1. What does the image on the left-hand side of the page show?

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1. How do you think this picture might relate to Jesus’ resurrection?

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Source: news.com.au

1. Define resurrection.

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Richard Dawkins, the atheist professor from Oxford University, said in a recent debate with a Christian professor, “It all quite really comes down to the resurrection of Jesus. It has a fundamental incompatibility [with] the sophisticated scientist… It’s so petty, it’s so trivial, it’s so local, it’s so earth-bound, it’s so unworthy of the universe.”

What do you think Richard Dawkins is trying to say in the quote above?

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Do you think it’s possible to believe in the resurrection and Science?

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Watch: <https://www.publicchristianity.org/behind-the-life-of-jesus-can-it-be-rational-to-believe-in-miracles/> (2min 35 sec)

Are you convinced by the reasons in the video? Why? Why not?

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**Is it Sane to Believe in the Resurrection?**

Greg Clarke

ABC Online Opinion and Analysis

Or is the whole Christian festival of Easter based on a foolish hope, an insane desire that something impossible happened back in the first century and it somehow helps us in our lives today?

If you read the atheist writers today, you would certainly think so. Richard Dawkins, the sharp-witted atheist professor from Oxford University, said in a recent debate with a Christian professor, “It all quite really comes down to the resurrection of Jesus. It has a fundamental incompatibility [with] the sophisticated scientist… It’s so petty, it’s so trivial, it’s so local, it’s so earth-bound, it’s so unworthy of the universe.”

The New Testament gives us perhaps a surprising answer to the question “is it insane to believe in the resurrection?” It says ‘yes’ – if the resurrection didn’t take place. **The plausibility of the resurrection is important. It is not a fanciful notion that is worth holding even if it didn’t occur.**

In the first letter to the Corinthian church, the writer (the apostle Paul) makes it plain that he thinks it is crazy to be a Christian, to be a believer in Jesus Christ as the living Son of God and Lord of everything, if this Jesus did not rise from the grave after his crucifixion. He writes, “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

The Christian faith stand or falls on this. Paul doesn’t say, well, let’s just put the resurrection to one side and get on living morally as Christians, doing good deeds and being polite to each other. Rather, he calls a spade a shovel: “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Before you summon up pity by the parish-ful, consider the implications of the Apostle’s position. It means that the plausibility of the resurrection is important. It is not a fanciful notion that is worth holding even if it didn’t occur; rather, it is something that history, philosophy and psychology ought to comment on. Thankfully, all of those disciplines do just that.

History tells us at least three significant things. First, we have multiple, independent and early accounts that the tomb in which Jesus was laid was found to be empty. You can read them because they are now compiled in what we call the New Testament section of the Bible. But remember, these are historical records that anyone can examine, regardless of their beliefs.

I have to add, with embarrassment here, that one of the reasons for believing these are historically accurate records is that the reports of the empty tomb are given by women. And in the ancient world, no one trusted the accounts given by women! If you were making this story up rather than reporting what really happened, you wouldn’t have given women such an important role. Outrageous, but true.

Second, in these independent records known now as the New Testament, there are accounts of many people seeing Jesus alive again three days after his burial. And some of these accounts were written while those witnesses of Jesus were still alive so they could easily have been checked and denied. Even the ardent sceptics take the historical nature of the resurrection appearances seriously. People thought they saw Jesus alive again—make of that what you will, but it is historically significant.

And third, history has to account for the rise of Christianity, something that makes most sense if a resurrection-style event took place to ‘shock’ the followers of Jesus into action. Something happened back then in the first century, at the first Easter, that those early Christians witnessed and that gave them reason to tell others about it, despite their fears and insecurities.

When we turn to philosophy, the figure of David Hume looms monstrously over the idea that a miraculous event such as a bodily resurrection took place. But, as philosopher John Earman has demonstrated in his book *Hume’s Abject Failure*, Hume does not allow any of the ‘background information’ about events to affect their likelihood of occurring. When you allow a piece of background information such as ‘God exists and is involved in the world”–a view which the majority of human beings still hold to be true—it becomes rather simple to believe that an event such as resurrection from the dead is plausible. You would still want to know it happened (that’s where history comes in), but the prior belief that God exists means there are no philosophical barriers in the way.

And third, we turn to psychology. Some theorists of human behaviour want to claim that the resurrection is just another example of wish-fulfilment by mortals. We fear death, so we are predisposed to believe that someone could conquer it and we would worship such a being.

I agree. We are afraid of death; we do wish to survive it and spend most of our time trying to; and we would fall in humble adoration before anyone who could help us do so. That’s why I’m a Christian, because I believe that in Jesus Christ, that wish is fulfilled—actually, in history, not simply emotionally.

When I add together the history, the philosophy and the psychology, belief in the resurrection of Jesus seems reasonable, defensible and very attractive. It would seem insane not to at least give it serious thought.

So, in summary:

1. From reliable historical records we can be sure that Jesus did die on the cross on the Friday afternoon, yet that by Sunday morning, his tomb was empty.
2. It is extremely unlikely that grave-robbers or the disciples could have taken the body from under the watchful eyes of the Roman guard.
3. If either the Roman or Jewish authorities had removed the body, they would quickly have brought forward either witnesses or the corpse itself as sufficient proof to undermine the new movement’s claims and stop its growth.

Could it be that the strangest explanation of all, the one that the disciples gave, is actually true?

Was Jesus actually raised from the dead?

If God is God – the creator,

then logically he could do anything he wants in his universe

Maybe in fact He *should* be able to “do miracles”

including defeating the one thing most humans fear most –

death…

**What do you think about the resurrection of Jesus?**

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**What does the resurrection mean to Christians?**

Just after Jesus’ resurrection, his friend Peter made a speech. This is part of it: *Now listen to what I have to say about Jesus of Nazareth. God proved that he sent Jesus to you by having him work miracles, wonders, and signs... you took him and had evil men put him to death on a cross. But God set him free from death and raised him to life. Death couldn’t hold him in its power... Everyone in Israel should then know for certain that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ, even though you put him to death on a cross... When people heard this, they were very upset. They asked Peter and the other apostles, ‘Friends, what shall we do?’ Peter said, ‘Turn back to God! Be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven...* Acts 2:22-24, 36-38 (CEV)

Christians build their lives on the belief that the gospel message is true. Because of this, they have come to see God, themselves and others in a new way. They believe they have experienced God’s love, grace and forgiveness in their own lives, so they want to share that experience with others. This means learning (and sometimes failing) to treat the people around them with love and compassion. It also means wanting to help other people come to believe that the gospel message is true, so that they can share new life with God now and in eternity. *God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world...* 2 Corinthians 5:19 (CEV)

**Summarise what these passages communicate about the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus?**

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