

Evidence for the Resurrection

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the Son of God, and that he was crucified and died for the forgiveness of sin, was resurrected from the dead, and lives today.

Over the centuries, skeptics have developed several objections to the resurrection of Jesus and have proposed several alternative theories about what actually happened to the body of Jesus Christ. Many believe that Jesus' resurrection is too difficult to prove beyond a reasonable doubt. Here is evidence to answer those doubts.

Skeptics' Theories

Answers

OBJECTION 1: Jesus Was a Mythological Figure

Evidence for Jesus Christ comes from many written documents from the first century, including 39 ancient sources in addition to the New Testament and early church leaders. An early statement of faith was probably written 8-20 years after the death of Jesus. The creed states that Jesus "was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3-8) Most critical historians agree that documents take more than 20 years to become corrupted by mythological development.

OBJECTION 2: Jesus Was Just a Man

Evidence supports that Jesus was all he claimed to be. For over three years, Jesus performed many miracles and signs such as controlling the weather, walking on water, giving sight the blind, healing the lame and diseased, casting out demons, and raising people from the dead. These miracles convinced people of his day that Jesus was all he claimed to be.

More than one hundred prophecies found in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus predicted he would suffer, die, and rise again, months before his crucifixion.

C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* that Jesus could not only be a good man. Because of Jesus' teachings, he could only be the Son of God, a liar, or a madman.

OBJECTION 3: Jesus' Followers Made It All Up

Evidence suggests that such a deception is highly unlikely. People will not knowingly die for a lie. The disciples were not fearless liars who wanted to fool the world. After the crucifixion, the disciples fled in fear for their lives. However, once they saw, touched, and spoke with the risen Lord, their lives were transformed.

Furthermore, all of Jesus' followers doubted the resurrection until Jesus physically appeared to them; then they believed.

OBJECTION 4: The Witnesses Were Unreliable

All four gospels agree that the first eyewitnesses to the proof of Jesus' resurrection were women. On the surface, this does not seem like a major proof for the resurrection.

The significance of these eyewitnesses lies in understanding the role of woman in first century Judea. During the time of Jesus, a woman's testimony was considered worthless. In fact, a woman was not allowed to serve as a witness in court.

If early believers wanted to fabricate the resurrection, they would have come up with witnesses who had political and religious influence in their community, not women who weren't even considered reliable witnesses.

The greatest weapon against these early eyewitnesses would have been to produce the body of Jesus. The silence of those who opposed Christianity while Jesus' followers preached about the empty tomb only confirmed the fact that the tomb really was empty and its vacancy could not be explained otherwise.

OBJECTION 5: The Resurrection is Not Important

The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is important only if it is true.

If Jesus did not rise from the grave, then the unbeliever is no worse off than he was before. However, if Jesus did rise from the dead, then it is reasonable to believe that everything Jesus claimed is true. If what Jesus claimed is true, then the forgiveness of sins of the world and one receives eternal life by believing in Jesus.

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Skeptics' Theories

Answers

THEORY 1: The Eyewitnesses Hallucinated

It is very unlikely, if not impossible for more than 500 people to have the same hallucination.

Those who saw Jesus after his death did not expect to see him and were surprised by his being there. Psychiatrists agree that hallucinations require expectation.

A psychiatric study performed in 1975 suggests that the content of the hallucination "reflects the efforts [of the one experiencing the hallucination] to master anxiety to fulfill various wishes and needs."

THEORY 2: Jesus Did Not Die on the Cross

If Jesus did not die, the Roman soldiers would have failed in their duties. Jesus had to survive massive blood loss, torture, and a stab wound in his side, roll the stone away (which normally would take several men to accomplish).

Witnesses saw that when Jesus was stabbed in the side, water mixed with blood poured out, medically indicating that Jesus had already died.

According to studies of first century tombs, the tomb was likely sealed by a 2000-pound rolling stone that fit in a sloping track, which would have been impossible for a sole individual to move from the inside of the tomb.

THEORY 3: Jesus' Body Was Stolen

The enemies of Jesus took several steps to prevent the disciples from stealing the body, such as sealing the stone and providing a guard of soldiers to watch the tomb.

