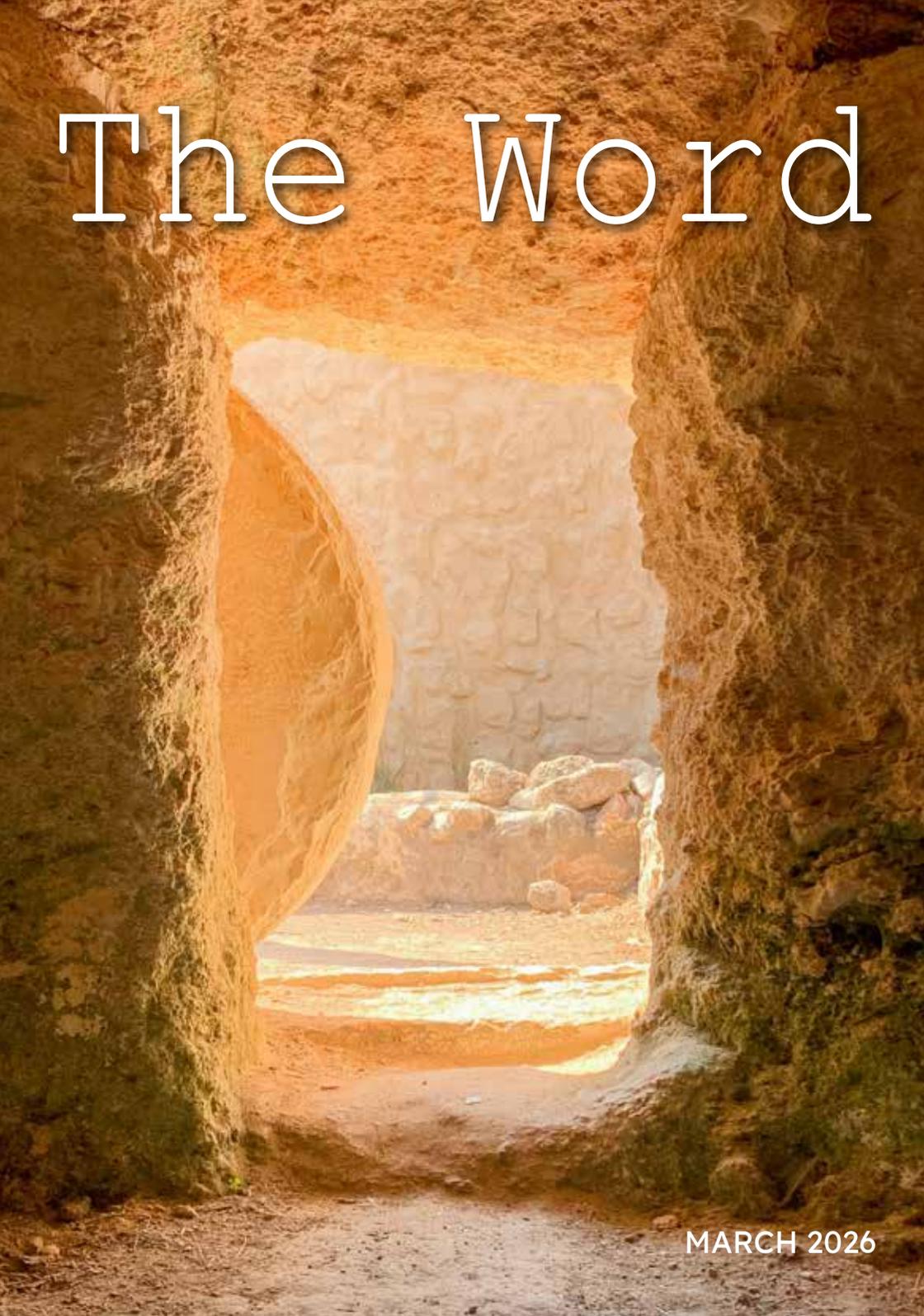
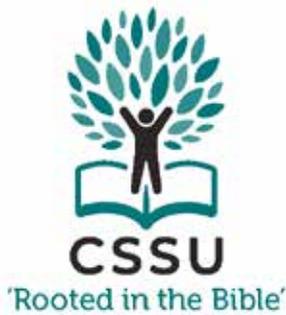


The Word

A photograph of a cave entrance. The cave interior is dark and textured with brown and orange tones. A large, smooth, rounded rock formation is visible on the left side of the entrance. The light from the opening illuminates the surrounding rock walls and the ground. Outside the cave, a bright, rocky landscape is visible, featuring a low wall of stacked stones and a sandy or rocky ground surface. The overall scene is warm and atmospheric.

