

HISTORY OR HYSTERIA?

Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

1. INTRODUCTION: THE QUESTIONS HISTORIANS ASK

- a. Two historical claims in the Gospels
 - (1) The empty tomb
 - (2) The resurrection appearances
- b. Jesus' resurrection in the Gospels

		Event	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
EMPTY TOMB		Women	16:1-8	28:1-8	24:1-10	20:1-2, 11-13
		Men			24:11-12	20:3-10
APPEARANCES	JERUSALEM	Mary/women		28:9-10		20:14-18
		Road to Emmaus			24:13-35	
		Peter			24:34	
		Disciples minus Thomas			24:36-49	20:19-25
		Disciples plus Thomas				20:26-29
	GALILEE	Sea of Tiberias				21:1-23
		Mountain in Galilee		28:16-20		
	JRSLM	Ascension at Bethany			24:50-53 Acts 1:9-11	

- c. Distinguish the *event* from *early beliefs* about the event

Early belief: *What did the earliest Christians believe?*

Event: *What gave rise to their beliefs? What actually happened?*

	EMPTY TOMB		APPEARANCES	
	Event	Early Belief?	Event	Early Belief?
K. Lake	Wrong tomb	Yes	Spiritual	Bodily
M. Goulder	Unhistorical	No	Hallucinations	Spiritual
N.T. Wright	Right tomb	Yes	Bodily	Bodily

d. Belief in Jesus' resurrection *preceded* the writing of the four Gospels

(1) The New Testament epistles

(2) Early Christian formulae

- "God raised Jesus from the dead" (Gal 1:1; 1 Thes 1:10; Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 4:13; 1 Pet 1:21; etc.)
- "Jesus died and rose again" (1 Thes 4:14; Rom 4:25; 14:29)

(3) A pre-Pauline Christian creed (1 Cor 15:3-7)

➔ The Gospel resurrection narratives purport to describe the events that gave rise to this belief.

- The key questions:
 - Did the Evangelists use sources, or did they invent things?
 - Did some Gospels copy from others, or are they largely independent?
 - How early are the traditions/sources used by the Gospels?

2. THE EMPTY TOMB

a. Agreement on the basic outline of events

b. Surprisingly little direct verbal correspondence, even between the Synoptic Gospels

c. Minor differences that rule out simple plagiarism or collusion

i. The time of day

ii. The women

iii. The angels

d. Unique emphases characteristic of each particular gospel

i. Matthew

- The earthquake (28:2; see 27:51-53)
- The guards (28:4; see 27:65-66; 28:11-15)

ii. Mark

- The silence of the women (16:8; see 1:34, 44; etc.)
 - An *historical* explanation: “something to someone”
 - A *rhetorical* explanation: The Messianic Secret

iii. Luke

- Omission of Galilean appearance prediction
- Fulfilment of prophecy (24:6-8; cf. 1:1)

iv. John

- Seeing and believing (20:8; see 2:11, 23-25; etc.)
- The minor role of the angels (20:12-13)

e. Initial assessment

- Broad agreement
- Indications of independence
- Editorial freedom, with restraint

3. THE RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

a. No account claims to be comprehensive

b. Agreement on the fundamental nature of the event

i. Bodily resurrection

ii. Worship

iii. Commission

- c. Agreement on many minor details
 - ➔ The criterion of multiple independent attestation

- d. Unique emphases characteristic of each particular gospel
 - i. Matthew
 - The mountain (28:16; see also 5:1; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1; etc.)
 - Worship of Jesus (28:17; see also 2:2, 8, 11; 8:2; etc.)
 - “I am with you” (28:20; see also 1:23)

 - ii. Luke
 - Fulfilment (24:25-27, 32, 44-47)
 - Witness (24:48; see also Acts 1:8, 22; etc.)
 - Cleopas (24:18)
 - An appearance to Simon Peter (24:34; see also 1 Cor 15:5)

 - iii. John
 - Seeing and believing (20:24-25, 29; etc.)
 - God as Father (20:17, 21)
 - Jesus’ sheep (21:15-17; see also 10:7-29)
 - “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (20:2; 21:20-24)

