

JOHN 20:1
HE IS RISEN!
OVERVIEW

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 20 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

As we have seen, Jesus has been crucified and His body wrapped in strips of linen with 100 pounds of burial spices placed upon His body by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Not only that, but Joseph of Arimathea gave the tomb that he had made for him and his family to Jesus.

As we will see, he is going to let Jesus borrow it for a few days, it was not going to be a permanent place for His body to dwell in! And after His resurrection, Joseph never used that tomb to bury his family or himself, anyone!

And keep in mind that long before this occurred, Jesus said He would be arrested and crucified and placed in the tomb, “**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.**” Matthew 12:40.

Jesus is speaking of being raised from the dead – ***HIS RESURRECTION!***

We see this spoken of in Matthew 16:21, “**From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.**”

We also see Jesus speak of His death and resurrection in Matthew 17:22-23, **“Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.’ And they were exceedingly sorrowful.”**

We see this in Mark 9:9 where we are told, **“Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”**

Also, in Mark 10:32-34 we are told, **“Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.’”**

And I can go on but I think you can clearly see that Jesus knew what was going to happen to Him and He told His men what was going to happen to Him, even though they did not want to believe it.

There is no doubt that Jesus said that He was going to be put to death and then, on the third day He would rise from the dead!

Why am I making such a big deal out of this?

Because the resurrection of Jesus Christ is vital to our Christian faith!

Let me show you what I mean.

Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:12-14, **“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.”**

Let me put it like this, *“If the resurrection of Jesus Christ did not happen, if it is all a lie, then we might as well gather our things together and go home!”*

So, do you think the resurrection of Jesus Christ is important?

Paul is saying that it is vital to our Christian faith, as I have said!

But there are many who deny the resurrection of Jesus, they don't see the importance of it!

Let me share this article with you and this is what their web page states who they are – “Pastor Dawn **BEYOND CHURCH** progressive visions of Christianity beyond church.”

Just from the front of the web page you can probably see where this is going. What I want you to keep in mind is that she is a Christian pastor who is teaching her congregation that the resurrection of Jesus did not really happen, there was no bodily resurrection.

This is what she wrote,

So, let me get to the point, so that those who like nothing better than to use the Bible to bludgeon anyone who dares to stray from their narrow understanding of the text, they can simply hit ALL CAPS in their keyboards, without having to read any further.

Let me say it right up front: ***“Yes, I do deny the resurrection!”*** I deny the resurrection. Furthermore, I suspect that you do to. . . .

The Apostle Paul denies that Jesus' resurrection was an actual physical resurrection. As a Pharisee, Paul believed in the resurrection of the dead and certainly he believed that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

[Let me say this. First, she says that Paul did not believe that Jesus rose in a physical body from the dead, but He was raised from the dead. What is the point? To sow confusion so she can make her point that Jesus did not rise from the dead in a physical body. Here's the thing. If you look at I Corinthians 15:8 Paul speaks of seeing the risen Lord! Also, was there a body found in the tomb when the women and Peter and John went there? No there wasn't because Jesus rose from the dead! Let's read on and see what she has to say.]

But as for our question about an actual physical body, Paul insists that this is simply a stupid question. For heaven's sake, when you sow a seed into the ground and it bursts forth into new life, that new life doesn't come in the form of a seed, it comes to life as a plant! Not all bodies are the same! The Apostle Paul did not need there to be an actual physical resuscitation of a corpse in order to believe that Jesus is risen from the dead.

To ask the question of whether the resurrection is true, and to mean by this that only a resurrected corpse constitutes such proof, is to impose the standards of the modern mind upon a pre-scientific culture of myth and magic.

[Again, I need to make this point. In John 20:27, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, listen to what we are told, "**Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.'**" That was the body of Jesus that was raised from the dead and it still bears the marks of the crucifixion! He told Thomas to touch Him, put his finger in his hand, put his hand in His side! Let me finish up what she wrote.]

