
Examining the Resurrection -4- A historical event that can be examined

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It has often been said that the resurrection is the best attested fact in history. Momsen, the great historian of the Roman empire, was among those to make such a declaration. Sir Edward Clarke KC, in a letter to the Rev. E. L. Macassey, offered the following perspective:

As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the High Court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling...The Gospel evidence for the resurrection...I accept unreservedly as the testimony of truthful people to facts they were able to substantiate.

From the perspective of a scholar of ancient literature, B. F. Westcott, one of the ablest of New Testament textual scholars, said:

Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no single historical incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection.

The evidence has proved convincing to many who have taken time to read the New Testament, even to some who have approached it with scepticism. One of the most notable cases is that of Gilbert West and Lord Lyttelton, two eminent lawyers in 18th century England. West set out to write a book disproving the conversion of Paul, while Lyttelton sought to disprove the resurrection of Christ. Both were convinced by the evidence and became Christians as a result. They wrote their books supporting the gospel stories.

A more up-to-date example is that of Frank Morison, who originally planned to write a monograph on the trial of Jesus. Confronted by the fact of the resurrection, he was convinced by the evidence, became a Christian and wrote instead *Who Moved the Stone?* In the book's first chapter, which is called "The book that refused to be written", he describes how, as he came to examine the material, so far from writing the book that he had intended, he found himself:

...compelled by the sheer force of circumstances to write quite another. It is not that the facts themselves altered, for they are recorded imperishably in the monuments and in the pages of human history. But the interpretation to be put upon the facts underwent a change. Somehow the perspective shifted - not suddenly, as in a flash of insight or inspiration, but slowly, almost imperceptibly, by the very stubbornness of the facts themselves.

So let's explore the evidence. I will leave it to you, the reader, to judge whether you think the above quotations have a reasonable foundation.