



Skeptics' Questions

Because some doubts you don't have to have.

Stuff I Wish I Was Taught in Sunday School

How Do We Know Jesus Was A Real Person & Not A Myth ?





How Do We Know Jesus Was A Real Person?

- There are 35-40 references to Jesus in early writings outside the Bible.
- Look up the *non-christian* historians Tacitus & Josephus.
- They write around the end of the 1st & start of the 2nd century.
~ Same time period John writes his gospel, the book of Revelation & pastoral letters.
- Tacitus was a roman senator who describes Nero torturing & killing Christians after Rome burned around 60 AD. Peter & Paul die in these persecutions.
- Josephus was a traitorous Jewish general who helped the Romans destroy the Jerusalem temple around 70 AD. He reports the death of James the Brother of Jesus by the Sanhedrin around 62 AD.
- Tacitus & Josephus are not important for confirming the Resurrection.
- *They are important for confirming that Jesus was executed by crucifixion on the order of Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius.*

Saying Jesus never lived, because we doubt the Resurrection is like saying John F. Kennedy never lived, because we don't like the theories about how JFK died.





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Could The Resurrection Be A Borrowed Myth?

SkepticsQuestions.com





Could The Resurrection Be A Borrowed Myth?

- In older myths, no god dies for the sins of mankind & rises on the 3rd day to prove their divinity.
- Earlier stories are attempts to explain the seasons & the mystery of plants dying off in the fall & coming back up in the spring. The story of Persephone & Demeter or Isis & Osiris are examples of this.
- Centuries after the crucifixion, there are myths like the Resurrection of Jesus, but Christianity could not borrow from stories that didn't exist yet. It's like saying the assassination of Abraham Lincoln was a myth based on the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The time order is backwards.
- More likely other religions borrowed resurrection stories from Christianity.





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Could The Resurrection Be A Legend Added Later To The Bible?





Could The Resurrection Be A Legend Added Later To The Bible?

What is the difference between myths & legends?

Myths are purely made up.

Legends based on kernel of truth with embellishments.

Legends risk being exposed by living eyewitnesses who can contradict them.

Not possible for the Resurrection to be a legend for 2 reasons.

1. Stories occur too soon - within the lifetimes of the eyewitnesses.
2. Too many early written copies in existence for the manuscripts to be altered later.

Crucifixion occurs ~30-33 AD. April 5, 30 AD or April 1, 33 AD from lunar cycles & dates Pontius Pilate in power.¹

¹ [Colin J. Humphreys & W. G. Waddington, "Dating the Crucifixion", Nature 306, 743-746, 1983.](#)

Note dates of 4/7/30 & 4/3/33 in the paper are Julian calendar dates rather than modern Gregorian dates listed above. On the website.





Could The Resurrection Be A Legend Added Later To The Bible?

Within ~5 years of the Crucifixion, Paul visits Jerusalem to compare notes with the disciples on what they are teaching about Jesus. He meets with Peter & James Brother of Jesus. This produces a list of eyewitnesses to the Risen Jesus & it ends up written down in 1 Cor. 15:3-7.

³For 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 and 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."

There are individual appearances to Peter, Paul & James along with group appearances to the disciples & also to a crowd 500 or more people. When this was written, many eyewitnesses were still alive that could be questioned about the appearances & deny them if untrue. 1 Corinthians was written before Paul's death in the early 60's AD & the meeting occurred in the late 30's.

Second there are too many early copies (~6000) of the greek New Testament for the stories to have been added centuries later. With early manuscripts in other languages, the number of copies skyrockets to ~25,000. It's way too many manuscripts to find hundreds of year later in order to modify the contents. It's like saying Time Magazine could deny Hitler was the 1938 Man of the Year by replacing the issue today. There are too many old copies to find & fix.





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Was The Body Really Missing?





Was The Body Really Missing?

- All 4 gospels say Jesus buried in tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.
- Mk 15:43 refers to Joseph as a prominent Sanhedrin member.
- Sanhedrin could easily deny tomb location or Joseph as a member if untrue.

