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THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

WHY IS THE RESURRECTION IMPORTANT?

- ▶ Spiritual
- ▶ Historical

SPIRITUAL

- ▶ If Jesus did not rise from the dead then Christianity is not real and we have no hope.
- ▶ 1Cor 15:12-19 "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, **your faith is futile** and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, **we are of all people most to be pitied.**"

HISTORICAL

- ▶ The resurrection is more than just a “spiritual” truth.
- ▶ Christianity is more than just spiritual. It is rooted in actual historical events.
- ▶ If the resurrection of Jesus Christ didn't really happen in history then Christianity is not true.
- ▶ Christians are a people committed to the truth.

GROUND RULES

- ▶ We will be treating the Bible as a historical document.
- ▶ We will use it in the same way skeptic historians do.
- ▶ Paul's 7 undisputed books (1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, Romans)
- ▶ We need to step out of our "Sunday School" mentality and realize that we're talking about real history here. We can't put Jesus and Paul (and others) into the same mental category we put Harry Potter and Ironman.

BUT CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE, HISTORICALLY?

- ▶ Great question
- ▶ Crucifixion/Resurrection AD30
- ▶ Gospels:
 - ▶ Mark AD 66-70, Matthew and Luke AD 85-90; John AD 90-110
 - ▶ Gap 40-120 years: is that reliable?

BUT CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE, HISTORICALLY?

- ▶ What about Alexander the Great's history?
 - ▶ Son of Phillip of Macedon
 - ▶ Tutored by Aristotle
 - ▶ Became king around 20 years old
 - ▶ Conquered everything from Europe to India

ALEXANDER THE GREAT... HISTORICALLY RELIABLE?

- ▶ We know that at least a dozen people wrote histories during his lifetime, but we don't have any of them
- ▶ His life: 356-323 BC
- ▶ First history: 50 BC (roughly 275 years later)
- ▶ Best histories: Plutarch, Seutonius AD 120 (445 years later)
- ▶ Yeah, but the Gospels have miracles and stuff in them, so do Plutarch and Seutonius (like a virgin birth, Zeus, and miracles)

THE MINIMAL FACTS APPROACH

- ▶ Jesus Christ died by crucifixion
- ▶ The disciples believed that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to them
- ▶ Paul, the opponent of Christianity converted
- ▶ James, the brother and skeptic converted
- ▶ The empty tomb

JESUS DIED BY CRUCIFIXION

- ▶ Roman: Tacitus (even mentions under Pontius Pilate)
- ▶ Greek: Lucian
- ▶ Jewish: Josephus / The Talmud

THE DISCIPLES BELIEVED THAT HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND APPEARED TO THEM

- ▶ They claimed it
 - ▶ Paul
 - ▶ Oral tradition
 - ▶ Creeds
 - ▶ Sermon summaries
 - ▶ Written tradition
 - ▶ Gospels
 - ▶ Church Fathers

THE DISCIPLES BELIEVED THAT HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND APPEARED TO THEM

- ▶ They believed it
 - ▶ Nearly all of the disciples (other than Judas and John) were martyred
 - ▶ James and Paul were also martyred
 - ▶ We have zero accounts of recanting

THEY BELIEVED IT

- ▶ “It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus’ death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ”

(Atheist) Gerd Ludemann, “What Really Happened to Jesus?
A Historical Approach to the Resurrection”

(He believes they saw some kind of vision)

THEY BELIEVED IT

- ▶ “I know in their own terms what they saw was the raised Jesus. That’s what they say and then all the historic evidence we have afterwards attest to their conviction that that’s what they saw. I’m not saying that they really did see the raised Jesus. I wasn’t there. I don’t know what they saw. But I do know that as a historian they they must have seen something.”

Paul Fredricksen, Boston University, *The Search for Jesus*

PAUL, THE PERSECUTOR OF THE CHURCH CONVERTED

- ▶ Paul was a good Jew who thought Jesus was a blasphemer who was justly executed. He was present at the stoning of Stephen (giving his approval) and was destroying the church.
- ▶ Then he claims to have seen the risen Jesus and spends the rest of his life preaching the Christian Gospel.
- ▶ He didn't convert because someone was preaching to him, but based on an encounter with who he thought to be the risen Jesus.

JAMES THE SKEPTIC BROTHER OF JESUS CONVERTED

- ▶ During the lifetime of Jesus he did not follow Jesus.
- ▶ But according to early Christian creeds, Jesus appeared to him after His resurrection.
- ▶ He then became a leader in the church at Jerusalem and was martyred.

THE EMPTY TOMB

- ▶ The Jerusalem Factor: it would be hard for Christianity to explode in the same city as the tomb, if there was a body.
- ▶ It's attested to by enemies of Christianity (early opponents claimed that the body was stolen).
- ▶ Women as the first witness (Jews and Romans)

OPPOSING EXPLANATIONS OF THE FACTS

- ▶ Legend
- ▶ Fraud
- ▶ Wrong tomb
- ▶ Apparent Death (Swoon)
- ▶ Hallucination

LEGEND?

- ▶ Not enough time
- ▶ 1 Cor 15:3-5 "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."
- ▶ This is an early church creed used in worship services.

TIMELINE

- ▶ Jesus was crucified in AD 30
- ▶ Paul's conversion (34) +4 years
- ▶ Paul wrote Corinthians (55) +25 years
- ▶ Paul at Jerusalem (37) +7 years
- ▶ Jesus Seminar (Dates the creed w/in 3 years)
- ▶ Skeptic James J.G. Dunn (dates it within months)
- ▶ Larry Hurtado (within days)

FRAUD

- ▶ Accounts for:
 - ▶ Jesus death on the cross
 - ▶ Testimony of the early disciples
 - ▶ Empty Tomb
- ▶ Doesn't account for:
 - ▶ The appearance of Jesus to Paul and his conversion
 - ▶ The appearance of Jesus to James and his conversion
 - ▶ The martyrdom of the disciples (with zero accounts of recanting)

WRONG TOMB

- ▶ No serious scholar argues for this
- ▶ This was a public scene and his tomb was mentioned by name
- ▶ We have no sources for this theory
- ▶ Doesn't account for:
 - ▶ The fact that the disciples saw the risen Jesus
 - ▶ The appearance to James
 - ▶ The appearance to Paul

APPARENT DEATH (SWOON)

- ▶ Doesn't match up with the process of crucifixion
- ▶ Doesn't explain the appearances to:
 - ▶ Disciples
 - ▶ James
 - ▶ Paul

HALLUCINATION

- ▶ Usually experienced by those expecting something
- ▶ Doesn't explain:
 - ▶ 1 Cor. 15 describes 3 individuals (Peter, James, Paul)
 - ▶ and 3 groups (the 12, all the apostles, 500... many still alive in 55 when 1 Corinthians was written)
 - ▶ There is no such thing as group hallucinations

CONCLUSION

- ▶ Given these 5 facts, the best explanation is that Jesus Christ did in fact rise from the dead.
- ▶ This validates the truth claims of the Bible
- ▶ Christ has been raised
 - ▶ Our preaching is not in vain
 - ▶ Our faith is not in vain
 - ▶ We are not still in our sins
 - ▶ Those who have died in Christ have not perished but will be raised