

WAS THE RESURRECTION STORY BASED ON HALLUCINATIONS OF JESUS BEING ALIVE AGAIN?

The gospels say Jesus died by crucifixion and shortly after his burial women saw him near his tomb. Later the apostles, his close friends, and some disciples reported seeing him alive. Those experiences led them to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Scholars are often taken by the notion that something must have happened in order to set off the Church.

How do we account for those appearances?

The Church denies that the apostles and the other witnesses hallucinated or imagined the appearances of Jesus Christ Yet the same Church recognises that a deep psychological need can cause such visions and claims that the visionaries had a strong need for Jesus to be alive. There is no evidence against the hallucination explanation and it is simpler to accept it than to accept that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

Some Christians like to case the joint. They tell us things about certain kinds of hallucination. They just pick out the forms that do not fit the New Testament accounts. That is to give the false impression that all forms of hallucination can be ruled out. They ignore forms such as self-induced hallucination.

Christians go through psychiatric manuals and consult "experts" to try and get evidence that the witnesses of the resurrection didn't hallucinate the resurrection appearances. But what if the hallucinations took place under some kind of supernatural or psychic influence? If you accept the supernatural you have to admit that possibility. So in that case the manuals and psychiatrists are no help. In 2020, the Catholic Church decided that the nun who saw Our Lady of America for years did not see the real Mary but it denied she was mentally ill or a fraud. It points to some kind of cause that is not explained but denied the appearances were the work of God. Scholars in the Church have tonnes of data and research that overthrow simplistic ideas such as, "The person is not lying or sick so the vision is real."

Christians who object to the hallucination hypothesis ignore the developments regarding hallucinations these days. It is now known that even bad eyesight can cause hallucinations for it causes the brain to mix up what it sees with what is in the part of the brain that takes care of fantasising. The book on reincarnation *Mind out of Time* by Ian Wilson shows us something. It is that the perception of hallucination Christians appeal for is built on misinterpretation. It is based on refusal to look into the subject properly. All that matters to them is fooling people and themselves.

It is now known that the way we in the west are conditioned makes us less likely to have visual hallucinations while these types of hallucination were encouraged in New Testament times (Craig's Empty Tomb and Habermas on the Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus).

Catholics despite knowing better fall back on the superficial rubbish that non-Catholics come up with to challenge the suggestion that hallucinations either created the resurrection visions or were involved in some way that made some kind of illusion and/or wish fulfilment look like a credible account of a man living when he should be dead.

It is dishonest how the Christians are so keen to eliminate hallucination from the flimsy gospel data about the resurrection while there are scores of more detailed cases in the annals of the Catholic Church in which several people at a time saw the Virgin Mary and got messages from her and were still found to be deluded though they seemed to see the same thing – usually what happened was a leader was shaping the things they thought they could see and hear.

It is dishonest to use reports that are not interested or capable of capturing the complexities of human psychology in the way the Christians do as evidence against hallucination. They were not written to counteract the notion of hallucination. They are not detailed enough. Only a psychiatrist who spent sufficient time with each witness would have the right to rule out hallucination.

One must not forget though that their claim is central to the denial that there were hallucinations. It is not an argument at all but a pile of speculation.

Hillyer Straton stated that people who have hallucinations do not become martyrs for them (page 248, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Vol 1) and dedicate their lives to preaching them (page 255, *ibid*).

The statement that people do not suffer hallucinations of a mystical nature and then preach them and maybe end up in danger of death for promoting them flies in the face of history. It is just an outright lie.

Straton assumes that the apostles died for their visions and there is no evidence for this. If they died for Christianity that is not the same as dying for visions. Christianity like all religions is more than just spiritual - it has a social, political, financial and cultural impact. The resurrection of Jesus may be proclaimed the core teaching but in practice that core is a turkey stuffed with other things that in practice end up being treated as more important. If an apostle thought that believers in the resurrection seemed to be better at loving others than unbelievers he could think that the resurrection is the core not because it happened but because it does that.

Plenty gave their lives for Christianity without having visions or intending to die to verify the apostles' visions or even thinking of doing so, therefore why should we be surprised if the apostles died for delusional visions?

