



## **Figtreewatchers Podcast Episode 147: Apologetics: Defending the Resurrection of Jesus (Part 2)**

### **What is apologetics?**

Apologetics comes from the Greek word “apologia” which means “verbal defence, speech in defence” or “a reasoned statement or argument”. Peter uses “apologia” in 1 Peter 3:15 when saying we should give a defense of the hope that is in us.

The bible tells us we should be ready to give an answer to people for the hope that is in us, **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear,”** (1 Peter 3:15).

We're also told to “contend earnestly for the faith”, **“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints,”** (Jude 1:3).

### **Review: 6 Arguments for the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus**

**Multiple Sources Attest to Crucifixion**

The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus...is attested to by several sources throughout the NT as well as non-Christian sources (Josephus, Tacitus, et al.)

The event is embarrassing and not something that the earliest disciples would likely have invented.

### **Multiple Sources Attest to Burial**

...the only positive evidence we have regarding Jesus' burial is unanimous that Jesus was, in fact, buried. No competing burial accounts exist...archeology provides evidence that crucified victims received a proper burial.

### **Empty Tomb**

The opponents of Jesus inadvertently acknowledge that the tomb was empty when they claim that the disciples stole Jesus's body (Matt. 28:11–15).

The early message of the resurrection was proclaimed in Jerusalem, thus making the earliest apostles' claim easily verifiable since the tomb was in that very city.

### **Appearances of the Risen Christ**

Virtually every Bible scholar across the Western world, regardless of religious background, agrees that Jesus' earliest followers believed he appeared to them alive.

The first people to experience and proclaim the empty tomb were the women followers. If one were to fabricate an empty tomb and risen Jesus in first-century Mediterranean culture, one would not cite women as eyewitnesses, given their low status as credible witnesses in the eyes of the people and the courts.

### **Disciples Willing to Suffer**

While many have died for something they believed to be true (including Christians today), the earliest Christians were willing to suffer and die for what they knew to be true.

### **Conversion of Non-believers**

Paul provides his own account of his conversion from being a persecutor of the church to a follower of Jesus. James, the brother of the Lord, was considered a skeptic during Jesus ministry but is later converted.

## **Alternate Theories about the Resurrection**

1. Apparent Death Theory (also known as "swoon" theory)
2. Theft Theory
3. Hallucination Theory
4. Wrong Tomb Theory

The goal of the theories is to explain the facts surrounding the resurrection to arrive at a non-supernatural explanation, or deny the resurrection altogether.

## **Apparent Death Theory**

**Claim:** Jesus didn't actually die on the cross but only appeared to die. After the crucifixion he was placed in the tomb unconscious, but alive. Later He revived in the tomb, took off his burial wrappings, unsealed the tomb, and shown himself to his disciples as risen.

This theory aims to explain away the supernatural element of the resurrection by claiming that Jesus actually fainted and due to that just walked out of the tomb which explains the missing tomb.

**Refutation:** The claim is widely critized and discredited. "Since 1835, no serious scholar has been willing to support the idea that Jesus merely swooned and was revived after being taken down from the cross. The apparent death theory fails to account for the known fact," (Evidence That Demands a Verdict, pg 276). The evidence - both historical and medical - argues against the possibility of survival.

### **Several reasons this can't be the case:**

1. The nature of his injuries - his whipping beating, lack of sleep, crown of thorns, and his collapse on the way to his crucifixion while carrying the cross - were so life-endangering in themselves that crucifixion would have completed the murder
2. The nature of crucifixion virtually guarantes death from asphyxiation.
3. The piercing of Jesus' side, from which came "blood and water" John 19:34), indicating serum separated from clotted blood, gives medical evidence that Jesus had already died.
4. The Roman soldiers, who were trained executioners, were charged to make sure that he died. Even though it was customary for soldiers to speed death by breaking the legs of the victims, they did not break his legs, for their examination determined that he was already dead (John 19:33).
5. Jesus' body was wrapped in about a hundred pounds of cloth and spices, and placed in a sealed tomb until the third day (John 19:39, 40; Matt. 27:60). If Jesus had not died from his previous torture, he would have died in the tomb from lack of food, water, and medical treatment.

Even if Jesus managed to survive the crucifixion, unwrapped his body, how would he manage to unroll the stone and get past the guards undetected, all in a severely injured and exhausted state?

In an article in the peer-reviewed Journal of the American Medical Association, William D. Edwards, Wesley J. Gabel, and Floyd E. Hsomer write: "...Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not

only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge, (Evidence That Demands a Verdict, pg 277).

## **Theft Theory**

**Claim 1:** The disciples stole Jesus' body from the tomb (which was sealed and guarded) and lied that he was raised from the dead

**Claim 2:** Grave robbers stole his body and the disciples and followers discovered the tomb empty and made them think that he was raised from the dead when he wasn't

### **Refutation:**

#### **Disciples were scared**

The disciples were scared and in hiding and would not have wanted to take on a sealed and guarded tomb, since they were probably afraid of suffering the same fate that Jesus had suffered: crucifixion, (Evidence That Demands a Verdict, pg 277).

They had already run away after Jesus was arrested just as Jesus predicted would occur in Matthew 26:31.

