

My Excuse

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I'm a Christian, a follower of Jesus and I trust what the Bible tells me.

One thing the Bible tells me is to . . . *always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have*
from 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

In other words I'm always to be ready to give an excuse for my hope.

. . . well, here's

My Excuse

NOTE:

I've included end notes, mainly so you can check out what the Bible says about things I mention in the text. The end notes take up the last six or seven pages.

It seems popular nowadays to rubbish the Bible. The rubbishers often tell us that *science has disproved all that stuff*. Many of them appear to believe in the non existence of God; any god, especially the God of the Bible. They also appear to believe there's no intellect greater than human intellect. One such group is known as the *New Atheists* and for a while they called themselves *The Brights*; rather arrogantly if you ask me, especially when you consider how unscientific their arguments are.

They seem to want me to accept that before the universe came into being, there was only nothing and nowhere. To my mind, dim or otherwise, that's a position of blind faith; belief based on nothing and coming from nowhere. And, to me, it follows that since a cause has to come from something or somewhere, they'd also have me accept the universe exists without cause, and therefore without purpose.

Generally, of course, I don't agree with them. But there are some things I think we do agree on. For example I think we agree that:

- the universe exists
 - mankind is part of that universe
 - mankind's mortality rate is 100%
 - the universe has a 'use by' date
 - there are such things as absolute truths . . .
- . . . and I accept that without God the universe probably would be purposeless; and meaningless.¹

Richard Dawkins was, at one time, a leading new atheist. He gave us an insight into new atheist thinking on the meaning of life, the universe and everything in 'River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life'. In it he wrote: *In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.*

*The universe that **we** observe? . . . the properties **we** should expect?* Sorry Mr Dawkins. That might be what you want me to observe, but it's not what I do observe!

As I read and look around me, there's obviously:

- plenty of evidence of design
- heaps of evidence of good and
- way too much evidence of evil: much of what

Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin and Pol Pot did was evil. Much that happens in war is evil. The recent Islamist attacks on Beirut and Paris were evil.

And Mr Dawkins insists his observation, his proposition, is scientific fact. But ignoring evidence then calling your proposition scientific fact isn't science. At best it's counterfeit, pseudo-science.

In my opinion, an equally if not more sustainable proposition is that the universe and the world I live in were designed, created and are sustained by an absolutely powerful God; a God who is also very patient.²

Of course the world, generally speaking, has turned its back on God. But really, his written word, the Bible, makes much more sense of the world and the universe I observe than the *pitiless indifference* Mr Dawkins appears to have blindly put his faith in as scientific fact.

The Bible tells us that *in the beginning* God and his word were already there; and that God created the heavens, and God created the earth.³ It tells us God said words commanding things to come into being and, from what started out as a formless void, they did come into being.⁴

At the very least there's an implication that God has, or is, absolute authority and absolute power; which means authority and power over what we call laws of nature and rules of science. And what are laws of nature and rules of science? They're conclusions human minds have drawn from observing the order in what actually happens, or has happened, in the heavens and on the earth.

Now, if my understanding is right, Mr Dawkins would have me believe that human minds are the product of a process involving *no design, no purpose, . . . nothing but pitiless indifference*. And, surely, that means a product of random chance, doesn't it?

But if that's what human minds are, why should anyone put any trust in conclusions they've made; any rules and laws they've developed?

Would you trust a machine, say a car or a plane or a computer, that was a product of random chance: *no design, no purpose, . . . nothing but pitiless indifference*? I certainly wouldn't! And how likely is it that the widespread and reliable order we see all round us could be the product of random chance?

But let's get back to the Bible. It goes on to tell us that to top off his creation God created mankind, that mankind was created to rule the rest of God's creation on earth⁵ and, at that stage anyway, everything was all good.⁶

It also shows us that mankind wasn't created as some sort of pre-programmed, mindless robot race. It shows that we were created with a mind and a will of our own; the ability to choose to do or not do what God says. *From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,*⁷ said God. So, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they went and

ate.⁸ They chose to ignore God. They rejected what he said.

And mankind's been doing it ever since. In spite of the way we continue to stuff up God's creation, we insist on running it our own way; either ignoring or rejecting what God says.

And in spite of the way it wrecks relationships – relationships between individuals, within families, across communities and nations – in spite of that, we persist in living **our** lives **our** way; in the way that makes **us** feel best about **ourselves**; again independent of God, without any reference to him and often defiantly rejecting the way he tells us is right, and best for us.

The Bible has a name for ignoring or rejecting God and doing things our own way, independent of him. It calls it sin. And the Bible confirms that ignoring or rejecting God is something we've always done.⁹ In fact, much of its narrative could be called *Mankind Sins*; and subtitled, maybe, *A history of mankind's ignoring and rejecting God*.

