

PROVING THE RESURRECTION

by David Lee Burris



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Was Jesus accused of claiming to be equal with, or a competitor of, the reigning emperor Tiberius as ‘a son of a god’? During his trial as recorded in John 19:1–16 and after ordering his scourging, Pilate declared before the crowd, ‘See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no fault in him.’ The chief priests and the officers immediately responded, calling for his crucifixion on the grounds ‘that He made himself a son of a god’ (ὅτι υἱὸν θεοῦ ἑαυτὸν ἐποίησεν) (John 19:7).

After further interrogation of Jesus away from the crowd, Pilate sought to release him and it was then that the Jews confronted the Roman governor. They retaliated. ‘If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend’ (οὐκ εἶ φίλος τοῦ Καίσαρος) (19:12). While there is no extant epigraphic or other literary evidence that Pilate had this important honorary title of a ‘friend of Caesar’, he was a close associate and loyal official of Tiberius, and substantial extant evidence exists of leading Roman officials bearing this title. (p. 30.)

The accusers reminded Pilate who was on his annual assize in Jerusalem of his judicial rôle as governor to punish breaches of Roman law, that ‘everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar’ (πᾶς ὁ βασιλέα ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν ἀντιλέγει τῷ Καίσαρι). Later when the governor said, ‘Behold your king’, they again asserted their total loyalty to Rome by declaring, ‘we have no king but Caesar’ (19:15).

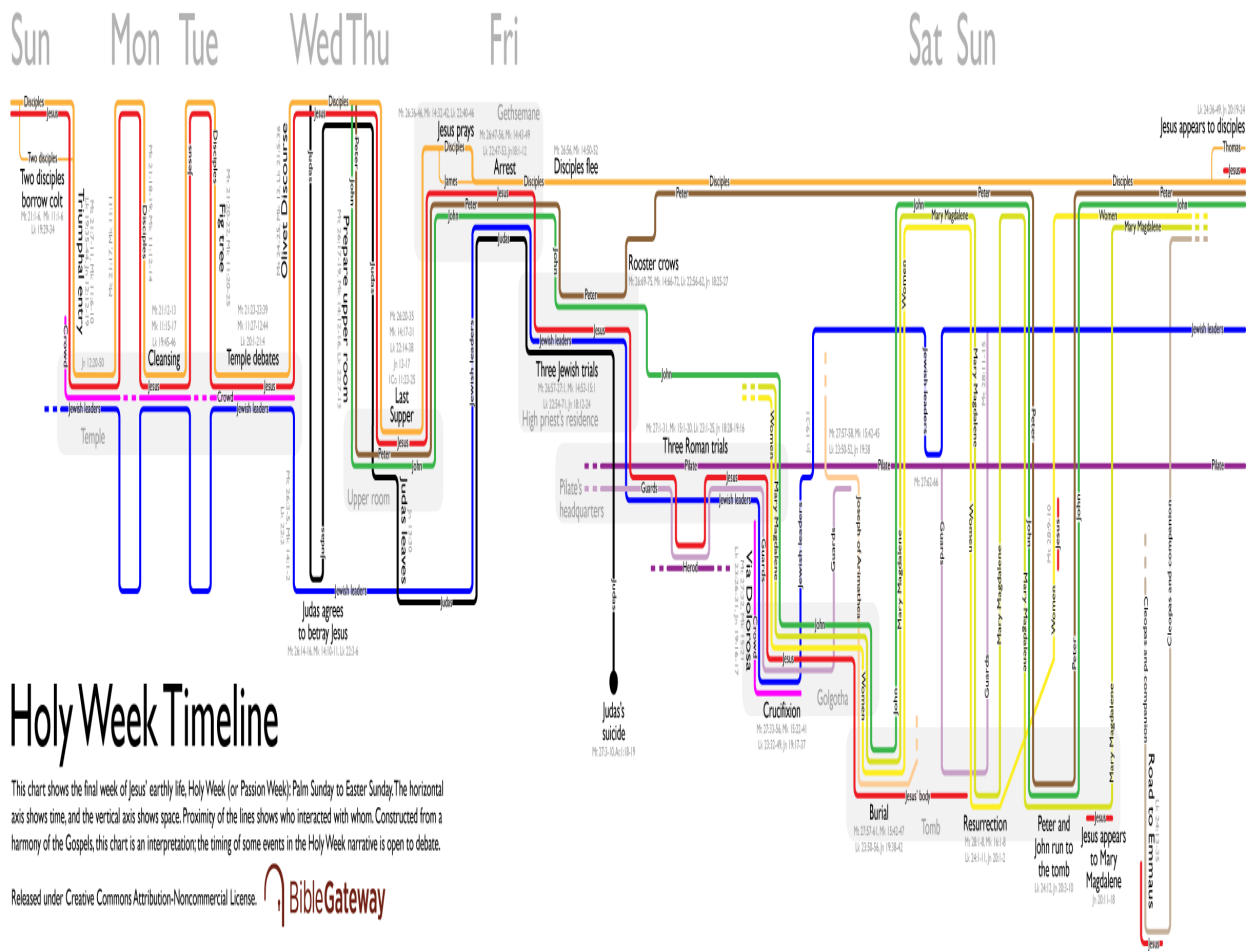
It is significant that the chief priests’ and Jewish officials’ case rested on their assertion not that Jesus called himself ‘the Son of the God’ as attested in John’s Gospel, but that he was said to have made himself a rival of Tiberius—hence their claim of the present divine emperor as ‘a son of a god’ (υἱὸν θεοῦ), both of which were recorded without the article before either of the nouns.

The Jewish officials would be aware of the claims of Tiberius and his title ‘a son of a god’. Theirs was the appropriate charge of sedition or treason to bring against Jesus in that he was a self-made rival of Tiberius. The implication was that Pilate could be guilty of ‘treason’ (*maiestas*) by reason of guilt by association if Pilate was to set Jesus free.

At the crucifixion of Jesus, the Jews who had heard of his comment about the destruction of the temple taunted him and are recorded repeating his claim, ‘If you are a son of the God (εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ), come down from the cross’ (Matt. 27:40). At the same time others report the claim of Jesus, ‘He trusts in God who should deliver him, for He said, “I am a son of a god” ’ (εἶπεν γὰρ ὅτι θεοῦ εἰμι υἱός) (Matt. 27:43). In the New Testament surprisingly, but not out of character in terms of cultural usage, immediately after the death of Jesus, a Roman centurion is recorded as declaring literally, ‘Truly this man was a son of a god’ (οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν) (Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39). He was reading into the superscription not only his Roman understanding of divinity from the headpiece ‘King of the Jews’ that was placed at the insistence of Pilate, but also the nature of the way he died. It is interesting to see the absence of the definite article with respect to ‘son’ recorded here *verbatim*.

There was a critical linguistic subtlety, the implications of which would not be lost on the nascent Christian movement. Compared with the Greek-speaking Roman East, Christians inserted the article when using certain terms, so that Jesus was ‘the’ son of ‘the’ God. At the same time the New Testament records non-Christians, including Jews, using the terms ‘a son’ and ‘a god’ as shown above.¹

¹ Winter, B. W. (2015). *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians’ Responses* (pp. 69–71). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.



Jerusalem

OBITUARIES

33 AD



Calvary

Jesus Christ, 33, of Nazareth, died Friday on Mount Calvary, also known as Golgotha, the place of the skull. Betrayed by the apostle Judas, Jesus was crucified by the Romans, by order of the Ruler Pontius Pilate. The causes of death were crucifixion, extreme exhaustion, severe torture, and loss of blood.



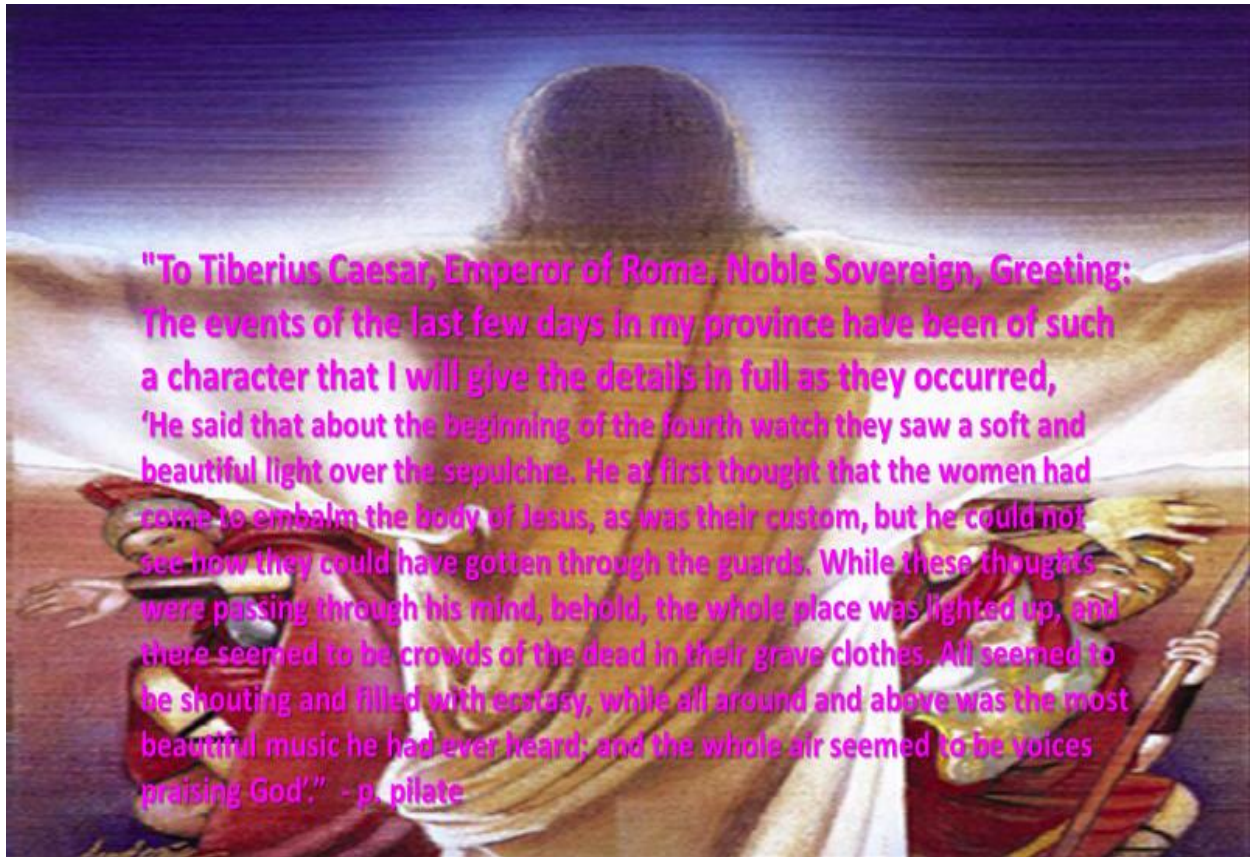
Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham, was a member of the house of David. He was the Son of the late Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, and Mary, His devoted Mother. Jesus was born in a stable in the city of Bethlehem, Judea. He is survived by His mother Mary, His faithful Apostles, numerous disciples, and many other followers.

Jesus was self educated and spent most of his adult life working as a Teacher. Jesus also occasionally worked as a Medical Doctor and it is reported that he healed many patients. Up until the time of His death, Jesus was teaching and sharing the Good News, healing the sick, touching the lonely, feeding the hungry, and helping the poor.

Jesus was most noted for telling parables about His Father's Kingdom and performing miracles, such as feeding over 5,000 people with only five loaves of bread and two fish, and healing a man who was born blind. On the day before His death, He held a Last Supper celebrating the Passover Feast, at which He foretold His death.

The body was quickly buried in a stone grave, which was donated by Joseph of Arimathea, a loyal friend of the family. By order of Pontius Pilate, a boulder was rolled in front of the tomb. Roman soldiers were put on guard.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that everyone try to live as Jesus did. Donations may be sent to anyone in need.



