

Did His Followers Steal the Body?

Fearing this very thing, Jewish leaders petitioned Pilate to have Jesus' tomb marked with a Roman seal and protected by Roman guards—who were obliged to protect it under penalty of death. After the resurrection, Jewish leaders bribed the soldiers to claim that Jesus' body was stolen while they slept on duty. But to imagine that Jesus' followers removed a stone that likely weighed two tons and stole His body while soldiers slept is absurd. Besides, how could sleeping soldiers know who stole the body?

Maybe Jesus Wasn't Really Dead?

If anyone knew how to be sure a criminal was dead, the Roman army did. Jesus was brutally flogged with Roman flagrum, had spikes driven through hands and feet, hung bleeding for six hours, and was thrust through with a spear. After the centurion proclaimed Him dead, He was wrapped in linen, with over 75 pounds of spices, and laid in a tomb. The idea that Jesus merely fainted and then revived on the third day is preposterous. Critics who claim this view also have to explain how He regained strength to move the stone and get past the guards. And how could someone in such a beaten condition have been celebrated as the conqueror of death?

What's the Significance?

If Jesus is dead, we have no hope. But if He is alive, He demonstrated that He is indeed Almighty God and has power over death—not only to raise Himself, but to give eternal life to all who trust in Him. The Bible says,

Your iniquities (sin) have made a separation between you and your God (Isaiah 59:2).

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

But God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross in our place—as our substitute. We deserve death and Hell for breaking His Law, but Jesus paid our penalty. The Bible states,

God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

Jesus said ... "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26).

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EVIDENCE

for the
RESURRECTION
of
JESUS CHRIST

Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

If not, Christianity is pointless. If He did, His claims demand our utmost attention. Luke, a historian in Jesus' day, records that Jesus showed Himself alive after His death by "many infallible proofs."

Hundreds of Eyewitnesses

After rising from the dead, Jesus was seen by many—including over 500 people at one time. These eyewitnesses were around for decades to testify to the facts, while Christianity grew rapidly. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthian church (about 25 years after Jesus' resurrection), he mentioned that most of these eyewitnesses were still alive.

Enemy Eyewitnesses Unable to Refute Facts

Jesus was *not* popular with the Jewish authorities of His day. They were envious of Him. After finally finding a way to have Him executed, His resurrection must have been their worst nightmare. Obviously, they would have tried everything in their power to disprove the event and stop the news from spreading. But the tomb was empty for all to see, and no one could produce the body of Jesus.

His Followers Wouldn't Die for a Known Lie

Did Jesus' followers steal the body and produce a brilliant hoax? History tells us that 10 out of 12 were tortured and martyred because they would not deny the truth of their claim! Would these men die for something they knew to be a lie? Men may be deceived and die for what they *believe to be the truth*. But people do not die for something they know is a lie! If anyone knew the true facts, it would be His closest followers. Yet these men went from being fearful cowards (who fled at Jesus' arrest) to suddenly having the boldness to preach Jesus Christ everywhere—and this in spite of terrible persecution.

Rapid Spread of Christianity

History records thousands immediately converting to Christianity—as many as 3,000 in one day in Jerusalem! Keep in mind that a crowd in Jerusalem was shouting, "Crucify Him!" only weeks before. What caused this dramatic mass conversion? A made-up story would not have convinced them. After all, the disciples were preaching in Jerusalem where people had access to the facts. Yet thousands believed, and within 50 years, Christianity was rapidly spreading toward the outer reaches of the Roman Empire. This is a powerful testimony to their firm belief in a risen Savior.

Reliability of the New Testament

Skeptics who describe the Bible as a book that has been exaggerated or changed over the years are either uninformed or intentionally inconsistent. For example, people do not generally doubt the historical information in Julius Caesar's book, *Gallie Wars*, even though only 10 manuscripts remain. By contrast, the current known total of existing Greek New Testament manuscripts is over 5,800—not to mention some 20,000 manuscripts in other languages. Cross-checking the numerous manuscripts shows their amazing consistency. Adding yet more evidence, over 25,000 archeological finds provide historical support for people and places listed in the Bible. The God who created the universe can preserve His Word.

Fulfilled Prophecy

The Old Testament contains hundreds of prophecies about the coming Messiah. Centuries before Jesus' birth, it was foretold that He would be a descendant of King David, born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, betrayed for 30 silver pieces, crucified, buried, and raised from the dead—to name a few. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 (which predate Jesus' birth by about 100 years) verified that these ancient Scriptures have not been altered.