# Objections to the Resurrection

A Chart by Shane Rosenthal

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<th>Theory</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| Twin / Lookalike  | • Jesus died, but a twin or lookalike later claimed he was the risen Christ. Conversely, someone who looked like Jesus may have been killed by mistake. According to the Quran: “They never crucified him—they were made to think that they did.” *Sura 4:157-158*  | • This theory does not explain the empty tomb  
• James and other members of Jesus immediate family are skeptics in the Gospels (Mk 3:21, Jn 7:5, and only become believers *after reports of the resurrection* (Acts 1:14).  
• Thomas, *who was a twin*, refused to believe in the resurrection unless he could put his hand in Jesus’ wounds (Jn 20:24-30)  |
| Swoon Theory      | • Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but simply fell into a coma and recovered in the tomb (contrast with the 1986 JAMA article on the death of Jesus, link to PDF provided) | • See: [www.godandscience.org/apologetics/deathjesus.pdf](http://www.godandscience.org/apologetics/deathjesus.pdf)  
• The texts do not merely claim that Jesus was seen alive, but that he ascended into heaven, etc. But if Jesus was still alive, how can they claim this? |
| Stolen Body       | • Jesus really did die on the cross but the disciples stole his body.  
• This is the oldest objection (Mt 28:11-15; Justin Martyr, *Dialog with Trypho*, 108) | • How did the disciples overcome the armed guards? (Mt 27:65; Acts 4:1). Edersheim: a Temple Guard consisted of “ten men.” Is it credible that all ten were asleep (Mt 28:13) and no one awoke?  
• What was the motive? How did they withstand persecution?  
• These deceptive disciples must have also fabricated Jesus’ fulfillment of countless OT prophecies. Why did they lie? Why did so many residents of Judea believe? Did no one check?  
• This theory does not explain the numerous eyewitness accounts of Christ’s resurrection, and the conversion of skeptics  
• How do you explain the transformation of the disciples and the rapid growth of Christianity? How do you explain the bold proclamation, centered on the resurrection, that you find throughout Acts? Why did Jews begin worshiping on Sunday? |
| Misplaced Body     | • Jesus body was placed in the wrong tomb. Thus, when the correct tomb was visited, the body appeared to be missing | • Mary Magdalene and company witnessed the burial location  
• A Temple Guard was placed at the correct tomb on Good Friday  
• Though this offers an explanation of the *empty tomb*, it does not explain the transformation of the disciples, the boldness of their proclamation during persecution, and the conversion of skeptics |
| Hallucination      | • Though they may have thought they saw Jesus, perhaps it was just in their minds (wishful thinking, psychosis, etc) | • The disciples were skeptics who needed to touch Christ’s wounds  
• What about the appearances to non-disciples (James, Paul)?  
• What about Christ’s appearance to over 500 witnesses at once?  
• What about the empty tomb? |
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| **Spiritual Resurrection**     | • Jesus was not raised from the dead bodily, but spiritually (in the hearts of the disciples) | • This is not the NT claim, and is not a Jewish view of resurrection  
• What about the empty tomb?                                               |
| **Legend**                     | • Jesus was a real teacher, but the events of his life were not written down until much later, and were incorporated with legends  
• The 1st century was a superstitious age and it was common to believe in such nonsense | • Late date theories are being abandoned. Very compelling arguments that the NT was written before 70AD.  
• What about the eyewitness testimony of 1Corinthians 15?  
• Geographical / Temporal indicators of the four gospels  
• All attempts to demythologize the NT have failed  
• NT documents shows Jewish skepticism, not superstition |
| **Faulty Transmission**        | • Jesus may have existed, but we can’t know much about him since texts we have are unreliable copies of copies of copies of copies, with lot of copy mistakes and additions  
• Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* | • How do we know that there are copy mistakes?  
• Not copies of copies of copies, but multiple lines of transmission which we can use to compare  
• The Bible is by far the most reliable work of antiquity  
• Out of 60,000 lines of Greek text, only 40 are in doubt |
| **Work of Fiction**            | • Jesus may or may not have existed. Those who wrote about his deeds made most of the story up | • What accounts for the fact that so many 1st century citizens of Jerusalem believed this account to be true?  
• Why did the disciples write the fiction the way they did (revealing their ignorance, rashness, unbelief, denials)  
• Why multiple versions? Why women eyewitnesses  
• Why would they undergo such persecution for a lie? |
| **Biased Sources**             | • Those who wrote the NT documents were “believers,” and therefore biased. These are not historical documents, but articles of faith | • Everyone is biased. This claim makes history / fact gathering impossible. A lawyer building a case is biased in favor of his client but that itself does not invalidate the evidence  
• What accounts for the “faith” of these early disciples, and the rise of early Christianity. Why were they willing to die for this faith? |
| **Cancelled Out by other Miracles** | • Big deal. Every religious tradition from Islam to Mormonism makes miraculous claims. WSH | • Making claims and vindicating those claims are different things  
• The resurrection, if true, merits a reconsideration of Jesus’ claims |
| **No Way to Prove**            | • Even if it did happen, there is no way to prove it, since it is an unrepeatable event  
• Some will argue that miracles are impossible | • All historical claims fall under this critique. History is not math or science, it’s an art. Where were you born? Can you prove it?  
• The belief that miracles are impossible, is a religious dogma |