


The Resurrection on Trial

Did Jesus *Really* Rise from the Dead?

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

2024.3.31



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep" too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- The evidence is overwhelming: Jesus died, his tomb was empty, hundreds claimed to have seen him alive again over a period of forty days, and their lives were forever changed. A resurrection clearly **could** account for these facts—can you think of a **more plausible** explanation for them?
- Review the "**Twenty Points of Evidence for Jesus' Bodily Resurrection from the Dead**" on the final page of today's **Talking Points, Walking Points**. Are any of them confusing to you?

Which evidences are most powerful to you—and **why**?

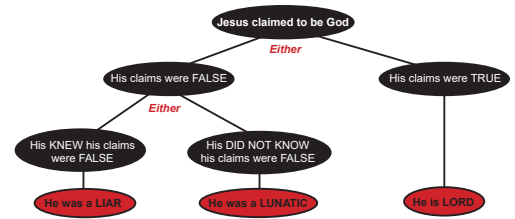
- Read Mark 9:30–32. List all of the details of Jesus' own death which he knew in advance. **We** don't know the circumstances surrounding **our own** deaths—**how** did Jesus know all this? **What** should we conclude about Jesus' identity? What have **you** concluded personally?
- **How relevant** is the question of **Jesus'** resurrection to **you personally**? **Why** do you think that?



Let's come at this question from another angle. How relevant are the following verses to you?
Hebrews 9:27 1 Corinthians 15:7 John 8:24 Luke 12:20

Sermon Summary

Today we gather with Christians around the world to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, a man who even most skeptics admit is the most influential person in human history. But did the resurrection really occur? Is there another logical explanation for the empty tomb? We are going to examine the evidence for the resurrection, but before we do so, we need to consider what is at stake in this inquiry. Why does it matter whether or not Jesus actually rose bodily from the dead? Isn't it enough to agree that Jesus was a great religious teacher who taught us to love one another sacrificially, and treat one another with dignity and respect? The question of whether or not Jesus actually rose from the dead is critical because it points to Jesus' true identity. Jesus claimed to be God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). These claims either are false or they are true, which leads to just three possibilities: Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or else he is Lord. If the resurrection did not occur, then we are all just wasting our time. But if Jesus really rose from the dead, it is a whole different story! Consider with me the following evidence for the resurrection.



History validates that Jesus died on a Roman cross. Jesus' disciples—and his own mother— watched him be crucified and die. Some skeptics theorize that Jesus simply fainted on the cross. They only thought he was dead—but the cool air of the tomb revived him. Jesus' followers mistook a resuscitation for a resurrection, or so the theory goes. But medical expert C. Truman Davis concluded that the flogging Jesus received (John 19:1) would have left him on the edge of death. Jesus would have been tied to a post and beaten at least thirty-nine times, probably much more than that, with a whip that had jagged bones and balls of lead woven into it. The famous historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, says the following about a typical Roman flogging: "The sufferer's veins were laid bare. The very muscles and tendons and bowels of the victim were laid open to exposure." Many who were sentenced to crucifixion died at the flogging.

After being flogged, Jesus was placed on a cross and seven-inch spikes were driven through his wrists. The Romans designed crucifixion to be a slow, tortuous death by suffocation. But when they wanted to hasten death they would shatter the shin bones of the person on the cross so they could no longer push up and breath. That's what the executioners did to the two other criminals who were with Jesus, but when they came to Jesus, he was already dead. One of the soldiers plunged his spear into Jesus' side causing a clear fluid and streams of blood to flow out. An article in the Journal of the American Medical Society concluded that "...the spear probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart, and thereby insured his death". Given all that we have learned about flogging and crucifixion, think of the physical condition Jesus would have been in when he appeared to his disciples three short days later! There is no way he could have convinced them that he had risen triumphantly from the grave!

