

<b>Series:</b> So All May Know	<b>Reference:</b> Matthew 27:62-28:15	<b>Title:</b> The Story of Redemption	<b>Date:</b> 11.21.2021
<b>Website Writeup:</b> The story of Christ's resurrection remains one of the most renown & controversial stories ever told. When sharing the gospel, it's important to listen & understand how others view Christ based on what they've been told.			

## COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

Over two thousand years ago, an outlandish story began circulating at which many laughed & still do. The story of Jesus, a Jewish carpenter, crucified as criminal, risen from the dead & appearing to His followers. But was it true?

Jesus' resurrection pumps the heart of the Gospel (doctrine), and is Christianity's central supporting fact (apologetics). The truth of Christianity stands or falls on Christ's resurrection. The apostle Paul explains: *"If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless & so is your faith"* (1 Cor. 15:14). And, *"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins"* (1 Cor. 15:17).<sup>1</sup>

Turn with me to p680 in your pew Bibles to Matthew 27 beginning in v62. The resurrection story remains one of the most renown & controversial stories ever told. When sharing the gospel, it's important to listen & understand how others view Christ based on what they've been told.

While the Gospel accounts of the resurrection are familiar today, they weren't the only ones circulating following the crucifixion. In Matthew 27:62-66, we read...*The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests & the Pharisees went to Pilate. <sup>63</sup>"Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' <sup>64</sup>So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come & steal the body & tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." <sup>65</sup>"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." <sup>66</sup>So they went & made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone & posting the guard.*

These leaders knew what an empty tomb would mean to the world, the claims He'd made would be true! No longer would He have been a simple disruption to their power structure - He'd be Messiah.

The story continues in Matthew 28:1...*After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene & the other Mary went to look at the tomb. <sup>2</sup>There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone & sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his*

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[If Christ Has Not Been Raised: Reasoning Through The Resurrection](#) by Kenneth Samples, April 1, 2002

*clothes were white as snow. <sup>4</sup>The guards were so afraid of him that they shook & became like dead men.*

*<sup>5</sup>The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come & see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly & tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead & is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”*

*<sup>8</sup>So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet & worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go & tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”*

Even after this miraculous event, Matthew 28:11-15 tells us the leaders made up their own version of events, and began spreading it quickly. It reads...*While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city & reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. <sup>12</sup>When the chief priests had met with the elders & devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, <sup>13</sup>telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night & stole him away while we were asleep.’ <sup>14</sup>If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him & keep you out of trouble.” <sup>15</sup>So the soldiers took the money & did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.*

Why would they be so afraid of the truth getting out? Why risk the soldiers lives facing the death penalty for claiming to have fallen asleep on duty? Whatever the reasons, money spoke & many believed the disciples had stolen Jesus' body. But the logic doesn't hold up. If the soldiers were asleep, how they know what happened? The disciples' courage during this period wasn't sufficient to carry out such a plot. They were afraid & had scattered when Jesus was arrested. It was beyond their ability. But the truth is often harder for a person to believe than a lie.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the reasons, God was one step ahead, and chose to use the most unlikely witnesses to report the news of His resurrection first. A great testament to the truth of this story is that women were the first eyewitnesses in a culture where they were regarded as second class citizens, their word wasn't valued. Especially, Mary Magdalene, a woman of a dubious past! If someone was to fabricate the resurrection, they certainly wouldn't have written it this way.

Other women may also have been present, based on the other Gospel accounts, but regardless, women first approached the tomb while the rest of the disciples remained hidden away in fear. These women were courageous, risking going to a grave guarded by soldiers. They fully expected to find a dead body, but instead found an angel, an empty tomb & a message. Ladies...be proud, God chose you first!

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<sup>2</sup> Louis A. Barbieri Jr., “[Matthew](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 93.

According to Kenneth Samples, there are 5 strands of evidence attesting to the bodily resurrection of Jesus. The first being ***The empty tomb***. Most New Testament scholars, even some liberal, agree solid historical fact attests to the empty tomb. Far from myth or legend, the report has a very early date & fits well with the archaeology of the times concerning burial customs & tombs. It was never challenged or refuted by contemporary enemies & critics of Christianity. If the Jews or Romans had produced the body of Jesus, Christianity would've been disproved & the disciples couldn't have proclaimed a bodily resurrection unless His tomb was empty. In ancient Judaism, the concept of resurrection was considered only bodily in nature, not spiritual, so the empty tomb requires explanation. The only consistent one is His bodily resurrection from the dead.<sup>3</sup>

The Jewish leaders weren't the only ones who doubted His victory over the grave. Even though Jesus told His disciples in advance He'd die & rise again, His own followers expressed doubt even as reports came in from others. Thomas conveys this in John 20:24-29 after he was told others had seen Jesus. He said, *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands & put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."* And Caravaggio, in his painting of that event reveals the end to that story...

