



Examine the views of R Bultmann and N.T Wright on the resurrection of Jesus (20)

The resurrection of Jesus is a fundamental feature of the Christian faith. Records of Jesus' resurrection can be found primarily in John chapters 20-21 where Jesus died and rose again after 3 days. It is recorded in the Bible that after Jesus had resurrected he appeared to people including the disciples and St Paul. There are different academic interpretations of the resurrection.

R. Bultmann is a 20th century German Christian scholar. He argued that all that is necessary for Christian belief is to know that Jesus lived, preached and died by the crucifixion. Bultmann's key ideas was to 'de-mythologise' the New testament in order to strip the content back to what truly matters, which, for Bultmann, is the fact that Jesus lived by the cross. Bultmann suggested that anything written in the Bible which is supernatural and break the rules of science should be considered a 'myth' and not be taken literally. For Bultmann a myth is simply a way in which people attempt to explain the world around them and their existence in it.

Bultmann applies this strategy of 'de-mythologising' to the story of the resurrection. This means that Bultmann did not regard the resurrection as a literal event, but merely a myth to demonstrate to Christians the faith that they should have in Jesus Christ. For Bultmann, there indeed exists Christian hope and an afterlife, and the story of the resurrection is a metaphor to remind us of such hope. Bultmann states that the fact that Jesus was willing to die on the cross for what he believes is enough to keep the hope of Christianity alive for the believers. However, Bultmann concedes that the disciples probably thought that they did see the resurrected Christ, for instance Paul's account in Corinthians 1:15, but for Bultmann this was a misinterpretation as it is scientifically impossible for a corpse to resurrect.

20th Century scholar N.T Wright, on the other hand, wrote in his book *The resurrection of the Son of God*, that Jesus' resurrection was indeed a historical event which 'marked the beginning of the restoration of creation that Jesus will complete upon his return'. Wright studied ancient Greek and Jewish belief around the resurrection to conclude that Jesus must have been deemed a Messiah and must have raised from the dead. This is because the Christian belief in resurrection departs too much from the Jewish belief in the 'sheol' (the sleep of the dead). For example, the early Christians now believed that bodies could raise from the dead, rather than just entering a place of sleep. For Wright, this is proof that the early Christians must indeed have witnessed Jesus rise from the dead.

Moreover, Wright used that fact that there were many people claiming to be the Messiah alive at Jesus' time to suggest that Jesus must have indeed performed a miraculous act to convince people that he was the real Messiah; namely rising from the dead. Wright points to Simon bar-Giora of 70CE and Judas the Gallilean as other people claiming to be a Messiah. Why, Wright asks, did masses of people not start following them rather than Jesus? Again, this is proof for Wright that the Gospel accounts of a resurrected Jesus must indeed be accurate and Jesus *did* rise from the dead.