

The Resurrection Factor – Part 4

Josh McDowell

I. Introduction.

A. The stone was moved.

B. The tomb was empty.

II. How did the tomb become empty?

A. Dr. Meyer argued that Jerusalem was the last place that Christianity could have started.

1. It could only happen if Jesus' body was removed from His tomb.

2. Anyone else with this claim would have been killed.

3. The people knew that the tomb was empty and therefore could not stand against the evidence.

B. Gamaliel's testimony. (Acts 5:34-42)

1. He gives an example of someone else who had followers and the movement was overthrown. Therefore, he advised that the Jewish Council not prevent the Christians because this movement also would fade if it was not from God.

2. However, the Jewish Council flogged and beat them anyways. It would be ridiculous for the Council to do this if they could just go over to the empty tomb and demonstrate the truth to them. But they could not, so they had to use threats to prevent them from teaching.

C. Yet the empty tomb alone did not convince anyone of the resurrection.

1. There were many natural ways that the body could have disappeared.

2. The supernatural explanation though fits all the evidence for the case.

3. Jesus' appearances convinced the disciples.

4. Paul appealed to over five hundred people who had witnessed Jesus' resurrected self.

III. Dealing with the evidence.

A. You must take all the evidence into account.

B. You cannot approach the facts with preconceived assumptions.

IV. Opposing theories.

A. The women went to the wrong tomb.

1. However, if the women went to the wrong tomb, then so did the Apostles, and so did the Jewish Council.
2. Common sense says that the women would have been ultimately taken to the right tomb.

B. It was an unknown tomb.

1. Many of the shallow explanations by the critics speaks louder for the veracity of the resurrection than those for it.
2. No evidence for it.
3. It was a private burial area, not public.
4. All were aware of the burial situation of Christ.
5. It does not fit the facts. There has never been one theory that fits all the facts of the resurrection.

C. Christ really did not die - he passed out and was placed into a damp tomb that healed him.

1. The resulting activities that Christ did though - removing a stone, appearing in glory and ministering to others cannot be accounted for at all.
2. He was clearly dead.

D. All the different appearances of Christ were hallucinations.

1. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, other women, to Peter, to the disciples of Amais, the disciples without Thomas, the disciples with Thomas, to James, to five hundred at one time, to others at the ascension, etc.
2. The American Psychiatric Association defines hallucinations as a false, emotional, and personal perception where there is no external reference for what they perceive.
3. It is also defined as a subjective perception of what appears to be an objective reality.
4. Hallucinations only occur with certain people of personal and genetic makeup.
5. No two people have the same hallucination - it is subjective.
6. If five hundred people all had the same exact hallucination you would have five hundred miracles comparable to the resurrection.
7. If they were hallucinations the body would still be in the tomb.

V. Conclusion: It is a historical fact that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

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STUDY GUIDE

Part 1: What do you see?

1. What was the significant about the place where the crucifixion took place in regards to evidence for the resurrection?

2. Review Acts 5:34-42. What is the significance of the Jewish Council's actions regarding the Apostles following Gamaliel's advice?

3. What is it about the nature of hallucination that makes it a highly implausible cause for the Apostles' belief in the resurrection?

Part 2: What do you think?

1. Why is the empty tomb not enough to establish the fact of Christ's resurrection? Why was it not enough for the Apostles?

2. Summarize the opposing arguments. Which one stands out to you the most? Explain.

3. In your opinion, do you think the Biblical writers foresaw that many would challenge the resurrection? Did they do a thorough enough job of presenting their case in writing? How, or how not?

Part 3: What will you do?

1. If you share the conviction with the speaker that the resurrection is a historical fact, what does the resurrection demand from your life?

2. In light of the message, how will you defend the resurrection? What arguments do you foresee being raised by others? Are any unique to those that the speaker raised?

3. If the testimony of the resurrection sat on the shoulders of many, how should a Christian's testimony stand? How should you witness in regards to your conclusion?
