

THE EVIDENCE FOR THE EASTER STORY - CRUCIFIXION, EMPTY TOMB AND THE RESURRECTION

Did Jesus die?

- Gethsemane - Luke 22: 44
- “And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”
- “Hematidrosis” - associated with high degree of psychological stress
- Causes release of chemicals that break down the capillaries in the sweat glands.
- Makes the skin fragile and very sensitive.

The Beating and Flogging:

- The Beating - blindfolded, punched and spat at
- Roman floggings were brutal
- Usually at least 39 lashes
- Whip of braided leather thongs with with metal balls woven in with pieces of sharp bone
- Metal balls cause bruises and contusions
- Bone rips the flesh down to the spine, bowels, veins, muscles
- From shoulders down the back, buttocks and back of legs
- Many died.
- Extreme pain
- Hypovolemic shock - “Hypo= low”, “Vol=volume”, “Emic=blood” i.e. the loss of a lot of blood
- Increase heart rate, blood pressure, fainting or collapse, kidneys stop producing urine, person becomes thirsty and craves liquid.
- Jesus collapsed on way to Calvary
- “I thirst”
- Jesus' life was already under threat

The Crucifixion:

- Laid down on the horizontal beam - patibulum
- Nailed with 5-7 inch spikes
- Into the wrists not palm of the hand!
- Hits the median nerve (worse than ulna nerve aka funny bone!)
- Imagine that nerve pinched with pliers and twisted
- Pain so indescribable - “excruciating” = “out of the cross”
- Hoisted onto vertical beam
- Nails through feet by ankles
- Arms immediately stretched by 6 inches - shoulders dislocated
- Crucifixion - slow death by asphyxiation
- Have to push up to breathe
- Pain in ankles where nailed
- Rub bare and bleeding back against wood
- Crown of thorns shoved into sensitive skin which would bleed
- Breathing slows - respiratory acidosis = carbon dioxide is dissolved as carbonic acid
- Irregular heartbeat - know you are near death
- Hypovolemic shock causes heart failure
- Results in collection of fluid in membrane around the heart = pericardial effusion
- Fluid around the lungs - pleural effusion
- Significant?
- John 19: 34 “Instead, one of Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.”
- Spear went through lung and heart into right side
- Pericardial effusion and pleural effusion - clear fluid (like water) followed by blood
- Jesus was dead. No doubt.



The Case for the Resurrection (Part 1)

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Did Jesus Really Die on the Cross?

1. Many first-century and early second-century unfriendly Roman sources (i.e., Thallus, Tacitus, Mara Bar-Serapion, and Phlegon) and Jewish sources (i.e., Josephus and the Babylonian Talmud) affirmed and acknowledged that Jesus was crucified and died.
2. The Roman guards faced death if they allowed a prisoner to survive crucifixion. Would they really be careless enough to remove a living person from a cross?
3. Jesus would have to control His blood loss from the beatings, crucifixion, and stabbing in order to survive, yet was pinned to the cross and unable to do anything that might achieve this.
4. Jesus displayed wounds following the resurrection but was never observed to behave as though He was wounded, in spite of the fact that He appeared only days after his beating, crucifixion, and stabbing.
5. Jesus disappeared from the historical record following His reported resurrection and ascension and was never sighted again (as one might expect if He recovered from His wounds and lived much beyond the young age of thirty-three).

Were the Disciples Lying About the Resurrection?

1. The Jewish authorities took many precautions to make sure the tomb was guarded and sealed, knowing that the removal of the body would allow the disciples to claim that Jesus had risen (Matt. 27:62–66).
2. The people local to the event would have known it was a lie (remember that Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 that there were still five hundred people who could testify to having seen Jesus alive after His resurrection).
3. The disciples lacked the motive to create such a lie (more on this in chapter 14).
4. The disciples' transformation following the alleged resurrection is inconsistent with the claim that the appearances were only a lie. How could their own lies transform them into courageous evangelists?

Did the Disciples Hallucinate the Resurrection?

