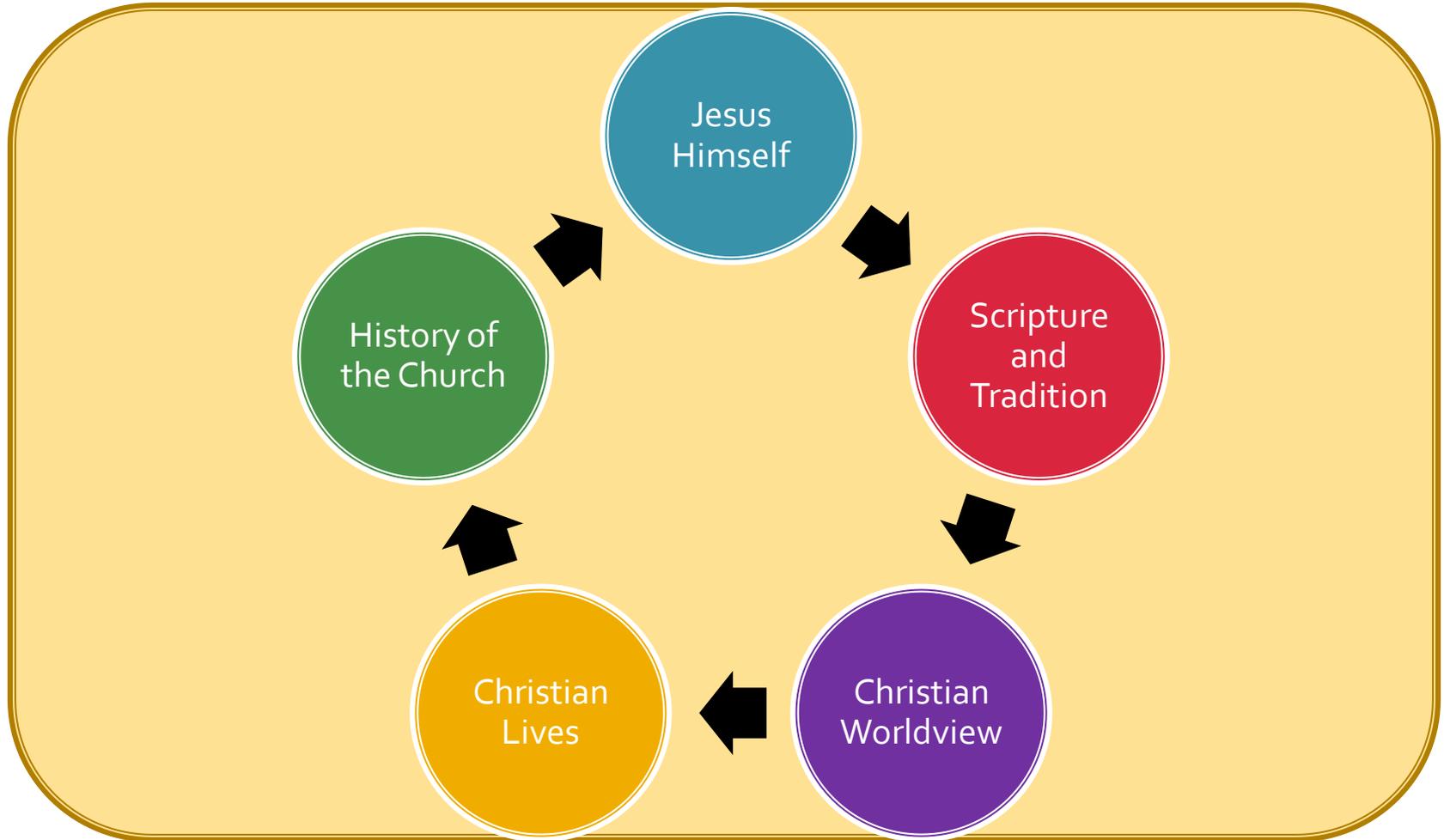


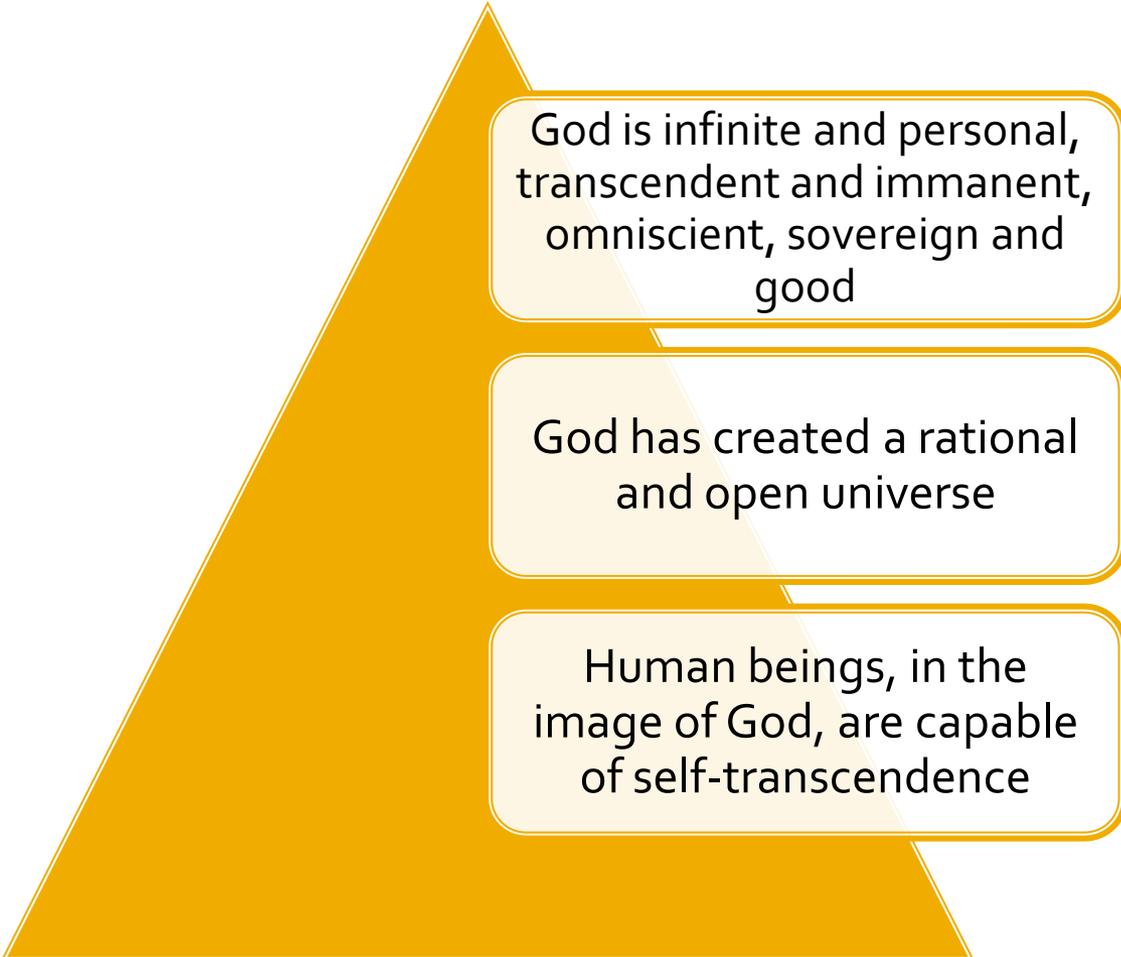
St. Raymond's Parish 2009

Public Christians and Pagan Culture (session two)

