

DID CORINTHIANS TEACH CHRIST DEATH MYTH?

Paul is the only alleged witness to the resurrection of Jesus whose writings we have. With everybody else, it is just what others wrote about them.

Paul wrote about the death of Jesus in a strange way. He wrote, "For I give to you what I also received as being of first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." You don't even need the rest of it. This shows Paul is saying Jesus died and some revelation told him that. He says the resurrection was revealed in visions yet this revelation about the death of Jesus is made bigger!

1 Corinthians 15 is worded as if only Paul knew that Jesus had died. It looks like some man was appearing to James and Peter and so on but only Paul realised he was a risen man who had been dead. He says that he received from the Lord what he passed on that Jesus died for sins and rose on the third day and he appeared to Peter, James and so on. And Paul was final in the list.

Later in the letter Paul defends the reality of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead to save us. It may be that the heretics Paul was battling against with 1 Corinthians 15 thought the resurrection of Jesus was an illusion and not real. Just as you use parables to make points so God might use visionary parables like resurrections to try and get a point across for the human mind can't understand what he is trying to say. They explain that it is so easy to make a mistake and end up with the wrong interpretation.

Paul tries to force the heretics to believe in the resurrection. He says that if Christ HAS NOT BEEN raised then the gospel and faith are useless. Does it really matter if you think Jesus has not risen yet? No. The "history" as given by the apostles is being questioned. The gospel is useless and even dangerous for lies are necessarily useless and dangerous. Reasons to believe in the resurrection in order of importance are, it makes possible our reconciliation with God and gives us graces and virtues from him for Jesus rises to save us from sin. [The danger is that this depends on sensing something is helping your spirit but that is very prone to illusion and it creates a bias before we get to the other reasons.] Next Jesus' power over death is confirmed. Next it shows he was what he claimed to be - God's son and God's supreme and essential prophet. Next it fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament that the saviour would rise - sadly for Christians though that reason is pure imagination. There are no prophecies of the resurrection. For these reasons anyway the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of Christianity.

Are the heretics possibly saying that Jesus never rose for he never really died in the first place? Perhaps. Some of them by commonsense had to be saying just that. Paul just dwells on the core issue for it is all he needs to do.

Some think that what they believed was that the resurrection was not real in the earthly sense of a man dying and rising again bodily. They could have thought of it as a symbol from Heaven for mystics believed that God was so different from what we are used to he has to use symbolic pictures and parables that may take years for us to crack for divine truth is hard if not nearly impossible for mortals to grasp. They thought the death and resurrection of Christ were mystical events. They would say that the apostles think now they had experiences with a resurrected man but this is a primitive attitude and a shadow of the truth that God was trying to get across to them. Many of them would have believed that the apostles did not grasp the secret knowledge in their visions. If the resurrection of Christ was an attempt to give spiritual insight through symbolism and pictures then so was the death of Jesus. The New Testament mentions heretics who believed the resurrection of all the dead had already happened meaning the resurrection just a metaphor for receiving some mystical enlightenment.

An argument like that could not be answered by Paul at all except to argue that terrible things would happen if Jesus has not really risen in the way Paul meant and Jesus said he would rise. The objection to this argument is that their objection to the resurrection would have no value for they are interpreting the apostles' experience while it is up to the apostles to interpret their own experience. They were the ones that had the experience after all.

But the heretics would have believed that they themselves got the light from God to crack the code and understand so this objection collapses. The evidence from Paul's reaction to the heretics is that they did not take the death and resurrection of Jesus literally as an event like the birth of Augustus Caesar but as a spiritual or mystical event. They were like the Christians in other places who according to the New Testament were saying that the resurrection had already taken place. They were saying that the resurrection in which the dead come back to life was only a metaphor for some mystical experience that changes your life that makes a whole new person in such a sense that your life starts with that experience.

Some think the heretics were not saying that Jesus was dead but that he survived death naturally and so he did not rise from

the dead. This is not true because of the way Paul talks. He would have tried to prove Jesus died if they had been saying that. The heretics did not believe in any historical happening that could possibly be interpreted as a resurrection.

If the death and resurrection of Jesus had been recent events, there had to have been heretics in Corinth who did not call the apostles liars, unlike the ones Paul took to task for calling them that, but who said Jesus swooned and came around and was thought to have risen from the dead when he met up with his friends later. Logic says that it would have been better to challenge them for they would have been easier to revert to Christianity if the historical evidence contradicted them. But Paul did not do that, meaning that his Jesus lived too long ago. All he could do was forget about them or what is more likely these heretics did not exist. If they did not exist then the only basis for believing in Jesus was the visions of the apostles. You don't say a man must have swooned and came around again over visions that might be lies or hallucinations when the man died and rose a long time ago before he appeared in the latter days. You could if the man died recently.

