

Interesting Email:

The following email was attached to Pastor Mike Taylor's article, "The Way, The Truth, and The Life". We felt the mailing was so good, and so true to form that it should be included along with the titled article.

Again, that was a great discourse about Jesus and who he really is. Can anyone "prove" Jesus is this? No, not any more than one can prove the stuff in the can that says "Campbell's Mushroom Soup" really is mushroom soup. Unless we actually see the soup being made and put into the can (which depends on our senses telling us the right thing) the best we can do is to rely on evidence, either from other people or our own when we bought another can of mushroom soup last week, opened it, heated it up and discovered it was indeed mushroom soup!

This is a very simple example of historical evidence, which is what we have to use to learn about Jesus because we didn't live in his time or place. For me, the historical evidence is compelling, and there is, to my knowledge, more for than Tiberius Caesar.

There are two key elements which I regard the strongest:

- 1) The inability of his enemies to "trot out the body" which would have fully destroyed the Resurrection account and cleared up the matter once and for all.
- 2) The totally changed aspect of his disciples who had once fled and hid in terror but boldly and publicly proclaimed Jesus' words and the accounts of his life and resurrection after the fact.

These men, except for John who was sent to Patmos as punishment for preaching Jesus, died for what they reported. I don't know anyone who will die for something they do not believe is true themselves. (Of course they might have been mistaken - people have died for lies, but only when they thought they were true.) But with all the other evidence, it certainly seems they had good reason—and so do we—to believe their message.

The "impossibility" of the resurrection and all the other miracles is dealt with by faith and a very frank assessment that we as human beings are not omniscient, something that our very nature often rebels about admitting.

Two hundred years ago I'm sure that we could find all kinds of expert scientists who would tell you that the flight of human beings in a heavier than air vehicle was totally impossible, too.

Since the complexity of the universe and life itself points to a "Designer," then why not go the extra step and decide that he can also decide to step in a change something in the design to allow what we would call a miracle to happen?

There were two other passages, John 3:1-8 and John 6:53-56, which to this day have led to what I believe is an unresolved debate.

John 3:1-8 has been interpreted to mean one must be water baptized as part of the "salvation formula."

John 6:53-56 has been interpreted to mean one must also have Holy Communion to be saved as well.

Unfortunately such entities as the Roman Catholic Church, and even the Anglican Church to some degree, has too often used these interpretations to get a stranglehold over their flocks. You step out of

line, you get excommunicated. That means, no communion for you, and you'll end up in hell because of that.

Likewise, without baptism, best thing you can hope for is limbo.

The main problem here becomes the evolution of "works-based salvation" which Jesus and Paul soundly refuted over and over again. Paul's letter to the Galatians is a wonderful treatise on this topic.

On the flip side, an interpretation I tend to agree with is that John 3:6 is the explanation of John 3:5. To be saved, you must first be physically born, and then, at the age of accountability, accept Jesus at which time the Holy Spirit comes to live in you and through you. Now there is a spiritual baptism that not only surrounds you, but dwells within you, too.

Regarding John 6:53-54, if literally taken really does sound pretty extreme. I am sure these verses factor prominently into the false Roman concept of "Transubstantiation." The communion itself becomes an object of "adoration" and, as we saw before, salvation. Sounds like idolatry to me!

Notice Jesus used these words even before instituting what we call Communion today. That means what he was saying was already true when He said it. If we look ahead, to verse 58, we see Jesus explain what he really meant—that he is the bread from heaven, the sustenance which will last one for all eternity.

This actually reinforces what he said back in John 6:28-29—belief is the key!

Now I know these matters will be debated until Jesus comes to take us home. I have no problem if someone disagrees with me on these matters, because despite my normally healthy ego, I've learned over the years to really understand I'm not omniscient either! In fact, the older I get, the more ignorant I realize I am!

At this rate, if I ever hit 100, I won't know anything at all.

God bless.