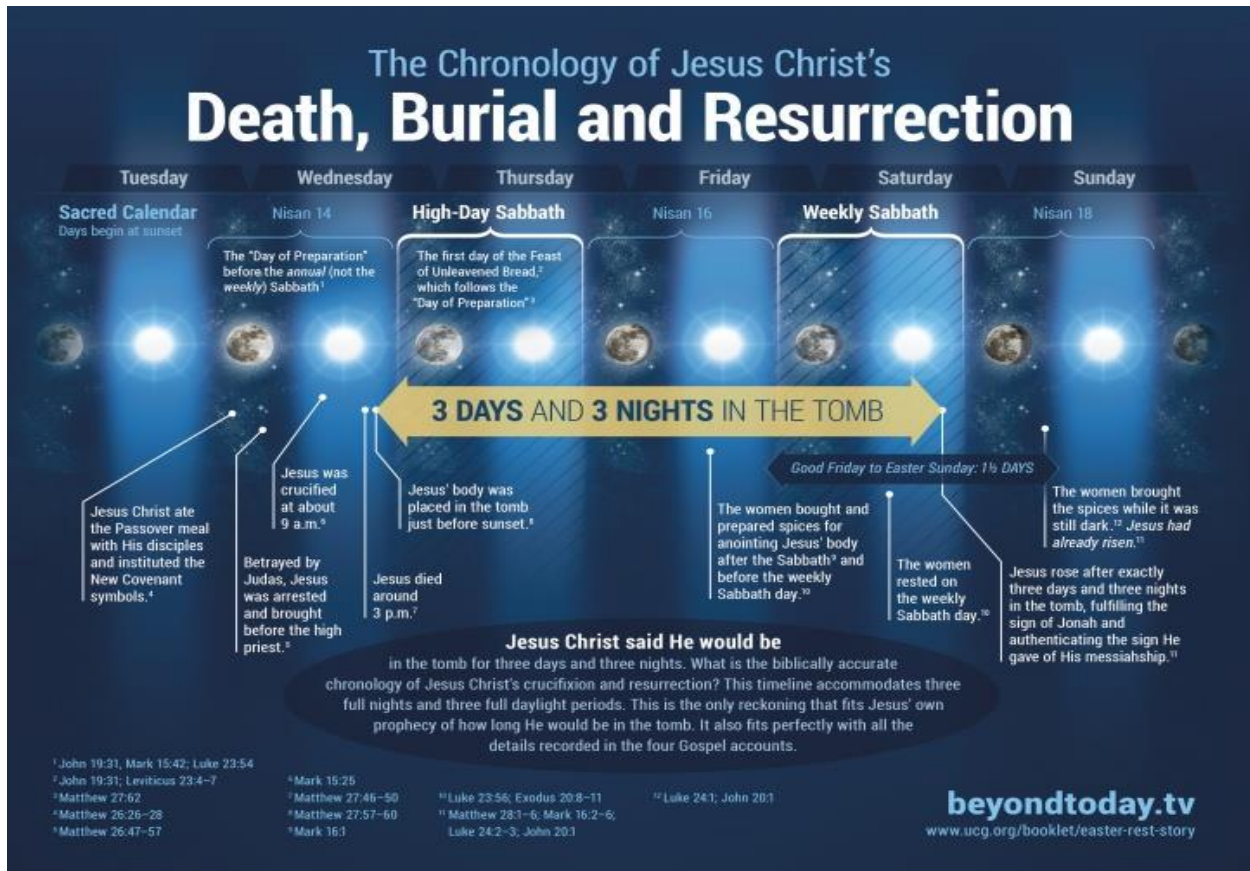


Resurrection Chronology of Jesus



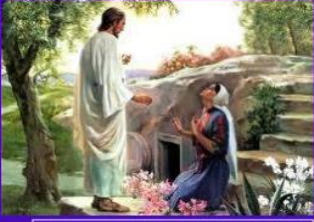
Event	Matthew 28:1-15	Mark 16:1-20	Luke 24:1-12	John 20:1-18
First day of the week (Sunday)	1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. 2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow; 4 and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men	1 And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"	1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared.	1a Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark,
the stone was moved		4 And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.	2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,	1b and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb
Mary Magdalene ran and told Peter Peter at the tomb first			12 [But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at that which had happened.]	2 And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." 3 Peter, therefore, went forth, and the other disciple and they were going to the tomb. 4 And the two were running together, and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; 5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. 6 Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.
three women at the tomb (Mk 16:1)		5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.	3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.	11 But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;
two men (angels) appeared			4 And it happened that while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling apparel;	12 and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.

Angel spoke	5 And the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. 6 "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. 7 "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."	6 And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. 7 "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you.'"	5 and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? 6 "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."	13 And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."
women left tomb	8 And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.	8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.	8 And they remembered His words, 9 and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.	
they see Jesus	9 And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.			14 When she had said this, she turned around, and beheld Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.
Jesus speaks to them	10 Then Jesus said to them, " Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me. "			15a Jesus said to her, " Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? "
Jesus and Mary Magdalene speak. She clings to Jesus.				15b Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." 16 Jesus said to her, " Mary! " She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, " Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.' " 18 Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.
They returned and reported what they saw.	11 Now while they were on their way, behold, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and counseled together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' 14 "And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble."	See comments on Mark 16:9-20 9 [Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. 10 She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. 11 And when they heard that He was alive, and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. 12 And after that, He appeared in a different form to two of them, while they were walking along on their way to the country.	10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. 11 And these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. 12 [But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at that which had happened.]	

	<p>15 And they took the money and did as they had been instructed, and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.</p>	<p>13 And they went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either. 14 And afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. 15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. 17 "And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." 19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.] [And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]</p>		
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Evidence of Christ's Resurrection

- ◆ Evidence of His death
 - Legs not broken
 - Wrapped in spices
- ◆ Evidence of His burial
 - Joseph of Arimathea
 - Pilate asked for assurance
- ◆ Evidence of His Resurrection
 - Appearances to disciples
 - Appearances to foes (James, Paul)

Mark 15:23
John 19:33,34
John 19:38,39
Acts 9
1 Cor. 15:8-10
Mark 6:3-4

@ Dr. Heinz Lycklama

Explaining Resurrection

- “Resurrection stands as an essential element of the biblical and historical witness of the Christian Community. Without the resurrection, Jesus is not the Living Lord but a dead person held in memory. Without the resurrection, God is not the God of the Living, not the one who has the power to conquer death. Without the resurrection, humankind has no ultimate hope for the, ‘last enemy,’ death, wins.” – W. Willis

The Audacity of the Resurrection

“Use your common sense.” It is a plea heard every day in courtrooms around the country. Fair, well-informed people are able to sift through mountains of evidence and use common sense to form opinions and make decisions. If we accept the reasonable conclusions about God’s power and nature, about his communication to humanity, about the true moral nature of sin and the human accountability that comes with the power to choose, we then must explain how the pure God can relate to sinful humanity. The Christian answer is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Can reasonable people accept such an audacious claim?

Witness List

Polycarp (A.D. c. 70–c. 156). One of the early church martyrs who died for his belief in the resurrected Christ is Polycarp, the second bishop of the church at Smyrna (modern-day Turkey). We know of Polycarp through letters written by him and to him, early narratives written about him (by Irenaeus and the early church historian Eusebius), as well as the detailed account of his death, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

Titus Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37–c. 100). Josephus was a Jewish military leader in Jerusalem’s first-century rebellion against Rome. After capture, he became a loyal Roman subject composing, among other things, a history of the Jews.

Publius (or Gaius) Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 56–117). Tacitus was a Roman senator and historian. Among his writings are histories.

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (A.D. c. 70–post 130). Suetonius served as director of the Imperial Archives under the Roman emperor Trajan, who ruled from 98 to 117. Later, Suetonius was the personal secretary to the Roman emperor Hadrian (119–121). During this time he wrote a history of the lives of the Caesars, finishing it around A.D. 119.

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, better known as Pliny the Younger (A.D. 61–c. 112). Pliny the Younger was a lawyer, author and Roman magistrate. As part of his professional duties, he wrote a number of letters that have survived to this day.

I want to subject the resurrection to the rigors and standards of the judicial system and to see what reasonable conclusion is best drawn from the evidence. As best I can, I want to determine what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. Before doing so, I am going to set out certain important legal concepts and rules for guiding jury decisions. These rules are designed to eliminate jury mistakes in the jury's role as the "finder of facts."

Trial Rules and Principles

Juries are charged with making their decisions based on evidence. *Direct evidence* comes mainly from witnesses and documents. Additionally, juries are allowed to look at *circumstantial evidence*, which is evidence that is reasonably inferred from the facts. The following is a good core overview of what is built into the jury system to make it arguably the most effective determiner of historical fact.

Witnesses: Credibility. Some of the witnesses are *fact witnesses*, which means they actually saw or witnessed something relevant firsthand. Other witnesses are *experts* who are generally paid to give their expert opinion on a matter that is better understood with specialized information not readily known by the common person. The jury is charged with the responsibility of determining the credibility of witnesses.

The determination of credibility can entail many things. Among the important indications of credibility are

- *The mental condition of the witness.* A mentally unstable or challenged witness is generally less likely to be accorded credibility. Jurors will look for witnesses who seem convinced of their testimony, who will look the jurors in the eyes, who are ready and willing to give their testimony without fear of it being heard or documented. Some witnesses are determined mentally challenged to such a degree that they are not allowed to testify.

- *The witness's motives.* For some witnesses the motive may be as simple as telling the truth. For others, especially expert witnesses, there is often an economic consideration. Some witnesses are paid for their testimony, which typically detracts from its credibility. Similarly, some witnesses have a personal stake in the outcome (e.g., a defendant who might have to go to jail, a plaintiff who might win money or a defendant who might lose money).
- *Comparison of different witness accounts.* Frequently, juries are faced with multiple witness accounts to the same set of facts. In that circumstance credibility often hinges, at least in part, on the relative merits of one person's testimony versus that of another. A weighing process can be involved, and when four witnesses agree on some issue or another, each witness's credibility is enhanced by the testimony of the others.
- *The character of the witness.* This is a very powerful influence in the credibility decision of jurors. So much so that there are very strict rules about what character evidence can be offered about witnesses. For example, if a witness has a reputation for dishonesty and there is evidence of such, then certain rules apply as to how and where that testimony can be offered. Clearly, a pathological liar will have less credibility over against an honest witness.

Witnesses: Hearsay testimony. As a general rule, fact witnesses are only allowed to testify to what they witnessed firsthand. The idea that a witness might say "John told me that he saw ABC" is not deemed testimony that ABC happened. It is merely testimony that someone else said he or she saw ABC. In courtroom vernacular this is called hearsay, which is when a witness asserts that what he or she "heard said" (the root of "hearsay") accurately related certain facts. Courts have recognized that once the factual examination includes statements of what others have said, a second layer of remoteness affects the strength of the comment. There are numerous exceptions to the inadmissibility of hearsay, often based on whether the original speaker ("the declarant") is available to offer the testimony firsthand.

For example, if the first speaker is not available to testify, then the statements of that speaker are admissible to a jury if they were given in another trial or proceeding, or if the declarant thought his or her death was imminent in some way related to the statements. Very importantly, if the first speaker's statements are contrary to his or her healthful pursuit of life, then the hearsay comments are admissible.

Expert witnesses: Junk science. Experts, generally paid witnesses in a case hired by one side or another, are allowed to testify to opinions arising from the expert's particular knowledge, skill, experience, training or education. These opinions are allowed before a jury if based on sufficient facts or data, and if reliable principles and methods are applied to those facts to justify the opinions. Courts have continually refined this Daubert rule to make certain that jurors are not handed *junk science*, the term applied to far-reaching opinions that have no real basis in reality. In a trial the judge is the gatekeeper of whether an expert's testimony is both relevant and adequately based on science. There are multiple factors the court considers in making this determination. The core concern is whether experts have an economic motive behind their opinions, which might move some beyond the realm of what is reasonably real and into the realm of the speculative.

Bias, sympathy and prejudice. Jurors are instructed not to make decisions based on bias, sympathy or prejudice. In fact, those whose biases, sympathies or prejudices are deemed too strong to be set aside are removed from consideration for serving on a jury.

Burden of proof. No trial is conducted based on the idea that jurors can be 100 percent certain of the facts. Determining the past is not a scientific or mathematical matter like determining whether the Pythagorean theorem is right in claiming $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$. Math and science have a certainty that comes from dealing with truths of the universe's physical laws. That is not the same as determining historical truths. As I have already noted, there is always the miniscule chance that reality as we see it is not real (we are dreaming). To seek a math proof for the reality of a historical fact is like using a liquid form of measurement to determine distance. Similarly, it is senseless to talk of proving a historical event by mathematics or laboratory experiments.

The courtroom determines historical fact using the “burden of proof.” One side or another has an obligation or burden to prove something as true or false. That burden fluctuates, depending on the matters in controversy. If the issue is a criminal matter, where someone’s liberty will be stripped away by a contrary finding, then the burden of proof is “beyond a reasonable doubt.” The approach is that we cannot strip away a person’s life or liberty unless the finder of fact is convinced of the truth of a case “beyond a reasonable doubt.”

In civil cases—for example, where person A brings a claim against person B for injuring person A—the party required to prove their case must do so by “the preponderance of the evidence.” This means that the question for the jury in finding facts is simply “what is more likely than not?” These burdens are important aspects of jury trials because 100 percent certainty is never reachable in any case. It simply is not an option in historical fact reconstruction.

Certainly, there are other factors that have been left out of this consideration. Jurors are generally listening to advocates who present opposing sides to a historical situation. Although there are exceptions, jurors are generally not allowed to question witnesses themselves. Trials do not even occur until there has been a time of “discovery” in which witnesses are examined to see what they have to say, facts are uncovered and documents are examined. This is when expert witnesses are retained and where arguments are marshaled for presentation.

Armed with these factors, I can now turn to the resurrection of Jesus, asking, What really happened? This is the most important finding of fact right we will face. So, let’s consider the question with civilization’s best tools.

The Resurrection of Jesus

The witnesses to the death and resurrection of Christ are numerous. I will place them in categories as we consider the main points of their testimony.

Direct eyewitnesses. The Gospels of *Matthew & John* record their witness and that of the other Apostles and of mass sighting witnesses.

