

I. The New Testament documents establish five facts concerning Jesus:

1) His crucifixion

A. Jesus was tried and executed by crucifixion

* Proof 1: The sources of the New Testament

* Proof 2: This is attested in extra-Biblical literature

“No historian believes that Jesus was not crucified.” - WLC

2) His burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea

A. This is significant because the location was known

* Proof 1: The source of 1 Corinthians 15:3-6

(this source dates to 7-15 years after the death of Jesus!)

* Proof 2: The Gospel of Mark

* Proof 3: Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin

* Proof 4: The story lacks legendary developments

* Proof 5: There is no competing burial story

“One of the earliest, and best attested facts about Jesus” - J.A.T. Robinson

3) The discovery that his tomb was empty

A. The next Sunday, his tomb was found empty by women

* Proof 1: 1 Cor. 15:3-6 implies an empty tomb

* Proof 2: This story is part of Mark's account

* Proof 3: His tomb was found empty by women followers

“By far, most exegetes hold firmly to the reliability of the Biblical statements concerning the empty tomb.” - Jacob Kremer

4) His post-mortem appearances

A. On multiple occasions and under diverse circumstances, different individuals and groups of people experienced appearances of Jesus alive after death.

(This is significant because hallucinations are rarely repeated, and do not happen to groups of people)

* Proof 1: 1 Cor. 15:3-6

* Proof 2: the Gospels provide multiple, independent sources

“It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus’ death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ.” - Gerd Lüdemann

5) The origin of the disciples’ belief in His resurrection

A. The original disciples suddenly and sincerely came to believe that Jesus was risen from the dead despite every predisposition to the contrary. (such as...)

* ...their leader was dead

* ...his shameful death exposed him as fraud by God and a heretic according to Old Testament law

* ...Jews did not believe in people rising from the dead, and going to glory before the end of the world

B. The disciples turned the world upside down

“some sort of powerful, transformative experience is required to generate the sort of movement earliest Christianity was...” - L. Johnson

II. The best explanation of these facts is that God raised Jesus from the dead.

ALTERNATIVE THEORIES

“What if he wasn’t really dead, but only looked dead?”

- 1) Crosses were modes of execution, and were not known to fail
- 2) The crucifixion was overseen by professional executioners
- 3) Their lives would be forfeit if they let a prisoner go free, (Acts 16:23, 27:42) which is why they either broke the legs, or pierced the sides to be sure
- 4) Medical concerns:
 - 1) The flogging, asphyxiation on the cross, the spear-thrust in his side, the grave-clothes, exposure in the tomb
- 5) If Jesus somehow survived all of this, His appearance on the third day would have been as someone in desperate need of medical attention, evoking pity, not worship

“What if his family or disciples stole the body?”

- 1) They had little time to organize a conspiracy
- 2) They had insufficient motive
- 3) This doesn’t explain their belief in the resurrection
- 4) This doesn’t explain how they got around the armed guard
- 5) *If the guards were asleep, how did they know it was the disciples that stole the body?*

“What if they had some sort of a hallucination?”

- 1) Hallucinations are *private*, not public experiences
- 2) The disciples had *bodily* experiences with the risen Christ (touching his side, clinging to his feet, eating with him)
- 3) These experiences were repeated
- 4) These experiences were had by multiple people
- 5) These experiences even happened to unbelievers, causing them to believe

About Dr. William Lane Craig

William Lane Craig is Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology and Professor of Philosophy at Houston Baptist University. He and his wife Jan have two grown children. At the age of sixteen as a junior in high school, he first heard the message of the Christian gospel and yielded his life to Christ. Dr. Craig pursued his undergraduate studies at Wheaton College (B.A. 1971) and graduate studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (M.A. 1974; M.A. 1975), the University of Birmingham (England) (Ph.D. 1977), and the University of Munich (Germany) (D.Theol. 1984). From 1980-86 he taught Philosophy of Religion at Trinity, during which time he and Jan started their family. In 1987 they moved to Brussels, Belgium, where Dr. Craig pursued research at the University of Louvain until assuming his position at Talbot in 1994.

He has authored or edited over thirty books, including *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus; Theism, Atheism and Big Bang Cosmology*; and *God, Time and Eternity*, as well as over a hundred articles in professional journals of philosophy and theology.

In 2016 Dr. Craig was named by *The Best Schools* as one of the fifty most influential living philosophers.

Further Reading

Craig, William Lane, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision*, (David C. Cook, 2009). Available on Amazon.

Craig, William Lane and Shabir Ally, "Hoax or History? Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" (Debate, available in text, audio or video from <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/debates/hoax-or-history-did-jesus-rise-from-the-dead1/>)

Dr. Craig has a thriving online ministry including a podcast, a YouTube channel, and a blog at www.reasonablefaith.org