



A P O L O G E T I C S

203

Week 3

THE RESURRECTION
of Jesus Christ

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The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that 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. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

Introduction

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important historical event in the world. It changed history and Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection. As Paul says, if Christ did not rise from the dead, then his teaching is in vain, our faith is futile and we are the most to be pitied. The historical evidence and scholarly respect for the physical and bodily resurrection of Jesus is overwhelming now but it wasn't always this way.

In the 1970s it was almost joke to talk about the empty tomb of Jesus. Today, the majority NT scholars talk about the empty tomb and 2/3 of them confirm it and because of this the majority of theologians today who study the resurrection are more conservative in their views of the resurrection. Before this, we had the influential liberal theologians Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann who both taught that it is futile to talk about the historical reliability of the resurrection. Barth confirmed the doctrine of the resurrection but denied any historical evidence for it. A lot of this had to do with influence from the enlightenment and theologians wanting to blend Diest teachings with orthodox so they wanted to avoid miracles as much as possible.

The very mainstream popular NT critic Bart Erhman has even changed his position on many things concerning the reliability of the Scriptures and the event of the resurrection.

Gary Habermas who is a historian and Christian apologist who is one of the foremost defenders of the historical evidence of the resurrection said that we have enough data now to argue that Jesus rose from dead even if the Bible was not reliable.

Our Hypothesis - "God Raised Jesus From the Dead"

Facts most all critics agree with:

1. Jesus Was crucified

- Tacitus reports, *"Nero fastened the guilt [of the burning of Rome] 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."*
- Lucian of Samosata, the Greek satirist, writes, *"The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day-the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account."*
- Mara Bar-Serapion, writing to his son from prison comments, *"Or [what advantage came to] the Jews by the murder of their Wise King, seeing that from that very time their kingdom was driven away from them?"*
- The Talmud reports that *"on the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged."* - (**Yeshu** is Joshua in Hebrew. The equivalent in Greek is **lesous** or Jesus.)
- Even the highly skeptical leader of the Jesus Seminar (evidence from a hostile source) John Dominic Crossan from Jesus Seminar, writes, *"That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be."*

2. After his death, Jesus was buried in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea.

1. Jesus' burial attested in very old tradition quoted by Paul (1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

- He uses typical rabbinical terms "received", "delivered" with regard to the info to Corinthians verse 3-5 highly stylized four-line formula filled with non-Pauline characteristics.
- This has convinced scholars that Paul is quoting from old tradition most likely when he was doing his fact-finding in Jerusalem around AD 33 when he spent two weeks with Cephas and James (Gal. 1:18) which dates it within 5 years of Jesus' death. Because of such a short time span between these events the talk of it being a "legend" is wasted breath.
- Creeds originated because of the need to pass along important information in a format that could be easily memorized. **POW** - Paul, Oral Tradition, and written tradition

2. Burial story very old source material used by Mark in his gospel.

- Gospels have different pieces and parts of the life of Jesus but when it comes to the passion story they all have one, smooth continuously-running narrative and this suggest passion story as one of Marks sources of info when writing.
- Most scholars think Mark is already the earliest gospel. Comparison between the gospels does not diverge until AFTER the burial. This implies burial account was part of passion story.

3. As member of Jewish court that condemned Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea unlikely to be Christian invention.

- There was strong resentment against leaders who condemned Jesus (1 Thess. 2:15).
- Unlikely Christian would invent idea that someone who condemned Jesus would then honor him by giving him a proper burial instead of being thrown out like criminal.

4. No other competing burial story exists.

- If burial by Joseph fictitious we would expect to find some other stories of what actually happened or competing legends.
- All sources unanimous that buried by Joseph honorably.

3. On the Sunday following the crucifixion, Jesus' tomb was found empty by a group of his women followers.

1. Empty tomb story part of old passion source used by Mark.

- Marks source did not end in death and defeat, but with empty tomb story. Mark is earliest gospel and sources come from Pre-markan sources.
- Pre-markan passion story never refers to high priest by name which is as if the high priest is still in power (Rudolf Pesch makes this mention (german commentator on Mark)). Since Caiaphas held office from AD 18-37 meaning latest pre-markan source within 7 years of Christs death.
- Very good evidence gospels and acts recorded early. For example Acts never mentions the death of Paul which occurred in 64AD or destruction of Jerusalem around 70 AD both being HUGE events in 1st century Palestine and would have been mentioned.

2. Tradition cited by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:3-5 implies fact of empty tomb.

- 1st century Jews would see "buried and raised" to imply a vacant grave left behind.
- Expression "on third day" probably derives from womens visit to tomb 3rd day, in Jewish reckoning after crucifixion.
- Third line of the tradition in Paul corresponds to empty tomb story.
- For Jews it was remains of the man that were raised in the tomb. Just a spiritual resurrection foreign to the 1st century Jews

3. Story is simple and lacks signs of legendary embellishment.

- Compare Marks account with wild legendary stories found in 2nd century apocryphal gospels where talking about Jesus coming out sticking his head out of clouds and followed by talking cross (Gospel of Peter as example).

