

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

The Cornerstone Doctrine

THE GOSPEL

- ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born

INTRODUCTION

- “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain your faith is in vain... If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Cor 15:14-18)
- The resurrection proved that Jesus Christ is who he claimed to be and that he accomplished what he claimed to have accomplished
- If it can be shown that Jesus rose from the dead, then Christianity rests upon a firm foundation
- If Jesus rose from the dead, all other doctrines

VERIFYING THE RESURRECTION

- An empty tomb produced many theories (e.g., swooned, stolen body)
- Peter saw at the tomb “lying there, the graveclothes” (Jn 20:5)
- The post-resurrection appearances (Mary, women, Peter, Emmaus disciples, the ten in the upper room, eleven disciples, 500+, those who witnessed the ascension, Paul)
- Transformed apostles—all martyred except for John
- The new day of Christian worship on Sunday

3 REASONS TO BELIEVE IN THE EMPTY TOMB

- Belief in the empty tomb predates the NT
- Jesus' empty tomb was discovered by women
- Jews claimed that Jesus' disciples stole the body

EARLIEST KNOWN CREED

- ³ For what **I received** (παραλαμβάνω) **I passed** (παραδιδωμί) on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles (1 Cor 15:3-7; cf. 1 Cor 11:23)

BELIEF IN AN EMPTY TOMB PREDATES THE NT

- 1 Cor was written in mid-50s. Paul likely received this creed from church leaders in Jerusalem in the 30s (cf. Gal 1:18-20)
- Within 3 years of Jesus' death, the church circulated a creed that affirmed Jesus' resurrection
- Historians date this creed to 2-3 years after Jesus' death (30-33 CE)
- You cannot have a bodily resurrection without an empty tomb

BELIEF IN AN EMPTY TOMB PREDATES THE NT

- It is agreed by virtually all contemporary theologians that this material contains an ancient creed that is actually much earlier than the book in which it is recorded
- This is indicated by Paul's use of technical terms for **receiving** and **passing** on the tradition, the stylized content, and the specific names of Peter and James (cf. Gal 1:18-19)
- The data indicate that both Paul and eyewitnesses proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus immediately after the event, which are based on early eyewitness testimony and not in

JESUS' EMPTY TOMB WAS DISCOVERED BY WOMEN

- Women were not considered credible witnesses in early Palestine
- “But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex, nor let servants be admitted to give testimony on account of the ignobility of their soul; since it is probably that they may not speak truth, either out of hope of gain, or fear of punishment”—Josephus
- “Any evidence which a woman gives is not valid to offer. This is equivalent to saying that one who is Rabbinically accounted a robber is qualified to give the same evidence as a woman” (Deak

JESUS' EMPTY TOMB WAS DISCOVERED BY WOMEN

- Why then did the gospel writers include women as the first witnesses to the empty tomb and the risen Jesus? (Mk 16:1-8; Matt 28:1-10; Lu 24:1-8; Jn 20:1-13)
- They were intent on recounting history truthfully, even if telling the truth included an embarrassing fact that could discredit their case
- “Embarrassment is one standard that historians use to gauge the historicity of a recorded event. If an author chooses to include an embarrassing fact that may hurt his or her case, then it is

admitted that he is making a historical statement.” (DA

JEWES CLAIMED JESUS' DISCIPLES STOLE THE BODY

- ¹¹While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.¹² When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’” ¹⁴If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day (Matt 28:11-15)
- Why would the Jews circulate a lie if the tomb was

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- “His disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when he was unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven” (Justin Martyr 155-160 CE, *Dialogue with Trypho*)
- “This is he whom his disciples secretly stole away, that it might be said he had risen again” (Tertullian 200, *De Spectaculis*)
- Why would there be a need to propagate the idea of a stolen body, if the tomb were not

JEWES CLAIMED JESUS' DISCIPLES STOLE THE BODY

- The stolen body theory assumes that the disciples expected others to find bodily resurrection be to desirable
- In Greco-Roman thinking the soul or spirit was good and the physical and material world was corrupt or defiling. Bodily resurrection was not only implausible but undesirable. This was the issue in 1 Cor 15:12
- The Jewish viewed the physical and material world as good. They believed in bodily resurrection of the righteous, when God renewed the whole world
- The idea of a bodily resurrection in the middle of history, while the rest of the world is decaying, was

WHY THE RESURRECTION MATTERS

- “The message of the resurrection is that this world matters. That the injustices and pains of this present world must now be addressed with the news that healing, justice, and love have won. If Easter means Jesus is raised in a spiritual sense—[then] it is only about me, and finding a new dimension in my personal spiritual life. But if Jesus is truly risen from the dead, Christianity becomes good news for the world. Easter means that in a world where injustice, violence and degradation are endemic, God is not prepared to tolerate such things—and that we will work and plan, with all the energy of God, to implement victory of Jesus over all” (NT Wright)

CONCLUSION

- It is difficult to prove Christ's resurrection, but there are strong evidences for its reality
- One can establish, with relative certainty, that Jesus' tomb was found empty three days after his death
- Antony Flew, a famous atheist philosopher turned theist believer, states, "The evidence for the resurrection is better than for claimed miracles in any other religion. It's outstandingly different in quality and quantity, I think, from the evidence offered for the occurrence of most other supposedly miraculous events"
- For a truth claim to be binding, it must be

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which of the arguments for Jesus' resurrection, if any, do you find most compelling? Why?
- How does the historicity of Jesus's resurrection engender faith and Christian living?