

# Evidence for the Resurrection



**ComRes surveyed 2,010 British adults by telephone, between 2 and 12 February 2017. The research was commissioned by BBC local radio for Palm Sunday.**

**A quarter of people who describe themselves as Christians in Great Britain do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus.**

**Exactly half of all people surveyed did not believe in the resurrection at all.**

A study released by the Rasmussen Reports polling firm on Good Friday (April 2013) found that 64% of Americans believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

While Americans who believe in the resurrection remain in the majority, that number is down significantly when compared to a Rasmussen Poll that asked the same question, released a year ago.

On April 7th, 2012 Rasmussen released a poll finding that 77% of Americans believed the resurrection of Christ to be historical fact.

The difference between the two polls shows a 13 percentage point drop in the number of Americans who believe that Christ rose from the dead, since last Easter.

In 1 Corinthians 15:12–19, Paul says that, if the resurrection of Christ did not occur, **preaching is in vain, faith is in vain**, the apostles were **false witnesses**, the Corinthians were **still in their sins**, believers who have **died have perished**, and Christians are of **all people most to be pitied**.

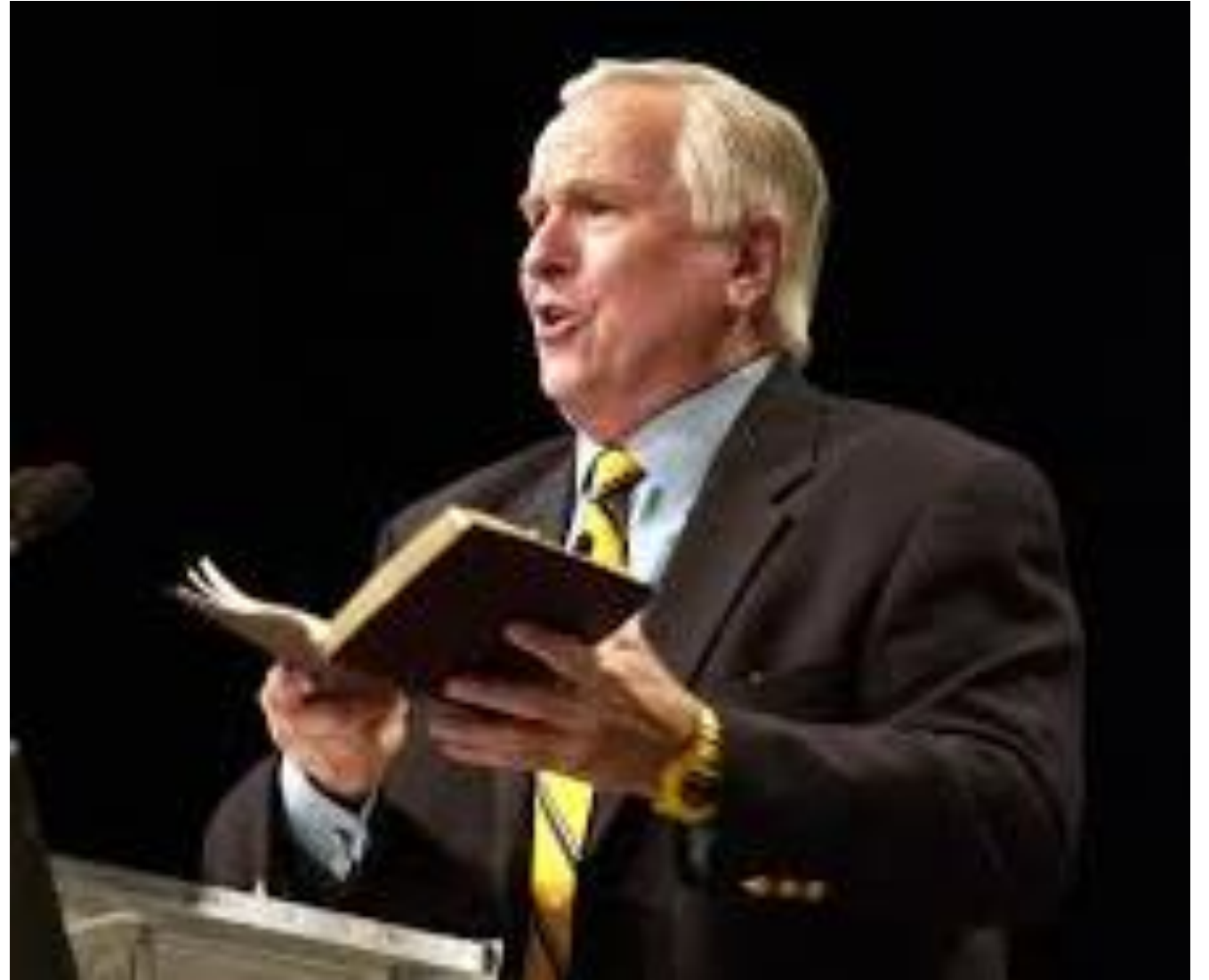
Paul rested his whole ministry and life on the bodily resurrection of Christ. In fact he makes the point if Christ did not rise in 1 Corinthians 15:19

*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

If you can disprove the resurrection, you have disproved  
Christianity.