Paul. An eyewitness of a different sort, Paul was raised in a devout Jewish home, was one of the Jewish elite (educated in the highest and best Jewish academic environment), was fluent in at least Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, knew Greek poetry, was a multigenerational Roman citizen conversant with Roman law, and was a zealot among his people, living above reproach by Jewish law and tradition. Paul was part of the Jewish power structure that was violently against the church, seeking to arrest and, if need be, kill those who were trumpeting Jesus as a resurrected Messiah. A follower of Jesus named Stephen, the first known martyr of the Christian faith, was stoned under Paul's approval (he held the cloaks of those involved). While Paul was on a zealous crusade ravaging the church, hauling both men and women to prison, he had an encounter with the risen Jesus while on the road to Damascus. Jesus identified himself to Paul and instructed him on what to do to resolve the blindness Paul suffered as a result of this encounter. Paul almost immediately began preaching Jesus as the risen Messiah, recounting his encounter with the risen Jesus multiple times. Throughout much of the Mediterranean world Paul proclaimed that God had raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 17:31). In his writings to the Corinthians, Paul specifies that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to [Peter], then to the twelve" (1 Cor 15:3-5). Paul adds that the resurrected Christ appeared to over five hundred disciples at one time, with most of them still alive lest anyone should want to check. Finally, Paul affirmed that the resurrected Jesus appeared to Jesus' brother James and to Paul.

Secondary witnesses. *Mark.* According to historical records of the church, the missionary Mark, who worked under Paul, Barnabas and Peter, penned the Second Gospel (the Gospel of Mark). Early historical church records report that Mark received his Gospel information from Peter. That would make Mark's Gospel hearsay in legal theory, which means it would not be admissible in a court absent certain indications of reliability. Saving admissibility issues for later, I note now that Mark's account does confirm the crucifixion and death of Jesus. He also details the burial and involvement by Joseph of Arimathea.

Mark recorded that on the Sunday following the crucifixion Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James found the tomb empty. An angel informed both women that Jesus was resurrected. The earliest copies of Mark's account end there. Later copies include appearances of Jesus to Mary, to two disciples and also to the entire group of eleven remaining disciples.

Luke. Luke wrote the Third Gospel as well as the book of Acts. Luke was not an eyewitness of the Gospel events, but he set out to "compile a narrative" from "eyewitnesses" (Luke 1:1-2). He then set out to write "an orderly account" (v. 3), which includes the early history of the church in Acts. Periodically in the Acts narrative Luke joins Paul on mission efforts, and his writing then includes eyewitness accounts. Luke explains not only the plot to kill Jesus but the events that led up to the crucifixion. Luke recounts the drama before the actual crucifixion, including the difficulties carrying the cross to the site of Jesus' death. In addition to Jesus' death, Luke adds the burial by Joseph of Arimathea, providing details about Joseph's role as a member of the Jewish council and his objection to the killing of Jesus. Luke details the story of the women coming to the tomb and finding Jesus' body missing. He adds to Peter's investigation of the empty tomb his discovery of Jesus' linen clothes.

Luke gives many more details than the other Gospel writers about Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, including walking with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, showing the disciples in Jerusalem his wounds and eating some broiled fish the disciples had with them. At the end of that encounter, Jesus explained to the disciples the Old Testament's teaching about his death and resurrection. He finished with the assurance they would receive the Holy Spirit. Luke ends with Jesus' ascension into heaven. Note that Luke identifies his sources for those who might want to confirm the accounts. Luke, for example, not only identifies Matthew's two women witnesses but adds another element, "the other women." And while Matthew identifies the two women as Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary," Luke says, "Mary Magdalene, and Joanna and Mary the mother of James."

Early church martyrs. There are many other witnesses relevant to Jesus' death and resurrection, including a group of early church martyrs. These people gladly laid down their lives, convinced that Jesus, the resurrected Messiah, assured them of the reality of God, of sin, of atonement and of a better life after this one is over.

My exemplar witness is Polycarp, whose martyrdom is set forth in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

Because Polycarp was wanted by authorities for his faith and was a leader of the church, the believing community hid him in the countryside. Those searching for Polycarp found two slave boys that, after being tortured, told the authorities where Polycarp was hidden. So, the mounted police and horsemen set out to find and arrest this old Christian man. Polycarp had enough warning to escape, but opted to stay, saying, "May God's will be done."

Upon hearing that the police had arrived, Polycarp started visiting with them. Those present were amazed not only at his advanced age but also at his composure in the face of what was to come. Polycarp ordered that his captors be given the supper they must have missed by chasing him at that hour. Polycarp also asked his captors for permission to pray for an hour before they left. The captors agreed, and to everyone's wonder, he stood for two hours, praying out loud for everyone "who had ever come into contact with him" (7.2–8.1).

His captors and those with them regretted coming after "such a godly old man" (7.2), but they still took him into the city. There the police captain and his father attempted to persuade him to state "Caesar is Lord," followed by an offering of incense. They explained that Polycarp could return to business as normal and live if he would do those two minor things. Polycarp responded, "I am not going to do what you are suggesting to me." Then Polycarp went straightway into the stadium where the crowd noise rose so high that "no one could even be heard" (8.1–3). The proconsul asked Polycarp whether he was indeed the legendary and wanted man, which Polycarp confirmed. The proconsul then tried to persuade Polycarp to recant, urging Polycarp to "swear by the *genius* of Caesar." Thinking of the Christians as atheists for not believing in Caesar's deity and gods of the Roman pantheon, the proconsul asked Polycarp to say "Away with the atheists!"

So, Polycarp “solemnly looked at the whole crowd of lawless heathen who were in the stadium, motioned toward them with his hand, and then said, ‘Away with the atheists!’” Not quite what the magistrate intended! The magistrate cried, “Swear the oath and I will release you; revile Christ.” To this Polycarp responded, “For eighty-six years I have been his servant, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?” (9.1-3).

The proconsul kept at Polycarp with wave after wave of persuasion and offers to save his life by recanting his faith. But Polycarp never faltered. Instead, Polycarp explained, “If you vainly suppose that I will swear by the *genius* of Caesar, as you request, and pretend not to know who I am, listen carefully: I am a Christian. Now if you want to learn the doctrine of Christianity, name a day and give me a hearing” (10.1-2).

As the proconsul moved into the final stage of confrontation, Polycarp was filled with courage and joy, and his face was “filled with grace.” Even the proconsul was astonished. Meanwhile, the crowd itself was emphatically shouting and chanting for Polycarp’s death. The cries eventually turned into demands that Polycarp be burned (12.1-3).

Instead of nailing Polycarp, they tied him up. Polycarp looked to heaven and offered a prayer of praise to God testifying to God’s love through Jesus. And as Polycarp declared “Amen!” the fire was lit (15.1).

And “such is the story of the martyrdom of Polycarp” (19.1). Many everywhere spoke of his death, “even by pagans” (19.1). Early in the 200s, the Christian writer Tertullian said that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. **More and more people were inspired and further convinced by a faith that people would gladly die for, than by the paganism that would kill those believers.**

Other witnesses. In addition to the early church writings there are historical writers like Josephus, who wrote Jewish history for the Romans. Around A.D. 93–94, Josephus wrote of the martyr James, who was identified as “the brother of Jesus, who was called Messiah [Christ].” He also said Christ was executed by Pilate. Josephus has more to say about Jesus as resurrected.

At this time there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. Many people among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have reported wonders. And the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day.

In addition to Josephus other Roman historians wrote of Jesus as the subject of worship among Christians. In his *Annals*, penned around A.D. 116, Tacitus wrote of the July 64 mass execution by Nero (see fig. 10.1). Tacitus confirmed the death of Christ by crucifixion (“the extreme penalty”) under Pilate as arising from Nero’s efforts to distract attention from his burning of Rome:

To get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.

Even before Tacitus, another Roman, commonly called Pliny the Younger, who was both lawyer and author, served for a time as a magistrate for the Roman emperor Trajan and wrote about Jesus and Christians. In his capacity as magistrate Pliny pursued Christians for their illegal status within the empire. Pliny explains the Christian practice of meeting on “a fixed day” (which scholars readily accord would have been Sunday, the resurrection day) and partaking of a meal. He adds that he made a point of following policy and executing those who would not recant.

In his *Lives of the Caesars*, Suetonius, the Roman emperor’s director of the imperial archives, used those archives to write of the significant events of the empire’s Caesars. Suetonius wrote that during the reign of Claudius (41–54), the Jews in Rome were constantly having disputes over Christ, which reached an intensity level so high that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome for some time. This event is also referenced in the New Testament (Acts 18:2).

Witnesses: Credibility. We do not have the ability to judge the credibility of these witnesses by looking them in the eye and focusing on their demeanor. Instead, we can examine their writings and the writings of others about them. In some ways those writings convey more relevant information on credibility than a two-hour examination might. The writings have been subject to near exhaustive analysis over the last nineteen centuries.

The mental condition of the witnesses. No scholar has produced a credible argument that these witnesses are mentally challenged or deranged. The writings of Paul, for example, are lucid and exhibit well-reasoned logic, marvelous command of language, some of history's most moving prose (1 Corinthians 13), profound theology (Philippians 2:5-11), knowledgeable confrontation of those with whom he disagreed (Gal 2:11-14), and more indications of mental stability and competence.

The witnesses' motives. Not one witness among the many listed could be seen as having an economic motive for subscribing to or supporting the resurrected Christ. In fact, the opposite is true. Christianity was not supported in Judea. Early believers in the resurrected Jesus faced persecution and death at the hands of Jews. The faithful Jews, including Paul before his conversion, believed that God had sent their forefathers into exile because they tolerated gods other than the God of Moses. The idea of a resurrected Jesus who was God and Savior would only bring trouble to Judea from the hand of the true God, or so they reasoned. Were they not truly convinced, the apostles and disciples of Christ (almost all of which abandoned him at the cross) would not sanely abandon their faith for a renegade idea about a resurrected Jesus. Furthermore, if they were charlatans who trumped up the idea of a resurrection, then you would not expect Peter, who denied the Lord three times in an effort to save his skin, to stick with the hoax once he faced imprisonment and death. Stoning of Stephen alone would have likely brought a faked resurrection to an end.

Closely considering the motives of Paul, we see something striking. Paul was a "Who's Who" among the Jews. Having studied under Gamaliel, a teacher of the Jewish law so famous that many of his sayings are extant today, Paul was in a position to lead the Jews. He cast his vote to stone Stephen (Acts 7:58; 26:9). Paul zealously adhered to Jewish laws.

Paul lost his affluence, position, standards and practices of life, and likely his family when he converted. He certainly was convinced that something tremendous happened in Jesus.

Paul knew what he had traded for. He wrote as much to the believers in Corinth, explaining that if Christ hasn't been raised from the dead, then Christianity is a cruel joke (1st Cor. 15:19).

History records that Paul, Peter, Thomas and most every other apostle eventually died a martyr's death out of their deep conviction that Jesus rose from the grave. Every one of the apostles exhibited a 180-degree turn in life and lived the rest of their days adhering to faith in the living Christ. The only motive was a firm belief in the truth of the resurrection.

Does history indicate these witnesses believed for profit or fame? No! There was no profit for Paul, Peter, James, Stephen or any others associated with Jesus. Nor was there fame (at least not in their lifetime). To the contrary, it made them outcasts and cost them their positions.

Paul, by his own accord, suffered "countless beatings, often near death." Five times he received forty lashes from the Jews. Three times he was beaten with rods. Once he was stoned. Three times shipwrecked. He chose a life in "danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure" (2 Corinthians 11:26). He preached "free of charge" (2nd Cor. 11:7) and worked as a tentmaker to support himself in ministry. Finally, history records, Paul willingly died a martyr's death at the hands of Nero rather than budge on the truth of the resurrected Jesus.

Stephen was martyred around A.D. 34 because he would not deny the truth of the resurrection (Acts 6–7). The apostle James (demarcated in the New Testament as "the brother of John") was martyred around A.D. 44 because he would not deny the truth of the resurrection (Acts 12). A later historical record, written 125 years after James's death by Clement of Alexandria, notes that James's accuser listened to his confession of faith and was so moved that he became a believer and was also martyred for his faith.

A different James in the New Testament was “the brother of Jesus” (Mk 6:3), who did not believe in Jesus during Jesus’ ministry (Jn 7:1-5). Yet after the resurrection we read of James being among the believers (Gal 1:19). James the brother of Jesus was thrown from the parapet of the temple and clubbed to death because he refused to deny the resurrected Jesus. Hegesippus, writing A.D. 170, records that James was pushed off the parapet because a number of watching Jews were moved to faith by his testimony.

The apostle Andrew was hung on a cross for four days before finally dying. He chose the misery and impending death rather than deny the truth of the resurrection.

Did the apostles risk life and limb for the fame of starting a movement? This motive likewise fails. It is readily apparent from reading the witnesses that they all believed that Jesus was soon going to return to take them to a glorified state. Believers in Christ were selling all their goods to support the common good in light of what they thought was around the corner (Acts 2:44).

