

Is The King Really Dead?

There's a common idea that to be a Christian you have to put your brain on the shelf, because faith is opposite of being rational.

Josh McDowell said, "I thought most Christians were walking idiots. ... I thought that if a Christian had a brain cell, it would die of loneliness."

Of course, that was before he became a Christian.

The title of this message is: Is The King Really Dead?

And what I want to do is consider the possibility of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Is the resurrection of Christ rational?

Do you really have to pretend that you don't have a brain to believe in Christ's resurrection?

In this message, I want to use one of the legal principles that our courts are based on when it comes to determining the truth of a case.

And I want to ask: Is the resurrection of Christ beyond reasonable doubt?

In 1850, Judge Lemuel Shaw talked about reasonable doubt.

He said, "[It] is not mere possible doubt; because everything relating human affairs, and depending on ... evidence, is open to some possible or imaginary doubt."

So we're not talking about just any doubt; you can make those up.

We're talking about reasonable doubt.

Isaac Asimov, who was famous as a science-fiction writer, but also as a prominent atheist said, "If, when everything impossible has been eliminated and what remains is supernatural, then someone is lying."

Folks, that's not reasonable doubt; that's personal prejudice.

He's simply saying that he will not believe in the supernatural regardless of the evidence.

Today, I'm going to ask you to apply the same standard to this issue as in a court of law as we look at common objections to the resurrection of Christ.

I'm asking you to set aside any prejudices you may have, and apply the test of "beyond reasonable doubt."

Here are three alternative theories.

1. The Swoon Theory

The Swoon Theory goes something like this: Jesus didn't really die. He fainted, but the silly disciples thought He was dead, they buried Him, three days the cool of the tomb invigorated Him to the point where He rips off grave clothes, kicks aside stone over the tomb's entrance, and then wanders off.

But when His disciples saw Him, they just assumed He'd risen from the dead.

What's wrong with this theory?

10 Reasons Why The Swoon Theory Is Hard To Believe:

1. Jesus was awake for at least 24 hours before being crucified at 9am.
2. He'd had no food since the previous night.
3. He was slapped and beaten by the Jews; the Roman soldiers also beat Him with a rod and their hands.
4. He was savagely whipped 39 times; people commonly died from this as they use to weave pieces of bone and metal into the whips.
5. He was nailed to the cross and was there six hours before He supposedly fainted.

6. A spear was thrust into His side and blood and water came out. In those days, that would have meant nothing to them. Today we know that the sac surrounding Jesus' heart was pierced and the fluid came out mingled with blood. As He was already dead, they decided not to break His legs.
7. He was taken off cross; apparently nobody noticed He was still breathing.
8. His body was bound tightly in strips of linen with around 45 kilos of ointment.
9. He was placed in a tomb with a huge gravestone rolled across the opening.
10. Roman soldiers stood guard to make sure there was no funny business.

This theory fails our test as it is not beyond reasonable doubt.

2. The Dabbling Disciples Theory

This theory goes like this:

Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, and the Jews were expecting Him to usher in new kingdom where Israel would break off the shackles of Rome and become the dominant nation.

But now their Messiah was dead; so, understandably disappointed, they took Jesus' body and made up the story of the resurrection.

But there are some important questions.

1. How did the disciples overcome the Roman guard?
2. Why did the disciples risk lives to preach the resurrection of Christ? People have to believe in a product to sell it successfully. ILLUS – Let's say you come to my house selling vacuum cleaners, and you claim that it's the best vacuum cleaner on the market, but you don't really think it is. What if I pulled out a gun and said, "If you say that's the best cleaner on the market, I'm going to shoot you." Would you still say that it was the best? Of course not! But ten of the eleven disciples gave their lives because they truly believed in what they preached.
3. Why did women discover the resurrection? In that culture, there is no way that the men would have made heroes out of the women by saying that they were the first to discover the resurrection of Christ. If they had made it up, the men would have been the heroes.
4. How does this theory fit in with the character of the New Testament writers? The men who wrote most of the New Testament and preached the highest ideals known to man turn out to be complete liars? Did they lie about the central issue of their faith? In a court of law, a person's character is very important. These men were of high moral character, so how could they have lived a complete lie?
5. What transformed the disciples from cowards who fled for their lives when Jesus was arrested into men who were willing to suffer imprisonment and death for their belief in Jesus' resurrection?

Clearly these men really believed that Jesus rose from the dead.

This theory also fails our test as it is not beyond reasonable doubt.

3. The Interfering Authorities Theory

Jesus openly predicted that He would rise from the dead.

This theory claims that the authorities knew this so they moved the body to prevent tampering.

So who moved the body?

Was it the Romans?

Obviously not!

When Jesus was brought to Pilate who was the Roman governor, he sent Him to King Herod.

The last thing the Romans wanted was to get involved in this Jewish squabble.

So when Jesus was brought back to Pilate after seeing Herod, Pilate sentenced Him to death and then washed his hands.

Pilate wanted nothing to do with it.

So much so that the Jews had to request him to post a guard at the tomb.

Was it the Jewish authorities that moved the body?

It couldn't have been them either.

They were the ones who asked Pilate to put guards at the tomb.

But here's the biggest problem with this theory.

When the disciples started preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead, if the authorities had hidden the body, why didn't they just bring it out and put it on display?

All they had to do was say, "Hello! Here's the body, therefore no resurrection."

Why didn't they produce the body of Jesus?

Because there was no body to produce.

This theory also fails our test as it is not beyond reasonable doubt.

The Swoon Theory fails to pass the test of being beyond reasonable doubt.

The Dabbling Disciples Theory fails to pass the test of being beyond reasonable doubt.

The Interfering Authorities Theory fails to pass the test of being beyond reasonable doubt.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle put these words in the mouth of Sherlock Holmes: "When you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."

And the only explanation left is that Jesus actually rose from dead.

What difference does it make?

Who really cares? Does it really matter if Jesus rose from the dead?

Here are three reasons why the resurrection of Christ is important:

1. The whole Christian faith depends on the resurrection of Christ

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, our faith is pointless.

Even the Bible teaches this.

We don't put our faith in some dead guy.

We put our faith in a risen, living Saviour.

2. If Jesus rose from the dead, then He is who He claimed to be

Son of God, Ruler over all, Saviour of the world, God in the flesh.

Who else could rise from the dead by their own power?

3. Jesus' resurrection is proof that Jesus successfully completed His mission

If His mission had not been successful, He would have stayed dead.

What was His mission?

To live a sinless life and die for the sins of the world.

Jesus made this claim, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." (John 11:25)

So what is God looking for?

He's looking for a response.

If Jesus has risen from the dead, then as the rightful ruler over all, He commands everyone everywhere to turn from their sin, trust in Him and follow Him with all their heart.

Will you do that today?