

February 20, 2022

The Gospel: Of First Importance

1 Corinthians 15:1-7

The Godspell

The etymology of words is one of the most fascinating fields of study. Take the word ‘gospel.’ It originates from the Old English word *godspel*.¹ Literally it is the conjunction of two words good + spell. A spell is a story or message or magical incantation. One author puts it like this:

“In Old English “to tell a story” was “to cast a spell.” Stories capture the heart and imagination and give us deep joy. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is *the Goodspell*. It is *the* story that all other joy-bringing, spell-casting, heart-shaping stories only point to. What’s special about this one? It is the one story that satisfies all [human] longings—yet it is historically *true*.”²

The spell in stories

Why do stories like “The Lion and the Witch and the Wardrobe” or “The Lord of the Rings” capture our hearts? Why do they put a spell on us *so-to-speak*? Because they envision the great battle of good vs. evil. These stories take you on a journey where all seems lost, all seems hopeless—the White Witch cruelly enslaves Narnia; Sauron poisons Middle Earth with the one ring. One hero rises to the occasion and sacrifices his own life to save the world—Aslan was slain on the stone table; Frodo went into the fires of Mt. Doom. But the heroes don’t ultimately perish. There’s a deeper magic. Aslan is raised to life. Frodo rides on the wings of eagles. The world is made right again.

¹ <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=gospel>

² Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, (New York, NY.: Viking, 2015), pg. 176

The spell that is true

These stories are so powerful and enchanting *precisely* because they remind us what our hearts long for most: the gospel—the good spell that’s actually true. An author reminds us:

“If Jesus Christ was really raised from the dead—if he is really the Son of God and you believe in him—all those things that you long for most desperately are real and will come true. We will escape...death. We will know love without parting,...and we will see evil defeated forever.”³

Loved ones, that’s *why* Paul says the gospel is of first importance. The gospel is an aroma of life to those who believe—“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life”⁴ But the gospel is an aroma of death for those who do not believe—“Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”⁵ Therefore it is imperative that we believe the gospel.

The Big Idea...

Vain belief in the gospel will not produce salvation

★ Our Doctrine

★ Our Duty

★ Our Delight

³ *Ibid*

⁴ John 3:36a

⁵ John 3:36b

I. Our Doctrine

A new subject: the gospel

Now remember the Apostle Paul is writing a letter to the Corinthian Church *partly* in response to the reports that heard from Chloe (1:11) and *partly* in response to the letter received from them asking him certain questions. For the last four chapters, he has been addressing public worship. Look at his transition in v.1 “*Now* I would remind you...” The word *now* indicates that he is beginning a new subject, namely the gospel.

“Now I would remind you, brothers, of *the gospel* I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as *of first importance* what I also received.”

His description of the gospel: *of first importance*

What is his description of the gospel? He says it is the thing “of first importance.” The Greek word is *πρῶτος* *prōtos*, where we get the word prototype. *Protos* means first. It can mean *first in sequence*, like a child who is born first. Or it can mean first in rank or the most important.⁶ In **Mark 12:28**, a scribe asked Jesus “Which commandment is [the *πρῶτος* *prōtos*] the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important [the *πρῶτος* *prōtos*] is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ That’s how Paul is describing the gospel here in v.3. “I delivered to you *the foremost, the most important, that which is of greatest importance...*”

⁶ Or it can mean the best like in Luke 15:22

His concern about the gospel: *vain belief*

Why is the gospel of first importance?⁷ Because to believe it wrongly is to be outside of salvation, outside of Christ. You can get lots of other doctrines wrong—even important doctrines—like eschatology or baptism or the spiritual gifts or the Lord’s Supper *and still be saved*. But if you believe the gospel *in vain*, you cannot be saved. He tells them at the end of v.1, this is the gospel “...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*.” Vain here means *without success or effect*. You will be saved, he says, *unless* your belief was a worthless vain faith.

