Last week I finished a thread on the criteria scholars use to establish what happened in the life of the historical Jesus. That series of posts raises an important question: what do historians do about the fact that throughout the Gospels Jesus does lots of miracles — and at the end the greatest miracle of all happens, he is raised from the dead as an immortal being, never to die again? Can such miracles be demonstrated to have happened historically?

That’s a question I’ve dealt with on the blog before. Here is the first of a series of posts I made on it from five years ago, in which I make a point about “history” that many people maybe haven’t thought of.

******************************************************************************************

Yesterday I started to answer a question from a reader who pointed out that just as the existence of Jesus is multiply attested, so too is Jesus’ resurrection. And so if *one* is established as historical, doesn’t the other one *also* have to be seen as historical? And if one is considered non-historical, doesn’t that show that the other is probably also non-historical?

These are great questions, but I think the answer to both of them is “no.” Yesterday I showed why multiple attestation strongly supports the existence of Jesus. Some readers objected to that, but I should reiterate – this is simply a common sense principle that all of us use every day to decide if something happened (say, what happened at lunch yesterday). Today I want to show why multiple attestation can *not* be used to support the resurrection of Jesus.

I begin by pointing out something that hasn’t occurred to a lot of people, but is nonetheless a fundamental point. History is not the past.

This may come as a surprise, but here’s the deal. The “past” is everything that has happened before now. “History” is what we can establish – in one way or another – as having happened before now. Trillions and trillions of things have happened before this moment. They are all in the past. But historians do not have access to far more than 99.99% of those things. What historians have access to is what we call history – things that we can show probably happened.

**FOR THE REST OF THIS POST, log in as a Member. If you don’t belong yet, JOIN NOW, OR YOU MAY NEVER KNOW!!!**

You need to be logged in to see this part of the content. Please Login to access.

More on the Historical Problem of Miracles
My First Taste of Critical Scholarship