The soldiers at the tomb would not sleep for fear of death.

During the crucifixion, the disciples were cowards who had abandoned Jesus. One disciple denied that he knew Jesus to a young servant girl. The disciples did not understand his purposes, nor the importance of the resurrection. These men did not have the courage to pass by the guard at the tomb, silently move the extremely large stone, rob the grave, and leave undetected.

THEORY 4: Everyone Went to the Wrong Tomb

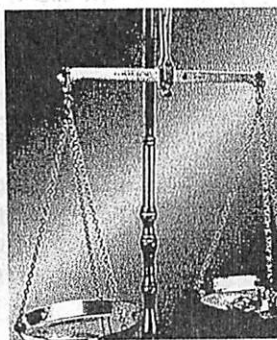
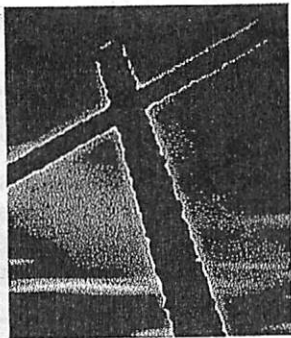
The women observed where Jesus' body was laid only a few days earlier.

After hearing the report from the women, Peter and John ran to the tomb without directions from the women. It is unlikely that Peter and John would make the same mistake as the women.

If Jesus' body were still in its correct tomb, his enemies could have produced the body immediately. Even if everyone went to the wrong tomb, Joseph of Arimathea, the owner of the tomb, would have corrected them.

On Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus, Peter addressed the crowd and specifically pointed out:

- Everyone there knew that Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God by miracles and signs. (Acts 2:22)
- Everyone there knew that Jesus was crucified, and that his death was by God's set purpose. (Acts 2:23)
- Everyone there knew that David spoke about the resurrection of Jesus nearly 1000 years before. (Acts 2:24-31)
- Everyone there was a witness to the fact that Jesus was raised to life. (Acts 2:32)



Biblical Descriptions of Heaven

Throne of God. (Deuteronomy 26:15; Psalm 11:4; Isaiah 66:1)

A reward. (Matthew 5:12)

A place safe from theft and destruction. (Matthew 6:20)

A place of rejoicing. (Luke 15:7)

A place where there will be no marrying or giving in marriage. (Matthew 22:29, 30)

A house with many rooms. (John 14:2)

A home of righteousness. (2 Peter 3:13)

A garden paradise. (Revelation 2:7)

A place that doesn't experience hunger, thirst, tears, hot sun, or scorching heat. (Revelation 7:16, 17)

A place of victory and playing harps. (Revelation 15:2)

A holy city. (Revelation 21:2)

A place where God dwells with us. (Revelation 21:3)

A place that doesn't experience sadness, death, or pain. (Revelation 21:4)

A place of brilliance like that of a very precious jewels. The walls are made of jasper and the city made of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls are decorated with precious stones. The twelve gates are each made from one single pearl. (Revelation 21:11, 18, 19-21)

A place that is lit by the glory of God. (Revelation 21:23)

A place with no night. (Revelation 21:25)

A place where no impure thing or person exists. (Revelation 21:27)

A place of life and healing. (Revelation 22:1-3)

A place where God reigns forever. (Rev. 22:5)

Biblical Descriptions of Hell

A place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 25:30)

A place of outer darkness. (Matthew 22:13)

A place of torments. (Luke 16:23)

A place of sorrows. (2 Samuel 22:5-7)

A place of everlasting destruction. (2 Thessalonians 1:9)

A place where people are tormented with fire and brimstone. (Revelation 21:8)

A place of worms that don't die. (Mark 9:43)

A place where fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:43)

A place where there is no rest. (Revelation 14:11)

A place that will ultimately be a lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14)

A place of hopeless of unsatisfied desires. (Luke 16:24)

A furnace of fire. (Matthew 13:42, 50)

A place of separation. (Matthew 13:49)

A place filled with the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, and all liars. (Revelation 21:8)

A place shut out from the presence of the Lord and the majesty of his power. (2 Thessalonians 1:9)

A place where fallen angels dwell. (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:16)

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