



ISSUE

22.2

January 12, 2020

# Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN  
OF THE  
OLSEN PARK  
CHURCH OF  
CHRIST

## Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

## Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

## Deacons:

Steve Dixon

Ryan Ferguson

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McNear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Kevin Wise

Trevor Yontz

## Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

## Circumstantial Evidence

By J. L. McKinley

There are different kinds of evidence used in determining the accuracy of alleged truth. Eyewitness testimony is the most powerful form of evidence. In the Old Testament eyewitness testimony was to be confirmed by at least two people (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Another form of evidence is called circumstantial evidence. Pamela Binnings Ewen in her excellent book *Faith on Trial* defines circumstantial evidence as “the type of evidence that requires the use of reason to reach a conclusion” (7). It is the practice of building a case on “knowable facts” (8). Thus, if one were to build a case for the evidence of the resurrection of Christ based upon circumstantial evidence he would collect as many known historical facts as possible and lay them upon one another until they built a wall no honest skeptic could jump.

In this study we shall briefly consider five lines of evidence that one can use in teaching unbelievers that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead.

### The Disciples Died for Their Beliefs

It is a known historical fact that those who followed Jesus died for their belief in Him and His message. Even atheist historians such as Will Durant and H. G. Wells acknowledge that Jesus’s immediate

disciples were martyred for their faith. This is even more incredible when we realize that on the night of their Master's arrest they were scattered and discouraged. Upon His death their belief that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah had been crushed. Their Master, in whom they hoped would throw off Roman oppression and restore Israel, had been crucified on a Roman cross. One who endured such a fate was believed to be accursed by God (Gal 3:13; Isa 53:4). Later they are found hiding behind closed doors in fear that the Jews would hunt them down to end Jesus's influence once and for all (John 20:19). The Jesus movement seemed as if it had been stopped in its tracks.

A short time later the disciples committed their lives to preaching that Jesus arose from the dead. How does one account for these Jewish preachers' belief in the resurrection of Jesus? It could not have been contrived because there was nothing in first century Judaism to influence them in making up such a doctrine. While the Jews believed in an end-time resurrection, they had no concept of an isolated event within history wherein one would rise to immortality. Such being the case we cannot attribute this new doctrine to the disciples of Jesus. Our best conclusion is that the apostles preached the resurrection of Jesus because they actually saw Him and were motivated by the **"many infallible proofs"** He gave them before He ascended (Acts 1: 1-3; 1 John 1: 1-4).

### Conversion of Skeptics

Some argue that the resurrection story is made up because when Jesus arose He only appeared to believers. However, if the resurrection story is made up, how do we explain the conversion of James the Lord's brother and Saul of Tarsus?. During His ministry Jesus's siblings rejected His claims (John 7:1-5). However, after Jesus's resurrection James became a leader in the Jerusalem church. How does one account for James becoming a believer? Only one plausible explanation, he saw Jesus alive after His crucifixion and death (1 Cor 15:6). The most popular example of conversion to Christ is the great persecutor Saul of Tarsus. What could have motivated this man who had and intense hatred for the church to become its most influen-



Olsen Park Church of Christ

tial evangelist? Paul forsook a prestigious career in Judaism in exchange for ostracism and suffering (Phil 3:2-11; Acts 9:16; 2 Cor 11:23-28). Imagine yourself as a first century Jew or Christian and the impact it would have to hear that Saul had been converted! What makes this even more incredible is that after Paul's conversion he did not try to bind the ordinances of the law on Gentiles. What caused such a change in doctrine for this once zealous Jew? He saw the risen Christ (Acts 9:1-18; 1 Cor 15:8-9).

### Changes to Key Social Structures

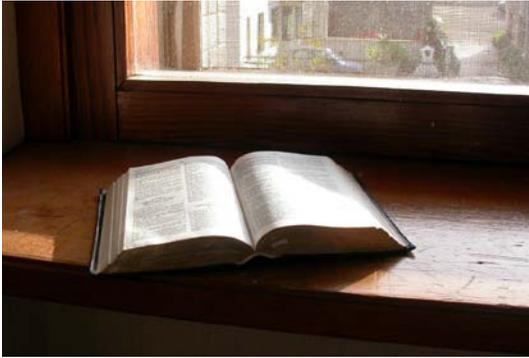
By the time that Jesus became flesh and dwelt among men the Jews had suffered persecution from pagan nations for 700 years. What is even more incredible is that many of the nations which persecuted the Jews had faded away, but the nation of Israel still existed. One of the reasons that the Jews remained was their dedication to their traditions and ordinances. God gave many of these ordinances in order to keep the Jews from losing their national identity when taken into captivity by pagans. It might even be said that it was the ordinances themselves that made them Jews. They were to be faithfully passed down from generation to generation with the conviction that their salvation was dependent on their keeping them.

However, when the church was established Jews began neglecting the old ordinances in favor of new practices. Many of their cherished doctrines began to be seen in a new light. Animal sacrifices, circumcision, and Sabbath keeping slowly lost their significance to those who followed the new Jesus movement.

One of the new practices was that of baptism into the name of Jesus. In order to see the force of this argument we must remember that in the Old Testament God told the Jews that where He put His name, there He

would come and bless them (Exod 20:24). God would put His name where He wanted sacrifices to be offered. In the New Testament Peter proclaimed that **“there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). Since that blessed name has been put on baptism we can see that God no longer comes and blesses man at an altar. Since Jesus is the sacrifice for our sins we come to Him by being baptized **“into”** His death (Rom 6:3-4). Also, baptism is where Jews embraced the fuller revelation of God's triune nature (Matt. 28:18-19).

Likewise, we find a new practice in the Lord's Supper. Early followers didn't come together to celebrate Jesus's teachings or His life—but to remember His death (Matt 26:28). These Christians understood that the Lord's death was a necessary step to a much greater victory (John 12:23-24; 2 Tim 1:8-10). When we observe the Lord's Supper in the weekly assembly we **“proclaim the Lord's death till He comes”**



(1 Cor 11: 26). How do we explain these new practices emerging from a group of men who were not even scribes or priests?

### **The Holy Spirit Working in the Church**

Nearly every religious organization which calls itself Christian is convinced that the Holy Spirit works among them either directly, indirectly, or miraculously. While we certainly

cannot believe that the Holy Spirit is working among all the religious confusion we see in the world—the fact that it is universally believed that He is among us is significant. Jesus foretold the coming of the Spirit after His resurrection and ascension (John 14:15-17; 15:26; 16:5-14; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). In fact, the miraculous work of the Holy

Spirit is the only reasonable explanation for twelve unlearned men spreading the gospel into all the world in spite of the resistance of Jewish scholars and pagan philosophers.

### **Conclusion**

While this evidence is powerful, we must remember that it is only circumstantial. When you add the testimony of the eyewitnesses themselves who went to their deaths for what they believed we can be assured that we are not following “**cunningly devised fables**” (2 Pet 1:16).

*Biblical Insights*, 4.9 (Sept. 2004): 23-24.



Faithful Sayings Issue 22.2 January 12, 2020

4700 Andrews Ave.  
Amarillo TX 79106  
806-352-2809  
[www.olsenpark.com](http://www.olsenpark.com)

# Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.  
Please come again.