4. Women's testimony discounted in 1st century Palestine stands in favor of women's role discovering tomb (principle of embarrassment).

- According to Josephus, testimony of women was regarded so worthless that could not even be admitted into Jewish court of law.
- Any later legendary story would have certainly used male witnesses of empty tomb.
- *Sooner let the words of the Law be burnt than delivered to women.* (Talmud, Sotah 19a)
- *The world cannot exist without males and without females—happy is he whose children are males, and woe to him whose children are females.* (Talmud, Kiddushin 82b)
- *Any evidence which a woman [gives] is not valid (to offer), also they are not valid to offer. This is equivalent to saying that one who is Rabbinically accounted a robber is qualified to give the same evidence as a woman.* (Talmud, Rosh Hashannah 1.8)

5. Early allegations by Jews that disciples stole Jesus' body (Matt. 28:15) shows that in fact the tomb was empty.

- They didn't laugh at disciples saying "Jesus risen!" but were making stories about why tomb was empty. Thus, evidence of empty tomb even from the opponents of early Christians.
- Jacob Kremer (Austrian specialist resurrection) - *"By far most exegetes hold firmly to the reliability of the biblical statements concerning empty tomb"* Jacob Kremer, *Die Osterevangelien—Geschichten um Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977), pp. 49-50
- Paul Maier (historian and novelist) - *"Positive evidence from a hostile source. In essence, if a source admits a fact that is decidedly not in its favor, the fact is genuine"*

6. Jesus tomb was never venerated with a shrine.

- 1st century custom to setup shrine at site of holy man's bones. At least 50 cities did this during Jesus time. Since no such shrine for Jesus, suggests no bones there.

7. If Burial account is accurate then the burial location of Jesus was known to both Jews and Gentiles

8. Jewish authorities who despised the Jesus followers would have only had to point to tomb with the body to squelch the movement they hated. Saul of Tarsus was example of how much they hated the movement.

4. On multiple occasions and under various circumstances, different individuals and groups people experienced appearances of Jesus alive from the dead.

1. List of eyewitnesses by Paul (1 Cor. 15) guarantees such appearances happened. Peter, the twelve and 500 brethren, and James
2. Paul visiting with Peter and James (Gal. 1) for two weeks. During this time is when he most likely received the witness accounts (1 Cor. 15). Paul's fact finding mission around AD33.
3. Appearance traditions in gospels provide multiple, independent attestation to appearances. Important mark of historicity. Appearance to Peter in Luke, to the twelve in Luke and John. Galilean appearances in Mark, Matthew, and John, as well as women in Matthew and John

4. Certain appearances mark of historicity. James and younger brothers did not believe in him during his lifetime. The stories would not have fabricating them not believing in Jesus if they believed in him all along but James and brothers became active Christian believers after death. James an apostle and eventually rose to leader of Jerusalem church. According to Josephus (1st century historian) James martyred for his faith in Christ late AD 60s.
 5. If disciples lied about seeing Jesus then 10 of them died for a lie that they knew was a lie. Most likely 10 people would not give up their lives for something that they KNOW to be a lie.
 6. Modern martyrs act out of their trust in beliefs that others taught them. The apostles died for holding to their own testimony that they had personally seen the risen Jesus. Contemporary martyrs die for what they believe to be true. The disciples of Jesus died for what they knew to be either true or false.
 7. At least seven early sources testify that the original disciples willingly suffered in defense of their beliefs.
 - Norman Perrin, the late NT critic of the University of Chicago: *“The more we study the tradition with regard to the appearances, the firmer the rock begins to appear upon which they are based.”*
5. The original disciples believed that Jesus was risen from the dead despite their having every predisposition to the contrary
- Leader was dead. Jews had no belief in a dying, or rising Messiah. Messiah was supposed to conquer Israel’s enemies (Rome) and re-establish Davidic reign and not suffer as a criminal
 - Jewish law Jesus execution showed him to be heretic (Deut. 21:23).
 - Not only showed disciples master was gone but that Pharisees were right that Jesus was heretic
 - Jewish beliefs about afterlife precluded anyones rising from dead to glory and immortality before general resurrection

Alternative Theories

1. Hallucinations of Seeing Jesus - This says the disciples and other witnesses hallucinated when seeing Jesus
 - delusion - is a false belief held with the conviction that it is true in spite of evidence that invalidates the truth
 - Marshall Applewhite of Church of Venus who committed suicide with 38 followers in 1997
 - Jim Jones (Peoples temple 1978)
 - David Koresh (Branch Davidians 1993)
 - hallucination - seeing something that is not really there. False perception of something that is not there
 - illusion- a distorted perception of something that may be there

This view was popular 100 years ago but not anymore.

Disciples recorded eating and drinking with him and touching him. Things that do not happen in hallucinations.

Disciples recorded eating and drinking with him and touching him. Things that do not happen in hallucinations. Also, highly unlikely they would have all had hallucinations. Hallucinations highly individual and not group projections. Hallucinations like dreams don't transfer. Was Paul the persecutor of church hallucinating?? Even after all this it doesn't explain empty tomb either.

This theory is not supported by many critics today except more along the fringe or extreme positions.

