

Evidence for the Resurrection

Objective

To examine the evidence that the Resurrection took place as well as the counterarguments used against the Resurrection.

References

- ❖ Holy Scripture
- ❖ <http://www.leaderu.com/everystudent/easter/articles/josh2.html>

Scriptural Verse

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6)

Lesson Outline

Can we prove the Resurrection?

- ❖ Can we prove the resurrection definitively one way or the other?
- ❖ Evidence vs. proof
- ❖ The scientific method cannot be used to prove all true statements
- ❖ Example: “I am thinking of a number between 1 and 10.” Prove it.
- ❖ If no experiment can be performed to observe the result, it is beyond the realm of science.
- ❖ An atheist claimed to perform such an experiment. He “prayed” to God to appear in front of Him. When this did not happen, he concluded that He must not exist.
- ❖ Science is only predictable because God made it that way. The same predictability and consistency cannot be applied to God. He has a mind.
- ❖ Just as we cannot predict the actions of other humans or make such claims. Example: Call a cell phone number, leave someone a voicemail, tell them to meet you somewhere, and then conclude that they do not exist if they do not arrive.
- ❖ Two aspects of believing in Christ’s Resurrection:
 - Understanding what happened
 - Understanding His character (Faith)

Facts of the Resurrection

Fact #1: Broken Roman Seal

- ❖ **Matthew 27:66**
So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.
- ❖ The seal on the tomb was broken
- ❖ Unlikely that the disciples would want more attention brought to themselves by trying to steal the body.
- ❖ The consequences of breaking the seal were extremely severe.
- ❖ People feared the breaking of the seal.
- ❖ Jesus' disciples were confused and afraid by what had happened and even went back to their previous profession (fishermen)
- ❖ Peter denied the Lord Jesus Christ three times.

Fact #2: Empty Tomb

- ❖ The resurrection “could have not been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned” [Paul Althaus].

- ❖ Both Jewish and Roman sources and traditions admit an empty tomb. Those resources range from Josephus to a compilation of fifth-century Jewish writings called the "Toledoth Jeshu."
- ❖ This is "positive evidence from a hostile source, which is the strongest kind of historical evidence. In essence, this means that if a source admits a fact decidedly not in its favor, then that fact is genuine" [Dr. Paul Maier].

Fact #3: Large Stone Moved

- ❖ The stone was very large:
- ❖ Mark 16:3 "And they said among themselves: Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"
- ❖ How could anyone have moved the stone themselves without alerting the guards?

Fact #4: the Lord Jesus Christ appears to many people

- ❖ The Lord Jesus Christ appeared to many people in the city
- ❖ 1 Corinthians 15:6 "After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep".
- ❖ These were eye-witnesses and many of them were still alive. They would have been the best people to refute these claims, but they did not.
- ❖ He even appeared to a hostile witness: Saul of Tarsus and he was converted!
- ❖ "If the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt." [F.F. Bruce – Manchester University]

Fact #5: Lives of the Disciples

- ❖ The most telling testimony of all must be the lives of those early Christians.
- ❖ What caused them to go everywhere telling the message of the risen Christ?
- ❖ Did they gain prestige, wealth, increased social status or material benefits?
- ❖ No, instead they were beaten, stoned to death, thrown to the lions, tortured and crucified. Every conceivable method was used to stop them from talking.
- ❖ Yet, they laid down their lives as the ultimate proof of their complete confidence in the truth of their message.

Theories against the Resurrection

Theory #1: The Wrong Tomb

- ❖ A theory propounded by Kirsopp Lake assumes that the women who reported that the body was missing had mistakenly gone to the wrong tomb.
- ❖ If so, then the disciples who went to check up on the women's statement must have also gone to the wrong tomb.
- ❖ There is no way that the Roman guards would have been at the wrong tomb, however.
- ❖ Also, if it was a simple mistake, then the Jewish authorities would have produced the body to put down this whole Resurrection business.

Theory #2: Hallucinations

- ❖ Another attempted explanation claims that the appearances of the Lord Jesus after the resurrection were either illusions or hallucinations.
- ❖ Again, where was the actual body, and why wasn't it produced?

Theory #3: Swoon Theory

- ❖ Another theory, popularized by Venturini several centuries ago, is often quoted today which says that Jesus didn't die; he merely fainted from exhaustion and loss of blood.
- ❖ Everyone thought Him dead, but later He resuscitated and the disciples thought it to be a resurrection.

- ❖ Skeptic David Friedrich Strauss--certainly no believer in the resurrection--gave the deathblow to any thought that Jesus revived from a swoon: "It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulcher, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to His sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that He was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life..."

Conclusion

- ❖ Christ's Resurrection is real.
- ❖ Evidence - Brooke Foss Westcott, an English scholar, said: "raking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ. Nothing but the antecedent assumption that it must be false could have suggested the idea of deficiency in the proof of it".

Activities/Discussion Points

1. Why is it important that we believe in the Resurrection?
2. How can we live the Resurrection?
3. What are some reasons that you have heard against the Resurrection?