

# OpenTheo

## Alternative Explanations for the Resurrection Data

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### **Knight & Rose Show** - Wintery Knight and Desert Rose

Wintery Knight and Desert Rose review elements of the historical Jesus narratives that are accepted as reliable by the majority of historians. We evaluate several naturalistic explanations for these "minimal facts". Did Jesus die on the cross, or did he just faint? Was Jesus crucified or was it someone else? Were the appearances only hallucinations? Is the resurrection a late legend? Did the disciples make it all up?

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## **Transcript**

Welcome to the Knight and Rose Show, where we discuss practical ways of living out an authentic Christian worldview. I'm Wintery Knight. And I'm Desert Rose.

Welcome, Rose. So today, we're going to be building on the material we presented in our very first episode. Yeah, so in our first episode, we talked about how to make a case for the resurrection of Jesus using only facts that have both strong, evidential support and

are granted by virtually all scholars on the subject matter.

This includes non-Christians. In that episode, we listed six minimal facts and we talked about why the resurrection is the best explanation for those facts. In this episode, we're going to be looking at attempts by naturalists, so those who don't accept any supernatural events whatsoever, to provide an alternative explanation for those minimal facts.

Right. So we presented the minimal facts in the first episode and we thought that the best explanation of those facts was the resurrection, but there are some people who doubt supernatural causes and they accept the minimal facts, but they have a different explanation. Right.

Yeah, exactly. Okay. So before we get started, I wanted to give an explanation to our listeners about why our episodes have been few and far between.

I think I've been a little bit busy, but I think you've also been busy doing something new and interesting. So tell us about that. Yes, I've actually been working on my doctor of ministry in apologetics, so I'm learning a lot, reading a ton, researching, writing papers, preparing to write a dissertation down the road, and keeping up with all the different ministry opportunities that I have at the same time.

It's been quite a bit. Yes, you're getting a lot of speaking invites, but you're also doing something with martial arts, right? Yes, yes. So for exercise and it's also a lot of fun and kind of a second family to me.

I am part of a martial arts school and let's see, I've got my red belt right now. I'll be testing actually in a couple of weeks. I think just like about a week from now, so probably about the time that this episode will be published, I'll be testing for my brown belt and about a year from now, I should be eligible to test for my black belt.

Nice. Very good. All right.

Well, so before we get started with our naturalistic theories, I thought it might be a good idea to have some kind of quick review of the material that we presented. So I would like to talk about what are the criteria that historians use to determine what a minimal fact is and also what are the minimal facts that they agree to based on that criteria. Maybe we should start with just the minimal facts and then we'll talk about what the criteria are.

Okay. Yeah, that sounds good. Yeah.

So in our first episode, we listed six criteria or rather six facts, minimal facts. The first was that Jesus was killed by crucifixion. The second was that Jesus disciples believed they saw Jesus resurrected from the dead.

The third is that Paul, the enemy of Christ who was Saul, became a follower of Jesus when he believed he saw the risen Jesus. Fourth, we talked about how James, the brother of Jesus, who was a skeptic became a follower of Jesus when he believed he saw the risen Jesus. Fifth, we talked about the early proclamation of the resurrection in Jerusalem where the events occurred.

That was within one to two years of the crucifixion, if not much sooner. And sixth was the transformation of the disciples from cowardly doubters to courageous apostles who were willing to sacrifice whatever it took to share their message. Yes.

So I noticed that in your presentations lately, you just try to do something in like 45 minutes. So you don't use all six of those, you're using a subset. So why don't you just give us the same material for our listeners who want to make a quick case, you know, for these minimal facts, which ones should they use? I really like to use the acrostic case C-A-S-E to help me remember four facts that we can use to make the case just as powerfully as if we had six or 12 or 24 facts that have been discussed in various books.

The acrostic is the word case, C-A-S-E. That's so funny. In computer science, we call that a mnemonic, M-N-E-M-O-N-I-C.

It's just like you take the first letters of every word and then it helps you to remember what it is. Right, exactly. So the C in our case is crucifixion.

Jesus was killed by crucifixion. Okay, virtually every historian on earth who studied the life and death of Jesus will agree that Jesus was killed by crucifixion. Right.

