

# Easter Sunday

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**INTRODUCTION:** The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of Christianity. Refute the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and you destroy Christianity. If Jesus Christ is dead, He cannot prepare a place for us in heaven. If Christ is dead, He cannot return to earth as a conquering king. If Christ is dead, He cannot save us from the penalty for our sins. If Christ is dead, He cannot be interceding for us before God the Father.

Because the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of Christianity, it is not surprising that the enemies of Christianity have attacked its credibility.

PASTOR – JESUS IS RISEN

CONGREGATION – HE IS RISEN INDEED

## **LIE #1 – IT WAS JUDAS ISCARIOT WHO WAS CRUCIFIED, NOT JESUS**

**EXPLANATION** – This lie has been perpetuated through the teaching of Islam. In an article written by Abdullah Kareem called “The Crucifixion of Judas,” this Muslim writer writes...

Jesus’ purpose in coming to earth was not to die on the cross and He was not crucified. Rather, it was Judas who took Jesus’ place on the cross. When the Roman soldiers and Judas went to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas was told to kiss Jesus, so that the soldiers could identify him. However, when the soldiers went to arrest Jesus chaos broke out and in the darkness they got confused and mistakenly arrested Judas instead of Jesus.

Jesus escaped, fleeing to a secret place in the town of Sychar in Samaria for three days and three nights. Judas was transformed to look exactly like Jesus and was punished for his treachery. As a result, the Roman soldiers crucified Judas instead of Jesus.

After the crucifixion of Judas, Jesus reappeared in Jerusalem and people thought He was raised from the dead. Judas never rose from the dead and the empty tomb is pure fiction because the empty tomb never existed.

This Satanic lie denies the clearest teaching of the Scriptures that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for man’s sin and was raised from the dead. Almost all the prophets spoke of Jesus and his crucifixion. Zech.12:10, 13:6; Mal.6; Isa.53; Isa.49:15. Isaiah 53 prophecies both His crucifixion and resurrection.

*Isaiah 53:5-12, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that*

*brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us*

*has turned to our own way and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Jesus prophesied repeatedly that He had to go to the cross, die and be raised to life on the third day.

*Matt. 16:21-23, "...Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."*

*Matt. 17:22, 23, "When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life."*

*Matt. 20:17-19, "Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, "We*

*are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law.*

*They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified.*

*On the third day he will be raised to life!”*

In his first sermon, Peter said,

*Acts 2:22-24: “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles,*

*wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over*

*to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by*

*nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was*

*impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”*

**APPLICATION** – Don’t let anyone fool you into believing the lie that Judas was crucified on the cross instead of Jesus. It was God’s plan from the beginning to crucify Jesus for man’s sins and then raise Him from the dead.

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## **LIE #2 – JESUS WASN’T DEAD WHEN HE WAS BURIED AND HE RECOVERED IN THE TOMB**

**EXPLANATION** – This lie was put forward by a man named Venturini several centuries ago and championed by German atheists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This lie says that Christ was truly nailed to the cross. While on the cross, Jesus suffered from shock, loss of blood, and pain and as a result, He swooned away or slipped into a coma, but He did not die.”

The people who took Christ off the cross made a mistake and thought He was dead. The people who prepared Jesus’ body for burial and buried Him made a mistake and thought He was dead. But Jesus was not dead. He had just swooned away or slipped into a coma. Then in the cool damp air of His tomb, Jesus regained consciousness, slipped out of His grave clothes, pushed the boulder away from the entrance to His tomb, fought off the Roman soldiers and revealed Himself to His disciples as a conquering King.

However, the scriptures which claim to be written by eyewitnesses clearly teach that Jesus was completely dead.

*John 19:32-35, "...Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate*

*to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first*

*man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found*

*that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a*

*spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is*

*true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe."*

*Mark 15:43-45, "Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the*

*kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was*

*already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the*

*centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph."*

The job of the soldiers and the centurion was to make sure the people they crucified were dead. They didn't make a mistake when they said that Jesus was dead.

**APPLICATION** – Don't let someone fool you into believing the lie that Jesus didn't die on the cross and was buried alive. It doesn't make sense that after being nailed to the cross, crucified and speared in the side, Jesus could fight off the Roman soldiers and reveal Himself to His disciples as a conquering King.

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### **LIE #3 – THE DISCIPLES STOLE JESUS' BODY WHILE THE GUARDS SLEPT**

This lie began immediately following the resurrection of Christ.

*Matt. 27:62-66, "The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.*

*Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'*

*So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal*

*the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the*

*first.” “Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.” So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.”*

But just as Jesus had predicted, three days after His death,

*Matt. 28:2-4, “There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.”*

*Matt. 28:12-15, “...some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, ‘You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.”*

Think about it. On the night Jesus was arrested, His disciples ran for their lives. Peter couldn't even stand up to a servant girl when she identified him as a friend of Jesus. Now we are to believe that 2 days later:

- 1) Jesus' cowardly disciples were willing to break a Roman seal for His dead body, knowing that if they were caught breaking the seal, they would automatically be executed by crucifixion upside down.
- 2) A Roman guard of 4 strictly disciplined soldiers all fell asleep at the same time while on duty, even though falling asleep on duty would have meant death for them from their superior officers.
- 3) The disciples were able to move the large stone at the entrance to Christ's tomb without waking up any of the Roman soldiers.

If the Roman guards were asleep, how could they know that Jesus' disciples took His body? This lie doesn't make sense because of the change in the disciples' behavior following Christ's resurrection.

Something happened to change Jesus' disciples from a group of cowards into a band of courageous evangelists who were willing to endure persecution, scourging, imprisonment, and even death because they would not deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Peter, who couldn't even admit to a servant girl that he was a friend of Jesus before Christ's resurrection, powerfully confronted the Jewish leaders with the fact that they killed Christ, but God raised Him from the dead.

Peter told them,

*Acts 2:23, 24, "...you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised Him from the dead..."*

The enemies of Christ were not happy with Peter's preaching and tried to stop Peter and the other apostles from teaching that Jesus had been raised bodily from the dead.

- They put them in jail to keep them from teaching that Jesus had been raised bodily from the dead. (Acts 4:1-3)
- They warned them and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Christ. (Acts 4:17-20)
- They wanted to kill them, but flogged them instead. (Acts 5:27-29, 40)
- They killed them and put them in prison. (Acts 8:1-4)

Ten of the 11 disciples who supposedly stole the body of Jesus while the guards were sleeping died martyrs' deaths because they said that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead. Tradition tells us that Peter insisted on being crucified head downward because he said he was unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

If Jesus Christ was not really raised from the dead, His disciples knew it; yet the actions of His 11 disciples following His bodily resurrection demonstrate that each one of His disciples was intellectually convinced that God had raised Jesus bodily from the dead. They would not have been willing to endure such persecution and pain if they had stolen Jesus' body. What did they have to gain from lying? Money? Power? Fame? Would you suffer and die for something you knew was a lie?

**APPLICATION** – Don't let anyone fool you into believing the lie that Jesus' disciples stole the body of Jesus. It doesn't make sense.

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#### **LIE #4 – THE WOMEN AND THE DISCIPLES WENT TO THE WRONG TOMB**

**EXPLANATION** – This lie says that the disciples and the women were so overcome with grief that they went to the wrong tomb. Well, if that was the case, why didn't the chief priests take them to the right tomb? Why didn't the Jewish or Roman authorities produce the body of Jesus from the correct tomb? Why didn't the enemies of Christ disprove the bodily resurrection of

Jesus with some objective evidence? Obviously, the reason they didn't produce the body of Jesus was that it was missing from the tomb in which it had been laid.

"The church was founded on the resurrection of Christ and disproving it would have destroyed the whole Christian movement. However, instead of any such disproof throughout the first century, Christians were threatened, beaten, flogged and killed because of their faith in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. It would have been much simpler to silence them by producing Jesus' body, but this was never done." (p.234,235, Evidence that Demands a Verdict)

**APPLICATION** - Don't let anyone fool you into believing the lie that the disciples and the women went to the wrong tomb. It doesn't make sense.

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**SPECIFIC APPLICATION** - Professor Thomas Arnold, author of a 3-volume literary work on the history of Rome and who was at one time head of the department of Modern History at Oxford University, said this: "I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose from the dead."

Jesus' bodily resurrection proved forever that He has the power to bring about everything He taught and promised. If He had not been raised from the dead, we would not have that assurance.

However, since Jesus Christ is alive, He can save us from the penalty of our sins. Since Christ is alive, He can intercede for us before God the Father. Since Jesus is alive, He can send the Holy Spirit to indwell us and guide us into the truth, until He returns. Since Christ is alive, He can prepare a place for us in heaven. Since Christ is alive, He can return to earth as a Savior and transform our lowly bodies to be like His. Since Christ is alive, He can come again as the conquering King and Judge of all mankind, and He will rule and judge the world with justice.

Paul said,

*Acts 17:31, "God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the Man he has appointed. He has given proof to this to all men by raising Him from the dead."*

Prayer – for unbeliever