

The Coverup of Jesus' Resurrection (Matt 27:62-28:15)

1. Notice that, unlike the followers of Jesus, Jewish religious authorities feared Jesus' body would be gone! What does the Bible tell us about how they covered up the disappearance of Jesus' body?

2. Did you know that today, like the Pharisees two thousand years ago, there are people who try to explain away the resurrection. Put on your thinking cap and by using your brain and logic, you can challenge these false explanations because the truth and facts are on your side!

a. Jesus did not die and instead was unconscious from the injuries He received in the course of crucifixion. In the tomb, He revived, was able to get out of the cloth wrapping, escape from the tomb, and appear to His disciples. (Hint: John 19:33-35)

b. According to Roman custom, Jesus was buried in a mass grave for criminals and was never put into the tomb. (Hint: Matt 27:62-66)

c. The followers of Jesus pretended to see the resurrected Lord. (Hint: Matt 28:16-17; Mark 16:10-13; Luke 24:9-11; John 20:24-25)

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Teacher Notes

Dramatically read and act out this Matthew account to help the student visualize what is happening:

The next day, which followed the preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that while this deceiver was still alive he said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give orders that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come, steal him, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."

"Take guards," Pilate told them. "Go and make it as secure as you know how." They went and secured the tomb by setting a seal on the stone and placing the guards.

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men.

The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.' Listen, I have told you."

So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell his disciples the news. Just then Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" They came up, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus told them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

As they were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them, "Say this, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him while we were sleeping.' If this reaches the governor's ears, we will deal with him and keep you out of trouble." They took the money and did as they were instructed, and this story has been spread among Jewish people to this day. (Matt 27:62-28:15, CSB)

1. Did the followers of Jesus understand what the resurrection meant (Hint: Mark 16:1-4; John 19:39-40)? How about the Pharisees?

Referring to the hint, ask the above questions to help the student see that the women expected to find a body. Spices and perfume were used to hide the smell of a decomposing body.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they could go and anoint him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?" Looking up, they noticed that the stone—which was very large—had been rolled away. (Mark 16:1-4, CSB)

The day before, when Jesus was taken down from the cross, another Jew, Nicodemus, prepared Jesus' body with 75 pounds of spices and perfume! That's a lot! How much do you weigh?

Nicodemus (who had previously come to him at night) also came, bringing a mixture of about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes. They took Jesus's body and wrapped it in linen cloths with the fragrant spices, according to the burial custom of the Jews. (John 19:39-40, CSB)

But the Pharisees anticipated that the Jesus' body would be gone and planned on how to prevent that from happening. Ask the student: what was done to prevent Jesus' body from disappearing?

2. Did you know that today, like the Pharisees two thousand years ago, there are people who try to explain away the resurrection. Put on your thinking cap and by using your brain and logic, you can challenge these false explanations, because the truth and facts are on your side!

a. Jesus did not die and instead was unconscious from the injuries He received in the course of crucifixion. In the tomb, He revived, was able to get out of the cloth wrapping, escape from the tomb, and appear to His disciples. (Hint: John 19:33-35)

Ask the student: Do you recall what was done to Jesus on the cross? Roman guards were experts at execution and were so certain that Jesus was dead, they did not even bother to break His legs! When they thrust a spear into Jesus' side and brought forth blood and water, they had final proof of His death.

When they came to Jesus, they did not break his legs since they saw that he was already dead. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth. (John 19:33-35, CSB)

b. According to Roman custom, Jesus was buried in a mass grave for criminals and was never put into the tomb. (Hint: Matt 27:62-66)

Help the student see that asking a question is a good method of exposing a flaw in logic: Why bother sealing a tomb if you knew Jesus' body was never there? If the Pharisees wanted to disprove the resurrection, couldn't they retrieve the body from the mass grave and show the public?

c. The followers of Jesus pretended to see the resurrected Lord. (Hint: Matt 28:16-17; Mark 16:10-13; Luke 24:9-11; John 20:24-25)

Help the student understand that throughout their life, there will be many challenges to their belief in God. If they take the time to read the Bible, the Holy Spirit will help them with the truth.

Initially hearing that Jesus rose from the dead, all four gospels record the disciples' disbelief and skepticism of His resurrection!!!

The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted. (Matt 28:16-17, CSB)

She went and reported to those who had been with him, as they were mourning and weeping. Yet, when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe it. After this, he appeared in a different form to two of them walking on their way into the country. And they went and reported it to the rest, who did not believe them either. (Mark 16:10-13)

Returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the Eleven and to all the rest. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them were telling the apostles these things. But these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women. (Luke 24:9-11)

But Thomas (called "Twin"), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were telling him, "We've seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe." (John 20:24-25)