The A in our case is for appearances. Jesus' disciples believed that Jesus appeared to them risen from the dead. Non-Christian scholars don't believe Jesus actually rose from the dead, but they do acknowledge that Jesus' disciples believed they saw him risen from the dead.

It doesn't have to be something like crazy glowing light or anything like that. I think Gary Habermas says, you saw your friend die, you know, you went to his tomb, and then a few days later you see him in the supermarket and go, hey Gary, what are you doing here? You know, so, but they believe that they saw him after he died. That's all right.

That's all that everybody admits to. Yeah, and then the S in our case is for skeptics. Okay, and here I put Paul and James together under skeptics because Paul, who was an enemy of Christ and James, the brother of Jesus, who was a skeptic, both became followers of Jesus after what they believe to be resurrection appearances.

Right. So it's, this is important because I feel like a lot of people are thinking, well, Christianity, you know, if it makes you feel good, you know, if that gets you credibility with your family, you know, then, then go on believing it, you know, that's what people are thinking. It's a community thing.

But for Paul, his community was, his community was decimated when he, when he left his, you know, role as a Pharisee and, and started proclaiming the resurrected Christ. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. But he, you know, he, he had his group of, of Jewish scholars that he was a part of and very good with them. Right.

And he wasn't just saying, I saw Jesus alive after his death. He wasn't saying that to just keep up with his, his group. It was an experience he really believed.

And even though at the time he was an enemy of Christians. Right. Exactly.

Yeah. And then the E in our case is for early, early proclamation. So Jesus resurrection, as we mentioned, was proclaimed very early on, very shortly after his crucifixion, beginning in Jerusalem again, where the events themselves took place.

Right. And I think it's important to say that there was no historical background in Judaism that expected one single person to rise from the dead ahead of all of the righteous people getting resurrected at the end of the age. I think we're going to talk more about that later on, because it's important for refuting some of these naturalistic explanations.

Okay. Why did, why do historians agree with these minimal facts? What, what about these reports in particular work better to make it historically reliable, as opposed to like a story like The Guard at the Tomb, which is in Matthew, which is kind of doubted by many. There are several, but let me just list a few.

So there's eyewitness testimony. Okay. Right.

So someone who is present at the events and reports what they saw is generally considered a stronger witness than someone who came along, you know, say generations later or, or even just years later and said that something happened. So eyewitness testimony. We also have early testimony.

Of course, testimony that is earlier, closer to the events themselves is considered stronger than testimony that arises later. Enemy testimony. If your enemies who don't like your message, don't like you, don't want what you have to say to be taken seriously, but they agree with you on a certain fact, then that lends tremendous strength and weight to that fact.

So we have enemy testimony with regard to things like the empty tomb and the, and the crucifixion. We have embarrassing testimony. By the way, all of these start with E and end with testimony.

So I think if that helps you to remember them, then that's great. Embarrassing testimony is the fourth one. So for example, it, the, what the disciples record is themselves as weak

and clueless cowards.

They report that the women were the first witnesses to the empty tomb and the risen Christ while they were hiding out of fear for the Jews. So embarrassing testimony, testimony that doesn't make you look very good carries of course, a certain strength with it. There's multiple attestation.

So when something's reported by several people, it's considered stronger than something that's just reported by one person. Okay. Those are very good criteria.

Yeah. I can kind of see why people would be more inclined to accept something that was in multiple sources. And one of them is early or something that's reported by like an enemy of the church or it's embarrassing to the authors.

Right. Yeah. These are pretty intuitive and they don't just apply to the case that we're making here.

These are historical criteria for reliability. Yeah. In general.

Yeah. I could imagine going to like a criminal court case and you're trying to, you know, defend your client. And then you're able to show that someone who is like jilted or harmed by your client says, Oh, I don't like him at all, but he was definitely there, you know, at this place on the night of the crime.

So it couldn't have been him, you know, that would, that would make a big difference. Okay. Exactly.

Do you want to talk about some of the evidences for those four things? Like, I think it's important for people to know what sources we're looking at, particularly when we have non-Christian sources for some of these. So why don't you start with the crucifixion and then I'll go after. Yeah.

So for the crucifixion, for example, we have ancient non-Christian sources. These include people like Josephus, Maribar Serapion, Cornelius Tacitus, Lucian of Samosata. These are all very, very early.

