

Chapter 12. Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Matthew 28 ⁶He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

Session overview

- Explore Jesus's claims regarding his own resurrection
- Twelve compelling reasons favoring the resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Introduce Bayes Theorem and apply it to evidence related to the resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Review Pascal's Wager as a decision framework for appraising probabilities assigned to the resurrection of Jesus Christ

Jesus's claim

- Before taking into consideration the empirical evidence favoring the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is essential to understand clearly what Jesus Christ actually said about himself and his mission
- We start with a very unusual assertion by John the Baptist:

John 1:29-34

²⁹The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³²And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

- In John 1:29 above, we find a clear statement that John the Baptist believed Jesus to be the “Lamb of God.”
- In Hebrew culture, it was understood that lambs are sacrificed to cover sins
- John indicates that this lamb would be different. He “takes away the sin of the world!”

John 10:30

³⁰I and the Father are one.”

- Jesus clearly identifies himself as God
- Amazingly, some people try to reinterpret this verse giving it a false understanding
- The people who heard Jesus make this declaration clearly understood for they sought to kill him for blasphemy
- Jesus clearly predicted that he would suffer and be killed as illustrated below in Mark 8:31. He also clearly stated that he would be resurrected.

Mark 8:31

³¹And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

- In Matthew 27:63 below, the leaders in Jerusalem understood what Jesus asserted concerning his own resurrection:

Matthew 27:62-66

⁶²The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ ⁶⁴Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” ⁶⁶So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

- After the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, Jesus went out of his way to demonstrate that he was physical; not just an empirically unverifiable spirit or a ghost.

Luke 24:36-49

³⁶As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” ³⁷But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹And while they still disbelieved for joy and were

marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

- The early church leaders understood that the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the centerpiece of Christianity as evidenced in early creeds.

The Apostles' Creed (750 AD~)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Reasons evidencing Jesus's bodily resurrection from the dead

1. Eyewitness accounts and experiences

- Many disciples saw, felt, touched, and testified to Jesus's bodily resurrection
- Remember that the vast majority of these same disciples suffered and died alone

2. Early, preserved accounts of the gospel.

- The centerpiece of Christianity is the gospel, not the prosperity gospel but the Biblical gospel
- As Paul articulates the Biblical gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (covered repeatedly already)

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

¹Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

- Remember that Paul follows up this good news with numerous eyewitness accounts
- The New Testament is filled with early, preserved accounts of the gospel

- The New Testament book of Acts contains numerous early sermons and testimonies related to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection

3. Transformed from fear to martyrdom

- The sheer number of people whose lives were transformed from cowering in fear to boldly proclaiming the gospel is an amazing historical fact
- Given our inherent desire to avoid pain and suffering, people typically do not willingly die for what they know is a lie

4. Empty tomb

- In the days after the secured tomb was found empty all the leaders in Jerusalem had to do was produce Jesus's body. They never did.

5. Resurrection was declared in Jerusalem

- Again, in the days right after killing Jesus, the fearful disciples of Jesus were found boldly declaring to each other as well as to anyone who would listen that Jesus had risen bodily from the grave
- These declarations were occurring right where it happened.

6. No contrary evidence

- In recorded history, there is no evidence of a body or any other contrary evidence
- There was a false rumor that some of the disciples stole the body. Since the tomb was empty, this rumor is not convincing, given that the tomb was secured and protected by guards.
- Further, if the body was stolen by the disciples, then they would not have endured such brutal suffering and martyrdom

7. Shortly thereafter some Jews changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday

- The Sabbath was a sacred and holy day on the Jewish calendar
- What would possess Jewish who believed Jesus was the prophesied Messiah, to change this day from Saturday to Sunday? Given the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred on Sunday, the celebration for what Jesus accomplished is the most reasonable explanation for this transition.

8. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus (renamed the Apostle Paul)

- What would possess a Jewish religious leader to abandon his prestigious position in favor of following a dead Rabbi whose ministry was over due to the charge of blasphemy and execution?
- One rational explanation is that he encountered the resurrected Jesus
- The fact that the Apostle Paul wrote a large portion of the New Testament suggests that he did not go insane. Clearly, insane people do not write such world changing materials.

