



Many Directions, One Way

Text: Luke 24:1-12, 36-48

Note: The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

Luke 24:1-12

1 Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.
2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.
3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.
4 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.
5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?
6 "He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee,
7 "saying, "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."
8 And they remembered His words.
9 Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.
10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles.
11 And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.
12 But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.

Luke 24:36-48

36 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you."
37 But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.
38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?
39 "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."
40 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.
41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?"

42 So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb.
43 And He took it and ate in their presence.
44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."
45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.
46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,
47 "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
48 "And you are witnesses of these things.

Is the resurrection of Jesus an important doctrine or teaching of the Christian faith?

There is no way to overemphasize the importance of the Resurrection to the Christian faith, for the resurrection of Jesus is the Christian faith. Christianity stands or falls on the validity, the historical reality, of the Resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:15 - "if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile."

What do you think was the main message of the apostles during the First Century?

The Resurrection was **the** theme of the apostles' preaching...
Acts 4:33 - "with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."

On the day of Pentecost when Peter preached the first gospel sermon, the focal point of the message was on the Resurrection...

Acts 2:23-24 - "Him (Jesus), being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."

Paul made it clear that the heart of his gospel message was the resurrection...

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 - "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

How does the resurrection of Jesus set Christianity apart from the other world religions?

The resurrection is the unique stamp of Christianity, for only Christianity claims an empty tomb for its founder. No resurrection has ever been claimed for Abraham, Buddha, Confucius, or Mohammed.

How does the resurrection of Jesus prove that He is God manifest in the flesh?

The resurrection validated everything Jesus said as being true. Jesus said that He would be resurrected and that this is the most important sign that He is who He claimed to be. When the Pharisees came to Jesus asking Him for a sign that He was the Messiah, He told them...

Matthew 12:39-40 - "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Jesus spoke about His resurrection in parables so that people did not know what He was referring to until after He was resurrected...

John 2:19-21 - Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

Jesus spoke more directly to His disciples about His resurrection...

John 14:19-20 - "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

Jesus prophesied about His resurrection and was right but where did He say He was God.

In many places in so many words. This is the subject of another full Bible study. One of my favorite passages where Jesus claimed His deity is...

John 14:9 - Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

So since Jesus was true about being resurrected, we can be assured that He is true about everything else He said, including His deity. Paul summed this all up...

Romans 1:4 - "[Jesus was] declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

In other words, it is the Resurrection that validates Jesus as God in the flesh.

How should we regard the resurrection of Jesus, as truth as myth?

The world does not accept the resurrection of Jesus as truth but genuine Christians know it is true. There is no way to get around the fact that the resurrection of Jesus is either one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon the minds of men, or it is the most fantastic truth of history!

How do Christians know that the resurrection of Jesus truly happened?

Christians know that the resurrection of Jesus is true by the testimony of Scripture. Certainly the Holy Spirit helps us to understand these truths...

1 Corinthians 2:14 - But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

What proof does Scripture present to convince us that Jesus was resurrected?

The Empty Tomb... when the women came to the tomb of Jesus, they found it to be empty.

Why were the women surprised to find the tomb of Jesus empty?

It had been three days since they saw Jesus die and be buried. The tomb was empty despite the fact that it had been sealed by a huge stone and despite the fact that it had been guarded continuously by a special contingent of Roman soldiers...

Matthew 27:62-66 - On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' "Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

What How do you think the Roman guards reacted when Jesus was resurrected and left the tomb?

Read on...

Matt 28:1-8 - Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was

crucified. "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

Scripture goes on to say that the soldiers reported on their startling discovery of the empty tomb to the chief priests of the Jews...

Matthew 28:11-15 - Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' "And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

The Roman soldiers who guarded the tomb of Jesus were given a bribe to tell the people that "His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept."

What is significant about the reaction of the Jewish leaders to the report of the Roman guard?

It is mostly interesting to note that the Jewish religious leaders did not challenge the fact that the tomb was empty.

Why didn't the Jewish religious leaders challenge the fact that the tomb was empty?

That's because the tomb was empty. They simply could not argue with reality so they made up a story to explain why the tomb was empty.

Men have been concocting stories to explain away the resurrection of Jesus ever since it happened. Let's consider some of these explanations. In doing so, you should begin to sense the shallowness of their arguments and the power of the truth of the Resurrection.

Explanations of the Empty Tomb

(1) Theft - The oldest explanation of the empty tomb is the one the Jews made up and bribed the soldiers to tell: that the body of Jesus was stolen by His disciples.

How should you counter this idea?

This explanation would have us believe that Peter, Andrew, James and John were body snatchers!

Are we really to believe a small rag-tag band of followers suddenly found the courage three days later to take on a guard of Roman soldiers?

The disciples were scared witless at the arrest of Jesus and who fled into the night to save their own skins...

Matthew 26:56 - Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.

Even more significant, what would have been the motive of the disciples to steal the body?

We're told over and over again in the Scriptures that they did not understand that Jesus was to be resurrected...

Mark 9:31-32 - For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

Their behavior after the crucifixion testified to this as they sat around in despair mourning the loss of their leader...

John 20:19 - Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Will men risk their lives for a lie?

This is what makes the idea that the disciples stole the body of Jesus away so ridiculous. Are we expected to believe this very group suddenly came alive with hope and went forth boldly proclaiming the Resurrection at the risk of their lives? Are we really to believe that a group of frightened disciples could be transformed in to a courageous band of fearless proclaimers by snatching a body, hiding it, and then committing their lives to a lie? That's more difficult to believe than the Resurrection! Men will risk their lives for the truth but not for a lie.

(2) Confusion - Perhaps the silliest argument of all is that the disciples went to the wrong tomb! Yes, some supposedly learned men have proposed this theory over the years.

