

Hurst Green
12th Apr 20
Easter Sunday
Proof of the Resurrection
John 11:1-44

Some time ago I promised you that today we would revisit the proof of the resurrection and here are some ideas and facts to help you think about this.

One important fact to keep at the front of your mind is that the idea of refuting the resurrection is a relatively new one. Until the 1800's the resurrection was just accepted and the only debate was about Jesus as the Messiah.

The bible has several people who are raised from the dead and people accepted it was something that happened – just not too often.

Then people started trying to argue it could not have happened so here are some points:

1. Jesus foretold it

Throughout the last weeks of his life Jesus had been teaching that he would be raised from the dead and of course this was going to be different because he would be raised from the dead and ascend into heaven as we say in our creed.

Jesus said this would happen and it did!

Jesus had demonstrated to that generation that this was possible. That was last weeks teaching on Lazarus. Jesus in his generosity and compassion reinforced his teaching with that active demonstration so that the people – not just the disciples but the many people who witnessed it – could know that it was possible.

But the disciples did not understand it

John 20:9 (ANIV)

⁹ *(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)*

And also note from your scriptures that when Jesus taught about his death and he did quite a lot of that he always also taught of his resurrection. An example of this is

Matthew 16:21 (ANIV)

²¹ *From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*

~~His rising was to be a sign to authenticate his claim to be the messiah matt 16 john 2~~

2. The fact of the resurrection

As I have said this was not really doubted until the 1800's and we know more about the death of Jesus that the death of any other person of that period.

None of the documents of that time carry any doubt that the resurrection happened. Even those who opposed this new religion could not refute the resurrection – their efforts were put into showing that this Jesus was not the Messiah.

The other debate that comes forward at this point claims that Jesus did not really die but merely swooned on the cross and awoke in the tomb.

This of course is also rubbish.

Firstly the Roman soldiers oversaw the crucifixions (see John 19:16) and they had a rather harsh penalty for getting it wrong – you died. And these executions were overseen by a centurion – the boss. He would not get it wrong.

To make sure Jesus was not faking it he had a spear driven into the side of Jesus – one of the wounds Thomas would be shown.

Also look at the miracles that happened during the death and resurrection

- The temple curtain is torn in two
- This darkness descends for three hours
- A violent earthquake on the Sunday morning.
- The raising of various Holy men

Again there is nothing in literature that attempts to refute these things until 1800 years later.

3. Refuting the resurrection

The resurrection had to be more than the disappearance of his body. The Pharisees were aware of the teaching that he would rise again and that is why they asked for the guard to be placed.

How could the disciples take it – it was guarded by roman soldiers and they were cowering rabble.

And over the coming years and even when faced with death not one of them would recant and say they had stolen the body.

If the Pharisees had taken it wouldn't they have produced it? They were worried by this new movement and if they could have produced the body to show that Jesus was dead they surely would have done it.

But it had to be more – We had to see Jesus

4. The Scene of the resurrection

The guards were still there and in place. If they had all fallen asleep and had the body stolen surely they would have just rolled the stone back and tried to get away with it.

Don't forget they had failed and the punishment was death.

Instead they get rewarded – most unusual.

And what of the folded grave clothes?

If the body had been stolen they would not have unwrapped it first!

If they had would they have folded the grave clothes given the guards were meant to be sleeping outside the grave?

5. Luke's opening to his gospel:

Luke 1:1-4 (ANIV)

¹ Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye-witnesses and servants of the word. ³ Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

This gospel and acts were produced after careful examination of the facts.

Of course the gospels were written fairly shortly (historically speaking) after the death of Jesus and yet there is still no attempt in other writings to rebut the claims.

6. Post resurrection appearances

After the resurrection Jesus appeared to many people

Acts 1:3 (ANIV)

³ After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

And of course he was seen by many:

1 Corinthians 15:6 (ANIV)

⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

The early Christians did not have to rely solely on the witness of the twelve apostles many of the disciples had also seen the resurrected Jesus.

And of course the whole nation and further afield had been witness to his birth and the miracles then. Because of the census Jews from all over the known world had been witness to this.

Many had seen and heard Jesus teaching as well as seeing his many miracles.

So as you celebrate Easter remember you are celebrating one of the most well documented and attested events from that period. You have much to celebrate for Jesus opened the way to heaven and demonstrated the truth of what he has taught.

Do not go out to conform to the ways of the world but go out with your head held high, confident in your Lord and certain of the hope you have within you.