Comparison of different witnesses’ accounts. In my courtroom experience, anytime two stories are identical, there is a strong likelihood of collusion. The truth is that eyewitnesses notice different things. One may see two cars racing through an intersection while another notices a green one. That does not mean one is right and the other wrong. It means that the stories need to be combined to see if they make sense.

Much has been made over whether the biblical eyewitness accounts are consistent. On core matters they certainly are. Only on minor matters are different facts presented, none of which undermine a coherent narrative. All of the accounts include (1) the crucifixion of Jesus, (2) his death on the cross, (3) his burial in the tomb of a noteworthy citizen who could be examined for the truth, (4) his resurrection on the third day and (5) witnesses to the empty tomb. Matthew, Luke and John also name witnesses who encountered the physically resurrected Jesus.

The character of the witnesses. Honesty is a virtue, but it is not always easy to tell when it exists. There is an expression that people need to “put their money where their mouth is” to prove their conviction. This reveals honesty. Each of the eyewitnesses put more than their money where their mouth was. They gave all they had for their convictions about the resurrected Jesus.

Another way to consider the character of the witnesses comes from the circumstantial evidence. Each of the eyewitnesses lived full and real lives. They had family and friends who knew their penchant for truth telling or the lack thereof. These eyewitnesses successfully proclaimed Jesus’ resurrection to such an extent that within two decades it had spread throughout the Roman Empire, becoming a legal religion by 313 and the official religion of the empire by 380.

Witnesses: Hearsay. The testimony of Matthew, John, Paul and Peter is not hearsay. They were eyewitnesses to what they recorded and to what they said. A court would consider Mark’s and Luke’s writings hearsay. They were not eyewitnesses but recorded the information they received from others. Before a court would allow consideration of their testimony, it would need to meet an exception to the hearsay doctrine.

Some of the testimony, however, would be accepted in a court of law. For example, testifying before King Agrippa, Paul began, “I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today” (Acts 26:2). His testimony included doing “many things in opposing the name of Jesus” (Acts 26:9). This testimony - as a recorded trial - is admissible as a recorded judicial proceeding.

Of course, all the statements of the non-eyewitnesses would be hearsay as statements “against interests.” At that point in history, everyone proclaiming Jesus as the resurrected Lord was doing so under threat of imprisonment or death. The stoning of Stephen bears that out.

So, regarding hearsay, it is not an issue for the testimony about Jesus’ resurrection according to Matthew and Luke, and where it is, it fits into exceptions that push the testimony into a realm of reliability.

Expert witnesses: Junk science. “Yes, based on the eyewitness accounts there is more than sufficient evidence to believe in a resurrected Jesus, but we know that scientifically it is impossible. So, there must be another explanation.”

I readily admit that absent God intervening in the laws of physics, it is not rational to believe in resurrection. Science says there is no resurrection by the rules of this universe. A resurrection could occur if and only if there is someone or something that can operate outside of the laws of this universe. That is true of God. **God is not some molecular entity bound by matter.** God is beyond the universe and is able to alter things in the universe. That is the only way science can allow for the resurrection. Science dictates the necessity of God’s involvement, unless all these witnesses were massively deceived and wrong.

Bias, sympathy and prejudice. Who gets to be a juror on the resurrection case? Of course, everyone does. Everyone must confront the issue of whether or not they see the hand of God in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. **Even though everyone gets to be a juror, I still need to address the issue of bias, sympathy and prejudice.** Because some might get disqualified from sitting on an actual jury if this were a real case in court.

Consider two different groups that would not likely be allowed on a jury. First, there might be a group that says, “I believe! I don’t care what the evidence is. I have a prejudice and bias that Jesus was resurrected. I was born into it; it is genetic. It must be the truth, and I could never examine it genuinely.” This person has a bias that would preclude jury service. That is not to say that the person is wrong. Many people can be right in their opinions but are not allowed to sit on a jury.

The second group says, “I cannot set aside my prejudice about the laws of nature. A resurrection is a functional impossibility. It doesn’t matter if fifty thousand people saw it, those fifty thousand must be deceived.” This person does not have an open mind, even to the idea that God can do what is impossible for people and molecules. These people still have to make a decision, but they are fooling themselves if they think they are making a rational one based on the evidence. They are making it based on their bias and prejudice. The evidence becomes irrelevant and not worth listening to or examining.

Burden of proof. We end with the burden of proof. As noted in the legal section, no one can be 100 percent convinced about any finding of fact in history, especially so far back in time. The question then becomes what standard of proof we would need before trusting in a conclusion that Jesus indeed suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, was buried, descended to the dead and on the third day rose again. Is the burden of proof what is more likely than not, like a civil case? Is it beyond a reasonable doubt, like a death penalty case?

Under either burden the evidence for a resurrected Jesus is immensely compelling. We have looked at that evidence from eyewitnesses and secondary witnesses, but I have left out some of the greatest arguments. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the missing piece of the puzzle in this book. Christ's death allows a just God to set aside the immorality and impurity of humanity and accord humanity a resurrection into perfection, just as Christ was resurrected.

This is the beauty of the finished work of Christ. His last words, "It is finished," reflect the atoning work that the nature of God requires. Here we see not only the records and testimony of the witnesses to the resurrected Christ but the logic and meaning behind it. It was not some harebrained idea concocted by a few fishermen, a tax collector and a budding rabbi that somehow caught fire amid a dreadful and documented persecution, finally arriving three hundred years later as a legal religion. It was the facts—no more and no less. It was prophesied for centuries in Scripture, and it was fulfilled in history.²

² Lanier, W. M. (2014). [*Christianity on Trial: A Lawyer Examines the Christian Faith*](#). Westmont, IL: IVP.

THE MEDICAL EVIDENCE: WAS JESUS' DEATH A SHAM AND HIS RESURRECTION A HOAX?

RESURRECTION OR RESUSCITATION?

The idea that Jesus never really died on the cross can be found in the Koran, which was written in the seventh century—the Muslims contend that Jesus actually fled to India. To this day there is a shrine that supposedly marks his real burial place in Kashmir.

As the nineteenth century dawned, Karl Bahrdt, Karl Venturini, and others tried to explain away the resurrection by suggesting that Jesus only fainted from exhaustion on the cross, or he had been given a drug that made him appear to die, and that he had later been revived by the cool, damp air of the tomb.

Conspiracy theorists bolstered this hypothesis by pointing out that Jesus had been given some liquid on a sponge while on the cross (Mark 15:36) and that Pilate seemed surprised at how quickly Jesus had succumbed (15:44). Consequently, Jesus' reappearance was not a miraculous resurrection but merely a fortuitous resuscitation, and his tomb was empty because he continued to live.

In 1965 Hugh Schonfield's best-seller *The Passover Plot* alleged that it was only the unanticipated stabbing of Jesus by the Roman soldier that foiled his complicated scheme to escape the cross alive.

In 1982, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* added the twist that Pontius Pilate had been bribed to allow Jesus to be taken down from the cross before he was dead. Even so, the authors confessed, "We could not—and still cannot—prove the accuracy of our conclusion."

Today, the swoon theory continues to flourish. I hear it all the time. But what does the evidence really establish? What actually happened at the Crucifixion? What was Jesus' cause of death? Is there any possible way he could have survived this ordeal? Those are the kinds of questions that I hoped medical evidence could help resolve.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDER METHERELL, M.D., PH.D.

As you would expect from someone with a medical degree (University of Miami in Florida) and a doctorate in engineering (University of Bristol in England), Metherell speaks with scientific precision. He is board-certified in diagnosis by the American Board of Radiology and has been a consultant to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health of Bethesda, Maryland. A former research scientist who has taught at the University of California, Metherell is editor of five scientific books and has written for publications ranging from *Aerospace Medicine* to *Scientific American*. His ingenious analysis of muscular contraction has been published in *The Physiologist* and *Biophysics Journal*.

THE TORTURE BEFORE THE CROSS

“Could you paint a picture of what happened to Jesus?”

He cleared his throat. “It began after the Last Supper,” he said. “Jesus went with his disciples to the Mount of Olives—specifically, to the Garden of Gethsemane. And there, if you remember, he prayed all night. Now, during that process he was anticipating the coming events of the next day.”

“Since he knew the amount of suffering he was going to have to endure, he was quite naturally experiencing a great deal of stress.”

I raised my hand to stop him. “Whoa—here’s where skeptics have a field day,” I told him. “The gospels tell us he began to sweat blood at this point. Now, c’mon, isn’t that just a product of some overactive imaginations? Doesn’t that call into question the accuracy of the gospel writers?” Unfazed, Metherell shook his head. “Not at all,” he replied. “This is a known medical condition called *hematidrosis*. It’s not very common, but it is associated with a high degree of psychological stress. What happens is that severe anxiety causes the release of chemicals that break down the capillaries in the sweat glands. As a result, there’s a small amount of bleeding into these glands, and the sweat comes out tinged with blood. We’re not talking about a lot of blood; it’s just a very, very small amount.”

“Did this have any other effect on the body?”

“What this did was set up the skin to be extremely fragile so that when Jesus was flogged by the Roman soldier the next day, his skin would be very, very sensitive.”

“What was the flogging like?”

Metherell’s eyes never left me. “Roman floggings were known to be terribly brutal. They usually consisted of thirty-nine lashes but frequently were a lot more than that. The soldier would use a whip of braided leather thongs with metal balls woven into them. When the whip would strike the flesh, these balls would cause deep bruises or contusions, which would break open with further blows. And the whip had pieces of sharp bone as well, which would cut the flesh severely shoulders – buttocks – legs. The back would be so shredded that part of the spine was sometimes exposed by the very deep cuts.”

“One physician who has studied Roman beatings said, ‘As the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh.’ A third-century historian by the name of Eusebius described a flogging by saying, ‘The sufferer’s veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews, and bowels of the victim were open to exposure.’ ‘We know that many people would die from this kind of beating even before they could be crucified. At the least, the victim would experience tremendous pain and go into hypovolemic shock.’”

“What does *hypovolemic shock* mean?”

“*Hypo* means ‘low,’ *vol* refers to volume, and *emic* means ‘blood,’ so *hypovolemic shock* means the person is suffering the effects of losing a large amount of blood,” the doctor explained. “This does four things. First, the heart races to try to pump blood that isn’t there; second, the blood pressure drops, causing fainting or collapse; third, the kidneys stop producing urine to maintain what volume is left; and fourth, the person becomes very thirsty as the body craves fluids to replace the lost blood volume.”

“Do you see evidence of this in the gospel accounts?”

“Yes, most definitely,” he replied. “Jesus was in hypovolemic shock as he staggered up the road to the execution site at Calvary, carrying the horizontal beam of the cross. Finally, Jesus collapsed, and the Roman soldier ordered Simon to carry the cross for him. Later we read that Jesus said, ‘I thirst,’ at which point a sip of vinegar was offered to him.

“Because of the terrible effects of this beating, there’s no question that Jesus was already in serious to critical condition even before the nails were driven through his hands and feet.”

THE AGONY OF THE CROSS

But how certain was death by this crude, slow, and rather inexact form of execution called crucifixion? In fact, most people are not sure how the cross kills its victims. And without a trained examiner to officially attest that Jesus had died, might he have escaped the experience brutalized and bleeding but nevertheless alive?

“What happened when he arrived at the crucifixion site?”

“He would have been laid down, and his hands would have been nailed in the outstretched position to the horizontal beam. This crossbar was called the *patibulum*, and at this stage it was separate from the vertical beam, which was permanently set in the ground.”

“Nailed with what?” I asked. “Nailed where?”

“The Romans used spikes that were five to seven inches long and tapered to a sharp point. They were driven through the *wrists*,” Metherell said, pointing about an inch or so below his left palm.

“I thought the nails pierced his palms. That’s what all the paintings show. In fact, it’s a standard symbol representing the crucifixion.”

“Through the wrists,” Metherell repeated. “This was a solid position that would lock the hand; if the nails had been driven through the palms, his weight would have caused the skin to tear and he would have fallen off the cross. So, the nails went through the wrists, *although this was considered part of the hand in the language of the day.*”

“And it’s important to understand that the nail would go through the place where the median nerve runs. This is the largest nerve going out to the hand, and it would be crushed by the nail that was being pounded in.”

“What sort of pain would that have produced?”

“Let me put it this way,” he replied. “Do you know the kind of pain you feel when you bang your elbow and hit your funny bone? That’s actually another nerve, called the *ulna nerve*. It’s extremely painful when you accidentally hit it. Well, picture taking a pair of pliers and squeezing and crushing that nerve,” he said, emphasizing the word *squeezing* as he twisted an imaginary pair of pliers. That effect would be similar to what Jesus experienced.”

“The pain was absolutely unbearable,” he continued. “In fact, it was literally beyond words to describe; they had to invent a new word: *excruciating*. Literally, *excruciating* means ‘out of the cross.’ Think of that: they needed to create a new word because there was nothing in the language that could describe the intense anguish caused during the crucifixion.

“At this point Jesus was hoisted as the crossbar was attached to the vertical stake, and then nails were driven through Jesus’ feet. Again, the nerves in his feet would have been crushed, and there would have been a similar type of pain.”

“What stresses would this have put on his body?”