Yes! I do deny the resurrection and I'm guessing that you do too! So, I'm trusting that it doesn't much matter whether or not you or I or anyone believes or doesn't believe in the physical resuscitation of Jesus' corpse. *What a stupid argument.* What matters is that LOVE rises. The LOVE which is the SACRED MYSTERY which is the LOVE that we call "GOD". . . .

- <http://bit.ly/3IX1gAJ>

Please understand that I am not saying that Jesus was resuscitated, but He was raised from the dead – ***RESURRECTION NOT RESUSCITATION!***

Let me clear this up so there is no misunderstanding that Jesus rose in a physical body from the dead. You see, I think the evidence is overwhelming that Jesus rose from the dead in a physical body. Listen to what Norman Geisler wrote regarding this.

We are told,

The biblical evidence that Jesus was raised in the same physical, material body placed in the tomb is unequivocal. Not only was the tomb where the body had lain permanently empty, but the same person (Jesus) who had died appeared repeatedly after that in the same body, crucifixion scars and all.

He was seen, heard, and touched with the physical senses. He declared his body was one of "flesh and bones" and offered as proof his ability to eat physical food and to be touched by physical hands. Jesus literally exhausted the ways in which he could prove that He had a real material body.

In view of this overwhelming evidence that Jesus was raised in the very same material body in which He died, any denial of this essential of orthodox Christianity is clearly unbiblical. Evangelicals who compromise on such a fundamental doctrine deny biblical truth and are unorthodox at this point.

- Norman L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection*, pp. 49-50

Again, we need to understand that the tomb was empty, and you can go to Israel today and see that the tomb is empty! Not only that, but, like I have said, those who went to the tomb saw that it was empty, that He had risen from the grave!

One writer puts this very clearly that He has risen. He wrote,

The greatest miracle of all history was about to take place. No human being had ever returned to this world with a brand-new eternal body that was impervious to disease and the ravages of time. But Jesus Christ, the God-Man would arise out of the dark realm of death. He would make appearances to His followers and display to the world the miracle of miracles! Because of the resurrection, many doubters would simply argue that He had not died but was only in an unconscious state. Others would argue that His resurrection is simply a fabricated story created by the apostles. Others believed that Jesus had a spiritlike body that was not truly flesh and blood. But the resurrection story, with all of its many evidences, stands as the corner stone of truth encompassing both the Old and New Testaments!

- Mal Couch, *The Gospel of Luke – Christ, the Son of Man*, p. 227

But, because this is a growing trend in churches, the denial of the resurrection of Jesus, I want to spend some time looking at this and thus, this morning we will take an – ***OVERVIEW*** of the resurrection of Jesus because there seems to be a lot of confusion and a lot of people trying to say that the stories in the Gospels don't agree with each other!

Now, if the Gospel's contradict each other and the Bible is supposed to be the inherent Word of God, then how can we trust it and then, it must not be infallible!

I hope you see the importance of understanding that it is not just the death of Jesus for our sins, but that on the third day He rose from the grave in bodily form!

I am going to focus on three main points and my prayer is that when you leave here this morning you understand that the Gospel's don't contradict each other but they do compliment each other. Think about it. If each of the Gospel's said the exact same thing, that would be very suspicious.

If I got together ten of you and we all sat down to write the Gospel story, we would each approach it from a different point of view. It is the same story but we have our own writing styles, what we feel we need to focus on, and that is what we see in the Gospels as well.

So the three points I want to focus on are as follows,

DO THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS OF THE RESURRECTION CONTRADICT EACH OTHER?

DID JESUS REALLY RISE FORM THE TOMB?

IS THERE EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION?

So with that as our introduction, let's look at John chapter 20, and just verse 1 this morning.

JOHN 20**VERSE 1**

John tells us that very early on that Sunday morning, before the sun had risen, Mary Magdalene, the one whom Jesus delivered from seven demons, came to the tomb. And she finds the stone rolled away and ran and told Simon Peter that **“They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”**

Now as you look at the other Gospels it can get confusing in regard to who came to the tomb, which women and what was the timeframe.

