

THE THIRD DAY

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

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A DEFENSE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION – PART 1

“On any showing the crucifixion should have put an end to the Jesus movement once and for all in an honor and shame culture like early Judaism.”

- Ben Witherington III

REVIEW OF RESURRECTION FACTS

THE UNDISPUTED FACTS OF THE RESURRECTION

1. Jesus was murdered and buried
2. Three days afterward, His body went missing
3. There were appearances of Jesus over the course of 40 days to various people, including His disciples and unbelievers
4. Christ's appearance transformed His followers and some previous skeptics, and became the central focus of their teaching

Note: These facts are undisputed. Scholars – whether atheist, agnostic, or Christian – who have thoroughly studied the case of the resurrection all agree to these four facts.

The question before us is this: What best explains these facts?

ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESES OF THE RESURRECTION EVENT

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS FOR RESURRECTION

1. The story developed as legend over time; a mere myth
2. Someone moved/stole the body – either the local authorities or the disciples
3. People went to the wrong tomb
4. Swoon theory; Jesus fainted on the cross but revived naturally in the tomb. He didn't actually die
5. The resurrection was spiritual; He 'rose' in the hearts of His followers but the body remained in the grave
6. Hallucination theory; all the sightings of Jesus were imagined
7. Mistaken identity; someone pretended to be Jesus and fooled everyone

REFUTING THE LEGEND/MYTH HYPOTHESIS

- The early dating of the gospels ensures they were written during lifetime of the eyewitnesses who could refute legend
- No example of a legend developing within two generations of an event
- Nearly all scholars agree that the gospels we have today are what were written in the first century
- Event can be traced back to the disciples



REFUTING THE LEGEND/MYTH HYPOTHESIS



- Legend hypothesis cannot explain the historically validated transformation of James or Paul
- The disciples went to their deaths for a truth, not a myth
- The empty tomb is validated by non-Christian sources
- Where are the champions of this theory's evidence?

REFUTING THE LEGEND/MYTH HYPOTHESIS



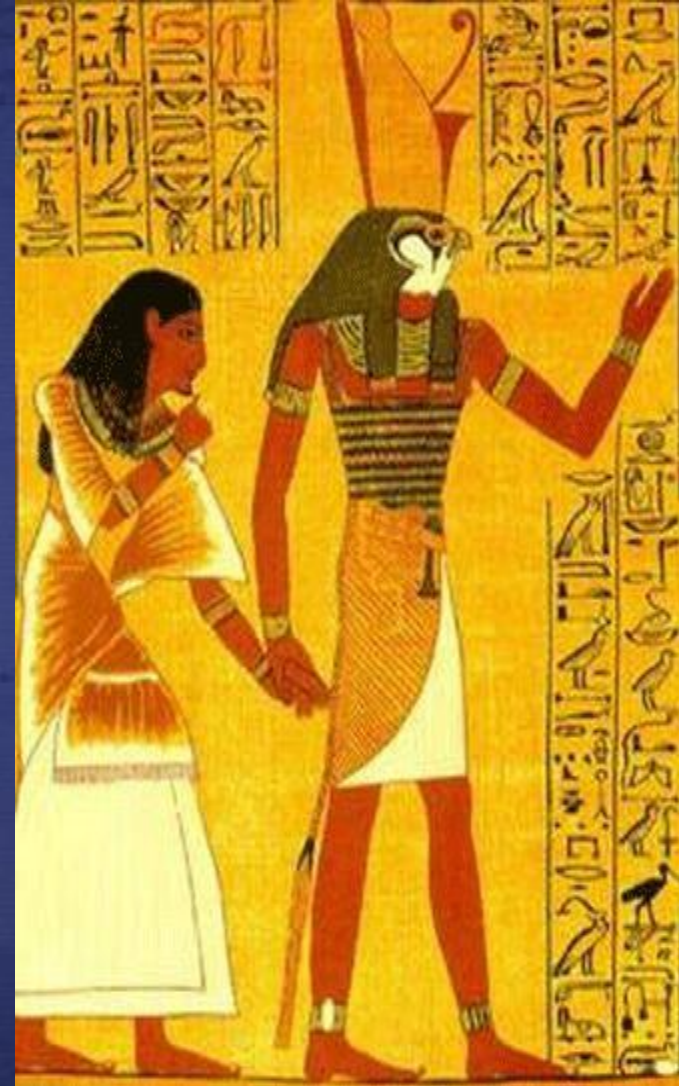
Jesus resurrection was not a copycat of pagan myths