We've got the Jewish Talmud, which was a slightly later source, but based on earlier sources. So these are all ancient non-Christian sources attesting to the crucifixion of Jesus and his death by crucifixion. Yeah, definitely.

And of course, it's going to be in all four gospels and in early church writers like Clement and Polycarp and Ignatius. Right. Exactly.

And Papias. Yep, exactly. And then we also have even non-Christian sources today, modern non-Christian sources like John Dominant Crossin of the poorly named Jesus Seminar, right? He's not a Christian by any stretch.

Bart Ehrman, who's devoted his life to trying to disprove Christianity, Gerd Lutemann, Paula Fredrickson, virtually all New Testament historians are all going to agree that Jesus was killed by crucifixion because the data is very, very strong. Yeah, it's ironic. Those first three names right there, Crossin, Ehrman, and Lutemann, all three of them have debated William Lane Craig denying the resurrection.

But when it comes to the crucifixion, they go, oh no, that definitely happened because look at all the evidence, you know. Right, exactly. So what about the appearances? The appearances are also really popular with skeptical scholars.

They don't want to deny it. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. There's kind of a two pronged case here. First, that the disciples claimed they saw the risen Jesus.

And secondly, that the disciples actually believed they saw the risen Jesus. So there are at least nine independent sources claiming that the disciples claimed to have seen the resurrected Jesus. These include Paul's letters to the Christian churches.

These include oral traditions like early creeds and sermon summaries. An example of an early creed, of course, would be first Corinthians 15, three through seven. We talked about that extensively in that first episode.

Yes. It's a gold mine. Absolutely.

You know, I can almost tell like I sometimes, you know, can see, I can judge like how serious a Christian is if I say to them, which part of the New Testament do you think has the most weight with skeptics? If they know it's first Corinthians 15, then you know, somebody studied these issues. Somebody's been reading, right? I don't know. You know, revelation.

No, right. Right. Exactly.

Yeah. We also have, of course, all four gospels attesting that the disciples saw the risen Jesus. We've got Clement, who was a disciple of Peter.

Pauli Karp, who was a disciple of John, nine independent sources that the disciples claimed to have seen the resurrected Jesus. But then we also have seven independent sources claiming that the disciples really believed it, which was evidenced by the fact that they were willing to suffer and even willing to die for what they were claiming. Yeah.

So several different sources on that. For example, we've got the testimony of Luke writing around 62 AD. We've got the testimony of Clement of Rome in the first century, Pauli Karp, Ignatius, Dionysius of Corinth, Tertullian origin.

So these are very early, very strong, reliable sources. Excellent. Okay.

What about the S in case for skeptics? Right. So we've got evidence that Paul actually became a Christian and that he believed his message in the fact that he was willing to suffer and die for it. So evidence for Paul's conversion includes his own testimony, Luke's record of Paul's testimony, which of course is found in Acts.

There were early Judean converts to Christianity and Paul talks about what they were saying about him in Galatians. So he's actually, he's reporting what the early Christian Judeans were saying about him, that he used to persecute them, but now he had become one of them. And then we also have evidence, as I mentioned, for Paul's suffering and... Well, wait, wait.

I just want to say people should probably check out Galatians 1 and 2, because this is where Paul goes to the early church leaders. I think it's Peter and James. And he says, hey, I'm preaching a message over here because I had an appearance of the Lord.

You guys are preaching a message because you've had appearances of the Lord. Are we preaching the same message? And they go, oh yeah, your message is the same as our message. And congratulations on becoming one of the group that you were formerly hunting.

And just don't stand so close to me. That's something that everybody has to explain, right? I think everybody, no matter what Hindu, Buddhist, whatever, is how did this prominent person who everybody knew and was talking about Paul, really high up, very famous, very wealthy, high status, why would you switch sides? That would be like switching from the football team that is doing the best in the standings to the football team that's doing the worst. It makes no sense at all.

Right. So with regard to our case and the conversions, we also have the independent sources that attest that Paul suffered greatly and he was willing to die and did die, in fact, for his beliefs. And so Paul himself talked about his suffering in his letters to the church.

Luke reports Paul's suffering for his faith throughout Acts. We have, with regard to his suffering in martyrdom, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Tertullian, Dionysius of Corinth, and Origen. So these are all again, a lot of sources.

