



EASTER 2019

How Do You Explain the Resurrection?

- Egg Demonstration

INTRODUCTION

I never make assumptions about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because when I entered college as a freshman I had never heard of the resurrection, that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. It was all news to me.

- My state of mind when I entered college — a shallow nihilist.
- First roommate was a believing Christian. This means he wasn't culturally Christian only. He actually believed the Bible.

- The problem with humanity... that is what perked my interest in Christianity, because it was terribly pessimistic. Now, why would pessimism attract me?

1. It coincided with reality — humans were flawed.

2. Because hard truths are harder to sell — that made me open to listening to him, because I knew he wasn't just telling me what I wanted to hear.

3. He himself was not pessimistic. Now that's interesting. How can you have

such a pessimistic view of humanity without being a pessimist yourself? Okay, I'm all ears.

- His optimism came through two unusual events. The first is counterintuitive to what we would normally consider optimistic — the unjust execution of an innocent man. How in the world can a crucifixion be optimistic?
- The second came in what is truly an optimistic event — the resurrection of

Jesus Christ who defeated death for us — that's optimistic.

- So as a college freshman, I finally heard about the resurrection.

With all that being said, the claim of Christianity is this and has always been this:

Luke 24:1-3

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they

found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

There are three facts of history, attested to and affirmed by non-Christian sources. And those three historical facts are:

- 1. Jesus was crucified.**
- 2. Jesus was buried.**
- 3. The body went missing.**

So, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then what are the alternative explanations for the explosive growth and message of Christianity? Because you must be able to answer this question, “How do you explain the resurrection?” Is there an alternative explanation that is credible?

Now, this is how I came to believe in Jesus Christ as the resurrected Lord who was born of a virgin, who was God incarnate, having two natures, one fully human and one fully God, who He made the lame to walk and the

blind to see, who He died for our sins and on the third day was raised again from the dead, and who finally ascended bodily into heaven. I came to believe in this historical Jesus as presented in the gospels.

How? I heard a lecture explaining the alternative explanations for the resurrection and why they just don't hold water.

If the resurrection of Jesus Christ did not happen, then there has to be another explanation for why the early disciples gave

their lives preaching that he did. There has to be another plausible explanation for why Christianity became the most influential religion in the world. Intellectual integrity demands explanation.

Today, I will present four alternative explanations for the resurrection and why they all fail to adequately explain it away.

ALTERNATIVE #1:

THE APPEARANCES ARE LEGENDARY

In 1835 David Strauss claimed these stories of the resurrection were legendary, that Jesus was just a good moral teacher and over time the disciples or other later followers made him out to be more than he was... and here's the problem with that claim — legends take time to develop, years and years.

If we turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 — and it's not disputed by anyone today, meaning scholars, that the Apostle Paul wrote this letter — we find a summary of what all the apostles were teaching at this time. But

what's most interesting is the date of a little creed Paul quotes in this letter.

1 Corinthians 15:1-7

15 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our

sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

**ALTERNATIVE #2:
THE APPEARANCES WERE
HALLUCINATIONS**

Now, I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this one, because it's more of an urban legend than a legitimate argument, but it has been proposed. But here's why it doesn't hold water.

Dr. Gary Collins, a professor for twenty years, author of dozens of books on psychological issues, president of a national association of psychologists has said: "Hallucinations are individual occurrences. By their very nature only one person can see a given hallucination

at a time. They certainly aren't something which can be seen by a group of people. Neither is it possible that one person could somehow induce a hallucination in somebody else. Since a hallucination exists only in this subjective, personal sense, it is obvious that others cannot witness it."

ALTERNATIVE #3:

THE WOMEN WENT TO THE WRONG TOMB

This was suggested as far back as 1907 that the women merely went to the wrong tomb.

The place where Jesus was buried, his tomb was known to Christian and Jew alike. So if his tomb wasn't empty, it would be impossible for a movement founded on belief in the resurrection to have come into existence in the same city where He had been publicly executed and buried.

ALTERNATIVE #4:

The disciples stole the body and then lied.

**William Lane Craig said in an interview:
“When you read the New Testament, there’s
no doubt that the disciples sincerely believed
the truth of the resurrection, which they
proclaimed to their deaths. The idea that the
empty tomb is the result of some hoax,
conspiracy, or theft is simply dismissed
today.”**

**The theory that the disciples stole the body
and then lied about his resurrection just
doesn’t present a realistic motive for why they
would give their lives for this lie.**

What were the social or personal benefits of lying?

Historical conspiracies

This is just a fact, but if these are the types of arguments that persuade you to disbelieve in the resurrection of Jesus then you're relying on arguments that were dealt with in the 1800's. Scholars today do not take them seriously.

With that Craig added this clincher: “As long as the existence of God is even possible, it’s possible that he acted in history by raising Jesus from the dead.”

Luke 24:1-3

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,

“To my surprise, I realized the stone needed to be rolled away not to let Jesus out, but to let us in. Trust, but verify. The resurrection needed to be verified by eyewitnesses, who could testify to the empty tomb and empty clothes. Ours is a faith founded on an event that occurred in space, time, and history, and it began with an angel politely opening the tomb so we could look into the empty space and see he was no longer there.” (Kathy Keller)

This is not a vain fantasy that we preach, but an actual historical event, Jesus risen from the dead, which means you now today can benefit from this event even.

Let me give you seven quick benefits of the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:17

¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

John 11:25

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

Romans 6:5

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

1 Peter 1:3

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Luke 14:14

¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Acts 2:32-33

³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Philippians 3:10

¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

“If Jesus did rise from the dead, then every human being is confronted with a demand to believe what he said, to acknowledge him as King, and to submit to him as Savior and Lord. And of course, my friend, that includes you.” (Greg Gilbert)

And that’s as close to a hard sell as I’ll make today. But I will leave you with this one word: urgency.

There’s a reason that Scripture reminds us that life is like a vapor and that that none of us

are promised tomorrow. Because if Christ did rise from the dead, the implications are sobering.

That's why I would urge you to consider the claims of Christ seriously. This is what we do every Sunday. This is why I'm inviting you to come back next Sunday to consider the claims of Christ with us again (if you don't have a church home).

Maybe you've never thought of it like this before, but you don't have to believe before you become part of a community of faith.

I'm inviting you to belong before you believe for two reasons. The first one I've already mentioned — because it will allow you a space to take the claims of Christ seriously every Sunday.

Secondly, you'll never find a group of people who care more for your soul. And I can say that with all sincerity. When you're around a

group of people who believe your soul has eternal value, they are going to treat in that way.

So, that is my simple invitation — come back next Sunday to consider. Belong before you believe.

If you want to talk to someone this morning or if you'd like prayer for any reason, our leadership team will be in the back with myself in front of the Guest Central table and we'd love to talk or pray with you.