It is interesting that Paul says that he and the apostles are lying if Jesus did not rise. Why didn't he say the apostles would be or mistaken or possessed by the deluding power of Satan if they were wrong? But he just said lying. Psychologically speaking then, they really were lying. If Jesus didn't rise bodily at all and it was entirely spiritual, they could have seen a ghost claiming to be a resurrected being for all we know. If there was no resurrection and merely apparitions, then obviously a fictitious resurrection for Jesus would not make liars of the apostles.

Many of the heretics would have said that the apostles misinterpreted the experience they had.

If there had been an inexplicably empty tomb, the apostles could have thought Jesus rose and if they had no authentic visions but hallucinations or were too dumb to understand what was happening, they could be mistaken but not liars if they said he rose. The apostles wanted to be called liars and nothing else if the resurrection never happened. The willingness then to accept the liar appellation implies that the apostles were claiming to know they were perfectly sane and not deluded by Satan or any other ability. It implies that they said they knew spiritually their experience of the Jesus visions was from God and real. It means they put more value on their religious feelings than on the visions themselves! This is just typical of what religious people do. They pretend to themselves that because they feel their gospel is true that it is true! Why should we believe the apostles' feelings and not the feelings of those who felt in their hearts that Jesus did not come back from the dead? The fact that their assertions boil down to that is enough to expose them as liars. It could be that by accepting the tag "liars" if the resurrection of Jesus never happened that they are saying they are admitting they would be lying. In fact, this is an admission of lying for how else could they be so sure?

When a man says that what he and his friends say is not a lie when he should add that it is not a mistake either it is a dead giveaway that he and they are liars and he knows it. And it is an even bigger dead giveaway when he cannot rebut the sceptics adequately which happens all the time when sceptics uncover outrageous lies. This consideration tells us that the heretics knew what they were talking about unlike Paul and Co. It tells us to rely on them and not Paul and the apostles.

The resurrection could still have happened if Paul and the apostles were lying – it would just mean we have no reason or right to believe in it for we have no evidence. So when Paul says it could not if they lie he is saying that the other witnesses like the 500 plus who allegedly saw the risen Jesus are untrustworthy. Or maybe some forger inserted the bit where he mentions them.

When Paul suggests that it is unthinkable that he and the rest could be lying, what he is hinting is that if Jesus rose fully bodily from the tomb and used the body that was nailed to the cross in its entirety that the disappearance of the body and not by theft but by divine power could be verified satisfactorily because the resurrection is dependant not on an empty grave but on the apostles' word. The arrogance is breathtaking. The resurrection witnesses were undoubtedly motivated by pride to tell their story which means we have to be wary because they were more worried about their own religious gratification and not at all about the truth.

Paul says that the Corinthian heresy that the resurrection never happened accuses the apostles of being liars. The heretics are sure that the apostles did not make an honest mistake but were liars. To lie is to knowingly say what is not true. We must ask then if they are liars then are the heretics saying they never had visions at all? Not necessarily. The heretics could be suggesting that the apostles are deliberately perverting their experience to justify a false doctrine of a literal historical resurrection and a physical literal Jesus.

Did the heretics think Jesus never rose and nothing odd happened after his death full stop? The way Paul talks to them is as if they are not openly denying Christ rose but re-interpreting what it means to say that Jesus rose from the dead. This interpretation had to be in some mystical sense. Also they were indicating this by implication by denying the bodily resurrection that awaits humanity for he told them that if Jesus is preached to them as having been raised he cannot see how they can maintain that there is no resurrection for others. The Christian suggestion that if they thought nothing odd happened after Jesus' death, then Paul would have verified why the apostles' testimony was true is wrong. It wrongly assumes he could verify and it is obvious from the passage that he could not and had to clutch insanely at straws. He just

said that there would be terrible consequences if the doctrine were false which suggests that the apostles were going around telling people to believe Jesus rose just because they said so. When Paul said that the apostles would be lying if there were no resurrection he was clearly indicating that the heretics were not saying the resurrection of Christ never happened for then the apostles could just have been wrong and not been liars.

If the heretics were misinterpreting the resurrection as a mystical event and holding that there would be no physical resurrection then Paul would have clearly corrected this if he could. He would have stated that he and the apostles touched a real body and the risen Jesus said he was real but he couldn't for there was no such evidence and none of the apostles were saying there was – if it was that bad for a risen Jesus then what was it like for a historical Jesus? The critics did not believe anybody who said that the risen Jesus was a man and that was what Paul was trying to get them to believe and he was trying to do it without relevant evidence for there was none and he was afraid to contradict the other apostles and invent some. The gospel story that Jesus had been eating after his resurrection and letting women feel him was obviously not concocted yet. This story would have been verified and promoted by Paul in order to convince the heretics if he had heard of it even if the heretics were just denying the resurrection full stop for touch and sight are often better than sight alone.

Perhaps Paul believed that this dying and rising Jesus was a pantheistic dying and rising entity that was one person with the Church. He does say that the Church is the body of Christ, parts of Christ, and he certainly means it more than as a symbol for he raves on about it. Perhaps the heretics were saying then that the resurrection wasn't real but was a symbol. They could have been believing the same thing all along but just misunderstanding. It is like a priest who believes the bread and wine at communion are the body and blood of Christ and who keeps calling them symbols. He could be misunderstood by somebody who doesn't realise that in Catholic teaching that the bread and wine are literally changed but are symbols at the same time.

It is a possibility that since Paul said such strange things to defend the resurrection such as that we are inevitably lost if Jesus has not risen is that the resurrection was not a historical event but a mystical one. Paul and his heretics could have been saying the same thing and misunderstood one another. Paul could have been a Gnostic, a person who sees the resurrection as a mystical enlightenment that gives knowledge of salvation, for he was undoubtedly a mystic. He could have believed that the visions of Jesus and the resurrection were just symbols from God to give a glimpse of something so abstruse and paradoxical that it could not be put into words. The resurrection in this view would mean a change in our status with God and his accepting us out of spiritual death. That alone would explain why Jesus not rising would be such a disaster. Had it been a historical event that never happened there would still be the room for hope that another would save us by his resurrection. But the resurrection is really about God changing the status of Jesus who is raised from some kind of mystical death to a mystical resurrection so that Jesus can save us for he is the Son of God. We and Jesus are connected so that we rise with him after dying with him (Romans 6). In some sense, we are one person with this Jesus. That is why it has to be him and nobody else for nobody else is us. Silly yes but a lot of ancients thought that way.

There is no doubt that whatever the truth is that what Paul wrote on this subject indicates that Jesus Christ left no evidence of his death and therefore of his human life. Paul said that God cursed anybody hanged on a tree and Jesus became a curse for he was crucified. For God to raise Jesus from the dead would be accusing God of raising a cursed being from the dead to make him second in charge. The suggestion would be nothing short of blasphemous to the Jews yet they never found it offensive and the bickering in the early Church for the first few decades was all over circumcision. Only if the crucifixion was a mystical and non-literal event and so was the resurrection could hostile attention be avoided. The crucifixion and resurrection described something very mystical and strange and otherworldly. The concept of God is strange so why not? It is certain that the claim of some that if Christianity had been invented the crucified saviour would not have been invented for it was too offensive is itself disproven by the Bible one way or another.

In this view, the difference between Paul and the heretics was an imagined one. They did not realise that they were on the one wavelength because they expressed themselves differently and misunderstood one another. I think Paul did not believe that Jesus died and rose on this earth but died and rose in another and that this was physical in some sense. But the death and resurrection of Jesus could have been in his Church for he was a pantheistic deity.

Paul argued that the pagans knew the dead rise for they are baptised for the dead (v29). The pagans believed that if they got baptised by proxy for the dead the dead could be saved in the resurrection. He argues from this that the resurrection of the dead must be a reality! But what did the pagans know? Do pagans praying to many gods mean that there is more than one God? The desperation of Paul who knew the resurrection was sinking into the sand is unmistakeable.

When Paul said there that sceptical Christians should believe in the resurrection because some pagans are baptised for the dead he made it clear that there was no evidence for Jesus' resurrection when he had to use that argument. If we should take the pagans who are baptised for the dead as evidence that there was a resurrection for Jesus then we should take it as evidence for the death of Jesus as well. Baptism pictured death and burial and resurrection (Romans 6). Now what Paul must mean is that the pagans sense that a mystical death and resurrection is necessary. That means that Jesus died and rose

mystically but not in the sense of an earthly man dying and rising again. The metaphysics of it are incomprehensible.

