Introduction

- Last week after we concluded our four week study on the topic of Tactics: Developing a Game Plan for Discussing the Word Right Divided, Brother Steve Homoki asked me if I had ever heard of Peter Boghossian. I had not.
- Peter Boghossian, according to his Wikipedia entry is "an American philosophy instructor, activist, author, speaker, and atheism advocate. He is a full-time faculty member at Portland State University. His primary research areas are critical thinking, philosophy of education, and moral reasoning. Boghossian is a speaker for the Center for Inquiry, the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, and the Secular Student Alliance. He has been nominated as a member of the Global Secular Council."
- Boghossian is the author of the 2013 book, <u>A Manual for Creating Atheist</u>. The goal of the manual is to school its readers in what Boghossian calls "street epistemology", a set of techniques that atheists can use in personal conversations with religious believers to get them to think more critically with the eventual goal of religious disaffiliation. In short, the manual is an atheistic version of the Koukl's *Tactics* book that we have been considering over the past four weeks. The goal of Boghossian's book is to bring about the de-conversion of Christians.
 - Chapter 1: Introduces Street Epistemology and the purpose of the book: To give people the conversational tools to talk people out of their faith and help them embrace reason.
- The Forward is written by Michael Shermer, a self professed former Evangelical Christian. Shermer defines Christianity with the following statement: "God sacrificed himself to himself to save us from himself. Barking mad!"
- In Chapter 2, Boghossian offers the following two definitions for faith: 1) Belief without evidence, and 2) Pretending to know things you don't know. In the midst of explaining his first definition of faith Boghossian states the following regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - o "Another way to think about "belief without evidence" is to think of an irrational leap over probabilities. 4 For example, assume that an historical Jesus existed and was crucified, and that his corpse was placed in a tomb. Assume also that eyewitness accounts were accurate, and days later the tomb was empty.
 - One can believe the corpse was missing for any number of reasons. For example, one can believe the body arose from the dead and ascended to heaven, one can believe aliens brought the body back to life, or one can believe an ancient spirit trapped in the tomb merged with the corpse and animated it. Belief in any of these claims would require faith because there's insufficient evidence to justify any one of these particular options. Belief

in any of these claims would also disregard other, far more likely possibilities—for example, that the corpse was stolen, hidden, or moved."

• For Boghossian and his ilk Christianity is "an irrational leap over probabilities." For the skeptic it is more probable, i.e., more likely that that the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth was stolen, hidden, or moved than it is Jesus Christ actually rose from the dead. Christianity therefore, for Boghossian, is irrational i.e., "belief with evidence."

The Doubting Corinthians

- I Corinthians 15:12—centuries before Boghossian, some members of the church at Corinth had apparently begun doubting the reality of resurrection. In Paul's mind, it was inconsistent for the Corinthians to doubt the reality of resurrection on account of fact that he had preached to them that Christ rose from dead.
- I Corinthians 15:1-4—Paul preached to the Corinthians a simple message that included the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ according to the scriptures. According to verse 1 the Corinthians had previously heard and received the gospel Paul preached to them and had a standing in the truth of these objective facts.
 - The word "stand" at the end of verse one is in the perfect tense and thereby describes an action that took place in the past, the results of which have continued into the present.
- I Corinthians 15:5-11—Paul offers proof that Christ did rise from the dead and challenged to the Corinthians to check out what he was saying with outside sources.
- I Corinthians 15:12-20—after presenting the evidence for the resurrection of Christ in verses 5 through 11 Paul presents his argument for resurrection based upon the fact of Christ's resurrection.
 - O Verses 18-20 address those that "are fallen asleep in Christ," i.e., believers who had died. If there is no resurrection what hope do believers have? A fools hope. But Christ is risen from the dead in verse 20 and become the first fruits of them that slept. In other words the resurrection of Christ in verse 20 secures the hope of those that have "fallen asleep in Christ" or "perished" in verse 18.
 - o I Thessalonians 4:13-14—addresses the hope of them that sleep in Jesus. Those that have believed that Jesus died and rose again God will bring with him at the catching up, i.e., they will be resurrected. Note the similar wording and subject matter to what Paul is speaking about in I Corinthians 15.
 - I Thessalonians 4:15-16—the dead in Christ rise first. They will join Christ in resurrection on account of the fact that Christ is the first fruits of them that slept in I Corinthians 15:20.

- o I Thessalonians 4:17-18—these truths are designed to give believers comfort regarding those who sleep in Jesus in verses 13 and 14.
- Some at the church in Corinth had questioning the reality of resurrection. By doing so they were threatening the hope and comfort of those saints who were not.
- I Corinthians 15:2—I think this is what Paul is talking about in verse 2. He is not talking about the Corinthians being saved from their sin in terms of their justification in verse 2. In verse 1, Paul addresses them as brethren, reminds them that he already preached the gospel to them, they already received it, and had a standing in it.
- Verse 2 is talking about them being saved from the despair that would result from denying the reality of resurrection (see verses 18-20). The way this is accomplished is by them keeping in memory the reality of what Paul had previously taught unto them. Verses 3 and 4 are a brief reminder of the contents of Paul's gospel.
- All of Christianity rests upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Either the resurrection of Jesus is the greatest miracle of history or it is the biggest hoax ever perpetrated against the human race.