9. Key initial evidence given to women

- In the Jewish culture at the time of the resurrection, women were marginalized members of society
- If you were going to create a myth surrounding a blatant lie, you would not have made women lead characters in the myth

10. Physical resurrection—the cornerstone

- The emerging religious cult, as some believe, could have easily made Jesus's resurrection a spiritual one
- That is, just say that he rose spiritually from the grave
- Given that it would be unverifiable, you could just proceed with your new religious cult
- By asserting a physical, bodily resurrection, you introduce the messiness of physicality and all the associated required empirical evidence

11. Fulfilled prophecy

- From Genesis through Malachi, the Old Testament provides numerous clear and precise predictions of a coming Messiah who would suffer and die for transgressions
- From the Messiah's birthplace to the date of his crucifixion, it was all clearly predicted

12. Deep and abiding clarity of biblical teaching related to finance

- If Christianity was merely a cruel myth fabricated by cunning people, then you would not expect to find deep and abiding wisdom related to personal and corporate wealth management
- The Bible presents clear and coherent truth claims related to financial management starting in Genesis and ending in Revelation
- Myths and frauds do not present coherent finance-related claims that deeply correspond to the empirical observations of our day
- Given the empirical evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is reasonable to consider deeply Jesus's teaching on finance

Bayes' Theorem and the resurrection¹

- Thomas Bayes (1701-1761) introduced a mathematical framework that bears his name for assessing the likelihood of undecided claims
- Around the same period, David Hume (1711-1776) argued that miracles are extremely unlikely and therefore claims of Jesus' resurrection are likely false

¹Based initially on materials produced by Professor Lionel Martellini.

- Using Bayes' theorem, one can easily demonstrate that although one claim favoring the resurrection may not be compelling, multiple claims when rationally considered results in persuasive evidence
 - Consider how probabilities are updated based on new data
 - Based on known objective probabilities (rare in philosophy or finance)
 - Widely used to solve numerous mathematical problems
 - Example: We have 10 marbles, four are blue and six are red. One of the blue marbles is striped and three are solid. Four of the red marbles are striped and two are solid. Figure 12.1 illustrates the assumed population of marbles.

***Figure 12.1. Illustration of probability updating
(10 marbles, one striped blue, three solid blue, four striped red, two solid red)***



- The probability of randomly picking a blue marble is four out of ten or $\Pr(\text{Blue}) = 40\%$
- The probability of picking a striped marble is five out of ten or $\Pr(\text{Striped}) = 50\%$
- Note, however, if all you know is that the randomly drawn marble is striped, then the probability that it is red is four out of five or $\Pr(\text{Red}|\text{Striped}) = 80\%$ (Read: The probability of observing a red marble given that we know the marble is striped.)

- Suppose we have two truth claims, A and B , where A is a particular proposition and B is a particular piece of evidence
- We assume you can assign probabilities to these two truth claims, $\Pr(A)$ and $\Pr(B)$
- We define the prior belief or prior probability of a particular proposition being true as $\Pr(A)$
- The $\Pr(A|B)$ is the posterior belief; that is, the new information provided by evidence B results in adjusting the probability of proposition A being true

Bayes theorem

- Bayes theorem provides a robust mathematical way to update probabilities in light of new evidence
- We skip the technical math here but it is available in the provided materials

Bayes theorem and the resurrection of Jesus Christ

- Consider two claims:
 - A – truth claim or proposition (e.g., A – “Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead”)
 - $\neg A$ – truth claim or proposition (e.g., $\neg A$ – “Jesus Christ *did not* rise bodily from the dead”)
- Suppose one assigns the likelihood of Jesus rising as remote say one percent of one percent

- $\Pr(A)$ – prior belief or prior probability [e.g., $\Pr(A) = 0.01\%$ or 0.0001].
- $\Pr(\neg A)$ – prior belief or prior probability [e.g., $\Pr(\neg A) = 99.99\%$ or 0.9999].
- Now one conducts a detailed study of the evidence related to the Apostle Peter
- He is an interesting character and portrayed as very human
- Consider a second truth claim:
 - B – second truth claim or proposition (evidence)
 - B – “Apostle Peter’s zeal in proclaiming that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead, especially after Peter’s own prior denial the night before Jesus was crucified”

