



Jesus' Resurrection

Eduqas A level R.S. C1A Christianity Theme 1B

Key Concepts:

- Four Bible passages convey Biblical ideas about death, the soul, the resurrected body and the afterlife:
- Matthew 10:28 teaches the importance of the soul and God's power over it.
- John 20-21 shows how Jesus' resurrection body had continuity with this pre-resurrection body, though it was **transformed**.
- I Corinthians 15 uses the analogy of a dead seed planted and springing to new life to explain the relationship between our current and resurrected bodies.
- Philippians 1:21-4 shows that what is most important for the Christian is to depart from the 'flesh' to be with Christ.
- **Rudolph Bultmann** believed that modern people could no longer accept Biblical myths, such as a bodily resurrection.
- He defined **myth** as a story used to explain the unknown through invoking supernatural elements. Now we understand the science of cause and effect.
- Yet we need more than 'facts' in our lives; we need 'faith'. Faith is an existential condition of hope that there is a power greater than death.
- Rather than simply removing the mythological stories from the Bible, we should look at the meaning behind them (this is called **demythologisation**).
- The meaning of the resurrection myth is that the disciples came to believe in a power greater than death and despair.
- Having faith in Jesus means having an encounter in which we are awakened to hope and inspiration as the disciples were. You do not need to believe in the historical resurrection to have this experience.
- **N.T. Wright** says that it is naïve to dismiss the bodily resurrection as the product of an unenlightened, gullible and pre-modern society.
- In fact, it takes more faith to believe in the '**swoon theory**' that Jesus didn't fully die on the cross, but later revived – the Romans knew how to kill people!
- The Biblical writers and their contemporaries knew that dead people didn't rise. In fact, the bodily resurrection of Jesus was not something the disciples' cultural-religious system prepared them for – this, alone, is good evidence for believing their testimony.
- The disciples would have believed in a general resurrection at the end of time; thus, their beliefs underwent a dramatic **mutation**.
- They also would not have believed that a **messiah** could have failed – only a miraculous occurrence could have changed their minds.
- Other mutations for the disciples included that in Judaism there was a spectrum of beliefs as to what could happen after death, but this did not include a physical resurrection in this world.

Key arguments/ debates:

Are there too many discrepancies between resurrection accounts to take them as historical testimony (i.e. in John, Jesus appears in Jerusalem and Galilee; in Matthew and Mark only Galilee)?

Alternative arguments include Jesus' body being stolen, group hallucination or wishful thinking. Or, is it powerful to have four independent accounts written by those who had reasons to resist belief because of the dangers this entailed?

Key questions:

- Is Bultmann's approach too personal/ individualistic to really make sense of the 'public' nature of the resurrection?
- Are the material aspects of the resurrection body inventions or misunderstandings of the Biblical writers?
- Does believing in the 'rational' view that Jesus never rose from the dead unscientifically rule out the possibility of an exception?
- Should Wright's view of a mutation of beliefs count as partial evidence for the resurrection of Jesus?

Key quotes:

'Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands...do not doubt, but believe."'
(John 20:27)

'If the resurrection were a historical fact, faith would become superfluous.'
(R. Bultmann)

'Jewish hope has undergone remarkable modifications or mutations within early Christianity.'
(N. T. Wright)



Key words:

transformed | Rudolph Bultmann | myth | demythologise | existential awareness | N.T. Wright | discrepancies | swoon theory | mutation | messianic expectations | authenticity | premodern