Christianity stands or falls on the basis of the resurrection being a  
real historic event.

Josh McDowell



## **His early years of suffering**

McDowell was born in Union City, Michigan in 1939 with the given name Joslin. He was one of five children and he struggled with low self-esteem in his youth, as his father was an alcoholic and abusive. Life was extremely difficult for young Josh, because between the ages of 6 and 13, he was molested on a weekly basis by a man his mother had hired as a housekeeper. Every time his mom went out of town for the weekend she would demand that he obey this man and threatened him with harsh punishment if he did not comply.



# His transformation

It was during his college years that as an agnostic (one who believes that nothing can be known about God) he found himself perplexed by a group of people who seemed different from the others he had encountered. On asking them why they were different, he was told that it was their faith in Jesus that made them different. McDowell later recalled; “I just laughed at them and I thought, You’ve got to be kidding.”

It wasn't long before these Christians challenged him to intellectually examine scriptures and in particular, the idea that Jesus could be God's son and He actually rose from the Dead. McDowell gladly set out on that mission, traveling abroad to examine biblical manuscripts in various libraries in an effort to disprove this central premises of Christianity, that is the resurrection.

In the end, though, something else entirely happened. Rather than corroborating his own personal dismissal of the faith, he found himself conceding that there were some truths that he couldn't simply ignore.

*Intellectually, I concluded that I could trust the Bible and I concluded that Jesus Christ not only claimed to be God — but there was sufficient evidence to support his claims of being God, McDowell said.*

# The result

Josh McDowell dedicated his life to proclaiming Christ and the truth and reliability of the Bible as he toured University campuses. His first book: *Evidence that demands a verdict*, became a best seller and impacted the lives of tens of thousands of people. His book; *More than a Carpenter*, has sold 15 million copies and has been translated into 85 different languages. He has authored or co-authored some 118 books.

The Josh McDowell Ministry, located in Plano, Texas, employs a staff of 75 people with affiliate offices located throughout the country. As well, Josh McDowell is the founder of the Christian ministries [josh-mcdowell-and-wifeJosh.org](http://josh-mcdowell-and-wifeJosh.org) and *Operation Carelift*, which is an international humanitarian aid ministry that is run by the Global Aid

## **Gilbert West (1703-1756)**

Gilbert West was included in Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*. As a student at Oxford, West set out to debunk the Bible's account of Christ's resurrection. Instead, having proved to himself that Christ did rise from the dead, he was converted. West published his conclusions in the book: *Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (1747).

**Albert Henry Ross** (1881–1950) was skeptical regarding the resurrection of Jesus, and set out to analyse the sources and to write a short paper entitled *Jesus – the Last Phase*, to demonstrate the apparent myth. In compiling his notes, he came to be convinced of the truth of the resurrection, and set out his reasoning in the book *Who moved the stone?* (reprinted 10 times from 1930-2006) which he wrote under the pseudonym Frank Morison. It was first published in 1930 and it has led many people to Christ.

# **Evidence for the Resurrection**



# 1. The tomb was secured

Pilate ordered the tomb to be guarded at the insistence of the Jews:[Matthew 27:63-64]

*63 Saying, Sir, we remember that, that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.*

*64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.*

Pilate's response to this request is recorded as:

*“Ye have a watch (guard); go your way, make [it] as sure (secure) as ye can.”*

# Reasons for them being the Temple guards

- If Pilate was referring to his guards, he would have said, “take a guard”
- The Roman punishment for falling asleep on duty would have been death and no amount of bribing could compensate.
- The guards reported to the Chief Priests (Mt 28:11) and not to Pilate.

## Reasons for them being Roman soldiers

- If they were the Temple guards, the Jews would not have asked Pilate
- If the guards were the Temple guards, there would have been no reason for the High Priest to bribe them as they were under his command.
- The guards sealed the tomb (Mt 27:66) which is more in-keeping with the actions of Roman soldiers.

## 2. The large stone was removed (John 20:1)

Archaeological evidence suggests that this stone would have weighed two tons. The normal procedure was for the stone to be rolled along a v-shaped groove, and once the body was interred, it would be rolled into place and wedged there in order to prevent the grave from being robbed. It would have taken many men to perform this task.



