

Apologetics

(The Resurrection of Jesus)

Apologetics can be understood as the philosophical, theological and historical demonstration of the *truthfulness* of Christian theological claims.

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Geivett, R. Douglas, and Gary R. Habermas, eds. *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Habermas, Gary R. and Michael R. Licona. *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004.

Habermas, Gary R. *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*. Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996.

Habermas, Gary R. *Philosophy of History, Miracles, and the Resurrection of Jesus*. 3rd ed. Sagamore Beach, MA: Academx, 2012.

- I. Why is the Resurrection Important?¹
 - A. It was the focal point of the disciples' preaching.
 - 1. If it did not occur there is no reconciliation between sinful men and a holy God (1 Cor 15:17).
 - 2. Belief in it is required for salvation (Rom. 10:9).
 - 3. It secures for believers an inheritance in heaven (1 Peter 1:3-4).
 - 4. Many doctrines are based on it.
 - B. It was the evidence that Jesus provided to validate his teachings (Matt. 12:38-40; 16:1-4; John 2:18-21).
 - C. The resurrection was the chief evidence provided by the apostles that Christianity is true (Acts 17:2-3, 18, 31; 2:22-32; 1 Cor 15:17).
 - D. Summary.
 - 1. It is the confirming ground for Jesus's claims.
 - a. Claims to deity.
 - b. Promises to the believers' eternal life.
 - 2. It grounds the truthfulness of Christianity.
 - 3. It grounds much of Christian doctrine
- II. Historiography and the Resurrection
 - A. Principles historians use to assess historical credibility.
 - 1. Multiple, independent sources.
 - 2. Enemy attestation.
 - 3. Embarrassing admissions.
 - 4. Eyewitness testimony.
 - 5. Early testimony.
 - 6. Discontinuity
 - a. Address and reference
 - b. Writing styles
 - B. Resurrection minimal facts defense criteria.
 - 1. Data is strongly evidenced.

¹Outline adapted from Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, "A Detailed Outline of Arguments," *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004), 219-247.

2. Data presented is granted by virtually all scholars, even skeptical ones.
3. Use of biblical data does not require belief in inspiration, only requires grant that writings are ancient

III. Is it reasonable to conclude Jesus actually predicted his resurrection?

- A. Gospels provide embarrassing testimony concerning the disciples and the women in relation to Jesus's resurrection (Mark 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 14:27-31; Luke 24:13-24).
 1. They either were truly distraught, or
 2. They didn't believe.
 3. The principle of embarrassment supports authenticity.
 - a. Unlikely that disciples would invent embarrassing testimony.
 - b. Such testimony would retroactively cast the disciples in a negative light.
- B. Jesus's use of "Son of Man" with respect to his prediction of his own resurrection heavily supports authenticity (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34).
 1. New Testament epistles never refer to him in this manner.
 2. The Jews did not think of "Son of Man" in the aspect of a suffering Messiah (see Dan. 7:13-14).
 3. The principle of discontinuity applies.
 - a. The "words or deeds of Jesus that cannot be derived from Judaism at the time of Jesus
 - b. Or from the early Church after him" (Habermas citing John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 3 vols., New York: Doubleday, 1991-2001).

IV. Argument for Jesus's Resurrection: The Facts (4+1)

- A. Jesus died by crucifixion
 1. Reported by all four Gospels
 2. Reported by non-Christian sources
 - a. Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:3)
 - b. Tacitus (*Annals*, 15:44)
 - c. Lucian of Samosata (*The Death of Peregrine*, 11-13)

