

**THE "ESTABLISHED FACTS" - DO THEY ALLOW FOR JESUS HAVING RISEN FROM THE DEAD?**

In historical research, you look at primary sources which mean sources that were written during the event. A good example of that is letters or diaries. Anything coming after that is a secondary source. The best secondary sources will be close to the event and written by people who were there. Hearsay and legend are barely sources and nobody will agree on the kernels of truth, if any, they contain.

Christians sometimes say that there is no primary evidence for the resurrection of Jesus but that the case for the resurrection is simply this: it explains the established facts.

The facts are typically laid out as follows:

Jesus' burial in a tomb.

The tomb being found with his body absent.

His post mortem visits to his disciples.

The disciples believing that Jesus rose.

These are not the facts at all.

William Lane Craig in the book *Jesus Resurrection: Fact or Figment* agreed to stop calling these things "established facts" and call them "reported facts." Reported facts is weaker than established facts.

Some of the reported facts depend more on reports than others. Take the burial - the gospels never say they got testimony or hearsay. They never name any source. The tomb being found with his body absent ignores the fact that the stone had moved somehow and the tomb was left alone meaning that nobody knows or claims to know how it left the tomb. It is never said the tomb was checked by the visitors until later on in the day. The gospels never say that anybody strongly believed except Thomas that Jesus rose. The behaviour of the others can be explained by them having a light belief that Jesus was alive. It does not matter how strong their faith got later for that happens. Belief can be fuelled in time no matter how weak and silly it was at the start. The only real reported fact is the apparitions. You therefore do not need a resurrection to explain them!

In the earliest gospel, Jesus asks the disciples who he is and they tell him that some people say he is John the Baptist raised from the dead. Mark 1:14 gives you the impression that people assumed Jesus was John for he went to Galilee to preach after John had been put away in jail. It is quite something to think a man is a jailed man raised from the dead who is not dead yet! With all that irrationality anything is possible.

When you look at the case for the resurrection of Jesus from the New Testament, you will want to draw the most reasonable explanation even if that is that he rose from the dead indeed. It is said that it depends on our philosophy: if we think miracles don't happen then we will deny that resurrection is the best explanation for the data. If we think they do we will perhaps suggest that resurrection is the best explanation. But it is forgotten that if we realise that most miracle claims are untrue or dubious we will still not think the resurrection is the best explanation. It is an implausible explanation. This is not bias against miracles as long as you have done the homework.

No matter what Christians do they cannot ask anybody to accept their explanation. It is bigotry to care about a particular opinion that much and a sign of addiction if you would risk your happiness and life and even your eternal life for it.

Historians can say a miracle was reported but say no more. It cannot say that anybody when Jesus died really said he rose for there is no primary source. Also if historians start saying there is something historically special or historically true about Jesus being back from the dead where does it stop? There are other miracles many of which involve other gods. What if history finds that the miracle it can most come close to believing though not quite is one that says Jesus was a fraud?