

Ankeny UCC Bible Study 3/18/15  
What Does it Mean that Jesus was Resurrected?

Remember our principles with both authors. Borg is looking for the story behind the gospel stories of Jesus, trying to understand what might have happened before the developing tradition of Christianity (and Paul's emphasis on the resurrection) modified the narrative.

Borg is looking for a plausible hypothesis that encompasses all of the gospel stories and the available archaeological and contextual evidence.

For the resurrection of Jesus, a few questions?

What do we mean by resurrection? What did that look like? Where is the evidence in the Bible?

How do we interpret the resurrection? What does it mean for us?

- I. What happened on Easter?
  - a. What is resurrection?
    - i. Borg: Not resuscitation. A new phase of life. We hear a lot about Jesus appearing, but no reason to think his form was the same.
    - ii. Wright: Resurrection is a specific point on a spectrum of belief in ancient Israel from Sadducees (no resurrection) to Pharisees (restoration of physical body). It specifically means transformed physical resurrection.
  - b. What Form did Jesus take??
    - i. Borg: We don't know for sure. A lot of Paul's language suggests similarities to visions and apparitions. The disciples on the Emmaus road don't recognize Jesus, and then he disappears. We have a lot of confusion about the tomb itself, and given that the physical resurrection was part of the developing tradition of Christianity, we must wonder whether it was added later. But it doesn't matter.
    - ii. Wright: His body was raised from the tomb. Multiple accounts look like eyewitness reports today. Resurrection was one of a variety of beliefs about life after death, and specifically means a transformed body in this context. A mere spiritual resting with God would not have been worth remarking upon.
  - c. What does Paul have to say?
    - i. Wright: Paul announces Jesus died, was buried, and was raised. Early Christianity did not change worldviews, just announced them. Also, Paul's a Pharisee, believes in bodily resurrection. Also, Paul says he was the last to see Jesus, not consistent with spiritual understandings. Jesus is the beginning of the end, presaging the end of death. Resurrection is a change, but still a continuation of physical body. "Spiritual Body" does not mean "nonphysical body (just no zombies)". Finally, the physical body is important because it suggests we are starting the next phase now.

- ii. Borg: Paul's not too specific. And contrasts "body animated by soul" (flesh and blood, perishable) with "body animated by spirit". Unclear whether there is a new form of physical body.
- d. Are there other understandings of Easter?
- i. Borg: Yes, five. Rejection/vindication. Jesus is rejected by the domination system of the temple, and vindicated by God.
  - ii. Borg: Defeat of the Powers. Repeat of the defeat of Pharaoh, also Satan, the principalities and powers, the beast from the abyss, etc. the powers that hold us in bondage can be defeated by God in Christ.
  - iii. Borg: Revelation of the Way. A metaphor for the spiritual process that lies at the heart of the Christian path, which is death and resurrection into a new way of being.
  - iv. Borg: Revelation of the Love of God. The incarnation of the depth of divine love
  - v. Borg: Sacrifice for Sin—Borg sees this not as Jesus's understanding, but a way others have interpreted him. Overthrows the monopoly of the Temple for the forgiveness of sin. We all get direct access to God. Also, sacrifice affirms that God's love is not contingent. We don't have anything else to sacrifice to God (no need for the Temple).
  - vi. Wright: What more do you need than the Body of Christ inaugurating the new Temple and kingdom?