Doctrine: vain belief in the gospel saves no one

So we arrive at **our doctrine**: *Vain belief in the gospel will not produce salvation*. So then what is vain belief? Consider 6 types of vain beliefs.⁸

Vain Belief #1: Unorthodox Belief

An unorthodox belief *is* a denial of one of the essential parts of the gospel. Paul tells us most immediately what this is in v.12. Look there with me. He says “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, *how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*” Summarizing his response in v.13-14, he says ‘If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ wasn’t raised *and our faith is in vain*.’ Paul’s logic is that to deny the resurrection of the dead (generally) is to deny thing the resurrection of Christ (specifically). Therefore a vain belief in the gospel is to deny the resurrection—Christ’s or our own. *Paul’s principle* is this:

⁷ If someone says “But isn’t the Trinity more important than the gospel? Or the Scripture? Or the Person of Christ Himself?” The answer most concisely is that all of these doctrines are the most important in different ways: 1) The Trinity: because God is the only necessary Being, the doctrine of God is the most important doctrine **metaphysically**. 2) The Bible: because we can’t know God savingly outside of special revelation, the doctrine of Scripture is the most important doctrine **epistemologically**. 3) The doctrine of salvation, or the gospel, is the most important doctrine for us **experientially** because through our believe in it we are saved. 4) The Person of Christ: because through Jesus we can know the Father (John 1:18) and because He accomplished salvation for us in His Person and His Work, the doctrine of Christ is the most important doctrine both **epistemologically** and **experientially**.

⁸ There are different types of “believing” in Scripture - Jesus teaches this in the parable of the sower - Matthew 13:1-23. Only one leads to salvation.

any denial of one of the essential parts of the gospel is a denial of the whole gospel. Therefore Oneness Pentecostalism and Unitarianism which deny the three persons of the Trinity holds to a vain belief that cannot save. God cannot send His Son into the world, if there is no Son to send. Likewise Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses who deny that Jesus Christ is "...begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father"⁹ holds to a vain belief that cannot save. Jesus said "...unless you believe that *I am he* you will die in your sins" (**John 8:24**). Likewise Deism which affirms that God is creator but denies that He is a Personal God who spoken to us through Scripture holds to a vain belief that cannot save. It is the Scripture alone that is able to make us

⁹ Nicene Creed

wise for salvation (**2 Timothy 3:15**).¹⁰ In short any denial of an essential doctrine—the resurrection, the nature of God, of Christ, the Scripture, etc.—is a vain belief that cannot save.

Vain Belief #2: Historical Belief

A historical belief is *mere assent* to the to the historical truths of the faith. Robert Sandeman spread this errant view of faith in the 1780's and 90's in

¹⁰ Vain Belief #_: Deistic Belief

A deistic belief is the affirmation that God exists and that He created the world and all things. Deism was a movement most popular in the 17th and 18th centuries. Historically deists believed in God as Creator but denied that the Scripture as God's personal Word to man. Benjamin Franklin was a Deist. This is what he said in a letter dated March 9, 1790:

“Here is my creed: I believe in one God, creator of the universe. That he governs it by his providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we can render to him, is doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental principles of all sound religion, and I regard them as you do, in whatever sect I meet with them. As to Jesus of Nazareth...I think the system of morals and his religion as he left them to us, is the best the world ever saw, or is likely to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupting changes, and I have... some doubts as to his divinity.”[*A Benjamin Franklin Reader*, Edited and Annotated by Walter Isaacson, (New York, NY.: Simon & Schuster, 2003), pg. 378]