How would you counter this argument?

The Gospel accounts tell us that Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, both accompanied Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to the tomb and watched them prepare the body for burial (Matthew 27:57-61 and John 19:38-42). Are we to suppose that when the women returned they could not find their way?

Even if they did get lost and looked in the wrong tomb, did Peter and John do the same thing? Did the Roman soldiers also guard the wrong tomb? Did Joseph of Arimathea have a memory lapse as to where his tomb

was located? And why didn't the Jewish leaders simply go to the right tomb and produce the body?

The answer is simple: *the tomb was empty!*

(3) Hallucination - One of the popular modern day theories has been the idea that the disciples experienced a series of hallucinations. As one advocate of this novel concept put it, "They experienced a disruption of the physio-chemical structures of the brain such a way as to be able to see what they desperately wanted to see."

How would you counter this argument?

In fact the disciples themselves initially accused Mary Magdalene of seeing things when she first told them about the empty tomb and her encounter with angels (Luke 24:11). After all, she was a frightened and frustrated young woman wandering around in a cemetery at daybreak.

How does the testimony of Paul dispute the hallucination explanation?

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 - For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

Jesus appeared in His resurrected body over 40 days to all the disciples on three different occasions, as well as to 500 believers on a Galilean mountain, and His ascension to heaven was witnessed by a host of disciples (Acts 1:1-11).

Can 500 people have the same hallucination?

An hallucination is a highly subjective experience and a very personal one. Like beauty, it is in the eye of the beholder. To believe that 500 people could have the same hallucination simultaneously takes more faith to believe than the Resurrection!

What is the biggest problem with the hallucination explanation?

The hallucination theory does not explain the empty tomb.

(4) Hypnosis - Another modern theory is that the disciples experienced mass hypnosis. The advocates of this idea argue that the disciples so desperately wanted Jesus to rise from the dead that they created an aura of auto-suggestion (or mental hypnosis) and thus believed they could see Jesus whenever His name was mentioned.

Is group hypnosis of 500 people possible?

Group hypnosis of 500 people is possible given the right type of controlled environment and the proper mass medium like radio, television, or film. But hypnosis on this scale without a skilled hypnotist, some form of mass media, and ideal conditions, is utterly outside the realm of sound reasoning.

So, how could 500 people in the open air of a country side, before the invention of mass media or the discovery of hypnotism, be subject to hypnosis?

This is a weak theory. And how does this explain the fact of the empty tomb? It's obvious the skeptics are grasping at straws.

(5) Fainting - This leaves us with a centuries old theory that has recently been popularized by an apostate Christian named Hugh Sconfield. It's called the "swoon theory." This is the idea that Jesus really didn't die on the cross. Instead, He just passed out and then awoke up three days later. Sconfield revived this idea in his book called *The Passover Plot*.

How could you counter this explanation?

Mr. Sconfield would have us believe that after Jesus was flogged, crucified, given a spear wound in His side to make sure He was dead, and laid in a cold, damp tomb for three days without food or water, He suddenly revived, removed His burial wrappings, rolled back the stone, evaded the Roman guards, and ran around the country side for 40 days without the benefit of penicillin or a tetanus shot. Only a fool could believe such utter nonsense!

(6) Nostalgia - There is another theory that has become popular among modern day liberal theologians. It's the idea that the Resurrection only occurred in the hearts of the disciples (hence the "nostalgia").

A few years ago *The Dallas Morning News* reported this theory had been proposed to the students of SMU by a professor of Theology from the Perkins School of Theology (SMU's seminary). He stated in his incredible Easter "sermon" that Jesus had not really risen from the dead in any literal way. What happened instead, he explained, is that Jesus came alive in the hearts of his disciples as they sat around and discussed his life and teachings - just as had been the case with the followers of Martin Luther King after his assassination!

How could you counter this explanation?

Such a ridiculous concept is a natural outgrowth of liberal apostasy because it leaves unbelievers with the kind of Jesus they like - one who was only human. Their "messiah" turns out to be a man who meant well, but who was deluded into only thinking he was God in the flesh.

What is the biggest problems with the nostalgia theory?

This theory denies the well documented post Resurrection appearances of Jesus, and like all the other theories, it fails completely to explain the fact of the empty tomb.

Besides the empty tomb, what is even more powerful evidence of the resurrection of Jesus? I'll give you a hint here, it has to do with Pentecost

The greatest evidence of the Resurrection in Scripture is to be seen in the transformed lives of Jesus' disciples when Jesus sent them The Holy Spirit. For within 50 days of His crucifixion, His disciples had been miraculously transformed from a defeated, frustrated, hopeless group of individuals into a confident band of Christian soldiers determined to win the world for their Lord.

Jesus' own brother, James, who did not believe in Him while He was alive, became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. Peter, who denied knowing Jesus three times in a fit of cowardice, began to proclaim Him boldly, even before the very Sanhedrin Council that condemned Him to death (Acts 4:1-12). A young Christian named Stephen gave his life for Jesus (Acts 7:51-60). And the most ruthless persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus, became the greatest missionary in the history of the church all because he encountered the risen Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9).

What kind of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus can we see today that is outside the Bible?

The most convincing evidence of the resurrection of Jesus is the way in which people's lives continue to be transformed today through encountering the living Jesus.

When one of Jesus' disciples named Thomas finally encountered Him after His resurrection, he cried out, *"My Lord and my God!"* Jesus replied, *"Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"* (John 20:28-29).

Has your life been changed by Jesus? Have you been born again by placing your faith in Him? Romans 10:9 says, *"if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

Salvation is to be found in a personal relationship with the living Jesus. Here's how Jesus expressed it in a prayer for us to God the Father: *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent"* (John 17:3).