What about James? He's listed as a skeptic. He didn't believe in Jesus during Jesus' ministry. Exactly.

Mark and John report in their gospels that James was not a believer during Jesus' ministry. Then we have the ancient creed in 1 Corinthians 15 affirming that Jesus appeared to James. And then Luke and Paul later identified James as a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

And early Judean Christians as well identify James as a leader of the church. Yeah. So we

have him not a believer.

Jesus appeared to him. He is a leader in the church. Yeah.

And how far was he willing to go with his belief? Right. Exactly. And then that's the question asked because he gave it all.

So we have reports from Josephus, Higesopas, and Clement of Alexandria that he suffered and died giving his life for his beliefs, which began apparently with the appearance to him of the risen Jesus. Okay. Let's try to move it along.

So the last one is E for early proclamation. Right. So we've already mentioned this.

1 Corinthians 15 3-7 is believed by skeptics, non-Christians, Christians, virtually anyone who's studied this. It's believed to go back to within one to three years of the events themselves. And many say even earlier, right up to the events themselves.

And so some of the, let me just say really quickly, four quick reasons for this. Paul's introduction, introductory words in 1 Corinthians 15 3, I delivered to you what I also received. This denotes the imparting of oral tradition verses three through five appear to be Aramaic in origin.

That was the original language of the disciples. And so presumably goes back quite far. The content of the text is stylized and it contains parallelism as in a creed.

And then the language is very non-Pauline. It indicates Paul did not write it. He was reporting something as he was claiming to.

He was reporting something that had been passed on to him. So many critical scholars believe Paul received this creed from Peter and James while he was visiting them in Jerusalem, which you mentioned is recorded in Galatians 1 18 and 19. Yeah.

Okay. So those are the four facts. And what we want to do is survey the best naturalistic explanations for, you know, what happened that squares with all this data.

So the first one we want to look at is one called Swoon Theory. And it's not like, oh my goodness, it's Thomas Sowell, Swoon, you know, it's not that. It's what they mean is, is that Jesus fainted or lost consciousness rather than died on the cross.

And then when he got buried, he was still alive, just unconscious. And three days later, he regained consciousness and pushed the stone out of the way and presented himself to his followers. And they mistakenly believed he was resurrected and then he went along with it.

And then I guess disappeared a few days later. But I can think of a few problems with this, but you get first crack at it. So go ahead.



Yeah. Well, first of all, just from the perspective of the minimal facts that we just shared, this theory fails to explain the appearances to Jesus for which there is abundant evidence. That's a big problem.

Why doesn't this count as explaining the appearances? Yeah. So that is not a decent explanation because crucified men who are on the verge of death are not easily confused with resurrected men who came back to life. The disciples were not expecting that.

It doesn't make any sense. So consider this. Okay.

After Jesus' death, he was bound in linen, according to historical records. His body was embalmed in 75 pounds of spices. He was placed in a cold tomb blocked by a massive stone that we're told was too heavy for even a strong, healthy man to move.

I've seen pictures of what these look like, and you would have to roll this crazy heavy stone uphill through these grooves. This was too hard for even a strong, healthy, single man to do by himself. But more importantly, if Jesus had laid in the tomb under these conditions, bloodied and on the verge of death for three days, he would not have come out looking resurrected.

He would have come out looking like a man in desperate need of urgent medical care. So I just think that this is one of the sillier explanations, although they all have major problems. All right.

Well, what else? What about the crucifixion? Is that something that the Romans could have failed to tell whether a person died from it or not? Yeah, good point. Not likely. So I'm not sure how wide spread the familiar ideas with the process, but Romans were very good at crucifying people.

They were experts at this. They would first start out by flogging people with leather whips that had at the end of them shards of bone and metal dumbbells. So these bones and metal pieces tore into their skin as the whip went into their body.

And then as the whip came back, as it whipped back, it would rip off their skin, causing profuse bleeding. Yeah, exactly. I mean, sometimes people would even die at that stage right there.

They wouldn't even make it to the cross. Their intestines would fall out and they die or they would bleed out before they even made it to the cross. If the person was still alive, he would carry the cross beam to the site of the crucifixion.