4. EVALUATION

- a. Recurring themes – The criterion of multiple attestation

- b. Awkward inclusions – The criterion of embarrassment
 - i. Women witnesses

 - ii. Non-recognition (Luke 24:16; John 20:15; 21:4)

 - iii. Doubting of the disciples (Matt. 28:17; Luke 24:37, 41; John 20:25)

- c. Surprising omissions – The criterion of double dissimilarity
 - i. Paucity of Scriptural allusions

 - ii. The unusual nature of Jesus’ resurrection body

 - iii. The absence of personal hope

5. CONCLUSION

The Criterion of Multiple Independent Attestation

Italics indicates Empty Tomb motifs

Matthew & Luke	• <i>The angel(s) emphasise that Jesus predicted his resurrection. (Matt. 28:6; Luke 24:6-7)</i>
Matthew & John	• <i>The women ran to tell the disciples. (Matt. 28:8; John 20:2)</i> • Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene / the women. (Matt. 28:9-10; John 20:14-18) • Mary Magdalene / the women held on to Jesus. (Matt. 28:9; John 20:17) • The risen Jesus referred to the disciples as his “brothers”.¹ (Matt. 28:10; John 20:17) • Galilean appearances. (Matt. 28:16-20; John 21)
Luke & John	• <i>Peter and at least one other disciple ran to the tomb. (Luke 24:12, 24; John 20:3-10)</i> • <i>Two angels. (Luke 24:4; John 20:12)</i> • <i>The burial cloths were still in the tomb. (Luke 24:12; John 20:6-7)</i> • Jesus showed himself to some disciples before the others. (Luke 24:33-35; John 20:24-25) • Jerusalem appearances to the Eleven/Twelve. (Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-29; see also 1 Corinthians 15:5) • Sudden appearance / disappearance. (Luke 24:31, 36; John 20:19, 26) • Jesus greets his disciples, “Peace to you” (εἰρήνη ὑμῖν). (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21, 26) • Jesus shows the disciples his hands. (Luke 24:39-40; John 20:20) • Jesus invites his disciples to touch him. (Luke 24:39; John 20:27) • Jesus is initially not recognised. (Luke 24:16, 37; John 20:14-15; 21:4) • Jesus speaks about the forgiveness of sins. (Luke 24:47; John 20:23) • Jesus promises the Holy Spirit. (Luke 24:49; John 20:22)
Matthew, Luke & John	• Some disciples doubted. (Matt. 28:17; Luke 24:37, 41; John 20:25) • Jesus commissions the disciples. (Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:48; John 20:21) • Disciples worshipped Jesus. (Matt. 28:9, 17; Luke 24:52; John 20:28)
Luke & 1 Corinthians	• Appearance to Peter. (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5)

¹ While Jesus often referred to his disciples as brothers (ie. brothers of each other), on only two other occasions in the Gospels did he call the disciples *his* brothers. In the first of these (Matt. 12:48-50 || Mark 3:33-35 || Luke 8:21) Jesus also called them his “mother”. The second (Matt. 25:40) is a parable referring to the judgement at the coming of the Son of Man, and so envisages a *post-resurrection* setting.

	Mark 16:1-8	Matthew 28:1-10	Luke 24:1-12
A	When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise,	After the Sabbath , at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.	On the first day of the week , very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.
B	they were on their way to the tomb ³ and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"		
C	⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.	² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.	² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb , ³ but when they entered , they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.
D		⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.	
E	⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said.	⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid,	⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them,
F	"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified.	for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.	"Why do you look for the living among the dead?
G	He has risen! He is not here.	⁶ He is not here; he has risen , just as he said .	⁶ He is not here; he has risen!
H	See the place where they laid him.	Come and see the place where he lay.	
I	⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"	⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples : 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. ' Now I have told you ."	Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " ⁸ Then they remembered his words.
J	⁸ Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.	⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb , afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.	⁹ When they came back from the tomb , they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others.
K		⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."	¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene , Joanna, Mary the mother of James , and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.