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The Historicity of the Resurrection

Gospel of John, Part LXVIII

John 20:1-29, Part One

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I. Chosen as Witnesses

Jesus' resurrection is a matter of historical record. Luke writes that Jesus "*presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by [the apostles] during forty days and speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God*" (Acts 1:3). Jesus made plain to His followers that He was alive from the dead.

Because the resurrection is a matter of human history, Jesus presented Himself alive *by many infallible proofs* so that those who saw Him could serve as _____ of His resurrection (cf. Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:14-15; 10:39-41). So Peter writes in his second epistle, "*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty*" (2 Pet 1:16).

II. He is Risen!

A. Discovering the Empty Tomb

1. Mary Magdalene's Report (1-2)

2. Peter's and John's Response (3-10)

B. Appearances of the Risen Lord

1. To Mary Magdalene (11-18)

2. To the Disciples sans Thomas (19-23)

3. To the Disciples and Thomas (24-29)

III. The Historicity of the Resurrection

A. Conspiracy Theory

Since the first days of the Church, opponents of Christianity have endeavored to explain away the resurrection. One of the most common claims is that the story of the resurrection was a conspiracy. Among the many problems with this theory are:

- The _____ of harmonizing the resurrection accounts;
- The shock and unbelief expressed by the disciples' themselves;
- The prominent role given to _____ as the first witnesses;
- The transformation of those who witnessed Christ (11,18; 19,20; 25, 27).

The disciples were ordinary men and women; they knew that dead people don't come back to life. Only Jesus' repeated appearances over the course of forty days convinces them. Jesus overcomes Mary Magdalene's despair (11), the disciples' fear (19), and Thomas' doubts (27). They did not expect to see Jesus alive.

B. Resuscitation Theory

Others have suggested that Jesus did not die upon the cross, he merely swooned, revived in the tomb, and then presented Himself alive to the disciples thereafter. The problems with this theory are myriad:

- It is incredulous considering Jesus' extensive injuries;
- It is anatomically ignorant;
- It does not account for the condition of the linen cloths.

C. Resurrection Fact

In the August 8, 1994 edition of *Time Magazine*, Pico Iyer wrote, "One reason [why we cannot seem to learn to die], of course, is that death is the one great adventure of which there are no surviving accounts; death, by definition, is what happens to somebody else. Empiricism falters before death. Yet [death] is more certain than love and more reliable than health." Yet Paul writes:

³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. (1 Cor 15:3-8)

This is _____. Christ is risen! Death has lost his sting; the grave has lost its victory. Hear the words of Jesus, "I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

IV. Conclusion