“When the dust has soaked up a person’s
blood, once he is dead, there is no
resurrection.”

-Apollo, founding of Areopagus
Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 647-48

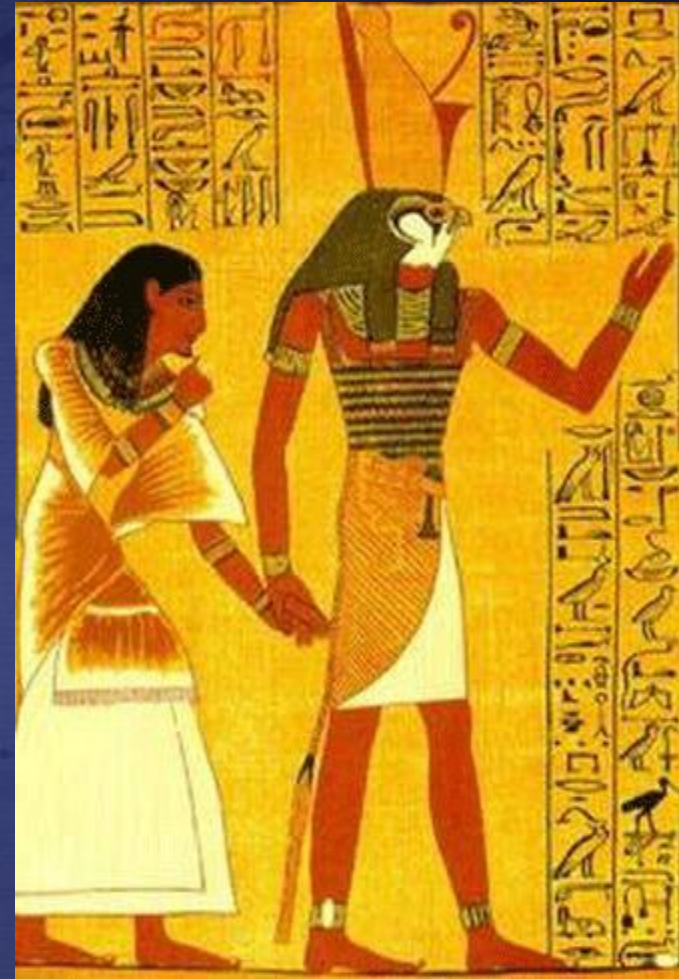
REFUTING THE LEGEND/MYTH HYPOTHESIS

- Horus – Not Resurrected: No account of Horus coming out of the grave with the body he went in with. Some accounts have Horus/Osiris being brought back to life by Isis (after being dismembered) and going to be the lord of the underworld.
- Krishna – Not Resurrected: died and ascended; no resurrection back in this life



REFUTING THE LEGEND/MYTH HYPOTHESIS

- Attis ~ Not Resurrected: Cybele [the great mother goddess] asks Zeus to preserve Attis and he does with the only signs being that his hair continues to grow and his little finger moves continuously. Only supposed resurrection stories of Attis come AD 150, long after the start of Christianity
- Mithras ~ Not Resurrected: he completes his earthly mission then is taken to paradise in a chariot alive and well. Tertullian did write about Mithras believers re-enacting resurrection scenes, but he wrote about this occurring well after New Testament times.



