

Satan's Lies About the Resurrection Fail to Stop the Gospel

Matthew 28:11-15

I. The History of the Resurrection Essential to Our Faith

A. Counterfactual History

1. "What If...?"

- a. What If George Washington and the Continental Army had been trapped in New York City as they almost were in 1776?
- b. What If Hitler had never invaded the Soviet Union in 1941?
- c. What If the North had lost the Battle of Gettysburg?

2. Very popular with history buffs... a life of historical speculation

3. History is a fabric, a tapestry, in which one thread connects to the others, with various colors combining to form a magnificent picture

4. But the most important counterfactual speculation about history was done by the apostle Paul concerning the resurrection from the dead... WHAT IF JESUS HAD NEVER BEEN RAISED?

B. Paul's Assertion

1 Corinthians 15:13-17 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

C. The Historicity of the Resurrection is Central to the Christian Religion

1. We proclaim a God who rules over all of human history
2. We proclaim a God who scripted history before it happened, and authored a magnificent story of redemption of human sinners from the judgment they deserved
3. And Christ's resurrection is the culmination of that history
4. All evangelists and missionaries go to lost people and preach a BIOGRAPHY... a HISTORY of the life of Christ, culminating in the cross and the empty tomb
5. Saving faith always moves from a BELIEF THAT stage to a BELIEF IN stage...
 - a. "belief that" = the facts of the gospel are true, actual history
 - b. "belief in" = entrusting the whole life to Jesus Christ for salvation
6. Faith in the resurrection is ESSENTIAL to salvation

Romans 10:9 if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

D. Alternate Explanations

1. Because the resurrection is vital to Christianity, many people have sought to debunk it as a myth or offer other explanations for what the early Christians were claiming
2. Skeptics MOCKING the resurrection has dogged the steps of Christianity from the very beginning... when the Apostle Paul was in the intellectual center of the world in Athens, debating on Mars Hill, he proclaimed that Jesus had risen from the dead

Acts 17:32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."

3. Since that time, many intellectuals have tried to come up with alternate explanations
 - a. The fake death theory: 1780: German skeptic Karl Frederick Bahrdt; Jesus used drugs fed him by Luke the physician to purposely feign death; he was then revived later by Joseph of Arimathea, and appeared to the disciples
 - b. The swoon theory: first proposed in 1800 by Karl Venturini

proposed that a group of supporters dressed in white — who were, with Jesus, members of a "secret society" — had not expected him to survive the crucifixion, but heard groaning from inside the tomb, where Jesus had regained consciousness in the cool, damp air. They then frightened away the guards and rescued him.

- c. The authorities moved the body (but why would they do that? And why not produce the corpse as soon as the disciples began preaching the resurrection)
 - d. The tomb was never visited... and all the resurrection appearances were visions
 - e. The women went to the wrong tomb
 - f. MOST COMMON NOW: Jesus was buried in a mass grave and decades later, legends arose about his resurrection
 - i) The gospel accounts are basically religious myths, of very dubious historical value
 - ii) All the post-resurrection appearances were hallucinations, brought on by intense longing for it to be true
 - iii) OR The post-resurrection appearances were a case of mistaken identity
4. Many cite similarities to the pagan myths that follow the dying and rising god pattern; in 1950, psychologist Carl Jung linked Christianity with the Egyptian myth of Osiris—the dying and rising god of the Nile

5. So neo-orthodox scholars like Emil Brunner sought to demythologize Christianity, stripping it of its pagan roots and getting to the “historical Jesus”; or course, essential to such efforts is the assumption that the New Testament Gospel records are unreliable... they cite the apparent contradictions in the gospel accounts of the resurrection... they look on the gospels as myths
6. BUT this neglects the fact that the gospel records themselves give evidence for having been written with in seven years of Jesus’ death, based directly on eye-witness accounts, four of them (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), each giving a clearly historical account, not myth

Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

- E. Many other skeptics have sought to unravel the gospel accounts themselves and show them to be inconsistent... and have ended up getting converted themselves
 1. Frank Morrison is pseudonym for Albert Henry Ross: *Who Moved the Stone?*

Albert Henry Ross was an English writer and advertising agent who was surrounded by skeptics who mocked Christianity. He decided to set out to disprove the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

