

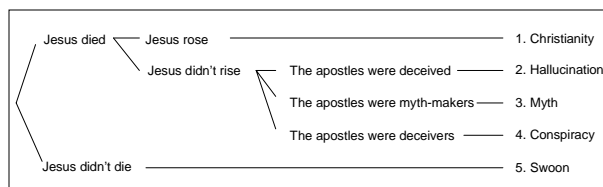
Question Time— Did the Resurrection Really Happen?



The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the most important events in the history of mankind. If Jesus did not die, then we could not be redeemed from our sins. If He did not rise again, then He could not be God nor have the power to save us from hell. Thus, it becomes extremely vital that everyone who claims the name of Jesus Christ as Savior, must have a basic understanding of the resurrection and be able to explain and defend its historicity.

The Theories Surrounding the Death of Jesus Christ

Many theories have been postulated throughout history to explain the circumstances surrounding the death, burial, and disappearance (resurrection) of Jesus Christ. Virtually every theory can be divided down into five basic categories or theories. Each one will be discussed in further detail. The chart shows the basic separation between these theories.



The Five Hypotheses About the Death of Jesus

Refuting the Swoon Theory

The first theory for discussion is what is commonly called the "Swoon Theory." This theory asserts that Jesus did not really die on the cross, but merely fainted and was later revived. This idea is not a new one. The Koran, which was written in the seventh century, teaches this. In fact, a certain sect of Muslims contend that Jesus fled to India after surviving the attempted crucifixion and that he is buried in Srinagar, Kashmir. However, even just a simple understanding of the Roman procedure of crucifixion and torture will be enough to convince the skeptic that Jesus could not have lived through those events. But, even if you assumed that he did survive a botched crucifixion, how did a swooning half-dead man overpower the Roman guards at the tomb? How did he even move the great stone blocking the entrance? And how would a man in that pitiful of a physical condition inspire the apostles to worship him as Lord and to die in testimony of him?

Refuting the Conspiracy Theory

This theory of explanation asserts that the apostles fabricated the entire story in order to deceive the world. The historical fact is that 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, lie, or a deliberate deception. Even when the people broke under torture and denied Christ, they never claimed that his resurrection was a conspiracy to deceive others. Let's also not forget that the Apostles had no motive to create such a fabrication and there were just too many eyewitnesses to really "pull it off."

Refuting the Hallucination Theory

This theory claims that all of the eyewitnesses were simply hallucinating when they thought that they saw Jesus rather than really seeing Him. The problem is that there were just too many eyewitnesses (Mary Magdalene, Peter, the eleven remaining disciples, to 500 followers, James, Paul, etc.). Hallucinations are private, individual, and subjective, not public, for hours at a time, and to large gatherings of individuals. By the way, a hallucination would explain only the post-resurrection appearances; it would not explain the empty tomb, the rolled-away stone, or the inability to produce the corpse.

"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins... If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

- I Corinthians 15:17, 19

Refuting the Myth Theory

This theory attempts to interpret the Gospels as myths – neither literally true nor literally false, but spiritually or symbolically true. The unavoidable fact is that there was simply not enough time for myth to develop. No one disputes that Paul's letters were written within the lifetime of eyewitnesses to Christ. The eyewitnesses would have discredited a new, mythic version of the resurrection story if it had been a myth. If Paul's letters are not myth, then neither are the Gospels, for Paul affirms the main claims of the Gospels. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." - *II Peter 1:16*

Positive Evidence for the Resurrection - No alternative to a real resurrection has yet explained the existence of the Gospels, the origin of the Christian faith, the failure of Christ's enemies to produce his corpse, the empty tomb, the rolled-away stone, and the accounts of the post-resurrection appearances. We serve a LIVING God!
- by Priest Eric English