Resurrection-Phobia: Are You Afraid of the Truth?

A phobia is an extreme, irrational fear of a specific object, place, situation, or feeling. It's an anxiety disorder where the fear is disproportionate to any actual danger and can significantly impact a person's life and well-being.

We are more than familiar with a thousand different phobias today: arachnophobia (spiders), claustrophobia (confined spaces), agoraphobia (open spaces), trypanophobia (needles). Then there are socially-constructed phobias focused upon categories of person: transphobia, homophobia, biphobia, lesbophobia, and so on.

To be phobic of something, someone, or some situation is to have an irrational, extreme and unjustified fear of it or them, causing the person who has it to avoid certain things or people.

That description applies perfectly to the religious leaders in ***Matthew 27:62–28:20***. They had an extreme and unjustified fear of the resurrection. Their anxiety about it caused them to avoid it, deny it, and do all they could to get around it. The religious leaders were resurrection-phobic!

Many are like them today. They pretend to boldly reject the resurrection, but in truth, they are afraid—because if Christ really rose, that changes everything. Are *YOU* resurrection-phobic? Consider five symptoms in the case of the religious leaders.

1. Resurrection-phobes deny Christ's claims (v62–63)

They acknowledge that Jesus claimed he would rise from the grave. It is quite true that the Lord did indeed declare this repeatedly, for example in Matthew 20:17-19. Yet they dismiss this claim completely.

Yet Christ gave them ample reasons for believing his claims. He performed remarkable miracles manifesting power over nature (stilling the storm), over food supply (feeding the thousands), over Satan (casting out demons), and over death (raising Lazarus). In so doing, he proved that he was the Christ prophesied in their own Scriptures (Luke 4:16–21), thus giving him the authority to interpret that same Scripture, showing how it prophesied his own death and resurrection (Matthew 12:39–41). This proof of his claims even before his resurrection could only be put beyond any possible doubt if he really was raised from the grave.

Since then, the claims of Christ have stood the test of history. The work and words of Jesus have more influence across the world today than the combined testimony and teaching of everyone else – even many atheists acknowledge this. Yet millions are afraid of his resurrection and so they reject his claims, even though they acknowledge he has been proven right over and over again.

2. Resurrection-phobes are deeply prejudiced (v63–66)

Their denial of Christ's resurrection comes in advance of the possibility that he might be speaking the truth. Instead of analysing the claim, they dismiss it out of hand – we call that prejudice, judging a matter before the evidence is available. They rejected resurrection not because it was impossible, but because they were afraid of its implications. Even their own Scriptures (Psalm 16:9–11), and the examples of resurrections through Elijah and Elisha (as well as others), pointed to resurrection.

Today, many resurrection-phobes reject the resurrection on "scientific" grounds. Yet some of these same scientists pour billions into SETI – the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence –

hoping aliens might communicate with us. In one case, they explore the wildly improbable. In the other, they deny the well-documented. Is there not an inconsistency here?

3. Resurrection-phobes deny the facts (v1–11)

Consider the evidence laid out in these verses: the testimony of the women to what they saw and were told (v1,8-10); the testimony of creation in earthquake (v2); the testimony of angelic messengers (v2–8); the testimony of hardened and battle-worn guards to the whole remarkable experience (v4, 11). All four Gospels provide similar eyewitness accounts, with their own unique emphases – the resurrection is indeed the best-documented of all ancient history's monumental events.

Consider these three questions concerning the facts:

1) If the resurrection never took place, how do we explain the empty tomb? Despite all precautions, it was indeed empty. Sceptical theories all fall short. The Christian message flourished in the very city where Jesus died and was buried – that only makes sense if the tomb was empty.
2) If the resurrection never happened, how do we explain the radical change in the disciples? Peter went from broken coward to bold preacher of the resurrection. James, Jesus' sceptical brother, became a leader in the church. The only explanation… is that he was seen by James.
3) Why would the apostles suffer and die for a lie? They weren't deluded or insane. They had nothing to gain by lying. No one dies for what they know is false.

Are you historically and scientifically-minded? Good! Then don't deny the facts.

4. Resurrection-phobes try to cover-up (v12–15)

They knew the truth, but they tried to hide it. The guards were bribed to lie about what they had seen. Why? Because the implications of Christ's authority were too great for them. Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and earth (v18), and he is seated in glory (Hebrews 1:3). One day, every knee will bow (Philippians 2:9–11). Covering up the truth won't be effective on the day of the "Great Reveal" (Revelation 6:15–17). Don't be a resurrection-phobe – give up on the cover-up.

5. Resurrection-phobes reject Christ's authority (v16–20)

Christ has all authority. He has given us a wonderful message and a mission to make it known. You can reject his authority now, but you won't be able to forever. Don't be a resurrection-phobe – bow the knee to King Jesus today.

The resurrection-phobe has no forgiveness, no hope, no life, so be a resurrection-believer!

1) Trust Christ's claims – receive forgiveness and hope and life.
2) Be willing to learn – grow in wisdom and grace now and forever.
3) Embrace the facts – no longer be afraid of the truth; make the truth your friend!
4) Give up on pretending – be free from the cover-up and breath the fresh air of truth.
5) Accept Christ's authority – walk in the power of resurrection life.

Those who believe that Christ is risen are forgiven, enjoy fellowship with the triune God, and have the certainty of eternal life. Death is defeated. Life is their portion (2 Timothy 1:10).