And thus, we are going to be looking at – ***DO THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS OF THE RESURRECTION CONTRADICT EACH OTHER?***

First of all, early this Sunday morning, before the sun came up, there was a great earthquake and an angel took the stone that had the Roman seal upon it and he carried it away, opening the door to the tomb where the body of Jesus was placed. (Matthew 28:2)

Keep in mind that the Roman soldiers are guarding this tomb so no one can come and steal away the body of Jesus. But, upon having the earth move under their feet and seeing this angel pick up the stone and move it away from the opening to the tomb, they exit very quickly!

I think that they were terrified at what they saw and probably initially stunned and then, feet don't fail me now, and they are out of there, running for their lives!

The reason I believe they took off is that we don't see them around the tomb when Mary and the other women come to the tomb early in the morning. So I think this took place prior to the women getting there!

Now let's deal with the women who came to the tomb, because, as you read the different Gospel's, it seems that they don't agree with each other. But, as we will see, they do, it all depends on who they are speaking about and the time frame of them getting there.

Here in John, we see Jesus speak only of Mary Magdalene who came to the tomb.

But Matthew tells us that it was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who went to the tomb. (Matthew 28:1) This Mary is probably the mother of James and Joses as we are told in Matthew 27:56.

And Mark tells us that it was Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, who came to the tomb. (Mark 16:1) Salome was the wife of Zebedee and the mother of the disciples, James and John. (Matthew 27:56)

And in Luke, he tells us that Joanna was also with these women, and maybe others. (Luke 24:10)

So what do we do with these different accounts of who was at the tomb early that morning?

Can these differences even be reconciled, or do we just ignore them and move on?

Let me show you how I believe this all played out and it is not different accounts, not at all. Just different writers given us different details of this morning.

Keep in mind that they went to the tomb early in the morning, before the sun was up. And what was their main concern as they went to anoint the body of Jesus with burial spices, since Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus quickly placed the body into the tomb?

They were concerned about what they would do when they got to the tomb since there was a stone that weighed maybe some 3 or 4 thousand pounds that sealed the tomb. How in the world would they be able to roll that stone away? That is what was on their minds.

But, as I have said, there was a great earthquake, and the stone was removed by the angel before they even got there. And the soldiers who were guarding the tomb also fled away in fear of what they saw.

So their biggest fear ended up being something that they had no need to worry about. How true that is in my life, and I am sure you have struggled with this as well. We waste so much time worrying about how we are going to do this or that and we need to remember that God will take care of it, just as we see here.

Again, these women started towards the tomb before the sun came up, there were several of them and they probably came from different locations as they did not live together.

Some of them may have lived close to each other and thus, they could have walked together to the tomb that morning.

The first one to the tomb that morning was Mary Magdalene. Maybe she lived in a different area than these other women and thus, trying to get there as fast as she could, arrived ahead of them, before the sun had risen. Matthew also tells us that the other Mary came as well but we are not sure that they came together. It would seem that Mary Magdalene came alone and the other women, including the other Mary came after Mary Magdalene got there.

John tells us that when she had gotten there, she saw that the stone was rolled away, and she came to the conclusion that someone stole the body of Jesus!

And like I have said, this stone was not rolled in the channel that it was in, it was carried away!

How do I know that?

Because the Greek word for “**taken away**” is *AIRO*, (ah’-ee-ro) and it speaks of “*to pick up and carry.*” So this angel picked up this 3 or 4 thousand pound stone and moved it to another location!

Mary Magdalene looks at what has taken place and she thinks that someone stole the body of Jesus and she runs to tell Peter and John, “**. . . ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.’**” John 20:2.

As Mary is going to tell Peter and John what has happened, the other women arrived at the tomb and saw what Mary had seen, the stone was rolled away. They probably did not all get there at the same time.

It is here we are told in Matthew 28:5-8, “**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.**”

Now they are on the run to tell the disciples of Jesus that He is not dead, but He has risen!