Metherell answered, “First of all, his arms would have immediately been stretched, probably about six inches in length, and both shoulders would have become dislocated—you can determine this with simple mathematical equations.

“This fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy in Psalm 22, which foretold the crucifixion hundreds of years before it took place and says, ‘My bones are out of joint.’”

THE CAUSE OF DEATH

Metherell had made his point—graphically—about the pain endured as the crucifixion process began. But I needed to get to what finally claims the life of a crucifixion victim, because that’s the pivotal issue in determining whether death can be faked or eluded.

I put the cause-of-death question directly to Metherell.

“Once a person is hanging in the vertical position,” he replied, “crucifixion is essentially an agonizingly slow death by asphyxiation. The reason is that the stresses on the muscles and diaphragm put the chest into the inhaled position; basically, in order to exhale, the individual must push up on his feet so the tension on the muscles would be eased for a moment. In doing so, the nail would tear through the foot, eventually locking up against the tarsal bones.”

“After managing to exhale, the person would then be able to relax down and take another breath in. Again, he’d have to push himself up to exhale, scraping his bloodied back against the coarse wood of the cross. This would go on and on until complete exhaustion would take over, and the person wouldn’t be able to push up and breathe. As the person slows down his breathing, he goes into what is called *respiratory acidosis*—the carbon dioxide in the blood is dissolved as carbonic acid, causing the acidity of the blood to increase. This eventually leads to an irregular heartbeat. In fact, with his heart beating erratically, Jesus would’ve known that he was near death.”

“Even before he died—and this is important too—the hypovolemic shock would have caused a sustained rapid heart rate that would have contributed to heart failure, resulting in the collection of fluid in the membrane around the heart, called a *pericardial effusion*, as well as around the lungs, which is called a *pleural effusion*.”

“Why is that significant?”

“Because of what happened when the Roman soldier came around and, being fairly certain that Jesus was dead, confirmed it by thrusting a spear into his right side. It was probably his right side; that’s not certain, but from the description it was probably the right side, between the ribs. The spear apparently went through the right lung and into the heart, so when the spear was pulled out, *some fluid—the pericardial effusion and the pleural effusion—came out.*

This would have the appearance of a clear fluid, like water, followed by a large volume of blood, as John described in his gospel.”

John probably had no idea why he saw both blood and a clear fluid come out—certainly that’s not what an untrained person like him would have anticipated. Yet John’s description is consistent with what modern medicine would expect to have happened. At first this would seem to give credibility to John being an eyewitness; however, there seemed to be one big flaw in all this.

I pulled out my Bible and flipped to John 19:34. “Wait a minute, Doc,” I protested. “When you carefully read what John said, he saw ‘blood and water’ come out; he intentionally put the words in that order. But according to you, the clear fluid would have come out first. So, there’s a significant discrepancy here.”

Metherell smiled slightly. “I’m not a Greek scholar,” he replied, “but according to people who are, the order of words in ancient Greek was determined not necessarily by sequence but by prominence. This means that since there was a lot more blood than water, it would have made sense for John to mention the blood first.”

“At this juncture, what would Jesus’ condition have been?”

Metherell’s gaze locked with mine. He replied with authority, “There was absolutely no doubt that Jesus was dead.”

ANSWERING THE SKEPTICS

Dr. Metherell’s assertion seemed well supported by the evidence. But there were still some details I wanted to address—as well as at least one soft spot in his account that could very well undermine the credibility of the biblical account.

“The gospels say the soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals being crucified with Jesus, Why would they have done that?”

“If they wanted to speed up death—and with the Sabbath and Passover coming, the Jewish leaders certainly wanted to get this over before sundown—the Romans would use the steel shaft of a short Roman spear to shatter the victim’s lower leg bones. This would prevent him from pushing up with his legs so he could breathe, and death by asphyxiation would result in a matter of minutes.”

“Of course, we’re told in the New Testament that Jesus’ legs were not broken, because the soldiers had already determined that he was dead, and they just used the spear to confirm it. This fulfilled another Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah, which is that his bones would remain unbroken.”

Again, I jumped in. “Some people have tried to cast doubt on the gospel accounts by attacking the crucifixion story,” I said. “For instance, an article in the *Harvard Theological Review* concluded many years ago that there was ‘astonishing little evidence that the feet of a crucified person were ever pierced by nails.’ Instead, the article said, the victim’s hands and feet were tied to the cross by ropes. Won’t you concede that this raises credibility problems with the New Testament account?”

Dr. Metherell moved forward until he was sitting on the edge of his chair. “No,” he said, “because archaeology has now established that the use of nails was historical— although I’ll certainly concede that ropes were indeed sometimes used.”

“What’s the evidence?”

“In 1968 archaeologists in Jerusalem found the remains of about three dozen Jews who had died during the uprising against Rome around AD 70. One victim, whose name was apparently Yohanan, had been crucified. And sure enough, they found a seven-inch nail still driven into his feet, with small pieces of olive wood from the cross still attached. This was excellent archaeological confirmation of a key detail in the gospels’ description of the Crucifixion.”

THE FINAL ARGUMENT

Appealing to history and medicine, to archaeology and even Roman military rules, Metherell had closed every loophole: Jesus could not have come down from the cross alive.

I pushed him further. “Is there any possible way—*any possible way*—that Jesus could have survived this?”



CRUCIFIXION NAIL
campsg©|PHOTOGRAPHY



Metherell shook his head and pointed his finger at me for emphasis. “Absolutely not,” he said. “Remember that he was already in hypovolemic shock from the massive blood loss even before the crucifixion started. He couldn’t possibly have faked his death, because you can’t fake the inability to breathe for long. Besides, the spear thrust into his heart would have settled the issue once and for all. And the Romans weren’t about to risk their own death [in punishment] from allowing him to walk away alive.”

“So, when someone suggests to you Jesus merely swooned on the cross—”

“I tell them it’s impossible. It’s a fanciful theory without any possible basis in fact.”

“Let’s speculate that the impossible happened and that Jesus somehow managed to survive the crucifixion. Let’s say he was able to escape from his linen wrappings, roll the huge rock away from the mouth of his tomb, and get past the Roman soldiers who were standing guard. Medically speaking, what condition would he have been in after he tracked down his disciples?”

“If he had, how could he walk around after nails had been driven through his feet? How could he have appeared on the road to Emmaus just a short time later, strolling for long distances? How could he have used his arms after they were stretched and pulled from their joints? Remember, he also had massive wounds on his back and a spear wound to his chest. . .

A person in that kind of pathetic condition would never have inspired his disciples to go out and proclaim that he’s the Lord of life who had triumphed over the grave. Do you see what I’m saying?

After suffering that horrible abuse, with all the catastrophic blood loss and trauma, he would have looked so pitiful that the disciples would never have hailed him as a victorious conqueror of death; they would have felt sorry for him and tried to nurse him back to health. His followers would not have been prompted to start a worldwide movement based on the hope that someday they too would have a resurrection body like his. There's just no way."

All in all, my interview with Metherell had been thoroughly helpful. He had persuasively established that Jesus could not have survived the ordeal of the cross, a form of cruelty so vile that the Romans exempted their own citizens from it, except for cases of high treason.

Metherell's conclusions were consistent with the findings of other physicians who have carefully studied the issue. Among them is Dr. William D. Edwards, whose 1986 article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded, "Clearly, the weight of the historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted. . . . Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge."

Those who seek to explain away the resurrection of Jesus by claiming that he somehow escaped the clutches of death at Golgotha need to offer a more plausible theory that fits the facts.³

³ Strobel, L. (2009). [*The Case for Easter: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for the Resurrection*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE MISSING BODY: WAS JESUS' BODY REALLY ABSENT FROM HIS TOMB?

Occasionally bodies turn up missing in pulp fiction and real life, but rarely do you encounter an empty tomb. The issue with Jesus isn't that he was nowhere to be seen. It's that he *was* seen, alive; he *was* seen, dead; and he *was* seen, alive once more. If we believe the gospel accounts, this isn't a matter of a missing body. No, it's a matter of Jesus still being alive, even to this day, even after publicly succumbing to the horrors of crucifixion.

The empty tomb, as an enduring symbol of the resurrection, is the ultimate representation of Jesus' claim to being God. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:17 that the resurrection is at the very core of the Christian faith: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

"In a profound sense, Christianity without the resurrection is not simply Christianity without its final chapter. It is not Christianity at all."

The resurrection is the supreme vindication of Jesus' divine identity and his inspired teaching. It's the proof of his triumph over sin and death. It's the foreshadowing of the resurrection of his followers. It's the basis of Christian hope. It's the miracle of all miracles.

If it's true. Skeptics claim that what happened to Jesus' body is still a mystery — there's not enough evidence, they say, to reach a firm conclusion. But others assert that the case is effectively closed because there is conclusive proof that the tomb was vacant.

INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM L. CRAIG, PH.D.

WAS JESUS REALLY BURIED IN THE TOMB?

Before looking at whether the tomb of Jesus was empty, I needed to establish whether his body had been there in the first place. History tells us that as a rule, crucified criminals were left on the cross to be devoured by birds or were thrown into a common grave. This has prompted John Dominic Crossan of the Jesus Seminar to conclude Jesus' body probably was dug up and consumed by dogs.

“Okay, then let's look at the specific evidence,” I said. With that I pointed out an immediate problem: the gospels say Jesus' corpse was turned over to Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the very council—the Sanhedrin—that voted to condemn Jesus. “That's rather implausible, isn't it?”

“The Jews had a physical concept of resurrection. For them, the primary object of the resurrection was the bones of the deceased—not even the flesh, which was thought to be perishable. After the flesh rotted away, the Jews would gather the bones of their deceased and put them in boxes to be preserved until the end of the world, when God would raise the righteous of Israel together.

WHAT ABOUT THE CONTRADICTIONS?

Through the years, critics of Christianity have attacked the empty tomb story by pointing out apparent discrepancies among the gospel accounts.

In Matthew, when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary arrived toward dawn at the tomb there is a rock in front of it, there is a violent earthquake, and an angel descends and rolls back the stone. In Mark, the women arrive at the tomb at sunrise and the stone had been rolled back. In Luke, when the women arrive at early dawn they find the stone had already been rolled back.

In Matthew, an angel is sitting on the rock outside the tomb and in Mark a youth is inside the tomb. In Luke, two men are inside.

In Matthew, the women present at the tomb are Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. In Mark, the women present at the tomb are the two Marys and Salome. In Luke, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and the other women are present at the tomb.

In Matthew, the two Marys rush from the tomb in great fear and joy, run to tell the disciples, and meet Jesus on the way. In Mark, they run out of the tomb in fear and say nothing to anyone. In Luke, the women report the story to the disciples who do not believe them and there is no suggestion that they meet Jesus.

CAN DISCREPANCIES BE HARMONIZED?

Sometimes while covering criminal trials, I've seen two witnesses give the exact same testimony, down to the nitty-gritty details, only to find themselves ripped apart by the defense attorney for having colluded before the trial. So, I remarked to Craig, "I suppose if all four gospels were identical in all their minutiae, that would have raised the suspicion of plagiarism."

"Yes, that's a very good point," he said. "The differences between the empty tomb narratives suggest that we have multiple, independent attestations of the empty tomb story. Sometimes people say, 'Matthew and Luke just plagiarized from Mark,' but when you look at the narratives closely, you see divergences that suggest that even if Matthew and Luke did know Mark's account, nevertheless they also had separate, independent sources for the empty tomb story. So, with these multiple and independent accounts, no historian would disregard this evidence just because of secondary discrepancies."

"Aren't there ways to harmonize some of the differences among these accounts?"

"Yes, that's right, there are," Craig replied. "For example, the time of the visit to the tomb. One writer might describe it as still being dark, the other might be saying it was getting light, but that's sort of like the optimist and the pessimist arguing over whether the glass was half empty or half full. It was around dawn, and they were describing the same thing with different words."

“As for the number and names of the women, none of the gospels pretend to give a complete list. They all include Mary Magdalene and other women, so there was probably a gaggle of these early disciples that included those who were named and probably a couple of others. I think it would be pedantic to say that’s a contradiction.”

“What about the different accounts of what happened afterward?” I asked. “Mark said the women didn’t tell anybody, and the other gospels say they did.”

“It could well be that this was a temporary silence, and then the women went back and told the others what had happened. In fact,” he concluded with a grin, “it *had* to be a temporary silence; otherwise Mark could not be telling the story about it!”

I asked about another commonly cited discrepancy. “Jesus said in Matthew 12:40, ‘For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’ However, the gospels report that Jesus was really in the tomb one full day, two full nights, and part of two days. Isn’t this an example of Jesus being wrong in not fulfilling his own prophecy?”

“Some suggest Jesus was crucified on Wednesday rather than on Friday, in order to get the full time in there!” Craig said. “But most scholars recognize that according to early Jewish time-reckoning, any part of a day counted as a full day. . .

Jesus was in the tomb Friday afternoon, all day Saturday, and on Sunday morning—under the way the Jews conceptualized time back then, this would have counted as three days. Again, that’s just another example of how many of these discrepancies can be explained or minimized with some background knowledge or by just thinking them through with an open mind.”

