



Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

(Notes for a PowerPoint Presentation)

By Lin Pearson

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<https://freeministryresources.org/evidence-for-resurrection-of-jesus-christ-part-1>

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1. ► [TITLE - *What Christians believe about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*]

A resurrection is when someone who has been dead comes alive again.

What do Christians believe happened to Jesus on that first Easter weekend?

2. ► [Calvary scene]

Christians believe that Jesus was arrested, tried and crucified.

3. ► [A tomb]

...That the body of Jesus was placed in a tomb

4. ► [Stone being rolled over tomb entrance]

...That the tomb was sealed with a great rock.

5. ► [Stone away from entrance]

...That on the third day after his death and burial, his grave was found to be empty.

6. ► [Jesus alive again with disciples]

...That Jesus had not stayed dead, but had come alive again

These beliefs are the foundation of Christianity, which spread throughout the world, starting first in Jerusalem, where all this happened.

7. ► [Magnifying glass and notes pad]

So, what is the evidence for this belief that Jesus came back to life after his death?

8. ► [Heading – *Evidence 1. Broken Seal* plus image of and clay impression of Roman seal]

(See Matt. 27:62-66)

The people in Jesus' homeland were under Roman occupation and law. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor at the time.

9. ► [Pontius Pilate and Jewish religious leaders]

He was asked by the religious leaders to supply a guard and seal the stone. They had remembered Jesus saying that he would rise from the dead after three days.

► [Speech bubble- "His disciples may come...]

They told Pilate, "His disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has come back to life."

► [Speech bubble - Pilate's answer]

Pilate said: "You have a guard: go, make it as secure as you know how"

(See Matthew 27:65).

This is how it might have been done.

10. ► [Photo of a sealed tomb]

The grave was like a cave dug out from the side of a hill. A huge stone was rolled in front of the entrance.

It was sealed using a cord stretched across the boulder and pressed into clay or wax at each end. This would not stop anyone getting in, but if someone tried to interfere with the stone, the cord or seal would be broken and immediately noticed.

The soldiers who were to guard the grave were crack troops!

11. ▶ [Roman soldiers]

The word translated “guard”, from the original Greek Bible is *kustodia*. The Romans spelt it with a c, not a k (*custodia*), from which we get our English word “custodian”, which means someone who takes care of something and looks after it.

12. ▶ [Roman soldiers smaller image]

The use of this particular word shows us several things:

- ▶ They were not Jewish temple guards
- ▶ They were Roman soldiers. This is very important, because...
- ▶ The Roman army had highly disciplined and skilled soldiers at the tomb.
- ▶ Interfering with the Roman seal meant the death penalty.
- ▶ So, NO ONE would dare to break the seal!

The followers of Jesus knew that if they were caught, it meant automatic execution by crucifixion. We know they were very afraid of what might happen because later, when they saw the seal had been broken, they hid away.

13. ▶ [Heading – Evidence 2. The Stone was Moved]

The tombs in that region were like caves cut out of the rocky hillside. The opening of the cave-grave was covered by a massive circular stone set in a sloping groove. The stone was wedged, and when anyone wanted to cover the entrance, they knocked out the wedge and the stone rolled down the slope by itself.

14. ▶ [The weight of the stone]

Archaeologists have examined the geology, the underlying rock of the Jerusalem area, and also the style of grave stones of the era of Jesus’ death. They have calculated that the weight of the average stone would have been between one-and-a-half tons and two tons.

- ▶ That is the same weight as a small elephant
- ▶ Or as heavy as a car. But of course, the stone had no wheels to help push it along!

It would have needed several men to move the stone back up the sloping groove and wedge it again it.

But something strange and wonderful amazed the people who came to the tomb on resurrection Sunday.

15. ▶ [Stone away from tomb]

Not only had the stone been moved away from the entrance of the grave, **but it was a great distance away from the cave-grave.** All four Gospel writers mention it.

The Greek words used in the Bible accounts have the meaning that the stone was not rolled only a *little* way, just enough for someone to get in or out of the burial place. But that it was rolled a *long* way—**completely away from the tomb area.**

16. ▶ [Heading - *Who moved the stone? plus man thinking*]

But who could, or would roll away the stone?

17. ▶ [Was it the Roman authorities or Jewish religious leaders?]

Neither the Jewish leaders nor the Roman leaders wanted Christianity to become more popular.

The Roman authorities knew that Jesus had predicted he would come to life three days after dying, so they wanted to keep his body there. That's why the entrance was sealed (*Matt. 27:62-66*).