I think these women, along with Mary Magdalene are trying to convince them that Jesus is risen and at some point, we see Peter and John take off to see for themselves.

And you have to love John, he was probably younger than Peter and faster than Peter and he wants us to know that he beat Peter to the tomb.

I think I would be a lot like John, competitive! Listen to what he tells us, **“So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there.”** John 20:4-6.

So John gets there first, but he does not go in. Peter, on the other hand, goes all the way in to look for himself. And we will deal more with this next time in our study, but the way that they looked is different for Peter and John.

It is after this that Mary arrives back at the tomb. And Peter and John leave, they head back.

It is here that Mary, crying over the fact that someone has stolen the body of her Lord, looks into the tomb and sees two angels.

It is here that these two angels ask her why she is crying.

And she tells them that someone has stolen the body of Jesus!

After this Mary turns around and she sees a man standing there, not recognizing it is Jesus. She thinks it is the gardener and when Jesus calls her by name, she recognizes His voice and gives Him a death grip, not wanting to ever let go! (John 20:11-18)

And here Jesus tells her to go and tell the other disciples that she has seen her risen Lord!

We also see Jesus appear to the other women. (Matthew 28:9-10)

Please understand that the four Gospels don't contradict each other but they enhance the story of the resurrection, giving us different details about it.

Remember what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:20, **“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**But the fact is that Christ (the Messiah) has been raised from the dead, and He became the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [in death].**”

The Living Bible gives us this insight into this verse, “**But the fact is that Christ did actually rise from the dead and has become the first of millions who will come back to life again someday.**”

There are no contradictions here - ***THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS OF THE RESURRECTION DO NOT CONTRADICT EACH OTHER!***

Next, let’s look at – ***DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE TOMB?***

Once again this is a big deal. You see, many claim that He never rose from the tomb, and they have their theories but as we will see, they don’t hold up, there is no support for them!

Why is it that people want to discount this historical account and yet, they accept other historical accounts that were written of others?

Why is this such a big deal, why is it so hard for them to believe?

Because if Jesus rose from the dead, if the tomb is empty, then everything Jesus said of Himself is true.

He is God, He did pay in full the penalty for our sins, and thus, apart from Him we will die in our sins.

Thus, people reject the claims of Christ, they reject the resurrection because they don’t want to believe in God or in Jesus Christ and His atoning work!

Now to justify their cause, what they believe, they have to come up with all kinds of theories but their theories, like I have said, are not substantiated by the evidence.

Irenaeus wrote, *“Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced . . . more true than truth itself.”*

(Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 1.2).

That truly hits the nail on the head regarding lies!

So let’s look at some of these theories because I truly believe, as we do, you will see that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact and these theories against it will fall by the wayside, they can’t hold water!

THE WOMEN WENT TO THE WRONG TOMB!

This one is very easy to dismiss, that the women went to the wrong tomb.

Why is this one easy?

Because, if we read the Scriptures, they saw where Jesus was buried, and they did not go to the wrong tomb. I may have gotten lost, but they surely didn’t.

In Mark 15:47, after Joseph and Nicodemus placed Jesus in the tomb, we are told, **“And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph observed where He was laid.”** So they knew where the body of Jesus was placed, the tomb His body was placed in, right next to Golgotha!

That one is so easy that whoever came up with it should be ashamed of themselves for not doing their homework!

THE SWOON THEORY!

Here is another one that can’t hold water and that is the swoon theory where Jesus just passed out, He never really died!

As you can see, the basic premise here is that Jesus never really died on the cross of Calvary, He only fainted and then, when He was placed in the cool of the cave, His tomb, He awoke and left the tomb. Because of that everyone thought He rose from the dead.

Others say he just faked His death, He pretended to be dead.

It may sound possible until you look at the facts, you look at the evidence and then you will see how foolish this is if you haven't already!

Let's look at the events that took place.

He was scourged, which was a brutal form of torture to get these criminals to confess their crimes. It was done with a whip called a flagellum and was made up of 12 or 13 leather thongs. Attached to them were pieces of glass and metal between metal balls so as the whip came down flesh would be ripped from the back of the person.

