

DEFENDING THE RESURRECTION

from
 **FAITH MAKES SENSE**

THE RESURRECTION IS HISTORY

The resurrection of Jesus is the single most important claim in Christianity. Paul said it plainly in his first letter to the Corinthians: if Christ has not been raised, our faith is worthless. Everything else we believe about Jesus stands or falls on whether He actually rose from the dead. That means the resurrection is not a matter of personal faith alone. It is a historical claim that must be investigated. Dr. Gary Habermas of Liberty University developed an approach called the minimal facts argument that does exactly that. It looks only at facts that are established by multiple independent lines of evidence and accepted as historically true by virtually all qualified scholars, including those who are not Christians and do not accept the Bible as authoritative. You do not have to trust the Bible to reckon with these facts. You only have to be willing to follow the evidence honestly wherever it leads.

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO THE GOSPEL

JESUS DIED BY CRUCIFIXION

This fact is so well established that even atheist scholars treat it as settled history. Jesus was executed under Roman authority during the reign of Tiberius, confirmed by Tacitus, Josephus, and multiple non-Christian sources entirely independent of the New Testament. Roman crucifixion was not amateurish. Professional executioners carried out the sentence and knew how to kill. The death of Jesus is accepted by virtually all scholars who work in the field. This fact matters because it is foundational. If Jesus never died, there is no resurrection to explain and

FOLLOWERS CLAIMED HE ROSE

Within days of the crucifixion, the earliest followers of Jesus were claiming they had seen Him alive. This is not a Christian argument. It is a historical fact accepted by virtually all scholars regardless of their own beliefs. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians records specific named witnesses including a group of more than five hundred people, many of whom were still alive when he wrote and could be questioned directly. Multiple independent sources confirm the same thing. The earliest followers of Jesus proclaimed publicly, loudly, and at great personal cost that Jesus rose.

CONVERSION OF PAUL

Saul of Tarsus was not a confused seeker who stumbled into Christianity. He was an active enemy of the early church, hunting down followers of Jesus and imprisoning them. After a personal resurrection appearance, he became a prolific apostle, authored letters accepted as reliable even by atheist scholars, and was eventually executed for it. The book of Galatians places him writing within eighteen months of the resurrection event itself. An enemy of the faith does not become its most tireless advocate, suffer imprisonment and beatings, and die for it because of a lie he invented or a grief he never had.

THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

The Christian church was born in Jerusalem, the hometown of Judaism, within weeks of the crucifixion, among people who had worshipped on the Sabbath for centuries. They changed their day of worship to Sunday almost immediately, in the one city where authorities who wanted Christianity stopped could have ended it instantly by producing the body. They had motive, access, and power. They never produced it. The church grew anyway, first in Jerusalem, then across Judea, then to Rome itself. That does not happen if the central claim is a lie that anyone in the city could have disproved.

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THE EVIDENCE REMAINS

Denying the resurrection does not make the evidence disappear. Anyone who rejects the conclusion still has to account for the facts. That is the standard we apply to every other historical question and there is no reason to lower it here. A good explanation has to do one thing above all others: it has to account for all of the evidence, not just the pieces that are convenient. What follows are the four most common attempts to explain the resurrection away. Each one has a fatal problem. None of them accounts for the totality of the circumstances. And when you have to stack multiple theories on top of each other just to get close to an explanation, that is a sign that no single alternative is working. The resurrection of Jesus is the only explanation that accounts for all of the evidence without creating new problems in the process.

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO THE RESURRECTION

THE LEGEND THEORY

The claim is that the resurrection story was invented or embellished over generations as the tradition grew. This theory sounds plausible until you look at the timeline. Galatians puts Paul writing within eighteen months of the resurrection, naming living witnesses who could be questioned directly. First Corinthians 15 represents what the church was already teaching before Paul even converted, placing the resurrection claim within weeks or even days of the event itself. Legendary development requires time and distance from the original events that doesn't exist.

THE SWOON THEORY

The claim is that Jesus did not actually die on the cross. He fainted, revived in the cool air of the tomb, and was mistaken for resurrected. This theory requires professional Roman executioners to not know the difference between a dead body and a live one. It requires the people who prepared Jesus for burial to do the same. It also requires the disciples to see a man barely surviving crucifixion, still wounded and bloody and conclude not that he survived but that he had been gloriously resurrected from the dead.

THE HALLUCINATION THEORY

The claim is that the disciples were so overcome with grief that they hallucinated appearances of Jesus. There is no documented case of group hallucination ever. Paul records appearances to groups, including one of more than five hundred people at once. Beyond the group problem, the theory depends entirely on grief as the trigger. Paul was an enemy of Christianity before his conversion. He had no grief over the death of Jesus. He had no grief or desire to see a risen savior. The hallucination theory cannot account for him and it cannot be quietly set aside because he is one of the most reliable witnesses we have.

THE STOLEN BODY THEORY

The claim is that either the disciples stole the body and fabricated the resurrection, or the Roman and Jewish authorities removed it to prevent the tomb becoming a shrine. If the disciples stole it, they died individually in torturous ways for something they personally knew was a lie, gaining no money, no power, and no earthly benefit of any kind. If the authorities took it, they had exactly what they needed to stop Christianity before it spread beyond Jerusalem. All they had to do was produce it. They never did. Both versions of this theory leave the resurrection appearances completely unexplained.

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