With hallucinations, what you hallucinate about is already somewhere in your mind. The fact that for 1st century Jews the idea of a resurrection before the final resurrection is foreign to them, they would have had no prior ideas about it in their minds.

2. The Lie Hypothesis (they stole the body) - Most scholars don't buy this hypothesis.

Why would 10 disciples willingly die for what they knew was a lie? Since book of Acts and gospels all written within 25 years of the events they would be circulating and people would have been able to show it to be a lie by pointing to the body in the tomb. Not to mention all the witnesses of the appearance. Chances of a movement growing as fast and powerful as early Christianity on a blatant lie is slim.

3. The Legend Hypothesis - One of the most popular today. The resurrection is a legend.

- Legend takes a long time to evolve and develop.
- The testimonies and eyewitness accounts did not evolve over long period of time but were all within very short time gap of the actual events.
- How does it explain the empty tomb?
- It can't explain the origin of the Christian faith and how it spread.
- Cannot explain the conversion of Paul. His conversion too early before any myth or legend could have evolved.
- Roman history is usually separated by a generation or two or even more so as to build legend into it were as the accounts of resurrection of Jesus are written about all within 50 years of Jesus death which makes it very hard for them to be legend because legend takes time to build.
- The writings of herodotus(ancient Greek historian) showed legendary accumulation time to take even longer than two generations because its too short a time.
- For resurrection to be legend it would have accumulated at an unbelievable rate never done before.
- All NT scholars agree the gospels were written down and circulated within the 1st generation that the events occurred during the lifetime of the eyewitnesses
- Some of the gospels written by AD 50 (new scholarship seeing this). This places gospels at same time as Pauls writings which have solid historical support

- Even Bart Ehrman dates the tradition that was handed down to Paul in 1 Cor. 15 went back to around 35 AD which was 5 years after Christ's death!!
4. Pagan influences (myths) - couldn't disciples have copied myths from other pagan sources??
- Skeptics frequently cite Osiris, Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, and Marduk as examples of dying and rising gods.
 - The earliest versions of the death and resurrection of the Greek mythological figure Adonis appeared after A.D. 150.
 - There is no literature contemporary to the disciples indicating that this was a genre of that period.
 - Most sources which contain parallels originated AFTER Christianity established.
 - The ancient Egyptian cult of Osiris is the only account of a god who survived death that predates Christianity.
 - Since WWII scholars widely reject this because most these mystery myths had no major influence in Palestine in 1st century.
 - Most sources which contain parallels originated AFTER Christianity established.
 - Most parallels apparent and not real - sloppy terminology.
 - Early disciples were Jews and unthinkable to borrow ideas from another religion. They saw pagan religions as abhorrent to God
5. The Swoon Theory - Christ Didn't Actually Die before taken off cross
- improbable given nature of scourging and crucifixion
 - Mayo clinic study on scourging and crucifixion
 - **crurifragium** - act of breaking the legs with a heavy club or mallet to speed up death process
 - Interpretations based on assumption that Jesus did not die on cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge
 - German Scholar D.F. Strauss - not plausible that having been scourged and crucified, Jesus pushed the heavy stone away from the tomb with pierced hands and walked blocks on pierced and wounded feet. Would the disciples been like "Gee, I can't wait to have that type of glorious body!!

Note: A combination of alternative theories leads to higher probability

- combination theories lead to higher improbability. Suppose you take quarter and flip. 50% it will land heads. Now add a nickel. percentage that both will land heads is 25%. Add three more nickels so total of five coins the odds all will land heads is 3%. So 3 theories would have probability of 3% of all being correct
- 5 theories each having 50% probability, lead to a combined probability of 3%. That is a 97% chance that things did not happen according to the combination of theories
- The person who has been caught up in a lie and then fabricates new lies in an attempt to defend his original lie is acting in an *ad hoc* (for specific purpose but without broader scope or answer) manner.

Resources

Gary Habermas (Veritas Forum)

http://www.veritas.org/talks/historical-evidence-jesus-resurrection-even-skeptics-believe/?view=presenters&speaker_id=1969

http://www.veritas.org/talks/resurrection-argument-changed-generation-scholars/?view=presenters&speaker_id=1969

Gary Habermas (Case for the resurrection of Jesus)

http://www.amazon.com/Case-Resurrection-Jesus-Gary-Habermas-ebook/dp/B001QOGJY0/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1391549397&sr=8-1&keywords=gary+habermas

Gary Habermas Online Quiz simulator

<http://www.garyhabermas.com/games/games.htm>

William Lane Craig - Reasonable Faith

http://www.amazon.com/Reasonable-Faith-Christian-Truth-Apologetics-ebook/dp/B001CDZZ7W/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1391549289&sr=8-1&keywords=reasonable+faith

The Annals by Tacitus

<http://classics.mit.edu/Tacitus/annals.html>

The Death Of Peregrine by Lucian of Samosata

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/luc/wl4/wl420.htm>

Letter by Mara - Mara Bar-Serapion

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/mara.html>

The Talmud

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Talmud/talmudtoc.html>

<http://halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kiddushin.pdf>

ELEMENT

