

Part 1 – Jesus

The Resurrection

Jesus Resurrection

As we approach Easter, our thoughts centre on Jesus the man, the cross and the Resurrection (empty tomb).

Today we will touch on the

- historical look at the resurrection of Jesus
- next week - theological look at Jesus as the Jewish Messiah (in OT/NT)

Competition with Bunnies & Eggs

We would have to agree that the resurrection of Christ is not the main topic of discussion at Easter for most – rather it's **Easter bunnies** and **eggs**.

But we should not give up – the **message of the cross is gripping** and once all the evidence and information is weighed up and considered, a **compelling argument** can be presented to encourage people to faith.

Who is Jesus

First a bit about Jesus

- a first century middle eastern, Palestinian Jew
- regarded as a prophet, a magician, a healer, a mystic
- gathered a band of followers (disciples) whom he trained
- preached a message of repentance, God's love & forgiveness, coming judgement
- revealed Himself as the Son of God – God Himself in the flesh
- confirmed His authority by doing spectacular public & private miracles (Lazarus, Lepers, Jairus daughter, withered hand, paralyses)
- displayed that he had power over demon spirits
- challenged the religious Jewish elites calling them hypocrites

Pointed to Himself

- made incredible claims about Himself (John 14:6)
- prophesied his death at the hands of the Jews
- prophesied his resurrection 3 days later

His Death – The Story

Jesus has been travelling around the land of (what was known as) Palestine

Lots of activities (many of which challenged the religious system & authorities):

- preaching
- teaching
- healing
- baptising

Ambushed

He was betrayed and ambushed in the Garden of Gethsemane by one of His followers (Judas Iscariot) who led the religious armed guards to His camp.

He was then taken before various religious and civil councils for judgement:

- Religious Jews accused him of sedition
- accused Christ of encouraging rebellion and proclaiming Himself as King
- This challenged the authority of Caesar (Emperor Tiberius)
- This charge of insurrection is how Jesus ended up on a Roman cross rather than being stoned to death (the ancient Jewish method of execution)
- Interestingly, he was found not guilty by the Roman governor of Judea (Pontius Pilate) AD 26–36 – but crowd demanded His death
- Pilot, worried about a riot, sentenced Jesus to death

His Punishment

- mocked & beaten
- spat upon & hit with sticks
- Scourged (39 lashes) Crown of thorns was placed on his head
- Stripped naked & forced to carry his cross
- Nailed to a cross
- After death, speared through the side by Roman soldier

The Anatomy of Suffering

The whip that was used, called a flagrum, consisted of

- braided leather thongs
- metal balls and pieces of sharp bone woven into the braids
- caused deep lacerations, bruising and contusions
- lacerations exposed skeletal muscles, underlying veins, sinews, and bowels
- some victims would not survive the scouring

Crucifixion

Romans were experts in inflicting suffering on their victims – Crucifixion was penalty for capital crimes

- reserved for slaves, foreigners, insurrectionists, vilest crimes
- was excruciatingly painful (we get the word from latin Crux - “cross” + “tormented”)
- death came through suffocation – as the victims had to lift themselves to breathe;
- broken legs hastened death;
- Jesus was on the cross for 6 hours – relatively short time to die (some people lasted days); probably attributed to terrible scourging (causing **hypovolemic shock**)

Hypovolemic Shock

Flogged victims would go into hypovolemic shock:

- refers to low blood volume in the body = shock

The results of this would be

- 1) The heart would **race** to pump blood that was not there.
- 2) The victim would collapse or **faint** due to low blood pressure.
- 3) The **kidneys** would shut down to preserve body fluids.
- 4) The person would experience extreme **thirst** as the body desired to replenish lost fluids.

The evidence from Scripture hypovolemic shock:

- collapsed as He carried His own cross to Golgotha (John 19:17) (Simon carry the cross)
- collapse indicates He had low blood pressure
- He was thirsty as He hung on the cross (John 19:28), indicating low bodily fluids

Pericardial & Pleural Effusion

Prior to death, the sustained rapid heartbeat caused by hypovolemic shock also causes fluid to gather in the sack around the heart and around the lungs. This gathering of fluid in the membrane around the heart is called **pericardial effusion**, and the fluid gathering around the

lungs is called **pleural effusion**. This explains why, after Jesus died and a Roman soldier thrust a spear through Jesus' side, piercing both the lungs and the heart, blood and water came from His side just as John recorded in his Gospel ([John 19:34](#)).

