

Why I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus

The documentary, *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*, asks us to believe in something incredible. It asks us to believe that the family of Jesus had a family tomb in Jerusalem, that they moved the body of Jesus from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea to this family tomb, and that they kept quiet about it. Tombs with ossuaries were for the well to do. The common man at the time would have been buried only in his clothes in a shallow grave that was unmarked or only temporarily marked. It is unlikely that a carpenter's family from Nazareth would have had the means for such a family tomb. It also seems unlikely that Joseph of Arimathea would have stepped in at great personal risk if the family could have handled it.

Why move the body and then keep quiet about it? The brothers of Jesus were not believers prior to the resurrection appearances (Mark 3:21, John 7:5). Why wouldn't they have helped the religious leaders squash the beginnings of Christianity if they could prove there was no empty tomb? Why would James, the half brother of Jesus, die a martyr's death if he knew where the remains of Jesus were entombed? His martyrdom is recorded in Josephus (*Antiquities* 20:9).

Talk of a spiritual resurrection does not fit either with a family ritual of moving the bones of the deceased to an ossuary a year after his death. John's gospel makes clear that Jesus showed his disciples the nail prints in his hands and the spear print in his side (John 20:20, 25-27).

We have an empty tomb to explain, and the explanations are limited. The enemies of Jesus had no motive for moving the body. If they could have produced the body of Jesus, they certainly would have to stop the preaching in His name. The disciples had no motive for moving the body. They were very frightened after the crucifixion, and they could have comfortably remained within Judaism if Jesus was moldering in a grave. Most of the apostles died martyr's deaths. The dynamic change in their lives seems unlikely if they were perpetrating a fraud.

The swoon theory doesn't work either. This view says that Jesus only swooned on the cross. He didn't die. He simply walked out of the tomb. Roman soldiers were very efficient at killing people. To allow a prisoner to escape for a Roman soldier was to become liable to the same punishment. Jesus' scourging and beating were brutal, the cross agonizing, and the Roman spear into the side convincing. Jesus died on the cross; he didn't swoon.

That leaves us with the resurrection. The witnesses testify to it. The birth of the church points to an event so powerful as to bring about the dramatic changes in Jesus' followers. Worship was transferred from the Sabbath to Sunday. Their strict monotheism was enlarged to allow one God in three persons. They used Lord to refer to Jesus.

They were not deterred by Deuteronomy 21:23 which said that a man hung on a tree was accursed. They willingly died for their faith. So much more could be said. I believe the evidence points to the resurrection of Jesus.

–Russ Holden