

The Resurrection of Jesus

5 Alternate Theories of the Resurrection debunked (my quick, off the cuff, notes. I'm not claiming to be the world's greatest apologist, so your mileage may vary).

1. The Disciples Stole the Body

They were dejected (not in mood); how did they get past the Roman Guard (who guarded the tomb and were under threat of execution if they failed)?

If they stole the body (a conspiracy), they know the resurrection is a lie. 11 of the 12 disciples went to their deaths as martyrs, claiming to have seen Jesus alive from the dead. Denying this would have spared their lives. Granted, we could find 11 persons today who would die for a lie... but they would think it was the truth. We couldn't find 11 who will die for a lie knowing it is a lie. But this is exactly what we'd have to say of the 11 disciples. They would have known it was a lie (because after all, they stole it). Yet not one of them caved in. Why?

Put another way: if you and 10 of your friends stole Jesus' body and went about telling everyone he's alive... then I put a gun to your head and told you to change your story or I'd shoot, what would you do? Even if one of you were stupid enough to die for your conspiracy, the other 10 would "squeal" to save their lives. Right? So why did the disciples, to a man, all die for their claim to seeing Jesus resurrected?

Charles Colson puts it this way: "*You see, men will give their lives for something they believe to be true—they will never give their lives for something they know to be false.*" What other explanation (than a resurrection) accounts for their sadness turned to gladness, their hopelessness to hope, their fear to courage?

2. The Authorities Stole the Body

This is the last thing they wanted. They'd heard that Jesus predicted He would rise again. So they secured the tomb with the Roman Guard.

If they had the body (or knew where it was), when the disciples started preaching a resurrection, why didn't they get the body, put it in a wheelbarrow, and parade it down the streets of Jerusalem? It would have killed Christianity in its infancy. They must not have had the body.

"It passes the bounds of credibility that the early Christians could have manufactured such a tale and then preached it among those who might easily have refuted it simply by producing the body of Jesus." John Warwick Montgomery

3. Wrong Tomb (oops)

Suddenly, everyone has forgotten where Jesus was buried. The women went to the wrong tomb. So did the disciples. But, certainly the Jewish authorities knew where it was & so did the Roman guard. So did Joseph of Arimathea (who owned the tomb).

If everyone had been visiting the wrong tomb, the authorities would have wasted no time in producing the body from the correct tomb. If the empty tomb weren't an established fact, the disciples couldn't have preached a resurrection in Jerusalem for one hour. Everyone would have walked over and checked it out.

Besides, how could we still explain the disciples claim to have seen Jesus alive and their willingness to die for that claim?

4. Swoon Theory

Like in the movie, *The Princess Bride*, Jesus was just “mostly dead” (as Billy Crystal’s character said of Wesley). Jesus merely fainted or swooned.

However, remember the data: he was crucified, major blood loss, spear in his side that pierced the pericardium – issuing blood and water (a sign of death), wrapped in linen and spices that began a mummifying, cast-like effect. Even the Centurion at the cross (an expert in death) recognizes Jesus is dead.

Nevertheless, Jesus revived, pushed a 2-ton stone uphill to escape the tomb, overpowered 16 Roman soldiers standing guard, then crept off and convinced his disciples that he was a victor over death. Yeah, right. I’ve got some swampland in Florida you might want to buy from me.

The death blow to this argument comes from the unbelieving skeptic, David Strauss, who said: *“It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulcher (tomb), who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings.... Could have given to the disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which He had made upon them in life and in death, at the most could only have given an elegiac voice, but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship.”*

5. Hallucination Theory

Over 500 people claim to have seen Jesus alive at the same time (1 Cor 15:6). When people hallucinate, they see different things. I may see a pink elephant, but you’ll see a purple flamingo. There is no evidence of mass hallucinations being of the exact same thing.

By the way, even if a mass hallucination were occurring, the authorities could produce the body from the tomb to squelch the stories of a resurrection.

Final Thought:

What, possibly, can explain the persecution that the early Christians were willing to endure other than a resurrection? Their lives were radically changed by something. What? Maybe it was what they said it was: Jesus is alive!