

Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus

Video: William Lane Craig ("Evidence for the Resurrection")

Best arguments for Christianity are arguments for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead

1. "Minimal facts" argument
2. Evidence for the empty tomb
3. Evidence for the appearances of Jesus after his death
4. Naturalistic theories to explain the appearances all fail



How do we know Jesus rose from the dead?

1. Evidence from history
2. Experience of Jesus

Evidence from history (2 steps)

1. 4 things need to be explained (Jesus' burial, Jesus' empty tomb, Jesus' appearances after death, the disciples belief in the resurrection)
2. Jesus' resurrection is the best explanation

Step #1: 4 things must be explained (critics agree on these facts!!)

1. Fact #1: Jesus was buried in the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea
 - a. Jesus' burial is multiply attested in early, independent sources (Mark, source behind Mathew, source between Luke, John, Acts, 1 Cor. 15)
 - b. Joseph of Arimathea is unlikely a Christian invention: if made-up then a follower of Jesus makes more sense
2. Fact #2: Jesus' tomb found empty on Sunday morning
 - a. Burial story supports the empty tomb: if Jesus hadn't risen, they could have easily located the shown the body
 - b. Empty tomb story multiply attested (Mark, source behind Matthew/Luke, John, Acts, 1 Cor. 15)
 - c. Discovered empty by witnesses with least credibility: women
 - d. Story lacks signs of being just made-up: it's simple (no prophecy, no OT Scriptures, not described, no reflection, no titles, simple telling in Mark's Gospel)
 - e. The earliest Jewish debate concerns the empty tomb: disciples thought to have stolen the body
3. Fact #3: Jesus was seen by individuals and groups after his death
 - a. Paul passes on the resurrection tradition only a matter of years after Jesus' death!
 - b. Early, independent sources for the appearances of Jesus
4. Fact #4: disciples suddenly believed in Jesus' resurrection despite having every reason not to
 - a. Their leader was dead (Jewish Messiah had earthly rule, not dead and resurrected)
 - b. Jewish beliefs in resurrection were contrary: resurrection only happened at end of time for all people

Evidence Step #2: Jesus' resurrection is the best explanation

(explanatory scope/power, plausibility, no better rival theory)

1. Evidence so good that alternate theories are desperate (e.g. identical twin brother)
2. A Jewish scholar concedes Jesus was raised from the dead