

## Conclusion:

“Hope, on one hand, is an absurdity too embarrassing to speak about, for it flies in the face of all those claims we have been told are facts. Hope is the refusal to accept the reading of reality which is the majority opinion; and one does that only at great political and existential risk. On the other hand, hope is subversive, for it limits the grandiose pretension of the present, daring to announce that the present to which we have all made commitments is now called into question.” Walter Brueggemann *‘The Prophetic Imagination’*

“I believe that when the truth of Christianity is under consideration in the context of science, it is with these issues relating to the resurrection that the discussion needs to begin. Only when a case has been made for the belief that God was present in Jesus of Nazareth in a unique way does it then become possible adequately to attempt to enquire into the significance of his crucifixion.” John Polkinghorne *‘Theology in the Context of Science’*.

So what have we learnt? If, as Paul consistently presents, the Resurrection of Jesus is the most important ‘fact’ of the Christian faith, what evidence might play into our ‘motivated belief’?

The term ‘motivated belief’ refers to the idea of **‘Beliefs that are sufficiently well-motivated for us to feel that we can commit our lives to them, knowing that they may be false, but believing that they are the best explanation.’**

1. The ancient world knew what it believed about resurrection – it did not happen. The 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish world knew what it believed about resurrection; either it did not happen or it was going to happen at some point in the future when YHWH saved Israel. Neither of these groups believed that a single person could or would be raised from death.
2. Both groups believed that if resurrection was even possible, which of course it was not, resurrection was not resuscitation, nor was it continued disembodied life someplace else.
3. Given the above, the explanation for the rise and continued growth of Christianity, with a central message of the

resurrected Jesus, must lie in the possibility that Jesus was really, historically resurrected.

4. The New Testament, and in particular the writings of Paul, show a unanimous central theme, that the resurrection of Jesus is both the *model* and the *means* for the future resurrection of those of humanity who live under the Lordship of Jesus.
5. The development of Christian thought did not take up the Platonic position of a human being as an imprisoned spirit within a body, nor did it leave the idea of resurrection as peripheral to their thought, as in Jewish theology. But rather quickly, within the first few years after Pentecost, the resurrection of Jesus and the future resurrection of his followers become central to the story of Christianity.

In regard to resurrection our motivated beliefs rest on these, and other, evidences.

The resurrection is not just about the future or the past, but, if Paul's emphasis is to be taken seriously, it is about how we live our lives today. If the resurrection is true, in both a historical and theological sense, then it demands our attention because we live in the 'therefore' of 1 Cor. 15:58.