This type of belief doesn't save anyone. Deism is the default belief system of everyone in the world! **Romans 1:19-20** tells us that everyone knows that God exists because God has show it to them through the things that have been made so they are without excuse. This is why God is angry with fallen man: because they believe He exists but refuse to worship Him through the one appointed Mediator Jesus Christ. **1 Timothy 2:5** “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Deistic belief is a vain belief. I would argue that this perhaps most popular religion in America today. In 2005 sociologist Christian Smith did a study on 3,000 American Teenagers. By far the most popular religion that they believed was a form of Deism which Smith called “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.” *Moralistic* because they (like Franklin) expressed a concern to be moral to others. *Therapeutic* because they believed the central goal of life is to feel good about yourself. *Deistic* because God wasn't really involved in your life—He wasn't personal—unless you really needed him. Smith summed up MTD in these five basic tenets: 1) A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth. 2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions. 3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about one's self. 4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem. 5) Good people go to heaven when they die. Source: <https://albertmohler.com/2005/04/11/moralistic-therapeutic-deism-the-new-american-religion-2/> Accessed November 18, 2019

England and Wales. It became a great nuisance to the Church and caused so much confusion. He said: “that...every one who *understands this report to be true, or is persuaded that the event actually happened* as testified by the Apostles, is justified and and finds relief from a guilty conscience.”¹¹ In other words, saving faith was merely an intellectual exercise. Here’s the problem most of Jesus’s chief enemies were persuaded and understood the Scripture to be true. The Jews believed Moses (**John 5:46**), they believed the Scriptures (**John 5:39**). The demons believe in the Shema—the most cherished doctrine in the OT—“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”¹² But James says that type of belief is vain **James 2:19** claims “You believe that *God is one*; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!” *Mere assent or mere agreement* to the historical doctrines of the faith is a vain belief.

Vain Belief #4: Temporary Belief

A temporary belief *is* assent or agreement with evangelical truth that is even accompanied with joy but later falls away. Jesus taught about temporary faith in the parable of the sowers. **Matthew 13:20-21** “As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ *yet he has no root in himself*, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.”¹³ Temporary belief is not proof that a person loses their salvation, it’s proof that they never had salvation to begin with. They didn’t have a root,

¹¹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Puritan Papers, Vol. 4: 1965-1967*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing 2004), pg. 274

¹² Deuteronomy 6:4

¹³ Also see Hebrews 6:4-6 and 2 Peter 2:20

meaning they were never born again, never justified.¹⁴ Judas Iscariot had a temporary faith (**John 6:70-71**). Temporary belief doesn't save anyone, it is a vain belief.

Vain Belief #5: Miraculous Belief

A miraculous belief is a belief not only in God as Creator but in God as miracle maker. The 5,000 people who were miraculously fed by Jesus were so convinced by His miracles that they sought to make him king by force (**John 6:15**). Yet when they found him the next day, Jesus said to them "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves" (**John 6:26**).¹⁵ In other words, they believed in the miracle, but not as a miracle validating the claims of Jesus. We already saw this type of vain belief earlier in **1 Corinthians 13:2** "If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains [so as to perform the greatest miracles], but have not love, I am nothing."¹⁶ Yes we must believe that God is a supernatural God, but a mere belief in the God who works miracles is not a saving belief, it is vain.

Vain Belief #6: Judaizing Belief

A Judaizing belief asserts that you must believe in Jesus *plus* obey some part of the law in order to be saved. This is why the book of Galatians was

¹⁴ You see temporary faith lacks perseverance, the very thing Paul says must accompany true saving faith. Look at **v.2** "...by which you are being saved, *if you hold fast to the word I preached to you.*" Now lest you think that a true believer might fail to persevere, listen to what the WCF says here in 17.2

"This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace."

In other words, true believers cannot have temporary belief. Perseverance in believing is inherent in true saving faith. Yet temporary belief is a real phenomenon. How many stories of Christian celebrities have we heard who have 'deconstructed their faith' (e.g. the #exvangelical movement)?

