

Article: The Empty Tomb and the Resurrection

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The belief in the resurrection – that Jesus Christ rose from the dead – is central to Christianity. If this belief were wrong, the entire Christian religion is false, and as a result then, your faith is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:14). If Christ was not raised from death, then you are still in your sins. How? *By God raising Jesus from the dead, He showed that sin and death were truly defeated, because by Jesus' being raised, God showed that Jesus' sacrifice for your sins was acceptable and that the full price had been paid.* Jesus Christ's resurrection proved to all that Jesus Christ's life and death was enough to cover every single one of your sins. God's wrath against your sin is satisfied. Not only this, but Jesus' resurrection proved that He was the divine Son of God (and not just a false teacher claiming to be the Jewish messiah), for by God raising Jesus, God vindicated Jesus for you, proving that what Jesus claimed was true, that He was the Saviour, the Christ-Messiah, the one who saves you from your sins (Matthew 1:21). If Jesus was not raised, then Jesus was a false teacher. But Jesus is raised, and you now have a confident hope!

Many atheists, agnostics, and other religions reject the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They claim that someone raising from the dead simply does not happen, because people don't rise from the dead. While it is certainly true that no one usually rises from the dead, because people are simply dead, the evidence shows that Jesus truly did rise from the dead. People who *outright reject miracles* – and Jesus rising from the dead is such a miracle – will never believe Jesus rose from the dead, for they reject any evidence for the resurrection before they even examine it. Yet, as a Christian, you have a confident hope, for because of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, you know that you have the forgiveness of sins and that it has been won by the death of Christ, and proved – vindicated – by His resurrection (Hebrews 11:1). In spite of all the arguments used by those who reject the resurrection, you as a Christians should be reminded that every 'argument' against the resurrection fails, and that your confident hope in the resurrection of Christ remains.

Argument #1: The "Swoon" or "Coma" Theory. Because of the historicity of Jesus – that he truly lived – and the evidence in favour of Christ's resurrection, some sceptics try to deny the resurrection of Jesus by claiming that Jesus did not actually **die** on the cross but simply fell into a deep sleep or a coma, and then, he only walked out of the tomb three days later. This is ridiculous, for the Romans knew how to kill people; and, no one survives crucifixion. On a cross, one dies by asphyxiation: you cannot breathe. Your arms nailed to the side make it harder to breathe, and eventually, you become too tired and run out of strength to keep yourself up to breathe. On a cross, you die; no one survives. Not only this, but the Romans ensured every person going through crucifixion was dead, and they found Jesus dead (John 19:33). Therefore, you can be beyond confident that Jesus died on the cross.

Argument #2: The "Theft" Theory. Other sceptics claim that Jesus' body was stolen from the tomb, by either the Jews, the Romans, a grave robber, or the disciples. It is firstly important to remember that the Jewish chief priests, the Pharisees, the Roman soldiers, the women, and the disciples all knew which tomb Jesus was in, and the Roman soldiers guarded this tomb (Matthew 27:62-66; Mark 15:47, Luke 23:55). In Roman Military Law, being assigned to guard a tomb, and failing to do so meant you could have faced execution, especially if you were negligent or asleep. Sceptics believe that Jesus' body was stolen from the tomb, either by the Jews, the Romans, a grave robber, or the disciples. This is simply wrong because: **1)** If the Jews had stolen the body, then when the disciple's claimed Jesus was risen, they could have shown the body and said, "*No he is dead*" and Christianity would have fallen apart. The Jews had no intention of stealing the body, because they wanted to make sure the body was in the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66); **2)** If the Romans had stolen the body, they also would have simply shown the body, because Rome did not want uprisings of any kind against their authority, and showing Jesus' dead body would have stopped this growing movement instantly. Both the Romans and the Jews both persecuted the early Christians, and both groups wanted Jesus' body to remain in the tomb, which is why they posted guards to the tomb (Matthew 27:62-

66). For this reason, this prevents either **3)** a grave robber or **4)** the disciples stealing the body, because the Roman soldiers were guarding the tomb.

Argument #3: The “Hallucination” Theory. This theory suggests that Jesus appearing to the 11 disciples (John 20:26) and to 500 people at once (1 Corinthians 15:6) was simply a hallucination experienced by all of them. However, this is obviously ridiculous because two people do not hallucinate the same thing, let alone 7, 11, or 500. Even if all these people were genuinely hallucinating, it would only take one look in the tomb to find Jesus’ dead body and prove he was not risen. Therefore, this theory – concocted by sceptics – is also false.

Argument #4: The “Mistaken Identity” or “Twin” Theory. This theory claims that the disciples and followers of Jesus mistook another person for Jesus, suggesting that Jesus may have had a secret twin who now claimed to be Him after His death. However, there are two main issues with this theory: **1)** The disciples lived with Jesus for over three years, so they would absolutely know if the person claiming to be Jesus was someone else, especially if that person had different mannerisms and ways of speaking; and **2)** All it would take is a quick look in the tomb to see Jesus’ dead body, proving He was not risen and that the person claiming to be Jesus was an imposter.

Argument #5: The “Lettuce” or “Gardener” Theory. This theory suggests that a gardener moved Jesus’ body to a different tomb because he had planted a new garden and was annoyed that people walked over it. However, this theory is false because everyone knew which tomb Jesus was placed in, and they saw the stone being rolled in front of the tomb to seal it on Friday (Mark 15:46-7). Moreover, it is illogical because more people would have walked over his garden if that were true. This theory lacks any historical support and was only created by sceptics attempting to disprove the resurrection of Jesus.

Argument #6: The “Fraud” Theory. The most common theory is the “**fraud**” theory, which says that the disciples just lied and said Jesus rose from the dead. But this theory is also ridiculous because: (1) This theory claims that the disciples lied and then willingly got tortured, imprisoned, abused and ultimately were killed for a lie, which simply does not happen, and that none of the disciples ever recanted and took back what they said which they would have known to be a lie if they were making it all up, and (2) This theory relies on the fact that the tomb was empty but with no explanation as to why, in spite of the guards guarding it, and if the disciples were making the entire story up, all the Jews or Romans would have to do was show Jesus’ dead body in the tomb and the entire movement would have stopped. This theory is also false.

All these theories show that there is no likely explanation given for why the tomb remained empty. Therefore, you can also say that it is a fact that the tomb was empty; and this fact changes everything. The most plausible remaining option is that Jesus did, in fact, rise from the dead, just as the New Testament says. Yes, you yourself know that people don’t rise from the dead, but this is what you believe happened based on the evidence. This is a Christian’s hope, this is your hope, that Jesus Christ did indeed rise from the dead. Believing that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead is a belief, but it is a confident belief by which everything in the world and in your life revolves around: Jesus Christ rose from the dead. And you now have eternal life! Praise be to God for this good news!