Jesus was tied by His wrists and dangled off the ground about a foot exposing His back and leaving Him defenseless.

Thirty-nine of these lashes came upon the back of Jesus, He had nothing to confess, He was innocent so each blow would come down harder and harder. At the end, many died from loss of blood!

He was then beaten, His beard plucked out, His face so abused that He did not even resemble a man anymore. This is before He was crucified!

Then, as He carried the cross beam of the cross, weighing some 100 pounds through the streets of Jerusalem and up to Calvary, He fell. He could not carry that cross any further because of His weakened condition.

So Simon, a man from Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross the rest of the way to Calvary for Jesus.

Then He was placed on the ground, metal spikes driven through his wrist into the cross and then He was placed on the cross and His feet were then nailed to the cross. He hung there naked, open to the elements.

Then, after six hours on the cross Jesus gave up His spirit, He died!

Crucifixion is a death by asphyxiation as you can't lift yourself up to breathe, to exhale the air from your lungs.

Now if He faked His death, how long did He hold His breath to fool the Roman soldiers who were experts in the death process, they knew when someone was dead!

And just to be sure Jesus was dead, they put a spear into His side and water and blood came forth showing He was dead, His heart had ruptured!

Now, if you still believe this theory, let's see how much you believe it.

Let me get a flagellum and whip you with thirty-nine lashes.

Let me beat you to a pulp.

Let me nail you to a cross.

Let me put a spear into your side.

Then, as you fake your death, I will take you down from the cross and place you in a tomb.

Then I will place 100 pounds of spices and burial cloths around your body.

When I am done, I will place a 3- or 4-thousand-pound stone at the opening of the tomb.

Then, if you wake up, you have to move the stone away, sneak past the guards who are guarding the tomb.

If you can do that, then I will believe the theory!

Let me be clear on this. You would never survive this, and you were not meant to. Crucifixion spoke of death and not life and like I have said, these Roman executioners knew when someone was dead, it was their job!

So let's just say that this means it is a death sentence to the swoon theory, there is no evidence that supports what it is trying to prove!

THE MASS HALLUCINATION THEORY!

Then there is the mass hallucination theory where every hallucinated that they saw Jesus. Obviously you have to have a lot of faith to believe that everyone who saw the resurrected Jesus all had the same hallucination!

JESUS WAS NEVER CRUCIFIED THEORY!

This one takes a lot of imagination. That someone else was crucified that looked like Jesus, but it wasn't Him. So He did not rise from the dead because Jesus never died! Foolishness.

Don't you think one of His men would have known this? Of course they would have and they would not die for that lie! And how could Mary not recognize her own son? Or how could John be confused by whom he saw on the cross?

THE CONSPIRACY THEORY!

We are all into conspiracy theories and it is not a new idea, that is what some feel happened here. And please understand that there are several variations to this theory, but the most popular is that the disciples of Jesus stole the body of Jesus and faked His resurrection!

I guess you can say that this is possible, but only possible when you negate what the Scriptures tell us.

What is the problem with this theory?

The problem is, when you see what the Scriptures say of these men, it is hard to believe they would risk their lives like this.

In fact, the Roman soldiers were bribed to make up this story to put down the idea that Jesus rose from the dead.

Thus, this is not new for we are told in 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.”**

And this lie continues on today!

Before the death and resurrection of Jesus these men were not the bravest men around.

Peter, when confronted after the arrest of Jesus, if he even knew Jesus, being asked by a little slave girl, denied his faith three times!

When Jesus was crucified, all the apostles were in hiding except for John and the women who were there at the crucifixion.

These men were terrified, not willing to risk their lives by showing they were followers of Jesus, and they stole His body? ***NO WAY!***

Not only that, but after Jesus is placed in the tomb, after the Roman seal is placed on the tomb, after the Roman soldiers were guarding the tomb, they were able to sneak up and steal the body of Jesus right in front of these guards, ignoring the seal on the tomb!

