

Proof Positive: The Resurrection of Jesus

Jarred McCrary / General

Pillars of Faith / Evidence; Resurrection

Intro

- Its no secret, greater part of religious world has turned their attention to the Resurrection today
- While you and I have some different ideas on how we celebrate one day over another, I do appreciate the fact that a day like today puts something like the resurrection in the minds of people.
- I want to use that as an opportunity to talk about something important

Talk about it from the standpoint of evidences for faith

- You know those questions we all have to wrestle with: Why believe God, Jesus, the Bible
- 1 Peter 3.15 - Peter says we need to be ready to give a defense, or a reason for the hope we have; we need to be able to articulate why we believe what we believe
- That's always been important, and is especially important in our **cultural climate** - fewer and fewer people have faith in God; our faith will be challenged and questioned
- Even if we're not called on to specifically give an answer, we need strong, convicted faith just to survive the world we're living in
- Tonight, for some, this may be a reinforcement, for others, maybe this will give some strength to your faith

that's lacking

I was reading something recently where a man called Christian faith nothing more than an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable

- I hope you know there's nothing further from the truth. Our faith is **intelligent** faith; It's not some **irrational** belief, or some **blind** leap into the dark
- No shortage when it comes to solid evidence for faith
- The **Bible** itself - way it was composed, fulfilled prophecy; the credibility of it especially as compared to any other ancient work
- **Nature itself:** What best explains our existence - something **intentional** or something completely **accidental**?
- I don't think it's hard for us to reason that everything we see is more than the result of something **unintentional**
- This podium; Nice; more skill set than i have; It's not complex, though. But even with something not complex, nobody would conclude that it just came together like this. Someone with **purpose designed** it and put it all together. If that's true of something NOT complex, how much more is it true of our human bodies, or an intricate universe
- **Archeology**
- The very fact that **morals** exist says there is a higher power

To that list of proofs, we need to have the Resurrection of Jesus

- I call this *proof positive*, not necessarily because this is the proof of all proofs, although I do think it could top the list, for different reasons

- **For one, there are lots of evidences for the resurrection OUTSIDE the Bible**

- **B/C there's good evidence that the Bible is what it claims to be, all we need**

- Anytime there's **external evidence** that confirms the truth of the Bible, that's favorable for our faith

- But also, It's hard to get somewhere with a **skeptic** if you keep saying the Bible says this, but they don't believe the Bible itself

- **Maybe someone listening to this is not convinced that the Bible is what it claims to be** - Just know, we can have certainty about the resurrection of Jesus, just from a historical stand point, and that's really important, and here's why

- **If Jesus didn't come back from the dead, He's not who He claimed to be;**

- › *it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day. Mat 16.21)*

- a fraud; and if that's the case, we can all go home and live out the rest of our days doing whatever we want to do;

- Paul frames it that way in 1st Corinthians - The resurrection is everything to our faith

- If Jesus was raised from the dead, now, Jesus is who he says he is, and we can place our trust in whatever he says

- **The Resurrection becomes this hinge for our faith;** if we can get it figured out - lots of other things begin to align, and there's reason for faith in God, faith in Jesus, even if we still have some other things to work out along the way

I mentioned the “OUTSIDE THE BIBLE” evidence

- Not only are there good, **extra biblical sources** that support the resurrection, but there are **independent** sources - people who are not dealing in **theology**, they're just dealing with **history** - That's important - not because some bias automatically means they are lying, but again, if there's a skeptic, and **independent** source is powerful
- It's even more powerful when you have **enemies** - people that are hostile towards Christianity - even they have to admit some historical claims that support the resurrection
- That's why i say the resurrection can be at or near the top of our list of evidences

Two gentleman - Gary Habermas and Michael Licona; both thought of as Resurrection scholars

- If you want a source that lays out all the evidence and sorts through all the arguments, I recommend their work: *“The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus”*
- One approach they use is called the **“MINIMAL FACTS APPROACH”**
- Meaning they ONLY use data that there's the strongest evidence for, AND only data that is granted by even skeptical scholars

- **Scholars** is an important word here - you can always find a YOUTUBE ATHEIST with no credentials that just wants to take a shot at Christianity
- A way of saying there's a ton of evidence out there, but we can make the case by using the bare minimum

One example of that - 1st Corinthians - 1st Corinthians is hard to deny; incredible piece of evidence for something like the resurrection -

- Historically, you can't dispute Paul - a convert - from persecutor to apostle; wrote that letter to Christians in Corinth within 25 years of the death and Resurrection of Jesus - not deniable;
- That doesn't mean that all people then, believe in the inspiration of scripture; It just means, historically, you can't deny **Paul**, 1st **Corinthians**, or a **date** that puts it really close to the actual event itself

• *"This is the sort of data that historians of antiquity drool over."*

IOW, if you can get this kind of evidence for something in history, that's incredible

The facts (Minimal Facts)

1. Jesus died by crucifixion

a. nobody of any legitimacy denies Jesus himself - more evidence for Him than anyone else - attested by non-Christian sources - lived, died by Pilate -

2. His disciples believed that He rose from the dead and appeared to them

a. If this is historically accurate, we have to get to the bottom of **why** they believed that

3. **Paul was suddenly changed**

a. By Paul's own admission, he was an enemy of the church, and also by his own admission, his **sudden change** was because he had an encounter with the resurrected Jesus

b. Again, factually true historically; What then would explain such a sudden change

4. **James, the brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed**

a. Jesus' own family was skeptical of him; yet, both biblical and non-biblical sources show James being a central figure in the early church - also based off of him seeing the resurrected Jesus

5. **The Empty Tomb**

a. Habermas leaves this off his minimal facts approach; almost gives it **honorary** mention; he only leaves it off b/c there are a few scholars who won't grant this, although there is strong evidence for it and it is accepted by an impressive majority

b. Again, keep in mind, he's just dealing with no reputable scholar can deny; that doesn't mean there's not some other impressive evidence - He just chooses to make the case using only the undeniable

The facts alone don't prove - skeptics can take these facts and give an offer alternative theories

• When weighing the evidence, the theories have to take

into account all the facts. IOW, an alternative theory is useless if it doesn't answer to all of the testimony

- hallucination - some say that the disciples were delusional - lots of problems with that - one, is it fails to deal with the empty tomb- -
- You see the point - there are lots of alternative theories - but none that answer to all of the facts; you can make the greatest case for hallucination, but if it doesn't answer to the empty tomb, or leaves any other testimony unaccounted for, you haven't produced a legitimate alternative

Alternative Theories

1. They made it up -

- **Maybe out of embarrassment; we followed this man, we hung on his every word; we thought he was our savior; and when he died, in order to save face, they made up the resurrection and the sightings**

- There are a few problems with that; One, none of them abandoned what they would have all known to be a lie; coverups and scandals don't work like that - someone always gives;
- Just the other night Katie and I were watching a real-life murder mystery - it really boiled down to about 3 people who were in the know - at some point, all 3 people changed their story, if it would give them a more favorable outcome;
- Maybe you say that's not definitive proof; but here's

another reality:

- **People don't die for what they KNOW to be a lie;**
- People have died for things that were not true, but they didn't know it wasn't true
- Act of terrorism - Muslims died for the sake of Islam - - not based on anything they saw firsthand ,but on something passed down - acting on faith
- Not the case with the disciples -
- If they died for a lie, they knew it, and that just does not happen - especially given the fact that the lie didn't help them
- If they knew Jesus died and stayed dead, they knew He was a fraud - meaning he can't do anything for me - meaning there's no reason to hold onto him -
- Unless somehow they had something to gain - If it made them rich, or popular, powerful - none of that happened - MOF, the opposite
- **Not only do we have to come to terms with the impossibility that the apostles themselves held the conspiracy together, died for a known lie, but also, how did the story get any traction**
- One writer commented that *the testimony of Christ's resurrection was presented in the teeth of opposition, among hostile cross-examiners who would have certainly destroyed the case for Christianity had the facts been otherwise*
- **IOW, if this were a made up story, it could have easily been refuted and silenced** - especially given where the

story starts- Jerusalem - the least likely place for success -
The time was the least likely time

- 9/11/2001 - Impact event - if you were alive and more than just a few years old, you remember details about that day - even going on 22 years later -

- If I were to ask you about some other day in history, like June 2nd 2019 - That's way more recent than something in 2001, but you don't remember it because it was not an impact event