#### **Empty Tomb doesn't account for alleged appearances**

Simply hearing that Jesus' tomb was empty wouldn't have convinced Paul who was persecuting the church, or James who already rejected Jesus. Mary Magdalene upon seeing the empty tomb thought the body was stolen. Peter was unconvinced as was Thomas. Even if the body was stolen, this calls into question the cause of the tomb being empty, but doesn't call the resurrection into question. It was alleged post-resurrection appearances that convinced Jesus' followers and led to changed minds and conversions.

#### **Tomb was guarded and sealed**

According to Matthew 27:62-66, Jesus' tomb was guarded. For the Jews or any type of grave robber to get Jesus' body, they would've had to fight off the guards and unroll the stone first which was incredibly unlikely.

#### **The Jews were not expecting a resurrection**

Jews that believed in a resurrection believed that it would occur at the end of time and for all humans. Jesus' resurrection contrasted to this as it occurred before the end of time and to only one person - him.

...resurrection was not the first thing the disciples concluded when discovering the tomb empty. They immediately jumped to naturalistic conclusions, just as any modern person would.

Consider their various responses:

- Someone moved the body (John 20:2).

- The gardener moved the body (John 20:13-15).
- The women were accused of speaking nonsense, and the men did not believe them (Luke 24:1-11).
- The body was stolen (Matt. 28:11-15).

It was not until after they saw him that they started to understand he had been resurrected, (Evidence That Demands a Verdict, pg 286). Due to this, none of them could've created a fake resurrection story because it wasn't even in the minds of the Jews at that time.

## **Hallucination Theory**

**Claim:** The followers of Jesus didn't actually see the risen Jesus, what they experienced was a hallucination.

**Refutation:** while arguably the most widely held naturalistic theory for the resurrection, the hallucination theory lacks the most evidential support for its case - more than any of the other theories.

### **Doesn't account for the missing body**

The hallucination theory fails to explain why Jesus' body was never recovered and presented to dispel the supposed hallucinations people would've had of him risen. If it was a hallucination, where was the body?

### **Group Hallucinations Lack Scientific Support**

It should be noted that scientific hallucination studies lack data on group hallucination phenomena. Why?...hallucination is an internal mental event and observes how unlikely it would be, given the lack of a shared external stimulus, for multiple people to experience the same hallucination.

Since hallucinations are mental events with no external referent, one cannot share in the hallucination of another, (Evidence That Demands a Verdict, pg 289)

Gary A. Sibey is a licensed clinical psychologist with a Ph.D. in the subject and has a great interest in whether hallucinations can be shared by groups. He writes, "I have surveyed the professional literature (peer-reviewed journal articles and books) written by psychologists, psychiatrists, and other relevant healthcare professionals during the past two decades and have yet to find a single documented case of a group hallucination, that is, an event for which more than one person purportedly shared in a visual or other sensory perception where there was clearly no external referent, "(Evidence That Demands a Verdict, pg 290)

### **Philosophers Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli offer several more reasons the theory fails:**

1. There were too many witnesses. Hallucinations are private, individual, subjective... And Paul says in this passage ([1 Corinthians 15] v. 6) that most of the five hundred are still

alive, inviting any reader to check the truth of the story by questioning the eyewitnesses - he could never have done this and gotten away with it, given the power, resources and numbers of his enemies, if it were not true.

2. Hallucinations usually last a few seconds or minutes; rarely hours. This one hung around for forty days (Acts 1:3).
3. Hallucinations usually happen only once, except to the insane. This one returned many times, to ordinary people (In 20:19-21:14; Acts 1:3).
4. The disciples touched him (Mt 28:9; Lk 24:39; In 20:27).
5. They also spoke with him, and he spoke back. Figments of your imagination do not hold profound, extended conversations with you...But this "hallucination conversed with at least eleven people at once, for forty days (Acts 1:3).

## **Wrong Tomb Theory**

**Claim:** Those that went to Jesus' tomb, actually went to the wrong tomb and thought it was Jesus'. When they found the wrong tomb empty, they incorrectly came to the conclusion that He was resurrected

### **Refutation:**

#### **The Jews were not expecting a resurrection**

Went against the grain of Jewish thought during the time regarding the resurrection and Jesus' followers came up with naturalistic explanations to explain the empty tomb, not that he was raised.

#### **Doesn't explain later conversions**

This theory doesn't explain how the followers of Jesus changed their minds and how some converted such as Paul and James.

#### **Several other problems with this theory:**

1. Even if the disciples went to the wrong tomb, this does not account for their belief that they had seen the risen Jesus.
2. No sources support the wrong tomb theory. If the women and disciples had gone to the wrong tomb, all that the Roman and Jewish authorities would have had to do would have been to go to the right tomb, exhume the body, publicly display it, and clear up the misunderstanding. Yet, not a single critic is recorded to have even thought of this explanation for the Resurrection during the first few centuries of Christianity.
3. The evidence suggests that the tomb's location was known, because a well-known man, Joseph of Arimathea, buried Jesus in his own tomb.

## **Summary**

**Evidence That Demands pg 275** - Non-miraculous explanations of what happened at the empty tomb have to face a cruel choice: either they have to rewrite the evidence in order to suit themselves or they have to accept the fact that they are not consistent with present evidence. The only hypothesis that fits the evidence is that Jesus was really resurrected. Could the Man who predicted His death and resurrection, only to have it come to pass exactly as He had said, be anything but God?

## **Sources**

1. Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell & Sean McDowell