Ross was skeptical regarding the resurrection of [Jesus](#), and set out to analyse the sources and to write a short paper entitled *Jesus – the Last Phase*^[3] to demonstrate the apparent myth.^[5] In compiling his notes, he came to be convinced of the truth of the resurrection, and set out his reasoning in the book *Who moved the stone?*. Many people have become [Christian](#) after reading the book

2. Malcolm Muggeridge (1903-1990)

English journalist, author, media personality, and satirist. In his youth, Muggeridge was a leftwing intellectual enchanted with Marxist communism. In 1932, he even traveled to the Soviet Union where he was to be a correspondent from Moscow for the *Manchester Guardian*. In travelling through the Soviet Union as a correspondent, he became disenchanted with communism and saw it for what it really was.

He turned to being a journalist, but his own soul was searching for the truth. An agnostic for most of his life, he became a Christian in his 60s, and wrote a book called *Jesus Rediscovered...* it was a collection of essays, sermons, and articles on faith

3. Josh McDowell

He was an agnostic at college when he decided to prepare a paper that would examine the historical evidence of the Christian faith in order to disprove it. However, he converted to Christianity, after, as he says, he found evidence for it, not against it.

Wrote one of the most famous books on Christian apologetics ever written: *Evidence that Demands a Verdict...* did a great deal to show the historical evidence for biblical Christianity, especially the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

4. Lee Strobel

Strobel received a journalism degree from University of Missouri and a Master of Studies in Law degree from Yale Law School becoming a journalist for *The Chicago Tribune* and other newspapers for 14 years.

He was an atheist, set against Christianity... but then, his wife was converted to Christ. Strobel began investigating the Biblical claims about Christ. As a result of the evidence he discovered in his investigation, he became a Christian, and wrote *The Case for Christ*. Since then, he has written many other apologetic works... including *The Case for Easter*.

Throughout church history, many skeptics have been converted by a careful consideration of the historical evidence for the resurrection of Christ

Meanwhile, Satan has been doing everything he could to cover up that evidence and prevent people from believing

F. IN OUR ACCOUNT TODAY... the BRIBING OF THE GUARDS...Satan's Strategies: Lies, Money, and Murder

1. Unable to prevent the resurrection, all Satan can do since that glorious morning is to LIE, LIE, LIE... and to bribe people away from the truth... and to kill those who keep proclaiming the truth
2. These are Satan's strategies...
3. And the first lie about the resurrection was plotted and enacted that same day that Jesus rose... that His disciples came and stole the body while the guards were asleep
4. From that time until this, there have been a series of Satanic lies about the resurrection... plausible theories, explaining away the resurrection... anything to undermine the central issue of Christianity

G. Part of the Gospel Ministry: Apologetics... Reasonable Answers to Satan's Lies

1. God commands apologetics... a careful, reasonable defense of the faith

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

2. Much of our outreach is a destruction of Satan's lies

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

3. Defense of the faith is part of our Christian responsibility

Philippians 1:7 defending and confirming the gospel

Jude 1:3 I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

4. Part of pastoral ministry

Jude 1:22 Be merciful to those who doubt... [BUT STRENGTHEN THEIR FAITH]

Titus 1:9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

5. Ours is a HISTORICAL and REASONABLE faith... and we MUST make a reasonable and historical appeal to those we are witnessing to
6. BUT in our text we will also see the LIMITATION to apologetics... the Sanhedrin and the Roman guards all had access to the BEST PHYSICAL EVIDENCE for Jesus' resurrection, and still they DID NOT BELIEVE...
7. Ultimately, faith in Christ is BASED on history and reason, but it is a DIRECT GIFT OF GOD

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God

NO ONE EVER GETS CHECKMATED BY APOLOGETICS AND EVIDENCE into saving faith

Story about Larry Jacobs at work!!!

1 Corinthians 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

So... how secure is the historical foundation of our faith? How secure is the proof for the resurrection?

II. Physical Evidence of the Resurrection

A. Three Key Facts About Saving Faith

1. It IS based on evidence

- a. Christ taught that His miracles were evidence as a basis for faith

John 5:36 "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.

