

TRINITY COLLEGE OF THE BIBLE AND SEMINARY

THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

A PAPER SUBMITTED TO INSTRUCTOR RODNEY TUCKER

AP 448 OVERVIEW OF RESURRECTION ARGUMENTS

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Introduction

In regards to the work of *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* by Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, the two have teamed up to reeducate the Lord's church on the central message of the church, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This resource gives a verbal, rational, organized, intelligent, systematic accounting of the Christian faith. Christian apologetics is the act of answering, primarily verbally, why the Bible is the word of God, why one needs to be saved, the existence of God as creator, ruler, and redeemer, why Christ was crucified, and when, how, and why He was resurrected, and much more. The author uses evidential apologetics as his discipline and field of work. This feature of defense is a one-step approach to establishing Christian theism. Evidentialist's will utilize evidence and arguments from several areas including archeology, fulfilled messianic prophecy, and the historical evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This paper will explain the main points, the supporting points and outline the original work. I will not seek to bring about a critical analysis or even an evaluation of this work. Rather, my objective is to summarize the author's concluding thoughts and main points of the various sections of this work.

Part One

A Life to Die For: Sharing Your Faith

In this section the author makes the claim that Jesus' resurrection is a crucial issue. One will clearly see that the main point of this section is that the bodily resurrection of Christ was a real historical event. In regards to evangelism and the resurrection of Jesus, many Christians do

not share their faith with others because they more than likely could view the resurrection as a story that teaches moral precepts and platitudes rather than a book to be taken seriously with respect to history. The author makes this claim and informs Christians that the resurrection of Christ is an excellent starting point for confirming the trustworthiness of the Bible. In regards to evangelism, the author makes it very clear that the evidence of the historical resurrection is part of sharing our faith (1 Peter 3:15).

The aim of this section is the author making the case that apologetics requires some prerequisites. *First*, one has to be committed to the truth. Truth is that which corresponds to reality, truth finds its origin with God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The only objective truth that we possess, which comes in the form of intelligible, oral, and written communication from God is the Bible. *Second*, it will involve an attitude which will be conducive to carrying out the rearranging of priorities and establishing goals. The author makes this case when he is speaking of gaining common ground with the one, we are seeking to evangelize. *Third*, it will involve a proper understanding of the biblical mandate to engage in apologetics. The author makes very clear that within the context of the Great commission, teaching would include giving an orderly, intelligent, systematic accounting of the Christian faith. In our evangelism of the bodily resurrection, the author constructs a strong case that all historical data, archaeological finds, documents, and eyewitnesses can be credible tools used for the Master's service.

Part Two

The Minimal Facts Approach

In the context of this section, one will see that the authors' objective has been to build a durable yet simple case for Jesus' resurrection. They list five facts that are packed with much evidence that even those who would seek to be skeptical would even regard them as reliable facts. First, the case is made that Jesus died. The second fact, Jesus' disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them. Third, the church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed. Fourth, the skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed. Fifth, the tomb was empty.

The author uses a common theme regarding the approach of these five elements. It is called the "minimal facts approach." The approach considers only those aspects of data that is so strong, that it meets all the criteria of a justified true belief, even by skeptics. One of the advantages of this approach is that it keeps the debate or topic on the real issue and not on any other issues. The author makes it very clear, that other issues can be important, however there is nothing more important than the bodily resurrection of Jesus because the resurrection is essential in order to have eternal life (Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 15:1-5). The minimal facts approach only considers substance that has evidence that is measured as historical by fundamentally all who study the subject matter of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Part Three

Encountering Opposing Theories

In this section the author looks at some major opposing theories to Jesus' resurrection. The author's overall desire in this section is to help the Christian to have several theories at hand to use for answering refutations against skeptical colleagues. One of the arguments the skeptics make is that the resurrection of Jesus was nothing more than a mere legend. The skeptics stating that embellishments and adding details over time is responsible for the accounts of Jesus' resurrection. The author gives several reasons why this argument doesn't hold up. One, being the empty tomb. Second, a fable or tall-tale would not have convinced the apostle Paul or James the skeptic, Jesus had risen from the dead. Third, there are assumptions made in Scripture about the resurrection of Jesus being a literal, physical event in history.

Another theory the author mentions is the apparent death theory. This position states that, how can we really be certain that Jesus really died on the cross? The author contends against this position by stating a journal of the American Medical Association, where pathologists who have studied scourging and crucifixion share their effects of study and describe the process of scourging. It is highly unlikely, given the essence of scourging and crucifixion anyone would survive. Many skeptics use the hallucination theory as well. According to the author, not only are there too many personal variances for this position to hold up but hallucinations do not hold

up in group occurrences. Hallucinations only occur on an individual level. Not to mention as the author clearly states, that any hallucinations do not account for the empty tomb. If it was a hallucination then the body of Jesus would still be in the tomb.

As this section of the book records many claims from the naturalist position, and many of their major theories that oppose any notion of Jesus rising from the dead. It was in this section that the author makes a very strong case that (1) Jesus died due to crucifixion. That is subsequent to his death. (2) The original disciples really believed that Jesus rose from the dead and appears to them. (3) We have creditable eye-witness testimony from an enemy of Christianity and (4) a skeptic of Christianity. The author makes the case both of these were only converted because based on their beliefs of the risen Christ, that was the main cause of their conversion. The final conclusion is that the tomb was empty.

Part Four:

The Art of Sharing

As the author comes to the end of his work, it seems that he knows transitions in the text to our application. The author no doubt understood that, its one thing to know something to be true, but a whole different animal to show it to be true. The first exhortation the author gives is that apologetics must be done with an attitude that is conducive to our Lord. It must be done with an attitude of love. The author makes the case for being a “credible messenger”. Next, he informs his readers to be humble (1 Corinthians 8:1). He uses several passages from God’s

Word to reinforce humility (Proverbs 15:1-2, Col. 4:6, 2 Tim. 2:24-26, Jude 22). The final step to the art of sharing described by the author, is to be a good listener.

All of these steps the author instructs are meaningless unless we reproduce what we receive. We must plan for the day when we will share this life saving message with those in our sphere of influence. Spiritual preparations must be made for the sake of the kingdom.

Conclusion

The bodily resurrection of Jesus is Christianity, and one professing Christ as Lord and Savior cannot separate oneself from the controversial implications of the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the grave. The resurrection is an historical matter, for there were eye witnesses to this account, as the book defends. In my conclusion of this book, my overall concluding thoughts are: The resurrection is a biological matter, for the body of Jesus was mutilated and he clearly died. The resurrection of Jesus is a scientific matter, because death for him was completely reversed, and this reversal of death was empirically verified by over five hundred people. Therefore, Christianity without the bodily resurrection of Jesus is not Christianity, without this reality being the central focus in preaching and teaching, all that is left is moral therapy.