¹⁵ Also cf. John 5:1-15

¹⁶ Also cf. Luke 10:1-20; Matthew 7:21-23

written because false brothers had crept in claiming that ‘Yes of course you have to believe in Jesus, but you also have to be circumcised to be saved.’ Paul said that anyone who preaches this type of gospel is accursed (**Galatians 1:8**). Jesus + *anything* is a false gospel. Paul said that “...if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose” (**Galatians 2:21**).¹⁷ Adding any type of law-keeping to the gospel as a necessary condition to be saved is a vain belief.

Vain Belief #7: Carnal Belief

Carnal belief is a profession of faith in Jesus Christ without repentance. This is the idea that you can accept Jesus as your Savior without having Him as Lord. Pastor Paul wonderfully preached on this last Sunday night from 1 John 1. **v.6** “If we say we have fellowship with him *while we walk in darkness*, we lie and do not practice the truth.” Walking in the darkness here means living an unrepentant life. Nobody is sin-free. John makes that clear. **v.8** “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” So walking in darkness is not merely sinning. Walking in the darkness is living a sinful life without repenting, living in sin as if it’s not sin. That is evidence of a vain belief. It’s impossible for true saving faith to walk in unrepentant. **1 John 3:9** “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him.” Carnal belief is a vain belief.

Those are the six types of vain belief: **1) Unorthodox belief** - belief that denies an essential part of the gospel; **2) Historical belief** - belief that merely assents to historical Christianity; **3) Temporary belief** - belief that doesn’t persevere in believing; **4) Miraculous belief** - belief that affirms the supernatural; **5) Judaizing belief** - belief that adds law keeping to Jesus’ work as the ground of salvation; **6) Carnal belief** - belief that professes faith in Jesus but lives without repentance. That’s **our doctrine**.

¹⁷ See the whole controversy on this in Acts 13. Paul’s concise teaching: “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^[a] by the law; you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

II. Our Duty

3 duties...

1. Informatory Use

Our first duty is simply to *consider* what true saving belief is. The Shorter Catechism Q.86 puts it most succinctly.

Q. 86. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.

Consider two parts of that definition. **First**, consider the *object* of true saving belief: Jesus Christ Himself. This is not a trusting in disembodied abstract facts. Rather saving belief is a giving oneself over to the Person of Jesus Christ. **John 1:12** “But to all who did *receive him*, who believed in *his name*, he gave the right to become children of God.” **Second**, consider the *act* of believing: it is called a receiving of Christ. How do we receive Jesus? We receive Him with our entire soul. Our *intellect* agrees with the truth that Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man and that outside of Him no one can be saved. Our *will* chooses Him as our portion. Our *heart* desires Christ Himself, and not *merely* His benefits. We receive Christ so that we may *have Him*. That’s how Jesus offers Himself to us in the gospel. He offers Himself as the Bread of Life—so we must receive Him as a starving man receives food, depending upon Him for life itself. He offers Himself as a Bridegroom—so we must receive Him as a bride receives her groom sincerely desiring Him, not just His benefits.¹⁸ That is true saving faith: receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the gospel.

¹⁸ Ephesians 3:17 “...so that Christ *may dwell in your hearts* through faith.”

2. Experimental Use

Our second duty is that we must *examine* our selves. What kind of a faith do you have? Do you have a true saving faith? Or do you believe in vain? So let's test ourselves.

Is your belief orthodox? Do you believe all the facts of the gospel? Do you believe what Scripture says about the Trinity? About Jesus Christ? Is the Scripture your standard of truth or do you have another standard?

Do you *merely* assent intellectually to historical Christianity? Are your beliefs any different than the devils who can affirm all the doctrines of the Bible?

Is your belief permanent or temporary belief? Does the Holy Spirit actually dwell within you? Have you been born again?

Do you believe in God *only* because you have a bent towards the supernatural? Do you know that it's possible to perform miracles and not be saved?¹⁹

Have you added law-keeping as a necessity to be saved? Do you realize that this was what Jesus' greatest enemies believed?

Do you profess Christ but walk in the darkness? If you refuse to walk in repentance and confession of your sin, how can you call yourself a follower of Jesus?

