

# Did the Resurrection of Jesus Christ Really Happen?

## Lesson 1 – Some Preliminaries

### Jesus resurrection is a crucial issue.

- a) It is the \_\_\_\_\_ of New Testament writing (I Peter 1:3, Romans 10:9)
- b) Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ His Resurrection (Mark 10:33)
- c) It was \_\_\_\_\_ of His authority (John 2:18-21)

### The four explanations of how the universe came into being

- 1) It has always existed.
- 2) It appeared out of nowhere; it suddenly came into existence.
- 3) The universe is a figment of our imagination.
- 4) It was created.

### Isn't the whole thing just legend?

- 1) What can you learn about Christianity from this account written by Cornelius Tacitus, a Roman historian, describing the six-day Great Fire of Rome that burned much of Rome in July AD 64?

"Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed by the flames and burned, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44, trans. Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb (1876)

- 2) What can you learn about Christianity from Pliny, who was governor of northwest Asia Minor in Bithynia around the year AD 112? He is writing to the Emperor asking for advice on how to deal with Christians.

“I interrogated them as to whether they were Christians; if they confessed it I repeated the question twice again, adding the threat of capital punishment; if they still persevered, I ordered them to be executed. As for those who denied that they were or ever had been Christians, when they invoked the words given by me and prayed with incense and wine offerings to your statue, which I had ordered to be brought for this very purpose, along with the images of the gods, and also cursed Christ, which is said that no true Christian could ever be compelled to do, I thought they should be discharged.”

Pliny then writes about what some of those who claimed they used to be Christians did in their meetings back when they were Christians “three years ago, many years ago and as much as 20.”

“They were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, never to falsify their word, not to deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of a meal—but ordinary and innocent food.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 10.96-97