

## 1 The Message that Endures

### 2 Introduction

- Later this year there is going to be another sequel to the action movie series Mission: Impossible.
- As many of you know the movie series is based on the television show that ran from 1966-1973, and then again from 1988-1990.
- Each episode started the same way. The leader of this team of exceptional spies would receive a top-secret, self-destructing message about their next mission.

### 3 Introduction

- It went something like this: “Your mission Jim, should you choose/decide to accept it [details are given here]”.
- “As always, should you or any of your I.M. Force be caught or killed, the Secretary will disavow any knowledge of your actions.”
- “This tape will self-destruct in five seconds. Good luck, Jim.”
- It had to self-destruct, because, otherwise, someone else could stumble upon the secret recording and compromise the mission.
- Plus, a spontaneously combustible briefcase (or telephone booth) is just plain cool.

### 4 Introduction

- Here's something else you may not know: We live in a day of self-destructing messages.
- They're not hidden in phone booths and briefcases, nor are they given to super-secret government spies.
- These messages are sent, received and destroyed on hundreds of millions of smartphones and tablets around the world every day, usually by teenagers.
- They may not be super-spies, but the reason for embracing this technology is the same as a character on Mission: Impossible: It leaves no trace.

### 5 Introduction

- Just as a spy doesn't want his mission compromised, a teenager doesn't want her secret life -- of gossip, crushes, taunts, flirts and worse -- discovered by others.
- Today's teens have been labeled, “Generation Delete.” Living in a tech-centric world, today's young people have never known a life without the option to “erase.”

### 6 Purpose

- Nevertheless, this weekend's message of the resurrection of Christ cannot be deleted.
- Even though many would want it gone or trivialized, its reality can't be ignored.
- God rose Jesus from the grave, just as Jesus said He would—showing Himself trustworthy in all matters.

- So then in tonight's sermon, I want to declare several irrefutable facts that can't be denied, deleted, or erased.

## 7 **Hoax or History**

- Best selling Christian author, Josh McDowell says. . .
  - "After more than 700 hours of studying this subject, I have come to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is either one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted on the minds of human beings--or it is the most remarkable fact of history."

## 8 **Important Points**

- The meaning of the resurrection is a theological matter, but the fact of the resurrection is a historical matter.
- The nature of the resurrection may be a mystery, but the fact that the body disappeared from the tomb is a matter to be decided upon by historical evidence.

## 9 **The Bible's Account**

- Living Witnesses
  - The New Testament accounts of the resurrection were being circulated within the lifetimes of men and women alive at the time of the resurrection.
  - Those people could certainly have confirmed or denied the accuracy of such accounts.

## 10 **The Bible's Account**

- Over 500 Witnesses
  - Do you realize that if each of those 500 people were to testify for only six minutes, including cross-examination, you would have an amazing 50 hours of firsthand testimony?
  - Add to this the testimony of many other eyewitnesses and you would well have the largest and most lopsided trial in history.

## 11 **Extra-Biblical Account**

- According to the Jewish Historian Josephus, he says . . .
  - Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure.
  - He drew over to him many Jews, and also many Greeks.

## 12 **Extra-Biblical Account**

- This man was the Christ. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross, upon his impeachment by the principal man among us, those who had loved him from the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive on the third day. the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonder things about him.

- And even now, the race of Christians, so named from him, has not died out.

### 13 Historical Proofs

- Broken Roman Seal
  - A Roman Seal was a sign of Roman power and authority and breaking a seal was extremely severe.
  - How could Jesus' disciples show signs of courage when they hid themselves? Peter went out and denied Christ three times.

### 14 Historical Proofs

- Empty Tomb
  - Jews themselves reported that the Tomb was empty, but said the body was stolen.
  - Jesus' disciples started preaching in Jerusalem.
  - People could go and look for themselves.

### 15 Historical Proofs

- Large Stone Rolled Away
  - Those who observed the stone after the resurrection described its position as having been rolled up a slope away not just from the entrance of the tomb, but from the entire massive sepulcher.
  - If the disciples had wanted to come in, tiptoe around the sleeping guards, and then roll the stone over and steal Jesus' body, how could they have done that without the guards' awareness?

### 16 Historical Proofs

- Roman Guards Go AWOL
  - The Roman guards fled. They left their place of responsibility. How can their attrition be explained, when Roman military discipline was so exceptional?
- Grave-clothes Tell a Tale
- Who robs a tomb and sticks around and folds the grave-clothes?
  - What attracted the Apostle John's attention was not only the empty tomb, but the position of the grave-clothes.
- The Changed Lives of the Disciples

### 17 Objections

- Body was stolen by the disciples. (Jewish argument)

- Body was moved by someone.
- Jesus merely fainted on the cross. (Swoon theory)
- God replaced Jesus on the cross with Judas. (Islamic argument)
- The church made the whole thing up?
- Jesus rose spiritually in the hearts of the disciples not physically. (Modern argument)

## 18 **Crucifixion Not an Accident**

- When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ—the Son of the living God, the gospel writer Matthew says something that is very interesting. He says . . .
- 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, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (Matt 16:21 NIV)

## 19 **Crucifixion Not an Accident**

- In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus says the same thing—probably on a different occasion, but here the gospel writer adds a commentary.
- He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. (Mark 9:31–32 NIV)

## 20 **Crucifixion Not an Accident**

- The third explicit prediction of this death and resurrection is recorded in the following two verses:
  - Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!” (Matt 20:17–19 NIV)

## 21 **Lesson**

- Why this is so interesting is that we often filter out things we don’t want to hear.
- This is so much so, that we don’t even remember the promise of victory either.
- Therefore, when what we fear begins to happen we often go to pieces.
- Jesus predicted His death, but His resurrection as well.
- He has also told us that He has received “all authority in heaven and on the earth.” [See Matthew 28:18]

## 22 **Lesson**

- This is a very important point, because Jesus having all authority and promising never to leave us or forsake us —to the very end of the age is huge. [See Matthew 28:20]
- That is why the next verse is very important too and should be a source of great encouragement.
- “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33 NIV)

### 23 Lesson

- As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (Matt 24:37 NIV)
- This means that when Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom and make all His enemies His footstool . . . most people will be caught off guard and society in general will be as wicked as it was in Noah’s day.
- However, as perilous as these days may be, Jesus has promised to be with us and give us help—no matter how rough things get.

### 24 A Message that Endures

- Jesus died and rose again, just as He said He would . . . implying all of the others things He said are true as well —so then He can be trusted.
- His death was no accident, but an important part of God’s plan.
- He died to pay for our sins, so that those who believe in Him can “legally” receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.
- Death is not final and the grave is only temporary.
- Just as God has raised Jesus from the grave, so will he raise all those who trust Him and his words.
- He will never leave us or forsake us! Amen.

### 25 He Has Risen