Now some of you who are true Christians will hear these questions and will fear for your salvation because you are prone to doubt, or because you have a small faith. Take heart loved ones, there are ways to distinguish true saving belief

¹⁹ Jesus said "On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and *cast out demons in your name*, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:22-23).

from unbelief. Theologian Petrus Van Mastricht gives us a three marks that help distinguish small faith from unbelief:

1) Even the smallest trust desires God, Christ, and salvation, unbelief by no means does this. 2) The smallest faith acknowledges its own infirmity, experiences it, and laments it, whereas unbelief is free from care. 3) The smallest faith pants after remedies; conversely, unbelief [because] it is dead, is therefore without sense and without desire.²⁰

Beloved it is not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the Object of your faith. We don't believe in our belief, we believe in Christ. Even the smallest mustard seed of faith that receives and rests in Christ Jesus is the victory that overcomes the world.²¹ Your imperfect faith, and my imperfect faith is dyed and stained with the merits of Christ, so that even the smallest faith pleases God.

3. Admonitory Use

That brings us to our third duty: *rebuke*. The only person to rebuke in this passage is the person with a vain belief, those who have a false belief in the gospel. Dear friend, the gospel of Jesus Christ is of first importance. Don't listen to the lies of the world. Ignoring this message will not make it go away. The day of your death will come soon enough. If you are secretly hoping that this life is all there is, and there is no such thing as the wrath of God; if you hoping that there are multiple ways to be saved, or that God will save everyone; if you are hoping that your good works will outweigh your bad; all these are hopes are but illusions, clouds without water. Your vain belief will not save you. No one has ever escaped the wrath of God except through Jesus Christ. "There

²⁰ Petrus Van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology, Vol. 2: Faith in the Triune God*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), pg. 30

²¹ WCF 14.3 "This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed, and weakened, but gets the victory: growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance, through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith."

is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."²²

Those are **our duties**: 1) To *consider* what true saving belief is; 2) To *examine* ourselves for vain belief; 3) To *rebuke* vain belief because it does not lead to salvation.

III. Our Delight

The God spell begins

Now here's where the God spell begins. The gospel isn't our belief. That's how we respond to the gospel. The gospel is a story. A story about how God intervened in human history. **v.3** tells us that it begins with Christ. Christ, meaning the anointed One, the Messiah, sent by the Father to redeem and rescue fallen man. Paul tells us what He did:

For 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, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

1. The historicity of this story

Notice the three critical components of this story. **First**, this isn't just *mere* story, it's a true story that happened in history. A Man who claimed to be God died—specifically He was crucified—He was buried, and then He rose from the dead on the third day. This resurrected Man then made several appearances. 1)

²² Acts 4:12

He appeared to Cephas or Peter. **2)** He appeared to the 12, though there were only 11 because Judas hung himself, but Paul mentions 12 because that's how the apostles were identified. **3)** He then appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time. This event isn't recorded specifically in Scripture, and conjectures have been given when this happened. But here Paul mentions that some of these brothers were still alive when he wrote this letter, so the Corinthians would have had access to these witnesses. **4)** He then appeared to James and finally **5)** To the apostles again.

What's the point of mentioning all these appearances?²³ Because all human law requires the testimony of 2-3 witnesses. As long as the testimony is not contradicted and it is given by credible witnesses—men of sound mind and integrity—this testimony is sufficient to condemn a man to death. Paul is making the point that all other events in world history would be accepted as true beyond reasonable doubt if it had this amount of testimony.

2. The prophetic nature of this story

The **second** vital component of this story is that it was prophesied about in the Scriptures centuries upon centuries before it happened. Twice Paul makes the point that this happened “in accordance with the Scriptures” meaning all these things took place just as the Scriptures—specifically the OT—foretold. The Jews had the complete OT written and even translated into Greek long before Jesus was born. And the death and resurrection of Jesus is prophesied about everywhere in the OT.²⁴

Q. What is the OT about?

A. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

²³ Much help here from Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2018), pg. 314

²⁴ Even the prophesies that were not about Him were about Him. The prophecy about King Josiah (1 Kings 13:1-2) was ultimately a typical prophecy about Jesus Christ.

