

“Resurrection: Myth or Miracle?”

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EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION

The apostle Paul wrote, “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Here is how Michael Green put it in an old book called *Man Alive!*:

Christianity does not hold the resurrection to be one among many tenets of belief. Without faith in the resurrection there would be no Christianity at all. The Christian church would never have begun and the Jesus movement would have fizzled. . . .

Christianity stands or falls with the truth of the resurrection. Once you disprove it, you have disposed of Christianity.

Let's take a few minutes and go through the evidence that Sir Luckhoo would have investigated.

1. THE EVIDENCE OF THE EMPTY TOMB

He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." (Luke 24:6–7)

Here are some objections to the resurrection that people have come up with. And here are a few easy ways to refute these objections.

Objection #1: "The Swoon Theory"

Objection #2: "The Stolen Body Theory"

When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day. (Matthew 28:12–15)

Video Clip Week 3

Objection #3: “The Hallucination Theory”

- 1. Hallucinations Are Not Group Events**
- 2. They Weren’t Expecting the Resurrection**
- 3. Jesus Appeared to Believers *and* Unbelievers**

Objection #4: “The Wrong Tomb Theory”

- 1. This Was Not a Little Execution**
- 2. If This Was the Wrong Tomb, That Means There Was a Right Tomb**

So What Are You Left With?

The Bible records that more than five hundred witnesses saw Jesus alive.

2. THE EVIDENCE OF FULFILLED PROPHECIES

Jesus said, *“I am God’s Son. Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father” (John 10:36–37).*

The following are a few of the three hundred prophecies about Jesus’s death and resurrection. Out of three hundred prophecies made in Scripture, three hundred were fulfilled:

- He would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9).
- He would enter the temple (Malachi 3:1).
- He would be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9).
- He would be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12).
- The silver would be thrown into the temple (Zechariah 11:13).
- The silver would be used for a potter’s field (Zechariah 11:13).
- He would be forsaken by His disciples (Zechariah 13:7).

- He would be accused by false witnesses (Psalm 35:11).
- He would remain silent before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7).
- He would be wounded and bruised (Isaiah 53:5).
- He would be whipped and spat upon (Isaiah 50:6; Micah 5:1).
- He would be mocked (Psalm 22:7–8).
- His hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16).
- He would be crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12).
- People would shake their heads at Him (Psalm 109:25).
- His clothes would be divided and lots cast for them (Psalm 22:18).
- He would be offered gall and vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21).
- The exact words of His death cry were predicted (Psalm 22:1).
- Not one of His bones would be broken (Psalm 34:20).
- His heart would literally burst (Psalm 22:14).
- His side would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10).
- Darkness would fall in broad daylight (Amos 8:9).
- He would be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9).
- He would be resurrected from the dead (Psalm 16:10).

3. THE EVIDENCE OF EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. (Acts 1:3)

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (1 Corinthians 15:3–8)

Objection

These are biased writers, you might be thinking. It's like taking your favorite team's coach and letting him referee the game. However . . .

1. Just because the disciples were followers of Jesus Christ doesn't mean they were inaccurate historians.
2. Sir William Mitchell Ramsay is one of the greatest archeologists who ever lived. He was the first Professor of Classical Art and Archaeology at Oxford University. He started out very skeptical of biblical writings and made it a goal to refute the writings of Luke in particular. After a lifetime of study, he concluded that the book of Acts "could bear the most minute scrutiny as an authority for the facts of the Aegean world, and that it was written with such judgment, skill, art and perception of truth as to be a model of historical statement." And about Luke himself, Ramsay wrote, "You may press the words of Luke

in a degree beyond any other historians and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment.”

3. The fact of the Christian book, the New Testament, which in its pages contains six independent testimonies to the fact of the resurrection. Three are by eyewitnesses: John, Peter, and Matthew. Paul, writing to the churches at an early date, referred to the resurrection in such a way that it is obvious to him and his readers that the event was well known and accepted without question. Are these men, who helped transform the moral structure of society, consummate liars or deluded madmen? These alternatives are harder to believe than the fact of the resurrection, and there is no shred of evidence to support them.

4. THE EVIDENCE OF CHANGED LIVES

1. Canon Westcott

Take into consideration what this great Greek scholar said about the resurrection. Canon Westcott from Cambridge University wrote, “Indeed, taking 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.”

2. Apostle John

John wrote, “*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32), which leads us to this—the evidence for the resurrection which is both contemporary and personal.

3. The Disciples

When you think about it, what was the initial reaction of all the disciples?

- They all fled.
- Peter went back to fishing.
- Mary came to the tomb at the first Easter sunrise with spices. Why? Not to find a risen Savior! She came to anoint a dead body. In fact, when she first saw Him, she mistook Him for the gardener.
- When the other disciples heard what the first eyewitnesses said, they didn’t believe them.
- When Jesus finally appeared to the disciples, their reaction was fear. They thought they were seeing a ghost. He finally had to say, “Touch me and see.” Then He ate in front of them, so they would know He was alive. He even cooked them breakfast!
- Finally, the classic case—Thomas the doubter. Thomas was not present when the Lord appeared to the disciples the first time. And he wasn’t interested in buying what they were selling. He said, “I need hard evidence to believe you guys!”

Now, what was it that changed a band of frightened, discouraged, depressed followers into people of courage and conviction? What was it that changed Peter the cowardly into a confident communicator? What was it that replaced Thomas’s doubt with a firmly held faith that went with him to the grave?

- One minute they're defeated . . . the next they're dynamic.
- One minute they're crushed . . . the next they're confident.
- One minute they're having a pity party . . . the next they're taking on the world.
- One minute they're paralyzed with fear . . . the next they're filled with faith.

John R. W. Stott wrote, "The transformation of the disciples is perhaps the greatest evidence of all for the resurrection."

4. Human Nature

When people are expecting death but find life, it causes an uproar. This is what happened historically at the time of Christ.

When people see life where they expected death, it causes a reaction!

5. Historians Agree

Something triggered the birth of a worldwide movement two thousand years ago that "turned the world upside down" over the span of a few years. If Jesus wasn't resurrected, what's the catalyst for this world-changing movement? One scholar said, "The coming into existence of the Church rips a great hole in history, the size and shape of the resurrection." What does the secular historian propose to stop it up with?

6. Simon Greenleaf

Simon Greenleaf was a Jewish professor and the greatest authority in the history of the United States on evidence. He is the man who made Harvard Law School what it is today. Once he was challenged by a student to investigate and apply the rules of evidence to the resurrection. As a result, he became a Christian.

Dr. Greenleaf wrote, “All that Christianity asks of people is that they would be consistent with themselves, that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things and that they would try to judge its witnesses as they deal with their fellow men when testifying to human affairs and actions in human tribunals. The result would be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability and truth.”

7. Many More

- Edmond Bennett, who for twenty years was Dean of Law School at Boston University, investigated the resurrection and believed it.
- Frank Morrison, a journalist and lawyer, set out to disprove the resurrection. He investigated it and devoted his life to Christ as a result.
- Josh McDowell, as a young agnostic headed for law school, investigated the resurrection and was converted and has helped convert thousands of young agnostics.
- Lee Strobel was an award-winning legal editor at the *Chicago Tribune* and an atheist until he investigated the resurrection and became one of today’s great apologists.
- John Singleton Copley, one of the greatest minds in the legal circles of England and three times Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, had a similar experience. He said, “I know what evidence is and evidence like that for the resurrection has not broken down yet.”

The only one who may not yet have written or declared their decision is sitting in this church
right now.

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