Reasons for Believing Christianity is True



Basic Christian Theism

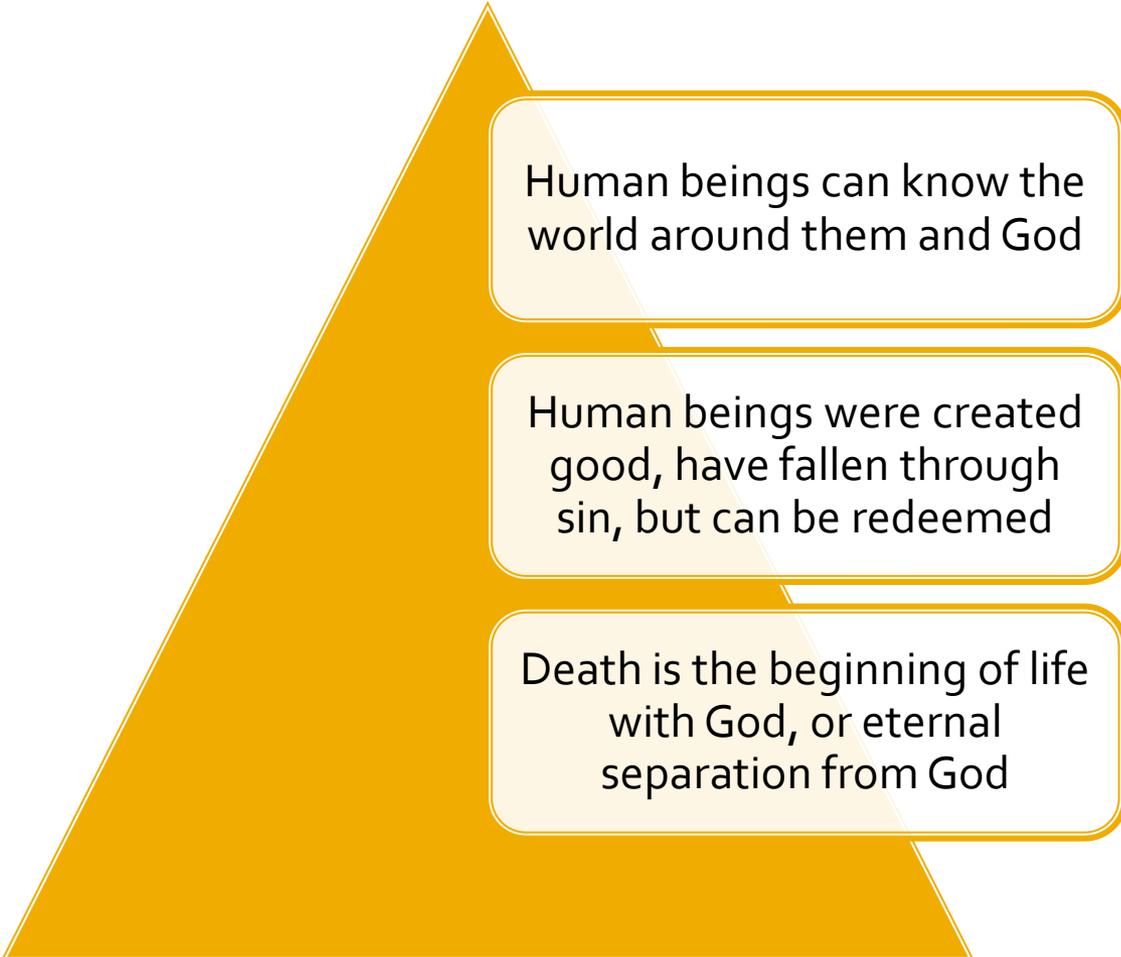


God is infinite and personal,
transcendent and immanent,
omniscient, sovereign and
good

