



## World Christian Fellowship

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### The first Fake News!

#### Matthew 28:11-15

**Matthew 28:11-15**, *Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. <sup>12</sup>When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, <sup>13</sup>saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.'<sup>14</sup>And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure."<sup>15</sup>So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*

#### Introduction:

#### The Question That Changed Everything

#### The Scientist who dared to ask

**Lee Strobel** was a hard-nosed legal editor at the **Chicago Tribune**, an atheist who considered faith for the intellectually weak. When his wife became a **Christian in 1979**, he was furious.

*But instead of dismissing her faith, he launched a two-year investigative journey — interviewing scholars, scientists, and historians — determined to disprove the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He expected to bury Christianity with facts.*

*Instead, every line of evidence he examined pointed to one conclusion: **Jesus Christ had truly risen from the dead.***

***The man who set out to destroy faith became one of the most influential Christian apologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.** His story, told in **The Case for Christ**, is a modern echo of the principle we see in Matthew 28 that even those who set out to oppose the resurrection end up proving it.*

There is a profound question that has echoed through every culture, every philosophy, and every human heart across the span of human history:

**Is there life beyond the grave?**

**Can death be defeated?**

**Canadian scientist G.B. Hardy**, in his landmark book on **Destiny and Philosophy**, crystallised this universal longing into just two searching questions:

**'Has anyone ever defeated death?**

**If so, did he make a way for me to do it also?'**

These two questions are not merely academic. They are the most personal questions any human being can ever ask.

The passage before us today answers both questions with breathtaking power.

It does so in the most unexpected way. Not through the shouts of the disciples, not through the testimony of those who loved Jesus, but through the frantic, desperate, bribe-fuelled cover-up of His enemies.

This passage is unique to Matthew's gospel. It has been called the lie that proves the Resurrection.

For in their attempt to silence the truth, the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers did the very opposite.

They produced the most compelling evidence that the tomb was indeed empty and that Christ had truly risen.

**Romans 10:9**, *"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

**Why the Resurrection is everything?**

## 1. The only Hope for Eternal Life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not merely one doctrine among many. It is the cornerstone upon which the entire structure of Christian hope rests.

Without it, there is no salvation, no heaven, no victory over death, no eternal joy, and ultimately no point to the present life.

**1 Corinthians 15:17–19**, *And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!*<sup>18</sup> *Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*<sup>19</sup> *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.*

The Apostle Paul pulls no punches. Without the resurrection, Christianity collapses into the most pitiable of religions.

But with-it everything changes.  
Death is swallowed up in victory.

**1 Corinthians 15:54-55**, *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*<sup>55</sup> *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"*

The grave loses its sting. Every promise of God is sealed and certified by the empty tomb.

## **2. To reject the Resurrection is spiritual suicide.**

To deny the resurrection whatever the reason, whatever the intellectual justification is to commit what we might call spiritual suicide.

It is to sever yourself from the only lifeline that bridges time and eternity. It is to forfeit every hope of a future life and to strip the present of ultimate meaning.

For if there is no resurrection, then there is no final justice, no ultimate redemption, and no reason to believe that anything we do in this life carries eternal weight.

**John 11:25–26**, *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. <sup>26</sup>And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*

## **3. The longing written in every human heart.**

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, made a stunning observation.

**Ecclesiastes 3:11**, *He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.*

God has set eternity in the human heart. There is something deep within every person across every culture, every century, every civilisation that refuses to accept that death is the final word.

The religions, philosophies, and myths of every age reflect this aching hunger for immortality.

There is no hope of life after death. There is no hope of heaven. There is no hope of eternal blessing and joy without the resurrection of Christ.

There's something inside man that reaches out for immortality, that reaches out for eternity, that is not satisfied with life only on a temporal level. The religions and philosophies and personal anticipations of the human race throughout all of history reflect this desire for immortality.

**Jesus Christ alone satisfies that hunger.**

Not by offering a philosophy, but by defeating death in person but walking out of a guarded, sealed, rock-hewn tomb on the third day.

**The Theories that cannot explain the Empty Tomb.**

Through the centuries, sceptics have proposed a host of alternative explanations for the empty tomb. It is worth examining each of them not to be argumentative, but because each one collapses under scrutiny, and that very collapse points us back to the only credible explanation: He is risen indeed.

Every theory must answer one fundamental question.

A question that no sceptic has ever satisfactorily resolved:

## **Where is the body?**

### **1. The Swoon Theory.**

First proposed in **1600 by Venturini**, this theory suggests Jesus never actually died. He merely swooned on the cross from blood loss, was revived by the coolness of the tomb, and emerged convincing the disciples He had risen.

But consider what this would require:

- Jesus would have had to survive a Roman flogging (which alone killed men),
- crucifixion with nails through His wrists and feet,
- a spear thrust into His side from which blood and water poured (indicating cardiac rupture),
- entombment with 75 pounds of spices,
- three days without food, water, or medical care,

- then roll a multi-tonne stone away from the inside,
- overpower a squad of Roman soldiers, and
- walk seven miles to Emmaus on feet pierced with iron nails.

The theory is not merely improbable.  
It is medically and physically absurd.

**John 19:34**, *But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.*

## **2. The No-Burial Theory.**

This theory suggests Jesus was never placed in a tomb at all that His body was thrown into a criminals' pit.

But this raises the obvious question:

**Why then did the Jewish leaders seal and guard a specific tomb?**

If the body was elsewhere, **why not simply produce it and end the resurrection rumour instantly?**

The silence is deafening.

## **3. The Hallucination Theory.**

Some have suggested that the disciples, overcome by grief and wishful thinking, collectively hallucinated the risen Christ.

But psychiatrists and psychologists are unanimous:  
Hallucinations are individual and subjective.

You cannot share a hallucination with 500 people simultaneously.

**1 Corinthians 15:6**, *"He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep."*

Furthermore, the disciples were not expecting a resurrection. They were hiding in fear and confusion. There was no psychological basis for mass hallucination.

Still the question haunts this theory: **Where is the body?**

#### **4. The Telepathy and Séance Theories.**

**Séance meaning:** a meeting at which people attempt to make contact with the dead, especially through the agency of a medium.

Others have proposed that God sent mental images back to the disciples, or that a medium conjured the spirit of Jesus.

But both theories make God a deceiver founding the most morally serious religion in history upon deliberate illusion.

✓ Jesus ate with His disciples (**Luke 24:42–43**)

- ