

Small group handout 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

To the small group leaders—begin by bringing up the objections, one at a time. After the students discuss provide the scripture passage and discuss again. Read my answer to the group only if they don't get there themselves.

4 historical points:

1. Jesus was dead and buried
2. the tomb was found empty 3 days later
3. witnesses claimed to see him post-mortem
4. Christians believe in the resurrection (that belief needs an origin)

OBJECTIONS TO THE RESURRECTION

OBJECTION 1. Jesus just swooned, he passed out and did not really die.

HELP: John 19:34 and following. The romans were executioners; they knew he was dead—the gospel account of John 19:34—blood and water come out (OH HE DEAD).

OBJECTION 2. Someone snuck in, took the body was caught by guards, was killed along the way and was thrown into a mass grave (not uncommon) and the body was lost.

There are many different scenarios that can be suggested here:

- Jesus' followers took it, were killed and the body lost
- Jewish leaders took it and desecrated it
- Roman officials took it fearing further problems with either side

HELP: Matthew 27:62-66, Matthew 28:11-15. Matthew 27 says that the grave was protected under penalty of death. Matthew 28 says that they paid the roman soldiers to keep quiet about the body missing and to say the disciples took it.

Could it have been his friends? Think about the disciples. Did they have the courage to come and fight an entire Roman guard unit? Peter was the strongest and he had fled the scene when someone even suggested that Peter knew Christ. No, the friends of Jesus had scattered like rats on a sinking ship. They lacked courage.

Could it have been his enemies? Perhaps the religious leaders or the Romans? Obviously not. While the friends of Jesus lacked the courage to steal the body, his enemies lacked the motivation.

They knew that if the body disappeared, Jesus' claim to be God would be verified. Romans and Jews did everything to destroy the Christian movement, not encourage it. If they had the body of Christ, all they would have had to do would be to parade that body through the streets of Jerusalem and the Christian movement would have died on the vine. The only answer is that God removed that body.

OBJECTION 3. Many claimed to see him, but this can be explained through collective hallucinations, or they saw his spirit but not the risen Christ.

HELP: Luke 24:36-49 People who have collective hallucinations reported what they saw and there are three things in common. The hallucination never speaks, it never interacts and affects the real world (eating for example), no one touches them, and everyone has a slightly different memory of the experience. This passage alone denies EVERY SINGLE qualification of a collective hallucination.

See above: spirits don't touch and don't eat

1 Corinthians 15:3 and following—the church leaders handed down the sightings of Jesus and the reports of his resurrection are told by eyewitnesses. Yes, 1 Corinthians is written 30-40 years after Jesus is gone but the eyewitnesses of him are still testifying! These stories are not made up by one person.

OBJECTION 4. These writings about Jesus came about 25-60 years after Jesus, and in that time the stories have changed. Secondly, the disciples made up these stories and never actually saw the risen Christ.

HELP: Consider the early appearance of the disciples both throughout the gospel stories and immediately following the resurrection: they are responses of fear (Matthew 26:56, 69-75; Mark 14:50-51, 16:8, John 20:19), are these the same disciples who will be imprisoned and killed for their faith? (Acts 7:54-60, 8:1-3, 12:1-3, 14:19-23, 16:16-18, 21:33-36—tradition holds that all the 12 were killed for their faith, except John). If Jesus was really dead, why did these many and hundreds of others who were alive to see Christ die for it?