

The Resurrection: History or Hoax? John 20:19-29

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*For many people Easter is little more than a religious _____...But it's definitely not reality!

It's about the Easter bunny, chocolate eggs, sunshine, and spring flowers. But the resurrection of a dead man sounds more like a "fairy tale" than reality.

Today's challenge is to examine the evidence for the resurrection!

*The Bible says we receive eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ—but it's not a _____ faith!

How do you "prove" any historical event? You can't prove it scientifically. Yet everyone believes such historical realities like George Washington becoming our nation's first president or that Julius Cesar was a Roman Emperor. None of us were there personally, yet we all believe it because **it's a matter of historical record!**

*Using the same criteria to prove any event in history the resurrection of Jesus Christ...
Can be proven to be a matter of historical _____!

*Historical events are proven with eye witness _____ and written _____!

Three compelling proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

1) The Disciples' _____

In a matter of days the disciples **went from being cowards to courageous proclaimers of the faith!** When Jesus was arrested they all fled for their lives! (Matt. 26:55-56) They were in fear that what happened to Jesus would happen to them! But something transformed them so powerfully...

*They went from _____ for fear of their lives to willingly laying down their lives!

Something so powerful happened that changed these men for the rest of their lives. In a matter of days they went from being cowards to courageous. **Not even being beaten or threatened with their lives could shut them up from proclaiming the name of Christ!** (Acts 5:40)

What happened that changed them so dramatically?

*There is only one explanation for their radical transformation...
They saw the risen Savior with their own _____!

Because of what they had seen they went from running for their lives to being willing to lay down their lives! **All of them except for John would eventually willingly die the most horrific deaths imaginable for their witness of Jesus Christ!** You say "That doesn't prove anything. Lot's of people have died for a lie through the centuries!" Yes, many have died for a lie—but they all thought it was true! **If the resurrection was a lie the disciples would have known it—and nobody knowingly dies for a lie!**

2) The Eyewitness _____

We know the resurrection is true for the same reason we know any historical event of the ancient world—the written records of eyewitnesses. They saw the life, the miracles, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus, and they wrote down what they saw!

The Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:16 "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.**"

How accurate are the written accounts of the eyewitnesses?

Simon Greenleaf, the Harvard Law Professor said, "Copies which had been as universally received and acted upon as the four Gospels, would have been received as evidence in any court of justice, without the slightest hesitation."

3) The Empty _____.

On the third day the stone was rolled away revealing to the entire world that the tomb was empty!

Theories to explain away the empty tomb:

1) The _____ tomb theory...Jesus' followers mistakenly went to the wrong tomb.

Problem: They knew which tomb it was because they were there when Jesus was laid in the grave!

*Had the disciples gone to the wrong tomb the Jews would have gone to the right tomb to _____ the body of Jesus! **The resurrection story would have easily been forever squelched!**

2) The _____ theory...Jesus didn't really die He just passed out falling into a coma.

Problem: The Romans were professional executioners. A soldier shoved a spear through the side of Jesus to ensure he was dead and out of his side flowed "blood and water"—medically a sign of death.

But if this theory were true it cannot account for the disciples' transformation! How does a bloody, beaten half-dead man possibly convince his disciples that He is the "risen Savior" worth dying for?

3) The _____ body theory...The disciples stole the body of Jesus to stage the resurrection.

Problem: Knowing the cowardice of the disciples' on the night of Jesus' arrest, how did they suddenly find the courage to sneak past an armed guard of Roman soldiers at the tomb of Jesus? And had they actually been successful in stealing the body of Christ they would have known the resurrection was a hoax? ***No one knowingly dies for a lie!***

*The _____ is overwhelming—Jesus came out of the grave...

And if indeed He came out of the grave it leaves us with only one rational response...

*To surrender to Him as our _____ and our _____!