



The Resolved Church

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The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

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The resurrection is a fabricated myth used for religious propaganda, only effective with an audience of unsophisticates and children. "...after the crucifixion Jesus' corpse was probably laid in a shallow grave, barely covered with dirt, and subsequently eaten by wild dogs; the story of Jesus' entombment and resurrection was the result of 'wishful thinking.'" - John Dominic Crossan¹

introduction:

- the resurrection of Jesus Christ is perhaps the most frequently and violently attacked belief of the Christianity. yet the resurrection is the "crowning proof"² of the Christian faith.
- of all the religions of the world, Christianity is the best one to start investigating because Christianity places its whole foundation on the one miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and says that if it did not happen then Christianity is false (1 Cor 15:14). therefore, all one has to do is disprove this one miracle and they can go on to investigate the next religion.
- "the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon the minds of men, or it is the most fantastic fact of history."³
- in order to best respond to the challenges regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this outline will give three primary proofs for His resurrection and then respond to three main objections.

I. the facts of the empty tomb

- (1) Jesus was buried in a tomb
 - a. this was the Jewish custom for Jewish holy men.⁴
 - b. no other burial story exists in either written or oral tradition.⁵
- (2) the disciples began to preach Christ had risen from the tomb⁶
- (3) it would have been foolish for the disciples to preach that Christ had risen if His body really was in the tomb.
- (4) no one would have believed them if they knew the body was in the tomb, yet thousands did just shortly afterward in the same city Jesus was crucified (Acts 1-2)
- (5) if the body was in the tomb anyone could have pointed to the tomb or exhumed the body to prove that Jesus had not been raised
- (6) the disciples were filled with discouragement and timidity after Christ's death (Jn 20:19). they would not have had courage or purpose to preach a false resurrection if it weren't really true.

¹ *Jesus Under Fire*, 142.

² *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 651.

³ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972), 185.

⁴ *Jesus Under Fire*, 148.

⁵ *ibid.*, 149. John Dominic Crossan's burial story may be the first variation.

⁶ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 246-248.

II. the resurrection appearances

(1) women were the first to see Him resurrected (Lk 24:1-11). a women's testimony in first century Judaism was "virtuously worthless."⁷ they were generally not even considered credible enough to give a testimony in court. if Gospel writers were attempting to present false history they would not have recorded this.

(2) Peter, James, and Paul are all specifically named as eyewitnesses (1 Cor 15:5,7,8). All the twelve saw Him resurrected and on one occasion over and then five-hundred people saw Him at the same time (1 Cor 15:3-8).

a. five-hundred people testifying in a courtroom would be overwhelming proof that something happened. how many of those five-hundred people would have to take the stand and testify of what they saw before any judge or jury would be convinced?

b. at the time when the apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he says that many of those five-hundred people "are still alive (1 Cor 15:6)." this was a way of saying, "if you don't believe me go ask them!"

(3) one of Jesus' disciples, Thomas, heard reports that Jesus had risen but doubted them until he too saw and touched Jesus and was convinced (Jn 20:24-29).

III. a historical resurrection is the origin of the Christian faith

(1) all the preaching of the early church was based on the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:23,26; 1 Cor 15).

(2) there is no parallel in pagan religion to a physical bodily resurrection. the dying and rising gods were symbols for processes of nature but never considered as actual people.⁸

(3) the number of converts on Pentecost, three-thousand people (Acts 2:41), was likely because everyone there in Jerusalem knew and heard about the empty tomb and the numerous resurrection appearances.

(4) no one challenged or argued with apostles over the historical facts of the resurrection in the 1st century. but instead argued with them about whether He really was the Messiah.

IV. three objections/explanations of the resurrection

A. the "resurrection" was a conspiracy or hoax devised by the disciples who stole Jesus body as the soldiers claim Matthew 28:12-15⁹

response #1: Matthew 28:12-15 describes how the chief priest paid the soldiers off to say the disciples stole the body.

response #2: Matthew 28:13 tells how the soldiers were to say they were asleep when the body was stolen. if they were asleep how could they have known the body was stolen, or known anything that happened.

response #3: in 1879 a roman edict was found stating that it was illegal under penalty of death to rob a tomb or to move a body from one place to another. disciples knew they would be guilty of death.

response #4: if the disciples stole the body they would not have taken time to fold up the grave clothes (Jn 20:5-7).

response #5: if the disciples stole the body they would not have died for what they knew was a lie.

B. the "resurrection" was merely a resuscitation from an apparent death. "Jesus was not completely dead when He was taken down from the cross. He revived in the tomb and escaped to convince His disciples that He had risen from the dead."¹⁰

response #1: physically impossible. considering the extent of Jesus' tortures. a modern medical examination of the Gospels determines that Jesus suffered from hematomia, hypovolemic shock, respiratory acidosis, pericardial and pleural effusion, and finally died of cardiac arrest.

⁷ *Scaling the Secular City*, 168.

⁸ *ibid.*, 181-182.

⁹ see *Reasonable Faith*, 278-279, for a good treatment of both the conspiracy and apparent death theories.

¹⁰ *Reasonable Faith*, 279. known as the "apparent death" or "swoon theory."

- response #2: religiously impossible. a half dead Jesus appearing to disciples would not evoke their worship to Him as Lord.
- response #3: biographically impossible. goes against all we know of Jesus character.¹¹
- C. it was not a bodily resurrection but spiritual/psychological resurrection¹²
 - response #1: Jesus called His body "flesh and bones" (Lk 24:39)
 - response #2: Jesus offered His body for physical inspection (Jn 20:27)
 - response #3: Jesus ate food (Lk 24:41-43)
 - response #3: one person could have had a hallucination or delusion but not 500 people all at the same time (1 Cor 15:6).

For further study of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ some great resources include:

- Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith*. Wheaton, ILL: Crossway Books, 1984.
- Geisler, Norman L. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.
- Geisler, Norman L. and Brooks, Ronald M. *When Skeptics Ask*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.
- McDowell, Josh. *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972.
- Moreland, J.P. *Scaling the Secular City*. Grand Rapids, MI: 1987.
- Ramm, Bernard. *Protestant Christian Evidences*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953).
- Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.
- Wilkins, Michael J. and Moreland, J.P. *Jesus Under Fire*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

¹¹ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), 163-207.

¹² this is the most popular theory today.