He would be nailed to the cross, driving these huge, thick nine inch nails through the ultra sensitive nerves in the wrist and the feet. Yeah. And then with their arms spread apart in the position of a crucifixion, he would only be able to exhale by pushing himself

up.

Okay, so so picture against the nails against the right. His feet would rip against the nails. His back, which was already all raw and bloodied from the whipping, would scrape against the wood of the cross and he would have to lift himself up against that wood in order to exhale.

Yeah, so yeah, yeah, basically, it's easy to tell if someone has died from crucifixion, because if they're not pushing themselves up in order to breathe and they stop doing that, then if you wait two minutes and they're in the down position, then they've stopped, they've suffocated even to give them five minutes or something. If they're not pushing themselves up, then they're dead. So it's impossible to mistake this.

Exactly. Yes, exactly. If Jesus had passed out on the cross, he would have died within a minute or two.

Let's even give it, you know, like you said, five. If you pass out during a crucifixion, you die because you can't lift yourself up to exhale anymore. All right, and then the stabbing with the spear.

All right, so he's definitely dead and this wound theory doesn't work. Right. And as you said, if he if he is, you know, resuscitated and still in need of urgent medical care, that is not the same as the doctrine of the resurrection, that Jewish people, they wouldn't apply that word resurrection to him, because resurrection means you're getting your final supernatural body to go and live with God for eternity in this glorified body.

And somebody who is half dead is, you know, not not resurrected, you wouldn't apply that word. Exactly, exactly. And it's probably noteworthy that in March of 1986, the Journal of the American Medical Association published an article called On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ in which they reexamine the evidence.

Modern doctors reexamine the evidence and they too concluded that Jesus was certainly dead when he was taken off that cross. All right, so a second theory that we want to talk about today is called the substitution theory, which holds that it wasn't Jesus who was hung on the cross, it was somebody else who was substituted for him. And some people actually believe this.

So what's wrong with this theory? Yeah, exactly. Well, I mean, for one thing, there are no records whatsoever of anybody claiming that it was anybody but Jesus. And that seems like it would have come up if that was even a possibility.

People sometimes mention a twin brother. Well, there's no mention of any sort of twin brother during the birth narratives of Jesus or his childhood or anything else. But this theory is actually primarily believed by Muslims who believe that Allah made it look like Jesus was crucified when really it was someone else.

Some Muslims will say that it was Judas who was crucified in some act of poetic justice for his betrayal of the Messiah. I've heard others say that it was Simon of Cyrene who carried Jesus cross, right? And then was crucified in Jesus place. Oops.

Can you imagine? That kind of that makes me kind of cringe and laugh at the same time. Like you're carrying Jesus cross beam and then the next thing you know, you're nailed to the cross. You're like, I was just trying to help.

Yeah, that would actually deny the first minimal fact because the first minimal fact is Jesus is the one who was crucified. Right. And that's what's universally agreed by all historians.

So is there any non Muslim historian that denies the crucifixion of Jesus? Not that I'm aware. No, no. I mean, there, there have been some people who were steeped in Gnosticism over the years, but they're not really taken seriously.

Their, their bias is so clearly affecting their ability to come up in the debates because I watched the dates with like Shabir Ali and different Muslim scholars. And they never, they never bring up any historian to defend this cause no, there isn't one to appeal to. Yeah.

So yeah, this certainly denies the crucifixion of Jesus. It I would think that it would also fail to explain the appearances of a resurrected person. Yeah, definitely.

Yeah. Like the thing about the post-mortem appearances is that they occur in different places where the person can't travel to them quickly enough. And I think there's also supernatural stuff like moving through walls and locked doors.

Right. So just because if even if you get an identical twin or a Jesus didn't really die, you know, to, to do the post-mortem appearances, the type of appearances that are there are super there. There's a supernatural element to it that you can't explain with just an ordinary person.

So you need to have something there to explain that. Exactly. And the Quran says it doesn't say that someone else was crucified while Jesus continued to hang out around town.

It says that Allah made it look as if Jesus was killed when actually Allah raised Jesus directly to himself. So this does very much fail to explain the resurrection appearances of Jesus. If Jesus was already in heaven, that's where he was because Allah had raised him to himself.