- People do not typically suffer and die to promote what they know is a lie
- Though skeptical, realize Peter was not the bravest of characters, hence you determine:
 - $\Pr(B|A)$ – likelihood [e.g., $\Pr(B|A) = 75\%$ or 0.75 , because Peter was unlikely to suffer and die to promote a cultural movement when he knew the resurrection was a lie].
 - Read: “Apostle Peter’s zeal in proclaiming Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead, given his own denial assuming Jesus Christ actually rose bodily from the dead.”
- Further, you concoct nefarious reasons motivating Peter to promote a lie and determine:
 - $\Pr(B|\neg A)$ – likelihood [e.g., $\Pr(B|\neg A) = 10\%$ or 0.1].

- Read: “Apostle Peter’s zeal in proclaiming Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead, given his own denial assuming Jesus Christ *did not* actually rise bodily from the dead.”
- Based on Bayes’ theorem, we have $\Pr(B|A) = 7.5\%$
- Based on this analysis, the skeptic’s view of the likelihood that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead has increased by a factor of about 750
 - Initial probability of 0.01% and posterior probability of 7.45%
 - Although this increase in probability does not seem like much, remember that the life transformation of Peter is simply one of hundreds of factual evidences favoring the resurrection

- For example, assuming the same probability structure for each of the additional twelve apostles, we can produce the following set of outcomes for the thirteen apostles who all suffered after the resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Table 12.1 shows the resulting mathematical calculations
- Based on repeated use of Bayes' theorem, the likelihood of Jesus rising bodily from the dead is virtually 100%.

Table 12.1. Bayesian updating of the likelihood of the bodily resurrection from the dead

Bayes Theorem and the Resurrection						
	$\Pr(A B)$	$\Pr(A)$	$\Pr(B A)$	$\Pr(\neg A)$	$\Pr(B \neg A)$	
Event (1)	$\Pr(\text{Res} \text{Peter})$	$\Pr(\text{Res})$	$\Pr(\text{Peter} \text{Res})$	$\Pr(\neg \text{Res})$	$\Pr(\text{Peter} \neg \text{Res})$	
Event (i)	$\Pr(\text{Res} i)$	$\Pr(\text{Res} i-1)$	$\Pr(i-1 \text{Res})$	$\Pr(\neg \text{Res} i-1)$	$\Pr(i-1 \neg \text{Res})$	Apostle
0						
1	0.07495%	0.01%	75%	99.99%	10%	Peter
2	0.55941%	0.07%	75%	99.93%	10%	Andrew
3	4.04836%	0.56%	75%	99.44%	10%	James
4	24.03743%	4.05%	75%	95.95%	10%	John
5	70.35530%	24.04%	75%	75.96%	10%	Philip
6	94.68075%	70.36%	75%	29.64%	10%	Bartholomew
7	99.25649%	94.68%	75%	5.32%	10%	Thomas
8	99.90022%	99.26%	75%	0.74%	10%	Matthew
9	99.98668%	99.90%	75%	0.10%	10%	James, son of Alphaeus
10	99.99822%	99.99%	75%	0.01%	10%	Jude
11	99.99976%	100.00%	75%	0.00%	10%	Simon the Zealot
12	99.99997%	100.00%	75%	0.00%	10%	Matthias
13	100.00000%	100.00%	75%	0.00%	10%	Paul

- We now turn to what has become known as Pascal's wager
- The goal is to explore a rational framework for establishing the threshold of probability that would transition a person from believing a particular truth claim as false to one who now believes a particular truth claim as true

Pascal's Wager

- According to Wikipedia, "Blaise Pascal (19 June 1623 – 19 August 1662) was a French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer and Catholic theologian
- He was a child prodigy who was educated by his father, a tax collector in Rouen

- Pascal's earliest work was in the natural and applied sciences, where he made important contributions to the study of fluids, and clarified the concepts of pressure and vacuum by generalising the work of Evangelista Torricelli. Pascal also wrote in defence of the scientific method.”
- Regarding Pascal's Wager, Alan Hájek concludes, “Pascal's Wager is a watershed in the philosophy of religion. As we have seen, it is also a great deal more besides.”²
- Before specifying the wager, we need to define the concept of utility

²See Alan Hájek, “Pascal's Wager”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/pascal-wager/>. Hájek is a widely cited professor of philosophy at Australian National University.