MARCH 2026



www.cssu.org.uk

A NOTE ABOUT ONLINE RESOURCES

In order to be relevant and accessible to all readers, we sometimes recommend resources from websites. We choose these resources carefully, but cannot check or endorse all the content of a website – particularly future content, which is impossible to predict. Always remember to check internet opinions against Bible principles, and talk to someone at your Sunday School or church about any concerns that arise.

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Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

The Word, March 2026



Editor: Becky Lewis



Designer: Julia Snobelen

The Word: Resurrection

“If Christ hasn’t been raised, then your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins, and what’s more, those who have died in Christ are gone forever. If we have a hope in Christ only in this life, then we deserve to be pitied more than anyone else.”

1 Corinthians 15:16-19 (CEB)

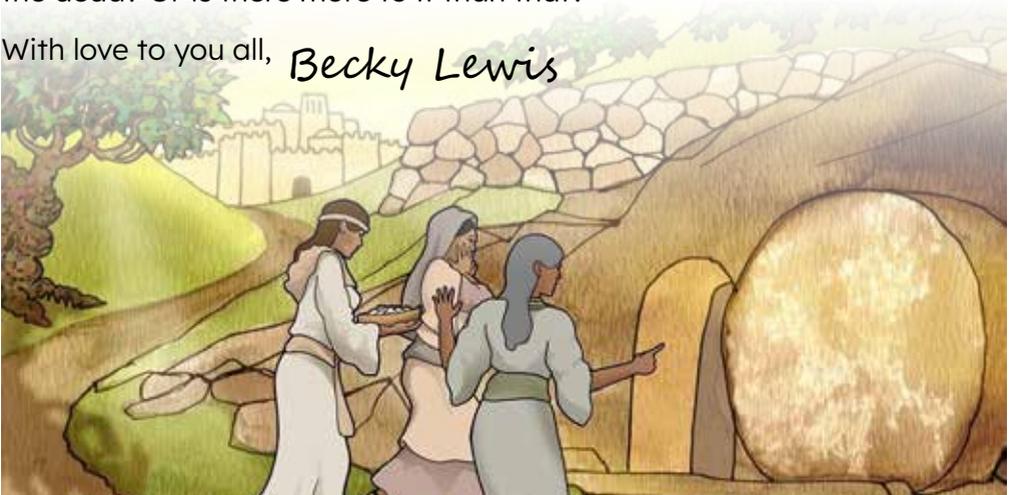
As this quote from the Apostle Paul points out, the Christian faith is built on the idea that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. If the resurrection of Jesus did not really happen, then Christianity is kind of pointless.

On the flip side, if the resurrection was a real historical event, then this is a Big Deal. It means that God intervened in the world, and that there is hope of life after death.

So, belief in the resurrection is a vital part of Christianity. Early Christians would have investigated carefully and not just accepted it without question. Remember that fake news existed back then too!

So, in this issue of The Word we will also examine the evidence together. Is it just wishful thinking that makes people believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Or is there more to it than that?

With love to you all, *Becky Lewis*



Past issues of ‘The Word’ are available to download here:
the-word.uk

Incredible?

“Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?”

Acts 26:8

In some ways it might be easier for us in the 21st century to imagine that God can reconstruct life. We now live with concepts that generations before us would have thought impossible. For example, humans have discovered the building blocks of DNA, experimenting with cloning animals and gene editing. Tech bros are talking about making themselves immortal by uploading their brains to the cloud. Today, perhaps it doesn't seem such a leap to imagine an all-powerful God reviving and recreating us after death.

However, throughout all of history, there's always been the idea of resurrection woven into daily life, for anyone to see:

“

Nature itself points the way and illustrates the pattern. When an animal retreats into its lair for hibernation, when autumn fades into winter or when a caterpillar forms itself into a chrysalis, this is not the end-game. It is instead the doorway to something new and better...

Imagine for a second that we had never seen or heard of a caterpillar wrapping itself into a cocoon and then transforming itself into a butterfly. If we had never heard of it before and someone showed us a caterpillar and a butterfly, telling us that, in a relatively short period of time, one would quite literally transform into the other, we would consider them mad – completely out of their mind... Now if such a thing can happen – despite the apparent unlikeliness of it – why should we be surprised that God... should raise His son from the dead should He choose to do so?