Well, then who, how does it, how does Jesus appear to all of these different groups of people at different times, as you said? Right. So, you know, even, even later when Christians began to be tortured and killed for what they believed, there's no evidence of

anyone questioning whether it may have been someone else on the cross. All these people who knew him, the people who discovered his empty tomb, you know, they're, they're able to, you know, uh, see him up close and none of them are saying, Oh, it's, it's a case of mistaken identity.

And Jesus' own mother was there. Mary, according to historical sources, John, who had just spent three years day and night with Jesus was there at the event. He, you know, one of these people who knew Jesus well certainly would have said something.

Yeah, I just got to say in cases like this, you have to look at where it's recorded. The substitution theory is recorded in the Quran, which was supposed to have been written, not, not that we have manuscripts, but it was supposed to have been written 600 years after the events, contradicting all the historians who came in that in the intervening years. So I think you'd have to be crazy.

Uh, that would be like, uh, all of us living in the 500 years after World War II talking about World War II. And then in 2500, somebody shows up and goes 2550. Hey, that, that never happened.

You know, uh, here's what really happened. It's just not something that anybody can take seriously if you want to be guided by the evidence. Exactly.

And I'll tell you this, I spend a lot of time interacting with Muslims and Muslims tend to disregard evidence. And what, and the most common response that I get from this is we don't care about your evidence because what we're saying is that Allah made it look like Jesus was crucified when really he wasn't. So obviously all your evidence is going to show that Jesus was crucified, but here's the problem with this.

And this is a huge, huge problem for Muslims. Okay. If this theory were true and Allah made it look like Jesus was crucified when really he just raised Jesus directly to heaven.

This would make Allah the greatest deceiver in all of history, in all of existence. That means that Allah is responsible for this misunderstanding that, uh, that's known as Christianity, right? That caused billions of people to put all of their faith in what the evidence shows and therefore have a false view of Jesus, right? It makes Allah the, I guess what you would say the greatest deceiver in existence. Now, actually the Quran does say that Jesus, I mean, sorry, that Allah is the greatest deceiver.

He actually brags about this. Um, but a lot of Muslims don't know that or they will deny it and say, Oh, you don't, you're not a native Arabic speaker, but, um, it does in fact say that he, in multiple places, that he is the greatest of deceivers. And it, it shows it by this, this incredible act of deception.

Okay. Let's go on to another one now. Uh, so this is, uh, what if the disciples, uh, invented this and they just, uh, rolled the stone away, grabbed the body, stashed it

somewhere and then said, Hey, we've all seen post-mortem appearances of Jesus.

Uh, I can think immediately of some problems with that. Uh, but what, what are, what are some of the problems you see with that? Well, again, this does fail to, uh, explain the post-mortem appearances of Jesus or, um, the people like Paul and James, right? Yeah, exactly. And yes, exactly.

And yes, exactly. Most, most importantly fails to explain the skeptics becoming Christians. Yeah, they're not going to go along with that.

Right. Exactly. Another important point is that there was no opportunity for fame or wealth or power at the time that the disciples were making these claims.

They suffered loss for their proclamation. Uh, it wasn't until hundreds of years later, uh, when Constantine made Christianity an acceptable religion in the Rome, Roman empire. And really after that, when Theodosius the first made Christianity, the state religion as it were, um, of the Roman empire, that there were opportunities for personal gain in this life by becoming a Christian.

Yeah, it's definitely like hard to explain what Paul's conversion, because when you think about all the things that happened to him after he became a Christian, people can just read 2 Corinthians chapter 11. It's, it's really nasty stuff like being whipped, shipwrecked, you know, imprisoned. You know, there's just no way you're going to get an enemy of Christianity to come on board when the bribe that you're offering him is, well, you can be whipped and shipwrecked and thrown in jail and you're going to lose all of everything you have right now, you know, all your respectability and everything.

Exactly. There's no way. And another important point is that the disciples were in a position to know whether they had made up this story.

And as Gary Habermas often says, liars make poor martyrs, right? Um, they were willing to suffer and even die for their claims. And unlike modern day martyrs of any religion, the disciples were in a position to know for sure, uh, what had happened. If they had made this up, they would not likely have been willing to lose everything and die for it.

There's no record of even a single one of them recanting. This is incredibly strong evidence. So with respect to Jesus's 12 apostles, all we need for our case against this theory is that they were willing to die.