Dr. Gary Habermas' research has shown there is no true dying and rising god until after A.D. 150. The mystery religions, who were very syncretistic (unlike the Jews) likely copy-catted Christianity; it was not the other way around.

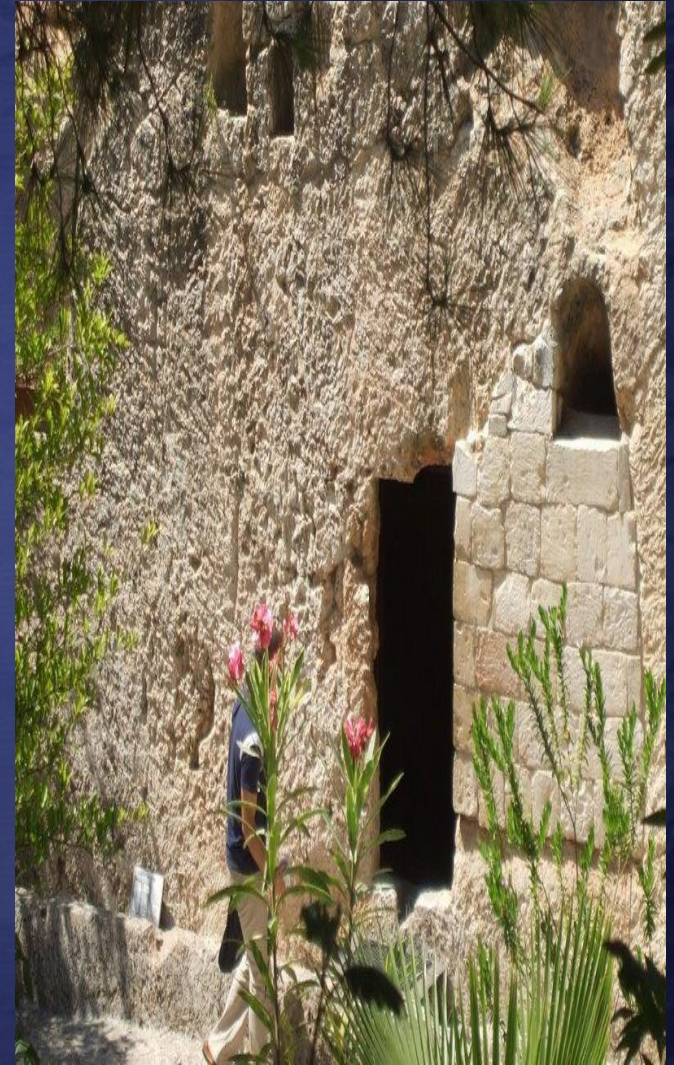
REFUTING THE LEGEND/MYTH HYPOTHESIS

He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.” (Acts 17:18-20)

The point: If dying and rising gods were aplenty in the first century, *why, when the apostle Paul preached Jesus rising from the dead in Acts 17, did the Epicureans and Stoics not remark, “Ah, just like Horus and Mithras...”?* The same would be true of Paul’s discourse in Acts 26; Festus, a Roman (who would have known about the Roman military Mithras cult), said Paul was out of his mind for preaching the resurrection. The resurrection was unique to Christianity.

REFUTING THE STOLEN BODY HYPOTHESIS

- Cannot explain the transformed lives of the disciples
- Cannot explain the transformation of the skeptics James and Paul; their conversion was based on appearance
- A cover-up of this type would be extremely difficult to pull off
- No one dies for what they know to be false
- Empty tomb, on its own, would not convince many (if any)



REFUTING THE STOLEN BODY HYPOTHESIS

Note that the eyewitnesses first assumed the body had been taken; it was Christ's appearance to them that caused them to believe.