From 'Life's biggest questions' p.84-85 by Mark Vincent
Available free: thechristadelphians.org.uk/lifes-biggest-questions

”



***“We will all be changed -
in a flash,
in the twinkling of an eye”***

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

The basic facts of history

“There are at least fourteen independent sources for the historicity of Jesus from multiple authors within a century of the crucifixion of Jesus.”

Wikipedia: ‘Historicity of Jesus’

When historians study the ancient world, they tend to work with surprisingly limited evidence. For many well-known ancient figures, only a small number of written accounts survive, sometimes written centuries after the events. Yet historians still regard these figures as real people. The sources for Jesus fall well within this normal pattern.

Historical Figure	Main surviving narrative sources	Typical date of writing
Socrates	Plato, Xenophon, Aristophanes	Within a few decades
Alexander the Great	Arrian, Plutarch, Diodorus, Curtius Rufus	300-450 years after the events
Julius Caesar	Plutarch, Suetonius, Appian	100-200 years after
Jesus of Nazareth	4 gospels, letters of Paul, early Christian writings.	Within 20-100 years

Early mentions of Jesus by non-Christians include the Jewish historian Josephus (37-100CE) and this one by the Roman historian Tacitus (56-120CE):

“Christus... suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate.”

Tacitus, ‘Annals’ 15.44

Loeb Classical Library, Vol 5, trans. Moore & Jackson (Harvard University Press)



The vast majority of historians agree that Jesus really existed and was crucified between 30-36CE. Where opinion divides is whether or not he was raised from the dead.

What makes a good historical source?

Studying history is like being a detective, or a jury member in a courtroom. When looking at our sources of information, we need to weigh up how reliable they are:

Are there several independent witnesses?

Is their information backed up by other evidence?

How long after the events were these accounts written down?

Are they based on first-hand eyewitness statements or written later on, when memories may have faded or stories become exaggerated?

Are witness accounts similar enough to each other?

What motives might people have for the claims they make?

Are there embarrassing details which people would not choose to include if they were making the story up?

So for the purposes of our investigation, we are looking for high quality sources, using eyewitness evidence, written down within living memory.



Sources:

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”

Luke 1:1-4

Eyewitness reports

Historians agree that the gospels are valuable sources, grounded in the era and places they describe. As time has passed, more archaeological evidence has surfaced of the people and places the gospels mention.



The 'Pilate stone' & the 'Caiaphas ossuary' indicate these historical figures existed.
Images from Wikimedia Commons.

Today, you could easily pretend you had been somewhere by looking it up on Google maps. You could also check records of who was in charge at a particular time. But when the gospels were written, it was difficult to know the details unless you had actually been there, in the right place at the right time.

The gospels weren't the result of a lengthy oral development, where the stories were retold again and again over generations, changing over time and becoming more exciting and exaggerated. In a book called 'Jesus and the eyewitnesses', Richard Bauckham goes into great detail to show that gospel writers (and historians generally) highly valued the reports of eyewitnesses, who they could interview about events. It is this investigative process that Luke is referring to in the quote above.

Contradictions?

While the gospels agree in the vast majority of details, there are some differences. If we look at the different accounts of the resurrection, there appear to be contradictions in details such as how many angels were at the tomb, and which women were there. However, this actually makes the gospels more trustworthy. Eyewitness reports never completely match up, and a good investigator would be suspicious if they did. The gospel writers (and their sources) would naturally have focused on different details. They were writing for different audiences, and highlighting different aspects of Jesus (see the next page).

“

“Contradictions between the resurrection accounts are actually evidence in favour of their reliability. If they had been invented by the early Christians, we might have expected identical accounts. It is obvious the Gospel reports of the resurrection are taken from eyewitness testimony – different people inevitably saw and remembered different things that had happened. However, they all agree on the fundamental points: a group of women went to the tomb; the tomb was empty; angelic appearances confirmed that Jesus had risen; and Jesus appeared at different times to different followers. These accounts do not read like invented stories, but as real eyewitness reports of a fast-moving and dramatic sequence of events following on from the discovery of the empty tomb.”

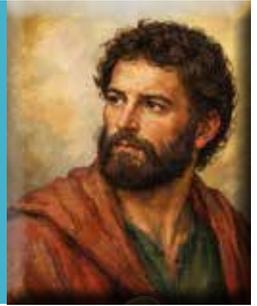
From ‘The Resurrection of Jesus Christ’, by James Andrews, available free at thechristadelphians.org.uk/booklets/the-resurrection-of-jesus-christ

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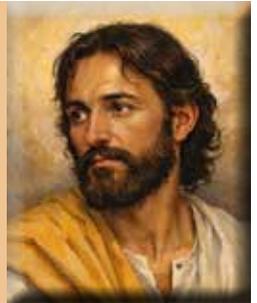
It’s likely that Matthew, Mark and Luke named the women they knew, rather than mentioning all the women present.

John takes a more spiritual approach. He points to a new creation, where Jesus is presented as the new Adam. This could be why he narrows the focus to only one woman at the tomb (Mary Magdalene), who could represent the new Eve - the church, responsible for spreading the good news. For more on this, read tidings.org/articles/eve-the-deliverer.

Gospel: Mark
Written down: c.65-75 CE
Focus/ Approach: Fast-paced. Jesus as suffering servant.



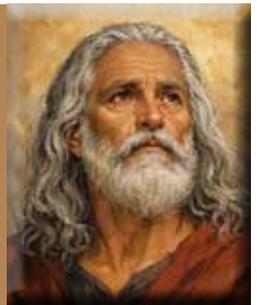
Gospel: Matthew
Written down: c.80-90 CE
Focus/ Approach: Blocks of teaching, with narrative in between. Jesus as the prophesied Messiah.



Gospel: Luke
Written down: c.80-90 CE
Focus/ Approach: "Orderly account", highlighting Jesus' compassion.



Gospel: John
Written down: c.90-100 CE
Focus/ Approach: Series of spiritual snapshots.



NB Some scholars give earlier dates for the gospels -- the dates given here are the latest ones that the majority of scholars accept. Some believe Mark could have been written as early as 25 years after the crucifixion.

Info from newworldencyclopedia.org: 'Gospel' & ebSCO.com: 'Synoptic Gospels'.

Additional early sources

1 Corinthians was written around 53-57CE (see Wikipedia: ‘First Epistle to the Corinthians’). In it, Paul quotes this early creed, already well-known among believers. It has the resurrection as its central focus:

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas [Peter], and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

Aside from the detail in the New Testament, we have other surviving early Christian sources too, including:

“Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord continually shows us the resurrection that is going to be, of which he made the Lord Jesus Christ the firstfruits, having raised him from the dead.”

Clement of Rome, c.96CE
1 Clement 24.1, trans. Holmes in ‘The Apostolic Fathers’

“For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection. And when he came to those who were with Peter he said to them, ‘Take, handle me, and see that I am not a disembodied spirit.’”

Ignatius of Antioch, c.110CE
Ignatius ‘Letter to the Smyrnaeans’ 3.1-2, trans. Holmes

These early texts demonstrate two key points:

- 1) The resurrection was not added to Christian beliefs later on, as part of a growing legend, or wishful thinking, but was central to the Christian faith from the beginning.
- 2) The texts were written down at a time when eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus were still available to be questioned about what they had seen.



Engage your imagination!

What might it have felt like to witness these events?

Read:

‘A Time to See’
by S J Knight

Available from
thechristadelphian.com

Immerse yourself in the dramatic events at the end of Jesus’ ministry...

“You are right to wonder – I hardly knew him at first, I thought he was a gardener... Oh to see him with all the heavy lines of pain erased, looking so calm, and young, and glad!”



Watch:

‘Inquest at Golgotha’

Search Youtube for “the resurrection of Jesus Christ: a dramatized inquiry”

Some viewers might feel they need to skip the doctor’s evidence, as it includes details of the crucifixion.



‘The Chosen’ Season 5

Available on Prime / The Chosen app

This season covers the Last Supper.

Season 6 is due to be released by early 2027, and will include the crucifixion.



Embarrassing truths

If a story includes some embarrassing details, then it usually means it's more likely to be true. Scholars call this the 'criterion of embarrassment'. It's not enough proof on its own, but when combined with other factors, we can start to see a solid case building.

There are plenty of embarrassing and unlikely admissions recorded in the gospels, including the crucifixion itself, which was designed to be a public humiliation, and reserved for the lowest of the low:

“We preach Christ crucified, which is scandal to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.”

