

March 31, 2024

DOUBT LESS: part 1-Doubt Less about the Resurrection

Part 1 - **Doubt Less about the Resurrection**
Part 2 - Doubt Less about a Theistic Universe
Part 3 - Doubt Less about the Bible
Part 4 - Doubt Less about Jesus
Part 5 - Doubt Less about Truth

We begin with a scene Levi Lusko describes in his book, THE LAST SUPPER ON THE MOON Nasa's 1969 Lunar Voyage, Jesus Christ's Bloody Death, And The Fantastic Quest To Conquer Inner Space.

Levi and his daughter Amelia had just come out of the imax theater having watched the newly released documentary movie Apollo 11, created from never publicly seen 70 millimeter film archives –it was amazing and they went out to dinner together afterward, chose a table outside, and gazed at the moon in amazement. When the waitress came to the table, she commented.

W *...it's a beautiful night.*

L: “Can you believe people landed on it?”

W: “*Yeah, I guess, ... though my roommate's brother doesn't think the moon is real. And I'm not so sure . . . he is pretty convincing.*”

L: “*You're surely not serious! If it's not real, what is it exactly? And who put it there and why? What possible gain would there be?*”

W: “*Well, he thinks that it is a CIA base for surveillance.*”

L: *...the moon cannot be a surveillance base placed in orbit by the CIA because from the beginning of written history, people have been writing about the moon—long before the existence of the CIA or the kind of technology you are talking about....besides all that, our astronauts landed on the moon in 1969 and revisited it multiple times and it is very well documented!*

Then Levi continued to give multiple examples, quoting (as only Levi can, having researched and writing his book) evidence after evidence not only why we can be certain the moon is real, but why we can be certain that the moon landing really happened. And yet here is how the server responded.

W: “*That's a good point, but really, there's no way for us to know it is there.*” —“*Well, anyway, can I get you started on an appetizer?*”

- Is the moon real?
- Was the moon landing a hoax?
- Was Jesus a real person?
- Is the resurrection of Jesus a hoax?

This series is not going to be able to **PROVE** anything to anyone but it might help **many of us to doubt less.**

I wrestled down to the mat my doubts about the Resurrection a long time ago—but that does not mean I am never affected by any doubts.

"Some people get addicted to chain-smoking their problems. They spend all day going from sorrow to sorrow. It doesn't have to be that way. You can live each day going from joy to joy—like a sunflower that turns to face the sun as it moves across the sky. It's not about having a problem-free life, but about focusing on the light. Sunflowers still have shadows, but they are always behind them."

—James Clear, 3-2-1 email 3/21/24

Chain-smoking problems is a great way to describe a destructive fixation of focusing on dark shadows. I need The sunflower's fixation that produces joy, putting the shadows behind me!

I need this series...because I need to Doubt Less! How about you?

ARE YOU READY TO HEAR MORE?

The Christian FAITH is not a blind leap. Christian Faith has always been an evidential faith. Before we get into the Bible, let me recommend a helpful book. **The completely updated and expanded Classic: Evidence that Demands a Verdict, by Josh McDowell, and his son, Sean McDowell Phd.**

Here's a quote from it...

"Almost everyone who has heard of Jesus has developed an opinion about Him. That is to be expected, for He is not only the most famous person in world history, but also the most controversial."

The main disagreements are not over whether Jesus was a real historical person.

The disagreements are over everything Supernatural... for example:

Bart Ehrman is a critical scholar of the New Testament who does not believe traditional Christian beliefs such as Jesus' claims to deity, his resurrection, or his miracles. But even Bart Erhman writes this:

"The reality is that Jesus certainly existed, as virtually every competent scholar of antiquity, Christian or non-Christian, agrees, based on clear and certain evidence."

—Bart Ehrman

The point of “Evidence that demands a verdict” and the point of our series is this: The Christian FAITH is not a blind leap. Christian Faith has always been an evidential faith. We don’t throw out our minds in order to believe it, we look at the evidence. The unbelieving side does as well. There are very intelligent people on each side of the controversy. The basic difference of interpretation is over the basic presupposition—Is there a God, or not? There are very intelligent people on both sides of the controversy,

Speaking of an Evidential Faith... check out how Luke begins his Gospel.