Jesus Death Accepted

It is universally accepted that Jesus was a real man who died open the cross. Even atheistic scholars hold this view.

 **Gerd Ludemann (Atheist Scholar)**

“Jesus’ death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable.”

Other Religious Leaders Remains

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Bahá'í Faith | Located in Israel - the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh contains the remains of Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the Bahá'í Faith. |
|  Buddhism | The Buddha's body was cremated and the relics were placed in monuments e.g. the Temple of the Tooth - Sri Lanka (the right tooth relic). |
|  Confucianism | The grave of Confucius is in his home town of Qufu, Shandong Province, China. |
|  Islam | Muhammad is buried in the Al-Masjid an-Nabawi ("Mosque of the Prophet") in the city of Medina in Saudi Arabia. |
|  Mormonism | Joseph Smith is buried at the Smith Family Cemetery in Nauvoo, Illinois in the United States. |
|  Sikhism | Guru Nanak remains are located in a small village named Kartarpur on the West bank of the Ravi River in Punjab, Pakistan. |
|  Jehovah Witness | Pyramid memorial near Russell's gravesite in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. |

Resurrection – Things Get Interesting

 **John 11:25 (NIV)**

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

- On the Sunday morning (the 3rd day) – the scriptures tell us that some of the followers of Jesus, women, approached the tomb to find it empty and the guards gone.
- There instead, was **an angel of God** who **moved the stone**, freaked out the **guards & casually chatted** with the women about Jesus rising from the dead.
- The women thought that Jesus’ body had been **stolen**.
- They ran and **told the disciples** and the disciples ran to the tomb, to find it empty.
- The disciples went on to preach the resurrection as they knew that He had risen because they saw Him with their own eyes.

Jesus’ Appearances

These all happened over a 40 day period following Jesus’ death:

 **Mary Magdalene (thought he was a gardener (John 20:14-16)**

 **Mary The Mother Of James, Salome, And Joanna (Matt 28:9)**

 **Peter (Simon) the apostle (Luke 24:34)**

 **Two Disciples On The Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-16)**

 **The Disciples - Thomas was Absent (Upper Room John 20:19, 20, 24)**

 **All Of The Disciples (Thomas says “My Lord and My God” John 20:26-28)**

 **Seven Disciples At The Sea Of Galilee (John 20:1-2)**

 **All Of The Disciples at a Mountain (Matt 28:16-17)**

 **Over Five Hundred People (1 Cor 15:6)**

 **James Then all the Disciples Again (1 Cor 15:7)**

 **Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:3-5)**

The three truths are:

- 1) The tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered empty by a group of women on the Sunday following the crucifixion.
- 2) Jesus' disciples had real experiences with one whom they believed was the risen Christ.
- 3) As a result of the preaching of these disciples, which had the resurrection at its centre, the Christian church was established and grew.

So, What Happened to Jesus?

When considering the evidence and evaluating what happened that first Easter, we must be conscious to two principles:

- The theories or alternate explanations must take into account all the facts surrounding the resurrection of Christ;
- One must not force the evidence into a preconceived conclusion, but let the evidence speak for itself.

Alternate Theories about the Resurrection

Various theories challenging the narrative of the scriptures have been circulated – they are:

1. Swoon Theory

Jesus did not really die - He only swooned (fainted) on the cross:

- Jesus fainted from exhaustion
- Everyone saw a revived or resuscitated Jesus
- Jesus was actually alive when He was buried
- He revived in the coolness of the tomb and departed

Problems

- **This theory completely ignores the facts of His death**
- He was judged dead by the Roman soldiers
- He was speared piercing the heart and lungs (blood and water)
- He was judged dead by the Jews (who requested the placing of guards)
- He was judged dead by the women (who were trying to further prepare the body)
- The cool damp air healed him
- He unravelled his death bindings (bound with approx. 100lbs of spice)

- He had to push a stone away
- He had to fight off the guards
- And then appear to His followers (He would have been in very bad shape!)

Requires more faith than the resurrection to believe!

