

DEITY

HISTORICAL FACT OF THE RESURRECTION



SUMMARY: We must accept the fact of Jesus' resurrection by faith. It is far more documented and reasonable to believe than many of the atheistic theories currently taught as "facts". The immediate switch to a Sunday worship by a Jewish population certainly reinforces that a significant event happened.

INTRODUCTION:

From approximately 7:10 to 8:00 A.M. on Thursday, April 6, of 33 A.D. after being up all night Jesus Christ was tried for the second time by Pilate. He was accused of blaspheming (1), deceiving the nations, forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and inciting the people to rebellion (2) which He did not do. He was also accused of claiming to be King of the Jews (3) which He acknowledged. At approximately 8:00 A.M. He was condemned to die by crucifixion on a cross. He was nailed to the cross at approximately 9:00 A.M., and His spirit departed from His body at approximately 3:00 P.M. and He was dead. His death was surgically confirmed by a soldier piercing His side with a spear and observing blood and water flowing out separately (an accepted sign of death).

Sometime before 7:00 A.M. on Sunday morning of April 9, A.D. 33, His spirit reentered the body and He was resurrected.

WHAT MEN CONSIDER AS HISTORICAL FACTS:

This lesson will discuss the historical fact of Jesus and His resurrection, however, as a basis for comparison we will first look at what some scientists who deny Jesus' resurrection consider as a requirement to be a fact.

On May 21, 1987 the Houston Chronicle presented the story that earliest true human remains were found in Tanzania's Olduvai Gorge in east Africa. The skeleton included an upper jaw, teeth, fragments of a skull and facial bones, a relatively complete arm, a partial thighbone, and a fragment of a shinbone.

From this, the scientists learned, believe, and/or have faith that a complete civilization:

1. Was more like apes than man,
2. Still climbed in trees regularly, and
3. Lived from 1.8 to 1.6 million years ago.

Further, this confirmed their abiding belief that life was created by an accidental spark in a primordial brew, as this was a step in the evolutionary process to life as we know it today.

Can you imagine that? They can't believe that the Son of God who was alive could be resurrected from the dead, but they believe that life can be created by accident. They can find some old bones and tell you that the person climbed trees frequently and lived 1.6-1.8 million years ago. They will calmly tell you that this is scientific fact.

Mind you, this is the same collective group of scientists that declared the fact of the Piltdown Man in 1911 as a prehistoric ancestor when it was a fake (4), the fact of the Nebraska Man

when the only evidence turned out to be a pig's tooth, and the Neanderthal Man (Neander Valley, Germany) who was believed to be a prehuman ancestor but was finally determined to be just a human (5).

In this age of declaring ancient races of people from finding a tooth and a part of a leg bone, let's look at the comparative historical proof about the resurrection of Christ.

SUMMARY OF PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT:

1. The #1 proof of the resurrection was that all the Apostles and early followers were Jewish, and had been faithful to the Jewish religion. That meant that the primary worship day was on Saturday. It was ingrained in them and customary. Without any apparent debate or fanfare, they switched to worshipping on the first day of the week. Something dramatic had to have happened to make that switch. The dramatic event was the resurrection.
2. Read Acts 1:1-3 and I Cor. 15:3-8
3. What do these verses and the remainder of the New Testament tell us of the resurrection:
 - A. Quantity of witnesses: 500+
 - B. Quality of witnesses: All types from doctors, members of the Jewish Sanhedrin, fishermen, & tax collectors
 - C. Written Documentation by:
 - Matthew, a tax collector
 - Mark
 - Luke, a physician
 - John, a fisherman
 - Paul, a lawyer and former member of the Jewish Sanhedrin
 - Peter, a fisherman
 - James, brother of the Lord
 - Jude, brother to John (Did not believe until after the resurrection)(6)

This is no less than 8 independent witnesses who wrote to document the facts about the resurrection.