Luke 1:1–4 (NIV) — 1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

It’s EVIDENCE that helps with CERTAINTY.

Now let’s jump to the topic of doubt. You may be surprised as we read any of the Gospel accounts about the resurrection. Let’s read Luke’s to show you what I mean.

Luke 24:1–11 (NIV) — 1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ” 8 Then they remembered his words. 9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

What!? Wait just a minute. PAUSE THE VIDEO!!!

LUKE, IF you are presenting the evidence that we might “KNOW FOR CERTAIN” that Jesus rose from the dead, why are you writing that EVEN the apostles did not believe Jesus was raised!?

But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

WHY? Luke would simply answer...because that's the way it happened.

But here's what we learn from this.

I. **The STRONGEST faith is not the faith that never DOUBTED**

Reports of an empty tomb by itself did not convince any of Jesus' chosen leaders. Nobody who is fabricating a story would think to present it this way. Not in their culture.

We know that the leaders who first doubted the report of a risen messiah, as nonsense and in no way expected a crucified and resurrected Messiah, eventually became the strongest proponents of the RESURRECTION. SO HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

We are right at the hinge point of the beginning of that answer...

II. **When you are in doubt, you can still do the NEXT RIGHT THING**

Here's what happened next!

Luke 24:12 (NIV) — Peter, however, [even though he did not believe the women and even though it all sounded like nonsense to him] got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

The next right thing for UNBELIEVING PETER TO DO was RUN AND INVESTIGATE to see what happened!!

But even then, can you see the cogs turning in his mind? He was probably thinking something like...*What!? That's odd! Why would anyone stealing Jesus' body bother to take those strips of linen off, -that stuff adheres like glue. I don't get it. Grave robbers would be in a rush. What happened to the guards? What happened here!*

THE EMPTY TOMB did not cause Peter to think, "The women were right... He is risen!" That was NOT his conclusion. He is puzzled. What happened here?

ILLUST: If you went to a cemetery where to visit the gravesite of a family member to place some flowers, and you got there and the tombstone leaning over a gaping hole, you would not be thinking your family member was raised...you would be MAD and wanting to find out WHAT HAPPENED!?

That was Peter's mindset... So what happened to convince Peter and the rest of the Apostles?

You have to keep reading for that. Don't stop at the end of Luke, keep reading by going to Acts (Luke / Acts is a two part work).

I won't leave you hanging, here is a summary statement of the whole deal in one verse:

Acts 1:3 (NIV) After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

This explains WHY

- There was an **immediate drastic change in these leaders.**
- They **went from fear to fearlessness** and were willing to suffer and die for the message they all staked their lives on.
- **This was no HOAX...**
 - who would die for a hoax, what would be their motivation?

If this still all sounds like nonsense to you, what will you do next? Do you want to doubt less? I believe you can. And you can move from doubt to a stronger faith.

Doubts are not insurmountable barriers but invitations to a deeper understanding, and a stronger faith.

What are you willing to do?

- Will you read Luke and Acts?
- Will you read **“Evidence that demands a verdict?”** (2017 edition)
- Will you come next week, and perhaps keep coming for the rest of this series?



Talk It Over

DOUBT LESS 1 - Doubt Less about the Resurrection

SMALL TALK

1. Share about a time when you experienced doubt in your faith or in something important to you. How did you navigate through it, and what did you learn from the experience?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ John 20:24-25.** What do these verses reveal about Thomas' doubt? Why do you think he struggled to believe in Jesus' resurrection, despite the testimony of the other disciples?
3. **READ John 20:26-29.** How does Jesus address Thomas' doubt, and what does this reveal about Jesus' character?
4. Reflect on the relationship between evidence and faith in the context of Thomas' doubt. How does Jesus provide evidence to support Thomas' belief, and how does this relate to our own experiences of doubt and faith?

5. What transformation takes place in Thomas' faith, and how does his confession reflect a deeper understanding of who Jesus is?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. What specific questions or areas of uncertainty do you wrestle with, and why?

7. How have your experiences of doubt ultimately contributed to a stronger and more resilient faith?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

8. What's the next right step for you to "doubt less"?