And just as there are consequences when we ignore or reject the manufacturer's instructions and insist on running our car engine without oil; just as a consequence of that is the death of the engine, its destruction, the Bible tells us that ignoring or rejecting

God has consequences too.¹⁰ It speaks of death and eternal or everlasting destruction, away from God.¹¹

Destruction's something we see a fair bit of in this world: terrible diseases, wars, earthquakes, tsunamis, bushfires; the list goes on. However, the destruction associated with these things isn't everlasting. For example: the destruction associated with a bushfire ends when it's extinguished or it runs out of fuel. It's not everlasting destruction. And amidst this limited timespan destruction there's often good stuff happening. How often do we hear that the values and character of our nation¹² and its people had their beginnings in the destruction of war and were refined during more war and disaster?

But the Bible says that the death and destruction that comes from ignoring God will be everlasting. It'll go on forever. And when the Bible says this everlasting destruction will be away from God, it means there'll be no good coming out of it, nothing good at all.¹³ Now I don't know the details of what everlasting destruction away from God will look like, but I wouldn't be surprised if it winds up looking like hell. It certainly doesn't sound like something that'll make us feel good about ourselves.

But, unless God does something about it, that's the destiny of each and every one of us: Christian, Atheist, Muslim, Buddhist; good, bad or ugly. At some stage we've all ignored or rejected God, we've all

sinned. And the Bible says that at a time of God's choosing¹⁴ each and every one of us will be called to account.¹⁵ And because God's standard is perfect sin-less-ness, and no one except Jesus has ever been perfectly sin-less, without God's help none of us will escape our destiny: everlasting destruction away from him. It's the natural way of things. There's nothing in our power we can do about it.

Science offers no comfort. The science appears to be that the universe has a reckonable lifespan and it, too, is headed for destruction.

The 'brightest' new atheist intellects have nothing to offer either. In 2009 Richard Dawkins gleefully backed an advertising campaign on London buses; the slogan: *There's probably no god. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.* But all the while the mortality rate for mankind doesn't vary; it's still stuck at 100%.¹⁶

And think about his statement that *there's probably no god!* In my mind saying *there's probably no god* is the same as saying *there possibly is a God.* And actually, for me, the existence of God is a lot more likely to convince me to stop worrying and enjoy my life than Dawkins' non existence hypothesis.

Because only God can help us.

And even though most of mankind is still ignoring or rejecting God; even though what we deserve is to be ignored and rejected by him; in spite of all that, throughout the Bible we read about how much God loves us.¹⁷ And God's love is a lot more than God just feeling warm and fuzzy about us too. God's love is active and real. It compelled him to act in our best interests and in a way that cost him dearly; the dead opposite of what we really deserve.

Why would anyone do that, let alone an almighty God, when it'd be quite fair and just for him to leave us to our own devices, ignoring or rejecting us like we've ignored and rejected him throughout our history?

- Simple answer: Who knows? God just does it!
- Less simple answer: God is a God of **grace**, of **love**, of **mercy** and of **justice**.

God sees and knows the deep trouble mankind's got itself into because of sin, because of ignoring or rejecting him. And God's done something about it: round 2,000 years ago, in the Roman province of Palestine, God entered human history as a man. This man lived a life that was perfectly in line with **God's** values, a life in which he never once ignored or rejected God, a life lived without sin. His name was Jesus, and the Bible makes some pretty outlandish claims about him:

- It says he claimed to be God¹⁸
- It says his mission in life was to save mankind –

- sinners – from the consequences of their sin¹⁹
- And that this mission involved getting himself executed:²⁰ taking on himself our punishment – the death and destruction fairness and justice demand is due to us for our having ignored and rejected God – ²¹ so that as well as justice being served, we could then be forgiven.

Now, apart from the fact that for a sane man to make good on a claim that he's got to be executed would've required unimaginable levels of resolve and will power –

especially when the method of execution, Roman crucifixion, was designed to maximise and prolong pain, suffering and degradation –

apart from that, back in the Roman province of Palestine it wouldn't have been too difficult a claim for a non Roman citizen to make good on. All that would've had to happen was for the Roman authorities to be convinced it'd be easier to run the province if you were dead than if you were alive. And right on cue, just as God had always planned it, Jesus' enemies made sure that happened, and Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross.²²

That, of course, could've been the end of it: a lying loonie with a God complex sacrificed on an altar of bureaucratic convenience.

Except . . . as often as not, when Jesus claimed he had to get himself executed, he also claimed that

within three days of his execution he'd be up and about again.²³ There's no power on earth that could've helped Jesus make good on that claim. He would've had to have some sort of authority and power over nature to rise up from the dead. The Bible tells us that Jesus has that power and authority,²⁴ and that it's an historical fact that he really did rise up from the dead.²⁵

I can't think of a scientific way to prove it; or to disprove it for that matter. But we often rely on non scientific evidence to test the truth or otherwise of a claim that an historical event happened thousands of years ago.

