

Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?

INTRODUCTION

- A. We believe that Jesus was raised from the dead.
 - 1. Yet, what makes this belief any more valid than other beliefs?
 - 2. Is there anything to support this belief?
- B. Does it really matter if Jesus was raised from the dead?
 - 1. If Jesus is not raised, we are still in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17).
 - 2. If Jesus is not raised, he was not the Son of God (Rom. 1:4).
 - 3. If Jesus is not raised, death has not been conquered (1 Cor. 15:20-22).
- C. Even if Jesus were raised, must we believe that Jesus was raised bodily?
 - 1. The Scriptures affirm that Jesus had flesh and blood after his resurrection (Lk. 24:39).
 - 2. The Jews would have no concept of a spiritual resurrection--The only type of resurrection the Jews understood was a bodily resurrection.
- D. What evidence is there that Jesus was raised from the dead?

WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE THAT JESUS WAS BURIED?

- A. The vast majority of those who were crucified were left on the cross for birds to eat or were thrown into common graves.
 - 1. Some claim this is what happened to Jesus.
 - 2. What evidence is there that Jesus was buried in a recognizable tomb?
- B. An early Christian tradition declares he was buried.
 - 1. “[Christ] was buried” (1 Cor. 15:4);
 - 2. How do we know this is an early Christian tradition?
 - a. Paul introduces this statement with the words—“I delivered to you first of all that which I also received” (1 Cor. 15:3).
 - 1) Delivered” and “received” were technical rabbinic terms indicating the passing on of holy tradition.
 - 2) Paul is telling these Christians that he gave them holy tradition.
 - b. This passage is also parallel language.
 - 1) “According to the scriptures” follows “Christ died for our sins” and “He rose again the third day.”
 - 2) Such parallelism was used in oral tradition.
 - c. The text refers to Peter as “Cephas” which would indicate this tradition was originally passed down in Aramaic.
 - 3. This tradition probably goes back to just a few years after Jesus’ crucifixion.
 - a. Paul more than likely received this tradition when he encountered the apostles after his conversion (Acts 9:26-28).
 - b. Paul probably received this tradition around AD 32-38.
 - 4. This tradition is valuable because liberal scholars want to allow time for evolutionary development.
- C. Joseph of Arimathea seems to be a historical character.
 - 1. All four gospel accounts of Jesus’ burial mention Joseph.
 - 2. Joseph would have been a very strange character for the apostles to invent.
 - a. He was a member of the Sanhedrin which voted to kill Jesus; however, Joseph was more than likely not present when the council voted, for the council unanimously voted to kill Jesus.
 - b. Why would the apostles have shown a member of the Sanhedrin in a good light when they were angry and bitter toward the Jews?
 - c. Had the apostles invented Joseph, those who read the gospels could have investigated and found this story to be false.

WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE THAT THE TOMB WAS FOUND EMPTY?

- A. Some critics allege that had the tomb really been empty the apostles would have taken people there.
 - 1. They claim that had the tomb been empty the apostles would have spoken of it.
 - 2. However, Peter contrasted the empty tomb of Jesus with the occupied tomb of David (Acts 2:29-31).
- B. Evidence for the empty tomb:
 - 1. The Jews would not have been able to preach about the resurrected Christ in Jerusalem had Jesus’ tomb not have been empty.

2. Mark, probably the first gospel written, just tells about the empty tomb--Had Mark been writing a legend, we would expect more supernatural language.
3. The tomb was found by women.
 - a. Women were considered second-class citizens; they were not permitted to testify in legal cases.
 - b. The rabbis spoke unkindly of women.
 - 1) "Let the words of the Law be burned rather than delivered to women."
 - 2) "Blessed is he whose children are male, but woe to him whose children are female."
 - c. Had the empty tomb been an invention by the apostles, surely they would have had men finding the tomb.
4. The earliest Jewish explanation requires an empty tomb.
 - a. The Jews explained Jesus' empty tomb by saying the apostles stole the body (Mt. 28:15).
 - b. The Jews had to devise this explanation, for Jesus' tomb was empty.
 - c. Years after the Resurrection, Jews continued to explain it away by accusing the apostles of stealing the body.

DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD?

- A. The apostles did not expect Jesus' death and resurrection to occur.
 1. When Jesus began to tell his disciples that he would die and be resurrected, Peter took Jesus aside and said that Jesus would never be crucified (Mt. 16:22).
 2. Yet, after the resurrection, Peter boldly announced Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 2:36).
- B. The resurrection makes the apostles look bad:
 1. Many of their actions shed bad light on the apostles.
 - a. Peter denied the Lord.
 - b. The apostles fled for fear.
 - c. The apostles were slow to believe.
 - d. Jesus found the apostles hiding from the Jews (Jn. 20:19).
 2. Why would the apostles have invented a story that makes them look so bad?
- C. The Jews had always offered sacrifices, yet within a few years of the resurrection, they no longer did so.
- D. Within a few years after Jesus' death, the church began teaching that one could not be saved by the Law of Moses.
- E. The apostles changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.
- E. The Jews strongly believed in monotheism.
 1. There would have been no place for a Trinity in Jewish thought.
 2. Yet, the apostles proclaim that God is one in three Personalities.
- F. The apostles died proclaiming the resurrection.
 1. Many died horrible deaths claiming Jesus was resurrected.
 2. Why would they knowingly die for what they knew was false.
- G. Those who were skeptics were converted.
 1. Paul was converted after he had helped persecute the church.
 2. James, Jesus' brother, was converted after Jesus appeared to him.
 - a. Jesus' brothers did not believe in him (Jn. 7:5).
 - b. James, one of his brothers (Mt. 13:55), became a pillar of the church (Acts 15:13).