

# What we know

- Jesus' disciples believed that he rose from the dead and appeared to them. Previously scared disciples very soon after, preached the resurrection of Jesus.
- Jesus was tortured and crucified.  
Evidence: Christian sources plus Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, Mar Bar-Serapion, Talmud.
- Many were martyred for their faith.  
e.g. Paul, Christianity's chief persecutor; James, Jesus' brother, previously sceptical.
- Paul cited over 500 witnesses, the majority still living, who saw the risen Jesus.
- Christianity quickly spread throughout the known world.
- Jesus' tomb was empty. No body was produced.

# Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

## Alternative explanations to Jesus' resurrection

### Legend, Lie or Lunacy

**Legend** - *The story gradually developed*

- The New Testament is narrative, not myth.
- It does not explain Paul's early conversion nor Christianity's early success against strong opposition.
- Strong claims of the historical accuracy of the resurrection were made well within the lifetime of witnesses. If the claims had been recently fabricated, they would have been readily refuted.

**Lie** - *Disciples stole the body while the soldiers slept and claimed he rose from the dead. This was the earliest Jewish claim.*

- Would the disciples allow themselves to be martyred for an elaborate hoax?
- To steal the body, the disciples would have needed an elaborate plan, including motive, bribed guards, a place to dispose of the body, false witnesses — with everyone taking the secret to the grave.
- There is no evidence that the body was stolen.
- It is very unlikely that all the soldiers guarding the tomb would have slept. They were professional soldiers. Even if they did, the noise of the stone being moved would have woken them.

**Lunacy** - *In an attempt to discredit Christianity, the following explanations have been made:*

#### Swoon Theory -

*Jesus didn't die, but fainted on the cross and later revived*

- Roman soldiers, expert executioners, oversaw the crucifixion and pronounced him dead.
- How could Jesus, after being tortured, crucified, speared and buried, unwrap himself, move a stone, defeat a guard of soldiers, walk 11 kilometres and convince his doubting disciples that God had resurrected him and made him immortal?

**Wrong Tomb** - *Confused by grief, the disciples went to the wrong tomb*

- Joseph of Arimathea's involvement and testimony must be rejected to accept this view.
- Multiple witnesses saw where Jesus was laid.
- If the disciples went to the wrong tomb, the Jews would have quickly pointed out the right tomb.

**Hallucination** - *Jesus' followers saw him in their imaginations*

- On multiple occasions and under various circumstances, different individuals and groups of people, heard, saw, talked and ate with Jesus after his resurrection.
- Hallucinations would have been easy to disprove, by producing the body.
- Jesus' disciples had lost their faith at Jesus' crucifixion, yet this totally changed to unflinching belief very shortly after and Christianity quickly took the Roman world by storm.