Many ghosts are hallucinations and their witnesses can swear they are real and tell everybody. If they can take them seriously some can take them even more seriously. The witnesses suffer great ridicule from many for their claims and that has never stopped them.

If the visions of the resurrection were wacky the apostles would have been in the right mental state to blame and excitement and confusion for bizarre elements with the result that they would be dismissed as being incapable of refuting the visions.

Memories of exciting visions can be unintentionally changed and improved over time so that they can eventually seem more persuasive and real than they actually were. Memories are selective and there is no evidence that the apostles made any effort to ensure theirs would not do this. The apostles might have attributed the wacky bits to the Devil and accepted the better bits as real especially if the tomb was inexplicably found empty. The tomb could have been the reason they founded a faith on their visions for the tomb could have been thought to prove the visions. People suffer for different kinds of hallucinatory experiences such as visions of ghosts and things. Many will call them liars or mad. If people want the hallucination to be real badly enough then they can remember what they want to remember and believe.

We are told by believers that only people with great imaginations and who are nervous can hallucinate and it is asserted that the apostles were not like this. This is an incredible suggestion if the apostles had been having strange religious experiences all along like the gospels say. Jesus said they were nervous cowards like the gospels report. Also, Jesus told the Jews that the sign of Jonah, his return from death, would be his only sign meaning the rest were not that convincing. We are told they were scared for their lives at the time of the alleged resurrection. And this fear was irrational if they had really been allowed to get away in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested.

The fact that the Gospels say that the visionaries had different moods, Magdalene was crying, Peter felt guilty and Thomas scoffed the resurrection, is supposed to make a hallucination unlikely. But they still could have a desperate wish for Jesus to come back which was fuelled to hallucination point when the tomb was found empty. Nobody is saying that they would have had only these moods. We are not told exactly what they felt or thought during their visions. The Christians are only guessing what they felt just when the visions were about to start. They are lying when they say that the witnesses were not emotionally set up to hallucinate for they do not know.

And suppose Mary was crying when she had her vision. Also, Magdalene could have cried with guilt and Thomas could have scoffed the resurrection out of guilt so we could have them sharing the same mood as Peter. The Christians are so crafty when they use the argument that they had different moods for the logic is terrible.

It is hard to believe that lots of people would see the same man. But it can and does happen.

Hallucinations come from the subconscious mind so suggestion might have happened to program the mind to hallucinate the same man. These people had been trained to meditate on Jesus and put him first which conditioned their minds. They all wanted to see the same man.

And who says that what they saw was really the same thing? They might have seen Jesus in different forms and slightly different times. Perhaps Magdalene saw Jesus as a blonde clean-shaven youth and the rest saw him as he looked in life. You never know. The gospels seem to say he could alter his looks.

The Womb and the Tomb (page 156) informs us that a group of people can have the same subjective hallucination. One person's vision colours and shapes the ones the others have in such cases. It has been known. Often the memory of the experience is altered when the person hears the leader of the group the one who has the most emotional control and clout describing his version and they think they saw much the same thing. The subconscious mind picks up many things we cease to be aware of and can be lying waiting for a trigger to make you see what somebody else says they see.

Hallucinations are contagious so perhaps each person did not see him exactly at the same time. The messages say that Jesus' death and resurrection were prophesied in the Old Testament and that he should be preached. But a person who had lost Jesus in death thinking about the meaning of the vision would come to these conclusions and take them as divine

inspiration. The apostles could have hallucinated Jesus eating the bit of fish which Luke says they gave him. Giving the fish need not mean it was handed to him. Perhaps, they did not notice that the pieces of fish on the table were not one down after this or thought he miraculously replaced the bit he took. Or perhaps they thought a piece of fish was missing in the excitement and concluded that Jesus took it. It was an emotional and therefore insane time for them.

The disbelief or doubt that accompanied some of the visions suggests that they believed they were seeing things. But be careful, if you think that disbelief blocks the visions. You could have them seeing Jesus then momentarily disbelieving causing him to vanish and him reappearing again with the restoration of their previous mental state. It is never said Jesus was visible when they disbelieved. People do report hallucinations and say that they could not believe what they were seeing.

