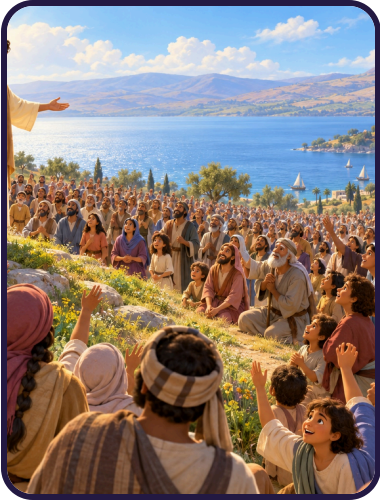


The empty tomb

BIG QUESTION

Did Jesus really come back to life?



Around AD 55, Paul wrote down a list of people who saw Jesus alive after he died: Peter, the Twelve, more than five hundred at the same time, James, all the apostles, and Paul himself. He says he had received the list earlier, and many scholars date it to the first few years after the cross. Most of the five hundred, Paul says, were still living. You could go and ask them.

And the people on that list changed. The night Jesus was arrested, his friends ran away. Fifty days later, Peter stood up in the city that had killed Jesus and said, “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.” James, the brother who hadn’t believed in him, became a leader of the church. Paul, who had tried to destroy the church, spent the rest of his life preaching.

People have tried four easy answers. Each explains one piece and leaves the rest. The answer the first Christians gave explains all of it: God raised Jesus from the dead.

Test the easy answers

Each easy answer runs into a fact. Draw a line from each one to the fact that sinks it.

1 “He didn't really die.”

2 “They hallucinated.”

3 “Someone stole the body.”

4 “It's a legend that grew.”

A Paul's list goes back to the first few years after the cross. Legends take generations.

B Roman soldiers made sure with a spear, and the centurion told Pilate he was dead.

C Hallucinations are private, like dreams. He appeared to groups, even 500 at once.

D The guards were paid to say the disciples stole him. That story admits the tomb was empty.

Memory verse

“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.”

1 Corinthians 15:3–4

Fill it in: “For what I received I passed on to you as of first _____ : that Christ died for our _____ according to the Scriptures, that he was _____ , that he was raised on the _____ day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3–4

I can say it! ☆ ☆ ☆ Color a star each time you say it.

★ Bonus verse

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”
1 Corinthians 15:20

Think it through

Answer in your own words.

1. Why does it matter that Paul's list of witnesses is so early?

2. Peter hid behind locked doors, then preached in the city that killed Jesus. What explains the change?

3. James grew up with Jesus and didn't believe in him. What changed his mind?

4. The apostles were flogged, and some killed, for saying Jesus rose. Why does that matter?

Talk about it

1. Which easy answer seemed strongest to you before? What sank it?
2. What would it take for you to believe your own brother was the Son of God?
3. If Jesus rose, what does that mean about death, for you?



Watch the video

Answers will vary. Look for: 1. witnesses could still be asked 2. he saw Jesus alive 3. Jesus appeared to him 4. nobody dies for a lie they made up