God has created a rational
and open universe

Human beings, in the
image of God, are capable
of self-transcendence

Basic Christian Theism



Human beings can know the world around them and God

Human beings were created good, have fallen through sin, but can be redeemed

Death is the beginning of life with God, or eternal separation from God

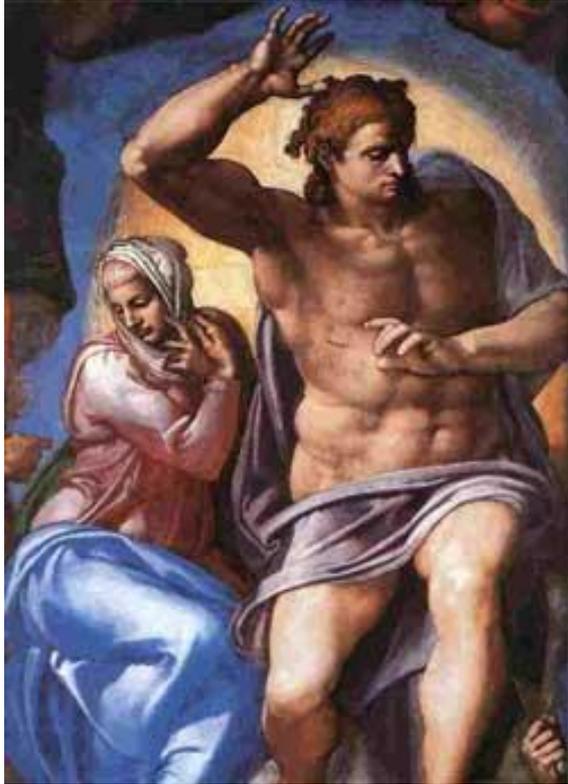
Basic Christian Theism



Human ethics are based on the character of God

History has a destination, the Kingdom of Heaven

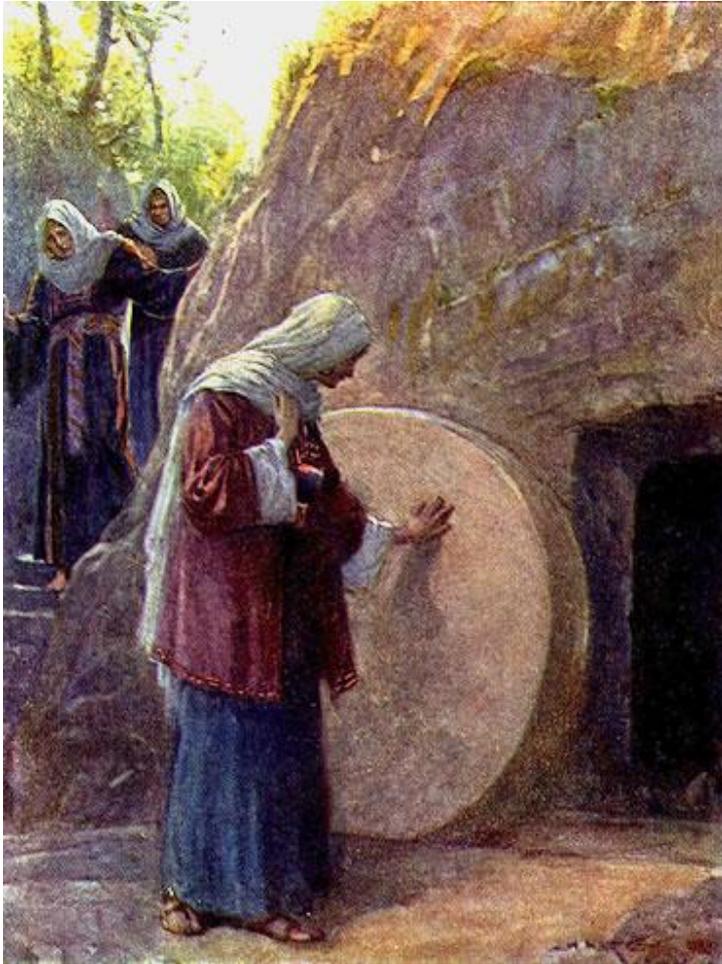
How do we know this is true?



Jesus himself is the best evidence that the worldview of Christian Theism is true.

“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.” -- Acts 17:30-31

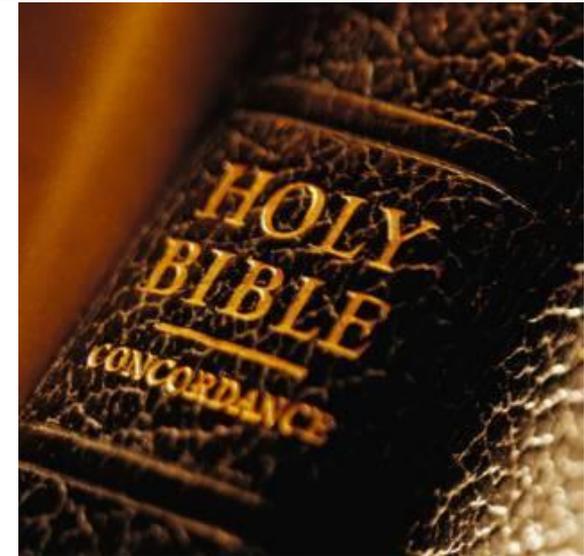
The Evidence for the Resurrection



- “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins.” -- I Cor. 15:17
- The resurrection is by far the most important claim that Christians make about Jesus.

