

WHY I BELIEVE

Some Explanations for the Resurrection are Inadequate

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The enemies of the gospel have lowered their sights on the resurrection, for it is the crux of all Christianity. They know that if this particular miracle can be disproved, then all miracles in the Bible are invalid.
- B. Skeptics and infidels deny the supernatural and do their best to explain away the obvious facts of the resurrection. They do have explanations but none of them hold water when put against the facts of scripture.
- C. This lesson will set forth the arguments of unbelievers to explain away the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. These are the best arguments the saved world has to offer.

II. THE WRONG TOMB THEORY

- A. This theory says that the women went to the wrong tomb and got a false rumor going and it spread like wildfire. It was dark and they couldn't see (cf. John 20:1).
- B. OBJECTIONS:
 - 1. It was probably dawn, not dark (Matt. 28:1; Luke 24:1; Mark 16:2).
 - 2. The women knew clearly where Jesus was buried (Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55).
 - 3. The women saw the whole process of the burial (Matt. 27:60-61).
 - 4. There were at least four women (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10). Did they all go to the wrong tomb and make a tragic mistake? These women were not stupid but sound in mind.
 - 5. Mary Magdalene was at the same tomb later in the morning when Christ appeared to her. She didn't make a mistake then (John 20:11-18).

6. If the women made a mistake about the tomb, so did the angel because the angel was in Christ's empty tomb (Matt. 20:1-7).

III. SWOON THEORY

- A. Jesus did not die on the cross, He only fainted. He revived in the tomb and then left it, making Himself known to the disciples.
- B. OBJECTIONS:
 1. Pilate wondered whether Jesus was dead but the centurion assured him that He was dead (Mark 15:44-45). Pilate was convinced Christ was dead and so was the centurion.
 2. Pilate commanded the soldiers to break the legs of those crucified to hasten death. The soldiers were under orders to make sure Christ was dead. These seasoned executioners, who were under orders, were convinced that Jesus was dead; thus they did not break His legs (John 19:31-34).
 3. Jesus had His side pierced with a spear (John 19:34). This was done to assure death.
 4. Is it logical that Jesus, after having been beaten to a pulp and crucified with a horrible wound in His side, could survive for 36 hours in a cold, damp tomb with no food, water or medical care? Would He have had enough strength to remove the heavy rock covering? Could He, half dead, wriggle His way out of the mummy-like burial wrappings?
 5. During the burial preparations, which often took hours, there was not so much as a groan out of Christ.

IV. THIEVES THEORY

- A. This view states that some thieves slipped into the tomb and stole the body of Jesus.
- B. OBJECTIONS:
 1. This viewpoint is unthinkable and without a shred of evidence. The soldiers were "hand picked" sentries and were good soldiers. How could the thieves get by these soldiers without causing a great stir?
 2. What would be the thieves' motives? Why would the thieves have taken the body of Christ without the grave clothes? Why weren't the grave clothes wrinkled or even torn?

V. DISCIPLES' FALSEHOOD THEORY

A. This view says that the disciples removed the body of Jesus themselves and spread a lie about His resurrection in order to push their new religion.

B. OBJECTIONS:

1. It is stated in scripture that this is the rumor that the Jews themselves got started in order to cover up for the absence of Jesus' body (Matt. 27:62-66; 28:11-15).
2. How could the disciples get by the guards? Would all sleep on duty when told to watch? The guards could have been killed for sleeping on duty.
3. The disciples were skeptical and in unbelief; therefore they would have no cause to remove the body.
4. In Acts they preached the resurrection in every message. Are some actually willing to say that the disciples proclaimed for years what they knew to be a deliberate lie? To say this is plainly ridiculous in light of the high moral standards and achievements of the apostles and their followers.
5. Would the disciples be willing to suffer, be beaten, jailed and martyred for a fairy tale? We must conclude that the disciples were sincere and honest. Men may die for what they believe to be true but isn't, but no man dies for what he knows is a deliberate lie.

VI. CUSTODY BY AUTHORITIES THEORY

A. This view says that, because the Roman and Jewish authorities feared the fanaticism of the disciples and what might happen if the disciples could have gotten the body out of the tomb, they took the body into their custody for protection.

