

Reasoning From the resurrection (Part 1)
The Resurrection of Christ --- Hoax or History?
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Introduction: Do you understand the logical basis for faith in Christ?

- A. What if someone asked you this question: "Why Christianity?"
1. If you have not heard this question, your children will.
 2. Christianity is not based upon a "blind faith" but rather a reasonable faith.

(1 Pt 3:15)

- B. Christianity is not just a system of philosophy or values.
1. It is dependent upon the identity of its founder, Jesus. **(Mt 16:13-17)**
 2. Contrast this with the religions of Buddha and Mohammed.
 3. If either figure never actually existed, you still would have the essence of these religions.
 4. These systems have no crucial historical events at their foundations.

I. What are the consequences if Jesus never actually was born, died and then raised from the dead?

- A. Consider the consequences as stated by the apostle Paul. **(1 Cor 15:12-19)**
1. The apostles are liars.
 2. There is no forgiveness of sins.
 3. Those who died as a Christian are gone forever
 4. Those who make sacrifices to be a Christian are "of all men the most pitiable."
 5. The Jesus of the Bible is an impostor
 6. Knowledgeable Atheists will challenge Christianity here.
- B. Could Jesus have been only a good, moral man and nothing more?
1. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God! **(Jn 10:36)**
 - a. If people believed this claim, they would radically change their lives.
 - b. Jesus said his words were so important that one day men would be judged before God by how they followed them. **(Jn 12:48)**
 2. In light of his claims Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord.
 - a. He was a **liar** if He claimed to be the Son of God and knew He was not. If this is true He should be exposed.
 - b. He was a **lunatic** if He claimed to be the Son of God but was just a man. Sane people do not make this claim!
 - c. He is **Lord** if His claim is true. - There is no middle ground!
- C. So far we have not considered any evidence. We have only identified the nature of Christianity and the foundation on which it rests.

II. The Nature of the Evidence - Historical, Eyewitness Testimony.

- A. Many when they speak of faith think in terms of feelings, tradition, and prejudice.
1. This is not the Biblical concept of faith.
 2. Faith is based upon evidence. **(Heb 11:1; 1 Pt 3:15; Jn 8:32)**
 3. Those who say faith is a "blind leap in the dark" are wrong.

- 4. The Christian is not to "park his brains at the door".
- B. At the heart of every sermon of the apostles is their eyewitness testimony of the raised Christ. (**Acts 2:32; 3:14-15; 5:30-32; 10:39-43; 13:27-31**)

III. The Validity of Historical Testimony.

- A. All personal knowledge that we have can be reduced to two categories - testimony and memory.
 - 1. Testimony deals with things that others have told us.
 - 2. Memory relates to those things we have personally seen.
- B. Every day we accept things as true based upon testimony.
- C. Consider some people of history we accept from testimony.
 - 1. Napoleon.
 - 2. Caesar.
 - 3. George Washington.
- D. But not all testimony is valid!
 - 1. Many will lie or simply are mistaken when they bear testimony.
 - 2. On what basis do we reject some testimony and accept other testimony?
- E. Tests for Accepting or Rejecting Testimony.
 - 1. Is the person giving testimony in a position to know the facts?
 - 2. Does he have a ulterior motive in telling his account?
 - 3. Is this person of good character? Is he reliable?
 - 4. Are there other witnesses and do they agree?

IV. The New Testament Passes the Test.

- A. Were the apostles in a position to know the facts? (**1 Jn 3:1-3**)
- B. Did the apostles have any advantages in lying about the resurrection? (**1 Cor 15:30-32**)
- C. Are the writings of the apostles historically accurate?

"So far is such from being the case, however, that the greatest of all New Testament archaeologists, Sir William Ramsay, who made the most extensive studies anyone has ever undertaken on the authenticity of these data recorded in Acts, finally said (even though he began his studies as a skeptic), "Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historic sense,... In short this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."

b. Listen to the challenge of another writer.

"On the contrary, no statement in the New Testament has to this date been refuted by an unquestioned find of science or history. This in itself is a unique testimony to the amazing accuracy and authenticity of the New Testament records."