- Again, quoting Hájek, “In any decision problem, the way the world is, and what an agent does, together determine an outcome for the agent
- We may assign utilities to such outcomes, numbers that represent the degree to which the agent values them
- It is typical to present these numbers in a decision matrix, with the columns corresponding to the various relevant states of the world, and the rows corresponding to the various possible actions that the agent can perform”

Alan Hájek summarizes Pascal's Wager in following way:

1. "Either God exists or God does not exist, and you can either wager for God or wager against God. The utilities of the relevant possible outcomes are as follows, where f_1 , f_2 , and f_3 are numbers whose values are not specified beyond the requirement that they be finite:

	God exists	God does not exist
Wager for God	∞	f_1
Wager against God	f_2	f_3

2. Rationality requires the probability that you assign to God existing to be positive, and not infinitesimal.

3. Rationality requires you to perform the act of maximum expected utility (when there is one).

4. Conclusion 1. Rationality requires you to wager for God.

5. Conclusion 2. You should wager for God.”

- The main insight is that a “Wager for God” results in a positive infinite expected utility regardless of the finitely assigned probability that “God does not exist”
- Assuming any positive probability assigned to “God exists” will result in a positive infinite expected utility
- There are many criticisms of Pascal’s Wager, but it remains a powerful way to frame evaluation of various decisions

- Alan Hájek concludes, “Pascal’s Wager vies with Anselm’s Ontological Argument for being the most famous argument in the philosophy of religion
- Indeed, the Wager arguably has greater influence nowadays than any other such argument—not just in the service of Christian apologetics, but also in its impact on various lines of thought associated with infinity, decision theory, probability, epistemology, psychology, and even moral philosophy”
- In summary, based on Pascal’s Wager, once you have established a positive probability favoring the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, then entrusting your life to Jesus Christ is the only rational response

Personal finance in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ

- Because the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is not only historically plausible, but a biblical necessity, all of life changes materially
- The world we find ourselves occupying is God-infused and teeming with living water and the bread of life
- The simple charge to go and make disciples is impossible from a human perspective
- Fortunately, God is at work all around us and we simply must join Him in what He is already doing
- If you are a follower of Jesus, then plead with Him to open your eyes to the lost but seeking all around you
- Perhaps ask God for one person to assist along the way

- It is easy for us to feel the pressure in our soul for the despair of entire nations
- It is much more challenging to invite our colleague at work to coffee to serve as God's ambassador and introduce them to Jesus Christ
- Figure 12.2 illustrates the daunting challenge of serving as God's ambassador to the world, but it starts by one person loving another person enough to share the gospel of Jesus Christ
- Ask God to give you one more person to disciple

Figure 12.2. Illustration of the disciple-making challenge



Summary

- Explored overall and in detail the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Examined what Jesus Christ claimed he would do
- Identified twelve compelling reasons to believe that Jesus Christ did, by empirical fact, rise bodily from the grave
- Took a mathematical dive into Bayes Theorem and explored applying it to the resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Introduced Pascal's Wager as a decision framework for appraising the resulting probabilities from applying Bayes Theorem

Questions?

Case Study #1:

“Jesus never claimed to be God and never suggest that he would rise from the dead.” Appraise.

See John 10:30, Mark 8:31, Matthew 27:62-66, and Luke 24:36-49.

Case Study #2:

“The physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is simply not supported empirically and it is simply a blind leap of faith that is too far for me.” Appraise.

Case Study #3:

“The combination of Bayes Theorem applied to empirical evidence favoring the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ combined with Pascal’s wager is an extremely powerful apologetic for becoming a follower of Jesus Christ.” Explain.

Your feedback will help improve this material.

Robert Brooks

(205) 799-9927

www.robertebrooks.org

rbrooks@frmhelp.com

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