"So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.""(John 20:2)

"And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. . . . For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead."(John 20:6-9)

"So the other disciples were saying to him [Thomas], "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.""(John 20:25)

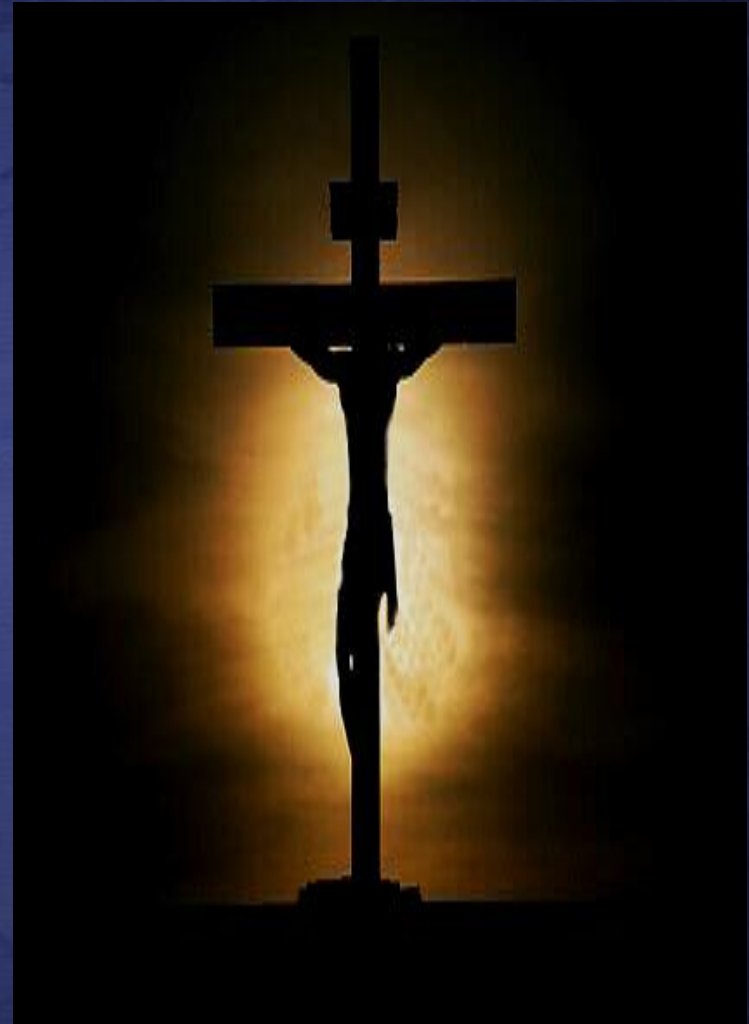
REFUTING THE WRONG TOMB HYPOTHESIS

- Too easy for the religious opponents of Christ to refute – just go to the right tomb and produce the body
- Does not account for the appearances to the disciples
- Does not account for the conversion of James and Paul
- Burial site likely known to all those involved in Christ's death



REFUTING THE APPARENT DEATH HYPOTHESIS

- Jesus was scourged to the point where He was completely disfigured (cf. Is. 52:14)
- Death recorded in all four gospels
- Death viewed by close eyewitnesses
- Roman soldiers did not allow their victims to live
- Spear wound described in John 19:34-35 tells of the rupturing of the pericardium
- Jesus would have to revive in the tomb, push back the stone, overpower the Roman guards, and then appear to His followers and skeptics
- Worship described by disciples would have been unlikely if Jesus was crippling about and in the shape He would be in
- Was seen in glorious form by Paul



“Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.”

