

The Account of the Resurrection

APOLOGETICS

Impact of the Resurrection

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a cornerstone event in Christianity that completes humanity's salvation and holds profound significance for believers. As stated in 1 Corinthians 15:14-19, the apostle Paul emphasizes that if Christ had not risen from the dead, the Christian faith and preaching would be futile, and believers' faith would be empty. "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."

The Resurrection affirms that Jesus conquered death and fulfilled the promise of salvation. It is not merely a historical event but an ongoing reality that continues to impact the present. In the Orthodox services, we say "Christ is risen from the dead" (present), not "Christ rose from the dead" (past). It is not a historical event, it is a present day reality that is continuous. Christ is risen. Unlike Lazarus, who was resuscitated and would eventually die again, Jesus' Resurrection represents a transformation into a spiritually glorified body that is not subject to decay or death. He did not rise as a ghost, He rose with a real Body. He did not reincarnate nor take on a new human body. Christ is risen with His spiritually glorified body, and it is not a legend, nor a myth, nor an illusion of some sort. The empty tomb of Jesus stands as a testament to His Resurrection and distinguishes Him from other religious founders whose remains can still be found on earth.

The belief in the Resurrection is rooted in the biblical accounts and the testimonies of eyewitnesses. The apostles and disciples encountered the risen Christ, and their lives were transformed as they witnessed His appearances and received the Holy Spirit. The evidence for the Resurrection is further supported by the fact that the early church faced intense persecution and martyrdom, yet the followers of Jesus remained steadfast in their faith, demonstrating their conviction in His Resurrection and the hope it brought.

In contrast to the Resurrection, there are various theories that attempt to explain the events surrounding Jesus' death and disappearance. These theories, such as the Substitution, Swoon, Conspiracy, Hallucination, and Myth theories, seek to provide alternative explanations for the Resurrection. However, upon examination, these theories lack sufficient evidence and fail to account for the historical testimonies, eyewitness accounts, and the transformative impact of the Resurrection

on the lives of believers throughout history. Let us then attempt to refute all possible assumptions such that the one remaining is the only one possible. We will begin with assumptions that Christ did not die and the associated theories, then follow with theories associated with Christ historically dying on the cross, which is not a contested event.

#	Assumption #1	Assumption #2	Theory
1	Jesus didn't die	Jesus didn't die; a look-a like was crucified in his place	Substitution
2	Jesus didn't die	Jesus didn't die; he Merely fainted & later revived in tomb	Swoon
3	Jesus died	Jesus didn't rise; apostles were deceivers	Conspiracy
4	Jesus died	Jesus didn't rise; apostles were deceived	Hallucination
5	Jesus died	Jesus didn't rise; apostles were myth-makers	Myth

Theory #1 - Substitution Theory (You Have the Wrong Man)

The substitution theory believes that Christ prayed for protection and didn't die, so therefore, someone with the resemblance of Christ was Crucified in His place. Islam here takes the most critical element, and casts doubt on it. Without which, there is no purpose for Islam (reminiscing of the serpent and Eve). This theory originated from them, for them. More importantly, who was this man and where are his remains? And why would his body disappear and make it look like a resurrection? If Christ survived, the disciples had no purpose to steal, and God had no reason to raise the innocent man. Is then God a murderer? Causing an innocent man to die? This significantly changes details about the person of God. The number of eyewitness accounts is too significant to consider this theory even plausible.

Theory #2 - Swoon Theory (Fainted & Alive)

The swoon theory, also known as the apparent death theory, is a fringe belief that questions whether Jesus Christ actually died on the cross. Proponents of this theory argue that Jesus merely fainted during the crucifixion and later revived in the tomb. One of the main arguments in favor of the swoon theory is that the Bible itself contains passages that seem to indicate that Jesus did not actually die on the cross. For example, in the Gospel of Matthew, it is said that after Jesus was crucified, he was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. The tomb was then sealed with a large stone, and Roman soldiers were stationed to guard it. However, on the third day, the tomb was found to be empty, and Jesus' body was nowhere to be found.