His death was prophesied

His death was the first prophecy—though He would crush the serpents head, He would suffer—His own heel (signifying His death) would be bruised (**Genesis 3:15**). **Psalm 22:1** prophesied His very words on the cross “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” His death was even prefigured in the law. Why were little Jewish boys to be circumcised? Because Jesus was to be bloodied and cut off. Why did God institute a lamb to be slain at Passover? (**Exodus 12**). Because Jesus is our Passover Lamb (**1 Cor. 5:7**). His death was even prefigured in OT persons. Why did God command Abraham to sacrifice His son Isaac—though God rescued Him at last? Because Christ is the True Son God would sacrifice and not rescue. Why did the innocent man Job suffer? To predict the sufferings and death of Christ.

His resurrection was prophesied

Furthermore Jesus’s resurrection was prophesied in the OT. Chiefly in **Psalm 16:10**. King David wrote “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.” Peter preaches from this passage in his first sermon at Pentecost. **Acts 2:29-31** “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ *he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ.*”²⁵ Jesus Himself prophesied His own resurrection. **Matthew 12:40** “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”²⁶

His kingdom from shore to shore

Some have been troubled that there is not as much prophetic material on the resurrection of Christ as there is on the death of Christ, but that’s just not

²⁵ Also cf. Psalm 2:7 + Acts 13:33-35; Hosea 6:1-2 (cf. Hosea 11:1)

²⁶ Also cf. John 2:19-22

true. Take in the OT as a whole. On the one hand we have all these passages that speak about the sufferings and death of Christ. On the other we have all these passages that speak about His universal kingdom that will spread from shore to shore, that will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. How can Jesus both die and have a kingdom?²⁷ There's only one answer: resurrection. Now putting these two components together: the historical testimony of this event, and that it was prophesied about centuries before it took place makes it the "...best authenticated event in the history of the world."²⁸

3. Jesus fulfilled this historical, prophetic event for us

The **third** vital component in this God spell is where the real enchantment takes place. We have the facts. *Namely* that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again. But what do these facts *mean*? *Why* did Jesus do these things? *For our sins*. "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died *for our sins*." Jesus death in history was not an accident. He wasn't a martyr. He was a sacrifice. Jesus came to deal with the greatest disaster in your life: you. Your guilt. Your shame. Your sin is a disaster. It is the cause of every misery in this life and the next. The wages of sin is death. The soul who sins shall die. Loved ones very soon you will die. It may seem like a long way off now, unimaginable even that it could happen to you, but when death comes it will astound you how little time you had. "What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes." And the only comfort you will have on that day is these five words: *Christ died for my sins*. As the old hymn goes

At the cross, at the cross where
I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now all my sins are washed away.

²⁷ Hodge, pg. 213-214

²⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 314

But it's not just His death you can rejoice in, it's that He rose from the dead. And because He rose, You will rise also. You can laugh at death. 'Death you have no hold on me. Because He lives, I will live also.' Beloved that's the enchantment of the God spell. That's why the gospel is of first importance. Because Jesus died for your sins, though you still sin, He loves you still. You can say with the Apostle Paul "Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me." And Because Jesus rose from the dead, you will escape death. "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."²⁹

The spell that never ends

And this spell will never be broken, and it will never end because it's actually true. It's not *just* that your sins are paid for, it's not *just* you have been given the gift of everlasting life. The chief good of the gospel is that you gain Him. What good is forgiveness of sins if You don't get Jesus? What good is eternal life if you don't gain Him? You will never have to part from His love, from His comforting voice, from His tender mercies.

"Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."³⁰

²⁹ John 11:25-26

³⁰ Revelation 7:15-17