- The Sanhedrin desperately wanted to stop Christianity from spreading.
- All they needed to do was point out the location of the body.
- Sanhedrin didn't deny the body was missing or the tomb location.

- Mt 28:11-15, Justin Martyr & Tertullian report Sanhedrin said disciples stole the body.





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Did The Disciples Steal The Body & Lie About The Resurrection?





Did The Disciples Steal The Body & Lie About The Resurrection?

Look at their deaths. *Liars make poor martyrs:*

- Stephen is stoned in Acts 7. Not one of the 12 but shows danger early on before Paul's conversion to Christianity.
- James Brother of John is beheaded by order of Herod Agrippa in Acts 12. No later than 44 AD when Herod Agrippa dies.
- James Brother of Jesus is stoned ~62 AD by order of Sanhedrin according to Josephus.
- Tacitus reports Nero's persecution of Christians after Rome burns in early 60's AD.
- Paul beheaded in those persecutions according to Eusebius around mid-60's.
- Peter executed then too according to Clement of Rome, Tertullian & Origen.





Did The Disciples Steal The Body & Lie About The Resurrection?

- Why would skeptics like Paul & James Brother of Jesus lie just to die?
- *Most of us would lie to avoid dying!!*
- Paul gave up power & went from killing Christians to dying as one.
- Both claimed they had met with the risen Jesus.

- You can argue Jesus didn't really rise from the dead, BUT their deaths show they 100% believed they had seen the risen Jesus.
- *Again liars make poor martyrs & they would have known if they were lying!*





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Were The Disciples Hallucinating Or Hypnotized?





Were The Disciples Hallucinating Or Hypnotized?

- These explanations don't work for the large group appearances like to the 12 or the 500.
- Only some are susceptible to hypnosis in a large group.
- People don't share hallucinations. Each sees something different.
- Plus there would still be a body in the undenied empty tomb.





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Did Jesus Pass Out & Revive In The Tomb?





Did Jesus Pass Out & Revive In The Tomb?

NO!

- Crucifixion victims have to push/pull upward to get each breath.
- Victim dies from suffocation due to exhaustion.¹

¹William D. Edwards; Wesley J. Gabel; Floyd E. Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ", JAMA, 255, 1455-1463, 1986. On my website.

***Passing out on the cross is like passing out underwater.
Stop moving, stop breathing, die in the time it takes to drown.***





Did Jesus Pass Out & Revive In The Tomb?

- Jesus 'passes out' first. On the cross for hours afterwards.
- Jews want burial by sundown to avoid work on sabbath.
- They need permission from Pontius Pilate.
- Soldiers break the legs of other 2 to speed up death.
- Jesus already appears dead, so he's speared to verify it.
- These soldiers kill for a living & know the signs of death:
 - Body goes pale when blood pools in the legs.
 - Body gets cold to touch.
 - Body stiffens in rigor mortis.
- These soldiers died by crucifixion if victim survived.
- Great motive not to get sloppy in your work.





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Is Resurrection Even Possible?





Is Resurrection Even Possible?

- Are miracles even possible? Depends on whether or not God exists.
- If God exists & created the universe & everything in it, then he knows science better than we do.
- He would be capable of amazing feats we could not understand whether he used scientific principles we don't know or his supernatural powers.
- In short, you can't rule out the possibility of all miracles unless you can prove that God does not exist.
- Science gives us reasons to suggest that God exists. Details would make this too long. Go to SkepticsQuestions.com for more on how science supports God's existence if interested.





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Why Believe In The Resurrection?

The Simplest Case





Why Believe In The Resurrection?

The Simplest Case

- 1. The disciples 100% believed they had seen the risen Jesus.
Shown by their willingness to suffer & die for their faith.
Liars make poor martyrs & they would have known if they were lying!***
- 2. Crucifixion victims die by suffocation when they pass out from exhaustion.
Passing out on the cross is like passing out underwater.
Stop moving, stop breathing, die in the time it takes to drown.***

