

EASTER

2021

AT CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOOR

HUB Notes / April 4, 2021 David Anderson

Read Luke 24:1-9

1) Why do you personally believe the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth actually happened?

2) Why is it important that our faith is grounded in the historical evidence? What happens if our faith is not grounded in the evidence?

3) Read through this article as a HUB and discuss the validity of his arguments:

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a. Without the physical Resurrection, two thousand years of history are left begging for explanation, like a movie missing a key scene. No other event in all recorded history has reached so far across national, ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, political, and geographic borders. The message spread with unreasonable success across the world. During just the first few centuries, it spread without political or military power, prevailing against the ruthless efforts of dedicated, organized and violent opposition. How did a small band of disempowered Jews in an occupied and insignificant territory of ancient Rome accomplish this unequalled act? What happened so many years ago that reframed all human history?

b. With dates established by radiometric analysis, prophecies from centuries before Jesus' birth predict his life, death, and resurrection. The great scientist Blaise Pascal identifies this as the "tangible proof" for people who want evidence that God exists. These prophecies include specific details that Jesus and His followers could not control. For example, before the Romans invented crucifixion, Psalms 22:16 described the piercing of Jesus' hands and feet. Isaiah 53 is a particularly important prophecy that lays out the story of Jesus and the meaning of the Resurrection (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). Is this evidence of an Intelligence outside our time confirming Jesus' authority?

c. Jesus was a real person in history who died. Several manuscripts from multiple sources, including Jewish historians, describe a man named Jesus who lived and was executed. Specific details reported about His execution confirm “blood and water” spilled from a spear wound in His side. He really died and was not merely unconscious.

d. The early accounts of the Resurrection and prophecies predicting it were reliably transmitted through history. As of 2014, more than 66,000 early manuscripts are known, orders of magnitude more than other ancient texts. Many are carbon dated to before Jesus’ time on earth and the first few centuries after. We see accounts nearly unaltered in the earliest manuscripts. A pattern of consistency emerges. There are variations in the manuscripts, but nothing invalidates the reliability of the Resurrection accounts.

e. Accounts of the Resurrection include inconvenient and unflattering details, that make most sense as attempts to reliably record what had happened, free from embellishment. They do not fit expectations of a fabricated account. For example, women are the first witnesses of the Resurrection. In a culture that did not admit the testimony of a woman as valid evidence in court, this detail is surprising. Likewise, all the disciples, the leaders of the early Church, flee as cowards when Jesus is taken.

f. After Jesus’ violent death, His followers were frightened and scattered. Then, something happened that grew a strong, bold, and confident belief that resisted sustained, murderous opposition. Unlike other movements with executed leaders, once they came back together they did not replace Jesus with one of his family members. Their resistance was entirely non-violent and devoid of political power. Yet they were all suddenly willing to die for what they saw. What changed them? Why was there not evidence at the time to undermine their belief? What convinced them that Jesus was inconceivably greater than his family?

g. More than just a fact about our past, the Resurrection creates a connection to God that is perceived by people from all times, cultures, socioeconomic statuses, personalities, and mental capacities, across the last 2,000 years of history. Its reach includes some of the most famous scientists: Blaise Pascal, Johann Kepler, Robert Boyle, Gregor Mendel, Asa Gray, Michael Faraday, James Maxwell, Santiago Ramón y Cajal, and Francis Collins. Is this unmatched reach and influence a sign of a living God working His purpose in history?

4) Which of the arguments for the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth encourages you the most?

2021 BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER REQUESTS:

Father, pour out your Spirit on us and move us forward together.

Father, please retire the Worship Center mortgage by 2025.

Father, please use us to build a reproducing church among an unreached people - the Nyamwezi - by 2030.