B. OBJECTIONS:

1. Why did Pilate post the guards if there was no body? Why were the guards stunned at the time of resurrection?
2. Within a few weeks after the resurrection the new Christian movement was spreading like wildfire. The resurrection was being preached everywhere. Why didn't the authorities produce the body and publish throughout the Roman Empire what they had done? This would have stopped the movement instantly. Instead they were silent and tried to put down the movement by force. The church was founded on the

resurrection. Disprove the resurrection and the church would collapse. But the authorities could not produce the body to prove their point.

VII. JOSEPH OF ARAMATHEA THEORY

- A. This view claims that the tomb was found empty because the only one who had the right to take out the body from the tomb was Joseph, the owner. Joseph removed the body during the night or early morning.
- B. OBJECTIONS:
 - 1. There is not the slightest bit of evidence from any four of the Gospels that Joseph took the body. We should not accept something when there is no evidence for it.
 - 2. Because the Jews hated Christ, Joseph had taken great chances and risked his life to take Jesus' body down from the cross and place it in his own tomb. What could have come over Joseph in the next 30 hours to change his mind about the place of burial? Joseph would dishonor the body of Christ by removing it from a tomb of honor to some obscure burying place.
 - 3. How did Joseph get by the Roman guards at the tomb? Pilate had given specific commands that the body was not to be taken out of the tomb. Not even Joseph could get it out.
 - 4. If it had been Joseph that had removed the body of Jesus, then the soldiers would have had a really good, believable story to tell the Jewish authorities on Easter morning. That would have been enough, and the Sanhedrin would have been saved the trouble and expense of creating a foolish story, and bribing the soldiers to repeat it.
 - 5. Joseph was an honorable, good and just man, and a disciple of Jesus. This Joseph would not deliberately deceive others. Surely Joseph saw the other disciples after the resurrection. As an honorable man and when He saw the disciples rejoicing over the resurrected Lord, he would be compelled to tell them the truth that he removed the body. But he never told them this because he did not remove the body (cf. Luke 23:50-51).

VIII. VISION-HYPOTHESIS THEORY

- A. This view states that the disciples really believed in the resurrection, but that mere visions of Christ had wrought in them this belief. According to some, these visions were the outcome of an excited imagination, of a morbid state of the nervous system. In short, this view says that because the disciples longed with such passion for the Lord to come back to life they had hallucinations and actually

believed the Lord was resurrected, although He never did. Thus the literal, bodily resurrection is explained away psychologically.

B. OBJECTIONS:

1. The scriptures present all the disciples, not as expecting the resurrection, but as skeptics. They could not believe Christ has risen and had to be convinced. Only the facts changed the minds of the disciples.
2. Christ appeared to men and women, individuals, small groups, and large groups, in different geographical locations under various circumstances; thus this makes the idea of a mere vision impossible. Hundreds of people could not have had the same vision.
3. Besides the visions of an excited imagination would not have endured and led to such results. Most likely they would soon have given place to corresponding depression.

IX. HISTORICAL MYTH THEORY

A. This view attempts to connect the account of the resurrection with legend. They try to show that similar accounts of resurrection can be found in oriental religions and heathen myths.

B. OBJECTIONS:

1. There is nothing like the resurrection of Jesus Christ recorded in any oriental religions or literature.
2. Objective scholarship can find no links between Christ's resurrection and myths.
3. These proponents completely ignore the teachings of scripture on the resurrection, and the eyewitness accounts by hundreds of people. It takes years for myths to develop. Legends require time and isolation from the facts in order to develop.

X. SPIRITUALIZING THEORY

A. This group recognizes the fact of resurrection but explain it away. They say Christ's resurrection was not bodily but the coming to life of man's soul and spirit, or revival of the personality.

B. OBJECTIONS:

1. If we spiritualize the resurrection of Christ, we have no Christianity and might as well throw away our Bibles.
2. These proponents completely ignore the scriptural teaching on the resurrection.

XI. CONCLUSION: The only satisfactory explanation that satisfies the intellect and harmonizes the facts of scripture is that Christ was supernaturally raised from the dead in bodily form. This is what scripture claims and it has never been disproved in 2,000 years. All the attacks of hell and infidels have never been able to refute the scriptural claims of resurrection.