- A great example of how impossible it would be to create a hoax or conspiracy about something that could easily be refuted

- We're in almost an identical situation with 9/11 that people were in when Paul was writing 1st Corinthians about the resurrection - The wide consensus is that it was written by the mid fifties - 25 years or less from the event

- Here's the point - It would be impossible for me to create a hoax of any magnitude that said 9/11 was a made up story - Why - because we're still living in the time in which it happened - Witnesses are still alive - too many ways to refute it; I could easily be proven wrong

- The same is true with the apostles and the resurrection of Jesus -The apostles didn't go to the other side of the world and start preaching the message of the resurrection, 50 days later in the place where it happened, and if it could have been proven wrong, it would have been, and that would have been the end

- SO there's all that, and still it doesn't answer why the

tomb was empty or why the body was never produced

- It's easy to say it's just a made up story - n=but that doesn't come close to answering the facts

Stolen body

- **That explains the empty tomb**

- What about all the precautions by the Jews and the Romans to make sure the tomb was guarded and sealed, knowing that the removal of the body would allow the disciples to claim that Jesus had risen
- This would also require us to answer why the apostles were so boldly preaching the resurrection - if they stole the body, they knew they would be suffering for no good reason
- This doesn't explain the radical changes by Paul or by James

Hallucination - Delusional -

- This proposal fails to explain the empty tomb -the Jewish authorities, had every incentive to produce the body, yet they never did
- Not even possible that so many people hallucinate, and the same thing
- Hallucination is real - especially in times of grief or anxiety - a person can imagine things that didn't happen — weird dreams; glitter in my beard;
- Remember though Paul says Jesus appeared to over 500 at one time - that can't be explained by hallucination
- Doesn't explain Paul because his encounter with Jesus

would have been much later

Wasn't dead

- Jesus was placed in the tomb, **he only appeared to be dead**. He actually survived the beating and the crucifixion somehow, without medical care of any kind worked his way out of the tomb;
- That would explain the empty tomb, and the eyewitnesses that say they saw Jesus alive again.
- What happened with the guards? let him go? sleeping? if so, how did they know?
- The post-entombed Jesus also made appearances and nowhere is it ever recorded that he was severely wounded (beaten, crucified, stabbed and only days later walking around virtually well)
- Also doesn't account for the fact that Jesus disappears from the historical record after the resurrection - never sighted again -

What best explains all of this

- In historical inquiry, professional historians work in terms of the strength of probability that an event occurred.

- Empty tomb
- Radical transformations
- Impact event -
- Denying death, to boldly preaching a resurrected Jesus
- from Sabbath to Sunday
- Give up circumcision and take on Baptism

- Animal Sacrifices - The one sacrifice of Jesus
- Sacrificial lives
- If they got rich, powerful or famous, maybe, but what they got was beaten, tortured and killed -
- There was no motivation -
- The eyewitness sightings of Jesus
- Rapid growth in Jerusalem of all places
- Even critics grant supporting evidence
- The body was never produced
- Jesus versus all other imposters
- You realize that there were a lot of men that claimed to be the Messiah
- They may have had a good message – may have acquired lots of followers – and some may have even died the same kind of death as Jesus
- Yet the message of none of those men lived on – you know why
- Because those men didn't come back from their death
- The greatest probability is that Jesus was resurrected from the dead;
- what do they say?
- Something happened ,but what, we don't know - that's not much to put your faith in -

Conclusion

If these facts are true, why don't the believe -

- Everything that needs to be in place for the Bible to be taken seriously is in place - MOF it's in a much better place

than lots of other things that are widely accepted

- You can guess why the Bible is disputed despite unsurpassed evidence - it's **because it comes with implications**

- There are lots of historical facts that i can accept or deny without consequence - that explains why some things are widely accepted even if they don't have strong evidence

Why people reject? The implications

If you are rejecting Jesus, are you really rejecting based on the evidence, or based on what you want to be true?

Here's something encouraging to end on

58 - faith is not in vain - nothing i do for the Lord is a waste of time. His resurrection doesn't just prove that he died, but that he died for me; for the sake of forgiveness; His resurrection not only proves He is who He claimed to be, but it's also evidence for my own resurrection to come. Because I have faith in Jesus and by that faith i follow Jesus, I know that one day, I'll be raised up too, Just like Him;