To this day, the story of Jesus' resurrection is a stumbling block to many, even those who've grown up in the church. When hardship shakes the foundations of belief, it's natural to experience seasons of doubt as the disciples did after Christ was crucified. As they sat in those locked rooms, they no doubt asked if everything they'd come to believe about His ministry was even true.

But before sending His followers out with the news of His resurrection, Jesus took time to address doubt & to encourage their hearts. Important to remember when sharing the gospel with others, or when encouraging Christians in a faith crisis. The first thing we can do is listen to understand their struggle. Only in prayer & wisdom, can we begin to speak into doubt & misconception. We should be patient with others struggling to accept the Gospel.

We also must grow confident concerning the resurrection knowing even the Roman authorities & Jewish leadership acknowledged the empty tomb. Hundreds of people who'd seen Jesus alive were still alive themselves at the writing of these things & corroborated the witness. **1 Corinthians 15:3-8 is an early creed providing evidence Jesus had risen which was circulated & attested to within 3 years of His crucifixion. It says...*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers & sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*** (Paul adds himself here in v8)

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<sup>3</sup> [If Christ Has Not Been Raised: Reasoning Through The Resurrection](#) by Kenneth Samples, April 1, 2002

The second strand of evidence Samples gives is ***the post-crucifixion appearances***: The Scripture records numerous people having intimate, empirical encounters with Jesus after his death on the cross. People interacted with Him at various times & places. Witnesses claimed to have seen, heard & touched the resurrected Christ, the same person they saw executed three days before. These “in time & in space” physical appearances were reported soon after actual encounters & can’t reasonably be dismissed as mythical or psychological in nature. The post-crucifixion appearances of Jesus weigh heavily in demonstrating the objective truth of the Resurrection.<sup>4</sup>

The New Testament describes His post-resurrection encounters with Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-18), Mary & the other women (Matt. 28:1-10), Peter (1 Cor. 15:5), two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), ten apostles (Luke 24:36-49), eleven apostles (John 20:24-31), seven apostles (John 21), all the apostles (Matt. 28:16-20), five hundred disciples (1 Cor. 15:6), James (1 Cor. 15:7), all the apostles again (Acts 1:4-8), and finally, Paul (Acts 9:1-9).

Characteristics of Jesus’ resurrected body are also described. He still bore the marks of the wounds in His hands, feet & side (John 20:20). He could be seen & touched as a physical body of flesh & bone (Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:37-39). He invited people to examine His body (Luke 24:39-40; John 20:20, 27). And He ate & drank with His disciples after His resurrection (Luke 24:41-43; Acts 10:41).

This story & the Scriptures as a whole have been dissected ad nauseam over the years to no avail by believers & unbelievers alike. The physician & historian Luke, authored both his gospel & the book of Acts, which together constitute about one-quarter of the New Testament. Was he a historian who could be trusted? In an interview with John McRay, former archeologist & NT professor at Wheaton, Lee Strobel asked, “When archaeologists check out the details of what Luke wrote, do they find that he was careful or sloppy?” McRay answered, “The general consensus of both liberal & conservative scholars is that Luke is very accurate as a historian. He’s erudite, he’s eloquent, his Greek approaches classical quality, he writes as an educated man, and archaeological discoveries are showing over & over again that Luke is accurate.”

Archeology has answered every challenge to Luke’s writing. Given the large portion of Scripture written by him, it’s significant that Luke’s been established to be an accurate historian, even in small details. One prominent archaeologist carefully examined Luke’s references to thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine islands, finding not a single mistake. McRay said, “If Luke was so painstakingly accurate in his historical reporting, on what logical basis may we assume he was credulous or inaccurate in his reporting of matters that were far more important, not only to him but to others as well?” Matters like the resurrection, the most influential evidence of His deity, which Luke says was firmly established by “*many convincing proofs*” in Acts 1:3.

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<sup>4 4</sup> [If Christ Has Not Been Raised: Reasoning Through The Resurrection](#) by Kenneth Samples, April 1, 2002

Strobel wondered what scientists would have to say about John, whose gospel was sometimes considered suspect because he talked about locations which couldn't be verified. Some charged since he failed to get these basic details straight, John mustn't have been close to the events of Jesus' life. But that conclusion's been turned upside down in recent years. "There have been several discoveries which show John to be very accurate. For example, John 5:1-15 records how Jesus healed an invalid by the Pool of Bethesda. John provides the detail the pool had five porticoes, but to date, no such place had been found.