John 14:11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

b. John's Gospel generally is written based on that conviction

John 20:30 - 31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

c. The greatest miracle is the resurrection of Christ from the dead

d. The angels called on the women to see the place where Jesus lay

Matthew 28:6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

John's Gospel also linked John's faith in the resurrection to the physical evidence:

John 20:8 He saw and believed.

SAW WHAT?? The physical evidence of the resurrection:

B. Physical Evidence of the Resurrection

John 20:3-9 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

1. The moved stone

- a. Placed in front of the entrance to the tomb to keep animals and robbers out
- b. As we discussed last week, the boulder would have been very heavy and difficult to move...
- c. The Greek indicates this heavy stone was LIFTED UP and REMOVED completely from the entrance to the tomb

2. The missing body

- a. The simplest way for the Jewish authorities to disprove the resurrection was to produce the body of Jesus
- b. BUT they couldn't... it was clearly gone

3. The grave clothes

- a. The grave clothes were covered with 75 pounds of sticky aromatic resin called myrrh
- b. That meant they would have clung to Jesus' body
- c. But there they were, arranged in the exact same position where Jesus' body had lain
- d. How would that have been possible?
- e. Why would a grave robber have taken the body out of the clothes, even if it could have been done?

4. The head cloth: folded up by itself in another place

C. Personal Evidence of the Resurrection: Eyewitness Testimonies

1. The women were the first to bear witness that they had had a personal encounter with the risen Lord... they told all the brothers what they had seen
2. The apostles: all began a life of proclamation to having been eyewitnesses to the resurrection
3. Five hundred eyewitnesses... possibly at the same time:

4. And Peter, and Paul: all listed in 1 Corinthians 15

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

5. This is an overwhelming amount of evidence concerning the resurrection

6. But so also is the official story of why the body was gone... it is, as John MacArthur called it, "The Lie that Proves the Resurrection"

III. The Lie that Proves the Resurrection

Matthew 28:11-15 While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³ telling them, 'You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' ¹⁵ So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

A. The Enemies of Jesus Sealed Their Fate by Posting the Guard

Matthew 27:62-66 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵ "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know

how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

1. Isn't it amazing how God uses the evil plans formed against Him as weapons against their own evil empire??!!
 2. Satan attacked God by killing Christ... and God uses Jesus' death to destroy Satan
 3. In a similar way, Jesus' enemies tried to stop the resurrection by posting the guard; but the posting of the guard played into God's plan perfectly
 4. They posted the guard plainly because they did not believe that Jesus would really rise from the dead... he was (as they said) a deceiver, and the fake-resurrection would be the final deception... the worst of all, by their perspective
 5. BUT by posting the guard, they ended up playing right into God's hands!!!
 6. It is, as John MacArthur called it, "The Lie that Proves the Resurrection."
 7. Let's see how...
- B. The Guard Could Not Stop the Resurrection... they just ended up hostile witnesses to the fact

Matthew 28:1-4 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

1. The guards were there to keep some tricky conniving disciples from sneaking in at night and stealing the corpse
2. How the disciples would have been able to pull it off even without the guards is difficult to imagine... how gullible would people

have to be to believe such a hoax... when a body disappears, very few people would even begin to consider a resurrection

3. BUT the guards were posted anyway
4. AND they could not stop the resurrection!!!
 - a. Almighty God is infinitely more powerful than anything man can muster
 - b. One single angel killed 185,000 Assyrian troops in one night
 - c. So also one holy angel appears, glowing with the glory of God... an earthquake shakes the earth... the guards are terrified... and the angel rolls back the stone to prove that the Lord Jesus had already been raised from the dead

C. The Guards' Problem: They Failed in their Mission

1. The request for the guards was to prevent the resurrection
2. This the guards utterly failed to do
3. But how could they stop it??
4. In the same way, Jesus someday will return from heaven
5. When he does, the reigning human power on earth will be the Antichrist... the most powerful man in history
6. The Antichrist will not be able to stop the return of Christ any more than the Roman guards could stop the resurrection

IV. Jesus' Hard-Hearted Enemies

A. What Should Have Happened: Faith and Repentance

1. This was the greatest miracle in history!!
2. It had been predicted by Old Testament prophets
3. Jesus had predicted this very thing, and his enemies all knew it
4. This was the "sign of Jonah"

