

## DOES HISTORY SHOW THAT THE MIRACLE REPORT, SUCH AS THAT JESUS ROSE, SEEMS VALID?

HISTORY CANNOT SHOW THAT JESUS REALLY DIED AND CAME BACK! THE RESURRECTION IS TOO OUT OF THE ORDINARY FOR HISTORY TO SHOW IT PROBABLY HAPPENED OR DEFINITELY HAPPENED. AT BEST IT CAN SAY THE DATA IS SAYING THAT JESUS DIED AND THAT HE WAS ALIVE AGAIN AFTER HE DIED. HISTORY DOES SOMETIMES FIND IRRECONCILABLE CONTRADICTIONS IN THE DATA SO ALL IT CAN DO IS PRESENT BOTH SIDES AND JUST LEAVE IT UNTIL NEW LIGHT MAY TURN UP. IT CANNOT SAY WHY JESUS WAS ALIVE - THAT IS A MATTER OF THEORY NOT EVIDENCE. IT MUST STICK WITH THE INFORMATION IT HAS GOT. HISTORY DOES NOT ALWAYS NEED INTERPRETATION BUT OFTEN IT DOES. SOMETIMES THINGS ARE TOTALLY CLEAR. SOMETIMES THERE IS NO ROOM FOR INTRODUCING A BIASED INTERPRETATION. IT IS CLEAR NAGASAKI WAS HIT BY AN ATOMIC BOMB SO WHY IS IT NOT CLEAR THAT JESUS' DOCTOR WROTE A REPORT THAT THE MAN WAS ALIVE AFTER DYING ON THE CROSS? BECAUSE THE EVIDENCE THAT HE WAS ALIVE IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

A historian could say the evidence shows Jesus did die on the cross but also that he seemed to be alive three days later and say it is a contradiction. Sadly for Christians the historical evidence does not show that Jesus died on the cross and was alive later. If you need history to find a contradiction in the data you will not find it here.

Gary Habermas and Michael Licona would tell you, "If we say the Bible has no historical errors, people accuse us of saying that the Bible does not err therefore its account of Jesus rising from the dead is true. But you don't need to argue that the Bible is always right. There are ways of showing that it makes clearly factual statements that both believers in the Bible and non-believers can agree on. One, Jesus died on the cross. Two, his disciples believed that he appeared to them for he had risen. Three, the rapid conversion of Paul to Christ. Four, the sceptical brother of Jesus James' becomes a believer. Five, Jesus' tomb was found empty as if he had risen from the dead."

This is merely refusing to look at the evidence as a whole to see if it is good or not. Cherry-picking evidence shows you are not really serious about truth but want to manipulate people to believe what you say. And it is not true that all scholars agree with all the statements above. The gospels do not say that the reason Jesus was missing from the tomb was that he rose. He could have been stolen and still risen. Or thieves could have gone in and found the body gone. If there were thieves there then we cannot say Jesus really bodily rose. We just don't know. The scepticism and conversion of James mean nothing for it is not claimed that he was a sceptic and then Jesus appeared to him to convert him. Nobody knows if anybody claimed that.

Habermas says that about 75% of scholars agree with the "facts" but despite requests for him to name them he has not done so. And anybody can keep the percentage high if they are just consulting the scholars who they think agree with them.

Gary Habermas and Michael Licona's goal is to have you accept that it is or probably is a historical fact that Jesus was reportedly alive after he died on the cross.

The reportedly is a problem for nobody was taking notes. People picking over the alleged evidence years later is not the same thing. Reportedly as in taking notes there and then and checking at the time is strong reportedly. Decades later all you get is hearsay pretending to be reporting.

Even if it could be established that Jesus was around after his supposed death it only proves he was probably alive but says nothing about how it came about that he was alive.

A very unlikely scenario, perhaps one we have not thought of yet, could explain how Jesus was alive. A very unlikely non-magical explanation is far more likely to be right than a magical one. And if you go down the magic road, the far-fetched scenarios multiply! Historians work by the principle that they must judge what is probable and go with it until it is shown improbable. A historian cannot choose a magical answer or a magical possibility. He assumes that magic is the most improbable thing and anything however far-fetched is better.

The other problem is that in history, most miracle claims can be shown to be untrue or unworthy of belief. So why should the resurrection of Jesus get any special treatment? Why is investigating it some important? That shows some bias is going on that makes the investigation and the interest suspect.

Saying, "The evidence shows that Jesus died. It also shows that he was alive after he died" is not the same thing as saying Jesus rose from the dead. A historian would say the evidence is in conflict with itself. Evidence often seems to be in conflict

with other evidence. In that case you need more evidence as an explanation and if you don't have it then its simply missing and that is what you say.

It is undeniable that the gospel accounts of the alleged resurrection expect us to take them as historical evidence of the resurrection. That is a terrible error as we have seen.

The historical evidence offered is horrendous.

The Christian claim that the gospels are first-hand testimony taken directly from the witnesses mouths is only an assumption. They state it as fact which is dishonest of them.

The early Christians may have thought that God revealed the resurrection of Jesus to them second-hand. The gospels do not claim to be eyewitness testimony to the resurrection. It is strange that even the gospel of John which claims that the author saw blood and water came from Jesus' side never actually gives his direct eyewitness testimony to the resurrection of Jesus or to the appearances of Jesus.

The gospel writers believed primarily in the resurrection of the Messiah because they thought the Old Testament spoke of it. If there had been no visions, or no convincing visions - a different matter!, of the risen Jesus or an empty tomb, they could still have believed. The historian cannot depend on an interpretation that is not there. And he cannot pick out one of many interpretations. Doing history is about being fair.

Mark the earliest Gospel speaks of Jesus and God being unable to do miracles because the people had no faith (Mark 6:4-6). The Christians say it was not down to any reluctance on Jesus' or God's part. It was just that God and Jesus would not do miracles except for those who already believed and trusted. Who was the resurrection a sign for then? It was not Jesus. It was done for the believers. No wonder Mark could be interpreted as indicating faith was needed to see the risen Jesus. Some men in white had to help people believe Jesus rose. Then when they believed they saw him. A sign for people who have made up their minds to believe already is hardly good evidence that Jesus rose!

Now neither science or religion today takes a person seriously if they testify to a miracle that they believed would happen and which they expected. Our belief and desire can trick us.

The gospels are thought to mention a risen Jesus who was able to break physical laws - eg pass through walls and rise up to heaven like a rocket etc. But we also read of a risen Jesus who seems to be still just an ordinary man. There is no explanation given as to how these stories can be reconciled. The Christians just assume that Jesus had miracle powers and had the choice of being ordinary or extraordinary and that is that. But that is using a miracle to reconcile discrepancies. That is a dangerous method. If you make holy books that contradict one another fit by using miracles to do it, the end result will lack credibility and look contrived and desperate. And that is what it would be. It would open the way for fake prophets to contradict themselves all they wish and we won't be able to say the contradictions refute their claims. We would be at the mercy of every fraud.

Only a book claiming to be the direct speech of God or the direct writing of God might be inspired. The Bible authors wrote in their own name not God's. So to assume they are God's is unwarranted. It seems to believers that it is possible that God still inspired them. But would he when he never said? What is to stop us saying that if we like a devotional book then God inspired it? It is possible in terms of divine ability but that does not mean its possible other ways. It's not. Unless we have a book like the Koran that claims to be the direct communication of God in book form, we are really no different from people who treat the word of man as the word of God. We might not be - but our attitude is that if we are treating man as God then we are happy to. No wonder authentic Bible thumpers are so bigoted.

If the gospels were written by Jesus it would be possible that they are really the word of God and approved by him. It would not prove it but make it possible. Jesus was the one who should have provided the explanation for the discrepancies but he didn't.

The gospel evidence (if it can be called that!) points only to a man of flesh being seen reportedly after his death. The doctrine that Jesus was very different after his death in terms of being able to pass through walls and look like he had a light bulb inside and immune to sickness and death hangs in thin air. Even the gospels do nothing to prove these claims. They don't assert them.

Paul the apostle assumed that the risen Jesus had a spiritual body - a saved body. But he made no effort to link this doctrine with the experiences he had or the apostles had when they supposedly saw the risen Jesus. He was more interested in that doctrine than the "history". It was a way of making people find meaning in the resurrection so that this would attract them most. He probably sensed the resurrection was on shaky ground in terms of historical evidence.

The resurrection of Jesus is mere revelation. It is impossible to verify that it may have happened by using the historical method.

The doctrine that Jesus suffered on the cross in the sinner's place to satisfy God's vengeance towards sin is enough to refute the resurrection especially if the doctrine must have come from Jesus just as the gospels maintain. The gossellers believed that the Old Testament scriptures were more believable than the resurrection and only believed in it because they were thought to predict it. Several times in the New Testament we read that the resurrection of Jesus was predicted in the Old Testament. Jesus himself says that in the gospel of Luke when he appeared to two men after his resurrection as they headed to Emmaus. It was the predictions that was the basis of the early Church's faith in the resurrection as a real occurrence not the visions or empty tomb of Jesus. Jesus himself taught that fulfilling the prophecies was the most important thing.

That is not history at all. No history looks at alleged prophecies and takes them as guidelines for what actually came to pass.

Hypothetically, if a historian accepts on historical grounds that a miracle happened when Jesus rose, he will have to suspend judgement on what the miracle was. He could say that something supernatural happened - perhaps Jesus was in a coma and miraculously recovered and thought he rose. Or perhaps a lookalike was possessed by some spirit and was the entity who people mistook for Jesus. As for the miracles, he or she will have to do the same with regard to other miracles such as those reported among the pagans. It only leads to one miracle claim contradicting another.

The Christians say that history shows Jesus was reported alive after his death. If that is true then we need to explain that. But if history fails to show it is even likely that he was alive then no explanation is needed. And what if you want one anyway? Any explanation would do for sometimes one explanation is as good as another. The Christians are too biased – they want you to adopt THEIR explanation. The reality is that we can just say the witnesses or the gospel writers were lying or not telling the whole story just as much as we can say they reported Jesus alive because he was. Many of us are biased towards ones we want to believe in but the fact remains we are more anti-miracle than pro-miracle. Since we are naturally biased against miracle claims the ones we accept are more about ideology than truth. They should be saying, "There is the miracles you believe in and the ones I believe in. We differ only in the miracles we accept or dispute. Let us tolerate the person who goes a step further and agrees with neither of us." It is hardly tolerance if Christians labour so hard to try and make it rational to believe Jesus rose and that history shows it is so. Why are the books not saying, "Explanation a is fine and so is b and c and whatever."

Anyone saying history allows for Jesus having risen from the dead does not know what they are talking about.