



## EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

### The Strategy: Five Possible Theories

We believe Christ's resurrection can be proved with at least as much certainty as any universally believed and well-documented event in ancient history. To prove this, we do not need to presuppose anything controversial (e.g. that miracles happen). But the skeptic must also not presuppose anything (e.g. that they do not). We do not need to presuppose that the New Testament is infallible, or divinely inspired or even true. We do not need to presuppose that there really was an empty tomb or post-resurrection appearances, as recorded. We need to presuppose only two things, both of which are hard



data, empirical data, which no one denies: The existence of the New Testament texts as we have them, and the existence (but not necessarily the truth) of the Christian religion as we find it today.

The question is this: Which theory about what really happened in Jerusalem on that first Easter Sunday can account for the data?

There are five possible theories: Christianity, hallucination, myth, conspiracy and swoon.

1	Jesus died	Jesus rose	Christianity
2	Jesus died	Jesus didn't rise - apostles deceived	Hallucination
3	Jesus died	Jesus didn't rise - apostles myth-makers	Myth
4	Jesus died	Jesus didn't rise—apostles deceivers	Conspiracy
5	Jesus didn't die		Swoon

Either (1) the resurrection really happened, (2) the apostles were deceived by a hallucination, (3) the apostles created a myth, not meaning it literally, (4) the apostles were deceivers who conspired to foist on the world the most famous and successful lie in history, or (5) Jesus only swooned and was resuscitated, not resurrected" (RCA, 182).

### Refutation of the Swoon Theory

1. Jesus could not have survived crucifixion. Period.
2. His legs were not broken (the soldiers knew he was dead).
3. John saw blood and water flow from his pierced heart. This shows that Jesus' lungs had collapsed and he had died of asphyxiation. Any medical expert can vouch for this.
4. His appearances convinced the disciples that he was gloriously alive. A half-dead, staggering sick man who has just had a narrow escape is not worshipped fearlessly as divine Lord and conqueror of death.
5. A swooning corpse could not have overpowered the Roman guards.
6. A swooning half-dead man could not have moved the stone.
7. Most simply, the swoon theory necessarily turns into the conspiracy theory or the hallucination theory, for the disciples testified that Jesus did not swoon but really died and really rose.

### Refutation of the Conspiracy Theory

1. The human heart is singularly susceptible to fickleness, to change, to prom-

ises, to bribery. One of them had only to deny his story under these inducements, or still more because of possible imprisonment, tortures and death, and they would all have been lost. (Pascal)

2. If they made up the story, they were the most creative, clever, intelligent fantasists in history. Fishermen's "fish stories" are never that elaborate, that convincing, that life changing, and that enduring.
3. They willingly died for their "conspiracy." Nothing proves sincerity like martyrdom.
4. There could be no possible motive for such a lie. Lies are always told for some selfish advantage. What advantage did the "conspirators" derive from their "lie"? They were hated, scorned, excommunicated, imprisoned, tortured, exiled, crucified, boiled alive, roasted, beheaded, disemboweled and fed to lions - hardly a catalog of perks!
5. If it was a lie, the Jews would have produced the corpse and ended the claims to the Resurrection.

### Refutation of the Hallucination Theory

1. There were too many witnesses.
2. The witnesses were qualified.
3. Five hundred saw Christ together (1 Cor. 15:3-8).
4. Hallucinations last a few seconds, not forty days.
5. Hallucinations usually happen only once, except to the insane.
6. Thomas didn't even believe it (he was skeptical, then convinced otherwise).
7. The apostles could not have believed in the "hallucination" if Jesus' corpse had still been in the tomb. They would have checked for it; if it was there, they could not have believed.
8. The Jews would have stopped their hallucinogenic story by producing the body.
9. A hallucination would explain only the post-resurrection appearances; it would not explain the empty tomb, the rolled away stone, or the inability to produce the corpse. No theory explains all these data except the real resurrection.