First of all, if you broke the Roman seal, you could be put to death.

Secondly, if you were a Roman soldier on guard duty, and you fell asleep, you could be put to death along with the other soldiers who were with you, so there was great incentive not to fall asleep.

And yet we are led to believe that this rag tag group of apostles could have stolen the body of Jesus and then faked His resurrection!

Again, ***NO WAY!***

But for the sake of argument, let's say that they did steal the body and faked the resurrection of Jesus.

They all knew it was a lie, right?

Of course they did if they stole the body.

Then why were they willing to die for a lie, die gruesome deaths for their faith if they knew it was not true?

Yes, people will die for their faith because they believe it is real, they die for all kinds of things they believe are true, but they will not die for a lie.

These men would have known it was all a lie and would not have died for a lie!

And it does not end there!

You see, even if they stole the body how could they give life to this dead body?

What do I mean?

Within a forty-day period of time over 500 people saw the resurrected Christ and Paul tells us in I Corinthians chapter 15 that many of them were still alive when he wrote that letter to the Corinthians.

The reason he said that was that you could ask these eyewitnesses who saw the resurrected Christ, it was not just something that was passed on from person to person!

Not only that, but what benefit did they get from this lie if they stole the body and faked His resurrection?

There was no honor, no prestige, no money or possessions. They were hated, scorned, persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, exiled, crucified, boiled alive, roasted, beheaded, disemboweled, fed to lions - not what you would call perks!

But why couldn't they have made this story up and thus were able to get people to believe it?

First of all, to put their claims to death all that had to happen was the body of Jesus exposed.

But even if they were able to steal and hide the body of Jesus, listen to what William Lane Craig said if this was a lie.

The Gospels were written in such a temporal and geographical proximity to the events they record that it would have been almost impossible to fabricate events. . . . The fact that the disciples were able to proclaim the resurrection in Jerusalem in the face of their enemies a few weeks after the crucifixion shows that what they proclaimed was true, for they could never have proclaimed the resurrection (and been believed) under such circumstances had it not occurred.

- Lane Craig, Knowing the Truth About the Resurrection, chapter 6

Now, as I rap up this conspiracy theory where the disciples stole the body of Jesus and faked His resurrection, at least that is how the theory goes, listen to what Blaise Pascal says regarding this theory and how it is not plausible.

He said, *“The apostles were either deceived or deceivers. Either supposition is difficult, for it is not possible to imagine that a man has risen from the dead. While Jesus was with them, he could sustain them; but afterwards, if he did not appear to them, who did make them act? The hypothesis that the Apostles were knaves [dishonest persons] is quite absurd. Follow it out to the end, and imagine these twelve men meeting after Jesus’ death and conspiring to say that he has risen from the dead. This means attacking all the powers that be. The human heart is singularly susceptible to fickleness, to change, to promises, to bribery. One of them had only to deny his story under these inducements, or still more because of possible imprisonment, tortures and death, and they would all have been lost. Follow that out.”* (Pascal, *Pensees*, pp. 322, 310).

Folks, the conspiracy theory has no evidence to support its claims and thus, like these other theories, it must be dismissed!

JESUS WAS AN ALIEN THEORY!

This last one is funny to me. They are trying to tell us that Jesus was an alien who had advanced abilities and technology that he used to amaze and convince the crowds he was God. After he was placed in the tomb, he beamed himself out and appeared to the disciples afterwards.

Okay, you reject the Bible story that Jesus rose from the grave, but you believe that He was an alien who came to earth! All I can say is this, *“You’re traveling through another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind. A journey into a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination. Your next stop, the Twilight Zone!”*

And again, ***NO WAY!***

Let me share this with you before we move on. We are told,

It is an accepted historical fact that the Christian faith (a religion built upon the preaching of the resurrection of its leader) originated in approximately A.D. 32 right in the very city of Jerusalem where Jesus was publicly crucified and buried. Now, this in itself is a good piece of evidence that the resurrection actually occurred. Why?