WHY DID THE WOMEN VISIT THE TOMB?

Craig’s explanation, however, left yet another question lingering: Why were the women going to anoint the body of Jesus if they already knew that his tomb was securely sealed? “Do their actions really make sense?”

“For people who are grieving, who have lost someone they desperately loved and followed, to want to go to the tomb in a forlorn hope of anointing the body—I just don’t think some later critic can treat them like robots and say, ‘They shouldn’t have gone.’”

He shrugged his shoulders. “Maybe they thought there would be men around who could move the stone. If there were guards, maybe they thought they would.”

“Certainly, the notion of visiting a tomb to pour oils over a body is a historical Jewish practice; *the only question is the feasibility of who would move the stone for them*. And I don’t think we’re in the right position to pronounce judgment on whether or not they should have simply stayed at home.”

WHAT'S THE AFFIRMATIVE EVIDENCE?

The top reasons the empty tomb is historical fact.

“First,” he said, “the empty tomb is definitely implicit in the early tradition that is passed along by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, which is a very old and reliable source of historical information about Jesus.”

“Second, the site of Jesus’ tomb was known to Christian and Jew alike. So, if it weren’t empty, it would be impossible for a movement founded on belief in the resurrection to have come into existence in the same city where this man had been publicly executed and buried.”

“Third, we can tell from the language, grammar, and style that Mark got his empty tomb story—actually, his whole passion narrative—from an earlier source. In fact, there’s evidence it was written before AD 37, which is much too early for legend to have seriously corrupted it.

“A. N. Sherwin-White, the respected Greco-Roman classical historian from Oxford University, said it would have been without precedent anywhere in history for legend to have grown up that fast and significantly distorted the gospels.”

“Fourth, there’s the simplicity of the empty tomb story in Mark. Fictional apocryphal accounts from the second century contain all kinds of flowery narratives. Those are the way legends read, but these don’t come until after eyewitnesses have died off. By contrast, Mark’s account of the story of the empty tomb is stark in its simplicity and unadorned by theological reflection.”

“Fifth, the unanimous testimony that the empty tomb was discovered by women argues for the authenticity of the story, because this would have been embarrassing for the disciples to admit and most certainly would have been covered up if this were a legend.”

“Sixth, the earliest Jewish polemic presupposes the historicity of the empty tomb. In other words, there was nobody who was claiming that the tomb still contained Jesus’ body. The question always was, ‘What happened to the body?’”

“The Jews proposed the ridiculous story that the guards had fallen asleep. Obviously, they were grasping at straws. But the point is this: they started with the assumption that the tomb was vacant! Why? Because they knew it was!”

WHAT ABOUT ALTERNATIVE THEORIES?

“Kirsopp Lake suggested in 1907 that the women merely went to the wrong tomb,” I said. “He says they got lost and a caretaker at an unoccupied tomb told them, ‘You’re looking for Jesus of Nazareth. He is not here,’ and they ran away, afraid. Isn’t that plausible?”

Craig sighed. “The site of Jesus’ tomb was known to the Jewish authorities. Even if the women had made this mistake, the authorities would have been only too happy to point out the tomb and correct the disciples’ error when they began to proclaim that Jesus had risen from the dead. Nobody who holds to Lake’s theory today.”

Frankly, other options didn't sound very likely, either. Obviously, the disciples had no motive to steal the body and then die for a lie, and certainly the Jewish authorities wouldn't have removed the body. I said, "We're left with the theory that the empty tomb was a later legend and that by the time it developed, people were unable to disprove it, because the tomb location was forgotten."

CONCLUSION: THE TOMB WAS VACANT

In the face of the facts, they have been impotent to put Jesus' body back into the tomb. They flounder, they struggle, they snatch at straws, they contradict themselves, they pursue desperate and extraordinary theories to try to account for the evidence. Yet each time, in the end, the tomb remains vacant.

I was reminded of the assessment by one of the towering legal intellects of all time, the Cambridge-educated Sir Norman Anderson, who lectured at Princeton University, was offered a professorship for life at Harvard University, and served as dean of the Faculty of Laws at the University of London. His conclusion, after a lifetime of analyzing this issue from a legal perspective, was summed up in one sentence: "The empty tomb, then, forms a veritable rock on which all rationalistic theories of the resurrection dash themselves in vain."⁴

⁴ Strobel, L. (2009). [*The Case for Easter: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for the Resurrection*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

THE EVIDENCE OF APPEARANCES: WAS JESUS SEEN ALIVE AFTER HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS?

In 1963 the body of fourteen-year-old Addie Mae Collins, one of four African-American girls tragically murdered in an infamous church bombing by white racists, was buried in Birmingham, Alabama. For years family members kept returning to the grave to pray and leave flowers. In 1998 they made the decision to disinter the deceased for reburial at another cemetery. When workers were sent to dig up the body, however, they returned with a shocking discovery: The grave was empty. Understandably, family members were terribly distraught.

Hampered by poorly kept records, cemetery officials scrambled to figure out what had happened. Several possibilities were raised, the primary one being that her tombstone had been erected in the wrong place. Yet in the midst of determining what happened, one explanation was never proposed: Nobody suggested that young Addie Mae had been resurrected to walk the earth again. Why? Because by itself an empty grave does not a resurrection make.

AN INTERVIEW WITH GARY HABERMAS, PH.D.

THE MYSTERY OF THE FIVE HUNDRED

In 1 Corinthians 15 is the only place in ancient literature in which it is claimed that the resurrected Jesus appeared to five hundred people at once. The gospels don't corroborate it. No secular historian mentions it. To me, that raises a yellow flag.

“If this really happened, why doesn't anyone else talk about it?” I asked Habermas. “You'd think the apostles would cite this as evidence wherever they went. As the atheist Michael Martin says, ‘One must conclude that it is extremely unlikely that this incident really occurred’ and that this therefore ‘indirectly casts doubt on Paul as a reliable source.’”

Habermas was annoyed that someone would make that claim. “I mean, give me a break! First, even though it's only reported in one source, it just so happens to be the earliest best-authenticated passage of all! That counts for *something*.

Second, Paul apparently had some proximity to these people. He says, ‘most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.’ Paul either knew some of these people or was told by someone who knew them that they were still walking around and willing to be interviewed.”

“Now, stop and think about it: you would never include this phrase unless you were absolutely confident that these folks would confirm that they really did see Jesus alive. Paul was virtually inviting people to check it out for themselves!”

“This is an example of how some critics want it both ways. Generally, they denigrate the gospel resurrection accounts in favor of Paul, since he is taken to be the chief authority. But on this issue, they’re questioning Paul for the sake of texts that they don’t trust as much in the first place! What does this say about their methodology?”

I was still having trouble envisioning this appearance by Jesus to such a large crowd. “Where would this encounter with five hundred people have taken place?” I asked.

“Well, the Galilean countryside,” Habermas speculated. “If Jesus could feed five thousand, he could preach to five hundred. And Matthew does say Jesus appeared on a hillside; maybe more than just the eleven disciples were there.”

Picturing that scene in my mind, I still couldn’t help but wonder why someone else didn’t report on this event. “Wouldn’t it be likely that the historian Josephus would have mentioned something of that magnitude?”

“No, I don’t think that’s necessarily true. Josephus was writing sixty years later. How long do local stories circulate before they start to die out?” Habermas asked. “So, either Josephus didn’t know about it, which is possible, or he chose not to mention it, which would make more sense because we know Josephus was not a follower of Jesus. You cannot expect Josephus to start building the case for him.”

MARK'S MISSING CONCLUSION

When I first began investigating Jesus' resurrection, I encountered a troubling comment in the margin of my Bible: "The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9–20." In other words, most scholars believe that the gospel of Mark ends at 16:8, with the women discovering the tomb empty but without Jesus having appeared alive to anyone at all. That seemed perplexing.

"Doesn't it bother you that the earliest gospel does not even report any post-resurrection appearances?" On the contrary, "I don't have a problem with that whatsoever," he said.

"Even if Mark does end there, which not everyone believes, you still have him reporting that the tomb is empty, and a young man proclaiming, 'He is risen!' and telling the women that there will be appearances. So, you have, first, a proclamation that the resurrection has occurred, and second, a prediction that appearances will follow."

"You can close your favorite novel and say, 'I can't believe the author's not telling me the next episode,' but you can't close the book and say, 'The writer doesn't believe in the next episode.' Mark definitely does. He obviously believed the resurrection had taken place. He ends with the women being told that Jesus will appear in Galilee, and then others later confirm that he did."

ARE THERE ANY ALTERNATIVES?

Without question, the amount of testimony and corroboration of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances is staggering. To put it into perspective, if you were to call each one of the witnesses to a court of law to be cross-examined for just fifteen minutes each, and you went around the clock without a break, it would take you from breakfast on Monday until dinner on Friday to hear them all. After listening to 129 straight hours of eyewitness testimony, who could possibly walk away unconvinced?

Having been a legal affairs journalist who has covered scores of trials, both criminal and civil, I had to agree with the assessment of Sir Edward Clarke, a British High Court judge who conducted a thorough legal analysis of the resurrection: "To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the High Court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling. As a lawyer I accept the gospel evidence unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts that they were able to substantiate."

But could there be any plausible alternatives that could explain away these encounters with the risen Jesus? Could these accounts be legendary in nature? Or might the witnesses have experienced hallucinations? I decided to raise those issues with Habermas to get his response.

POSSIBILITY 1: THE APPEARANCES ARE LEGENDARY

If it's true that the gospel of Mark originally ended before any appearances were reported, it could be argued that there's evolutionary development in the gospels: Mark records no appearances, Matthew has some, Luke has more, and John has the most.

“Doesn't that demonstrate that the appearances are merely legends that grew up over time?” I asked.

“For a lot of reasons, no, it doesn't,” Habermas assured me. “First, not everybody believes Mark is the earliest gospel. There are scholars, admittedly in the minority, who believe Matthew was written first.

Second, even if I accept your thesis as true, it only proves that legends grew up over time—it can't explain away the original belief that Jesus was risen from the dead. *Something* happened that prompted the apostles to make the resurrection the central proclamation of the earliest church. Legend can't explain those initial eyewitness accounts. In other words, legend can tell you how a story got bigger; it can't tell you how it originated when the participants are both eyewitnesses and reported the events early.

POSSIBILITY 2: THE APPEARANCES WERE HALLUCINATIONS

Maybe the witnesses were sincere in believing they saw Jesus. Perhaps they accurately recorded what took place. But could they have been seeing a hallucination that convinced them they were encountering Jesus when they really weren't?

Habermas handed me a piece of paper. "I asked Gary Collins about the possibility that these were hallucinations, and this is his professional opinion." I looked at the document.

Hallucinations are individual occurrences. By their very nature only one person can see a given hallucination at a time. They certainly aren't something which can be seen by a group of people. Neither is it possible that one person could somehow induce a hallucination in somebody else. Since a hallucination exists only in this subjective, personal sense, it is obvious that others cannot witness it.

Habermas said, "That's a big problem for the hallucination theory, since there are repeated accounts of Jesus appearing to multiple people who reported the same thing.

"And there are several other arguments why hallucinations can't explain away his appearances," he continued. "The disciples were fearful, doubtful, and in despair after the crucifixion, whereas people who hallucinate need a fertile mind of expectancy or anticipation."

“Also, hallucinations are comparably rare. They’re usually caused by drugs or bodily deprivation. Chances are, you don’t know anybody who’s ever had a hallucination not caused by one of those two things. Yet we’re supposed to believe that over a course of many weeks, people from all sorts of backgrounds, all kinds of temperaments, in various places, all experienced hallucinations? That strains the hypothesis quite a bit, doesn’t it?”

“Besides, if we establish the gospel accounts as being reliable, how do you account for the disciples eating with Jesus and touching him? How does he walk with two of them on the road to Emmaus? And what about the empty tomb?”

If not a hallucination, maybe it was something more subtle!

“Could this have been an example of groupthink, in which people talk each other into seeing something that doesn’t exist?” I asked. “As Michael Martin observed, ‘A person full of religious zeal may see what he or she wants to see, not what is really there.’”

Habermas laughed. “You know, one of the atheists I debated, Antony Flew, told me he doesn’t like it when other atheists use that last argument, because it cuts both ways. As Flew said, ‘Christians believe because they want to, but atheists don’t believe because they don’t want to!’

Dangers Of Group Think

WHY DOESN'T GOD ANSWER PRAYERS?
IS GOD RELEVANT TODAY?
IS HEAVEN REAL?
HELL REAL?
CAN THE BIBLE BE TRUSTED?
DOES SCIENCE POINT TO A CREATOR?
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING?
THE NATURAL REAL?
IS JESUS THE SON OF GOD?
DO RIGGS LEAD TO HEAVEN?

