

The Resurrection of Jesus

Initial Reflections: History and Tradition

I. Belief in the resurrection of the body (=whole person) in the Israel of Jesus' time: Sadducees vs. Pharisees; not resuscitation

II. Expectation of general resurrection, not of an individual

III. The empty tomb seems historical

but unknown, or not of interest, to St. Paul
crucial in Mark
connected to Jerusalem

IV. Two early pieces of tradition: I Cor. 15: 1-8 and the original ending of Mark (16:1-8)

Paul: no narratives of appearances; units of tradition; *opthe* experience; Paul-*ektroma* (he compares himself to baby delivered despite mother's death: he came to faith without direct contact with the earthly Jesus, unlike the other apostles)

Mark: no Jesus-appearance but empty tomb and divine interpretation of its being empty (appearance of the angel); the 2 Mary's as witnesses (indication of historicity)

Theological Reflections

I. Multiple understandings of what happened to Jesus: Resurrection, Ascension, Glorification, Exultation, Enthronement at Right Hand of God, Sending of the Spirit

II. The Easter Appearances

In Luke, they are distinct events, spread out in time (perfect for liturgy); but in John, all the events happen on Easter Sunday. they are facets of one paschal event

We have the reports of appearances that are influenced by the communities in which they were passed down:

Luke: Emmaus: context of liturgy (Word and Eucharist); is the risen one a ghost? (he eats some fish)

John: Thomas proclaims: "My Lord and my God" (risen Jesus vs. Emperor Domitian); forgiveness and missioning of Peter on the beach

John: Trust in his word, not putting hand in his wounds, is how to relate to the risen Jesus (doubting Thomas); this means that we too can connect with him.

He is consistently portrayed as not *vorhanden*, not an object; now he is a thoroughly personal reality; he needs to give a gesture for people to recognize him (Emmaus)

We can't recover what happened between the risen Jesus and the disciples. But Jesus needed to reveal himself to them in some way that allowed them to recognize the one appearing as identical with, while different from, the Jesus of the earthly ministry.

Central to the Gospels: the identity in difference of the pre-Easter Jesus and the Risen Jesus

III. The Truth of the Affirmation of Jesus' Resurrection

We cannot prove the resurrection of Jesus (event as distinct from "fact"); faith is central, allowing someone to participate in its reality and power

But we can show how the affirmation of his resurrection possesses truth:

1) it makes sense of data that need to be explained:

the resurrection of one individual, not a general resurrection

the transformation of the distraught, panicked and fearful disciples

2) there is fundamental consistency in the Easter affirmation

the vindication of someone who lived and ministered totally identified with God's project in the world

the affirmation of Jesus as continuous with, and different, from the earthly Jesus

3) there is heuristic fruitfulness when one "indwells" the affirmation

IV. Dimensions of Jesus' resurrection: eschatological, soteriological, theological, christological.

V. Final Thoughts: The meaning of evolution; the meaning of matter; the meaning of spirit; making whole the Cosmic Christ