

Twelve Factual Historical Events Surrounding Jesus' Resurrection

At his debate with atheist Dr. Antony Flew on the historical resurrection of Jesus from the dead,¹ Christian theologian Dr. Gary Habermas presented as strongly factual, the following list of historical claims. Of these claims Habermas stated, "*The critical approach [to Jesus' resurrection] has changed substantially in recent decades. The naturalistic theories of the nineteenth-century older, liberal theologians are rarely held these days, as will be mentioned in the next section. Rather, by historical investigation or by the utilization of form and redaction criticism, contemporary scholars have approached this event in a **different** manner. **Even by these critical methodologies, a substantial number of historical facts are accepted with regard to the death and Resurrection of Jesus.**"²*

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. He was buried.
3. His death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope.
4. The tomb was empty (the most contested).
5. The disciples had experiences which *they believed* were literal appearances of the risen Jesus (the most important proof).
6. The disciples were transformed from doubters to bold proclaimers.
7. The resurrection was the central message.
8. They preached the message of Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem.
9. The Church was born and grew.
10. Orthodox Jews who believed in Christ made Sunday their primary day of worship.
11. James was converted to the faith when he saw the resurrected Jesus (James was a family skeptic).
12. Paul was converted to the faith (Paul was an outsider skeptic).³

Acknowledgment of the above "facts," does not mean that all of its adherents personally hold that Jesus was actually raised from the dead. Indeed many of them are skeptical and, to the contrary, seek to explain the data away by resorting *naturalistic*⁴ solutions to the above phenomena. Whether or not they are successful is the question.

For Further Reading

Gary Habermas. "The Minimal Facts Approach to the Resurrection of Jesus."
https://www.garyhabermas.com/articles/southeastern_theological_review/minimal-facts-methodology_08-02-2012.htm

"12 Historical Facts (Most Critical Scholars Believe these 12 Items)"
<http://www3.telus.net/trbrooks/garyhabermas.htm>

Compiled by Gary Jensen, Pastor © March 18, 2021
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (NALC), Berlin, Berlin, USA

¹ Terry Miethe, ed. Gary Habermas and Antony Flew. Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? (Harper and Row, 1987).

² Ibid, p. 19. Boldface mine.

³ Ibid. pp. 19-20.

⁴ "Naturalism" is the philosophical view that reality is entirely limited to physical entities and events. Hence, miraculous events by a supernatural creator is conceptually impossible.