

The Resurrection Does Not Have Any Signs of Being an Invented Story

by Kenneth Francis (April 2018)



The Resurrection, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1635

The Bible tells us that the “fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’.” (Psalm 14:1) And for the first time since 1956, Easter Sunday (1st April 2018) will coincide with April Fools’ Day. But according to Scripture, only a fool could deny the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

But is the Resurrection something that we should just believe in by blind faith? Aside from properly basic belief, it’s certainly not, as the Resurrection is one of the most studied events in history. If it is false, then Christianity is based on wishful thinking a delusion; even St Paul admits to that.

However, it is more probable than improbable that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is true because of the many factors that point toward its authenticity. Let us look at some of these factors: The majority of distinguished biblical scholars agree on the witnesses’ testimonies of the appearances of Jesus after the crucifixion.

Despite this, some sceptics have asked, could the appearances be hallucinations? This is unlikely, as hallucinations are primarily personal subjective events, according to distinguished psychologist Dr. Gary Collins. Collins wrote some fifty books and numerous papers on psychology. He said:

Hallucinations are individual occurrences. By their very nature only one person can see a given hallucination at a time. They certainly aren’t something which can be seen by a group of people. Neither is it possible that a person could somehow induce a hallucination in somebody else. Since a hallucination exists only in this

subjective personal sense, it is obvious that others cannot witness it.

And Philosopher J.P. Moreland also says of the hallucination theory:

Since the disciples would not have been in a frame of mind to expect a Messianic resurrection, they would not have been in a state of expectation longing necessary for hallucinations to take place.

But even if they had such hallucinations of Jesus, which seems unlikely, they would not have necessarily interpreted them to mean that He had been raised from the dead physically and ascended into the heavens. World-renowned theologian and Bible-scholar, N.T. Wright, says neither in Plato nor Aristotle do we find any suggestion that resurrection [permanent], the return to bodily life of the dead person, was either desirable or possible.

Even according to the ancient Paganism encountered in the works of Homer, once someone died they could not become bodily alive again; according to their thinking, there was no physical resurrection with ascension to Heaven.

World-leading philosopher William Lane Craig says:

For a first century Jew, the idea that a man might be raised from the dead while his body remained in the tomb

was simply a contradiction in terms. In the words of E.E. Ellis, 'It is very unlikely that the earliest Palestinian Christians could conceive of any distinction between resurrection and physical 'grave emptying' resurrection. To them, an anastasis without an empty grave would have been about as meaningful as a square circle'.

Some sceptics argue that the story of the Resurrection is a made-up story, a hoax turned into propaganda. Propaganda by its very nature is something that is propagated, in this case, by word of mouth.

Furthermore, the idea of a group of women to be the first to witness the empty tomb was unthinkable because the 'ordinary' woman during that era was a second-class citizen and her testimony in a court of law was only permitted if there were no male witnesses available.

The first-century AD Romano-Jewish scholar and historian, Josephus, wrote about Jesus and Jewish history. He said: "But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and of their sex." And in Luke 24:11: "They did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense."

Moreover, there are the brute-honest accounts in the four gospels of the embarrassing cowardice of the disciples. On the night before Jesus' crucifixion they fell asleep when He'd asked them to pray. When the authorities came to arrest their friend and master and, their loyalty and bravery was put to the test, they ran away.

Who in their right mind would admit such shameful things unless they were true? This is far from being propaganda or indeed a hoax. Hoaxes work by using information that is believable and credible. As for conspiracy: former atheist-turned-Christian academic J. Warner Wallace is regarded by many as one of America's greatest homicide detectives. He is also Professor of Apologetics at Biola University, USA. He said this about the resurrection: "I've written a chapter in *Cold Case Christianity* describing the five necessary elements of successful conspiracies, and none of these elements were present for the Apostles."

The Apostles were even too scared to give Jesus a proper burial. Instead, Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the same court also involved in sentencing Jesus to death, the Sanhedrin, buried Jesus in his own prepared tomb. Would the disciples have written this? Would it be to their advantage to make up such a story? Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy man from a high court of seventy individuals which presided in Jerusalem.

It seems Joseph of Arimathea would be the last person to care for Jesus in such a way and give him his own personal tomb. All this is not very flattering to the followers of Jesus. And it's certainly not the stuff of propaganda or conspiracy.

Brian Chilton, a pastor at Cross Examined Ministries, said:

J. Warner Wallace has noted in his lectures and books that when a conspiracy is formed, three motivating factors are

behind such a move—power, greed, and/or lust. The disciples would hold no power behind claiming the Resurrection as history. They were running around while often being threatened by the Jewish and Roman authorities. As far as greed, they taught that one should not desire earthly possessions, but spiritual ones. Lust was not a factor, either.