Hallucinations of a deceased are normally triggered by the places and things associated with them when the person really wants to see them. It is said that this trigger was missing in the women and the apostles' situation. There is no evidence that it was or that it wasn't. But if Jesus was buried in the Garden of Gethsemane and if the apostles were in places they associated with him that would explain a lot. But hearing of the tomb being empty could have stirred up the feelings that are preparatory to a hallucination. It is the feelings that count not the surroundings. Hallucinations can take place without things associated with the deceased through things that remind you of or look like those things.

If places and things trigger hallucinations, then surely the people most closely associated with Jesus could be a trigger for them too? They would be a stronger trigger.

Hallucinations can be triggered by time as well. A woman might see her dead husband at 5:30 pm if that was the time he came home from work every day. Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Vol (page 252) dishonestly tells us that Jesus was seen at different times. But if you read the gospels you will see that Jesus may have appeared only in the mornings to the women and the apostles as well except one time to the apostles that John says was evening. The two men going to Emmaus saw him in the evening but they were not of these two groups and could have tended to see him then. We could have merely two different times which fails to disprove hallucination for a woman can see her dead husband at 5:30 and again in the bathroom at 9 am if he was in the habit of shaving then. Also, two different groups can hallucinate at different times.

Most of the Jesus visions could have been over very quickly. Hallucinations tend to be glimpses (page 252, Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Vol 1). Jesus says a few sentences in some visions and eats fish in Luke. But were the witnesses led to think that he said these things to them spiritually or kind of telepathically after momentarily appearing? Were the sayings merely impressions they got and which they felt inspired to put into words? Many mystics claiming to hear the voice of God claim that it is up to them to put the revelations into words.

Commentators say Luke says they did not believe what they were seeing for joy. But Luke actually says they did not believe for joy after Jesus showed them his hands and his feet.

Evidently, they could believe they saw him but not that he had the wounds. What was so joyful about the wounds was that it made them sure it was Jesus?

Christians usually misread it to say that it was Jesus being they couldn't believe for joy. Did not believe for joy does not imply that despite their joy they couldn't literally believe. It is just an idiom. It is just like you would tell a person you cannot believe they look so good which does not mean you really believe they look ugly!

Jesus led them out to Bethany and went to Heaven from there. He could have been thought to have led them out to Bethany invisibly and reappeared there. Perhaps only one person saw him there and told the rest what was happening. Notice how Matthew, Mark and John do not say that Jesus was seen going to Heaven. He might have went up in the cloud without being seen. The messages in Acts 1 are not said to have been transmitted by a visible Jesus. It says they were watching as he was lifted up and taken away in a cloud. Perhaps they thought they could make out a man in fog. It is easy to see shapes in fog. And if they had been convinced by their own or others hallucinations that he was alive they would have thought the man was Jesus especially if they were being manipulated to get the same divine messages in the heart the way charismatics get them.

One objection against hallucination is that in the Luke Gospel the men going to Emmaus walked with a man they did not know and who they later realised was Jesus. In Emmaus, it is not said why the men thought it was Jesus. It could have been one of those silly strange ideas that religious people can get. Perhaps they walked with a preacher man. Perhaps one of them had a hallucination that altered his memory of the event so that he came to believe that the man had been revealed to him as Jesus at the end of their walk and when he broke bread and he convinced the other man. Both men admitted that when they listened to the man their hearts burned with joy inside them which suggests that they were drifting towards the right mentality for a hallucination or persuading themselves that they saw Jesus when they hadn't. The joy was not natural after what they had been through. It could be that their feelings warped their memories so that they came to believe the man

was Jesus when he broke bread. He probably left then because he thought they were mad.

The reference in Luke that the eyes of the witnesses of Jesus were restrained from recognising him admits that there were miraculous hallucinations happening. They hallucinated in such a way that they could not see Jesus as Jesus. It was when Jesus broke bread that they recognised him. That is why you can hold that Jesus did not rise from the dead but that the appearances that he did were still miraculous. It is not just a theory.