Not that all of them or even a majority of them, uh, died. Cause I think historically speaking, it's not historically solid that, uh, we don't have all the strongest data for every one of their cases. We know that a bunch of them died.

A bunch of them were willing to be killed for what they believed and a bunch of them didn't. Weren't you just reading a book about this? Yes. Yes.

Uh, it's by Sean McDowell and it's called the fate of the apostles. It was his, uh, PhD dissertation, I believe. And what he did was he looked at the evidence for how many of the disciples were actually martyred and he ended up breaking them up into four categories.

Those who were pretty certainly martyred for their faith, those who were probably martyred for their faith, those who were probably not at least as far as we can prove with evidence and those who were almost certainly not at least, um, and as far as we could prove with the evidence. And so several of them were almost certainly martyred. We don't have the evidence to say that 11 of the 12 were actually martyred as most, as I often hear people say.

Right. But the important part, as you mentioned, is that, um, the evidence does show that every one of them was willing to lose their life for what they knew to be true. And again, they were in a position to know what was true.

Yeah. And nobody recanted, uh, none of those apostles recanted. Right.

All right. How about this one? This one is the most popular one, at least it was until recently. So the hallucination theory.

All right. This was popular in the 1990s, advocated by really good atheist historians like Dr. Gerhard Ludemann. Uh, it posits that, uh, Jesus's disciples only thought they saw the resurrected Jesus, but actually they were all hallucinating.

Again, I see some problems, but you get first crack at this. So why don't you take it away? Yeah. So Dr. Ludemann and others get this idea from grief based hallucinations, but Paul in particular would not have had a grief based hallucination involving Jesus.

He wasn't friends with Jesus. He, he boasted of killing Christians. He was proud of it.

He certainly would not have been grieving Jesus death. Um, yet another problem for the hallucination theory is that hallucinations occur in the mind. They're not group events.

They're not contagious. They're actually a lot like dreams. Uh, people cannot just gather together and have the same dream at the same time, just because they all want to experience something together.

Right. That would be silly. Yeah.

Um, these resurrection appearances occurred over 40 days to different groups of people of different sizes in different states of mind and with different relationships to Jesus. Um, and, uh, as first Corinthians 15, three through seven attests, the largest group to interact with the resurrected Jesus at one time was 500 people. And actually, I believe the text says 500 men.

So there were probably even more people there, including women and children. This is nothing like any hallucination event ever recorded. You have to allow me some time for a couple of funny stories here.

So I, I watch a lot of Mike Lykona videos. That's how I learned, you know, how to talk about the resurrection and gospel reliability. And he has funny stories about this.

So for the group hallucinations, I think it's him. He talks about Navy SEAL candidates, uh, trying to become Navy SEALs down in Coronado, California, California. And they have something they go through called hell week.

Like a lot of people know about this, uh, where they don't let them sleep or eat. And they just have to keep going and doing SEAL activities, uh, without any rest. And they start having hallucinations because of how hard they're working.

So he tells a story. I think, uh, maybe this is Gary Haber miss a story. And he goes, uh, one of the, one of the seals is in a, a rubber boat, you know, uh, zooming along with his friends.

And, uh, he has a hallucination of a dolphin coming up to the raft and trying to get on. And so he grabs the paddle and starts whacking away at the dolphin. And he goes, and then his friends pull him down and go, what are you doing? And he goes, I'm trying to keep the dolphin out of our rubber boat.

And they go, no, there's no dolphin there. And, you know, and they pull him down and then he comes to his senses. So there's no thing where you're in a group and one person has a hallucination.

And then he turns to all the rest and they all have it. That doesn't work like that. Great.

Um, I think Michael Lykon is the one who's, who talks about having a dream at night. Right. Waking up and saying, Hey, sweetie, I'm having this amazing dream.

Come in my dream with me and we're going to have this amazing vacation. Yeah. He's in Hawaii and he wakes up his wife and goes, go back to sleep and come into my dream.

Okay. All right. Let's do one more.

I think there's one more. Uh, oh no, we have two more. Okay.

So this one is quick, but people believe this one. So this is called the legend one. So the belief in the resurrection develops over time.

I mean, this is okay. Yeah. I mean, you get to go ahead and tell us what's wrong with this, but do you think that the belief in the resurrection could have developed over a long period of time? Like maybe hundreds of years later, somebody came up with this.

