

What Christians Believe About...

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Part 1 - The Evidence

A PowerPoint study from EffectiveChildrensMinistry.org

NOTE

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POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

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[He is Risen background] You might like to have this displayed while the group is getting settled.

[Click Title] - What Christians believe about... (pause) the Resurrection

What do Christians believe happened?

[Click—Calvary scene] ...Jesus was arrested, tried and crucified.

[Click— A tomb] ...He was buried in a tomb.

[Click—Stone being rolled] ...The tomb was sealed with a great rock.

[Click—stone away from entrance] ...Three days after his death and burial, his tomb was found to be empty.

[Click—Jesus had come alive again] ...He had come alive again.

These beliefs are the foundation of Christianity, which spread throughout the world, starting first in Jerusalem.

[Click - Magnifying glass and notes pad]

So, what is the evidence?

[Click—Roman seal and clay impression]

Evidence 1. Broken Seal (See Matt. 27:62-66)

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor at the time.

[Click— Pontius Pilate and Jewish religious leaders]

He was asked by the religious leaders to supply a guard and seal the stone.

They had remembered Jesus saying that he would rise from the dead after three days.

[Click— Speech bubble: “His disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead.”]

They were afraid that if the tomb were not guarded the disciples would steal the body and say that Jesus was alive.

[Click— Speech bubble: Pilate’s answer]

Pilate said: “You have a guard: go, make it as secure as you know how” (Matthew 27:65).

It might have been done a bit like this.

[Click— diagram of tomb]

The grave was like a cave in the side of a hill. A huge stone was rolled in front of the entrance.

[Click— cord and seals over stone]

It was sealed using a cord stuck into clay or wax. The cord would not stop anyone getting in, but it would be broken and immediately noticed if someone tried to interfere with the stone.

The soldiers were crack troops!

[Click— troop of Roman soldiers]

The word “guard” is the Greek word *kustodia*, the Romans spelt it *custodia*, from which we get our English word “custodian”, which means someone who takes care of something and looks after it.

The use of this particular word shows us that this was **[CLICK]** not a Jewish temple guard, but a **[CLICK]** Roman guard.

This is important because **[CLICK]** the Roman army had highly disciplined and skilled soldiers at the tomb. **[CLICK]** Interfering with the Roman seal meant the death penalty.

[CLICK] No one would dare break the seal!

The followers of Jesus knew that if they were caught, it meant automatic execution by crucifixion. We know they were very afraid of what might happen because later, when they saw the seal had been broken, they hid away.

[Click— Open tomb and title]

Evidence 2. The Stone moved away

The tombs in Palestine were like a cave cut out of the rocky hillside. The opening of the cave-grave was covered by a large circular stone set in a sloping groove. The stone was wedged, and when anyone wanted to cover the entrance, they knocked out the wedge and the stone rolled down the slope by itself.

[Click—The weight of the stone]

Scientists have worked out that the weight of such a stone would be between one and a half tons and two tons

[Click—Elephant] As heavy as a small elephant

[Click— Car no wheels] *Or as heavy as a car, but the stone had no wheels to help push it along. It would have needed several men to move the stone back up the groove and wedge it again it.*

But something strange and wonderful amazed the people who came to the tomb on resurrection Sunday.

[Click— Stone away from tomb]

Not only had the stone been moved away from the entrance of the grave, **but it was a long way away from the cave.** All four gospel writers mention it. The Greek words used in the Bible accounts have the meaning that the stone was not rolled only a little way, just enough for someone to get in or out of the cave-grave. But that it was rolled a long way—up a slope and completely away from the whole cave.

[Click—Man with think bubble: Who moved the stone?]

But who would roll away the stone?

[Click]—Was it the Roman and religious leaders?

They wanted to keep his body there and the door sealed (Matt. 27:62-66). They knew that Jesus had predicted he would come to life three days after dying. They wanted no chance of the Christians stealing the body and hoaxing people with a pretend resurrection. Neither the Jewish leaders nor the Roman leaders wanted Christianity to become more popular.

[Click— NO!] So it was not the Roman or Jewish leaders who rolled away the stone.

[Click]—Was it the disciples?

They knew the tomb was guarded by a crack squad of fighting men. They would have been too afraid of the Romans. And anyway, even if the men had done it, they can't have told the women. Because the women went on the Sunday expecting to find the body (John 20:1-2).

[CLICK—No!] So the disciples did not roll back the stone.

[Click]—Was it the women? They could never have managed it by themselves. While they were going to the tomb on the Sunday morning, they were wondering who would roll away the stone for them. (Mark 16:2-8).

[Click—No!] It definitely was not the women.

So, who did roll away the stone?

[Click—Angel] The Bible tells us it was an angel of the Lord. (Matthew 28:2-4)

The reason it was rolled away was NOT so that Christ could come out of the tomb. With his resurrected body he could pass right through the stone (as he did when he later came into the locked room where the disciples were).

The reason God had the stone moved away was so that people could look into the tomb and see that Jesus' body was not there—and also to see something else amazing that proved that Jesus was alive.

It was the third piece of evidence that Jesus had come alive again...

