

Session 5: The Resurrection of Jesus

I. Why is the resurrection important?

A. It validated Jesus' ministry and claims.

1. Jesus' claim to be _____

and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 1:4)

2. Jesus' prediction of _____

And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:29–31)

B. The resurrection was at the center of the _____' teaching.

Read Acts 2:22-36 -- the first church sermon!

C. The resurrection is at the center of our _____ as Christians.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1–4)

II. What are the facts of the resurrection?

A. Fact #1: Jesus died by _____.

B. Fact #2: The disciples _____ believed that Jesus rose from the dead.

See 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

C. **Fact #3: _____, a persecutor of the church, was converted.**

Confirmed by: Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Tertullian, Dionysius of Corinth, and more

D. **Fact #4: _____, a skeptic of Jesus, was converted.**

Confirmed by: Josephus, Hegesippus, and Clement of Alexandria

III. **Opposing theories, given the facts listed above**

A. A bad game of “telephone”

One response: Paul was converted not by testimony of Jesus’ disciples.

B. Wrong genre, bro.

One response: Certainly “fable genre” existed during the time of Christ, but so did “historical genre.” Merely presenting another option doesn’t mean that option is to be preferred.

C. The disciples were frauds.

One response: Frauds don’t typically die for their lie.

Counter response: People die for their beliefs all the time.

Yes, in the case of followers of a specific religion (those who have been deceived), but this wasn’t the case for the disciples who were eyewitnesses.

D. Someone stole the body!

One response: This was the story the chief priests perpetuated in Matthew 28 (11-15). The religious rulers of the day would have made it their priority to search for Jesus’ body if they thought it had been stolen.

E. Other theories:

1. Wrong tomb
2. Apparent death

3. Psychological phenomena
 4. Hallucination
 5. ...and so on...
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Argument for Jesus' Resurrection: from *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, by Gary Habermas

- Jesus' disciples sincerely believed he rose from the dead and appeared to them.
 - External evidence and events support the authenticity of their belief in his resurrection: the conversion of the church persecutor Paul, the conversion of the skeptic James, and the empty tomb.
 - Since no plausible opposing theories exist that can account for the historical facts, Jesus' resurrection is the only plausible explanation.
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Why the Discrepancies Among the Resurrection Accounts?

“Professor Ehrman has pointed out all four Gospels report the Resurrection with vastly different details. Why the discrepancies? Which of the four is the most accurate?”

The short answer to your question is that all four of the gospel accounts are completely accurate. The only quibble I have with Professor Ehrman's characterization of the resurrection accounts in the four canonical gospels is your word “vastly” above. I would definitely agree that the four gospels report the resurrection with different details. I would not agree that they are “vastly” different.

Why are they different? The answer is in part that each author has a different purpose for writing and a different immediate audience, but that recognition in no way means that the authors were making the historical facts fit their particular biases. The more accurate answer is that the gospel authors experienced the events from different angles (John, Matthew, and perhaps Mark) or received their information from careful research utilizing different eyewitness sources (Luke). Because they saw what happened from different places, literally and metaphorically, they wrote with different perspectives.

As every journalism school in the world will tell us, accounts that differ on details are not necessarily contradictory or untrue. For example, Matthew says that two women came to the tomb of Jesus very early

in the morning the day after the sabbath and saw an angel of the Lord, but Mark mentions three women coming to the tomb and encountering a young man there. As for the women, wherever we have three women, we necessarily have two women. Matthew did not think it significant for his purposes to mention Salome, but Mark did. Although Mark says the women met a young man at the tomb and Matthew says it was an angel, they both describe the person as dressed in white. Mark merely says that the appearance of the young man elicited amazement from the women, while Matthew says his appearance was like lightening. They are clearly both describing the same phenomena, though from different points of view.

Luke does not mention how many women or which women specifically came to the tomb, but he does say they encountered two men there, not one man, and John agrees with his number. There is no problem that Matthew and Mark only mention the one man or angel who actually did the talking while Luke and John add the detail, which was important to them, that there were actually two of these beings present. Far from indicating error, these differing details lend credibility to the authenticity of each of the accounts. If everyone describes an event exactly the same way, the discerning reader or juror should suspect collusion on a rehearsed story.

John's record of the resurrection focuses on the experiences of Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John, but it does not contradict the synoptic gospel accounts. Only Matthew tells us about the report of the guard. Only Luke mentions the two unnamed disciples who encountered the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Only John reveals that Thomas was not present the first time Jesus appeared to the apostles following the resurrection. These unique additions to the shared basic narrative fill out the history and make it more personal and true to life.

The movie "Vantage Point" from 2008 demonstrates how having several witnesses experience the same newsworthy event from different perspectives can add to the proper interpretation of what actually happened. Initial appearances may be deceiving, and apparent contradictions in the testimony actually keep people from jumping to the wrong conclusions about what actually happened. Historians are delighted that there are four accounts of the resurrection instead of just one. They do not contradict one another; they complement.

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From, *The Ehrman Project*