

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have considered those who deny the resurrection by suggesting it is just a nice made up story. Then we considered those who said Jesus didn't really die on the cross--it was somebody else, or He just passed out and then came to again. All these theories don't hold water.

This brings us to the next category of those who deny the Resurrection: Those who say that Jesus of Nazareth really did die, but something happened to His body and so His disciples started to believe what they wished was true: that their friend had risen from the dead.

One scholar supposes that Jesus' body disappeared because it was abandoned or hurriedly buried in a shallow grave and the dogs ate it. But we know that it was very important to the Jews to bury their dead respectfully, and we have the evidence that Jesus' body was buried in a particular person's tomb (who would have served as witness if it hadn't happened that way).

Furthermore, we have to remember that Jesus' enemies were concerned that His disciples would steal the body, so they demanded that a Roman guard be set up. If the body wasn't buried, why did they demand a guard at the tomb?

Others say the disciples stole the body. For this to be true we have to believe that the twelve men who fled in terror and denied their friend (lest they too would be tortured and crucified) suddenly not only found their courage, but they got together, planned a heist, crept out at night, overpowered the Roman guards at the tomb and stole the body away? Why would they have done this in the first place? Because they wanted to fake a resurrection? They were as surprised by the Resurrection as anyone else.

The New Testament account is very clear. Here are people who are telling the truth, even about awkward facts that are not instantly advantageous to their claims. They genuinely believe Christ was risen, they do not come across as people who lie about a body that they know perfectly well was stolen or eaten by dogs. For the rest of their lives (right through to their torture and execution), the apostles behaved like men utterly convinced that they had met the Risen Christ.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker