

What Historian Say About the Resurrection

Or HaOlam

July 4, 2015

Quintessential issue of our faith!

1 Cor 15:17 “..if the Messiah has not been raised, your trust is useless, and you are still in your sins.”

How is History Determined?

1. Narratives examined for consistency
2. Physical evidence (artifacts, drawings, archaeology) examined to see if validates narratives.
3. Logic
4. *“Best explanation” for evidence (is there a “reasonable degree of certainty” for a conclusion)*
5. *“inference to the best explanation.”*

Rarely is there a single piece of evidence that conclusively corroborates a specific event in ancient history.

Rather, history is assembled in pieces, like a giant jigsaw puzzle.

-When dealing with ancient historical figures there is not what we are accustomed to today.

-No fingerprints, photos, audios, videos.

-BUT have to be consistent with our critiques when dealing with Biblical events as we are with non-Biblical events.

Let's examine historical authenticity of the 4 Gospels

1. Most historians agree the gospels were written 35-65 years following the death of Yeshua in approximately 32 CE (*Alexander the Great writings 363 years AFTER his death—300 years later*)

2. Meticulously handwritten by Jewish men, just as Torah was.

3. 5,838 portions of the New Covenant in Greek, 25,000 in other languages, and over 1,000,000 quotations from early Messianic leaders quoting the New Covenant have been discovered (*7 copies of Plato's writings of the teachings of Socrates in its original language*)

4. Perceived inconsistencies attributed to mistranslation, misunderstanding or different perspective of writer. (Football game analogy; William Lane Craig's Q&A: Inerrancy and the Resurrection which can be found on his website reasonablefaith.org)

5. Sites named for Yeshua and His followers and following for 2000 years (*same used to validate Alexander the Great and following for less years*)

New Covenant scholar F.F. Bruce says major stumbling block for Biblical skeptics based on their religious beliefs, not the historicity of the Bible:

“If the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt.”

4 Adverse Witnesses to Life and Death of Yeshua!!!

Adverse Witness #1: Flavius Josephus! (respected ancient Jewish historian for Romans)

(He confirms beheading of John the Baptist, Yeshua had brother James, Yeshua lived, was crucified and His followers believe He was resurrected)

Josephus holds Yeshua in high esteem and did not consider him to be a lunatic or deceiver:

“At that time there appeared Jesus, a wise man. For he was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. And when Pilate (a Roman), because of an accusation made by leading men among us (the Jews), condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. And up until this very day the tribe of Christians (named after him) has not died out.”

2. Adverse Witness #2: Babylonian Talmud

“On the eve of Passover Yeshu was hanged... “(It was asked that) Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.” But since nothing was brought forward in his favor, he was hanged on the eve of Passover.” (consistent with Gospels)

Adverse Witness # 3:

Maimonides (Rambam--a very highly regarded 13th century Rabbi). In his 14 volume work (the Mishne Torah) he makes multiple references to Yeshua and his execution:

“Jesus of Nazareth who aspired to be the Messiah and was executed by the court...”

Adverse Witness 4: Tactius

The Annals, written by Roman senator Tactius in 115 CE:

“Therefore, to squelch the rumor, Nero created scapegoats and subjected to the most refined tortures those whom the common people called “Christians,” [a group] hated for their abominable crimes. Their name comes from Christ, who, during the reign of Tiberius, had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate. Suppressed for the moment, the deadly superstition broke out again, not only in Judea, the land which originated this evil, but also in the city of Rome.”

The MIRACLE of the Resurrection!

It stands to reason if there is a God, as most people believe (90% according to a recent survey), He could easily surpass the laws of physics making miracles a possibility.

MIRACLES

-Again, Josephus referred to Yeshua as “a doer of startling deeds,” which was a similar description he used in referencing the miracles of the Jewish prophet Elisha.

- Babylonian Talmud (Sandhedrin 43a) acknowledged miracles but felt *“sorcery.”*

An adverse witness to MIRACLES

Second century Roman, Celsus, wrote *The True Word*, a critique of those following Yeshua:

“Jesus, then coming to the knowledge of certain miraculous power, returned from thence to his own country, and by means of those powers proclaimed himself a god.”

MIRACLES

Respected theologian Dr. John Meier: *“The miracle traditions about Jesus’ public ministry are already so widely attested in various sources and literary forms by the end of the first Christian generation that total fabrication by the early church is, practically speaking, impossible.”*

3 Key Pieces of Evidence to the RESURRECTION!

Exhibit A: The empty tomb

**Exhibit B: 530 Witnesses to the
resurrected Yeshua**

**Exhibit C: The commitment of the
disciples of Yeshua despite threat
of torture and death.**

**Exhibit D: Silence from the
opposition**

Exhibit A: The Empty Tomb

There is NO evidence that either the Jewish or Roman leaders found the corpse of Yeshua!

Exhibit A: The Empty Tomb-Logic

The momentum of His following would have halted if the corpse of Yeshua was produced, or if there was evidence of foul play.

Paul Althaus, a professor at the University of Göttingen: "*(The resurrection) could have not been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as an undeniable fact for all concerned,*"

Exhibit A: The Empty Tomb-Logic

N. T. Wright, an eminent British New Covenant scholar concludes, *“That is why, as an historian, I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again, leaving an empty tomb behind him.”*

Exhibit A: The Empty Tomb-Logic

The Romans despised anything other than allegiance to Rome. The Jewish religious leaders believed Yeshua was blaspheming as He claimed to be the Son of God. One foolproof way to squelch His following would have been to simply produce His corpse once word of the resurrection began to spread.

Exhibit A: The Empty Tomb

The main debate in the Book of Acts was *why* the tomb was empty, not *if* it was empty.

Rebuttals to the Empty Tomb

1. The body of Yeshua was stolen
2. Everyone looked for Yeshua in the wrong tomb
3. Yeshua was never killed during His crucifixion

1. Not reasonable to conclude His
body was stolen

**-Followers had no access. (not
Barney Fife on guard; serious
consequences to guards if
access allowed)**

-Followers had no motive.

2. Not reasonable to conclude everyone was looking in the Wrong Tomb

It was only a three-day time-span between Yeshua's burial and resurrection, so it seems implausible all of His followers and enemies would have forgotten where He was buried.

3. Not reasonable to conclude Yeshua
was never killed

Crucifixions were brutal. Yeshua would have had to make a miraculous James Bond-esk escape after this punishment, and then He would have had to be deemed fully healed by His followers three days later.

3. Not reasonable to conclude Yeshua was never killed (swoon theory)

Journal of American Medical Association:

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

Like many theories of skeptics, the swoon theory may take more faith to believe in than the resurrection.

EXHIBIT B: WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTED YESHUA

1 Corinthians 15:6 Rabbi Saul (Paul) writes, “*After that He (Yeshua) was seen by over 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep,*”

Saul wrote this passage when most of the 500 witnesses were still alive.

EXHIBIT B: WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTED YESHUA

If Saul lied about the 500 witnesses of the resurrection, there would have been an abundance of people lining up to set the record straight.

Saul even identifies some of the individuals by name who saw the resurrected Yeshua.

Even one denier would have totally undermined Saul's written accounts.

Rebuttal to the 530 WITNESSES: The Mass Hallucination Theory

-Seriously!?!

-Clinical psychologist Dr. Gary A. Sibcy points out that even two people experiencing the same hallucination has never been known to occur:

EXHIBIT C: THE COMMITMENT OF THE DISCIPLES AMIDST HORRIFIC THREATS

Imprisoned, tortured, and executed for their cause. 10 of the original 12 disciples were brutally murdered because of their faith in Yeshua—boiled in oil, crucified upside down, etc.

EXHIBIT C: THE COMMITMENT OF THE DISCIPLES AMIDST HORRIFIC THREATS

Another Adverse Witness:

German New Covenant scholar Gerd Lüdemann concludes, *“It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus’ death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ ,”* (emphasis added).

EXHIBIT D: SILENCE FROM THE OPPOSITION

If the Jewish or Roman leaders were able to present *any* evidence calling into question *any* portion of the narrative circulating about Yeshua's resurrection, the evidence would have been provided and the following of Yeshua would have never even began.

Logic

1. Would God raise a blasphemer?

2. Popular historian, Will Durant:

“That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so lofty an ethic and so inspiring a vision of human brotherhood, would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the Gospels.”

Logic

3. Disciples did not flee--they stayed in Jerusalem.

4. Disciples denied Him (forsook Him and fled”-*Mark 14:50*) until they saw Him risen and

Logic

5. John R. W. Scott, ranked in 2005 by *Time* Magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the world, confirms this dramatic change in the lives of the disciples of Yeshua:

“Perhaps the transformation of the disciples of Jesus is the greatest evidence of all the resurrection.”

Conclusion

Exhibit A: The empty tomb

Exhibit B: 530 Witnesses to the resurrected Yeshua

Exhibit C: The commitment of the disciples of Yeshua despite threat of torture and death.

Exhibit D: Silence from the opposition

Conclusion

Dr. Paul L. Maier is a professor of ancient history, and a Harvard graduate:

"If all the evidence is weighed carefully and fairly, it is indeed justifiable, according to the canons of historical research, to conclude that the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea, in which Jesus was buried, was actually empty on the morning of the first Easter. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources, epigraphy, or archaeology that would disprove this statement."

Conclusion

As the former Chief Justice in England, Lord Charles Darling affirmed, *“No intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true.”*

Conclusion

Belief that miracles don't happen is also based on faith we will never find evidence to support such.

Conclusion

If you have been convinced, or your curiosity has been even mildly piqued, I invite you to ask God whether He is real. One night, over 23 years ago, I asked God to reveal Himself to me. Although there was no burning bush, or big voice from the sky, bit by bit, He broke down barriers I had previously built up against Him and let me know that He was *very* real...

Conclusion

...I believe if you ask God with an open heart to reveal Himself to you, He will meet you where you are in the most personal way. And once you meet Him, you will understand the true beauty and love of Yeshua, our Messiah, who is far more than just another historical character.