Matthew 12:38-40 *Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you."³⁹ He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

5. None of the happened in a vacuum, but it was the culmination of the most amazing pattern of miracles the world had ever seen
6. As soon as the guards' report reached their ears, they should have fallen on their faces and confessed that Jesus was Lord, to the salvation of their souls
 - a. The guards spoke of the angel, his appearance, his moving of the stone
 - b. The guards spoke of the empty tomb
 - c. They told it all...
 - d. The authorities SHOULD HAVE confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord... but they didn't
7. But Jesus predicted that even this would not move them to faith

Luke 16:27-31 *I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house,²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'²⁹ "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'³⁰ "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'³¹ "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"*

B. What Did Happen: Hardness of Heart and Rebellion

1. These are the same bitter enemies of Jesus that opposed Him every step of the way

2. These are the same Jewish authorities who had just three days ago wickedly and illegally condemned Jesus to death, using false witnesses to do it
3. When the guards came and reported LITERALLY WHAT HAPPENED, they convened an official meeting of the Sanhedrin, and came to a three-fold conclusion
 - a. Bribe the soldiers with a LARGE SUM OF MONEY (Judas took 30 pieces of silver; there may have been as many as a dozen soldiers... and they would have required a lot more than 30 each)
 - b. Feed them the lie: "The disciples came and stole his body while we were asleep"
 - c. Promise them to

C. Here We See the Limit to the Converting Power of EVIDENCE

1. The soldiers had the evidence of the angel, the stone, the grave clothes, and the missing body
2. They related all this evidence to the Sanhedrin
3. Yet neither one was converted
4. Evidence is ESSENTIAL for saving faith... but it's NOT ENOUGH for it
5. God must add the supernatural gift of FAITH

D. Matthew: A Story Circulated "To This Day" (and Beyond)

1. A century and a half later, Justin Martyr (114-165):

"You Jews selected men and sent them into all the world proclaiming that a certain atheistic and lawless sect has arisen from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver whom we crucified, but His disciples stole Him by night from the tomb and deceived men by saying that He is risen from the dead and ascended into heaven."

E. BUT: There Are Immense Problems with this Lie

1. Problems with the Jewish leaders: If the story were true, then why didn't the Jewish authorities make any effort to search for the stolen body, produce it, and squash the disciples' lie? The failure of the Sanhedrin to make such a search is strong evidence that the story was a lie
2. Problems with the Roman guards: How could it be that they were all such heavy sleepers that no one heard this while it was going on? Furthermore, the guards would have been organized in shifts, some of them asleep and some awake, with the night divided into watches; this was standard procedure for trained soldiers like these; furthermore, why were the guards still alive??? If they had fallen asleep on guard duty, they would have been executed

In Acts 12, Peter had been miraculously delivered from prison, though he was guarded by four squads of four soldiers each:

Acts 12:19 After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

A simple question anyone could have asked at that time, "If you were asleep on guard duty, why weren't you executed?" The safety of an entire army depends on absolute discipline for the sentries posted through the night.

Also... if everyone was asleep while the body was stolen, how could they know it was the disciples who stole it? More believable would be, "We fell asleep, and when we woke up, they body was gone." To give the additional detail of "the disciples came and stole it" is clearly a lie

3. Problems with the disciples:
 - a. MINDSET: They were terrified of the Jewish authorities... they all deserted Jesus and fled for their lives; they were hiding out in the upper room, afraid of arrest; they didn't believe in the resurrection even when they were told; to steal the body and courageously proclaim the resurrection MAKES NO SENSE whatsoever
 - b. OPPORTUNITY: how did they actually pull it off? The disciples had no military power, no ability to fight the Roman guards; but that wasn't even the story... the official story was

that they came at night while the guards were sleeping and stole the body; but how did they move the stone silently, waking none of the sleeping guards? It seems absolutely preposterous! And why leave the grave clothes behind?

- c. MOTIVE: Beyond this, what was their motive? What did they gain by risking their lives? All of the disciples were bitterly persecuted for proclaiming that Jesus had risen from the dead... if they all knew He hadn't, why would they risk their lives for a LIE? For what they KNEW to be a lie?

