

The Word@ZPC

The Case for God in an Anti-God World

Jesus' Resurrection

Can The Ultimate Miracle be Verified?

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Not Just Another Alleged Event

It is fashionable to appreciate Jesus as a teacher but just leave it at that.

Yet it's clear (as the apostle Paul first wrote) that the issue on which everything hangs is whether Jesus actually rose from the dead – as he himself predicted and as the New Testament boldly claims:

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.
And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.
Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.
If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.
But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead...

I Corinthians 15:16-20

Christmas appears in ____ NT chapters; Easter appears in _____ NT chapter.

If the resurrection really happened, it changes us (and history) completely.

Easter provides much more than assurance concerning our own deaths.

Jesus emerges from the _____ and meets us in the _____.

His resurrection is the first step in God's remaking of both heaven and earth.

What the Biblical Accounts Claim

First and foremost, it is clear that something happened.

The Bible asserts that Jesus died and was brought back again to bodily life.

It is crucial to remember that "resurrection" concerns _____.

The earliest witnesses were confused and even doubtful (Matt 28:17).

It is clear that no one actually expected the resurrection:

In the ancient world, no one anticipated a _____ resurrection (“who would want to keep that awful thing?”) and even Jewish thinkers could not imagine the *present* resurrection of just _____.

There were at least _____ would-be Messiahs within a hundred years of Jesus’ life.

Their untimely deaths always meant: *We backed the wrong horse!*

Public crucifixion was the Roman Empire’s way of saying that all was lost. So why did Jesus’ followers gain a new burst of energy?

Four questions must be answered satisfactorily.

Question One: Did Jesus Actually Die?

Crucifixion was a profoundly dishonorable and “excruciating” way to die. It is estimated that _____ Jews paid this price around the time of Jesus.

Victims usually succumbed to asphyxiation and cardiac arrest.

Until 1968, we had little archeological or artistic insight.

It is safe to assume that Roman soldiers knew how to kill a criminal.

Question Two: Was the Tomb Really Empty?

Typically, crucifixion victims were left hanging to be eaten by animals. Jesus’ death, however, featured unusual circumstances:

- The need to clear the crosses for Passover / the Sabbath
- Joseph of Arimathea’s graciousness
- A guard (Jewish or Roman?) posted at the tomb

What motivations did the disciples or the authorities have to steal the body?

It is significant that Jesus’ tomb never became _____.

Question Three: Did Jesus Appear to Various Witnesses?

“Here’s how I look at the evidence for the resurrection: First, did Jesus die on the cross? And second, did he appear later to people? If you can establish those two things, you’ve made your case, because dead people don’t normally do that.”

Gary Habermas

In I Corinthians 15:3-8, Paul declares the availability of _____ witnesses.

It is equally significant that Jesus abruptly stopped appearing after _____ days.

Question Four: Is There Circumstantial Evidence the Resurrection Took Place?

No historian (Christian or contrarian) disputes the following realities:

- (1) The earliest disciples _____ for their beliefs.
- (2) Jewish Christians began to worship on _____.
- (3) The sacraments (communion and baptism) both acknowledge and celebrate the meaning of Jesus’ death and resurrection.
- (4) From seemingly out of nowhere, _____ appeared.
- (5) Christians suddenly had a full-blown theology of hope and renewal.

How shall we account for these historical certainties?

The Skeptics’ Turn at Bat

The Easter accounts are legendary – stories that grew up over time.

But the earliest accounts (found in Paul’s letters) are reported just _____ years after Christ, and Paul quotes even earlier stories.

No ancient myth-maker would have featured _____ so prominently, even granting them the privilege of being first on the scene.

The accounts are all biased in favor of one perspective.

But so is all journalism, all history, and even every photograph.

All of Jesus' appearances were hallucinations by adoring followers.

Hallucinations generally stem from _____ or _____.
Incidences of mass hallucination have never been verified.

At least two witnesses (James and Saul of Tarsus) were not adorers.

Jesus didn't really die; he convinced his disciples he had risen from the dead.

Would the disciples really believe that a drugged, mugged, or beaten-up Jesus had conquered Death?

Jesus and/or his followers conspired to make others believe the resurrection.

What about prophecies that no conspirators could manipulate?

Hugh Schonfeld (*The Passover Plot*) acknowledged the fatal _____.

The four gospel accounts of the empty tomb have significant contradictions.

These include time of day, number and identify of the women present, the number of angels, and how the women responded.

Nevertheless, there is a central _____ of an historical bombshell.

The preservation of secondary contradictions is actually a strength.

The women & the disciples went to the wrong tomb, or met someone like Jesus.

But they would have figured this out soon enough.

Jesus' followers had a gradual experience of renewed hope.

The Bible's claim, however, is that _____ itself had been defeated.

What Shall We Say?

The evidence for the resurrection is huge; other options lack explanatory power.

"I don't have a good explanation, but I choose to believe dead people don't rise."

The important matter to recognize is that this is indeed a _____.