Because a message calling people to repent and put their faith in a risen man could never have gained any substantial following amongst the Jews if the tomb had not actually been empty and had the Jewish people not seen Jesus alive after His crucifixion.

The message of a risen man, could not have been maintained for even a day in Jerusalem if the grave was still occupied. [Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, 232]

Remember, Jesus' disciples did not run off to Athens or Rome to preach that Christ rose from the dead (where the facts could not be verified). They went right back to the city of Jerusalem where they would have been quickly exposed and disproved - if what they were teaching was false.

The critics could have said, "**Hey! Here is the grave and here is Jesus' body!**" That would have squashed the whole movement, and Christianity would never have spread. But that never happened! And not only did Christianity originate there in Jerusalem, it thrived there! . . .

And not only did Christianity originate and flourish in Jerusalem, it went on to triumph over a number of competing ideologies and eventually overwhelm the entire Roman Empire. . . .

Imagine with me for a moment that the year is 1963. You happen to be in the city of Dallas for work. You hear that the President, John F. Kennedy, is going to be driving through the city in a motorcade on his way to give a speech.

So, you go. Moments later, the horrifying shots ring out, and sadly, you witness the assassination of our 35th President.

Question for you.

How hard would it have been in the weeks following that tragic event to convince thousands of people in the city of Dallas (who were there and saw J.F.K. die) that he came back to life after he was buried? Pretty much impossible, right?

You might convince a few people, but you'd have an incredibly hard time convincing hundreds of people.

Why?

People didn't rise from the grave in America in the twentieth century. And the same was true in ancient Israel. People didn't rise from the grave then either. And yet, in the days immediately following Jesus' crucifixion (a death attested to by Roman and Jewish historians outside the New Testament) thousands of Jews who lived in Jerusalem and who knew Jesus had died, suddenly converted to Christianity, convinced Jesus rose from the grave. How does one explain this? . . .

Friend, at this very hour, the ashes of . . .

- Siddhartha Guatama (now known as the Buddha) lie in a grave at the foot of the Himalayan Mountains
- Muhammad, the founder of Islam, is buried in Medina, Saudi Arabia
- Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, is buried in Nauvoo, Illinois
- Charles Darwin is buried at Westminster Abbey in London
- Karl Marx is buried at Highgate Cemetery in North London

They are all dead and their graves are occupied.

Only Jesus Christ proved that what He said was true by rising from the dead. This is great reason to rejoice, Christian. Your Savior, the one you follow, is alive! You're not following the teachings of some dead man. No. You are walking through this life with Jesus, the true and living God who can be known, called upon, and trusted daily! So, I urge you to do that.

- <http://bit.ly/3m9rrvc>

Make no mistake about it, Jesus really rose from the grave and that is what we will look at next – ***IS THERE EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION?***

You bet there is. But what is the evidence we have regarding the resurrection of Jesus?

Let me share with you some of the evidence that there was a physical resurrection of Jesus, that He is not just some kind of ghost you might say!

First of all, we know in His resurrection body that it was a real body, it had flesh and bones.

Remember what we read in John 20:27, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, as Thomas is before Him and doubting, Jesus tells him to, “**. . . ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’**”

If this was not a physical body, then Thomas would not be able to touch Jesus!

Remember when Mary was clinging to Jesus after His death and resurrection and in John 20:17 Jesus said to Mary, “**. . . ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’**””

You can't cling to an immaterial being or some kind of ghost but Jesus was no ghost, He was flesh and bones.

In fact, in Luke 24:39 we see Jesus make that exact point, "**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.**"

In other words, Jesus rose bodily from the grave and that is great comfort to us that we too will rise from the grave with new bodies just as Jesus!

Not only that but we also see Jesus eat four different times with His men after His death and resurrection.

You will find that in Luke 24:30 as Jesus ate dinner with the two disciples.

Then, in Luke 24:42-43, later that evening, He ate with the ten apostles.

In John 21:12-13 Jesus ate breakfast with the seven apostles.