Paul answered the heretics who were saying that the dead don't rise for there is a problem with what kind of body they will have (v35). He calls them fools here not for asking a question but for seeing a problem in this. The heretics were obviously troubled by how a rotted body could rise again for clearly God could find it easy to restore a fresh corpse to life. He had to explain to them that the risen body is different from the body that dies in many ways though the old body provides the seed for it so they were wrong to think that the entire physical constitution would be renovated by God and he reminded them too that Adam was made from dust so the resurrection body could be made from an entire rotted body.

So he has two explanations. One, The resurrection body is not like an ordinary body so it is easy to believe it can come from an ordinary body. Two, Adam was made from dust.

One tells us that the body of Jesus didn't need or involve the revival of a corpse. The less of the corpse used in the resurrection body the easier it would be to believe in the resurrection.

Two tells us that these people, these heretics were indeed professing Christians for they were reminded that Adam was made from dust. This was the account given in the Old Testament. So they were reminded in effect that they believed in the Old Testament and therefore had to believe that Adam was made from dust meaning resurrection from the dead is possible.

Bringing the two ideas together we see that the new body is made from part of the old.

His explanations prove then that they disputed the resurrection because bodies decayed and when Jesus' resurrection was rejected as well that tells us that they believed that Jesus must have decayed too and lived centuries before he began to appear as a resurrected being. The heretics would have believed that bodies were too bad to be raised up which was why Paul stressed that they were right and the body has to be changed before God can admit a risen person into Heaven. Gnostics believed that the body was evil for it weakened the person and was subject to decay. Nobody believed in the existence of the Jesus we find in the gospels at all in those days. We are even given a clue in this that they did not believe the apostle when he wrote that Jesus died and rose three days later. The three days reference could be an interpolation. He doesn't strive to defend it as if he didn't care about history or the three days was something that there was no evidence for.

When an expert on religion cannot adequately answer those who say the death and resurrection of Jesus does not describe earthly events it is clear who has won the argument. Them! And even more so when the expert himself is confused about their doctrine and may agree with them unknowingly!

When Paul suggests that we must believe in the resurrection because of the witnesses of the visions of Jesus after the resurrection with the evidence of the empty tomb being ignored as if it was not true or known or relevant or whatever it most probably means it was not known for Jesus was buried too long ago.

If Jesus was made up then why did nobody say that his resurrection was seen just as it happened? A possible answer is that they saw no need. Seeing Jesus after the resurrection is as good as seeing him rise. A possible answer is that the early story did not teach that there was an empty tomb. When the body was in the tomb it was only a matter of Jesus appearing to prove his resurrection. If there had been a resurrection there would have been some people who said they saw it happen if not by being actually there then by some kind of vision in which they were able to indulge in a bit of remote viewing. Alleged events like that attract loads of crackpots. But it seems such people did not exist. Those who believe that there was an empty tomb might say the gossellers dared not say that anybody seen the resurrection happening for that would mean somebody was present at the tomb that could have taken the body. They were not interested in proving the body was not stolen but they were interested in proving that Jesus appeared. Another answer is that Jesus was believed to have risen centuries before.

Nobody that writes IF it is certain that one man's (Adam's) fall condemned all to death then it is even more certain that Jesus will cause all men to become righteous and live forever (Romans 5) unless this fall and the salvation won by Jesus are both in the same evidential category – ie that both are ifs. He does not mean the certainty that comes from evidence, or the certainty that comes from experience, for being sinful doesn't mean one man in the past is to blame for your sins as much as you are or experiencing forgiveness does not necessarily mean that Jesus earned it for you when he did the opposite of what Adam did. But yet he is trying to use Adam to show that there had to be a Jesus to reverse what Adam did. He is referring to emotional certainty; you feel these things happened so they happened! To appeal to feelings as evidence indicates that there is nothing else to depend on. The Jesus of the gospels never lived. Suppose there is no direct evidence for the existence of John F Kennedy. You don't argue that if the United States had to have a Catholic President eventually that President John F Kennedy must have existed. If you do that shows there is no direct evidence. The non-existence of evidence for Jesus that would stand up scientifically or in a court of law is all over the epistles of Paul.

So Paul thinks that it is more certain that Jesus saved than that Adam fell for we feel that more strongly. That is bizarre

because you would need to believe Adam fell as much as you believed that Jesus reversed it. The two beliefs cannot be even partly separated. But what it tells us is this. It is because people would rather believe they are saved and feel it stronger than they do that they have fallen the former is the best authenticated belief! The epistemology of the first Christians was horrendous.

Clearly the 15th Chapter of Corinthians, shows that a historical Jesus didn't exist in the minds of Paul or his converts and his heretics never mind in the first century!