

Resurrection

Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

Pastor Andrew Sherman

Message Series by Pathway Community Church

DID JESUS RISE FROM THE DEAD?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the “capstone in the arch of Christianity, if it is removed, all else crumbles”. Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection of Christ. It is the very foundation upon which the Christian faith is built (1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Ephesians 2 :19-22; Romans 10:9-10) and without the resurrection there would be no Christianity (Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:12-19). It is the distinguishing event that not only confirms what Jesus taught (Hebrews 2:1-4; Mark 16:19-20), but who He is (Son of God, Romans 1:4).

The Greek word for “resurrection” is anastasis which is derived from another Greek word anistemi which literally means “to stand up” or “to rise”. The resurrection is different than a “resuscitation”.

Reincarnation, resuscitation and resurrection are three different things. A reincarnation includes a change of Body and a change in the primary qualities. A resuscitation has no body change and that body dies again, also there is no change in the primary qualities of the body as it is the same body and essentially the same person as it was before. A resurrection has a change in the body though it is the same body and there is a change in secondary qualities of the body.

Reason

The resurrected body will possess several characteristics that are distinct from reincarnation, they are;

1. Physical body (Lk 24:39; Jn 20:27-29 cf. Jn 2:19 and 1 Jn 3:2)
2. Identity (same genetic code) with the body that died (1Corinth 15:37-38)
3. The Corruptible will be changed to incorruption (1 Corinth 15:50-53)
4. Died in dishonor, will be raised in glory (1 Corinth 15:43)
5. Died in weakness, but raised in power (1 Corinth 15:43)
6. Died in a natural body, raised in a spiritual body (1 Corinth 15:44 cf. 1 Corinth 10:1-4)
7. Mortal body will take on immortal body (1 Corinth 15)

CRITICS OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Rudolph Bultmann

20th century German theologian

“The resurrection is not an event of past history...an historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable...such a miracle is not otherwise known to mythology.”

Robert W. Funk

Founder of the Jesus Seminar

“To ask whether the resurrection really took place – is an idle question. Besides, to the modern mind a mythical event like the resurrection of a corpse is simply incredible”.

John Dominic Crossan

Former catholic priest who co-founded the Jesus Seminar and Professor at DePaul University

“Jesus lived on in the hearts of His followers...but He did not physically rise from the dead. Taken down from the cross, His body was probably eaten by wild dogs.”

“With regard to the body of Jesus, by Easter morning, those who cared did not know where it was, and those who knew did not care.”

Reason

IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

The Apostle Paul lists 7 consequences that follow a denial of Christ's resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:14-19):

1. Our preaching of the gospel is in vain (v 14)
2. Our faith is also in vain (v 14)
3. We are false witnesses of God, namely, for telling others that Christ was raised from the dead when He was not (v 15)
4. Our faith is worthless (v 17)
5. We are still in our sins (v 18)
6. Those who have died believing in Christ have perished (v 18)
7. We are of men most to be pitied (v 19)

Further consequences are:

1. The Bible is in error
2. Jesus is a liar
3. The prophecies have failed
4. It would be doubtful that Jesus is God and that His teachings were true

THE RESURRECTION IS HISTORICAL, MATERIAL AND IDENTICAL

Historicity

1. Man lost relationship in time/space, thus it needs to be regained in history (Romans 5)
2. The historical and the spiritual are inseparably connected (John 3:12; Romans 4:25)

Materiality

1. Empirical verifiability
2. Identity, it wouldn't be the same body

Reason

Sameness of Body (Identity)

Paul's seed analogy in 1 Corinthians 15:37-38 strongly implies a material and genetic identity with the pre-resurrection body. (1 Corinthians 15:42)