➤ “Several factors in the church may make it susceptible. To the degree we are sensitive to the destructive effects of conforming to the larger society, some church people may want to isolate themselves from outside contact. Attacks on the church from outside, if there have been any, may contribute to cohesiveness within— a sense of ‘us’ against ‘them’— and make church unity an end in itself. We reason that only a united church can defend itself against those attacks, survive and grow. We believe that only a church free of conflict can provide a strong and vital witness to the world. We view quiet dissent and disagreement as disruptive, and open conflict as destructive, as though it might shake stability and endanger the very existence of the church. Ironically, in our quest for unity within the church, we may lose the very strength and vitality we seek— the vigor that healthy and loving conflict can bring!” -- The Human Connection - pg. 98

FAITH UNDER FIRE

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Dangers Of Group Think

WHY DOESN'T GOD ANSWER PRAYERS?
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➤ “Another factor which may contribute to groupthink in the church is the false idea that faith is antagonistic to exercising critical judgment on any issue. This distorted perspective implies that the rational analysis of a problem, a careful search for information and independent analytical thinking may well be proper for solving problems in government, business and education, but they are not appropriate for resolving issues within the church; in fact, such analysis is diametrically opposed to trusting God.”

➤ “We don’t encourage loyalty to God by a faith that refuses to exercise critical judgment. Such refusal readily leads to groupthink. Our own initial ideas or impulses become identified with God’s will and we create an illusion of invulnerability and a belief in our own inherent morality. Alternatives are either not examined or quickly dismissed. Suggestions to review or reconsider, to delay temporarily or exercise caution are rationalized as reflecting a lack of faith.” - The Human Connection

FAITH UNDER FIRE

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“Actually, there are several reasons why the disciples couldn’t have talked each other into this. As the center of their faith, there was too much at stake; they went to their deaths defending it. Wouldn’t some of them rethink the groupthink at a later date and recant or just quietly fall away? And what about James, who didn’t believe in Jesus, and Paul, who was a persecutor of Christians—how did they get talked into seeing something? Further, what about the empty tomb?”

“And on top of that, this view doesn’t account for the forthright language of sight in 1st Corinthians Chapter 15 and other passages. The eyewitnesses were at least convinced that they had *seen* Jesus alive, and groupthink doesn’t explain this aspect very well.”

“Sometimes,” concluded Habermas, “people just grasp at straws trying to account for the appearances. But nothing fits all the evidence better than the explanation Jesus was alive.”⁵

⁵ Strobel, L. (2009). [*The Case for Easter: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for the Resurrection*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

MINIMAL FACTS THAT MAKE THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION

It was a rare opportunity: there I was, sitting across from *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner in his opulent Los Angeles mansion, discussing spiritual issues for a television show I was hosting.

Clad in his trademark pajamas and silk smoking jacket, Hefner professed a minimal belief in God. But the God of Christianity, he said, was “a little too childlike for me.”

Interestingly, when I brought up Jesus’ resurrection, Hefner immediately recognized its significance. “If one had any real evidence that, indeed, Jesus did return from the dead, then that is the beginning of a dropping of a series of dominoes that takes us to all kinds of wonderful things,” he told me. “It assures an afterlife and all kinds of things that we would all hope are true.”

FACT #1

Jesus was killed by crucifixion

Skeptic James Tabor says, ‘I think we need have no doubt that given Jesus’ execution by Roman crucifixion he was truly *dead*.’ Both Gerd Lüdemann, who’s an atheistic New Testament critic, and Bart Ehrman, who’s an agnostic, call the crucifixion an indisputable fact.

“Why? First of all, because all four Gospels report it. We also have a number of non-Christian sources that corroborate the crucifixion. For instance, the historian Tacitus said Jesus ‘suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius.’ The Jewish historian Josephus reports that Pilate ‘condemned him to be crucified.’ Lucian of Samosata, who was a Greek satirist, mentions the crucifixion, and Mara Bar-Serapion, who was a pagan, confirms Jesus was executed. Even the Jewish Talmud reports that [Jesus was killed].

“Jesus was crucified and died as a result. The scholarly consensus — again, even among those who are skeptical toward the resurrection — is absolutely overwhelming. To deny it would be to take a marginal position that would get you laughed out of the academic world.”

FACT #2

Jesus’ disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them

“The second fact is the disciples’ beliefs that Jesus had actually returned from the dead and had appeared to them,” Licona said. “There are three strands of evidence for this: Paul’s testimony about the disciples; oral traditions that passed through the early church; and the written works of the early church.

Paul is important because he reports knowing some of the disciples personally, including Peter, James and John. Acts confirms this. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:11 that whether ‘it was I or they, this is what we preach,’ referring to the resurrection of Jesus. So, in other words, Paul knew the apostles and reports that they claimed—just as he did — that Jesus had returned from the dead.

Then we have oral tradition. Obviously, people in those days didn’t have tape recorders and few people could read, so they relied on verbal transmission for passing along what happened until it was later written down.”

FACT #3

The conversion of the church persecutor Paul

“We know from multiple sources that Paul — then known as Saul of Tarsus — was an enemy of the church and committed to persecuting the faithful,” Licona said. “But Paul himself says that he was converted to a follower of Jesus because he had personally encountered the resurrected Jesus. So, we have Jesus’ resurrection attested to by friend and foe alike, which is very significant.”

“Then we have six ancient sources in addition to Paul — such as Luke, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Tertullian, Dionysius of Corinth and Origen — reporting that Paul was willing to suffer continuously and even die for his beliefs. Again, liars make poor martyrs. So, we can be confident that Paul not only claimed the risen Jesus appeared to him, but that he really believed it.

You can’t claim that Paul was a friend of Jesus who was primed to see a vision of him due to wishful thinking or grief after his crucifixion. His mindset was to oppose the Christian movement that he believed was following a false messiah. His radical transformation from persecutor to missionary demands an explanation — and I think the best explanation is that he’s telling the truth when he says he met the risen Jesus. He had nothing to gain in this world — except his own suffering and martyrdom — for making this up.”

FACT #4:

The conversion of the skeptic James, Jesus’ half-brother

“The next minimal fact involves James, the half-brother of Jesus,” Licona said. “We have good evidence that James was not a follower of Jesus during Jesus’ lifetime. Mark and John both report that none of Jesus’ brothers believed in him.”

These reports are most likely true, he said, because “people are not going to invent a story that’s going to be embarrassing or potentially discrediting to them, and it would be particularly humiliating for a first-century rabbi not to have his own family as his followers.”

“Then, however, the pivotal moment occurs: the ancient creedal material in 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that the risen Jesus appeared to James. Again, this is an extremely early account that has all the earmarks of reliability. In fact, James may have been involved in passing along this creed to Paul, in which case James would be personally endorsing what the creed reports about him.

“As a result of his encounter with the risen Jesus, James didn’t just become a Christian, but he later became leader of the Jerusalem church. Actually, James was so thoroughly convinced of Jesus’ messiahship because of the resurrection that he died as a martyr, as both Christian and non-Christian sources attest. So, here we have another example of a skeptic who was converted because of a personal encounter with the resurrected Lord and was willing to die for his convictions.”

FACT #5

Jesus’ tomb was empty

“Although the fifth fact — that the tomb of Jesus was empty — is part of the minimal case for the resurrection, it doesn’t enjoy the near universal consensus among scholars that the first four do,” explained Licona.

“Still, there’s strong evidence in its favor. Habermas determined that about 75 percent of scholars on the subject regard it as a historical fact. Personally, I think the empty tomb is very well-supported if the historical data are assessed without preconceptions. Basically, there are three strands of evidence: the Jerusalem factor, enemy attestation and the testimony of women.”

“Jerusalem factor?” I asked.

“This refers to the fact that Jesus was publicly executed and buried in Jerusalem and then his resurrection was proclaimed in the very same city. In fact, several weeks after the crucifixion, Peter declared to a crowd in Jerusalem: ‘God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.’ Frankly, it would have been impossible for Christianity to get off the ground in Jerusalem if Jesus’ body were still in the tomb. The Roman or Jewish authorities could have simply gone over to his tomb, viewed his corpse, and the misunderstanding would have been over.

“Instead, what we do hear is enemy attestation to the empty tomb. In other words, what were the skeptics saying? That the disciples stole the body. This is reported not only by Matthew, but also by Justin Martyr and Tertullian.”

Here's the thing: Why would you say someone stole the body if it were still in the tomb? This is an implicit admission that the tomb was empty.

“On top of that, the idea that the disciples stole the body is a lame explanation. Are we supposed to believe they conspired to steal the body, pulled it off, and then were willing to suffer continuously and even die for what they knew was a lie? That's such an absurd idea that scholars universally reject it today. In addition, we have the testimony of women that the tomb was empty.”

“Why is this testimony of women important?” I asked.

“Because in both first-century Jewish and Roman cultures, women were lowly esteemed and their testimony was considered very questionable,” Licona explained. “If you were going to concoct a story in an effort to fool others, you would never in that day have hurt your own credibility by saying that women discovered the empty tomb. It would be extremely unlikely that the Gospel writers would invent testimony like this, because they wouldn't get any mileage out of it. In fact, it could hurt them. If they had felt the freedom simply to make things up, surely, they'd claim that men — maybe Peter or John — were the first to find the tomb empty.”

“The best theory for why the Gospel writers would include such an embarrassing detail is because that's what actually happened and they were committed to recording it accurately, regardless of the credibility problem it created.

“So, when you consider the Jerusalem factor, the enemy attestation and the testimony of women, there are good historical reasons for concluding Jesus' tomb was empty. William Ward of Oxford University put it this way: ‘All the strictly historical evidence we have is in favor [of the empty tomb], and those scholars who reject it ought to recognize that they do so on some other ground than that of scientific history.’ ”

“Okay, how would you summarize your case?” I asked.

“Shortly after Jesus died from crucifixion, his disciples believed that they saw him risen from the dead. They said he appeared not only to individuals but in several group settings — and the disciples were so convinced and transformed by the experience that they were willing to suffer and even die for their conviction that they had encountered him.

Then we have two skeptics who regarded Jesus as a false prophet — Paul, the persecutor of the church, and James, who was Jesus’ half-brother. They completely changed their opinions 180 degrees after encountering the risen Jesus. Like the disciples, they were willing to endure hardship, persecution and even death rather than disavow their testimony that Jesus’ resurrection occurred.

Thus, we have compelling testimony about the resurrection from friends of Jesus, an enemy of Christianity and a skeptic. Finally, we have strong historical evidence that Jesus’ tomb was empty. In fact, even enemies of Christianity admitted it was vacant. Where did the body go?”

My conclusion, based on the evidence, is that Jesus did return from the dead. No other explanation comes close to accounting for all of the facts. Historically speaking, I think we’ve got a cogent and convincing case.”

Historian N. T. Wright, author of *Resurrection of the Son of God*, put it:

It is no good falling back on “science” as having disproved the possibility of resurrection. Any real scientist will tell you that science observes what normally happens; the Christian case is precisely that what happened to Jesus is not what normally happens. The early Christians believed that Jesus had been bodily raised from the dead, and [followers] account for this belief by saying that they were telling the truth.⁶

⁶ Strobel, L., Zondervan. (2012). [NIV, Case for the Resurrection](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.



west palm beach
c h u r c h o f c h r i s t

The Resurrection of Jesus

INTRODUCTION:

How we read the scriptures is fundamentally important and determines our understanding of the scriptures. If we read the scriptures with a twenty-first century mindset, we will miss many of the important teachings contained in the Bible because we are not thinking like the audience who received the divine message. This is the main reason why the book of Revelation is so misunderstood and usually taught incorrect. Too often we think the book is written to us and apply the message to our culture rather than realizing the book was written to a first century audience and applying the message to their culture.

I. Jesus' Fulfillment of Prophecy

A. Peter's sermon

- 1. As most well know, Peter's sermon in Acts 2 attempts to prove to the Jews that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah. In his sermon, Peter quotes from Psalm 16 in Acts 2:25-28. To grasp the whole context of this part of Peter's sermon, read Acts 2:22-29. When we go back and read psalm 16, we encounter some trouble dealing with how Peter is able to apply these words as prophecy to the coming Messiah.**

2. Notice how many times the first person is used in this psalm of David: “I saw the Lord always before me.” “He is at my right hand that I may not be shaken.” “My tongue rejoiced.” “My flesh also will dwell in hope.” “For you will not abandon my soul to Hades.” “You have made known to me the paths of life.” Throughout the psalm, David was referring to himself. The only part that breaks away from the first person in this quotation is the statement, “...or let your Holy One see corruption.” Here David speaks of the third person “Holy One,” and not in the first person. But as anyone knows whose studied Hebrew parallelism, the first line of a couplet is amplified again by the second couplet. This couplet is saying the same thing using a form of Hebrew poetry: “For you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One see corruption.” David is still speaking of himself. In fact, as you know from our study of the psalms, David repeatedly used this kind of language to speak of his hope that God would continue preserving him.
3. We also must question if this psalm in its original context was speaking of a resurrection. David speaks similarly throughout the psalms. Consider Psalm 30:2-3, “*O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.*” Psalm 18, 28, 40, 49, 86, 116 and many other psalms use this type of language. There is nothing in the psalm that demands an understanding of physical resurrection. Again, this psalm is speaking of the king’s preservation by the hand of God. These words are not teaching in the context of the psalm that the king was resurrected.
4. So how can we explain Peter’s application of Psalm 16 to the Messiah as one who would be resurrected from the dead? This interpretation of Peter does not seem at all to be the original message of psalm 16. Before we think that Peter was the only one who did this, consider that Paul also quoted Psalm 16 in Acts 13 and made the same application to the resurrection of the Messiah.