For example, say I wanted to test the validity of claims that Julius Caesar landed in Britain. It'd be hard to come up with a scientific experiment or scientific evidence to prove or disprove the claims. I'd be looking at other types of evidence: particularly documentary and/or historical evidence. And I'd find there was plenty of historical and documentary evidence that Julius Caesar did land in Britain; enough to establish it as a matter of certain fact.

And there's heaps of historical, documentary and other evidence that Jesus rose from the dead; way more than enough to establish it as much a matter of certain, historical fact as Julius Caesar having landed in Britain.²⁶

The evidence is that this man Jesus was actually tortured; killed; found to be dead by the people who killed him, people who knew how to tell; was buried; and then did rise up from the dead.²⁷

But what difference does it all make over 2,000 years later? Why would people like me say they're not only convinced of it, but counting on it, trusting in it and relying on it. How does it have anything to do with the everlasting destruction and death that is mankind's natural destiny?

Well, at the very least, it gives us hope, hope in what is otherwise a hope-less situation.²⁸ You see, when Jesus made good on his claim that he'd rise from the dead, he demonstrated he's a man of his word who has the authority and the power to, and does, make good on his claims, his promises; no matter how outlandish they seem to us. And it's claims plural. There were other claims and promises.

Jesus also promised he was going to build a gathering of people who death would not overcome.²⁹ They'd be a gathering of his people who wouldn't be overcome by death just like he hadn't been. He also said this gathering of people would be his followers.³⁰ So according to Jesus, his followers will not be overcome by death.

And, according to Jesus again, it's because **God loved the world so much that he gave his one and**

*only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*³¹

Jesus claimed believing in him means, for the believer:

- rather than mankind's natural, default destiny: that is, everlasting destruction and death,
- there's an **alternative** destiny: that is, eternal or everlasting life

And when the Bible talks about eternal life, it's not talking about the existence we're living out now going on and on to eternity. For much of mankind that'd be unbearable. No, it's talking about life as it was meant to be . . . life to the max ³² . . . forever.

Of course, believing in Jesus includes believing about him. But there's more to it than that. Believing in Jesus also means trusting him, relying on him, having faith in him. And in Jesus' case, it's not the blind faith Richard Dawkins wants us to have in his proposition. In Jesus' case it's faith based on reliable evidence about what, by his absolute power and absolute authority, he's already done and what he promises he will do. In Jesus' case it means trusting that being a follower of Jesus is the way, the only way, to be right with God, the only way to everlasting life.³³

I know it sounds exclusivist to say things like that, some even say arrogant. Well, it is exclusivist. Jesus claimed he was the only way . . . no other way.

But arrogant? If I'd made it up or it was just me saying it, it would be arrogant; arrogant of me. However, it was Jesus who said it, not me! And it might've been arrogant of Jesus if he was lying or delusional or if he hadn't risen from the dead. But by rising from the dead Jesus demonstrated that he had the power and authority to qualify him to say it. And if it's the way things really are, if it's true, it's not arrogant for someone who has power and authority over creation and death to say so.

What is arrogant, as well as being deceitful, really dangerous and harmful, is setting out to con people into believing that our natural destiny is all there is; and they must be a bit dim to believe in God. However, if the natural destiny of mankind and the universe, without God in the picture, is everlasting destruction and death, and there is an infinitely better alternative, then letting you know about that alternative isn't arrogant; letting you in on that good news is actually doing you a favour.

And if it's just not true? . . . Well, if it isn't true I'm probably wasting my time. However, consider this: my life, the lives of my family and billions of Jesus' followers through time and history have been far, far better for us having believed that it is true; plus, I wouldn't bother wasting my time telling you about it if there was any doubt at all in my mind.

Because you see, the Bible says this alternative to everlasting destruction and death, the natural destiny of mankind and the universe, it says this gift of everlasting life – life with a capital L – is available to everyone; the good, the bad and the downright ugly. It's available to anyone who will accept it and follow Jesus.³⁴ And it's not so much a matter of doing anything as accepting something that's already been done for you and then going on from there.

Of course, like any gift that's offered, you don't have to accept it. Millions won't. Millions will settle for everlasting destruction and death.

Or maybe you already have accepted it. If you have, that's great!

But if you haven't, will you? Will you accept God's gift of everlasting life? It's not complicated. If you know you've been ignoring or rejecting God and you'd like to find out more about making that right and accepting God's gift of eternal life, have a look at <http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au/2wtl/> on the internet . . .