- d. Mara bar Sarapion (Letter at British Museum)
 - e. Talmud
- B. Disciples believed Jesus rose from the dead
1. They claimed it (POW)
 - a. Paul
 - (1) Paul said disciples claimed Jesus rose
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 15:9-11
 - (b) Galatians 2:1-10
 - (2) Paul's authority
 - (a) Claimed by Paul (2 Cor. 10:8; 11:5; 13:10; 1 Thess. 2:6; 4:2; 2 Thess. 3:4; Philem. 1:21)
 - (b) Acknowledged by Apostolic Fathers
 - i) Clement of Rome (1 Clem. 5:3-5)
 - ii) Polycarp (Pol. *Phil.* 3:2; 12:11)
 - iii) Ignatius (Ign. *Rom.* 4:3)
 - b. An oral tradition
 - (1) Early creed (1 Cor. 15:3-8)
 - (a) Evidence it's a creed
 - i) "Delivered" and "received" indicates Paul is relaying the tradition he received.
 - ii) Contains Aramaic substrata
 - a) Fourfold use of Greek *hoti* common to creeds
 - b) "Cephas" is Aramaic for Peter
 - 1) Discontinuity
 - 2) Paul wrote in Greek
 - c) Text's content is stylized
 - d) Contains parallelisms
 - e) Contains non-Pauline terms
 - (b) Evidence it's early
 - i) Crucifixion dated A.D. 30

- ii) Paul's conversion dated A.D. 31-33
 - iii) Paul goes away for three years after conversion
 - iv) Paul visits Peter and James (Gal. 1:18-19)
 - v) Most scholars believe Paul received creed from them at this time
 - vi) Another option is that Paul received the creed at his conversion in Damascus, three years earlier.
 - vii) Latest dating of the creed would be prior to A.D. 51 since Paul had the creedal information prior to his A.D. 51 visit to Corinth (1 Cor. 15:3).
- (c) Biblical vs. extrabiblical
- i) Paul quotes secular writers in New Testament (1 Cor. 15:33; Titus 1:12; Acts 17:28).
 - ii) Use of quotations do not make them New Testament sources
 - iii) Recitation of the creed demonstrates it existed before Paul's writings.
 - iv) The creed can be claimed to be a non-New Testament source through the use of "delivered," "received," and other non-Pauline terms.
- (d) Important point about the creed:
- i) Early testimony to Jesus's resurrection
 - ii) Likely eyewitness testimony to Jesus's resurrection
 - iii) Multiple testimonies to Jesus's resurrection
 - a) Cephas
 - b) The Twelve
 - c) More than five hundred at one time
 - d) James
 - e) All of the apostles
 - f) Paul

- iv) Post resurrection appearances: the 12, 500+, all of the apostles in which company Paul claims his inclusion partially based on his resurrection experience.
- (e) Sermon Summaries (Acts 1-5, 10, 13, 17)
 - i) Origin of sermons dated within twenty years of Jesus's crucifixion.
 - ii) Important points:
 - a) Early testimony to Jesus's resurrection
 - b) Possible eyewitness testimony to Jesus's resurrection
 - c) Group appearances: Acts 10, 13
- (2) Written Tradition
 - (a) All four Gospels.
 - i) Does not require skeptics' acknowledgment of inspiration
 - ii) Simply requires grant that the Bible is a collection of ancient writings
 - iii) Written within seventy years of Jesus
 - iv) Assert that Jesus rose from the dead
 - (b) Apostolic Fathers
 - i) Clement of Rome (A.D. 95, 1 Clement 42:3)
 - ii) Polycarp (A.D. 110, Pol. *Phil.* 9:2)
- 2. They believed Jesus rose from the dead
 - a. Transformation of the disciples
 - (1) At arrest and after execution: fearful, hiding, fleeing
 - (a) Abandoned Jesus at his arrest
 - (b) Denied Jesus
 - (c) Met in secret: fearful of persecution from the Jews
 - (2) After appearances:
 - (a) Proclaimed him risen from the dead