Absolutely not. No, for one thing, it rejects the early proclamation of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, which is abundantly attested, um, very strongly supported by the evidence. Yeah.

And, um, as we discussed in first Corinthians 15, three to seven, as we said in episode one, like scholars across a broad, uh, ideological spectrum believe first Corinthians 15, three to seven is an ancient creed dating back to within one to three years of the crucifixion. So there you have the appearances. You have the resurrection proclamation.

You've got the death of Jesus and, uh, Paul is writing it. He says he has an appearance. Um, so there's just no time for legends about the core facts of the resurrection narrative to creep in.

Exactly. Yep. That's exactly right.

Okay. This one is yours. So you have one more.

So tell us about it. Yes. So this one's my favorite because it makes me laugh.

So, uh, when I talked to, let me give a, just a background sentence or two, when I talked to non-Christians, okay, I like to ask them, so how do you account for the facts agreed upon by virtually all scholars of all religions surrounding the death and appearances of Jesus? How do you explain these? How do you account for these facts? So most people have not thought about this question at all. They have usually no response. Other people may have heard some things here and there.

They may repeat one of the debunked naturalistic explanations that we've just talked about, but others are actually really informed on the subject. They follow the scholarship. They're updated on, on the conversation.

They know the problems with all of these naturalistic explanations that we've just talked about, but they don't want to admit that the resurrection is true. They don't like the conclusion, right? And the implications of it. So their answer is something happened.

And I think that is so funny when I asked people, what do you think happened? And they're like, something happened. Well, yeah, no kidding. I mean, billions of people believe in Christianity because something happened.

The question is what happened? And the fact is, this is not an explanation. This is a cop-out. This is a rejection of the conclusion.

It's not an interaction with the evidence, but it is, I would say, a perfect opportunity for us to challenge our friends to investigate the single most important question they will ever need to answer because they're right. Something happened. And there is plenty of evidence to know what that something was.



All right. So we're getting near the end. And I guess it's time for final comments.

So what do you think our listeners should take away from today's presentation? Well, I think the most important thing is that the best explanation for the facts that are agreed upon by virtually every scholar, regardless of worldview, who has studied the evidence is that Jesus actually rose from the dead, literally and bodily. The only so-called problem with this view is that it requires a miracle. But if God exists, then miracles are possible.

Miracles are not a problem. Yeah. So this is a good point to make.

I think when you're going to talk about the Christian worldview with people, you don't want to necessarily start with the resurrection. You want that to come after you've shown the evidence for a creator and a designer of the universe. Because once you get the existence of God established, then miracles become possible.

And we've done a lot of shows on the evidence for for a creator and designer, right? We have, yeah. So there's a lot of evidence that the universe and life were created by an intelligent, eternally existent God. Non-Christians believe the universe and life and intelligence came into being from no one and nothing, right? So even that is a miracle.

I would make the case that everyone actually believes in a miracle, whether they admit it or not. The miracle of Jesus rising from the dead isn't the only or the greatest miracle ever done. The same God who created everything that is raised Jesus from death to life, overcoming death's power and the finality of death for all who would trust in Him.

So we believe that an intelligent designer created all that is non-Christians or atheists, rather, believe that no one and nothing created all that is. There's a miracle either way. But yes, as you pointed out, we've done several episodes on different aspects of the universe, origin of the universe, fine tuning, origin of life.

We have to do one on the fossil record. If we can get a speaker on, who is an expert in fossils, we will do an episode on that. I think molecular machines, habitability, things like the distance from the sun, the moon, earthquakes, fine tuning of the tides and having a sweeper planet, habitability is another one.

So there's plenty of evidence for a creator and designer. And so once you establish that, you've got the miracle working person. And then it's just a question of what's the evidence for Jesus's resurrection, being historical evidence, being reliable.

Exactly. Yep. All right.

Well, that sounds like a good place for us to stop for today. So listeners, if you enjoyed this episode, please consider helping us out by sharing this podcast with your friends, writing us a five star review on Apple or Spotify. I think we're up to 42 on Apple.

It would be great if we can get some more five star reviews there. Give us a subscribe and a comment on YouTube. Hit the like button if you're watching the video on YouTube.

And we just appreciate you taking the time to listen and we'll see you again in the next one.