

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

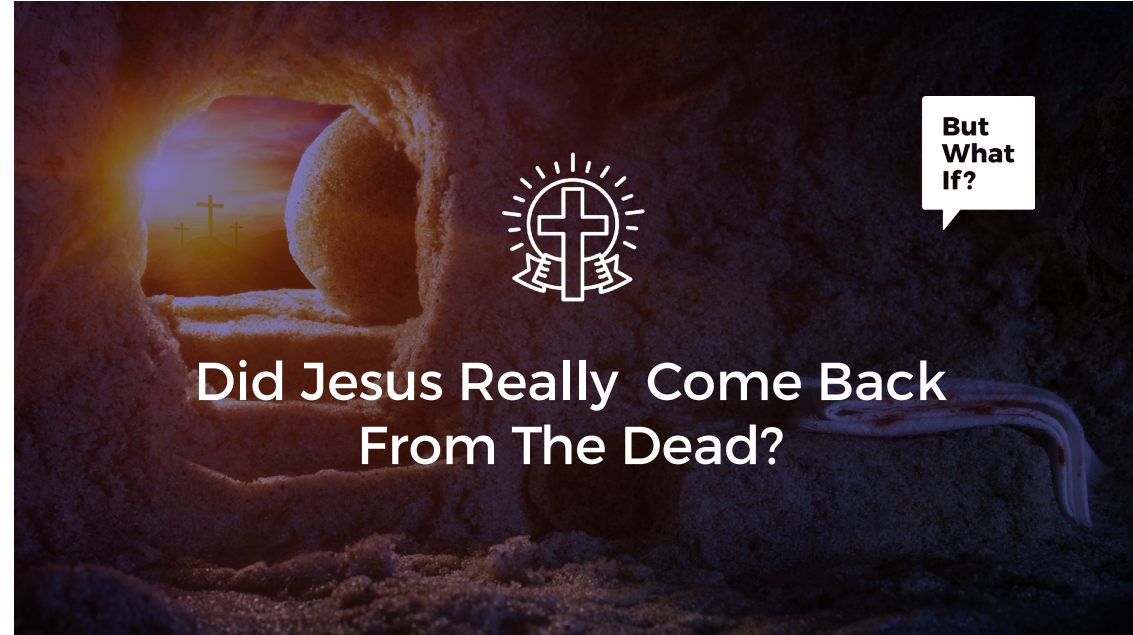
1 Corinthians 15:3-8, The Bible

What do you think?



Further reading from a Christian perspective:

- Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?*, 1930
 - Val Grieve, *Your Verdict on the Empty Tomb*, 1988
 - Paul Barnett, *The Truth about Jesus (The challenge of evidence)*, 1994
 - Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 1998
- (Or if you're not a reader, perhaps watch the 2017 movie of the book!)
- Gary R. Habermas & Michael R. Licona, *The Case For The Resurrection Of Jesus*, 2004
 - Tim Keller, *The Reason For God*, 2008
 - David J. Randall, *Why I Am Not An Atheist*, 2013
 - Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, rzim.org



But
What
If?

Did Jesus Really Come Back From The Dead?

The stakes are high

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

1 Corinthians 15:16-19, The Bible

Theories proposed to explain the empty tomb:

1. **Fraud** - The disciples stole the body and tricked hundreds of people into thinking Jesus had come back from the dead
2. **Swoon** - Jesus didn't really die on the cross, in the coolness of the tomb he recuperated and then later appeared to his followers
3. **Hallucination** - People so desperately wanted to see Jesus again that they experienced delusions where they manifested him in their minds
4. **Miracle** - Jesus really did come back from the dead after 3 days

What about the fraud theory?

Who moved the huge stone at the entrance to the tomb?
What about the guards protecting the tomb? How did they sleep through this?
How did these terrified disciples suddenly become so bold within 2 days?
If they stole the body, how did they manage to convince so many people that Jesus was alive and well?

Something would need to be gained from a plot - not martyrdom. People die for a cause, but who is willing to die for something they know to be a lie?
How does this match with the characters of the disciples we read of in the New Testament?

What about the swoon theory?

How would he have recovered after the cruelty of the floggings he received?
What about the horrendous pain of crucifixion itself? Reportedly one of the worst execution methods ever invented...
Wouldn't he have asphyxiated whilst hanging there?
What about the spear thrust into his side?
Even if he did begin to recuperate - how did he move the stone from the inside and get out of the guarded tomb?
Who would have wanted to follow him after all that?

What about the hallucination theory?

When have there been reports before of mass hallucination or hypnotism as a large group activity?
If they usually happen in very specific situations, times and places— how does that match with Jesus' appearances to so many at different times?
If over 500 people were reported to have seen him, in different places and times (some who weren't previously even followers) - couldn't this be easily checked or disproved?

What about the miracle theory?

What if it really did happen?

Why did no one produce the body if Jesus was really there?
Why include the testimony of the women in the gospels if the evidence of women at that time were considered inadmissible in court?
How do you account for Jesus, and the Old Testament, predicting this was going to happen?
What made such a change in the disciples from being fearful to brave, and sorrowful to joyful?
What made Saul of Tarsus turn from being the main persecutor of Christians to their most famous leader in such a short time?
And what about the testimony of the millions of Christians around the world who say their lives have been changed by coming to know Jesus for themselves?

No Buddhist has ever claimed that Buddha rose from the dead. When he died it was a passing away in which nothing whatever remained. The same applied to Mohammed. According to tradition he died on the 8 June 632AD at the age of 61 in Medina, where his tomb is annually visited by thousands of devout Muslims. But down the ages the claim of Christianity is that Jesus not only died but rose from the dead and is alive today, changing people's lives. If this is true, then Christianity stands by itself. There is no real comparison with other religions because their founders are dead. Christians claim that the founder of their faith is still alive.

Val Grieve, Your Verdict on the Empty Tomb, 1988