### **3. The tomb was empty (John 20:3-8)**

This is the greatest evidence of the risen Saviour. No body has ever been produced. It would have been very easy for the Jews to disprove the resurrection by simply producing His body. No one has been able to do this in 2,000 years.

## **4. The graveclothes were intact (John 20:3-8)**

The tomb was not totally empty, for when the disciples looked where Jesus had lain: John 20:6-7

*<sup>6</sup> Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,*

*<sup>7</sup> And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.*

In fact, the clothes were possibly set hard since they consisted of strips of linen saturated with a mixture of about 34 kilograms of myrrh and aloes. Indeed, this embalming procedure would make it very difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to remove the body and reconstitute the bandages.

## 5. His resurrection was unexpected

According to the gospel narratives, none of Jesus' followers expected Him to rise from the dead. Luke wrote that when Jesus appeared to them in a room with the doors closed:

*...they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a ghost.[Luke 24:37]*



Jesus had predicted His own death and resurrection on at least four occasions:

- John 2:18-22
- Matthew 12: 39-40
- Matthew 16:21
- John 10:17-18.
- Luke 18:31-33

## **6. The testimony of a hostile witness**

As compelling evidence as the above may be, even more compelling is the testimony of a hostile witness: in this case Saul of Tarsus, who despised Jesus and persecuted His followers.[Acts 7:51-8:1; 8:3; 22:4-5]

However, when the risen Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus, he believed with a passion and became one of the greatest proponents and propagators of Christianity.

## **7. Those who saw the resurrected Christ were still alive**

Paul states in chapter 15, verses 3-7 of his first letter to the church at Corinth, that Jesus appeared to 500 witnesses at the one time and if anybody doubted this, most of these witnesses were still alive and he or she could quickly obtain confirmation.

## **8. Jesus' post-resurrection appearances**

In all, there were 11 recorded post-resurrection appearances of Jesus over a forty-day period and at various times of the day. We can count twelve if we include Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus.

Event	Date	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Acts	1 Corinthians
<b>At the empty tomb</b>	Early Sunday morning	28:1–10	16:1–8	24:1–12	20:1–9		
<b>To Mary Magdalene at the tomb</b>	Early Sunday morning		16:9–11		20:11–18		
<b>To two travelers on the road to Emmaus</b>	Sunday at midday			24:13–32			
<b>To Peter in Jerusalem</b>	During Sunday			24:34			15:5
<b>To ten disciples in upper room</b>	Sunday evening			24:36–43	20:19–25		
<b>To eleven disciples in upper room</b>	One week later		16:14		20:26–31		15:5
<b>To seven disciples fishing on Sea of Galilee</b>	One day at daybreak				21:1–23		
<b>To eleven disciples in Galilee</b>	Some time later	28:16–20	16:15–18				
<b>To more than 500</b>	Some time later						15:6
<b>To James</b>	Some time later						15:7
<b>At the Ascension on the Mt of Olives</b>	Forty days after the resurrection					1:3–8	

## **9. The transformation of two of Jesus' brothers**

During His earthly life, His brothers did not believe in His Messiahship[John 7:1-5] and yet after His resurrection two became believers and each wrote a book (James and Jude) and spent the rest of their lives proclaiming the 'good news.'

## **10. Being prepared to die for what they believed**

If more evidence is needed, it can be found in the form of His disciples who, by spreading the gospel, risked their lives. Extra-biblical writings tell that all of them (except John) lost their lives for the sake of Christ. This is even more compelling when their cowardly behaviour at the time of Christ's arrest is taken into account. Of all people, it was the disciples and the women with them who would have known if Jesus had risen from the dead, and on the basis of His resurrection, they willingly gave their lives.

**Would you give your life for something that you knew was a lie?**

## **11.If Jesus' resurrection was a lie, the disciples kept it secret for decades.**

Charles Colson of Watergate infamy, who became a Christian, started Prison Fellowship and wrote the much challenging and widely read book; *Born Again* and nine other books, makes this point very clear:

*I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world-and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible.*



## 12. The Nazareth Inscription.

Further evidence comes in the form of a marble tablet known as the Nazareth Inscription. It was acquired by Wilhelm Fröhner (1834–1925) to form part of his collection of ancient inscriptions and manuscripts. It was labelled: This Marble was sent from Nazareth in 1878. Since 1925 it has been in the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, displayed in the Cabinet des Médailles



- *1. EDICT OF CAESAR*
- *2. It is my decision [concerning] graves and tombs--whoever has made*
- *3. them for the religious observances of parents, or children, or household*
- *4. members--that these remain undisturbed forever. But if anyone legally*
- *5. charges that another person has destroyed, or has in any manner extracted*
- *6. those who have been buried, or has moved with wicked intent those who*
- *7. have been buried to other places, committing a crime against them, or has*
- *8. moved sepulcher-sealing stones, against such a person, I order that a*
- *9. judicial tribunal be created, just as [is done] concerning the gods in*
- *10. human religious observances, even more so will it be obligatory to treat*
- *11. with honor those who have been entombed. You are absolutely not to*
- *12. allow anyone to move [those who have been entombed]. But if*
- *13. [someone does], I wish that [violator] to suffer capital punishment under*
- *14. the title of tomb-breaker.*

Michael Green cites the inscription as a secular source of early origin that bears testimony to Jesus' empty tomb:

*It is an imperial edict, belonging either to the reign of Tiberius (A.D. 14-37) or of Claudius (A.D. 41-54). And it is an invective, backed with heavy sanctions, against meddling around with tombs and graves! It looks very much as if the news of the empty tomb had got back to Rome in a garbled form. (Pontius Pilate would have had to report: and he would obviously have said that the tomb had been rifled). This edict, it seems, is the imperial reaction.*

Clyde Billington of North Western College (Minnesota) has dated it to AD 41, and interpreted it as evidence for the historicity of Christians preaching the resurrection of Jesus within a decade of His crucifixion since it seems to apply specifically to Jewish burials from the early first century (moved bodies, moved sepulcher-sealing stones, whereas Gentiles either cremated or buried their dead in coffins).

# Arguments against the Resurrection

## 1. The swoon theory

Jesus did not actually die, but went into a deep coma (swoon) from the severe pain and trauma of the crucifixion. However, in the cool atmosphere of the tomb, He revived and was somehow able to get out of the strips of cloth wrapped around His body and appear to His disciples.

## Rebuttal:

Remember, the Roman guards were actually the first to report Jesus' death (John 19:33–37). They were experts at execution and would be put to death themselves if they allowed a condemned man to escape death. They were so certain that Jesus was dead, they did not even bother to break His legs. And when the spear they thrust into Jesus' side brought forth blood and water, they had final proof of His death, for this occurs when the heart stops beating.

Also, for the “swoon” theory to be valid, Jesus would have had to survive massive loss of blood through the scourging, the nail wounds, and the spear thrust.

He would have had to unwrap Himself from His grave clothes, and roll away the massive stone closing the tomb.

He would have had to travel countless miles in that condition to make many appearances to His disciples over a period of 40 days.

He would have had to delude the disciples into thinking that He could simply appear in a room without the use of a door.

## The “no burial” theory

Premise: Jesus was never put in the tomb to begin with. Instead, He was thrown into a mass grave for criminals, according to Roman custom.



## Rebuttal:

If this were true, neither the Jewish leaders or the Roman soldiers would have bothered to seal the tomb knowing His body was not in there (Matthew 27:62–66). Moreover, to disprove Jesus' resurrection, they would only have had to retrieve the body and put it on display.

## The “mass hallucination” theory

Premise: Everyone who claimed to see the risen Lord was hallucinating out of an earnest desire to see Jesus alive again.

## Rebuttal:

Jesus' disciples had not expected to see Him alive again (Mark 16:10–11). It came as a complete and total shock to them. Scripture also tells us that 500 people saw Him on one occasion alone.

Ironically, the nonbelievers initially had more faith in the words of Jesus than His own disciples. The chief priests and Pharisees came to see Pilate and asked for the tomb to be secure so His disciples could not steal His body.

## The “stolen body” theory

Premise: Jesus’ disciples took His body in order to fulfil Jesus’ words (see Matthew 27:64). According to Scripture, this story goes back to the day the guards who had stood watch at Jesus’ tomb told the chief priests what had transpired. The chief priests bribed the guards, telling them to spread this story instead of what they had witnessed (Matthew 28:11–15).

## Rebuttal:

Jesus' friends could not have taken His body because they had left the scene, convinced that He was dead. When the women reported Jesus' resurrection to the eleven apostles and other believers in Jerusalem, *their words seemed...like idle tales, and they believed them not* (Luke 24:11). The apostles had no reason to counterfeit Jesus' resurrection since they did not even believe it themselves. How could it be that the very men who fled for their lives, while Jesus was still alive, could suddenly muster the courage and ingenuity to steal the body from a guarded tomb, and then boldly start preaching and teaching about a Jesus they knew was dead?

There is no doubt that the man known as Jesus of Nazareth, was/is Jesus the Christ; God the Son, the Second person of the trinity, and that He rose from the dead.

If Christ did rise from the dead, we have answers to the profound questions of our existence:

Where have we come from?

Why are we here?

Where are we going?

If Christ rose, we know with certainty that God exists.