An objection to hallucination is how Magdalene didn't know Jesus when she seen him. So one person defines the experience for everybody else?? Magdalene mistook Jesus for the gardener and also some of the apostles did not know Jesus when they saw him in Galilee. You only hallucinate people you know. John tells us the yarn. Magdalene could have went to the gardener and wished him to be Jesus so that she had a vision that he was Jesus. There could have been a man in Galilee dressed like Jesus who went away and the next time the apostles looked they saw a hallucination of Jesus dressed the same way and assumed that it was Jesus the whole time. The Gospel does not prove that it was Jesus all along.

It is possible that the witnesses hallucinated visions of angels telling them that Jesus rose and they started assuming strangers were Jesus.

Val Grieve rejects the hallucination explanation for the appearances of Jesus on the grounds that the witnesses did not expect to see Jesus (page 14, Verdict on the Empty Tomb). The apostles not believing the women that Jesus had appeared does not prove the apostles did not expect to see him or did not expect him to rise. Doubting Thomas might have felt he could see Jesus though his head told him he wouldn't and the feelings and the need brought about the hallucination. The heart is what causes the head to hallucinate. However, despite Grieve, the gospels do not say that nobody expected to see Jesus.

Professor Kevan had a problem with the hallucinations stopping so abruptly and at the same time. This makes him think they were not hallucinations but real (page 255, Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Vol 1). But the feelings that caused the people to imagine all they saw would have been satiated by the visions causing them to stop eventually. The apostles came to believe that Jesus was with them even if they could not always see him and that satisfied them. Jesus told them he would never leave them meaning spiritually and personally when he left them bodily which could have been the psychological trigger that ended the visions. And they went on for forty days which is a long time though that does not mean Jesus appeared often or spent much time with them. They could have gone on after this time. Remember how Paul reportedly had visions much later.

Kevan there is no proof that the hallucinations stopped abruptly at the one time. You are lying.

If Jesus appeared a lot then it could be that the gospels selected the most believable visions out of the quagmire of visionary ramblings. If hallucinations happen a lot then chances are that some of them will be credible. There is no evidence against this so the Christians should not be twisting the facts to tell us that the evidence has Jesus having risen from the dead.

Val Grieve states that delusion visions usually get worse over a long period while the apostles' stopped after forty days (Verdict on the Empty Tomb, page 14). But maybe these people had been having visions on and off before it came to a head after the supposed resurrection. But did they stop? The New Testament never says that they did though it does perhaps see the ascension as a cut off point for the major revelation. Jesus could go back to Heaven for good meaning that from now on there would be only occasional appearances as in exceptions to the rule.

Grieve says usually the hallucinations get worse. But there was nothing usual about these hallucinations. Lots of hallucinations differ from what you would expect.

Montifiore states that two of the visions of Jesus could have been subjective visions, meaning the vision to Paul near Damascus and the vision to the 500 plus Paul mentioned (The Womb and the Tomb, page 157). But he says this is not true of the rest for the witnesses were not overstressed or expecting to see Jesus (page 157). And they had to be overstressed and believed they could meet the same fate as Jesus. There is absolutely no proof that nobody expected to see visions. How does he know how they felt in that hour? And Paul is the only eyewitness writer so if his account is problematic then what about the rest which are hearsay?

As Paul wrote that 500 + saw Jesus at the one time, this is taken as evidence that they were not hallucinating. If people delude themselves that a vision is happened they do not all see it at once. One sees it and then another says he sees it and the others come along and see nothing but convince themselves they are seeing something. But Paul only meant that they were all together when they saw Jesus. If you say John and Bert died at the same time years ago you mean they died perhaps in the same week not that they died at 13 hours 11 minutes and 3 seconds on a specific date. Paul would not have meant to have been taken so literally.

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We cannot apply any usual discoveries about hallucinations to the resurrected Jesus witnesses for the whole framework was unique and one of a kind. It does not even match any other religious context. It was surrounded by miracles anyway and the early Church liked Pentecostal stuff such as prophecies and speaking in tongues. They used the Old Testament as the voice of Jesus. The gospels only told us a little of what supposedly happened so they picked the best stories and straightened out anything that would have clearly pointed to hallucination. There is no evidence that the witnesses agreed with how they were written about and that is the bottom line. And there is the matter of how Christian scholars hallucinate that the gospels saying it is accurate or true. The witnesses are not the only people to worry about.