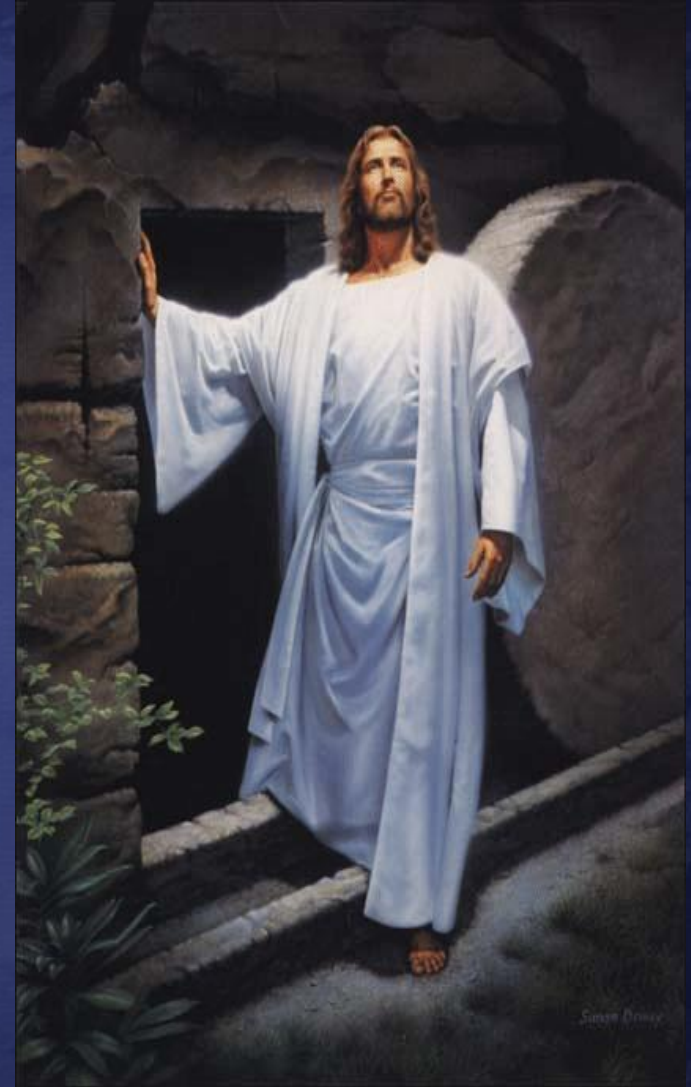
- Journal of American Medical Association

“On the physical death of Jesus Christ”

March 21, 1986

REFUTING THE SPIRITUAL-ONLY RESURRECTION HYPOTHESIS

- The Gospel accounts record that the disciples disbelieved – even on Easter morning. It was the physical appearances of Christ that transformed them
- Thomas doubted the resurrection and only believed once he touched Christ
- Christ took food and ate it in their presence (Luke 24:42-43)
- James was converted via a physical encounter with Jesus



"I believe the best explanation, consistent with both scientific findings and the surviving evidence . . . Is that the first Christians experienced hallucinations of the risen Christ, of one form or another. . . . In the ancient world, to experience supernatural manifestations of ghosts, gods, and wonders was not only accepted, but encouraged."

- Atheist Richard Carrier

"The Spiritual Body of Christ" in *Empty Tomb*, pg. 184.

REFUTING THE HALLUCINATION HYPOTHESIS

- A hallucination is a false perception of something that is not there
- Does not address the empty tomb; officials (or the disciples) could just go to the tomb and produce the body
- Hallucinations are not group experiences; they are individual. Jesus appeared to groups of people over 40 days
- Multiple hallucinations would have had to occur to many different people
- Does not account for the conversion of the skeptical James
- Does not account for the conversion of Paul



Down but not out ... yet.

REFUTING THE TWIN BROTHER HYPOTHESIS

Jesus must have had an unknown, identical twin brother who was separated from him at birth, and who showed up in Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion, stole Jesus' body, and then showed himself to the disciples, leading them to mistakenly infer that Jesus rose from the dead.

Dr. Robert Greg Cavin
University of California Professor, Ph.D.
Dissertation on the Resurrection
(Noted by William Lane Craig in lecture)

Book of Thomas the Contender, part of the Nag Hammadi library, asserts it was Thomas.

