

WHAT DO HISTORIANS SAY ABOUT THE RESURRECTION?

THE MINIMAL FACTS

Have you ever talked to someone who believes the Bible is just an old book full of fairy tales? Dr. Gary Habermas developed an interesting way of talking to those who believe this. He focuses on the historicity of Jesus and his resurrection. He believes that *even if* you don't trust Bible's teachings, and *even if* you only believe facts that are agreed upon by the vast majority of scholars, Christian and non-Christian alike. . . .you still have to admit that Jesus probably rose from the dead. Dr. Habermas writes,

“Throughout my publications my emphasis has been to build a case for the resurrection of Jesus from the bottom up, like a brick wall. Each brick represents a historical fact. Each fact is multiply attested by sub-facts that carefully establish its historicity. Each fact is also generally accepted as historical by an exceptionally large majority of the critical scholars who study this subject, whatever their discipline or theological outlook.”^{††}

The following are well-attested historical facts:

- ***Jesus died*** due to the process of Roman crucifixion.
- ***The disciples experienced what they thought were actual appearances of the risen Jesus.*** The disciples were so utterly transformed by what they saw, that they were willing to be tortured and killed rather than give up their beliefs in the resurrection.
- ***Christianity's greatest persecutor, Paul, became a believer*** because he too experienced what he believed was the appearance of the resurrected Jesus.
- ***One of Jesus' biggest skeptics, his brother James, became a believer*** because he too experienced what he believed was the appearance of the resurrected Jesus.

So what does this mean?.

- It means we have more than one strand of eyewitness testimony, coming from both individuals and groups.
- It means we have the eyewitness testimony of skeptics and persecutors, who had nothing to gain and everything to lose by becoming Christians.
- All of these eyewitnesses were in an excellent position to know whether Jesus' resurrection was truth or a lie. Every single one of them was willing to be tortured and killed rather than give up their beliefs.

Even when they look only at these “minimal facts” and ignore the rest of the Bible, scholars have been unable to propose any other reasonable explanation of what happened on Easter. What could possibly make so many different, unconnected people behave in such an unexpected way? The only plausible explanation is that the early believers actually saw the risen Jesus.”

^{††} Gary Habermas, The Minimal Facts Approach,” *Tough-Minded Christianity*