What if it's true?

- If the resurrection took place, then it is the most important fact in the world
- For non-believers to assess the claim of the resurrection they need only grant only that there is a New Testament and that there is a Church

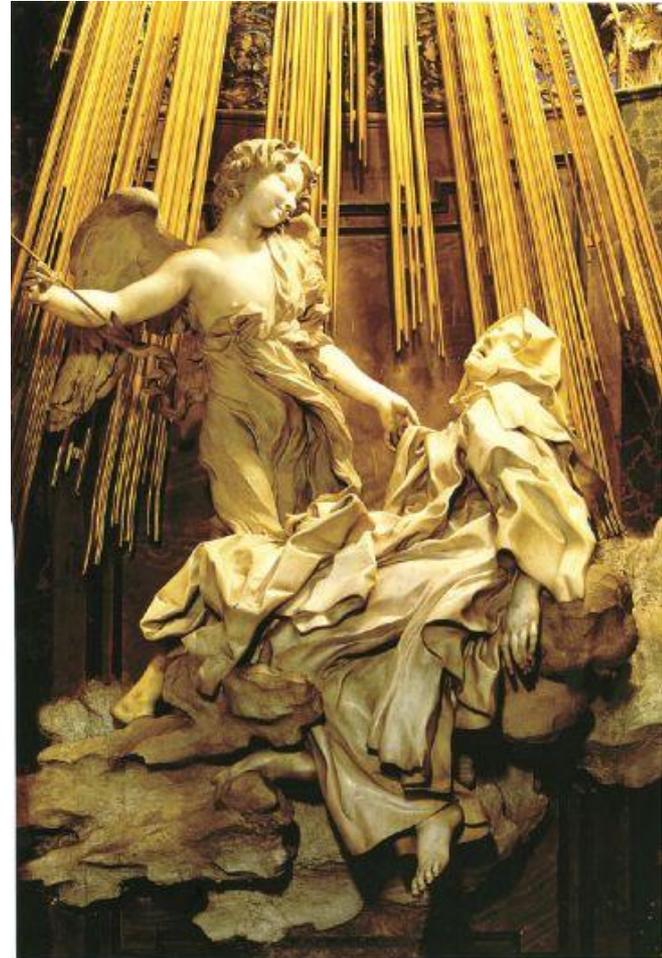


What accounts for the facts?

- The New Testament and the Church have had so great an impact on history that they have to be accounted for
- Both the New Testament and the Church claim that they exist because of the Resurrection
- If they are wrong about that, then something else must account for their existence
- If there is nothing else, then the Resurrection must be true

The Swoon Theory

- Jesus didn't die on the cross but only fainted
- He revived in the cool of the tomb
- He escaped, leading his followers to claim that he had risen



Problems...

- Romans were very thorough in the way they carried out crucifixions
- JAMA, 21 March 1986 concluded that Jesus was certainly dead as a result of his injuries



Problems...

- Even if he had escaped he would have been badly hurt and in need of medical attention. He vanished without a trace – there is no evidence, friendly or unfriendly about his continued earthly life after reviving
- This is not the kind of story the New Testament tells about the heroic conquest of death
- It does not account for the facts. This is not the story that results in a New Testament and a Church

The Conspiracy Theory

- The disciples stole the body and made up the story of the resurrection
- This story is the oldest, dating from Easter Day



Problems...

