

RUSSIA SEMINAR TALKS, SEEKERS TRACK
DR. ROBERT C. NEWMAN
OCTOBER 17-31, 1992

LECTURE 6: DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD?

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS QUESTION:

If Jesus rose from the dead, then options (1) and (2) in Lecture 5 are not viable.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then all of Christianity is finally a delusion, no matter how good its ethics may be.

If Jesus rose from the dead, then God has put his stamp of approval on the claims which Jesus made.

If Jesus rose from the dead, then one day you too will rise from the dead to answer to Jesus for what you have done with your life: every action, word and thought.

THE QUESTION OF MIRACLE:

Clearly the resurrection is a miracle. If miracles cannot happen, then this one didn't. If miracles can happen, then (as we will see shortly) the evidence that this one happened is as good as for any other in human history.

David Hume: Miracles by definition violate natural law. But natural law is a reflection of our total experience. We believe reports of witnesses to extent they fit our experience and doubt them to extent they violate our experience. So no miracle will be accepted, since witnesses can lie and senses can deceive. **Response:** Hume's argument begs the question, since many reports of miracles exist. Hume's procedure would explain away a miracle even if it did occur.

Adolf Harnack: In ancient times, miracles were thought to be everyday occurrences. The ancients didn't know enough about natural law to recognize a miracle when they saw one. **Response:** Not all ancients believed in miracles. Sadducees were very much embarrassed when faced with strong evidence of Jesus' miracles. Had him killed. They bribed guards to cover up resurrection story. None of Jesus' miracles are easily explained using modern science.

Rudolf Bultmann: The universe is a closed system of cause and effect into which not even God could break. **Response:** We certainly don't know enough scientifically about our universe to maintain this. This claim faces problems in the area of origins, in quantum level of phenomena, and on the scale of the cosmos.