12 FACTS ALL SCHOLARS BELIEVE TO BE TRUE ABOUT CHRIST

1. Jesus died by crucifixion
2. He was buried
3. Jesus' death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope, believing that His life had been ended
4. The tomb was discovered to be empty just a few days later
5. The disciples had experiences which they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus
6. The disciples were transformed from doubters, afraid to identify themselves as being with Jesus, to bold proclaimers of His death and resurrection
7. The message of the resurrection was at the center of preaching in the early church
8. Soon after Jesus' death, this message was proclaimed in Jerusalem, where He had been buried
9. As a result of this preaching, the church was born and grew
10. Sunday became the primary day of worship
11. James, who had been a skeptic was converted to the faith when he believed he saw the resurrected Jesus
12. A few years later, Paul was converted by an experience which he believed to be an appearance of the risen Jesus

Reason

When we look at the resurrection of Christ, we cannot just assume that everyone believes that He actually died in the first place. There are many theories throughout the general public that try to “explain” how Christ didn’t actually die but just faked His resurrection, or that He did die and did not rise from the dead.

The four main theories are:

1. The Swoon Theory
2. The Hallucination Theory
3. The Conspiracy Theory
4. The Wrong Tomb Theory



Reason

THE SWOON THEORY

According to this theory, Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but rather swooned or fainted. Jesus is said to have later revived in the tomb until He was strong enough to leave.

PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY:

1. In 1986, secular medical scholars wrote about the gravity of Jesus' wounds; "Clearly the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to His side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between His right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured His death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge." - The Journal of the American Medical Society March 21st, 1986
2. John 19:32-37, specifically verse 33 says "But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs".
3. Jesus was "embalmed" and prepared for burial with 100 pounds of spices. (John 19:39)
4. There is no way that someone as wounded as Jesus was would have been able to move the stone, overpower the Roman soldiers, then walk over 7 miles on the Emmaus road without a great amount of help.
5. Crucifixion was designed for a horrible, perfect death and the Romans were great at it so they wouldn't have been fooled into thinking that He had fainted and not truly dead.

Reason

THE HALLUCINATION THEORY

According to this theory, those who reported seeing Jesus after His death were actually not seeing correctly, but rather were hallucinating and probably seeing what they wanted to see in their psyche.

PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY:

1. The disciples seemed to have moved on from the death of Christ and had gone back to their normal lives. A person who is hallucinating is normally emotionally torn up and distraught about the passing of a loved one.
2. Hallucinations don't happen in large groups and yet, Jesus appeared to multiple people at once. In fact, at one time He appeared to over 500 of His followers at the same time. (1 Corinthians 15:6)
3. It should also be noted that the disciples, as Orthodox Jews, were not expecting the resurrection at all, rather they viewed his death as final

THE CONSPIRACY THEORY

According to this theory, either Jewish authorities, the Roman guards, or the disciples conspired to steal the body of Jesus.

PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY:

1. The pharisees remembered Jesus' claim about rising from the dead and convinced Pilate to have the tomb guarded by Roman soldiers so that the disciples would not be able to steal the body and claim that He had risen. (Matthew 27:66)
2. Anyone found breaking the Roman seal on the tomb would have been put to death.
3. Moving the stone that sealed the tomb would not only be very difficult due to the weight and size of the stone but also, would be quite noisy and disruptive.
4. The Pharisees paid off the guards to say that they had fallen asleep and the disciples stole the body of Christ to try and discredit the claims the disciples were making. (Matthew 28:11-15) The guards however would have been put to death for falling asleep on the job.
5. Most of the disciples would go on to be martyred and it is highly unlikely that they would choose to die for something that they knew to be a lie, especially when all they had to do was change their story and they would have been allowed to live.
6. Mark 16:3 talks about how they could not roll the stone away without a lot of help.
7. It did not benefit the Jews to steal His body.
8. The Romans were trying to keep the peace and would not have wanted to start a fight by allowing His body to be stolen or taken.

Reason

THE WRONG TOMB THEORY

According to this theory, Mary Magdalene and the other women went to the wrong tomb and discovered it empty. This view holds that early morning darkness, emotional trauma, and wishful thinking can account for the mistake.

