

# Defending The Faith Series

## The Apologetics Pyramid

GOSPEL

JESUS CHRIST

REVELATION

THEISM

WORLDVIEWS

TRUTH



# Evidence For The Resurrection

## Introduction

Matthew 12:38-40

### Two Kinds Of Evidence Used In Courtrooms:

1. **Direct Evidence** - facts that directly support a case
2. **Circumstantial Evidence** – evidence from which other facts can be inferred

# Evidence For The Resurrection

## I. Direct Evidence For The Resurrection

### A. The Empty Tomb

*What evidence is there for the empty tomb?*

First, it would be impossible for a movement founded on proclamation of the resurrection to have come into existence if the tomb was not empty

Acts 2:32 – resurrection proclaimed 50 days after His death

Acts 2:40-41 – 3,000 believed

Acts 4:1-4 – 5,000 believed

# Evidence For The Resurrection

**Dr. Paul Maier**, professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, adds this commentary, *“Where did Christianity first begin? To this the answer must be: Only one spot on earth – the city of Jerusalem. But this is the very last place it could have started if Jesus tomb had remained occupied, since anyone producing a dead Jesus would have driven a wooden stake through the heart of an incipient Christianity inflamed by His supposed resurrection.”*

**Paul Althaus**, professor in a University in Germany adds, *“The resurrection could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned.”*

# Evidence For The Resurrection

Second, the soldiers, chief priests and elders acknowledged an empty tomb

Matthew 28:11-15

*What about their claim that the disciples stole the body?  
Could this be possible? NO! Why?*

First, he had been placed in a solid rock tomb with a 1 ½ - 2 ton circular stone rolled over the entrance. Before it was rolled into place it was uphill ... held by a wedge ... once in place it would have taken 20 men to move it.

# Evidence For The Resurrection

**Second**, the tomb was secured with a Roman guard which was usually 4 – 16 highly trained men. They were a fighting machine who risked execution if they slept.

**Third**, the tomb was secured with a Roman Seal. The Roman Seal stood for the power/authority of Rome ... there were severe consequences for breaking the seal ... those found guilty of breaking the seal and robbing a grave would face capital punishment.

**Fourth**, the grave clothes were left in the form of Jesus' body. It is extremely unlikely that they disciples would have taken the time to unwrap the grave clothes and leave them in that way. Furthermore, it was unthinkable for Jews to touch a dead body in this way.

# Evidence For The Resurrection

There have been other proposed theories to explain away the empty tomb ... each breaking down quickly after scrutiny:

1. Moved By Authorities
2. Unknown Tomb
3. Wrong Tomb

All four Gospels record that He was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Aramethea (Matt. 27:57-60) ... part of the Sanhedrin ... would have been known like a Senator

4. Spiritual Resurrection
5. Swoon Theory ... claims that Jesus fainted from exhaustion or given a drug that made him appear to die ... revived by the cool, damp air of the tomb

# Evidence For The Resurrection

*Is it possible that Jesus really didn't die?*

1. Severe flogging with a ***flagrum*** ... sturdy handle with leather thongs of varying lengths ... sharp jagged pieces of bone and lead were woven into them ... Jews were limited by their law to 40 lashes ... for the Romans ... when a prisoner is near death the beating is finally stopped
2. Wore a crown of thorns ... stiff like nails or spikes ... more blood lost
3. They mocked, spat upon and beat Jesus with a rod ...
4. Crucified with nails driven through His feet and hands



# Evidence For The Resurrection

5. Death slowly came through suffocation and insufficient blood circulation ... usually broke legs to speed up the death ... didn't do this with Jesus because He was already dead ... His death was certified ...
6. One of the executioners thrust a spear into Christ's side ... **John 19:34** says "immediately there came out blood and water."

**Medical doctor C. Truman Davis** says that with this we have  
*"rather conclusive post-mortem evidence that Christ died ... of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium."*

7. No way they would have released Him if He was not dead

# Evidence For The Resurrection

8. After that he was wrapped in grave linens from the feet to the head ... up under arms, then around the arms to neck ... they used a separate piece around the head ... aromatic spices were placed between the folds ... altogether the encasement probably weighed around 120 pounds ...

There was no way a cold tomb was going to revive Him ... no way that He could then brake out of the grave cloths ... and move a 1 ½ - 2 ton stone ... and then overtaken the Roman guard ... and declare that He had risen!

# Evidence For The Resurrection

## I. Direct Evidence For The Resurrection

A. The Empty Tomb

B. The Eyewitnesses

There is a wealth of sightings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels ... not fleeting views of a shadowy figure by one or two people ... but multiple appearances to numerous people over a 40 day period ... some to individuals ... most of them to groups ... some to tenderhearted people like John ... some to doubting skeptics like Thomas ...

# Evidence For The Resurrection


**The Gospels record the following appearances in this order:**

## FIRST DAY (SUNDAY)

1. Mary Magdalene
2. Other women
3. Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus
4. Simon Peter
5. Ten of His disciples and others late Sunday night in the Upper Room ... Judas was dead and Thomas was absent

# Evidence For The Resurrection

## REMAINING 40 DAYS

1. A week later to Eleven disciples in the *Upper Room* ... this time doubting Thomas was there
  2. Peter and six other disciples at the *Sea of Tiberias* after they had spent an unsuccessful night fishing
  3. Eleven disciples on *Mt. Tabor* ... gave them the Great Commission
  4. Again in the *Upper Room*
  5. At the Mount of Olives to His disciples before His ascension (40 days after His resurrection)
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# Evidence For The Resurrection

**There are many good reasons to believe these eyewitness Gospel accounts:**

**First**, there is strong evidence that source material for the Gospel of Mark which was also used in the other Gospels was written within 20 – 25 years after Jesus' death and resurrection ... this is way too early for a legend of any kind to develop.

**Second**, the NT Gospels have all the marks of eyewitness accounts and details that only 1st Century writers could have known or would have written.

# Evidence For The Resurrection

Third, the resurrection accounts in all the Gospels have unadorned simplicity that fictional stories do not have.

Fourth, the Gospel accounts indicate that empty tomb and the resurrected Christ were first seen by women.



# Evidence For The Resurrection

**New Testament authors point to eyewitness accounts as evidence for the resurrection:**

**Acts 1:1-3**

**Acts 2:32**

**1 Corinthians 15:3-7**

Paul's initial preaching in Corinth probably occurred in the fall of 52 AD ... less than 20 years after the resurrection of Christ. Most of the eyewitnesses were still living ... the witnesses could have been checked out.

500 people x 6 minutes each = 50 hours of testimony



# Evidence For The Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:8-9

Here we discover an extremely credible eyewitness ... the Apostle Paul himself ... why such a credible eyewitness?

Because he had been persecuting the church of God as a zealous Pharisee ... Luke records Paul's conversion in Acts 9 ... and Paul's testimony in Acts 22 and 26 ... he was dead set against Christianity ... the only explanation for the change in Paul's behavior is that he actually saw the resurrected Christ.

Direct evidence for the resurrection of Christ centers on the empty tomb and the eyewitnesses. There is also circumstantial evidence for the resurrection of Christ.

# Evidence For The Resurrection

## II. Circumstantial Evidence

### A. Transformed Disciples

### B. Conversion Of Skeptics

### C. Sunday Worship

### D. Other Changes Converted Jews Were Willing To Make

- Stopped going to the Temple to offer animal sacrifices ...
- Stopped seeing themselves as under the Mosaic Law ... now able to eat unclean animals ... started eating with Gentiles ...
- Began to embrace the concept of the Trinity ...

### E. The Existence Of The Early Church