

The Real Easter Story

The Post-Resurrection Scene

1. The Empty tomb

A. In the book of Acts, there is enormous emphasis on the fact of the resurrection, but not a single reference to an empty tomb... why? Because everyone knew it was empty. You could go and look for yourself. Even the Jewish leaders didn't argue about the tomb being empty. They just made up a reason to explain it (**Matthew 28:11-15**). The only questions worth discussing was 1) why was it empty and 2) what did it mean, or prove?

2. The grave clothes

A. The body clothes would have formed into somewhat of a 'soft cast' because of the ointments. The face clothes didn't have nearly as much ointment on them. Maybe this is why one of the disciples looked at the grave clothes and believed (**John 20: 3-9**). They had not been touched or manipulated by any human being.

B. Even if robbers had broken in and stolen the body (how could they do that with the Roman guards?), they would have left the grave clothes strewn about as time was of the essence. They would not have spent the time redoing them; indeed, they couldn't redo them in the exact position that the grave clothes had been in.

3. The Roman guard

A. **Matthew 28:11-15**: The Jewish leaders never questioned the report of the Roman guards. The guards wouldn't have come back with such an incredible story if it wasn't true. The stone was rolled away, the Roman Seal was broken and the body was gone... They were dead men; if they'd fallen asleep at their post, they'd be killed instantly by their superiors. Their negligence, in any case, was punishable by death; their only choice was to accept the Jewish leaders' 'story' and then let them go to bat for them with the guards' superiors.

B. The Jewish leaders, by not questioning the guards' testimony, gave tacit approval to the tomb's emptiness. All the Jewish leaders had to do was produce a body, but they couldn't. If the soldiers had been sleeping, how could they say the disciples stole the body?

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4. The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus

- A. To Mary Magdalene: *John 20:14* and *Mark 16:9*
- B. To women returning from the tomb: *Matthew 28:9,10*
- C. To Peter later in the day: *Luke 24:34* and *1st Corinthians 15:5*
- D. To the Emmaus disciples: *Luke 24:13-33*
- E. To the apostles, Thomas absent: *Luke 24:36-43* and *John 20:19-24*
- F. To the apostles, Thomas present: *John 20:26-29*
- G. To the seven by the Tiberius Lake: *John 21:1-23*
- H. To 500+ believers on a Galilean mountain: *1st Corinthians 15:6*
- I. To James: *1st Corinthians 15:7*
- J. At the Ascension: *Acts 1:3-12*
- K. To Stephan: *Acts 7:55*
- L. To Paul: *Acts 9:3-6* and *1st Corinthians 15:8*
- M. To Paul in the temple: *Acts 22:17-21* and *Acts 23:11*
- N. To John on the Isle of Patmos: *Revelation 1:10-19*

5. The enemies of Christ did not refute the resurrection.

- A. In the four gospels, the book of Acts and all first century literature for that region, there is no mention of the grave being anything but empty.

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6. Established Psychological Facts (continued)

B. The transformed lives of 2000 years of history:

Men and women, throughout the last 2000 years of history, have had the same experience as the early disciples – transformed lives by Jesus Christ. From scientists, like James Clerk Maxwell (discoverer of the laws of electro-magnetism) to prostitutes to the leader of the Pearl Harbor attack (Mitsuo Fuchida), to criminals to gang leaders (Nicky Cruz), to sports players to billionaires to cartoonists (Charles Schulz, Johnny Hart), to authors (C.S. Lewis), to businessmen to doctors (several here in Jackson), to political leaders (like John Ashcroft), to skeptics (Lew Wallace, author of 'Ben-Hur'), and the list goes on and on. Napoleon (not a believer) once said that he could not imagine that his soldiers would die for him AFTER he was dead. But that is exactly what he saw with the followers of Jesus Christ; they were willing to die for their belief in Jesus Christ, rather than renounce Him. Wherever Christianity has spread, it produces results like this. People willing to die rather than renounce their belief in Jesus Christ. Even today, in third world countries like Sudan, believers are being killed, tortured, raped and maimed for their belief in Jesus. It is subjective evidence bearing witness to the objective fact that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. For only a risen Christ could have such transforming power in a person's life.

Lesson 4

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7. Established Sociological Facts

A. The Christian church (that is, the body of Christ as a whole):

For whatever the Christian church has not done well, through the ages, there are many things that it has done well, even in our current times. Never has an institution, such as the Christian church, done so much good for so many people all over the world for so many years. Most of the hospitals, orphanages and soup kitchens in the world were started by Christians and/or churches. Church missionaries have brought health (physical and psychological), education and advancement to remote tribes that the world had forgotten about or did not care enough about. Today, many churches have 'care' ministries such as marriage counseling, small-group care, child care, parenting help, substance abuse help, day-care, etc. etc. Please show me an atheist, agnostic, secular humanist, Buddhist or Hinduist organization that has done these things. Until modern times, even governments didn't do this. But because of the commands of Jesus Christ, the church has been doing these things SINCE IT BEGAN. And the results are irrefutable! Changed lives and a changed world!
HE IS RISEN...! HE IS RISEN INDEED...!

Lesson 4

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The Post-Resurrection Scene

Some important points:

Before Jesus left, He gave us instructions for what to do until His return

Matthew 28:16-20 and ***Mark 16:14-20***

He will return to this earth physically

Acts 1:1-11

The apostle Paul made the resurrection the central proof of Christianity; without it, there is no Christianity. ***1st Corinthians 15:13-20***

Jesus staked His whole ministry on the fact that He would rise from the dead

Matthew 12:38-40 and ***John 2:18-22***

No other person in all of history has claimed that he would rise from the dead while he was still alive, then actually do it – and – leave ample proof that he did, in fact, do it.