

Why Hallucinations Don't Explain the Resurrection Appearances

Kenneth J. Coughlan

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The most common attempt at a naturalistic explanation for the minimal facts approach is to allege that the post-mortem appearances of Jesus were some form of hallucination. This argument fails, however, for at least five reasons.

First, the scriptures record several instances in which Jesus appeared to multiple people at the same time, including 500 people at once (1 Cor 15:6). However, at best group hallucinations are extremely rare, if not impossible.

Second, hallucinations generally come about as intense wish fulfillment. When the disciples saw the risen Christ, they were surprised. Furthermore, neither James nor Paul were followers of Jesus prior to the crucifixion, so they certainly were not harboring a wish to see Him again. Finally, it is unlikely that all 500 people who witnessed an appearance together were followers hoping for a resurrection.

Third, only about 7% of seniors who lose a loved one experience a grief hallucination, yet if this explanation is to be believed 100% of the disciples experienced one.

Fourth, for all these people to have experienced a hallucination, the region truly must have experienced an epidemic of mental illness that was coincidentally uniform and remarkably convenient in its timing.

Fifth, it simply fails to explain all it must explain. The minimal facts are (1) Jesus died by crucifixion, (2) He was buried in a known tomb, (3) that tomb was subsequently empty, and (4) many people experienced what they sincerely believed to be post-mortem appearances. At best the hallucination theory is consistent with (1) and (4), but it fails to account for (2) and (3). False belief resulting from hallucinations could be cured by simply producing the body. Yet this could not be done because the tomb was empty.