Pastor Chilton points out that the disciples taught celibacy before marriage and marital fidelity after marriage. And N.T. Wright highlights in his book, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, that the disciples had no theological motivation behind claiming that Jesus had risen from the dead as they were anticipating a military hero and a final resurrection at the end of time.

Furthermore, the disciples, who go from frightened, timid followers of Jesus before his death to bold evangelists willing to die preaching his resurrection, do not fall into the categories of a group lying for advantage. They lived virtuous lives, they did not desire money or material wealth; and they risked their lives, and ultimately lost their lives, bar one (John), for not only what they believed in but also what they personally witnessed. And before they lost their lives, their friends and families scorned them; their social standing in the community was also scorned by some Jews and Romans; they had no political privileges and their possessions were stolen; they were tortured, imprisoned, exiled and crucified and eaten by lions; some were even butchered by gladiators. Would they have endured all of this for a hoax?

Philosopher Dr. Peter Kwasniewski, says:

Consider the Christian's faith in the resurrection of Christ, which, according to St. Paul, is the foundation of our hope of everlasting life. Our belief in the Resurrection is based upon the testimony of contemporary eyewitnesses, who tell us that they saw the risen Lord. Moreover, the dialogue between Christ and the Apostle Thomas is the epitome of empiricism: 'I will not believe until I place my hand in His wounds,' says the doubting Thomas, and Christ obliges: 'Place your hand in my wounds, and doubt no longer.' The disciples who followed Jesus were so confirmed in their faith by the forty days He spent with them after His resurrection that they went on to preach the Gospel everywhere they could get to and suffered agonizing martyrdoms rather than deny the truth they saw, heard, and touched.

Think about it: what kind of people would invent a story with no bias, a negative spin, embarrassing facts, and risk having their world turned upside down? As for the Crucifixion: Historian Bruce L. Shelley writes: "Christianity is the only major religion to have as its central event the humiliation of its God." Once again, who would make up such a story infused with shame?

But back to post-crucifixion: what about the other gods of antiquity who 'resurrected' from the dead? To repeat, the God of Christianity is not in the same category as the Greek, Canaanite, Indian or Norse gods, who are all *contingent* gods and mythologically 'rose from the dead' *spiritually*. In other words, they weren't Necessary Beings. (The next time an atheist says that a Christian is nearly as atheist as he is because he doesn't believe in the 2,870 other gods, while the

Christian doesn't believe in 2,869 gods, point out the above enormous category error he has just made: he's metaphorically confusing apples with oranges).

Also, the miraculous resurrection from the dead of other Biblical characters (even the risen Lazarus eventually died) was temporary on this earth and not permanently with an ascension to the presence of God. 'No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man'. (John 3:13).

Can this be 100% proven? The answer is 'No', in the same way that we can't 100% prove the existence of the external world, aesthetic values and judgments (beauty), the existence of other minds apart from one's own mind, mathematical equations or science. However, we know deep down, whether consciously or unconsciously, in our minds and hearts that the above things do exist. More: belief in the Resurrection, for most deep-thinking Christians, is inextricably linked to a cumulative set of supernatural events linked to Christ's ministry of many miracles on earth.

It is also linked to the fact that no other deity in the history of mankind touches the human condition quite like Jesus. Despite humans being flawed, our lives in many ways reflect the short life of Jesus as he walked the earth and endured happiness, love, sadness, cruelty, hatred, slander, shunned and avoided, rejection, betrayal, being misunderstood and suffering. Even the symbol of the cross has an uncanny resemblance with the protein laminin that holds the membranes of our bodies together ('In Him all things hold together', Colossians 1:16-17) Just Like Jesus, each and every one of us all metaphorically suffer our own personal Golgotha.

The courageous Irish writer/public speaker, John Waters, sums it up well in *First Things* when reflecting after his operation recovery in a cancer ward. Identifying the humane, kind care he received from the medical staff, he wrote:

And this becomes possible only by virtue of Christ's total gift of Himself, because only in Him and in the story of His earthly life is this total affection rendered visible. By coming and dying and rising again, He showed us the ideal in which we might find an echo of His grace, the model on which to base our own longing. This grace is what I felt, lying there. This was not Simon of Cyrene nor the Good Samaritan, but the spirit of Tabitha, raised from the dead following an intervention by Peter, because her charity was found to be indispensable.

None of us know what the future holds but we all can be assured of physical death. We also don't have the luxury of being agnostic regarding the Resurrection, as our eternal souls are at risk of separation from Christ.

The world's leading expert on the Resurrection, Mike Licona, said: "If Jesus actually rose from the dead, truth matters! His claims about Himself and God's love for you matters. You have worth. Your life has meaning, real meaning."

Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

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