

Going Deeper

Jesus is alive!

Many people try to find another explanation for Jesus' resurrection. They can't believe someone could come back to life! It is pretty wild! They make up all kinds of ideas to explain what happened at the tomb in Jerusalem. Some of the things they make up are harder to believe than simply believing what the Bible says: Jesus came back to life on the third day after his death.

Here is some evidence that I think points to the resurrection being the real thing!

- Did you know that all of the disciples except for John died a martyr's death. That means they were put to death for what they believed about Jesus. The disciples never stopped saying that Jesus truly did rise from the dead. They knew they had not stolen the body of Jesus. They knew they had not forgotten the location of the tomb. They knew that Jesus had not passed out and come back to life in the cool tomb. Who in his right mind would die for a lie? This is great evidence to show the story about Jesus rising from the dead is TRUE
- The Jews knew that Jesus had predicted his own resurrection. They were afraid that his followers might do something to make it look like Jesus had died and risen again. So the Romans took extraordinary precautions to be sure he was dead and remained dead. Check out what they did to be sure he was dead!

-He was crucified on a hill outside Jerusalem. Anyone walking by on the road would have seen him hanging there on the cross. No one could say he had not died.

-Even after Jesus appeared to be dead, one of the Roman executioners thrust a spear into his side. Blood and water flowed out. The separation of blood and water in the bloodstream is a sure sign of death.

Four executioners had to report to Pilate that Jesus was indeed dead.

- We can be very sure that Jesus was buried in Joseph's tomb. Paul says the story is true and he would have seen documents that told about the death of Jesus. No documents have ever been found that suggest the bible story is a lie- and the Jews would have written it down if they discovered it was a fake!

- Jesus was buried in a tomb carved from solid rock. The tomb door was covered by a disk-shaped stone rolled down into a channel to block the entrance. The stone was huge! While it was easy to roll the stone downhill, it would take a lot of men to roll it back uphill so that the tomb would be open. That little detail—that the stone must be rolled uphill to open the tomb—is important when we read what Matthew wrote. He said there was an earthquake and an angel rolled back the stone. When an earthquake happens and there is no angel involved, things roll downhill. They don't roll uphill. What happened with the stone was truly a miracle.
- There had been rumours that the disciples planned to steal the body of Jesus and claim that he had been raised from the dead. To keep that from happening, Pilate posted a guard at the tomb. The Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb were not like the security guards you see guarding buildings at night. These were tough, highly trained soldiers. Each guard was trained to protect six feet of ground. Sixteen men in a square of four on each side were supposed to protect 36 yards of earth. It worked this way: four men were placed immediately in front of what they were to protect. In this case it was the tomb of Jesus. The other 12 would sleep in a semicircle in front of them with their heads pointing toward the middle of the semicircle. If someone wanted to steal what the guards were protecting, they would have to walk over the guards who were sleeping and then confront the four who were awake. It wasn't going to happen. There was no way that the disciples or anyone else would have been able to steal the body of Jesus from the tomb.
- When Pilate told the soldiers to make the tomb as secure as they knew how, they set a seal on the tomb. A seal was made of string and clay. The string—cord—was stretched across the rock and fastened at either end with sealing clay. The clay was impressed (stamped) with the official seal of the Roman governor Pilate. If anyone tried to move the stone, the seal on one or both ends would be broken and the authorities would know someone had tampered with the stone. The body of Jesus was protected by 16 Roman soldiers and by the official seal of the local ruler of Rome. No one could open that tomb, steal the body of Jesus and then say that he had risen from the dead.
- A soldier who left his post would be punished by death. Therefore, soldiers were very careful to pay attention to duty—especially night duty such as they had at the tomb of Jesus. If robbers had come to rob the tomb, the stone would have simply been rolled on down to one side. The position of the stone would have proved that the guards were sleeping when they should have been guarding the tomb. But the fact that the stone had been rolled uphill proved to

the Jewish authorities that what had happened at the tomb was humanly impossible. Something more powerful than grave robbers had moved the stone. They knew what the guards said was true. The Jewish priests knew that they couldn't let word get out that something supernatural had happened there, so they bribed the guards with money to hush them up.

- After he had died Joseph and Nicodemus had wrapped Jesus up to the neck in linen strips. Gummy spices were wrapped in as well, and that made the strips stick together. Unwrapping a body would have been a long and difficult task, taking quite a bit of time—more time than a tomb robber would have had. A tomb robber would have taken the whole thing—body and grave clothes. The head had been covered with a separate cloth. What the disciples found was the grave clothes still wrapped up and the headpiece folded and laid to one side. Jesus was gone, and he had left his grave clothes right where they were. Now the disciples knew that Jesus was alive. That was the only thing that could have happened to find the grave clothes there but his body gone.
- With an event that was so well publicized, don't you think that if Jesus had not risen from the dead, at least one eyewitness would record that he had seen Christ's body in the tomb? He might have said, 'Listen, I saw that tomb—it was not empty! Look, I was there; Christ did not rise from the dead. As a matter of fact, I saw Christ's body.' But there is no such witness against the resurrection."
- Only two or three witnesses were required by Jewish law to convict someone of a crime. The chief priest found only two false witnesses to testify against Jesus. It was enough to convict him. The apostle Paul says in the Bible that after Jesus was resurrected, more than 500 people saw him alive, including all of his disciples. Most of those witnesses were still alive at the time Paul was writing the account (see 1 Corinthians 15:6). Five hundred witnesses is more than enough proof according to Jewish law that Jesus is alive. In fact, it seems that Paul is saying, "If you don't believe the resurrection happened, go ask those witnesses who saw him."
- The people who say Jesus' resurrection was a myth don't realize how much true evidence there is about his resurrection. Their arguments are weak. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ took place within history, at a specific historic time. It was the time of Roman rule in Israel. He was tried before Pilate. Pilate has been proven to be a historic figure. Myths, on the other hand, are not historical.
- When Jesus appeared to his disciples, he scared them. They thought he was a ghost. Jesus said, "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Luke 24:39).

Later on, Jesus ate fish with his disciples, further showing us that he had flesh and bones. Spirits don't eat fish. And another time, Jesus appeared to some women as they ran to tell his disciples he was alive. "Greetings," he said to them. They grabbed his feet and worshiped him (see Matthew 28:9). You don't grab the legs of a spirit! Jesus was real, and he had a body. The apostle Paul believed in a physical resurrection and he said that some day we too will be raised with a physical body. Those new bodies will be different than the ones we have now, but they will be real—physical.

Why don't you post on CBC Families and tell us what convinces you the most that Jesus really came back to life! It will really encourage others.