The religious leaders wanted to prevent the followers of Jesus stealing the body and hoaxing people with a fake resurrection.

▶ **No!**

So it was not the Roman or Jewish leaders who rolled away the stone.

18. ▶ [Was it the disciples?]

The disciples knew the tomb was guarded by a crack squad of fighting men. They would have been too afraid of the Romans.

And anyway, even if the men had done it, they mustn't have told the women. Because the women went on the Sunday expecting to find the body (*John 20:1-2*).

▶ **No!**

So the disciples did not roll back the stone.

19. ▶ [Was it the women?]

The women could never have managed it by themselves. While they were going to the tomb on the Sunday morning, they were wondering who would roll away the stone for them.

(*Mark 16:2-8*). They fully expected everything to be as they had left it.

▶ **No!**

It definitely wasn't the women who removed the stone.

So, who did roll away the stone?

20. ▶ [Angel]

The Bible tells us it was an angel of the Lord. (*Matthew 28:2-4*)

The reason that the stone was rolled away was NOT so that Christ could come out of the tomb. He didn't need the entrance to be opened.

With his resurrected body he could pass right through the stone (as he did when he later came into the locked room where the disciples were). (*John 20:19*)

The reason God had the stone moved away was so that people could look into the tomb and see that Jesus' body was not there—and also to see something else amazing, **which was the third piece of evidence that Jesus had come alive again...**

21. ▶ [Heading - Evidence 3. The Grave Clothes]

The grave clothes left behind after Jesus came alive are powerful evidence of his resurrection from death.

In those days the people at the funeral (mourners) took cloth, and starting at the feet they tightly wound the cloth round and round the body, like a huge bandage.

As they went they poured on about 100 pounds weight of spices and ointments. These dried and hardened into a sort of "cocoon". The cloth for the face was put on separately.

22. ▶ [Bible text – from John 20:6-9 Amplified Bible]

"Then Simon Peter...went into the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there..."

23. ▶ [Bible text - part 2]

...But the burial napkin (kerchief) which had been around Jesus' head, was not lying with the other linen cloths...

24. ▶ [Bible text – part 3]

...but was still rolled up (wrapped round and round) in a place by itself.

25. ► [Bible text – part 4]

“Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, went in too; and he saw **and was convinced and believed.**” (*John 20:6-9 Amplified Bible*)

26. ► [Why are the grave clothes such convincing evidence? plus Thoughtful woman]

Why are the grave clothes so convincing as evidence that Jesus came alive?

Why was the disciple convinced after seeing them?

27. ► [Body in grave clothes again]

If anyone wanted to steal the body, they would have to **cut open the cloth** that was now stiffened with the gum and spices like a hard cocoon. They would have to pull back the material enough to get the body out. In that case, the grave clothes left behind would be damaged.

Or else they would steal **the body still in its grave clothes**. Remember, they would have had to carry the dead body plus the 100 pound weight of the grave clothes! A very difficult task (with guards around as well!)

Another reason why the grave clothes are convincing evidence that Jesus came alive and passed right through them is that an ordinary person inside the clothes, even if they came alive, **would never manage to get themselves untied.**

28. ► [Lazarus coming from the grave]

Jesus brought a man called Lazarus back from the dead. When Lazarus came out of his grave, Jesus told the men there to take the grave clothes off him, because he needed help to get out of them (*John 11:44*).

So to find the grave clothes of Jesus not cut apart, but still intact and wound up, without the body in them, was amazing. It was proof that he had come alive again, with a new body.

29. ► [Face napkin]

Another very important detail was the wrapping for the face. This was a separate piece, and it was found not bundled with the other cloth, but set apart.

► “But the burial napkin which had been around Jesus’ head, was not lying with the other linen cloths, but was still rolled up (wrapped round and round) in a place by itself.”

(*John 20:6-9 Amplified Bible*)

The Greek word translated in the King James Version of the Bible as “wrapped together” actually means “rolled or wound round”.

This is exactly how the napkin would have been used on a dead body—rolled, placed under the chin and tied on top of the head. The original language in the passage suggests that it remained still in its roughly circular form, just as it would be on the head of the dead Jesus.

[Extra note: There have been several articles online and elsewhere, suggesting that the napkin was folded (not rolled) and that this was a significant symbol – a message to the disciples that Jesus had unfinished business and would return. It is suggested that this has to do with a Jewish cultural practice with a napkin at the dinner table. This has been thoroughly refuted by eminent Jewish scholars. A link to further details of this is in the bibliography at the end of this script.]

30. ▶ [Heading - Summary of the Evidence so far plus magnifying glass]

So far we have looked at 3 areas of evidence.

▶ The broken clay seal

This proved that the stone had been moved.

▶ The stone moved far away

Neither the Roman or Jewish leaders would want to give any impression that Jesus had come back from the dead and left the tomb. They would not have moved the stone.

The ladies who came with spices fully expected the stone to still be in front of the tomb entrance. It had been miraculously moved a long way.

▶ The grave clothes uncut

No one took Christ's body, but he came alive again and rose up through the grave clothes with his resurrected body, leaving the empty clothes still in place.

31. ▶ [Heading – This Evidence proves:]

So, from the evidence we have seen so far we can see that...

▶ No one stole Christ's body

▶ Jesus came alive again after his death

▶ His new body rose up through the grave clothes

.....
[Note for presenters: This might be a good place to stop, if you are dividing the teaching into several sessions. You could begin your next session starting with slides 30 and 31, reviewing the three areas of evidence covered in session 1.]
.....

32. ▶ [Heading – Evidence 4. The Empty Tomb plus Open tomb]

Most people at the time of Jesus' resurrection accepted that the tomb was empty. Even the enemies of the Christians did not try to say that Jesus' body was still in the grave.

33. ▶ [Religious leaders]

The authorities did try to contradict the disciples when they preached about the resurrection of Jesus. But if Jesus had still been dead, they could easily have proved the disciples wrong.

All they needed to do was produce the body of Jesus. They didn't, because they couldn't—the body was no longer in the grave. That tomb was now empty!

That was why they **started the rumour** that the disciples had stolen the body. They also **bribed the guards to lie**. They had to say that the disciples had stolen the body, as an excuse for an empty grave!

34. ▶ [Man writing]

Both Jewish and Roman documents and traditions agree the grave was empty.

▶ [Gamaliel]

Gamaliel, who was a member of the Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin, suggested that the rise of the Christian movement was God's doing; he could not have done that if the tomb still had the dead body, or if the Sanhedrin (the Jewish religious leaders) knew where Christ's body was. (Acts 5:34-39)

▶ [Josephus]

Josephus was a first century Jew who wrote history for the Romans.

The Romans were hostile to Christians, so the fact that Josephus recorded the detail of the empty tomb is evidence that it could not be denied.

35. ▶ [Heading – *So we know that...*]

The tomb must have been empty on the Sunday.

No one has ever produced evidence to prove otherwise.

36. ▶ [[Heading – *Evidence 5. The women*]

The facts add up!

▶ [Women were thought to be inferior]

Women were considered very inferior in Jewish society.

Jewish men always wanted sons and regretted having daughters.

37. ▶ [Women were not allowed to give evidence in court]

Women were not allowed to give evidence in court. They were considered unreliable witnesses. What they had to say would only be worthless, the Jewish men said.

38. ▶ [Yet women were first to find the tomb empty]

Yet it was women who first found the tomb empty! It was to a woman that the resurrected Jesus first appeared. The women told the men, who didn't believe them at first and thought they were crazy!

39. ▶ [Anyone wanting to lie about it would NOT have said...]

Surely, if the disciples had wanted to spin a story to convince everyone that Jesus was now alive, they would not have chosen women to be the first witnesses!

40. ▶ [No men would have deliberately embarrassed themselves like that!]

This shows that the gospel accounts are true, because the men would never have made up anything so embarrassing for themselves, as women being the ones who first discovered the empty tomb.

41. ▶ [Heading –*So we know that...*]

The Gospel account must be true, because in that culture no false story would have given women such an important position.

42. ▶ [Heading –*Evidence 6. The Guards* plus image of open tomb and guard]

The sixth piece of evidence is the guards. They were disturbed on their watch.

▶ [What did they see?]

What was it that alarmed them?

43. ▶ [Angel sitting on stone]

There was an earthquake. Then they saw an angel come down from heaven and move the stone. (Matt. 28:2-3)

44. ► [Guards fainting]

The guards were so afraid of the angel that they shook with fear and fainted with fright.
(Matt. 28:4)

45. ► [Heading – *Evidence 6. The Guards plus What did they do?*]

This troop of elite soldiers had faced many scary experiences before, but not this! So they reported to the people who had arranged for them to be on guard duty at the tomb.

► [They went to tell the religious leaders]

Some left their post to go and tell the Jewish authorities what had happened. (Matt 28:11).

No self-respecting Roman soldier would have made this up. It was too embarrassing for these fighting men. Their report must have been the truth.

46. ► [Heading – *The religious leaders bribed the guards*]

The religious leaders bribed them to lie, to say they had been sleeping and that during that time the disciples had stolen the body. (Matt 28:11-15).

The story got around very quickly. But people must have had many questions, **because there were three things which made their lie totally unbelievable!**

47. ► [How did they avoid the death penalty?]

How did they avoid the death penalty? The punishment for a Roman soldier who fell asleep on duty was execution. Everyone would wonder how they were still alive to tell this fake story.

48. ► [How could every soldier fall asleep at the same time?]

There were probably 16 guards in this troop. Usually they took turns to be on watch, four at a time. The earthquake must have woken up those who were sleeping. How would a whole unit of guards fall asleep at the same time? It doesn't ring true!

49. ► [How could they see what was happening if they were all asleep?]

If they were all asleep, how could they have possibly seen the disciples – or anyone else, for that matter – stealing the body?

It was all a big lie!

In this session we have looked at a further 3 main areas of evidence:

50. ► [Heading – *Summary of the evidence plus magnifying glass*]

► [The empty tomb]

The tomb was empty; the body was gone! If Jesus had still been dead, the authorities could easily have proved the disciples wrong.

All they needed to do was produce the body of Jesus. They didn't, because they couldn't.

► [Women were important in the story]

If the men who wrote the Gospels had been lying about Jesus coming alive again, they would never have had women play such an important part in their story. In that culture women were considered unreliable and insignificant.

The fact that women are central in the Gospel records of the resurrection means that this account is true. Jesus really did come back to life!

▶ [The guards were bribed to lie]

Why did the religious leaders give the guards money, to tell everyone they fell asleep on duty?

It can only be because what the soldiers reported was the truth that the authorities wanted to cover up – Jesus had risen from the dead.

51. ▶ [Heading – *The Evidence shows...*]

The resurrection must have really happened, or else why did the authorities lie to try to cover it up?

.....
[Note for presenters: This might be a good place to stop, if you are dividing the teaching into several sessions.]
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52. ▶ [Heading – Evidence 7. *The Appearances of Jesus* plus Jesus at entrance to tomb]

The Bible records this:

▶ [Jesus came alive..etc]

Jesus came alive after three days in the grave, and he was then seen by very many people.

53. ▶ [Mary weeping and Jesus comes to her]

The first person to see him after his resurrection was Mary Magdalene. At first she thought he was the gardener. But as soon as he spoke her name, she knew it was him. She knew his body had not been stolen as she had feared, but that he had come back from the dead.

(John 20:14-16)

54. ▶ [Paul's list]

Only thirty years after the crucifixion, the apostle Paul wrote that the resurrected Christ had been seen by many people. He put some of them in a list. *(1 Corinthians 15:5-8)*

- Peter
- 12 Disciples
- Over 500 people at one time
- James
- All the Apostles
- Paul himself

It would have been impossible for Paul to get away with a lie.

▶ [Many were still alive]

Any of those he claimed had seen the risen Christ could have refuted what he said. Because many were still alive! Instead they agreed that Jesus had indeed come back to life.

55. ▶ [Heading – *The Evidence says:*]

Jesus was seen alive by far too many people for the truth to be covered up.

56. ▶ [Heading – Evidence 8. Transformed Disciples

Originally they had lost all hope, were scattered, and in terrible fear, they locked the doors whenever they met. But suddenly they were different!

57. ▶ [Received the power of the Holy Spirit]

They followed Christ's instructions and went to Jerusalem to wait. Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit would come to help them and empower them.

Acts chapter 2 describes what happened:

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

Jesus had kept his promise! Because of the power that the Holy Spirit gave them they were no longer hiding in fear and trembling.

The disciples received God's power to preach, heal, and deliver people from the power of evil spirits—just as Jesus had told them would happen. (*Acts 1:8*)

58. ▶ [Preached boldly in public]

They immediately went public with the message that Jesus was alive! Nothing would stop them. After one open-air sermon preached by Peter, about 3,000 people put their trust in the living Christ for salvation.

59. ▶ [Not put off by opposition]

Despite opposition, threats and death sentences they stayed in Jerusalem and preached their message there.

60. ▶ [Changed the main day of worship]

The special day of the week on which they worshipped God changed from the Jewish Saturday Sabbath to Sunday, commemorating the day Jesus rose from the dead.

61. ▶ [Heading – *The Evidence says:*]

Nothing could have brought about these massive changes in the disciples except the resurrection of Christ and his continued power.

62. ▶ [Heading – Evidence 9. Unbelievers converted]

Some people who had staunchly believed that Jesus was an ordinary man, now dead, had complete change of heart.

▶ [Saul the persecutor]

Saul was a persecutor of Christians. He did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah (the person God had promised would come to save people from the punishment of their sins). He rounded up the followers of Jesus, imprisoned them and even approved when they were killed.

Yet, when he met the risen Lord Jesus he acknowledged that Jesus was real and alive, and Saul acknowledged him as his Lord.

63. ▶ [Saul on the ground]

This picture reminds us of the time when the unbelieving Saul was on the way to Damascus and met the risen Jesus Christ. He was totally changed and chose to follow Jesus.

Saul, later named Paul, became a great Christian leader and missionary.

64. ▶ [Saul preaching openly]

He never turned back from following the risen Lord Jesus. Even when he was persecuted and tortured. His experience of the living Christ – not only on the road to Damascus, but through his whole life – had totally changed his unbelief to a deep, lasting faith.

65. ▶ [James, the brother of Jesus]

James was a half-brother of Jesus (*Matthew 13:55*). Mary was his mother and Joseph his father.

He did not believe in the miracles of Jesus. He certainly did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah (*John 7:2-30*).

James was very fixed in his ideas, until he saw Jesus alive after his resurrection (*1 Cor. 15:7*).

Then, like Paul, he became a loyal follower of Christ, a leader in the Christian community (*Acts 15:13,19*), and finally was martyred for his faith.

66. ▶ [Heading –*The Evidence says:*]

Only the resurrection of Christ could have turned such hardened unbelievers into faithful followers of the living Christ.

67. ▶ [Heading –*Summary of the Evidence*]

Over this series we have examined 9 very powerful pieces of evidence which show that Jesus really did come alive again after he had died on the cross and been buried.

Here are the pieces of evidence again, to think about.

▶ [The Broken seal]

No one would have dared risk interfering with a Roman seal. Yet it was broken. Who could have done that?

▶ [The stone moved away]

The massive rock was too heavy for men or women to easily roll away. And besides, it was found far away from the tomb. Who could have moved the stone?

▶ [The grave clothes uncut]

The grave clothes were found uncut and exactly as they would have been placed on the body. Whose body could have disappeared and left the grave clothes totally undisturbed?

68. ▶ [Heading –*Summary of the Evidence*]

▶ [The empty tomb]

Why did the authorities not simply produce the body of Jesus to prove he had not come alive again? They could not!

▶ [The women's evidence]

The Bible says that they were the first to find the tomb empty and a woman was the first person to see Jesus alive again.

When the culture of the time made women second rate, why does the Bible give them such an important place in the account of Jesus' resurrection? No liar would have done that.

▶ [The Guards' false evidence]

The authorities bribed the Roman guards to say they had fallen asleep on duty. Why were these guards not punished? And why did the Roman and religious leaders have to organize such a cover up?

69. ▶ [Heading –*Summary of the Evidence*]

▶ [The Appearance of Jesus alive again]

So many people saw Jesus alive again, in so many different places and at different times. If you had that many eye-witnesses in a court today, telling the same things, it would be accepted as the truth.

▶ [The Disciples transformed by God's power]

From fearful to bold. From weak to empowered by the Holy Spirit. How else could they have been totally changed, except by the living Christ?

▶ [Unbelievers who totally changed their minds]

Saul and James did not believe in Jesus. They were opponents of Christ. Yet when they saw him alive, they believed he was God's Son and never wavered in their belief after that, even though they were persecuted and killed for what they believed.

70. ▶ [He is risen]

These are some reasons why Christians believe that Christ rose again from the dead and is alive today.

71. ▶ [What do you think?]

What do you think?

72. ▶ [Fade to black]

.....

Some sources of information used in this presentation

Evidence demanding a verdict by Josh McDowell

The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus by Lee Strobel.

The Resurrection Factor by Josh McDowell

(<https://www.bethinking.org/did-jesus-rise-from-the-dead/the-resurrection-factor>)

The Answer Is the Resurrection by Steve Cable - An article from www.probe.org

Regarding the folded napkin -

<https://hosannaefluxmundi.blogspot.com/2017/04/the-controversy-over-jesus-folding.html>

For a full list of post-resurrection appearances of Christ, see https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_814.cfm