

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: March 23, 2008

"Many Convincing Proofs"

In Acts 1:3, Luke records, "To these He also presented himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." **Aside from all the other evidences that could be mustered in support of the claim of Jesus' resurrection** (e.g., the empty tomb; the change in the disciples from being afraid for their lives [Jn. 20:19] to suddenly being willing to suffer persecution and death for their bold proclamation of a risen Christ; the coming of the Holy Spirit [Acts 2]; the birth and existence of the Christian church; the testimony of believers throughout history regarding the transforming power of the presence of Christ in their lives; as well as dramatic testimonies about God's hand in their lives in answer to prayer in Jesus' name; etc.), **Luke zeroes in on this most important, most foundational evidence, the testimony of the eyewitnesses who saw the risen Jesus.**

It is important to consider what Luke is actually claiming. **The word he chose to employ for "convincing proofs" is the Greek word, *tekmērion*, which means "that which is shown to be true by *clear, undoubtable evidence, or by indisputable, objective indications or signs*".**

We have an example of what Luke thought qualified as such a proof in Lk. 24:36f. In this account, Jesus suddenly appeared in the midst of the disciples, who were *not* at all in a meditative, "conjuring" frame of mind, but rather in the midst of animated conversation. They were naturally startled and frightened (again, they were *not* expecting Him to "show up" right then, ...or *ever*, for that matter). He assured them He was indeed with them, *and that He was not a spirit, or a figment of their imagination*. He encouraged them to *touch* Him, and *ate food* in front of them, to prove His point, i.e., that He was *actually* physically there. Then He taught them about the significance of what He had accomplished by His death and resurrection, especially emphasizing the the Holy Spirit's coming.

By stating that Jesus presented Himself alive by *many convincing proofs* over a period of time, Luke actually is building a case to strongly establish a historical fact by inductive reasoning methodology. He is saying that, based upon a *repeated series* of observable confirmations (the post-resurrection encounters with Jesus), it is reasonable to conclude that the claim of the NT (that He really *did* rise from the dead) is true.

In our age of near-worship of modern science, it is important to see that this respected academic discipline relies on this same inductive methodology. The scientist observes a phenomenon, proposes an explanation (hypothesis *A*), then also proposes ways to examine his theory (if *A* is true, then *B*, *C*, *D*, and *E* would also be true), and tests it out by examining a series of repeated events (experiments) designed to establish or discredit each of these propositions. If the hypothesis continues to hold up under examination, and if it satisfactorily explains all aspects of the known data (converging lines of evidence), then the hypothesis is accepted as the "assured and established findings of the scientific community". This means that it is the *most probable* explanation to date.

Historical events are established the same basic way, and our court systems also seek to discover truth by a similar process. The problem with historical events, however, is that they are *not* repeatable, as are the experiments of the scientist. Nevertheless, historians and lawyers do rely heavily on the same inductive approach. They gather as many bits of relevant evidence they can find. As they examine these artifacts, they propose theories, or explanations of what occurred, which are suggested by the evidence. Each theory will then be examined by all known evidence to see if satisfactorily explains all the facts. **The scenario which is best supported by the evidence is considered to be *probably true*.** The more converging evidence that can be found to support an explanation, the stronger the probability factor that is associated with that theory. ***Any known facts which directly contradict an explanation would rule it out from further consideration.*** In our law court system, the burden of proof that must be demonstrated for conviction of a crime is required to be *beyond reasonable doubt*. There must be a very high degree of probability demonstrated in order to establish events in a law court setting.

In the history of Western philosophy, there was an ongoing search by philosophers for what could be known with absolute certainty. **In the debates about methods of thought and investigation of information, two types of logic were identified.** There is **deductive logic**, which draws particular conclusions from generally known truths, and there is **inductive logic**, which draws general statements from the examination of many bits of information. **The strength of deductive logic is that, when the premises are true, and the correct logical form is followed, the conclusion will *always* be true with certainty.** The weakness of it is that it is very limited in its scope. There are some aspects of reality that simply cannot be investigated purely from a deductive basis. **The**

inductive method, is an alternative strategy for the discovery of truth. Its strength is that it can investigate things where the deductive method cannot. Its weakness, however, is that it is *only capable of probability, not certainty.*

The inductive method actually employs an *expanded version* of a process of thought that is recognized by deductive logicians as an *invalid, fallacious form.* In a nutshell, the two methods would look like this:

Valid Deductive Syllogism

If A, then B.
 A.
∴ B.

Fallacious Deductive Syllogism

If A, then B. (If Christ is risen, then He will be seen by eyewitnesses.)
 B. (Christ is seen by eyewitnesses.)
∴ A ∴ (Christ is risen.)

In logic-talk, this is an example of the fallacy known as *affirming the consequent.* **The fact that it is a fallacious logical form does not mean it is false, it just means that the logical structure of the argument does not guarantee with certainty that it is true.** Many of the attempts over the years to discredit the resurrection have attempted to offer *other explanations* for the fact that He was seen by the disciples. For example, some have said that He did not really die. Others have suggested that the disciples were hallucinating. These possible explanations must be examined in light of *all* the evidence. As theories, do these adequately explain *all* the facts?

I mentioned that **the inductive method was based upon an *expanded version* of what logicians saw as an *invalid deductive form,*** one incapable of guaranteeing absolute certainty. The value of the inductive method is that it *does* produce useful results. In spite of a similar basic approach, it is *not* the same as the simplistic form rejected by the deductive logicians. **Inductive approaches commonly utilize three important principles to protect the results from error: (1.) Repetition; (2.) Converging Evidences; and (3.) Cross Examination.**

Inductive Method

If A, then B (e.g., If Christ is risen, then He will be seen.)
B1, B2, B3, B4,...etc. (Christ is seen on numerous occasions.)
∴ A ∴ (Christ is risen.)

Step One: Repetition

If A, then C,D,E,... (If Christ is risen, what *else* could we expect?)
 C,D,E,... (Other supporting evidence is present)
∴ A ∴ (Christ is risen.)

Step Two: Converging Evidences

If A, then X,Y,or Z? What other possible explanations might there be for these events? Is there any conflicting evidence? Other theories?

Step Three: Cross Examination

Finally, the conclusion of the inductive process is *the most probable scenario* explaining all the available evidence.

It is beyond dispute that, in spite of its limitations, the inductive approach to discovering truth is valuable, practical, and generally reliable, if not 100% certain. We all employ it every day in making decisions. We live in a world where its benefits are widely seen and accepted. For example, the fruits of scientific inquiry plainly show that there is much to be gained by this methodology. Even though absolute certainty *must* always evade the true scientist, all of us would recognize that **there is a great deal of understanding that can be acquired, and established as *highly probable, which is of tremendous value.*** We have been able to develop and employ any number of various applications in the form of technological advances that we enjoy every day based upon such "un-certain", but highly probable discoveries. **We accept by faith that they will work, because they have performed for us in previous experiences.** In fact, we are *so* confident in these "probabilities" that we don't even think about them. We simply live with the *belief* that they will work for us as they have in the past.

Luke says that **Jesus showed Himself to the disciples with *many convincing proofs* over a 40 day period of time.** Of these appearances, there were at least a dozen instances recorded for us in the New Testament. It is important to note that **these were in a variety of settings, different locations, usually without any expectation of His coming, to many different people, and to individuals as well as to groups of various sizes. They employed not only sight and hearing, but they also touched Him and saw Him consume food. They spent extended time with Him, eating meals and conversing. They even went on long walks with Him.**

Twelve Resurrection Appearances

1. **To Mary Magdalene** -- Jn. 20:11-18; Mk. 16:9.
2. **To women returning from the tomb** -- Mt. 28:9.
3. **To Peter** -- Lk. 24:34; I Cor. 15:5; Jn. 21:15-22.
4. **To the disciples on the road to Emmaus** -- Lk. 24:13-35; Mk. 16:12,13.
5. **To "the ten" in the upper room** -- Lk. 24:30,31; Jn. 20:19-23.
6. **To "the eleven" (including Thomas)** -- Jn. 20:26-29; Mk. 16:14; cf. I Cor. 15:5.
7. **To five hundred** -- I Cor. 15:6.
8. **To James (Jesus' brother)** -- I Cor. 15:7.
9. **To the seven disciples by the lakeside (in Galilee)** -- Jn. 21:7.
10. **To "chosen witnesses who ate and drank with Him"** -- Acts 10:41.
11. **To "many" on the Mount of Olives near Bethany (in Judea) at His ascension** -- Lk. 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-12.
12. **To Paul (in Syria)** -- I Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:1-20.

Other Corroborating Evidences

13. **The Empty Tomb** – Without an empty tomb, the claim of resurrection is meaningless. To refute the resurrection, all that would have been necessary was to produce the body. The body was missing.
14. **The Condition of the Grave Clothes** – It is clear that the grave clothes were left behind. Why steal a corpse, but take the time to remove the linen strips, especially since they had been applied with a paste-like mixture of oil and 75 pounds of spices (Jn. 19:39)? According to the record, the grave clothes remained “twirled up”, and their appearance immediately inspired faith in those who saw them (Jn. 20:1-8).
15. **The Change in the Disciples** – The disciples were transformed from fearful, cowardly men, who fled for their lives at Gethsemane, and who locked themselves away for fear of reprisal from the Jews (Jn. 20:19), into champions for the faith. Why? They claimed that the risen Jesus appeared to them. They never profited from this claim, but instead boldly faced persecution, imprisonment and even death because of it.
16. **The Existence and Testimony of the Church** – The coming of the Holy Spirit, the birth of the Church and the testimonies of literally millions of people who say that they have been radically transformed by faith in Jesus Christ cannot be easily dismissed. *Something* must have happened to explain these experiences. The explanation all of these witnesses give is that Jesus rose again, and is alive today. What do *you* think?

In a court of law, the testimony of a single witness is significant. The corroborating testimony of two or more is very weighty, usually compelling enough to convince beyond reasonable doubt. **When these post-resurrection appearances are taken together, along with the other many corroborating evidences for this historical event, we have a *very sound basis for our faith.*** We may not have absolute certainty, but this is true of any historical event. What we do have is a *very high degree of probability*, a degree of probability based upon sound evidence, a degree of probability which we all find comfortable in living with in our daily lives. **Why do some doubt, or even castigate the claim of the resurrection? Their objection is not due to a lack of evidence, it is usually the result of pre-judgment,** e.g., presuppositions of anti-supernaturalism, or possibly an unwillingness to believe something that would demand their accountability to God. **The evidence is there. We can be confident that He is risen, indeed!**

Faith in Jesus is *not* a shot in the dark. It is a faith commitment in response to a well-established historical event. If Jesus claimed to be God, and rose from the dead, as He predicted, then we'd better pay attention. God's promise is that if we align with Him as our Master, and believe that He was raised from the dead, then God will save us (Rom. 10:9). **It is *not* a blind leap, but a *reasonable choice.***