

The Fourteen Bravest Christians

Did They Die for a Lie? - by Todd Bauerle

Chapter One: A Question Worth Your Life

Everyone believes something they have never tested. We carry convictions the way we carry keys - close, automatic, rarely examined until the moment we need them and reach into an empty pocket.

This is a book about people who reached into that pocket and found something there. It asks one question and keeps asking it from every angle: what are you willing to die for? Not willing to argue for on the internet. Not willing to put on a bumper sticker. Willing to die for, with a soldier at the door and no reporters watching.

The first followers of Jesus faced exactly that door. Within a generation, the men who had walked dusty roads with a Galilean teacher were scattered across the known world, telling anyone who would listen that they had seen him alive after his execution. It was not a popular message. It cost them dinner invitations, then livelihoods, then, for most of them, their lives.

A liar makes a poor martyr. People will die for what they believe to be true, even when it is false. They do not knowingly die for what they made up last Tuesday.

That distinction matters, and we will spend real time on it. Sincere people die for false beliefs all the time; history is a long catalog of the honestly mistaken. So the fact that the early Christians were willing to die does not, by itself, prove the resurrection happened. What it establishes is narrower and harder to wave away: they were not lying. They really believed they had seen what they said they had seen.

From there the questions multiply. Could that many people, in that many places, have been sincerely fooled by the same thing? What actually happens to a movement when its leader is killed - and why did this one do the opposite of what movements normally do? What did a first-century execution actually involve, and what would it take to walk toward one on purpose?

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I did not write this book to end the argument. I wrote it to slow it down. We tend to reach conclusions about faith at the speed of a scroll, and this subject deserves the

pace of a long walk. Over the next fourteen chapters we will take that walk together, one life at a time - Peter, Andrew, James, John, and the rest - following each man to the end of his road and asking, honestly, what we make of where he was willing to go.

You can be a skeptic and read this book. I would prefer it. Bring your doubts; they are welcome company and they ask good questions. All I ask in return is that you hold your certainties as loosely as you would want me to hold mine, and that you keep in front of you the question this chapter started with. It is the one that sorts everything else out.

What are you willing to die for? Your answer, if you are honest about it, is a fairly reliable map of what you actually believe. The fourteen men in this book gave their answer plainly. The rest of these pages are about whether they were right to.

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