The tomb was clearly empty on that first Easter Sunday. Jesus' body was laid to rest in a tomb belonging to a wealthy man named Joseph of Arimathea. The tomb was sealed with an extremely heavy bolder. And because Jesus had claimed he would rise from the dead three days after his death, a Roman guard was dispatched to safeguard the tomb. Interestingly enough, the fact that a group of women discovered the empty tomb lends even greater credibility to these accounts. How so? Because in the first century women possessed very low status. Had the disciples fabricated the story surely they would have claimed it was men who first discovered the empty tomb. Men's testimony would have been considered more credible in their culture. But even more significant is the fact that Jesus' opponents admitted that the tomb was empty (Matthew 28:11-15). But Roman soldiers didn't fall asleep at their post (if they did, the death penalty awaited them)—besides if the guards were asleep, how did they know it was the disciples who stole the body? If Jesus' tomb were not empty, his enemies would simply have produced the body—end of discussion!

And if the disciples had stolen Jesus' body, if they knew Jesus had not risen from the dead, certainly at least one of them would have broken rank and told the truth. All of the disciples died for their belief in the resurrection (John was the one exception: he was boiled in oil, but survived the execution attempt!). Nobody dies for something they know to be a lie. And the theory that they went to the wrong tomb also doesn't withstand scrutiny: Mary Magdalene, other women, Peter and John all independently go to the same tomb—the one donated by Joseph of Arimathea (and he certainly knew his own tomb). Even if all these suffered from collective amnesia, the Jewish and Roman authorities knew which tomb they were guarding and simply would have produced the body. The only explanation that fits the facts is that Jesus really did rise from the dead!

Numerous eyewitnesses confirm the resurrection. Over a period of forty days following his resurrection Jesus appeared a dozen times to more than five hundred individuals! Jesus talked with people, ate with them—he even invited a skeptic to put his finger in the nail holes in his hands and to feel where the spear had been thrust into his side. Some skeptics suggest that all of these people were merely hallucinating. It was all in their mind! More than five hundred people having the same hallucination at the same time? That would be a bigger miracle than the resurrection itself!

The changed lives of those eyewitnesses argues for the authenticity of the resurrection.

Before Easter the disciples were dejected and confused; they had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior, and now he was gone! After the crucifixion, the disciples were hiding behind closed doors, afraid they too might be put to death. Yet, after that first Easter, these same men boldly proclaiming that Jesus was alive! And how do you explain the radical transformation of a persecutor of the church who became a Christian after encountering the risen Lord (see Acts 9)?

The evidence is simply overwhelming! Empty tomb + eyewitness testimony + changed lives = the certainty that Jesus Christ was indeed resurrected from the dead—thus verifying his claim to be the Son of God, and the Savior of the world. Today, Easter Sunday, we celebrate Jesus' resurrection! Every religious leader of history—Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed—all remained in the grave. But Jesus' tomb is empty, because he alone had the power to overcome death. So, what will you do with this evidence?

Twenty Points of Evidence for Jesus' Bodily Resurrection from the Dead, Harmonized and in Chronological Order

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1. Witness of Jesus' death	27:51-56	15:38-41	23:45-49	
2. Certification of Jesus' death and procurement of the body	27:57-58	15:42-45	23:50-52	19:31-38
3. Jesus' body placed in the tomb	27:59-60	15:46	23:53-54	19:39-42
4. Tomb watched by women and guarded by soldiers	27:61-66	15:47	23:55-56	
5. The tomb visited by women	28:1	16:1		
6. The stone rolled away	28:2-4			
7. Tomb found empty by the women	28:5-8	16:2-8	24:1-8	20:1
8. Tomb found empty by Peter and John			24:9-12	20:2-10
9. Appearance to Mary Magdalene	28:9-10	16:9-11		20:11-18
10. Appearance to the other women	28:9-10			
11. Report of the soldiers to the Jewish authorities	28:11-15			
12. Appearance to two disciples travelling to Emmaus		16:12-13	24:13-32	
13. Report of the two disciples to the rest (1 Corinthians 15:5a)			24:33-35	
14. Appearance to the ten assembled disciples		16:14	24:36-43	20:19-25
15. Appearance to the eleven disciples (1 Corinthians 15:5b)				20:26-31
16. Appearance to seven disciples while fishing				21:1-25
17. Appearance to more than 500 at once (1 Corinthians 15:6)	28:16-20	16:15-18		
18. Appearance to James, his brother (1 Corinthians 15:7)				
19. Appearance to the eleven in Jerusalem (Acts 1:3-8)			24:44-49	
20. Christ's ascension (Acts 1:9-12)		16:19-20	24:50-53	