1. While individuals have hallucinations, there are no examples of large groups of people having the exact same hallucination.
2. While a short, momentary group hallucination may seem reasonable, long, sustained, and detailed hallucinations are unsupported historically and intuitively unreasonable.
3. The risen Christ was reported seen on more than one occasion and by a number of different groups (and subsets of groups). All of these diverse sightings would have to be additional group hallucinations of one nature or another.
4. Not all the disciples were inclined favorably toward such a hallucination. The disciples included people like Thomas, who was skeptical and did not expect Jesus to come back to life.
5. If the resurrection was simply a hallucination, what became of Jesus's corpse? The absence of the body is unexplainable under this scenario.



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A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels



The Evidentially Diverse Resurrection Appearances of Jesus

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A brief list of the Resurrection sightings:

1. Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden shortly after His Resurrection. (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18)
2. Jesus appeared to the women returning from the empty tomb. (Matthew 28:8-10)
3. Jesus appeared to two disciples (Cleopas and another) on the road to Emmaus. (Mark 16:12,13; Luke 24:13-35)
4. Jesus appeared to Peter. (Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5)
5. Jesus appeared to his disciples, in Jerusalem, while Thomas was absent. (Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23)
6. Jesus again appeared to his disciples, in Jerusalem. This time Thomas was present. (John 20:24-29)
7. Jesus appeared to his disciples (Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons and two other of his disciples), on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. (John 21:1,2)
8. Jesus was seen by 500 believers at one time. (1 Corinthians 15:6)
9. Jesus appeared to James. (1 Corinthians 15:7)
10. Jesus appeared to his disciples on a mountain in Galilee. (Matthew 28:16-20)
11. Jesus appeared to the believers in Jerusalem for forty days after the Resurrection. (Acts 1:1-11)
12. Jesus appeared to His disciples, blessed them, and ascended into heaven. (Luke 24:50-53)
13. Jesus also appeared to Paul, on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:3-6; 1 Corinthians 15:8)

If you examine these accounts closely, you'll be impressed by the diversity of the claims:

Jesus Appeared to Groups of Diverse Size

To single eyewitnesses, to small groups and to huge crowds.

Jesus Appeared at Diverse Locations and Times

In enclosed rooms and open areas; in the region of Jerusalem, Galilee and well beyond. He appeared at night and at various times of the day.

Jesus Appeared to People of Diverse Status

To people he knew well and to people he didn't know well at all, to those in His inner circle, to those less connected and to complete strangers (Paul). Some were devout followers, some were more skeptical and some were in complete denial.

Jesus Appeared for Diverse Purposes

To many He simply wanted to demonstrate His Deity and Resurrection power. With others He ate a meal or had an important conversation. He appeared to Peter to comfort and challenge him and to Paul to call him away from his murderous mission.

Jesus Appeared for Periods of Time

Some of his appearances were little more than a few minutes, others for hours. He stayed with the believers in Jerusalem for forty days.

Jesus' Appearances Were Recorded By Diverse Authors

Two were direct eyewitnesses, two were close associates of the eyewitnesses. Some were better educated than others. One was a doctor, one a tax collector, one a fisherman.



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Conclusions:

"I claim to be an historian. My approach to Classics is historical. And I tell you that the evidence for the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ is better authenticated than most of the facts of ancient history..."

E.M. Blaiklock - Professor of Classics, Auckland University

"Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no single historical incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection."

B.F. Westcott, New Testament textual scholar

"As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. 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...The Gospel evidence for the resurrection...I accept unreservedly as the testimony of truthful people to facts they were able to substantiate."

Sir Edward Clarke KC from a letter to Rev. E.L. Macassey

"I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

Thomas Arnold, History of Rome

"If all the evidence is weighed carefully and fairly, it is indeed justifiable, according to the canons of historical research, to conclude that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was actually empty on the morning of the first Easter. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources, epigraphy or archaeology that would disprove this statement."

Dr. Paul L. Maier, Professor of Ancient History, Western Michigan University.