

FOOLISHNESS OF RESURRECTION

The last time Easter Sunday fell on April Fool's Day was 1979. The next morning I stepped out for work, and there was no car in my St. Louis carport. I wondered which of my church friends would play such a prank. No joke, it was stolen. Imagine how traumatic it was for Jesus' disciples to watch helplessly as He died on the cross and was placed in the tomb, only to find it empty on Easter.

The Bible, as the reliable record of God's redemptive history, provides numerous accounts of intricate irony and wonders of wordsmithery. Some are more obvious than others. Consider the words of the angels in Luke 24:5 to the women who came to Christ's tomb on Easter Sunday: "*Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.*" Unbelievers consider this the height of foolishness. How can anyone believe what they cannot confirm experimentally in their own lives? Turns out, that's the real folly - to suppose that you must first subjectively experience something in order for it to be objectively true. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is truth, whether or not you believe it. The unbeliever is the fool. Let's look at five ways the truth of the resurrection trumps the foolishness of unbelief.

1- Jesus predicted it. Many Old Testament passages foreshadow resurrection. Psalm 49 notes how death comes to the wise, stupid and fools alike, "*but God will ransom my soul.*" Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac in Genesis 22 because "*he considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead*" (Hebrews 11:19). Job 19:25 declares, "*I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God.*" Isaiah 26:19, "*your dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy, for the earth will give birth to the dead.*" See also Daniel 12:2 and John 5:29. Jesus affirmed resurrection as He rebuked disbelieving Saducees in Mark 12:24, "*is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?*" And Jesus spoke of His own coming resurrection numerous times in the Gospels. And Matthew 27:63 recounts how Pharisees asked Pilate for guards at the tomb, because "*we remember how that imposter said, 'after three days I will rise'.*" Indeed, death could not hold Him.

2- God recorded it. All four Gospels and Acts attest to the remarkable resurrection of Jesus. In Matthew 28:5 the angel said, "*you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He lay.*" Lee Strobel, former atheist and Chicago Tribune legal editor, notes four irrefutable evidences for Jesus' resurrection: 1) He was surely dead after the crucifixion. Historical accounts and even American Medical Association reports leave no doubt. 2) The guarded tomb was surely empty. The "stolen body theory" immediately falls apart. It was known that the guards were paid off to lie, when apart from the miracle of resurrection they would have paid with their own lives for losing such a valuable victim. 3) Oral and written reports of His resurrection come so rapidly that they must be taken seriously. There is no historical rebuttal. 4) Nine ancient sources inside and outside the New Testament corroborate how the disciples encountered the risen Jesus in His resurrected body. Seven ancient sources confirm the extreme deprivations of the disciples' lives, losing life and liberty and pursuit of worldly possessions and power. All were willing to be martyred for their faith in the resurrected Christ, explainable only by their personal witness of the resurrected Jesus. Who would die for a lie? God recorded resurrection truth because it is at the heart of the Gospel. God predicted it and reported it, writing it all down and preserving the Bible, to reveal His truth to people of all times.

3- Witnesses confirm it. Jesus appeared to the women, disciples on the road, and to the eleven. In the forty days before His ascension, Jesus appeared to individuals, groups, and more than 500 believers at one time, most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote 1Corinthians 15. Such rigorous historical corroboration eliminates the possibility of lies or hallucinations. And the Bible is the most strictly analyzed book in history. Strobel, author of "*The Case For Miracles,*" says this "avalanche of historical data" led to his own conversion to Christ. He experienced not a rush of emotion but "a rush of reason" - because "the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not some April Fool's joke. Rather, it is historical reality, based not on mythology or make-believe or wishful thinking, but on a solid foundation of historical truth." Next time, we'll consider two more reasons why the truth of resurrection trumps the foolishness of unbelief. Transformed lives proclaim it - and Jesus asks you for your own response to His resurrection.