2. Hallucination Theory

All Christ's post-resurrection appearances were hallucinations:

- all the post-resurrection appearances can therefore be dismissed

Problems

- How can so many people have similar hallucinations?
- How does a **group** hallucination occur (500 people together)?
- The supposed hallucinations occur at different times (over 40 days), in different areas, with different people
- The disciples were reluctant to believe to begin with (first women @ tomb, Peter, Thomas, Emmaus Rd, Saul)
-

The hallucination theory is simply not plausible because it contradicts laws and principles which psychiatrists say are essential to hallucinations.

Psychiatrists claim:

- Only certain kinds of people have hallucinations. These are usually high-strung, highly imaginative, and very nervous people. In fact, usually only paranoid or schizophrenic individuals have hallucinations. But Christ appeared to many different types of people. His appearances were not restricted to people of any particular psychological make up.
- Hallucinations are linked in an individual's subconscious -- to his particular past experiences and this was certainly not a part of any past experience.
- Hallucinations are usually restricted to when and where they occur. They usually occur in a nostalgic atmosphere or in a place of familiar surroundings which places the person to a reminiscing mood.
- They occur in people when there is a spirit of anticipation or hopeful expectation. The historical record shows no such anticipation existed. They were prone to disbelieve even after they were told of the resurrection.

3. The Impersonation Theory

This is the view that the appearances were not really Christ at all, but someone impersonating Him. This, the opponents say, is evident because in some cases they did not recognize Him at first (or at all).

Problems:

- Reluctant disciples would not have believed an impersonator
- Thomas was the chief disbeliever (yet bowed to Jesus)
- The wounds would have been impossible to impersonate (Christ proof to Thomas was His wounds)
- His followers had been with Him in close quarters for 3 years
- Many times he appeared to them in locked quarters

4. The Spiritual Resurrection Theory

Not a real physical resurrection.

- Christ's body remained in the grave and
- His real resurrection was spiritual in nature

Problems:

- The facts are ignored with this view – a physical body disappeared!
- He was touched, and handled by His followers

5. The Theft Theory

The disciples stole the body – and made up the story of the resurrection.

Problems:

- Begs the questions - who **could** and who **would** steal the body?
- The **Romans** were guarding the body – had no reason to steal it;
- The **Women** could not – they could not move the stone (and were wondering who would help them move the stone) – plus guards are posted to stop theft;
- The **Disciples** would not have – they were disbelievers and fearful, scattered and huddled (2 had even left town and were heading to Emmaus);
- The **Jews** would not have – they requested the guards – if they had stolen the body, all they needed to do was to reveal the body to kill the resurrection story;

Summary

The disciples viewed, touched and spoke with Jesus after His death. They were so convinced that they would risk their lives to proclaim the truth.

Jews & the Body

If the resurrection story was fabricated by the disciples, all the Jews had to do to kill the story was to display the body – they could not do this!

They in fact admitted that the tomb was empty:

 **Matthew 28:12-13 (NIV)**

When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away ...’”

Stop and Think About It

If the resurrection story was fabricated by the disciples, then they knowingly and deceitfully:

-  Preached, taught and wrote about the lie
-  Were flogged & imprisoned for the lie
-  Were beaten, tortured & stoned for the lie
-  Sacrificed themselves for the lie
-  Died horrific deaths for a lie

And not one ever weakened or confessed that it was all a lie! Why?

Because Jesus did rise from the dead - it was the truth.

 ***Instead - the disciples knew the resurrection was true and all their days made it central to their preaching about Jesus.***

They died testifying to it ...

Conclusion

None of alternative theories deals with the evidence & facts of the resurrection:

The evidence says

- He rose from death
- the resurrection marks Him out as the true Son of God (Rom. 1:4)

- as the Saviour of the world
- the means of our justification
- the means of our peace with God through personal faith in Christ (Rom. 4:25-5:1)

The words of **Gamaliel** are fascinating as he addressed the Jews religious leaders who were trying to stop the disciples from preaching:

 **Acts 5:38-39 (NIV)**

Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”

You can become a Child of God

 **John 1:12**

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, ... to those who believe in His name,

Look at the simple equation for salvation:

 ***Believe + Receive = Become***

Follow Christ by Faith

 **John 3:16-17**

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him

Let's pray.