Skeptical Theories About the Resurrection

Note: *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, pages 299 through 324 by Norman L. Geislter and Frank Turek was used as a resources in preparing this section of the notes.

- Gary Habermas wrote a book titled *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* in which he investigates what scholars believe about the resurrection.
- Habermas reports that virtually all scholars from across the ideological spectrum—from ultraliberals to Bible-thumping conservatives—agree that the following points concerning Jesus and Christianity are actual historical facts.
 - o Jesus died by Roman crucifixion.
 - He was buried, most likely in a private tomb.
 - Soon afterwards his disciples were discouraged, bereaved, and despondent, having lost hope.
 - o Jesus' tomb was found empty very soon after his interment.
 - The disciples had experiences that they believed were actual appearances of the risen Jesus.
 - O Due to these experiences, the disciple's lives were transformed. They were even willing to die for their belief.

- The proclamation of the Resurrection took place very early, from the beginning of church history.
- The disciples public testimony and preaching of the Resurrection took place in the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus had been crucified and buried.
- o The gospel message centered on the preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- o Sunday was the primary day for gathering and worship.
- James, the brother of Jesus and a skeptic before this time, was converted when he believed he also saw the risen Jesus.
- A few years later, Saul of Tarsus (Paul) became a believer, due to an experience that he also believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus.

Hallucination Theory

- This theory states that the disciples were all deceived by hallucinations.
- Hallucinations are not experienced by groups but only by individuals.
- Jesus did not appear to just one person—he appeared on a dozen separate occasions, in a variety of settings to different people over a 40 day period.
- Jesus was seen by men and woman, inside and outside, eating and talking.
- Jesus was seen by more than 500 people and they were not all seeing the same hallucination.

The Witnesses Went to the Wrong Tomb

- This theory states that the disciples went to the wrong tomb and then assumed that Jesus had risen.
- First, if the disciples had gone to the wrong tomb, the Jewish or Roman authorities would have gone to the right one and paraded Jesus' body around the city. The tomb was known to the Jews because it was their tomb (it belong to Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin). And the tomb was known to the Romans because they placed guards there to secure it.
 - o Matthew 27:62-66
- Second, even if the disciples did go to the wrong tomb, the theory does not explain how the risen
 Jesus appeared twelve different times. In other words, the appearances must be explained, not
 just the empty tomb. The empty tomb was not enough to convince most of the disciples that
 Jesus had risen from the dead it was the post-resurrection appearances of Christ that persuaded
 them.

Swoon or Apparent Death Theory

- This theory states that Jesus didn't really die on the cross. In other words, he was still alive when he was placed in the tomb, but he somehow escaped and convinced his disciples that he had risen from the dead.
- Enemies and friends alike believed Jesus to be dead. The Romans, who were professional
 executioners, whipped and beat Jesus brutally to the point of collapse prior to his crucifixion.
 They then drove heavy, wrought-iron nails through his wrists and feet, and plunged a spear into
 this side. If the Romans were good at anything it was killing people and knowing when they
 were dead.
- Moreover, would Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus have made the mistake of embalming a living Jesus (John 19:40).
- Even if everyone had been wrong, would someone who had been as badly beaten as Jesus still be alive 3 days later?
- For this theory to be true Jesus would have had to unwrapped himself, move the two-ton rock
 away from the inside of the tomb, and over power the elite Romans guards (who would have been
 killed for allowing the breach of security) and then convince everyone that he had risen from the
 dead. Jesus would have been a battered, bleeding pulp of a man whom the disciples would have
 pitied not worshiped.

The Disciples Stole the Body

- This theory states that the disciples stole Jesus' body.
- This theory takes the untenable position that the New Testament writers were all liars. For some inexplicable reason, they stole the body in order to get themselves beaten, tortured, and martyred!
- Matthew 28:11-15—this was the original explanation the Jews offered to explain the empty tomb. Did the disciples overpower the elite Roman guards who were dispatched to guard the tomb against this exact eventuality?

A Substitute Took Jesus' Place on the Cross

- This theory states that Jesus was not crucified, but someone like Judas was killed in his place. Many Muslims offer this theory.
- Are we to believe that scores of people who witnessed some aspect of Jesus' death—the disciples, the Roman guards, Pilate, the Jews, Jesus' family and friends—were all mistaken about

who was killed? If Jesus wasn't really killed, then why was the tomb of the man who really was killed found empty?

Explanations for the Empty Tomb

- Option 1—it was a human work.
 - o Removed by enemies—No Motive
 - o Removed by friends—No Power
- Option 2—it was a divine work.
 - o Most Logical Explanation
 - o Scriptures Teach that Jesus Miraculously Rose From the Dead