

EQUIP

March 6, 2019

Tactics

Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith also is in vain." 1 Corinthians 15:14

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." 1 Corinthians 15:19

Certainty or Probability Based on Evidence?

As discussed in an earlier session, is not possible to have 100% certainty on matters of ancient history from the available evidence. Certainty in the modern world is reserved for simple mathematics. History is a game of probability, or best explanation of the data.

Historians utilize the modern historical method to try and learn truth about history from the available evidence. C. Behan McCullagh, in his book, *Justifying Historical Descriptions*, published by Cambridge University Press, gives these points to be considered in the historical method:

1. The hypothesis must be of greater explanatory scope than any other incompatible hypothesis about the same subject; that is, it must imply a greater variety of observation statements. **It should make sense of more of the data.**
2. The hypothesis must be of greater explanatory power than any other incompatible hypothesis about the same subject; that is, it must make the observation statements it implies

more probable than any other. **It should better explain the data.**

3. The hypothesis must be more plausible than any other incompatible hypothesis about the same subject; that is, it must be implied to some degree by a greater variety of accepted truths than any other, and be implied more strongly than any other; and its probable negation must be implied by fewer beliefs, and implied less strongly than any other. **It must be more plausible than the alternatives, based on what we know to be true.**

The Facts Scholars Believe are Supported by Sufficient Evidence

1. Jesus Existed
2. Jesus was Crucified
 - a. This is virtually universally accepted by scholars/historians.
 - b. Tacitus states he was crucified by Pontius Pilot.
 - c. Duke University Professor E.P. Sanders said that Jesus' crucifixion by Roman authorities is an "almost indisputable fact" of history.
 - d. Islam is going against the evidence. (Surah 4:157-158)
3. Jesus was Buried in a Tomb by Joseph of Arimathea
 - a. Paul stated he was buried in 1 Cor. 15, a book which all scholars believe is genuine, from a tradition within five years at the latest, some say within 6 months of the Crucifixion.

4. The Tomb was Empty (A majority of scholars, but not all)
 - a. The Jewish authorities quickly alleged that the disciples of Jesus stole the body...thus providing evidence that the tomb was, in fact, empty. Matthew 28:12.
5. Jesus' Disciples Believed He Met with Them, Fully Alive, after His Death
 - a. Many People
 - b. Multiple Occasions

"Perhaps no fact is more widely recognized than that early Christian believers had real experiences that they thought were appearances of the risen Jesus. In particular, virtually all scholars recognize Paul's testimony that he had an experience that he believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus."¹ This is based on a survey of nearly "30 years of German, French, and English scholarship relating to Jesus' resurrection."
6. The Conversion of the Unbeliever and Persecutor Paul

Why don't many historians or scholars believe that Jesus rose?

The Other Pieces to the Puzzle

1. Are Miracles ruled out Philosophically before the evidence is examined?
2. Is there a God that acts in this world?

If God or the possibility of the miraculous is ruled out in one's beliefs before hand, then of course one will not conclude that God

¹ Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004), 74.

raised Jesus from the dead, or that a miracle has occurred. Because there is no God and there are no miracles. "There must be an alternate explanation, so, even if existing hypotheses fail, we must remain agnostic."

Counter Arguments

1. Body Stolen
 - a. Matthew 28:12 (the earliest Jewish refutation)
2. Wish Fulfillment
 - a. Ludwig Feuerbach stated dismissively, "Man, at least in a state of ordinary well-being, has the wish not to die. This wish is originally identical with the instinct of self-preservation... This wish becomes the positive wish for a life, and that a better life, after death. But this wish involves the further wish for the certainty of its fulfilment. Reason can afford no such certainty. ... The resurrection of Christ is therefore the satisfied desire of man for an immediate certainty of his personal existence after death."²
3. Swoon Hypothesis
4. Hallucination

English New Testament scholar N.T. Wright concluded that alternate explanations fail on their own face, and the only explanation for the radical change in belief about death and the afterlife following the life of Jesus, is that Jesus rose bodily and appeared to people.

² Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989)135. Originally published 1841.

“The proposal that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead possesses unrivalled power to explain the historical data at the heart of early Christianity.”³

- ▶ The bodily Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead makes sense of more of the data (explanatory scope), better sense of the data (explanatory power), and is more plausible than the alternative explanations.

The Stone in the Shoe

The evidence shows that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is plausible and fits the evidence. It cannot simply be dismissed based on the evidence, as the evidence fits with the explanation offered by the early Christians. It could only be dismissed on philosophical grounds. But, if God exists, and can act in this world, and the evidence shows the best explanation of the data is the bodily resurrection of Jesus, then it must be taken seriously.

What Does it Mean to Me?

1. Our lives matter.
2. There is real life beyond death.
3. We can see our loved ones again.
4. Goodbye is a lie.
5. There is Hope.
6. The model of the Cosmos, which reduces everything to sets of atoms moving until the Cosmos is annihilated, is broken.

³ N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 718.

Recommended Resources

- 1. The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus, Gary Habermas and Michael Licona
- 2. The Case for Christ, Lee Strobel
- 3. YouTube Videos by Gary Habermas or William Lane Craig on the Resurrection

Additional Notes