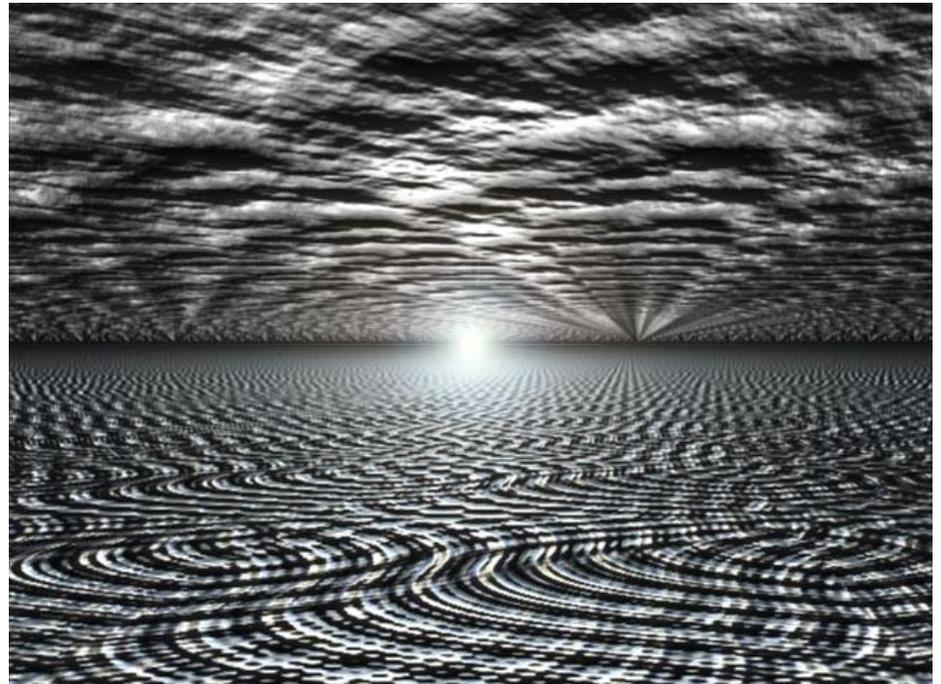
- To believe the conspiracy theory one must believe that 11 disorganized and frightened disciples sneaked up on the Roman guard, rolled away the stone, folded the grave clothes, got away, and then lied for the rest of their lives about it
- Despite persecution and scorn no one ever admitted to the lie
- This presses credulity to the breaking point. No serious historian today believes it

Problems...

- Doesn't account for the facts.
- The Conspiracy Theory says we have a New Testament and a Church because for 2000 years the world lapsed into imbecility, and the disciples covered their tracks so effectively that no one has been able to trace them
- No atheist historians believe this either

Hallucination Theory

- The disciples saw not the risen Christ but a wish-projection of their own minds
- They only *imagined* that Christ had been raised



Problems...

- Too many witnesses – as few as 10, as many as 500
- All the witnesses saw the same hallucination at the same time. Hallucinations do not happen that way
- Hallucination theory means that the tomb must be empty, so either the Conspiracy Theory or the Swoon Theory has to be true, too

Myth Theory

- The Resurrection accounts were never meant to be taken literally, but metaphorically
- The New Testament was meant to be taken as myth, not history
- Most popular view of modern times



Problems...

- The resurrection accounts (and the whole NT) are not good enough to be myths
- Myth is a highly developed form of literature and discourse, developing over hundreds of years
- Embarrassing or awkward features of myth are polished away

Problems...

- The NT accounts of the resurrection developed over a period of less than 50 years – too young to be myth
- They are full of embarrassing features – e.g. women as the first witnesses and the disbelief of the disciples. Myth would have polished these away
- There is no evidence of a myth developing around any historical figure within 100 years of his death

Problems...

- Myth doesn't account for the facts. Neither the Church nor the NT ever talked about the resurrection as a symbolic event, but as an actual event
- The purpose of myth is to leave things out. There is no documentary evidence that the disciples or the church tried to leave anything out of the resurrection accounts

Conclusions...

“Once you have eliminated the impossible, what remains is the truth.”

-- Sherlock Holmes



He is Risen!

- Neither the Swoon Theory, the Conspiracy Theory, the Hallucination Theory or the Myth Theory account for the facts
- The evidence points to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus is true
- If that is true, then all non-believers have a compelling reason to take Christianity seriously