Or, even better, sort it out right now . . . if you've realised you've been ignoring and rejecting God, that you've been rebelling against him, and that you want that to change, then acknowledge it to God too. Confess it to him and ask him for mercy on the basis of Jesus' death in your place. Ask him to help you to

become a follower of Jesus. One way is to pray this prayer here and now; either this prayer or a prayer like it:

Dear God,

I know I don't deserve to be accepted by you. I don't deserve the gift of eternal life you're offering me. I've been rebelling against you, ignoring and rejecting you, and I need your forgiveness.

Thank you that Jesus died for me and that I can be forgiven.

Thank you that Jesus rose from the dead and that I can have eternal life.

Please forgive me and change me to be someone who lives with Jesus as my ruler.

Amen.

In the Bible, God promises to grant sincerely prayed prayers like that.³⁵ Once you've sincerely prayed such a prayer, you should expect to start wanting to put into practice what you've prayed about: becoming a follower of Jesus. You'll want to work on knowing Jesus better and on becoming less greedy, less angry, less selfish and so on; instead becoming more generous, kind, loving, patient etc.

These changes won't come about overnight; they'll be going on for the rest of your life. But God will be with you all the way. He'll be speaking to you as you read the Bible and listening to you as you pray. Through his spirit he'll be enabling and empowering you to live his way. And he'll provide you with brothers and sisters to support and encourage you as you meet with other Christians.

Of course, you'll have setbacks. You'll still stuff up and do the wrong thing. We all do. So you'll need to keep coming back to the cross and Jesus' death and resurrection as the only way to get right with God.

We must never stop relying and depending on Jesus, and Jesus alone, as the only way to be forgiven and to receive God's gift of eternal life.

END NOTES

¹ **Ecclesiastes 1:2** "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." (NIV)

² **Colossians 1:16-17; 2Peter 3:9**

From Colossians 1:16-17 . . . all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (NIV)

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (NIV)

³ **Genesis 1:1-2** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. (NIV)

⁴ **Genesis 1:3-26** And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (NIV)

⁵ **Genesis 1:26-28** Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (NIV)

⁶ **Genesis 1:31** God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. (NIV)

⁷ **Genesis 2:17** but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (NIV)

⁸ **Genesis 3:6** When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (NIV)

⁹ For example: **Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:10-11, 23**

Ecclesiastes 7:20 Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins. (NIV)

Isaiah 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (NIV)

Romans 3:10-11 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. (NIV)

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (NIV)

¹⁰ **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

¹¹ **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9** He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might (NIV)

¹² **Australia** (ANZAC, Gallipoli etc)

¹³ **James 1:17** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows (NIV)

¹⁴ **Acts 17:31** For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." (NIV)

¹⁵ **Hebrews 9:27** Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, (NIV)

¹⁶ **Hebrews 9:27 (again)** Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, (NIV)

¹⁷ For example: **Psalms 103:11-12; John 3:16; 1 John 4:10**

Psalms 103:11-12 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (NIV)

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV)

1John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (NIV)

¹⁸ **John 10'30-31; John 14'9-10**

John 10:30-31 (*Jesus said . . .*) I and the Father are one. Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, (NIV)

John 14:9-10 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. (NIV)

¹⁹ **Matthew 1'21; 1Timothy 1:15**

Matthew 1:21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (NIV)

1Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners —of whom I am the worst. (NIV)

²⁰ **Matthew 16'21; Mark 8'31; Luke 9'22**

Matthew 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (NIV)

Mark 8:31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. (NIV)

Luke 9:22 And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (NIV)

²¹ **1Peter 3:18; 2Corinthians 5:21**

1Peter 3:18 (NASB) For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; (NASB)

1Peter 3:18 (NIV) For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. (NIV)

2Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (NIV)

²² **Acts 2'22-24** "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was

handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. (NIV)

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²⁴ **Matthew 28'18; John 10'17-18**

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (NIV)

John 10:17-18 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." (NIV)

²⁵ **1 Corinthians 15'3-9** For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (NIV)

²⁶ **Try Googling 'resurrection evidence'; read the Gospels**

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and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (NIV)

²⁸ **1 Peter 1:3** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (NIV)

²⁹ **Matthew 16:18** . . . I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (NIV) . . . Note: the word translated as 'church' (ekklesia) literally means gathering/congregation (of people); Hades means 'place of the dead' (Leigh Windsor)

³⁰ **Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23**

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (NIV)

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (NIV)

Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (NIV)

³¹ **John 3:16** (NLT)

³² **John 10:10** . . . I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (NIV)

³³ **John 14:6; Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23**

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (NIV)

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (NIV)

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (NIV)

Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (NIV)

³⁴ **Joel 2:31-32; Acts 2:19-21**(quoting Joel 2:31-32); **Romans 10:13**
Joel 2:31-32 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved . . . (NIV)
Acts 2:19-21 I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. ' (NIV)
Romans 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (NIV)

³⁵ **1John 1:8-9** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (NIV)