

JESUS' RESURRECTION – EVIDENCE IS POOR

The Dubious Resurrection of Jesus

The New Testament gospels say that a miracle healing man called Jesus Christ lived. They say he died by crucifixion and three days later he rose again. The tomb he was placed in was found wide open with the stone that had been across the entrance moved back and the tomb was mysteriously empty. His body was gone. Certain witnesses claimed that Jesus appeared to them as a resurrected being.

THE FEMALE TESTIMONY

The first witnesses to the body having gone from the tomb and of the risen Jesus were women, the most important of whom was Mary Magdalene.

Matthew says that Jesus manifested to Magdalene and another woman. John and Mark know only of the former having the vision. Books written to promote the gospel would say if there were more witnesses than Mary to strengthen the evidence. That is what the gospels were written for and the more people a book says experienced something the more likely it is that that book is telling the truth. For the same reason, one gospel would not be speaking of one angel and another of two, as they do, in case it would confuse and make people sceptical unless the gospels disagreed.

When you state that Jesus appeared first to somebody you mean that that person was alone. Mark did (16:9) so Mark meant that Magdalene was on her own contrary to Matthew (28:9).

Jesus would have had his disciples cured of prejudice against women witnesses by the time he died. Jesus talked to and listened to women. The gospels say that the apostles did not believe the women about the empty tomb. There was nothing amazing about that so the only reason they didn't believe was that these women were known to invent stories.

Magdalene was an ex-lunatic out of whom Jesus cast seven devils (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). The apostles believe that Jesus cured her but I wouldn't be so sure. No evidence was offered for her sanity at the time of the resurrection. She is no use as a witness without it. And since she was the main lady we can safely ignore the other women with her if there were any.

John claims that Magdalene told the man she thought was the gardener that a mysterious "they" had taken her Lord and she did not know where they had put him and that was why she was weeping. She was accusing either the Jews or the Romans without evidence and anybody that does that is not a reliable witness.

The women were not believed by the apostles when they told them that the grave was empty and that they had met Jesus. They were not really honest if they asked men who believed that women should not be listened to, to listen to them. They wanted the men to deceive themselves. Also, the Church says that the apostles were unreliable when they disbelieved the women and not when they changed their minds after they saw Jesus themselves. What kind of double-standard is this? The apostles did not accuse the women of being mistaken but of lying so they must have known that they had a habit of lying.

The gossellers might have lied about the women seeing Jesus and believing he rose. Scholars argue that the female testimony was not made up for that society did not recognise female testimony as valid and the gospels would not have invented anything embarrassing. But everybody knew that a testimony was still a testimony. And though not too much was staked on a woman's testimony it had some value. Women were not listened to in trials except to some extent and men were preferred but probably were in other things and the gospels are not legal documents. Most non-Jewish people did recognise female testimony and the gospels catered for them. Matthew was written for Jewish Christians hostile to Jewish tradition. Mark and Luke and John were written for Gentiles. Also, even the gospels did not depend on what the women said but only accept it because the men in white and the apostles back them up. The apostles were the official witnesses which was why they were called apostles. Any other witness was only to draw people to their testimony. So, it is really the men's witness that the women were right that is being leaned on. In Matthew, the soldiers are stated to have seen what the women seen at the tomb though not necessarily anything that looked like an angel – the angel could have been a lightning bolt that was interpreted as an angel by the Christians - and all the disciples accepted what the women said when they saw Jesus themselves. In Mark and Luke, Jesus says the women were right. In John, the gossellers says that Jesus really manifested to Mary Magdalene and that Jesus appeared to the Eleven in confirmation of her claim that he was restored to life.

If what women say is weak it is better to use it for anything is better than nothing. But it may show that you are stuck for evidence.

The women were originally thought by those who knew Jesus best to be liars which shows that they were not trusted. If Jesus did miracles and the women were still not believed then we have several testimonies that they were not trustworthy against their few testimonies. So, the most testimonies should be accepted.

The women were probably not near the tomb at all.

THE APOSTLES' TESTIMONY TESTED

The apostles claimed that they saw the risen Jesus.

Jesus had told them he would rise again on the third day and the gospels claimed that they did not understand him for they acted as if they never expected it. But the words were plain enough so that is an excuse for explaining why they did not believe when it happened.