V. Two Powerful Questions

A. Question Number 1: What Happened to the Body? OTHER LIES that Satan has concocted over the centuries...

1. The tomb was empty, as clearly seen from Peter's allusion to David's tomb and implication that Jesus' tomb was empty

[Quoting Psalm 16] Acts 2:27 *you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.*

Acts 2:29-32 *"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day."³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.³¹ Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.*

2. Jesus' enemies had every opportunity to produce the corpse... so the tomb must have been empty
3. BUT skeptics dismiss this by saying you can't use part of the story to prove the rest of the story... one atheist website did it this way:

I live in China. I invited my friend Joe from So Cal over to my home. Now, Joe is convinced that a Dragon attacked San Diego. He tells me the story of how the Dragon burned the library, how his buddy Mike died fighting it, and how the dragon stomped through the beach. Me, being a skeptic, demand evidence. Rather than produce some conclusive evidence of the Dragon's

attack, he asks “How do you explain the burned library then?” I point out that the story itself cannot be used to prove the validity of the story.

4. MY OWN PROBLEMS: In order to answer this question, people have to play a game of how much of the New Testament to accept... the simplest thing to do is to say that the Gospel Accounts themselves are pieces of religious myth written centuries after the events they say happened... so we would literally have NO INFORMATION WHATSOEVER about the true historical Jesus if there was one...
 - a. The problem with this approach is that it has no answer for the historical fact of Christianity itself... where did this religion come from that proclaimed a true, historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth, saying that He died on the cross and rose from the dead
 - b. In order to do that, you have to turn your back on the undeniable historical fact that, roughly three centuries after Jesus was said to have lived and died, the Roman Emperor Constantine declared himself to be a Christian... if there was no historical figure of Jesus, then where did the faith known as Christianity come from so soon after Jesus was said to have lived?
- B. Question Number 2: Why Did the Apostles Lose their Fear of Death?
1. Before the resurrection... the disciples all deserted Jesus, fled; Peter denied three times even knowing Jesus... they were all cowering in the upper room with the door locked for fear of the Jews

2. After the resurrection:

Acts 4:9-13 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone." ¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." ¹³ ¶ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were

unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

3. One independently provable fact of the start of Christianity is that the early disciples were boldly proclaiming that Christ had risen from the dead in the very city in which he was killed... and they were doing it directly to the very authorities that had executed their leader
4. They had completely lost their fear of death!!!
5. Christianity spread on the basis of their eyewitness account of Jesus' resurrection...
6. How does one explain the undeniable existence of and spread of Christianity—openly based on the resurrection of Jesus??

C. William Lane Craig: Three Accepted Facts

1. **EMPTY TOMB:** The tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered empty by a group of women on the Sunday following the crucifixion.
2. **EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS OF POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES:** Jesus' disciples had real experiences with one whom they believed was the risen Christ.
3. **ASTONISHING SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY BASED ON THE RESURRECTION:** As a result of the preaching of these disciples, which had the resurrection at its center, the Christian church was established and grew.

D. Challenge to the Skeptics: Handle the Historical Evidence the Same Way You Treat Any Historical Event

Simon Greenleaf, a Harvard professor of law, some years ago wrote, "All that Christianity asks of men is that they would be consistent with themselves, that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things and that they would try to judge its actors and witnesses as they deal with their fellow men when testifying to human affairs and actions in human tribunals. The result would be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability and truth,"

VI. Applications

A. Come to Christ!!! The Records are Reliable!!!

Romans 10:9 if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

B. Christians: Know the certainty of what you've been taught

1. The Gospel records are reliable

Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

2. They were written to FEED YOUR FAITH

3. They are trustworthy historical documents

4. Skeptics reject them because they have a predisposition against them and against miracles

5. By those accounts we have access to the fact that Jesus gave the eyewitnesses INFALLIBLE PROOFS of the resurrection

Acts 1:3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.

C. Understand the Indissoluble Link Between the Scriptures and Faith in the Resurrection

John 20:9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

D. Get Ready to Make a Defense for What You Believe

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

E. Rejoice in the Resurrection of Jesus... What it Means

1. You WILL live forever

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

2. You can live a holy life

Romans 6:4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.