Did the apostles simply take liberties with the scriptures and make them apply the words however they wanted?

B. Common suggestions

- 1. Scholars have come up with many suggestions to deal with this problem. Some answer this problem by simply saying that the apostles were inspired and that's supposed to end the discussion. While it is certainly true that the apostles were inspired, this is not a good basis of argument. I do not believe that the Jews on the day of Pentecost were to believe Peter's application of Psalm 16 simply on the basis of his being inspired.**
- 2. Others have taught that David was thinking of his and the Messiah's resurrection. The view asserts that David's words are a single, generic statement. The view says that David was speaking of his own resurrection that would happen one day in the final judgment, but also spoke of a Messianic resurrection. However, this argument falls short of the satisfaction we need for concerning Peter's application of these words. There's nothing generic about these words. David is clearly speaking of himself about how he wouldn't be abandoned but would continue to be preserved by God.**
- 3. Yet others believe the best answer is to teach that the Old Testament's full meaning only becomes clear with later revelation. This is certainly a true point which we find in Acts 1:20 concerning the need for an apostle to be chosen to replace Judas. But this answer also does not explain how the Jews would have accepted Peter's explanation of Psalm 16 that, in its context, does not appear Messianic nor to be speaking of the Messiah's resurrection.**
- 4. Finally, others have begun to teach that New Testament authors used the hermeneutic techniques of the Jews. There is nothing wrong with this idea. However, what is being taught is that the Jews simply applied a fancy form of exegesis making these prophecies fit Jesus as Messiah.**

5. Phil Roberts states the problem: “Often we’re embarrassed when attempting to “justify” our hermeneutical practices. Perhaps the real hermeneutical problem is the difficulty of fully participating in the first century view of Scripture.” I believe this is our problem in understanding the Old and the New Testaments. We are having difficulty viewing the scriptures with the mind of the original audience. In this case in Acts 2, the original audience are Pentecost Jews.

C. Jewish exegesis

1. We need to understand how the Jews then interpreted the scriptures if we are going to fully understand the argument that Peter is making in Acts 2. The following is a list of premises the Jews had when interpreting the scriptures.
2. *First, the Old Testament scriptures were inspired of God.* The Jews believed this fundamental premise. Therefore, the scriptures are one book given by God to the people.
3. *Second, Old Testament scriptures speak to every single generation, with special relevance for “the end time.”* Since the scriptures are the word of God, then the scriptures are timeless. The scriptures spoke to every generation that would come along and read the word of God. Further, the scriptures have special relevance to the time of the coming of the Messiah, otherwise called “last days” or “end time.”
4. *Third, context gives words their meaning. The same words, read in a new context, might state another true point.* To understand this point, we need to recognize this truth in our own culture. Francis Scott Key wrote the Star-Spangled Banner during the War of 1812. Those words had a special meaning to those people at that time in the context of that war. However, the song has a different but related meaning to soldiers today who have fought in recent wars. The words “the bombs bursting in air” does not call to their minds the war of 1812 but the war they just fought in.

5. Similarly, we know the P.P. Bliss penned the song “It Is Well With My Soul” as upon the knowledge of losing his family at sea. The despair and loss of his family on a ship sinking was the context and the meaning of the song. However, today the song has a different meaning to us, though very related, about how God can carry us through whatever losses we may endure.

D. Jewish Procedure

1. With these three premises, the Jewish procedure of interpreting the scriptures was twofold. First, look at an Old Testament statement in more than just its original context. The scripture would have meaning to every generation because it is the word of God.
2. Second, ask what truth an Old Testament statement might express if read in another divinely-revealed context. The psalms were particularly useful concerning this procedure. When the psalmist spoke of the preservation of the king, each king would read that psalm and think it applying to themselves, not just David who penned the psalm. The psalms had many potential contexts as each king would rise up and lead the nation.
3. But we must also remember the second premise of Jewish exegesis: the scriptures speak to every generation, with special relevance for “the end time.” Therefore, the Jews already understood that these prophecies had special importance to the nature of the Messiah and his kingdom. The Jews did not expect the Messiah to come and die, but to live and rule forever in his kingdom. Statements in the psalms concerning the preservation of the life of the king were understood by the Jews to be apply to the immortality of the Messiah. The greatest king of all for the Jews would be the Messiah who would reign forever.

Psalm 21:4 amplifies this point: “*He asked You for life, and You gave it to him—length of days forever and ever.*”

Therefore, as the Jews read psalm 16, there was nothing earth-shattering or unusual about the idea that the Messiah would not see decay nor be abandoned to the grave. The Jews already believed in the immortality of the Messiah.

II. Understanding the Gospel

A. The point of Peter's sermon

1. As we come back to Acts 2:22-30, consider the argument Peter is really making to the Jews at Pentecost. The Jews knew that David was dead and his grave was still with them. The Jews didn't think that David's tomb was empty. The question was: could Jesus fulfill these words? Could Jesus fulfill the words that he would not be abandoned in the grave or see corruption?
2. The point of Peter's sermon is to show that Jesus fulfilled these words, but not in the way that any of the Jews ever expected. Rather than be the Messiah that never saw death, the Messiah would die and be raised from the dead three days later. Jesus proved himself to be the Messiah by fulfilling these words in the most unexpected way.
3. Peter is not teaching that Psalm 16 is Messianic rather than Davidic. The Jews applied Psalm 16 to David when he was alive and to the coming the Messiah. Peter was teaching that the Jews should apply the words of Psalm 16 to Jesus because he is the Messiah. Jesus is the immortal Messiah because he rose from the dead. Death could not hold him!

B. The Jews and death

- 1. As we conclude, it is important to understand what Jews understand concerning death and the need for three days. The Jews understood death as process. The separation of spirit and body was a process that was completed after three days. Consider the words from the Jews themselves:**

2. *“People give testimony to the identity of a corpse only through the features of the face...and one may give testimony only within three days of death, beyond which point the face is disfigured”* (Yeb. 16:3 of the Mishnah). *“For all of the three days the soul hovers above the body, thinking that it will be able to return to it. When it sees that the face of the body has changed with decomposition the body has changed with decomposition it gives up and leaves. After three days the belly splits spewing its contents upon his face...”* (M.Q. 82b of the Jerusalem Talmud).
3. This is the significance of the need for three days. To the Jews, the process of death (the separation of the spirit from the body) was completed. For Jesus to rise from the dead three days later was the ultimate proof to the Jews that Jesus had conquered death. The tomb was empty, Jesus was alive, and fulfilled the Messianic prophecy of being the immortal king of Israel.
4. Luke 24:44-46 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 are making the emphasis that Jesus raised from the dead after three days of death. This is the significance of Jesus waiting three full days before coming to raise Lazarus from the dead in John 11. It explains why Martha says to Jesus that if he had been there, Lazarus would not have died. She is saying that if Jesus had come a day sooner, it would have been possible for Lazarus to be brought back to life. But since three days have passed, the death process has completed and the spirit cannot be brought back into the body. Jesus waits three days to show his power over death by raising Lazarus from the dead. Jesus waits three days to show his power of death when he raised himself from the dead.
5. Jesus’ ability to conquer death showed he was the prophesied Messiah of the Old Testament. The Messiah was to be the immortal king. Jesus proved himself to be the immortal Son of God through the resurrection!



Thallus

- We know of Thallus only from a third century Christian historian named Julius Africanus who wrote a three-volume treatise of world history in the 50s AD. In discussion the darkness at the time of the resurrection of Jesus, Julius Africanus mentions that in the 3rd book of Thallus' history, he mentions the darkness and calls it an eclipse of the sun. Africanus believes that Thallus is wrong. Whether or not this source proves the darkness at the time of Jesus' crucifixion is dubious, but it does seem to support the idea that even non-Christians were aware of the resurrection as early as the 50s AD—at about the time the first book of the NT was written. It also supports the claim, not necessarily of the darkness having occurred, but of the darkness having been claimed and believed by the Christians. Because we do not have Thallus' history and because we have a Christian interpreting rather than quoting it, this is rather dubious support to Christian claims.

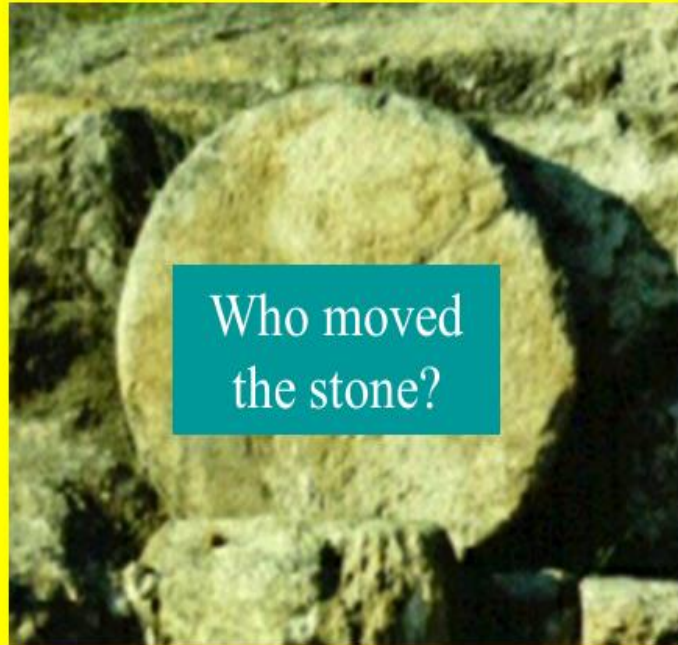
The Essential Jesus 3 Events During Jesus' Crucifixion

DARKNESS AT MID-DAY

“In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad (33 AD), there was the greatest eclipse of the sun . . . It became night in the 6th hour of the day (noon) so that stars even appeared in the heavens.”

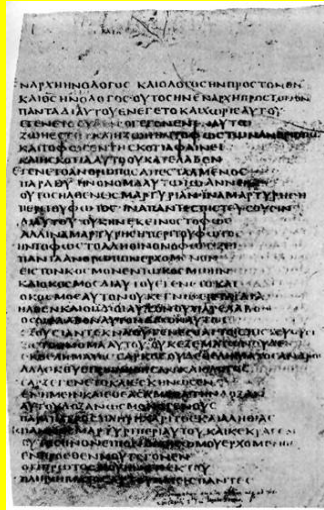
Phlegon, a non-Christian Greek author writing in 137 AD





Who moved the stone?

There is an interesting parenthetical in the Bezae manuscripts.



- “And when He was laid there, he put against the tomb a stone which *twenty men could not roll away.*”

Double Bound Spice-Soaked Body Wrap Weighed 78 lbs

In confirmation we also have Pilate's Letter to Emperor Tiberius in reference to the witness of the Roman Cohort: "He said about the beginning of the fourth watch they saw a soft and beautiful light over the sepulcher. He at first thought that the women had come to embalm the body of Jesus, as was their custom, but he could not see how they could have gotten through the guards. While these thoughts were still passing through his mind behold, the whole place was lighted up, and there seemed to be crowds of the dead in their grave clothes. All seemed to be shouting and filled with ecstasy, while all around and above was the most beautiful music he had ever heard; and the whole air seemed to be voices praising God."

Some ill-advised attempts have been made to deny that Christ's apostles actually died because of their belief in, and preaching of, the resurrection. For example, it has been proposed that the apostles died because they were political instigators or rabble-rousers. However, combining the high moral quality of their teachings with testimonies of the early church, and acknowledging the fact that their task was to be witnesses of the resurrection, it is historically inaccurate to imply that the apostles suffered for any reason other than that of their confession of the resurrection. The fact of the matter is, the apostles died because they refused to stop preaching that they had seen the Lord alive after His death.

— Apologetics Press



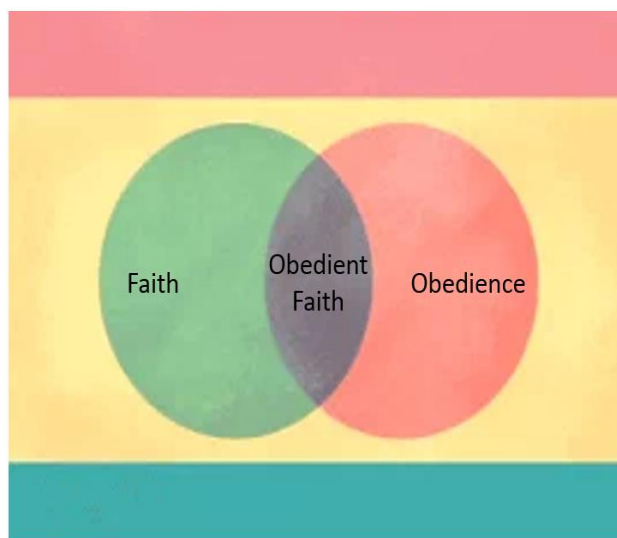




AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



O That Will Be Glory

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

I an Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

When by His grace I shall look on His face, e

That will be glory, be glory for me. me.

