

RESURRECTION FACT SHEET

(A Briefing Paper)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The resurrection is the crucial issue of Christianity. On its historicity stands the entire Christian system.
1. 1 Corinthians 15:13-19
 2. “All but four of the major world religions are based on mere philosophical propositions. Of the four that are based on personalities rather than a philosophical system, only Christianity claims an empty tomb for its founder.”¹
- B. Christ predicted His resurrection. (Matt. 16:21; 17:9; 17:22-23; 20:18,19; 26:32; Mark 9:10; Luke 9:22-27; John 2:18-22).
1. “It was this same Jesus, the Christ who, among many other remarkable things, said and repeated something which, proceeding from any other being would have condemned him at once as either a bloated egotist or a dangerously unbalanced person. That Jesus said He was going to Jerusalem to die is not so remarkable, though all the details He gave about that death, weeks and months before He died, are together as prophetic phenomenon. But when He said that He himself would rise again from the dead, the third day after he was crucified, He said something that only a fool would dare say, if he expected longer the devotion of any disciples, unless - He was sure he was going to rise. No founder of any world religion known to men ever dared say a thing like that!”²
- C. The resurrection, if it really occurred in space-time history, would authenticate His claim of deity.
1. “The meaning of the resurrection is a theological matter, but the fact of the resurrection is a historical matter...”³
- D. It would seem that for an event in antiquity, the resurrection has superior sources:
1. We have six written testimonies of the resurrection event (five different reporters of which two were eyewitnesses and one was initially an antagonist): Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts (Written by Luke) and I Corinthians (Written by Paul.)
 - a. “When an event takes place in history and there are enough people alive who were eyewitnesses of it or had participated in the event; when the information is published, one is able to verify the validity of an historical event.”⁴
 2. The aforementioned books were in circulation during the lifetimes of those alive at the time of the resurrection. Therefore, the accuracy of these accounts could have been confirmed or contradicted at that time. We lack such concurrent contradictions while thousands became believers.

¹ Josh McDowell, EVIDENCE THAT DEMAND'S A VERDICT.

² Wilbur Smith, A GREAT CERTAINTY IN THIS HOUR OF WORLD CRISIS.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Josh McDowell.

3. There are many extra-biblical sources that mention the resurrection of Jesus. One ossuary (an ancient epitaph) mentions the resurrection only 18 years after Jesus' death.

II. THE EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION

A. The prime evidence is the Empty Tomb.

1. Both the followers of Jesus and His enemies agree the tomb was empty. The fact that no one produced a body, though His enemies would have had compelling reasons for doing so testifies loudly to this issue. The elders of the Jews actually paid the soldiers to say, "*His disciples ... stole Him away...*"⁵ Had the body not been missing this would not have been necessary.
2. The Sermons preached by Peter in Acts 2 (see v. 32) and Acts 3 (see v. 26) were given only a 20-minute walk from the tomb. His message and the response to it would have been easily foiled if the body could have been produced for all to see.

B. Attempts to explain away the empty tomb:

1. The Stolen body theory: the disciples stole the body. (Matthew 28:11-15)

(a) Objections:

- The Stone was quite heavy (as much as 1.5-2 tons) and not easy to move quietly or by just a few.
- Roman guard posted (Matt. 27:62-66.) Death penalty for allowing prisoner to escape (Acts 12:19)
- Tomb sealed (Matt. 27:66) by Roman seal, which would make robbing this grave, serious crime. Disciples were afraid and hiding at this time.
- Stealing body would be against the principles of Christ Himself. Each of the 12 faced torture and execution for their refusal to deny the principles of Christ's teaching. Are we to believe these men went to their graves living by their principles but started it all by intentionally breaking them?

- (1) The Swoon Theory - Originated by Venturinni around 1700 and made popular today by Hugh Schonfield in his book THE PASSOVER PLOT. Original version: Jesus was not really dead but revived in the cool tomb. Today's version: Jesus plotted His own death and a cohort gave Him a drug on the cross that caused Him to appear dead. He hadn't counted on the spear wound.

(a) Objections: In order to accept this you have to believe that Jesus:

- Survived the numerous trials of the night-before events.
- Survived the beating, spitting, and the crown of thorns by the Romans.
- Survived the Romans scourging (no limit put on number of lashes.)
- Survived the partial trip to Golgotha and the 110 lb. Crossbar.
- Survived the blood loss from nail wounds in hands and feet.

⁵ Matthew 28:12-13.

- Convinced the executioner that he was dead sufficiently so that his legs were not broken as the others were.
 - Survived the spear thrust into his side that brought forth blood and water.
 - Freed Himself from the grave clothes.
 - Survived three days in the cold tomb either with no clothing or in the suffocating grave clothes.
 - Rolled away the stone himself.
 - Fought off the guards or succeeded in sneaking past them.
 - Immediately walked seven miles to Emmaus on nail-pierced feet.
 - Later walked to Galilee.
 - In this condition convinced his followers that he was victorious over death (!)
- (2) The Wrong Tomb Theory - A mistake was made because the wrong tomb was checked.
- (a) Objections:
- Did they *all* make the same mistake? (The women, Peter and John, the angels, the authorities.)
 - If this actually happened, why didn't someone correct it? The authorities would have good reason to do so. Just go to the right tomb and get the body.
- (3) The Mistaken Identity Theory - Mary Magdalene mistook the gardener for Jesus. Or, it was a disciple who looked like Jesus, or His identical twin.
- (a) Objections: Same as above.
- (4) Hallucination Theory - Disciples just *thought* they saw Jesus. They were actually hallucinating.
- (a) Objections:
- Difficult to explain his appearing to 500 at once (I Corinthians 15:6.) Do 500 people share the same hallucination?
 - Jesus appeared in a variety of locations over a period of 40 days. Would people see the same hallucination for 40 days, then have it suddenly stop? Do people usually eat with their hallucination?
 - If it was all a hallucination, why didn't his enemies produce the body?
 - Hallucinations often happen when someone wants to believe something is true. How could the case of Thomas' doubt be explained as a hallucination?
 - Did Saul of Tarsus see the same hallucination later on the Damascus road?
- (5) Legend Theory - The story of the resurrection is simply a legend that came about as the story of Jesus was told over and over again for many years.
- (a) Objections:
- Accounts of resurrection appear too soon for a legend to have developed.
 - Manuscript evidence is moving the verification of the dates of the key documents back closer and closer to the events.

- If the story of the resurrection didn't develop until many years afterward, how can we account for the willingness of the apostles of Jesus to forfeit their lives for their belief in Him? If they knew He was dead, why would they die for their faith?

C. The Behavior of the Disciples.

1. It is hard to explain Peter's courageous preaching on Pentecost and after (see Acts 2:36 ; 4:10) in the light of the previous denials that he was a follower of Jesus the night of the crucifixion.
2. It is hard to explain the behavior and martyrdom of the disciples if they had knowledge of the truth. Note how they died according to tradition:
 - Stephen-stoned, James-beheaded, Philip-crucified, Matthew-sword, Mark-dragged through the streets and burned, James the Less-beaten and stoned, Matthias-stoned and beheaded, Andrew-crucified, Peter-scourged and crucified upside down, Paul-beheaded, Thaddeus-crucified, Bartholomew-beaten to death, Thomas-speared, Simon the Zealot-crucified, John-sentenced to be boiled in oil but later died a natural death.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

It means the Father accepted the Son's offering for sin. It was proof of His deity. We have hope of redemption.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

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