Perhaps Jesus never said he would rise and the gospels are lying when they said he did. Perhaps the apostles only pretended to disbelieve when they found the empty tomb and heard the testimony of the women for they didn't want to preach a resurrection and get into danger. Perhaps the apostles knew he never rose and decided to say he did after denying the resurrection. But if Jesus had been a miracle-worker you would expect them to believe. Were they afraid to support the resurrection at that time in case the Jews would accuse them of having stolen the corpse? It is evident that the apostles were not telling the whole truth about what they made of it all.

The John gospel says that Peter and another disciple put their lives and the lives of others at risk by visiting the empty tomb leaving them open to being framed for the theft by the hostile authorities and over something they did not believe, namely that the tomb was empty. Men like that would lie about a risen Jesus. And the apostles claimed to be lacking in faith after spending three years with a man who could not have got them all crucified as messianic supporters. They were lying. The Matthew gospel hints that they lied about the resurrection when it was more interested in the women and the guards than the apostles. Yet it says they were to prove the resurrection not the women or the guards. Matthew just wanted to forget about the apostles and there would only have been one reason for that. They were a blight on the Christian cause.

There is proof that the apostles were gullible, fanatical, deceitful and so cannot be trusted as witnesses. If Jesus had seemed to raise people from the dead when he was alive that would have prompted the apostles to say they saw Jesus after his death if the body disappeared or even if it didn't for they would take it for granted that he would raise himself even if he wouldn't appear. They would have lied with a clear conscience. That is why the gospels and Christian apologetics are nonsense for they seek to defend the resurrection appearances when what they should be doing is defending the badly substantiated raisings of the dead performed by Jesus before his own alleged comeback from the grave.

THE MAGICAL BODY

The central doctrine of Christianity is how Jesus rose again in a body that was very different from what he was like before. It needed no food, it could go through walls, it was immortal and free from the risk of sickness and it could change form. Not a single text in the Bible says that anybody witnessed to this. The gospels say that Jesus did not look the same and showed up in locked rooms. But that is not the same as saying he had the power to alter his features by magic and pass through walls. All they saw was a man who ate and who seemed normal. Paul speaks of seeing a glorious Jesus but it is to be expected that when apparitions are reported that one person at least will think they see something supernatural. Knock, Fatima and Lourdes had trouble from people who tried to imitate the "real" visionaries who saw Mary and reported some odd things. And besides what did Paul mean by seeing Jesus? Did he just see a light? And the Christians did not necessarily interpret glory as meaning anything supernatural. The gospel of John says that Jesus showed his glory at Cana when it came to the knowledge of some that he had turned water into wine. It is not talking about his appearance.

The Church has known for centuries that the notion of Jesus being a mere resuscitated corpse is not going to appeal to anybody or make much of a spiritual difference to their lives. And part of us wants bodies that are not prone to sickness and weakness and death. We want to think Jesus got a body like that and will give us similar bodies. That is why the Church invented a new doctrine about the magical glorious body of Jesus.

HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

This book argues against the hallucination possibility in relation to the resurrection visions in chapter eight.

It says that there were too many witnesses to hallucinate. It says that 500+ saw Jesus and just takes Paul's word for that. The laughable part is that it says the witnesses were reliable though we know next to nothing about them! The gospels even say that the apostles had trouble believing in Jesus though they knew him best meaning that they were not reliable though

the book does not mean for us to see it like that.

The book then tells the lie that Mary appeared to 70,000 at Fatima knowing full well that she did not for they only saw the miracle of the sun and not all of them did. It says that this matches the vision of the 500 and says that this however was a vision and not a physical resurrection. But the appearances of Jesus were not a resurrection either but only visions of a resurrected man like the three children of Fatima supposedly saw Mary as a resurrected woman. I don't know why I bother attacking this shocking tissue of deviousness. The book says that five hundred separate visions of Elvis may be dismissed. This is because visions of Elvis do happen. Yet the authors hold that Paul's vision of the risen Jesus to which he was the only witness to the risen Jesus should be believed in. The damn hypocrisy! Should we reject 500 separate visions just because they are of Elvis? The authors wouldn't treat 500 visions of Jesus similarly. Even the gospels give no real indication that all who saw Jesus saw the same thing at exactly the same time.