And lastly, in Acts 1:4 He ate with all the apostles just before His ascension.

If He did not have a physical body in the resurrection, He would not eat with them!

According to Paul in I Corinthians chapter 15 there were over 500 witnesses of the resurrected Christ before His ascension.

Now maybe one or two might make a mistake but not over 500 and Paul tells the Corinthians that if they don't believe him to check it out for themselves because many were still living during the writing of Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

I think the evidence is overwhelming that Jesus rose from the dead in a physical body.

But what about non-biblical sources regarding the resurrection, are there any?

Yes, there are.

Let me share this with you from Flavius Josephus who wrote after the time of Christ,

“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; *for he appeared to them alive again the third day*; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”

I think that is pretty clear, that Jesus appeared to them alive on the third day!

Also, reporting on Emperor Nero’s decision to blame the Christians for the fire that had destroyed Rome in A.D. 64, the Roman historian Tacitus wrote,

Nero fastened the guilt . . . 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 . . . 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. . . .”

Did you see that?

He wrote about “*a most mischievous superstition*” regarding Christ or Christus, and it seems to be speaking of His resurrection and how this had spread not only in Judea, but also in Rome!

I truly believe if you look at the evidence for the resurrection, you will see that He has risen.

Let me give you a couple of examples to show you what I mean.

Dr. Simon Greenleaf of Harvard University was a very verbal skeptic of Christianity. He wrote a set of books called *THE LAWS OF LEGAL EVIDENCE*.

Dr. Greenleaf was challenged by his students to apply these books to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He accepted the offer, and in the process, he became a Christian.

His conclusion was *“The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best established events of history, according to the laws of legal evidence administered in the courts of justice.”*

In other words, if you place the resurrection of Jesus on trial, the evidence is overwhelming, He is risen!

Also, the Guinness Book’s record-holder for most successful trial lawyer, Sir Lionel Luckhoo, examined the evidence for Christ’s resurrection and wound up giving his life to Jesus Christ.

Sir Edward Clarke wrote,

As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the first Easter Day. 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. Inference follows on evidence, and a truthful witness is always artless and disdains effect. The Gospel evidence for the resurrection is of this class, and as a lawyer I accept it unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts they were able to substantiate.

- Cited in J. R. W. Stott, Basic Christianity p. 47

Also, Oxford professor Thomas Arnold wrote,

The evidence for our Lord's life and death and resurrection may be, and often has been, shown to be satisfactory; it is good according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece as carefully as every judge summing upon a most important case. I have myself done it many times over, not to persuade others but to satisfy myself.

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.

- Wilbur M. Smith, *Therefore Stand: Christian Apologetics*, pp. 425-426

You see, as William Lane Craig said, it all comes down to this,

Without the belief in the resurrection the Christian faith could not have come into being. The disciples would have remained crushed and defeated men. Even had they continued to remember Jesus as their beloved teacher, his crucifixion would have forever silenced any hopes of his being the Messiah. The cross would have remained the sad and shameful end of his career. The origin of Christianity therefore hinges on the belief of the early disciples that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

- William Lane Craig

I think the evidence is overwhelming; Christ is risen from the dead and has given to us eternal life if we would receive Him into our lives as Lord and Savior.

You can reject the resurrection, but it does not change the fact, the tomb is empty!

You see, the Old Testament prophets testified of His death and resurrection hundreds of years before the event occurred.

Jesus predicted that He was going to die and on the third day rise from the dead. The tomb is empty; you can go and see for yourself!

Many people saw the risen Lord, over 500!

The lives of the disciples were changed after the death and resurrection of Jesus; they were bold in their faith as they were empowered by God to spread the Gospel message!

The resurrection of Jesus was the central teaching of the early church.

And folks, our lives have been touched by the risen Lord!

Let me leave you with this to think about. We are told,

This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussion, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.

- Philip Schaff, The Person of Christ

HE IS RISEN! THE TOMB IS EMPTY, WON'T YOU COME AND SEE!