[Click— Body in grave clothes]

Evidence 3. The Grave clothes

These are powerful evidence of the resurrection from the dead of Jesus.

In those days the people at the funeral (mourners) started at the feet and tightly wound the cloth round and round the body, like a huge bandage.

As they went they poured on about 100 lbs weight of spices and ointments. These dried and hardened into a sort of "cocoon". The cloth for the face was put on separately.

[Click– Bible text John 20:6-9]

The original Greek words used in this passage from the Bible say that the grave clothes were still in the form that they would have taken if they were wrapped round the body.

It also goes on to say

[Click–Remainder of this quote]

“Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, went in too; **and he saw and was convinced and believed.**”

[Click– Man and think bubble: “Why are grave clothes so convincing?”]

Why are the grave clothes so convincing as evidence that Jesus came alive? Why was the disciple convinced after seeing them?

[Click–Body in grave clothes again]

If anyone wanted to steal the body, they would have to cut open the cloth that was now stiffened with the gum and spices like a hard cocoon. They would have to pull back the material enough to get the body out. Or else they would steal the body still in its grave clothes. Remember, they would have had to carry the dead body plus the 100 pound weight of the grave clothes! A very difficult task (with guards around as well!)

A second reason why the grave clothes are convincing evidence that Jesus came alive and passed right through them is that an ordinary person inside the clothes, even if they came alive, would never manage to get themselves untied.

[Click–Lazarus coming from the grave]

Jesus brought a man back from the dead. When Lazarus came out of his grave, Jesus told the men there to take the grave clothes off Lazarus, because he needed help to get out of them
(John 11:44)

So to find the grave clothes of Jesus not cut apart, but still intact and wound up, without the body in them, was amazing.

[Click–face napkin]

Another very important detail was the wrapping for the face. This was a separate piece, and it was found not bundled with the other cloth but separately.

[Click–Bible passage] Here it is again.

The Greek word translated “wrapped together” in the KJV means “rolled or wound round”. We already saw the part of the Bible referring to that.

This is exactly how the napkin would have been used—rolled, placed under the chin and tied on top of the head. The language in the passage suggests that it remained still in its roughly circular form, just as it would be on the head of the dead Jesus.

[Click–Conclusions]

All this evidence points to these conclusions:

No one took Christ's body, but he came alive aghain and rose up through the grave clothes with his resurrected body, leaving the empty clothes still in place.

[Click–Title...pause...background picture of open tomb]

Evidence 4. The Empty tomb

Most people at the time of Jesus resurrection accepted that the tomb was empty. Even the enemies of the Christians did not try to say that Jesus' body was still in the grave.

[Click—religious leaders]

The authorities did try to contradict the disciples when they preached about the resurrection of Jesus. But if Jesus was still dead, they could easily have proved the disciples wrong.

All they needed to do was produce the body of Jesus. They didn't, because they couldn't—the body was no longer on the grave. That tomb was now empty!

That was why they started the rumour that the disciples had stolen the body and bribed the guards to lie. They had to say that, as an excuse for an empty grave!

[Click—man writing]

Both Jewish and Roman documents and traditions agree there grave was empty.

[Click] **Gamaliel**, who was a member of the Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin, suggested that the rise of the Christian movement was God's doing; he could not have done that if the tomb were still occupied, or if the Sanhedrin (the Jewish religious leaders) knew where Christ's body was.

[Click] **Josephus** was a first century Jew writing history for the Romans. The Romans were hostile to Christians, so the fact that Josephus recorded the detail of the empty tomb is evidence that it could not be denied.

[Click—Conclusion]

The tomb must have been empty on the Sunday. No one has ever produced evidence to prove otherwise.

[Click—The Women]

Evidence 5. The women

The facts add up!

[Click] **Women were considered very inferior** in Jewish society. Jewish men always wanted sons and regretted having daughters.

[Click] **Women were not allowed to give evidence in court.** What they had to say would only be worthless, the Jews said.

[Click] **Yet it was women who first found the tomb empty!** They told the men (who didn't believe them at first and thought they were crazy).

[Click] Surely, if the disciples had wanted to spin a story to convince everyone that Jesus was now alive, **they would not have chosen women to be the first witnesses!**

[Click] This shows that the gospel accounts are true, because the **men would never have made up anything so embarrassing for themselves**, as women being the discoverers of the empty tomb.

[Click—Conclusion]

The Gospel account must be true, because the women are important witnesses and that goes against the usual culture.

If the men who wrote the Gospels had been lying about Jesus coming alive again, they would not had women involved in their story.

[Click—The Guards]

Evidence 6. The Guards

The guards were disturbed on their watch.

[Click— Things that happened]

There was an earthquake, an angel moved the stone, they saw the tomb was empty, they shook with fear and fell into a dead faint. (Matt 28:2-4)

Some left their post to go and tell the Jewish authorities what had happened. (Matt 28:11-15).

No self-respecting Roman soldier would have made this up - it was embarrassing to these fighting men.

[Click—Things the guards were told...]

The religious leaders bribed them to lie, to say they had been sleeping and during that time the disciples had stolen the body.

