

That's One Body That Will Never Be Found

By Bruce Malone

Christianity centers on the resurrection of Jesus Christ almost 2000 years ago. Did it happen or not? If this event actually happened, it is not only the focal point of Christianity, it is the most important event of all human history. If Jesus Christ rose from the dead after three days in the grave (as He predicted on four occasions prior to His death), then why would we doubt other statements He made while here on earth? How do we know that the account of the resurrection of Christ was not a complete hoax? How do we know that Jesus Christ even existed?

Historians judge the accuracy of ancient documents by several criteria. The most important of these criteria are the total number of ancient manuscripts, the time-span between the actual event described and the oldest manuscript, and how well the events described by the manuscript are confirmed by other historical events or manuscripts. No other ancient document even approaches the Bible for accuracy, total copies available, or effect upon Western culture and thought. For instance, we have only 10 ancient documents describing the Gallia wars of Julius Caesar and the oldest available document is 1000 years removed from the events described. We only have 5 ancient documents describing the life and work of Aristotle and the oldest copy is 1400 years removed from the events described. In contrast, there are

over 2000 ancient manuscripts of the new testament Bible which are essentially identical to our modern translation.¹ The oldest manuscript has been dated to within a single generation of the events described. If Caesar or Aristotle were real people ... if we have an accurate account of their lives and statements ... there is far, far greater evidence for the existence of Jesus Christ, the accuracy of His statements, and the reality of the events surrounding His life.

This is the account of Jesus death:

Prior to His death, Jesus claimed to be God and stated that He had not come to earth to bring peace among men but to make the ultimate sacrifice in payment for mankind's rebellion against God. Because He claimed to be God, the religious authorities had him crucified. This form of death was so excruciatingly painful that no Roman citizen was allowed to be put to death in this way. Before Jesus was nailed to the cross, He was beaten beyond recognition. His final words were, "It is finished." The exact same words were written on paid bills to mean, "Paid in full."

The body of Jesus was pierced with a spear to assure that He was dead, tightly wrapped in strips of cloth coated with spices, and placed into a sealed tomb. After His execution, His closest friends fled and even denied that they knew Him. In spite of this

demonstration of cowardice by His followers, the religious leaders feared that they might try to steal the body. Therefore, they had the tomb sealed by the Roman government and guarded the tomb around the clock. Several days later, the tomb was found empty, except for the burial cloths which made it appear as if the body had just stepped through them (they had not been unraveled). The massive stone sealing the tomb had been moved away from the entrance. Jesus appeared on numerous times to many groups of people. On one occasion He was recognized by 500 people. EITHER THESE EVENTS HAPPENED ... OR THEY DIDN'T.

The documents describing these events were widely distributed during the lifetime of those who had witnessed them and could have been refuted were they not factual. Not only were the accounts not refuted, Christianity transformed the entire Roman world in spite of incredible persecution. The amazing effect that Christianity has had on Western civilization is undeniable. In face of the facts, what excuse do we have for denying the claims of Jesus Christ?

1. McDowell, Josh and Hostetler, Bob, ***Don't Check your Brains at the Door***, pp.52, Word Publishing, 1992.

A complete set of articles examining science and reality from a Christian perspective can be found at SearchfortheTruth.org and in the book [Search for the Truth](#) by Bruce Malone.