### Refutation of the Myth Theory

1. The style of the Gospel is radically different from mythical literature.
2. No time for the myth to develop.
3. The first witnesses of the resurrection were women. Scripture explicitly states that it is not myth (2 Pet. 1: 16), so either it is not, or we are back in the conspiracy theory.

### Conclusions

"What terrible fate awaits [the modernists] if they follow the multifarious and weighty evidence and argument that naturally emerges from the data, as we have summarized it here in this chapter? The answer is not obscure: traditional Christianity awaits them, complete with adoration of Christ as God, obedience to Christ as Lord, dependence on Christ as Savior, humble confession of sin and a serious effort to live Christ's life of self-sacrifice, detachment from the world, righteousness, holiness and purity of thought, word and deed. The historical evidence is massive enough to convince the open-minded inquirer. By analogy with any other historical event, the resurrection has eminently credible evidence behind it. To disbelieve it, you must deliberately make an exception to the rules you use everywhere else in history. Now why would someone want to do that? Ask yourself that question if you dare, and take an honest look into your heart before you answer" *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, Kreeft & Tacelli, p 197

For Further Reading: *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, Kreeft & Tacelli, ch. 7; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §456-478; Philippians 2:5-11; Lumen Gentium ch. 3 (1964); *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis.

# THE EASTER HOMILY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

*Early Church Father & Doctor of the Church*

*347-405 AD*

If any man be devout and love God, Let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast!  
If any man be a wise servant, Let him rejoicing enter into the joy of his Lord.  
If any have labored long in fasting, Let him now receive his recompense.  
If any have wrought from the first hour, Let him today receive his just reward.  
If any have come at the third hour, Let him with thankfulness keep the feast.  
If any have arrived at the sixth hour, Let him have no misgivings;  
Because he shall in nowise be deprived therefore.  
If any have delayed until the ninth hour, Let him draw near, fearing nothing.  
And if any have tarried even until the eleventh hour, Let him, also, be not alarmed at his tardiness.  
For the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even as the first.  
He gives rest unto him who come at the eleventh hour,  
Even as unto him who hath wrought from the first hour.  
And He shows mercy upon the last, and cares for the first;  
And to the one He gives, And upon the other He bestows gifts.  
And He both accepts the deeds, And welcomes the intention,  
And honors the acts and praises the offering.

Wherefore, enter ye all into the joy of your Lord; Receive your reward,

Both the first, and likewise the second.  
You rich and poor together, hold high festival!  
You sober and you heedless, honor the day!  
Rejoice today, both you who have fasted  
And you who have disregarded the fast.  
The table is full-laden; feast ye all sumptuously.  
The calf is fattened; let no one go hungry away.  
Enjoy ye all the feast of faith:  
Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness.

Let no one bewail his poverty,  
For the universal Kingdom has been revealed.  
Let no one weep for his iniquities,  
For pardon has shown forth from the grave.  
Let no one fear death, For the Saviour's death has set us free.  
He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it.

By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive.  
He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh.  
And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry:  
Hell, said he, was embittered  
When it encountered Thee in the lower regions.

It was embittered, for it was abolished.  
It was embittered, for it was mocked.  
It was embittered, for it was slain.  
It was embittered, for it was overthrown.  
It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains.  
It took a body, and met God face to face.  
It took earth, and encountered Heaven.  
It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

*O Death, where is thy sting?*  
*O Hell, where is thy victory?*

Christ is risen, and thou art overthrown!  
Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen!  
Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice!  
Christ is risen, and life reigns!  
Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave.  
For Christ, being risen from the dead,  
Is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.  
To Him be glory and dominion;  
Unto ages of ages. Amen.



**Christ is risen and life reigns!**



**Next Sunday**

**April 12, 2015 Divine Mercy Sunday**

Eucharistic Adoration begins after Mass  
approximately at 10:30 am with  
Silent Prayer until 2:30 pm  
Reconciliation from 8:30 - 9:15 am  
Hymns, Liturgy of the Word,  
Divine Mercy Litany begin at 2:30 pm  
Divine Mercy Chaplet - 3:00 pm