This has led some people to believe that Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but rather that he was merely unconscious and later revived. They point to the fact that Jesus was not pierced in the heart, which is where a Roman soldier would typically spear a crucified victim to ensure death. They also note that Jesus' body was not embalmed, which was the customary practice at the time.

However, the vast majority of Christian scholars and theologians reject the swoon theory. They argue that the evidence presented in favor of the theory is not convincing, and that it is more likely that Jesus did actually die on the cross.

There are several reasons why the swoon theory is not widely accepted. First, it contradicts the teachings of the Bible. The Bible clearly states that Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected three days later. Second, there is no historical evidence to support the theory. There are no records of anyone resembling Jesus being crucified in his place. Third, the theory raises a number of theological problems. If Jesus did not actually die on the cross, then it means that he did not atone for the sins of humanity. This would undermine the entire foundation of Christianity. For all of these reasons, the swoon theory is rejected by the vast majority of Christians. It is a fringe belief that is not supported by the evidence.

In addition to the arguments mentioned above, there are a number of other reasons why the swoon theory is not credible. For example, it is difficult to believe that Jesus would have been able to survive the crucifixion even if he had not actually died. The crucifixion was a horrific form of execution, and it is unlikely that anyone could have survived it without sustaining serious injuries. Romans procedures are quite strict, which is why they typically break legs, to speed up death. His lungs, water & blood gushing out, clearly indicate that his lungs collapsed, and cause of death was asphyxiation. “Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.” (John 19:38-42)! The level of shock in the appearances of Christ left everyone convinced of death. Did they really not check for a pulse? And if it was weak, it suddenly came back without any help? Christ came out alone in a faint state and rolled over the stone and overpower the soldiers, all alone? And no one cared to mention anywhere? How then afterwards, did He disappear? No one cared to say anything?

The swoon theory does not explain how Jesus was able to escape from the tomb. The tomb was sealed with a large stone, and Roman soldiers were stationed to guard it. It is difficult to believe that Jesus would have been able to overcome the guards and escape from the tomb without being detected. Finally, the swoon theory raises a number of theological problems. If Jesus did not actually die on the cross, then it means that he did not atone for the sins of humanity. This would undermine the entire foundation of Christianity. For all of these reasons, the swoon theory is not a credible belief. It is a fringe theory that is not supported by the evidence.

Theory #3 - Conspiracy Theory (The Last Conspiracy)

This theory has two different components to it. The first gets us to revisit the Last Supper under the assumption that there is some type of conspiracy. Maybe that is why Christ told Judas “Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’” (John 13:27) Within the context of a conspiracy still seems to hit a nice echo. Right? The Last Conspiracy. Why is this not the case? What evidence that this is a misportrayal of events? Judas hanged himself! See how gullible our human nature and our faith can be? It fails to think when half logical challenges seem to arise. But let us continue further, Jesus truly dies, the disciples are distressed and conspire together to give value to their experience with Him.

The second component of the conspiracy indicates that Christ died and did not rise, but the disciples in agreement conspired as 'deceivers' to say so to give value to their experience with Him. No one, weak or strong, saint or sinner, Christian or heretic, ever confessed, freely or under pressure, bribe or even torture, that the whole story of the resurrection was a fake, a lie, a deliberate deception. Can a conspiracy and web of lies continue for so long? Was St. Paul apparition, the persecutor of Christians, a lie? Were they all martyred for something they knew was a lie? None of them said to themselves this lie is not worth death? Did unarmed poor disciples really overpower Roman soldiers or roll away a great stone silently while guards remained asleep? Did no one at the time really not think to try to expose this as fraud? Examinations were without a shadow of a doubt conducted. The conspiracy theory clearly fails in light of all the other events of history.

Theory #4 - Hallucination Theory

The hallucination theory, which proposes that Jesus did not physically resurrect and that the apostles were deceived by hallucinations, faces significant challenges. One key objection is the length and frequency of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. Hallucinations typically last only a few seconds or minutes, not 40 days as described in Acts 1:3. Additionally, Jesus appeared to many people on multiple occasions, including hundreds at a time. It is highly unlikely that all these individuals would simultaneously experience the same hallucination.

Furthermore, hallucinations typically arise from within the individual's mind and lack external stimuli. In contrast, Jesus' post-resurrection appearances involved unexpected actions and interactions that were unlike dreams. For example, he ate fish in Luke 24:42 to demonstrate his physical presence and allowed his disciples to touch him in Matthew 28:9. These actions suggest that Jesus' appearances were not mere hallucinations.

The fact that the disciples themselves initially doubted Jesus' resurrection also argues against the hallucination theory. If the disciples were prone to hallucinations, they would have been more likely to believe in Jesus' resurrection from the start. Instead, they required physical evidence, such as eating fish and being touched, to be convinced.

Additionally, the hallucination theory fails to explain the absence of Jesus' body from the tomb. If Jesus' body had been stolen, it would have been a major conspiracy involving multiple individuals. Yet, there is no historical evidence to support such a conspiracy.

Overall, the hallucination theory presents several significant challenges that undermine its credibility. The length and frequency of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, the unexpected actions and interactions during these appearances, the initial skepticism of the disciples, and the absence of Jesus' body from the tomb all suggest that Jesus' resurrection was a genuine historical event.

Theory #5 - Myth Theory

The myth theory, which asserts that Jesus did not actually resurrect and that the apostles were mere myth-makers, presents a compelling argument. The natural writings of each author, however, reveal distinct perspectives and focus on various details of the same events, reflecting their individual

viewpoints. Unlike forgers, there is no attempt at harmonization among the Gospels. If the empty tomb were an invented legend, its inventors surely would not have had it discovered by women, whose testimony was considered worthless!

Myths typically evolve over centuries, and it is highly unlikely that no external source would have referred to the entire story as a myth or legend at some point in time. There is substantial evidence contradicting the myth theory. The story of Christ spread rapidly throughout Europe, Eastern Asia, and North Africa within a century, suggesting a profound impact on contemporary witnesses. Several early Christian writings, such as the letters of Barnabas and Clement, mention Jesus' miracles and resurrection. Polycarp, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Quadratus, and Justin Martyr also provide testimonies supporting the resurrection and other miraculous events attributed to Jesus.

Furthermore, there is significant external evidence from reputable sources like Tacitus, Josephus, and Philo, corroborating the existence of Jesus and the extraordinary events surrounding his life. If the empty tomb were a fabricated legend, its inventors would have likely attributed its discovery to more credible individuals than women, whose testimony held little weight at the time. Conversely, if the writers were merely reporting their firsthand experiences, they would have been compelled to convey the truth, regardless of potential social and legal ramifications.

In addition to the historical testimonies, the Gospels demonstrate an intimate knowledge of Jerusalem prior to its destruction in 70 AD, providing accurate details of proper names, dates, cultural nuances, historical events, and prevailing customs and opinions of that era. These elements further substantiate the reliability and authenticity of the Gospel accounts.

While the myth theory offers an alternative interpretation of the origins of Christianity, the overwhelming historical evidence and contemporary testimonies strongly support the belief in Jesus' resurrection and the transformative impact it had on early Christians and subsequent generations.



Review Questions

1. Why is the resurrection of Christ an essential part of our faith? (A: The Resurrection is a cornerstone event of our faith because it completes our salvation.)
2. What does the substitution theory state? (A: Someone with the resemblance of Christ was Crucified in His place on the cross.)
3. True or False? The swoon theory questions if Christ even survived the crucifixion since it believes that Jesus merely fainted and later revived in the tomb. (A: True)
4. Fill in the blank. The myth theory believes that Jesus did not actually rise and that the apostles were _____. (A: Myth makers.)
5. True or False? The hallucination theory is founded on the concept that Jesus did not rise and that the apostles were deceived by a hallucination. (A: True)



Books & References

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