1 Corinthians 1:23 (CEB)

Another glaring example is the fact that women were the first witnesses of the resurrection:

“When we come to the account of the empty tomb, women are listed as the primary witnesses... This would be an odd invention, since in both Jewish and Roman cultures, women were lowly esteemed and their testimony was regarded as questionable, certainly not as credible as a man's... If the account of the empty tomb had been invented, it would most likely not have listed the women as primary witnesses.”

“Sooner let the words of the Law be burnt than delivered to women.”

(Talmud, Sotah 19a)

“Let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.”

(Josephus, 'Antiquities' 4.8.15)

“But [the disciples] did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.”

(Luke 24:11)

From 'The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus', by Gary Habermas & Michael Licona, 2004, p.72-3, available from Amazon.

Complete this outline of events from the gospels, from Jesus' arrest to the resurrection. Then highlight the boxes that could count as criteria for embarrassment. That is, which details do you think the gospel writers would have altered if they were constructing a legend rather than telling the truth?

Jesus is arrested.	Mark 14:46
Peter fights back and is rebuked by Jesus.	John 18:10-11
	Mark 14:50-52
Jesus brought before Jewish leaders.	Mark 14:53-65
	Mark 14:66-72
Jesus before Pilate and Herod.	Luke 23:1-25
	Matthew 27:27-31
Jesus too weak to carry his cross.	Luke 23:26
Jesus is crucified in between two criminals.	Luke 23:32-33
Jesus is mocked by many.	Luke 23:34-39
	Mark 15:37
Soldiers check that Jesus is dead.	John 19:31-35
	John 19:38-42
Women see where Jesus is buried, then leave to prepare spices and oils.	Luke 23:55-56
	Matthew 27:62-66

	Mark 16:1-3
Stone found moved, angels announce resurrection.	Mark 16:4-8
	Luke 24:9-11
	Matthew 28:11-15
Disciples investigate tomb.	John 20:3-10
	John 20:11-18
Disciples hiding in locked room when Jesus appears to them.	John 20:19-23
Thomas doesn't believe it until he meets Jesus.	John 20:24-29
Jesus appears on several occasions to various followers.	Luke 24:13-49 John 21:1-14
	Luke 24:50-51

New optimism and courage

This outline of events also demonstrates how devastated, scared and confused the disciples were. It is clear that they were not expecting Jesus to be raised from the dead, and that many of them were sceptical until they had seen him for themselves.

Yet, once convinced, they behaved completely differently. The book of Acts is all about how they boldly and joyfully risked their lives to spread their good news.



If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then there needs to be another convincing reason for the disciples' sudden transformation into dedicated preachers.

Alternative theories

While no singular piece of evidence can prove the resurrection beyond doubt, there are several strong pieces of evidence on which we can build a case.



We have shown that any alternative explanations to the resurrection of Jesus will need to account for:

- The empty tomb
- The many witness reports of the risen Jesus
- The sudden change in the disciples.

Over the centuries, many theories have been put forward to explain what could have happened. We will briefly look at the most common ones. Do any of them tick all 3 of the points listed above?

1) Stolen body

Perhaps the earliest alternative version of events came from the Jewish authorities, within days of Jesus' crucifixion and burial. They claimed that the disciples stole the body to make it look as if Jesus had risen. On the next page is a fun imagining of a conversation that might have happened between the chief priest and Pilate. Why is Pilate so suspicious of the chief priest's tale? What doesn't add up?

Other details mentioned in our sources suggest this story is not true. For example, the graveclothes of Jesus were found folded in the tomb. Who would pause while stealing a body to unwrap the graveclothes from it, fold them and then leave them behind?

2) Wrong tomb

Another theory is that the women went to the wrong tomb, found it empty, and assumed that Jesus had risen from the dead. But if this is what happened, then the Jewish and Roman authorities could simply have shown everyone the correct tomb, or produced Jesus' missing body. This would have been easier and more convincing than the story about the guards falling asleep on duty!

Pilate (eyebrows raised): Your guards fell asleep?

Chief Priest: Er yes. They were very tired.

Pilate (eyes narrowed): They slept while that massive stone was being rolled back?

Chief Priest (shakes his head sadly): Very, very tired.

Pilate (fully aware he is being humbugged, decides to string the priest along): And presumably while a handful of men lugged a dead body from under their very noses too. Tell me, had they taken a few sleeping pills by any chance?