4. Special Proofs: Some believers were endowed with miraculous powers to perform miracles to confirm that what they were saying was the truth.
5. Consistency of proof: To the best of our knowledge, none of the witnesses ever recanted the story, but rather many died because they believed it.
6. Could it have been just another fanatical religion? Not likely as many of the 500+ witnesses who saw Jesus after the resurrection, died for that belief. If there was an earthly instigation of this plot, the witnesses would have been the instigators. You might expect a trusting convert to a religion to die for the religion, but not an instigator. The instigators would have known that it was not true, and would not have died

individual deaths of crucifixion for it. Many of the 500+ witnesses died individually horrible deaths for this belief.

SUMMARY OF PROOFS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. Psalms 22:16-18 predicts the method of death as by crucifixion by the piercing of Jesus' hands and feet.
2. Psalms 16:10, 30:3, 41:10, & 118:17 predicts the resurrection of Jesus 1000 years before Jesus was born.
3. This is clearly an extra ordinary proof for an extra ordinary event.

RESPONSE BY ATHEIST TO BIBLICAL PROOFS

The typical answer by an atheist for this is that the Bible is a single book by insiders and so it is therefore no proof at all. Responses to this are:

1. That many of the witnesses were insiders who would tend to make witnesses suspect, but would not necessarily invalidate the reports. Most historical facts on many subjects have been recorded by "insiders". Mind you, all of the believers in creation of life by accident are believers in the religion of atheism.
2. It was not a single book. The New Testament is a collection of 27 independent letters by several different authors at different times. The books of the New Testament were not collected into a standard form (the Canon) during the lifetime of the authors. Historical reference is made to the fact that approximately A.D. 140-150 a collections of the writings existed in Rome which were virtually identical to our New Testament (7).
3. Old Testament writers prophesying about the life and resurrection of Christ were clearly of a different group of people.
4. Paul was probably the most learned of the witnesses to Christ after the resurrection and was clearly an enemy and unbeliever before he saw Jesus after the resurrection. He was having the believers thrown in prison and killed. He clearly was not an insider.

NON-BIBLICAL PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION

To the best of my knowledge, no nonbeliever historians observed and wrote about the resurrection of Jesus. Actually, non-believer documentation of the resurrection is unlikely, as anyone who saw it and recognized it to write about it would become a believer.

We shall instead discuss non-Biblical historical documentation of the existence of Christ to provide insight to the actual existence of Christ.

1. Flavius Josephus: Eminent non-Jewish historian of the first century, born A.D. 37, was with Titus at the destruction of Jerusalem and said: "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man...."
2. The following 8 men wrote of Christ or gave proof of Christ in discussing Christians during the first century:

1. Flavius Josephus
2. Cornelius Tactitus
3. Suetonius
4. Pliny Secundus (Pliny the Younger)
5. Thallus
6. Letter of Mara Bar-Serapion
7. Polycarp
8. Ignatius

For detailed description of the writings of these men and others in the second and third centuries, see **CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS AND CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES**, by Bert Thompson, pp. 142-153. (We have a copy.)

THEREFORE: The documentation that Jesus actually lived on the earth and was resurrected from the dead greatly exceeds the things which demonstrate the theory of atheistic creation of life, creation of species by evolution, and a lot of our other things as presented in our accepted history by a wide margin. Whereas one might expect spectacular proof that a person claims to be "God", one would expect the same level of proof that we appeared by accident from nothing. There is proof that Jesus was resurrected, there is none that we appeared from nothing. It is certainly reasonable to believe that the God who could create life in the first place could resurrect a person back to life.

We must accept the fact of Jesus' resurrection by faith. It is far more historically documented and reasonable to believe than many of the atheistic theories currently taught as "scientific facts".

It is our hope that you will believe in Jesus not only from the negative side because it is more logical than other things such as atheistic evolution, but also from the positive side because you can look all around you and see the wonderful proofs God has put all around us that could not possibly have happened without a guiding hand.

- (1) Matthew 26:65
- (2) Luke 23:2-14
- (3) Luke 23:3
- (4) World Book, Volume P, 1973, page 417
- (5) IMPACT NO. 171: STARTLING DISCOVERIES SUPPORT CREATION, Duane T. Gish, Ph.D
- (6) John 7:5 & Acts 1:13-14
- (7) Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Page 145