

Give Me a Reason to Believe: Evidence for the Resurrection

Independent [Non-Christian] Citations of Jesus' Death by Crucifixion

- Tacitus, The Annals 15.44 [115 A.D.]
- Mara Bar-Serapion, The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325.
- The Talmud, The Sanhedrin 43a [approx. 190 A.D.]
- Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews Book 18, Chapter 3.3
- [1st Cen. A.D.]
- John Dominic Crossan, Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography, pg. 145, 1991.

The Claims to Have Seen the Risen Jesus – Direct Eyewitnesses

The Disciples and more than a dozen others listed by name. I Corinthians 15:6. Proclaims that there are over 300 eyewitnesses. Many are named in the New Testament for verification.

Theories of Skeptics and Their Problems:

The Jewish leaders had the body of Jesus and hid it

- To stop the “myth” of Christianity, all the skeptics had to do was to produce the body of Jesus. This has never been done, because it is not in the tomb.
- At Pentecost, to stop the spread of Christianity, all the Jewish leaders had to do was produce the body of Jesus. But they were silent!
- The wrappings on Jesus' body were present and in fashion that they were not removed hurriedly, but neatly folded. No thief would do that.

The Disciples Stole the Body and Lied about it

- The disciples were tortured to renounce their claim, but they died willingly and refused to renounce that they had seen the risen Lord.
- How could these 12 Disciples move the stone without the Roman guards knowing? For the Romans to allow this, they would be executed.
- This theory does NOT support the dramatic change in Paul (Saul's) conversion. Why would the hunter of Christians become one of its leaders?
- This theory does NOT support the dramatic change in James, the brother of Jesus who was such a skeptic before the resurrection. Why would he change his mind on who Jesus was and die a martyr's death?
- This does not explain all the eye witnesses.



Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Jesus is said to be buried and eventually Mary witness the resurrection in the Old City of Jerusalem, Israel



Mosaic artwork depicting the crucifixion and burial of Jesus in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Old City of Jerusalem, Israel.

Someone Else Stole the Body

- The disciples were tortured to renounce their claim, but they died willingly and refused to renounce that they had seen the risen Lord.
- How could people sneak in and move the stone without the guards knowing? The Romans guards would have been changed every watch.
- This theory does NOT support the dramatic change in Paul (Saul's) or James' conversion.
- This does nothing to explain the hundreds of eyewitness accounts that claimed to have seen Jesus alive.

The Disciples Went to the Wrong Tomb

- This is a modern theory and was never suggested in ancient times because the witnesses knew this is not logical. History does not record a vast number of crucifixions occurring at the time of this Passover.
- Pilate gave specific orders that the tomb of Jesus was to be officially sealed for Rome. It thus became the property of Tiberius Caesar and Rome. To disregard this order and place a seal on any other tomb would be punishable by death.
- Even the Jewish leaders, who were behind Jesus' death, did not claim this!
- The disciples were convinced not by the empty tomb but by the appearance of Jesus.
- Paul and James were converted, not by the empty tomb, but by the appearance of Jesus.
- There are no ancient sources that state or claim that the disciples went to the wrong tomb.
- Jesus was placed in the new and unused tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, who would know where his tomb was located.

Jesus Did Not Die, He Only Appeared to be Dead

- Does not explain Paul's conversion. The supernatural experience changed his life.
- The Roman centurion in charge of the crucifixion knew death. It was his career. He certified to Pilate that Jesus was indeed very dead.
- The stabbing of Jesus to test for death by the soldier was to the heart because it produced a flow of blood and water (pericardial fluid).
- Many doctors and medical examiners have tested the crucifixion story as written in the Gospels and have concluded that He did indeed die.
- The Strauss Report published in 1879 points out that even if Jesus did not die, he would not be able to walk at all, or over 60 miles to Galilee.
- Jesus would not have been physically able to unwrap Himself, walk over and open His own tomb without the guards knowing.

Jesus Did Not Die, He Was Drugged

- The Romans carrying out the execution were present the entire time, allowing no chance of a doctor drugging Jesus.
- The Romans were experts in death.
- This does NOT explain the stab test the soldier did, (a fatal wound).
- Does not explain the Strauss Report of 1879.

In Grief, His Followers Were Hallucinating

- Hallucinations are not contagious.
- Hallucinating does not explain the empty tomb.
- It does not explain why Paul (Saul), or James would have converted, because they were not grieving.
- Over a period of 50 days, many people both singularly and in large groups testified that they saw the risen Lord, ate with Him, and touched Him.

The Gospels Accounts Vary and are Not Reliable

- 4 people can look at the same painting and come away with 4 different but true images.
- Harmony is not how the Gospels were written. They were written as portraits – thus sequence is not important.
- The Gospels are not biographies. They do not fit the requirements of being a biography. For instance, John's Gospel focuses primarily on just one week in Jesus' life. How can this be called a biography?

Conclusion

- The tomb is empty.
- The evidence is clear!
- He is alive!
- Jesus is God!