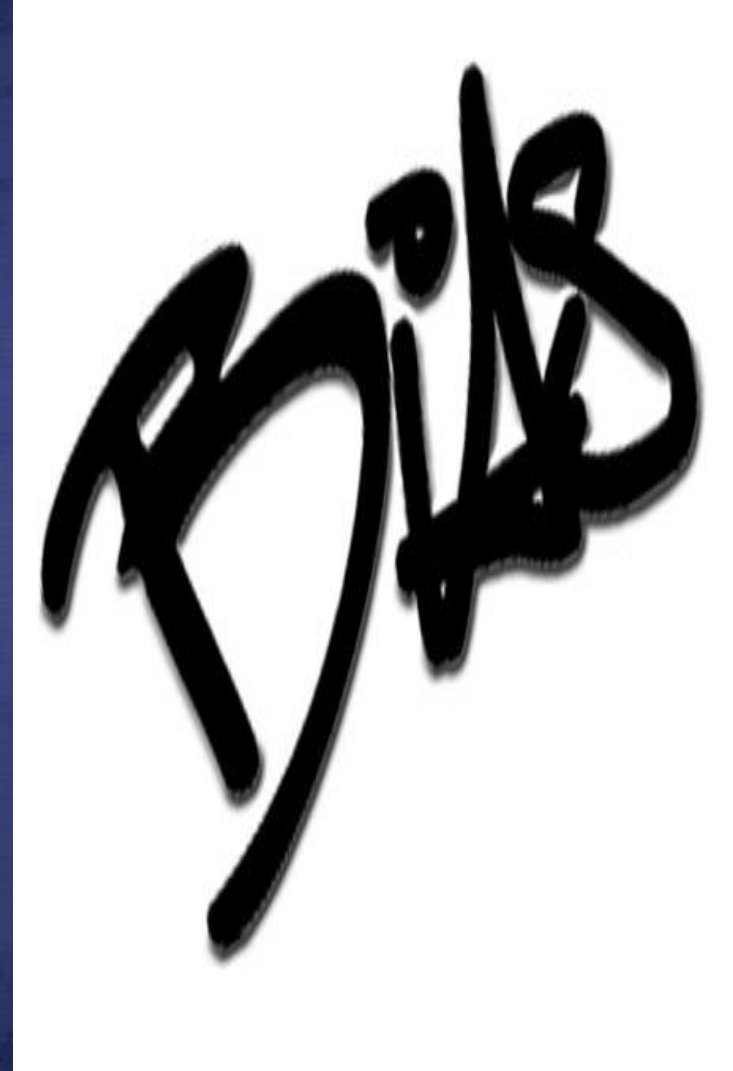
REFUTING THE TWIN BROTHER HYPOTHESIS

- No mention in any historical document of Jesus' twin; only very thin assertion is in one of the Gnostic gospels (Thomas)
- Would have had to mutilate himself to carry the crucifixion scars
- Would be suicide; the 'twin' would have to know what Rome did to his brother and that the same fate would await him
- Bottom line: absolutely no evidence for this theory whatsoever



REFUTING THE BIASED TESTIMONY OBJECTION

- 'Bias' does not mean false; someone may strongly hold a position and tell the truth. This position would say a holocaust victim could not write a true portrayal of the holocaust
- What made them biased? Why would they lie?
- James and Paul's bias originally ran in the opposite direction
- The Gospels state that the disciples originally disbelieved
- Does not account for the empty tomb



REFUTING THE 'GREATER IMPACT' OBJECTION

- Argues that the resurrection would see greater impact in non-Christian historical writings
- Ignores the fact that many books of antiquity have been lost
- Within 150 years of his death, 42 authors, 9 of them secular (Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny, Phlegon, Lucian, Celsus, Suetonius, Thallus, Mara Bar-Serapion) mention Jesus and the resurrection
- Only 5 sources in history mention Julius Caesar's military exploits



CONCLUSIONS

THE UNDISPUTED FACTS OF THE RESURRECTION

1. Jesus was murdered and buried
2. Three days afterward, His body went missing
3. There were appearances of Jesus over the course of 40 days to various people, including His disciples and unbelievers
4. Christ's appearance transformed His followers and some previous skeptics, and became the central focus of their teaching

Again ... the question before us is what best explains these undisputed facts?