- D. Was there agreement between the numerous witnesses? (**1 Cor 15:1-6**)
- E. If you reject the New Testament as being unhistorical, you must for consistency's sake reject all of ancient history!
 - 1. Most knowledgeable atheists recognize this point.
 - 2. Their main objections lie in other areas.

V. The Resurrection Scene (Mt 27:57-66)

A. Jesus was Dead.

1. Hear the description of an eyewitness. **(Jn 19:32-36)**

2. Medical authorities today indicate that “blood and water” was positive proof of death.

B. The body was placed in a new tomb. **(Mt 27:60)**

1. There was only one body to account for.

C. The tomb was cut out of rock. **(Mt 27:60)**

1. There would be only one way in and one way out.

D. A large stone covered the entrance. **(Mt 27:60)**

1. This boulder was to prevent any easy access to the body.

E. A Roman seal was placed on the stone. **(Mt 27:66)**

1. This signified that the full power and authority of Rome would stand against the one who broke the seal.

F. A Roman Guard was placed at the tomb. **(Mt 27:65-66)**

G. The tomb was inspected carefully. **(Jn 20:3-8, 11)**

VI. Who Moved the Stone?

A. Did the Jews? **(Mt 27:62-66)**

1. The Jews were the very ones trying to prevent the resurrection.

2. If so they had a perfect time to present the body 50 days later! **(Acts 2:32, 36)**

B. Did the Romans?

1. The Romans would not want to risk their necks for what they would consider as "silly Jewish superstition".

2. The penalty for a Roman guard's failure was death. **(Acts 16:26-27; 27:42)**

C. Did the Disciples?

1. This was the best explanation the smartest men among the Jews could come up with. **(Mt 28:11-15)**

2. If they were asleep, how did they know it was the disciples?

3. Why did the Roman authorities not prosecute the apostles as grave robbers?

4. Did the apostles give their lives for a lie?

5. Their account is believable. **(Mk 16:9-14)**

D. Who then moved the stone? **(Acts 13:27-31)**

1. Our God moved the stone!

2. Consider what the non-Christian, Jewish historian Josephus said:

The Jewish historian Josephus, who lived from A.D. 37 to 95, wrote about the administration of Pilate in his Antiquities. Here is what he had to say about Jesus in XVIII.3.3.(63): There was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it be right to call Him a man; for He was a doer of marvelous works, a teacher of men who received the truth with pleasure; and He won over to Himself many Jews and many of the Greek [race] also. This one was the Christ. And when, upon accusation of the leading men among us, Pilate had condemned Him to the cross, those who had loved Him at the first did not cease; for He appeared to them alive again on the third day, as the divine prophets had

spoken these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him. And even until now the "sect" of Christians, named after this one [man], has not ceased.

VII. Modern Day Attempts to Deny the Resurrection

A. The Swoon Theory.

1. The enemies were closely watching the cross. (**Mk 15:31-32; 15:44-45**)
2. The burial process itself would have killed Jesus. (**Jn 19:39-40**)
3. How could Jesus have done this? (**Lk 24:13-15, 32**)

B. Mass hallucination, etc..

VIII. The Significance of the Resurrection.

A. Jesus is the Son of God. (Rom 1:3-4**)**

B. Our resurrection is certain. (1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:13-14; Acts 17:30-31**)**

Conclusion: Do you believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead?

1. Are you living the Christian life? Are you ready for judgment?
2. Dying words of atheists.

Ingersoll: "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul, from hell, if there be a hell."

Voltaire: (He predicted that in less than 100 years the Bible would be discarded and Christianity swept from the earth. Like Tom Paine, his press was used to print Bibles, and his home was used by the The International Bible Society as a depot to store Bibles before shipment.): "I am abandoned by God and man; I will give you half of what I am worth, if you will give me six month's life," to the doctor treating him. When told it could not be done, he continued, "Then I shall die and go to hell."

Sir Thomas Scott: "Until this moment I thought there was neither a God nor a hell. Now I know and feel there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty."