

Christian Apologetics (Youth)

Week 6: Resurrection of Jesus

Jesus as Victorious Savior

*Did Jesus Die a Cruel Death by Scourging and Crucifixion? Or Did He Swoon?
Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? Or Did the Church Invent Jesus' Resurrection?*

Gary Habermas, the leading expert on the resurrection of Jesus, argues that the death, burial and resurrection are the **best-attested** facts about Jesus.

Testimonies

Eyewitness Testimony of Jesus' Death

Apostle John is regarded as a **primary eyewitness** at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, along with the three Mary's. John chronicles the crucifixion events in John 19 including placing himself in **close proximity** to Jesus. (v. 25), witnessing the **drooping** of Jesus head. (v. 30), **soldier thrust the sword** into Jesus' side (v. 34), Jesus' **death by crucifixion** (v. 30), and Jesus' **bones not broken** and **side pierced** (vv. 35-37).

Jesus' Disciples – Those Jesus knew personally **stood at a distance** (Luke 23:49).

General Public - Jesus' crucifixion was witnessed by the **general public**. The hill on which Jesus was crucified, Golgotha, is located on the **public road** north of the Damascus Gate where visitors to the Passover would be traveling. Phrases such as "*many people*", "*a large crowd*", and "*all the crowd*" are used to describe the passing spectators (John 11:55-56, 12:9-13, Luke 23:27, 23:48 NLT).

Eyewitness Testimony of Jesus' Resurrection

500+ Eyewitnesses – Post-resurrection appearances were witnessed by 500+ people over the course of 40 days (Acts 1:3, 13:31, 1 Corinthians 15:3-7). This included his disciples, the three Mary's, James the brother of Jesus, Paul, and others.

Many counter-theories abounded regarding the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. One theory that emerged during the 19th century was the **hallucination theory** alleging that people merely experienced **visions** of Jesus after his death. Given that hallucinations and delusions are an individual experience, it is highly unlikely that the same vision of the resurrected Jesus could be experienced by the eleven disciples let alone 500+ people.

Post Resurrection Conversions

Jesus' resurrection was a **watershed moment** in the life of his disciples and followers. After encountering the risen Jesus, their lives were radically changed.

- They went from being **unbelievers** and **cowards** to being **believers** and **bold proclaimers** of the Gospel message. Many were **martyred** for their faith.
- Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul, went from being a **persecutor** to being a **believer** and **bold proclaimer**, and was **martyred** for his faith.
- James, the brother of Jesus, wanted to **promote** Jesus as a **miracle worker**, and **exploit** Jesus for his own gain. According to the Apostle John, James was an unbeliever. (John 7:5) Later, James became a believer and rose to a very influential position in the early Christian church as a prominent leader, and was **martyred** for his faith.

What we learn from these conversions is that the resurrection **emboldened** Jesus' disciples to **dedicate** their lives to **preach** the Gospel message, even to their deaths.

Extra-Biblical Testimony

Extra-biblical (secular) testimonies concerning the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection **corroborate** the biblical eyewitness testimonies presented above.

Flavius Josephus – 1st century Jewish Historian (90-95 AD) **who specialized in Roman-Jewish history**.

Pilate **condemned him** to be **crucified** and to **die**.

They reported that he had **appeared to them** three days after his **crucifixion** and that he was **alive**.

Cornelius Tacitus - Roman Historian of the early 2nd century (115 AD) considered the greatest historian of the Roman empire.

*Christus, the founder of the name, was **put to death** by Pontius Pilate.*

*Christus suffered the **extreme penalty** at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate.*

Lucian of Samosata – 2nd century Greek historian (165 AD)

*A man (Jesus) was **crucified**. These misguided creatures (Christians) worship the **crucified sage**.*

Jewish Talmud (135-200 AD)

*Yeshu was **hanged** on the evening of the Passover.*

Thallus – 1st century Greek historian (52 AD)

*On the whole world there pressed a **most fearful darkness**; and the rocks were **rent by an earthquake**, and many places in Judea and other districts were **thrown down**.*

Phlegon of Tralles - prolific 2nd century Greek historian (137 AD)

*There was an **eclipse of the sun**, **greater** than any which had occurred previously. At the sixth hour, the day became as **dark as night**, and the **stars were visible** in the sky. An **earthquake** in Bithynia destroyed many buildings in Nicaea.*

Tertullian - 2nd century Christian writer (155-240 AD)

*The **light of day was withdrawn**, when the sun at the very time was in his meridian blaze.*

These extra-biblical testimonies are consistent with the death and resurrection accounts presented in God's Word.

Prophetic Fulfillment

Prophetic fulfillment of Jesus' death and resurrection was covered in Week 5 with the illustration of Psalm 22.

Jesus' Death by Crucifixion

Perhaps the most popular **conspiracy theory** from the eighteenth century is the **swoon theory**.

- According to this theory, Jesus **lost consciousness** (or **swooned**) while on the cross due to **extreme exhaustion** and then was **resuscitated** after a 3-day rest in the tomb.
- According to notable forensic pathologist Frederick Zugibe, to suggest that Jesus could survive the **fatal injuries** he incurred during the **brutal scourging** and **crucifixion** is contrary to the findings of modern forensic science.

Forensic Evidence

Let's briefly summarize the injuries Jesus incurred during his last hours.

Extreme Emotional Distress - **Garden of Gethsemane** (Luke 22:44) Jesus experienced extreme emotional distress, sweating blood (*hematidrosis*), severe dehydration, and likely vomiting.

Beatings – **Temple** (Matthew 26:67-68, Mark 14:65, Luke 22:63-65) Temple guards beat Jesus with their fists while mocking him resulting in bruising and fractures to the face and upper torso.

Roman Scourging - **Governor's Headquarters** (John 19:1-3) Roman guards used a flagrum (fortified whip) to deliver **lethal blows** to the Jesus' back, sides, and chest. This scourging would have resulted in *hypovolemic shock* which is characterized by heavy blood loss due to lacerations. Additionally, Jesus incurred deep contusions and bruising, vertebrae damage, muscle/ligament/tendon damage, lacerated liver and spleen, punctured lung, fluid buildup on the lung's pleural lining (*pleural effusion*), and periodic vomiting, tremors and seizures.

Crown of Thorns/Facial Beatings – **Governor's Headquarters** (Matthew 27:27, Mark 15:16-20) We learn from medical science that the thorns would have damaged or severed the *trigeminal* and *occipital* nerves which service the front and back of the head resulting in severe facial pain. We also learn of the **great company of soldiers** forcefully striking Jesus in the head with a reed resulting in severe facial bruising/swelling/lacerations, eye/nasal/oral traumas, and concussion/dizziness, while complicating injuries already inflicted by the crown of thorns.

Roman Crucifixion – Golgotha (Matthew 27:35-44, Mark 15:24-32, Luke 23:33-43, John 19:18-27) We learn from history and archeology that Roman crucifixion was a **form of torture** designed to produce a **slow death** while maximizing the victim's **pain** and **suffering**. Crucifixion would have resulted in the severing of the *median* nerves in both wrists/hands and the *plantar* nerves in both ankles/feet, piercing of the pleura, lungs and heart (*pericardium*) by the sword resulting in severe hemorrhaging, and finally an inability to exhale (*asphyxiation*) leading to death by a combination of cardiac arrest or asphyxiation.

According to the prophet Isaiah, Jesus was so **disfigured**, he was **unrecognizable** (Isaiah 52:14).

The consensus among forensic pathologists is that Jesus suffered a **violent** and **certain death**, and that his injuries were **fatal** and **irreparable**.

To suggest that Jesus could walk away from these injuries is completely absurd!

Jesus Resurrection from the Dead

Circumstantial Evidence

Unlike **direct** or **eyewitness** evidence, circumstantial evidence is **indirect** evidence that relies on **inference** to connect the **evidence** (circumstances surrounding Jesus' resurrection) to an **assertion** (Jesus' resurrection).

Prolonged Darkness and Earthquakes

The Gospels record a **prolonged darkness** (Matthew 27:45) and **earthquakes** (Matthew 27:54) at the time of Jesus' death on the cross.

- These events were also recorded by extra-biblical historians Phlegon, Thallus, and Tertullian.
- What is interesting about Phlegon's account is that it likely occurred in Bithynia during Olympiad held in AD 29-33.
- This implies that both the **darkness** and **earthquakes** were **widespread** throughout the entire regions of Israel and Asia Minor, because Bithynia is located approximately **800 miles** north of Jerusalem.

Temple Curtain Torn in Two

In Matthew 27:51a, Matthew tells us the temple curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom.

- This four-inch-thick curtain separated the **Holy Place** from the **Most Holy Place**, separating Man from God.
- Matthew is suggesting that this event can only be explained as a **work of God**, not by a **natural event** such as an earthquake or a violent wind.

Opened Tombs, Resurrection of the Saints

In Matthew 27:51b-53, Matthew tells us that tombs of the dead were open due to the earthquake, and that many godly people were raised from the dead at the time of Jesus' death on the cross.

- Matthew also reports that those who were raised from the dead appeared to many people in Jerusalem after Jesus' resurrection.
- These events perfectly coincided with Jesus' death and resurrection.

Cessation of Temple Phenomena

The Jewish Talmud (Yoma 39a-b) reported that longstanding temple phenomena ceased to occur after Jesus' death.

- **Lot for God** - Always Selected by Right Hand
- **Strip of Crimson Wool** - Always Turns White
- **Candelabrum** - Burned Continuously
- **Sanctuary Door** - Always Remained Closed

According to the Talmud, the cessation of these phenomena was the result of **God's disfavor with the nation of Israel**.

- The Jewish leaders' rejection of Jesus as Messiah (Acts 4:11, Acts 13:46) and blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:22-29) were the **final transgressions** in the long sequence of Israel's moral decline.

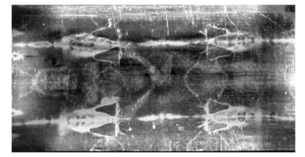
Shroud of Turin Evidence

The Shroud of Turin (SOT) was discovered some time before 1357.

- We know this because the earliest written account of the SOT was written in 1357.

- Therefore, we can establish that if the SOT is a **forgery**, it must have been forged earlier than 1357.
- We know that many features found on the SOT were **unknown** before 1357.

We argue that the SOT is the authentic burial shroud of Jesus given the following evidence.



Floral Images and Pollen Grains Unknown

Botanical evidence indicates that the **floral imprints** and **pollen grains** found on the SOT are **endemic** to Israel and the surrounding area in the 1st century.

- **Chrysanthemums** customarily used in **floral wreaths** placed around the victim's head can be clearly seen on the SOT.
- These Chrysanthemums could have come only from the **Middle East** and would only have been in **bloom** during the months of February through May – the season when Jesus was buried.



This evidence strongly suggests that the SOT was exposed to these native plants during a 1st century burial and could not have been introduced in a 14th century forgery.

Shape of Scourge Marks Unknown

The scourge marks found on the shroud are consistent with the **dumbbell-shaped tips** on the **Roman flagrum** used in the 1st century which was **unknown** until one was unearthed in the ancient Roman city of Herculaneum in 1709.

- The dumbbell-shaped scourge marks are only visible with **ultra-violet light**, a technology unavailable in the 14th century.
- All 100 scourge marks have **identical shape** and **dimensions**, and could not be forged by hand with such precision.



Medical Conditions Unknown

Knowledge of certain **medical conditions** depicted on the shroud were **unknown** to medical science in the 14th century.

Blood Clotting

- Knowledge of blood clotting seen in the **serum halos** surrounding the scourge marks was **unknown** in the 14th century.

Pleural Effusion

- The condition is the buildup of various **fluids** between the layers of tissue that line the lungs and chest cavity.
- According to John 19:34, **blood** and **water** were released when the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear.

Abdomen Distension

- The condition is the buildup of various **fluids** and **air** in the abdomen, causing the abdomen to **bulge outward**.

Image Formation on Shroud Unknown

No one has been able to satisfactorily explain how the image was imprinted on the SOT even with the latest technologies available today. The most likely theory is that the image was imprinted on the SOT using **heat** and **radiation** a process commonly known as **scorching**.

- Since all forms of radiation were discovered in the 19th and 20th centuries, it is impossible for a forger to imprint the image using radiation in the 14th century.
- The image is 3-dimensional and therefore would have been difficult for a forger to accurately produce on a 2-dimensional linen.

All the injuries incurred by Jesus based on the biblical accounts are depicted on the SOT. The features that are attributed uniquely to Jesus include:

- the facial/head wounds due to multiple blows,
- the crown of thorns,
- the legs of the victim were not fractured,
- the absence of any bodily tissue and embalming ointment,
- the fine linen used at burial, and
- the unknown method by which the linen was scorched.