

## THE RESURRECTION: FACT OR FICTION

### I. INTRODUCTION

As you are no doubt aware, every year around Easter time the major networks, cable channels, and news magazines compete with specials seeking to discredit Christianity. Recently the Discovery Channel tried to shock Christendom with the news that Christ's tomb had not only been found, but his wife and son's as well. It was not a hoax, but neither was it serious scholarship. It's producers had seemingly high hopes of dealing a fatal blow to the Christian faith by undermining the physical resurrection of Christ.

- A. The resurrection is the falsification point of Christianity. The keystone in the arch; if you remove the keystone the whole structure crumbles.. (I Cor. 15:14).
- B. Christ predicted His resurrection 8 times (Matt. 16:21; 17:9; 17:22-23; 20:18,19; 25:32; Mark 9:10; Luke 9:22-27; John 2:18-22).
- C. The resurrection, if it really occurred in space-time history, would authenticate His claim of deity. Nothing like this is known in any other religion.
- D. It would seem that for an event in antiquity, the resurrection has superior sources:
  1. We have six Biblical sources (five different reporters), Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, and I Corinthians.
  2. The aforementioned books were in circulation, for the most part, by the end of the First Century A.D. Recently some scholars are moving them back even closer to the event.
  3. There are many extra-biblical sources that mention the resurrection of Jesus. death. *One ossuary (an ancient epitaph on a bone box) mentions the resurrection only 18 years after Jesus' death!*

### II. THE EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION

#### A. The Empty Tomb

1. Both the followers of Jesus and His enemies agree the tomb was empty.
2. There are extra-biblical references to it.
3. The Sermon on the resurrection preached by Peter in Acts 3:28 was given only a 20 minute walk from the tomb. His message and response would be hard to

explain without it if the body were still there.

4. Attempts to explain away the empty tomb:

a. The body was stolen

(1) By the Disciples (Matt. 28:14-15)

Objections:

- (a) How did the soldiers know it was the disciples if they were sleeping?
- (b) Soldiers who allowed a prisoner to escape were executed.
- (c) Hypocrites are not martyrs.

(2) By the Jewish authorities

Objection: If so, they could have produced the body to counter the preaching in Jerusalem.

b. The Swoon Theory

Originated by Venturinni around 1700 and made popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by Hugh Schonfield in his book: *The Passover Plot*.

- (1) Original version: Jesus was not really dead but revived in the cool tomb.
- (2) Today's version: Jesus plotted His own death and a cohort gave Him a drug on the cross that caused Him to appear dead, but he hadn't counted on the spear wound.

Objections: In order to accept this you have to believe that:

- (a) He freed Himself from the grave clothes.
- (b) He pushed the stone away.
- (c) Sneaked past the sleeping soldiers.
- (d) Walked 60 miles to Galilee and convinced his disciples that He had arisen from the dead.

c. The Wrong Tomb Theory

The women went to the wrong tomb.

Objections:

- (1) It assumes that Peter did too.

(2) Why didn't the authorities just point this out?

d. A Case of Mistaken Identity

Mary Magdalene mistook the gardener for Jesus. Or, it was a disciple who looked like Jesus, or His identical twin.

Objections: same as above.

e. Hallucinations

Objection: None of the right psychological conditions were present. It's difficult to explain his appearing to 500 at once (I Cor. 15)!

f. It became a Legend

Objections:

(1) The Gospels were written too early.

(2) He appeared to women first. In ancient time women were not viewed as credible witnesses.

B. The Behavior of the Disciples

1. It is hard to explain Peter's sermon 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 a 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.

C. His Appearances

In order they are: To Mary M., a party of women, two men on the Emmaus road, Peter, to ten disciples in the upper room, one week later to eleven disciples, to seven disciples in Galilee, to 500 people at once, to James, the brother of Jesus, to the disciples in Jerusalem, to Stephen, and finally to Saul (Paul).

D. The existence of the church.

It's hard to explain the existence of the church if the resurrection had not occurred.

E. Day of worship shifted to Sunday.

F. The experience of Christians over 2000 years of history.

### 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 and resurrection.

### FOR FURTHER STUDY

Chapman, Colin. *The Case for Christianity*. See pp.278-290.

Chapman, Colin. *Christianity on Trial*.

Craig, William Lane. *The Son Rises*.

Geisler, Norman L. *Miracles and Modern Thought*.

Green, Michael. *Runaway World*.

Green, Michael. *Man Alive!*

Habermas, Gary. *The Resurrection: An Apologetic*.

Ladd, George Elton. *I believe in the Resurrection*.

Mathewson, Steven D. *Risen: 50 Reasons Why the Resurrection Changed Everything*.

Miethe, Terry L. *Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?*

Morrison, Frank. *Who Moved the Stone?*

Wright, N.T. *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.