PROBLEMS WITH THIS THEORY:

1. The Synoptic gospels all point out that, seventy-two hours earlier, the women had made a careful note of the position of the tomb, in order that they might return later to anoint the body (Matthew 27:61, Mark 15:47 and Luke 23:55). Though not impossible, it seems unlikely that they would forget its location after such a short space of time.
2. Furthermore, the women did not come looking for an empty tomb, rather one that was sealed. One would expect them therefore to bypass an empty tomb, if they were unsure of the exact location of the correct tomb.
3. Peter and the beloved disciples made straight for the tomb (John 20:2-9). If they too went to the wrong tomb, it would have been an independent mistake. Yet, the tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:53), who would have known its location, as did the Romans, as they stationed a guard there.
4. Matthew's account also suggests that the Jews knew where the body was to be placed (Matthew 27:62-66). They therefore could have identified it, and thus offer proof against the resurrection.

CHRIST, OUR RISEN HOPE

EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

The gospel record of Christ's resurrection is attested by several eyewitnesses. Jesus appeared to:

1. Mary Magdalene (John 20:1)
2. Mary the Mother of James (Matthew 28:2)
3. Salome and Joanna (Luke 24:10)
4. Several other women from Galilee (Luke 23:55)
5. Peter (Luke 24:34)
6. Cleopas and the other disciple on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32)
7. The ten Apostles in Jerusalem (John 20:24)
8. The eleven when Thomas was present a week later (John 20:26-29)
9. The seven disciples on the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-24)
10. The eleven on the mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20)
11. The 500 at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6)
12. His brother James (1 Corinthians 15:7a)
13. The disciples on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:4-12)

If one chooses to reject the eyewitness testimony of Christ's resurrection, he must also reject the eyewitness testimony of most ancient events.

Reason

Not only was there an overwhelming number of eyewitnesses to the events contained in the gospels, the nature of their testimony places it beyond reasonable doubt. Several factors indicate this contention;

1. The witnesses were in most cases independent of each other with at least twelve different appearances occurring over 40 days (Acts 1:3)
2. There was an initial disinclination to believe what they saw, which would eliminate the possibility of hallucination (cf. John 20:25 f.; Luke 24:15 f.; Matthew 28:17 f.)
3. The divergent perspectives of the authors argue strongly for the independence and integrity of the witnesses. Further, the apostle's truthfulness and integrity is reflected in their writings. They did not tolerate lying, they refused to be bought with money, and they remained steadfast in their testimony when facing persecution even to the point of martyrdom.

EVIDENCE THAT CHRIST'S BODY IS PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL

1. Physically recognized (Matthew 28:7, 17; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:24; John 20:14, 20; 1 Corinthians 9:1)
2. Offered it to be touched (John 20:17, 27; Matthew 28:9)
3. Ate physical food (Luke 24:30, 41-43; John 21:12-13)
4. Body was made of "flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39)
5. Could be seen and heard with physical senses (Matthew 28:17; Luke 24:31; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:5-8)
6. Will be recognized at the second coming (Revelation 1:7; Acts 1:11)
7. Burial clothes were disturbed (i.e. face cloth was folded) (John 20:6-7)

Reason

EVIDENCE THAT CHRIST'S BODY WAS THE SAME BODY

1. The tomb where Jesus was buried is empty (Matthew 28:6)
2. The "stigmata" (crucifixion scars) shows it was the same body (Luke 24:39; John 20:25-28)
3. Jesus prophesied that it would be the same body (John 2:19-22)
4. Jesus did not see corruption after death (Acts 2:31)
5. Paul's "seed" comparison shows it's the same body (1 Corinthians 15:35-44) (notice pronouns "it" and "this")

SO, WHAT?

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

If the resurrection didn't happen, then we are wasting our time. But, if it did happen then we are responsible to that consequence.

We cannot sit silently while people go to Hell. We have to live our lives in a way that reflects Christ and His example for us. We have to be "people of the way". We have to make disciples.

Giving the gospel becomes a pleasure and not a chore when we have the correct perspective on our faith.

Go and live your life for Christ!

Reason