- (b) Boldly and publicly
- (3) Luke (Acts 7, 12)
- (4) Clement of Rome (contemporary of apostles) reported suffering and deaths of Peter and Paul (1 Clement 5:2-7)
- (5) Ignatius (student of Polycarp)
 - (a) Likely knew the apostles
 - (b) Reported the disciples so encouraged by seeing and touching the risen Jesus, they were unaffected by the fear of martyrdom (Ign. *Smyrn.* 3:2-3)
- (6) Polycarp
 - (a) Appointed and instructed by the apostles
 - (b) Attested that Paul and all the apostles suffered (Pol. *Phil.* 9:2)
- (7) Dionysius of Corinth (cited by Eusebius in *EH* 2:25:8)
- (8) Tertullian (*Scorpiace*, 15)
- (9) Origen (*Contra Celsum*, 2:56, 77)
- (10) Important points:
 - (a) Willingness of apostles to suffer and die for their **testimony** of the risen Jesus
 - (b) Willingness to suffer and die for their **testimony** demonstrates they were not deliberately lying. Liars make poor martyrs.
 - (c) Jesus's disciples sincerely claimed and believed that he rose from the dead and appeared to them.
 - i) Too early for legend (eyewitnesses)
 - ii) Deliberate and knowing liars usually unwilling to suffer or die for their fictitious testimony.

C. Conversion of the church prosecutor Paul

1. Paul's conversion

- a. Paul (1 Cor. 15:9-10; Gal 1:13-16; Phil. 3:6-7)
- b. Recorded in Acts (9: 22, 26)

- c. Early oral tradition circulating in Judea (Gal. 1:22-23).
- 2. Paul's suffering and martyrdom
 - a. Paul (2 Cor. 11:23-28; Phil. 1:21-23)
 - b. Luke (Acts 14:19; 16:19-24; 17:5; 17:13-15; 18:12-13; 21:27-36; 23:12-35).
 - c. Clement of Rome (1 Clement 5:2-7)
 - d. Polycarp (Pol. *Phil.* 9:2)
 - e. Tertullian (*Scorpiace* 15)
 - f. Dionysius of Corinth (cited by Eusebius, *EH* 2:25:8)
 - g. Origin (Commentary on Genesis cited by Eusebius *EH* 3:1)
- D. Conversion of skeptic James
 - 1. James's conversion
 - a. Gospels report Jesus's brothers were unbelievers prior to the resurrection (Mark 3:21, 31; 6:3-4; John 7:5)
 - b. Early creed reports appearance to James (1 Cor. 15:7)
 - c. Paul and Acts testify James leader in Jerusalem church (Gal. 1:19; Acts 15:12-21)
 - 2. James's suffering and martyrdom
 - a. Josephus (*Ant.* 20:200)
 - b. Hegesippus (quoted by Eusebius, *EH*, 2:23)
 - c. Clement of Alexandria (quoted by Eusebius, *EH*, 2:1; 2:23)
- E. Empty tomb
 - 1. Jerusalem factor
 - a. Impossible for Christianity resurrection claims to survive if body still in the tomb
 - b. Enemies would simply have to produce the body
 - 2. Enemy attestation
 - a. Jesus enemies claim the body stolen (Matt. 28:12-13; Justin Martyr, *Trypho*, 108: *Tertullian De Spectaculis*, 30)
 - b. If body in the tomb, no incentive to claim resurrection
 - 3. Testimony of women (embarrassment)

- a. Women's testimony not valued
- b. Inclusion of women's testimony would have had little value to claims (Luke 24:11; Josephus, *Ant.* 4:8:15; *Talmud*: J Sotah 19a; Rosh Hashannah 1:8; Kiddushim 82b; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2:59, 3:55; Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, Augustus 44).

Opposing Theories

- Legend
- Resurrections in other religions
- Fraud
 - Disciples stole the body
 - Someone else stole the body
- Wrong tomb
- Apparent death
- Psychological Phenomena
 - Hallucination
 - Delusion
 - Vision
 - Conversion Disorder (Paul)
- Undercutting Paul's Testimony
 - Guilt
 - Desire for power
 - Epiphany
- Combination Hypotheses
- Biased Testimony
- Unknowable Hypothesis
- Alien Hypothesis
- Scientific Naturalism