Until recently, the Pool of Bethesda has been excavated forty feet below ground with five porticoes exactly as John describes. **And you have other discoveries - the Pool of Siloam from John 9:7, Jacob's Well from John 4:12, the probable location of the Stone Pavement near the Jaffa Gate where Jesus appeared before Pilate in John 19:13, even Pilate's own identity - all of which lend historical credibility to John's gospel."**

McRay states, "Archaeology hasn't produced anything that is unequivocally a contradiction to the Bible. On the contrary, as we've seen, there have been many opinions of skeptical scholars that have become codified into 'fact' over the years but that archaeology has shown to be wrong."<sup>5</sup>

People die for what they believe to be true, not for what they believe to be false. Without the resurrection there's no gospel - these people didn't die for a false religion, but due to the resurrection which transformed them. Which brings us to the third strand of proof for the resurrection Samples cites is ***the transformation of the apostles***: Acts describes a dramatic enduring transformation of eleven men from terrified, defeated cowards after Jesus' crucifixion into courageous preachers & martyrs. Men now bold enough to stand against hostile Jews & Romans in the face of torture & death. Such radical change deserves explanation since human character & conduct don't transform so easily. Following Jesus' arrest the apostles fled & even denied knowing Him. After His resurrection, they were courageous in the face of persecution & execution; attributing their strength to a direct personal encounter with the resurrected Christ. In Christ's resurrection, they found their unshakable reason to live & die.

The fourth strand of evidence according to Samples is, ***the emergence of the Christian church***: Within 400 years Christianity came to dominate the entire Roman Empire and, over the course of two millennia, thoroughly dominated Western civilization. Very quickly Christianity developed a distinct cultural & theological identity apart from Judaism. According to Scripture, the Christian faith came into being directly because of the resurrection. The apostles "turned the world upside down" with this truth, and the enduring Christian Church emerged from it.

And the last strand of evidence is, ***Sunday became a day of worship***: The Jews worshipped on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week (sundown Friday to sundown Saturday). But, the early Christian church changed the day of their worship to the first

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<sup>5</sup> [The Case for Christ: Evidence for the Resurrection](#), Lee Strobel, FaithGateway, Feb 27, 2017

(Sunday: “the Lord’s Day,” Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2), only because Sunday commemorated Jesus’ resurrection. His being raised to eternal life transformed worship & distinguished the Christian faith from Judaism. Apart from the Resurrection, no reason existed for early Christians to view Sunday as having any theological & ceremonial significance.

The story of Christ’s resurrection remains one of the most renown & controversial stories told. When sharing the gospel, it’s important to listen & understand how others view Christ based on what they’ve been told. Being knowledgeable ourselves, not only increases faith, but gives ability to speak into doubts which may arise from falsehoods in another. The resurrection pumps the heart of the Gospel, is Christianity’s central supporting fact, and stands up under intense scrutiny.

The truth of Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection. But Christ *has* been raised! Due to the resurrection, our preaching & faith aren’t useless & futile! Due to the resurrection, we are not still in our sins! Due to the resurrection, we’ve been made alive in Christ! And, due to the resurrection, we are able to live freely in victory for the sake of His mission to this world!

## Apologetics Resources

For apologetic evidence of Jesus' resurrection, as well as a critique of alternative naturalistic theories, see...

- William Lane Craig, *Knowing the Truth about the Resurrection* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1988)
- *Reasonable Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 255–98
- *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1989); Norman L. Geisler
- *The Battle for the Resurrection* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992)
- J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 159–83
- Peter Kreeft & Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 175–98

### -OTHER RESOURCES-

A Good Short Video: [Did Jesus Rise From The Dead?](#)

<https://reasons.org/> Reasons to Believe – Hugh Ross. Wide range of scientific resources. Probably the most respected scientist with a Christian apologetics ministry. He's a Cal-Tech astrophysicist. Closely related is <https://stephencmeyer.org/> scientific philosopher Stephen Meyer, who is excellent, but at a higher academic level so he might be a little difficult to follow at times...but has some great resources on his website.

<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/> Reasonable Faith – William Lane Craig – Without a doubt the most respected Christian philosopher alive today. Endless resources with debates, including many with Christopher Hitchens.

<https://crossexamined.org/> Cross Examined – Frank Turek - Very approachable apologetic information. Easy to understand and has a bunch of short videos.

<https://coldcasechristianity.com/> Cold Case Christianity - J. Warner Wallace – really interesting stuff. A former atheist detective of some notoriety that had an experience with his own research very much like that of Lee Strobel...who is another good resource.

<https://www.garyhabermas.com/> Gary Habermas is a New Testament scholar at Liberty University, but he is best known for his work on the Resurrection for which he is considered the world's foremost expert. His website is not very good, but he has published about 40 books and is working on a multi-volume tome compiling all of his resurrection resources. He does a lecture-style talk on the resurrection that goes for about an hour and is worth the time if you can find one on YouTube.