Stolen body? Myth? Hallucination? Wrong tomb? Apparent death?
Spiritual-only resurrection? Unknown twin brother?

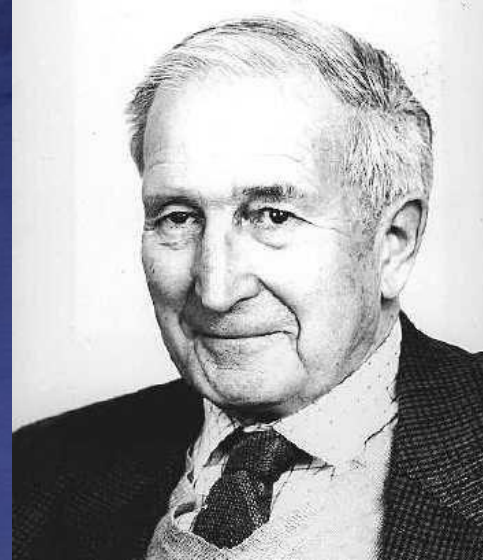
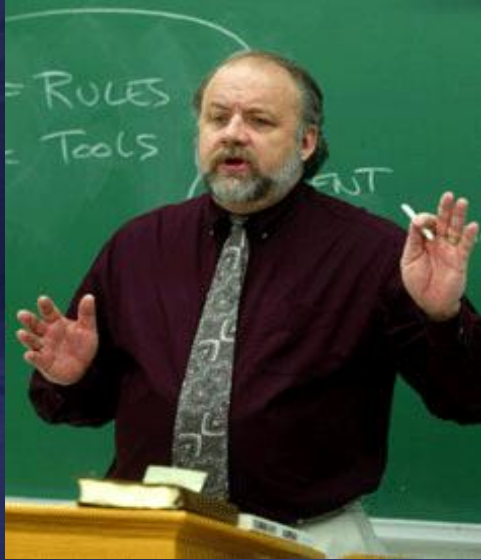
“The proposal that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead possesses unrivalled power to explain the historical data at the heart of early Christianity”

- Bishop N. T. Wright



Given the evidence and logical conclusions from examining other resurrection hypotheses, why do people still reject Christ's resurrection?

REASON #1: COMMITMENT TO NATURALISM



Anthony Flew, noted (now former) atheist debated Gary Habermas on the historicity of the resurrection. In the end, Flew admitted that Habermas had made an air-tight case – that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. What was Flew's answer to that?

It was a one-time physical anomaly...

"I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope that there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that."

- Thomas Nagel
Professor of Philosophy, New York

“See all those historical facts could very well be wrong, truth is we can never say for sure for sure but we can look at the bits of evidence we do have and see if it all hangs right, if it makes sense, if it fits within the context of reason and logic. None of those claims are particularly fantastic or even unlikely to occur, there is no motivation for anyone to have lied or otherwise falsified the records. But when we come to Jesus? Hooboy! First off there are claims of supernatural so that right there is a big red flag.”

- Atheist, Christianpost.com Forums

Commenting on historicity of Jesus and why he believes Jesus never existed

But if we admit God, must we
admit Miracle? Indeed, indeed, you
have no security against it. That is
the bargain"

- C. S. Lewis
Miracles, pg. 169

REASON #2: SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS OF MAN

"The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus."

(John 12:9-11)



“When we lack the will to see things as they really are, there is nothing so mysterious as the obvious.”

- Irving Kristol

”“But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’ ””

(Luke 16:31)

“Nothing good can come if the will is wrong. And to give evidence to him who loves not the truth is to give him more plentiful material for misinterpretation.”

- Richard Weaver

The Reality...?



"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep."
(1 Corinthians 15:20)

THE THIRD DAY

A DEFENSE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION – PART 2