[Click—Soldier]

[Click—Big Lie]

That was a big lie and no one would believe that!

There were three big mistakes in their lie:

[Click]— How did they avoid the death penalty? To fall asleep on duty meant execution.

[Click]— How would a whole unit of guards fall asleep at the same time?

[Click]— How could they see what happened if they were asleep?

[Click—Conclusion] All this leads us to think: The resurrection must have really happened, or else why did the authorities lie to try to cover it up?

[Click—Appearances of Jesus]

Evidence 7. The Appearances of Jesus

[Click—two statements]

- Jesus came out of the grave alive.
- He was seen by hundreds of people

Only thirty years after the crucifixion, the apostle Paul wrote that the resurrected Christ had been seen by many people. He put some of them in a list.

[Click—Paul's list]

Peter, the 12 disciples, then more than 500 people.

[Click—Red arrow: many still alive]

Many of these witnesses were still alive when Paul wrote these things, so they were available to be questioned by critics.

Then James. He was the half-brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55 and Galatians 1:19) He was among those brothers who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, until he saw the living Christ after his resurrection.

All the Apostles (together) and finally Paul (then called Saul) himself. (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

[Click—Conclusion]

Jesus was seen alive by far too many people for the truth to be covered up. Many were available to be questioned at the time and later, yet they never changed their story.

[Click—Transformed disciples]

Evidence 8. Transformed disciples

Originally they had lost all hope, were scattered, and in terrible fear, they locked the doors whenever they met. But suddenly they were different!

[Click]— They immediately went public with the message that Jesus was alive! Nothing would stop them. Despite opposition, threats and death sentences they stayed in Jerusalem and preached their message there.

[Click]— They were not put off by opposition, threats and violence.

[Click]— The special day of the week on which they worshipped God changed to Sunday, the day Jesus rose from the dead.

[Click]— The disciples received God’s power to preach, heal, deliver—just as Jesus had told them would happen. He had said that when he came alive he would eventually go back to heaven and send the Holy Spirit to be their helper. (Acts 1:8)

[Click— Conclusion] Nothing could have brought about these massive changes in the disciples except the resurrection of Christ and his continued power.

[Click— Unbelievers converted, picture of Saul]

Evidence 9. Unbelievers converted

[Click— Saul the persecutor captian]

SAUL was a persecutor of Christians. He did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah (the person God had promised would come to save people from the punishment of their sins). He rounded up Christians, imprisoned them and even approved when they were killed.

Yet, when he met the risen Lord Jesus he acknowledged that Jesus was real and alive, and deserved to be Saul’s Lord.

This picture reminds us of the time when Saul was on the way to Damascus and saw the risen Jesus Christ. He was totally changed and chose to follow Jesus. Saul, later named Paul, became a great Christian leader and missionary.

[Click— Saul with his enemies]

He never turned back from following the risen Lord Jesus. Even when he was persecuted and tortured himself.

[Click—James]

JAMES was a half-brother of Jesus. He did not believe in the miracles of Jesus. He did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah. James was very fixed in his ideas, until he saw Jesus alive after the crucifixion. Then, like Paul, he became a loyal follower of Christ.

[Click—Summary]

We have examined nine very powerful pieces of evidence which show that Jesus really did come alive again after he had died on the cross and been buried.

Here are the pieces of evidence again, to think about.

[Click] 1. Broken seal—No one would have dared risk interfering with a Roman seal. Yet it was broken. Who could have done that?

[Click] 2. Stone moved away—The massive rock was too heavy for men or women to easily roll away. And besides, it was found far away from the tomb. Who could have moved the stone?

[Click] 3. Grave clothes—found uncut and exactly as they would have been placed on the body. Whose body could have disappeared and left the graveclothes totally undisturbed?

[Click] 4. Empty tomb— Why did the authorities not produce the body of Jesus to prove he had not come alive again?

[Click] 5. Women's evidence—The Bible says that they were the first to find the tomb empty and a woman was the first person to see Jesus alive again. When the culture of the time made women second rate, why does the Bible give them such an important place in the account of Jesus' resurrection?

[Click] 6. The Guards' false evidence—The authorities bribed the Roman guards to say they had fallen asleep on duty. Why were these guards not punished? And why did the Roman and religious leaders have to organize such a cover up?

[Click] 7. Appearance of Jesus alive again—So many people saw Jesus alive again, in so many different places and at different times. If you had that many eye-witnesses in a court today, telling the same things, it would be accepted as the truth.

[Click] 8. Disciples transformed by God's power—How else could they have been totally changed, except by the living Christ?

[Click] 9. Unbelievers changed their minds.—Saul and James did not believe in Jesus. They were opponents of Christ. Yet when they saw him alive, they believed he was God's Son and never wavered in their belief after that, even though they were persecuted.

[Click—He is risen background]

That is why Christians believe that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead and lives today!

[Click]

Now, what do you think?

[Click—Fade to black]

Bibliography

Evidence demanding a verdict by Josh McDowell

The Answer Is the Resurrection by Steve Cable An article from www.probe.org

The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus by Lee Strobel.