Then the book claims that unlike hallucinations Jesus hung around for forty days. But he may have only been seen for a few moments at a time over that period. Then it is dishonestly argued that the hallucination would not have been believed in if Jesus had been still in the tomb! Besides only one gospel speaks of this forty day period.

The book then discusses the theory that the resurrection story was a myth. First it is alleged that the gospel stories all serve a purpose and even goes as far as to say that the detail about Jesus writing in the sand in John 8 proves that it was an eyewitness testimony! As for the purpose many of the stories are repetitive. Jesus says in a parable what need only be said in two sentences. A real person would not have talked like that and nobody – especially in a busy world - listens to preachers who treat them like morons who need fairy stories to understand the simplest of points. Then it is argued that there was not enough time for myths to develop (page 190). But there are no hard and fast rules about such things. Every town is full of mythological rumours that have started and are believed by many just in the course of a few days. Many of these rumours will find themselves in two or three diaries and often if anybody read these diaries he would believe the rumours.

Many Christians were Gnostics and mystics and Gnostics and mystics often held that an ability to great good myths was an indication of gnosis. Christians would have developed good myths rapidly.

Page 193 says we can trust the gospel account of the resurrection for Acts was written before Paul died and Luke before that and that Jesus' prophecies about the fall of Jerusalem were written before the event for the gospels connected it with the end of the world. There is no evidence that Acts was written then. Perhaps Luke died and could not finish the book or took a stroke or lost his mental faculties like the authors of this silly dose of apologetics have. And when the gospels were written has no bearing whatsoever on their reliability for there is no evidence that they were widely published among those who would have known the truth about Jesus. And how Catholic apologists can trust gospels they accuse of making a mistake about the end of the world is a mystery. What other major mistakes did they make?

The tales of Jesus' weakness and that of his friends is supposed to tell of the accuracy of the gospels. Christians cannot seriously have expected the witnesses to boast about themselves if they were lying for that would turn anybody off. People are attracted to humility and to say you believe in something though you did not want to makes you come across as more sincere than you would if you said you did want to believe it. When the Christians invented their Jesus, they thought the spirit was telling them stories about him many of which were inspired by figures other than Jesus. No wonder stories of the weaknesses had to come in.

As for the vast number of conversions following the resurrection, it is known that though Tertullian boasted that most of the citizens in the cities were Christians he was lying for Origen stated that only a tiny number of people were Christians and no inscriptions or texts refer to Christians before 250 AD and Christians are omitted from the two biggest histories written in the third century. On the whole the picture is that in 250 AD only 2 per cent of the people in the Empire were Christian (page 230) and a lot of these would have been Gnostic heretics.

Even if no miracle claim should be taken very seriously, if you are going to take miracles seriously then look at ones that survived sceptical inspection and this inspection needs to be happening when the miracle is ongoing not years later. Any miracle claim should be dismissed that is just based on what believers say. Nothing in the New Testament indicates that any sceptic knew of the resurrection claim while the appearances were allegedly happening. Thomas is not a sceptic for he did not weigh the evidence for and against but just laughed at the resurrection reports. No unbeliever said at the time that Jesus seemed to have come back from the dead and he didn't know how.

A sceptic is not a scoffer but a checker. It just happens that the checking out shows nothing really supernatural happened.

EARLIEST ACCOUNTS NEVER MENTION VISIONS ON EARTH

Not one line in Paul's writings suggest that Jesus was seen on earth as such. Jesus is in Heaven according to Philippians

2:9. Stephen saw Jesus in Heaven in Acts 7:56. Paul suggests that he had to be taken up to a Heaven himself to get revelations. It is very serious if the oldest and most reliable accounts leave us open to think that they saw visions remotely in the sky. Paul even refers to Christ appearing to Israel as a cloud.

ACTS 26:4-8

Paul says, "The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?"

The Jews could have said Jesus for some unexplained reason did not seem to be dead but they did not. They knew best. They were there. Jesus did not rise from the dead.

CONCLUSION

The resurrection accounts never claim to understand what evidence means or how it is worked out or checked. They never indicate that they care. We don't have a good enough reason to think that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead. The New Testament never claims that any apostles faith in the Jesus story was very strong. Nobody thinks people making strange claims but who admit they don't have strong faith in them and who are about more than just faith – eg social improvement, are cranks. We have no problem with fortunetellers being carers and respected in society as long as they don't take it too seriously.