Chief Priest (crossly): No, of course not! They were inordinately tired sir. Been doing a lot of overtime recently.

Pilate (enjoying himself now): Hmm. Well, we'll have to execute the guards for neglecting their duty of course.

Chief Priest (sighs): Compassion Guv'nor. We like to act with a little compassion in our religion.

Pilate: Compassion hmm? Would that be the kind of compassion you showed that man Jesus by any chance?

Chief Priest (looking shocked): Oh that was different sir. He was a criminal. We can't just let criminals off the hook, you know. (He carefully pushes a bulging bagful of coins towards Pilate.) Where would we be if that was the case?

Pilate (weighing the bag carefully in his hands): Indeed. (He drops the bag in his pocket.) So you say the guards slept?

Chief Priest (in relief): Exactly. They're very, very sorry you know.

Pilate (nods slowly and looks puzzled): Maybe you can just explain one thing to me. If they were asleep how did they know it was the disciples who stole the body?

The **Chief Priest** looks coldly at **Pilate:** Intuition my dear sir.

From 'The Whistle-Stop Gospel' p.162 by Hannah Hayles
Available from cssu.org.uk and thechristadelphian.com

3) ‘Swoon’ theory

This is the idea that Jesus didn’t actually die, but passed out on the cross and revived in the cool of the tomb. Look back at the outline of events on pages 14-15. Which events appear to confirm that Jesus definitely died?



“Medical experts note that the ‘blood and water’ described in the Gospel accounts would indicate a ruptured heart or fluid build-up in the chest cavity – clear signs of death.

Roman soldiers were professionals. They knew how to kill people and making a mistake in judgment would possibly endanger their own lives. The idea that Jesus survived crucifixion, escaped 75 pounds of burial spices and wrappings, rolled away a huge stone, avoided armed guards, and then managed to convince anyone he had conquered death – while severely wounded – is not historically or physically possible. It is clear that Jesus died on the cross.”

Kyla Abel, tidings.org/magazine/christ-lives-today



4) Hallucinations

Perhaps the disciples convinced themselves that they had seen Jesus alive, when really they were deluded? Does this seem likely? Consider whether they were expecting Jesus to be resurrected, or did they need convincing?

Impact of the resurrection

If the resurrection really happened, then this means...

- 1) Jesus is alive now, and will live forever more (Revelation 1:17-18).
- 2) Jesus has been exalted in status (Philippians 2:9-11).
- 3) Christians can approach God through Jesus (Hebrews 4:14-16).
- 4) Jesus can be with us in our daily lives (Philippians 4:13).
- 5) Followers of Jesus will be raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Dig deeper

Check it out:

theholeinhistory.com

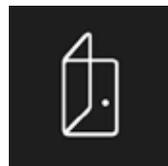
“From the events of just three days, Christianity emerged and has changed the course of human history.”



Watch:

bibleunlocked.com/videos/the-resurrection

The Book of Acts set to video:
YouTube - search for 'Lumo Acts'



Read:

Our 'New Life' issue of The Word from March 21

'The Resurrection of Jesus'
by Simon Dean, a chapter in 'Reasons: Evidence for God, Jesus & the Bible', ed. Thomas Gaston, available from lulu.com



Listen:

biblefeed.org

- The Jesus of history
- He is risen!
- Why are there four gospels?



New music

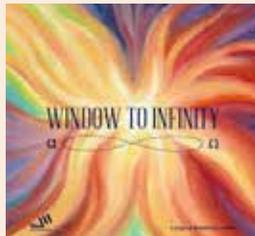
Christadelphian musicians have been busy over the last few months! Here are some of the albums recently released. Look for them wherever you stream your music.

Window to Infinity

The Seventh Day

Our favourite tracks:

- Mighty Warrior
- Stand in Wonder



Exceeding Joy

NCYC

Our favourite tracks:

- My Cup Overflows
- Above the Heavens



the pages are unfolding

Mabel Ann, WCF

Our favourite tracks:

- Every Star
- Your Will



Celebrating 50 years of Meal-A-Day!

The Christadelphian Meal-A-Day charity aims to help vulnerable communities around the world build better futures.

In 2026, Meal-A-Day turns 50. To mark this milestone, some special events are being organised throughout the year, including a day of dedication on 17th May, linking with 'May We Eat', and a Praise Day on 5th December.

Check out meal-a-day.org for more info on the charity, and how you can help!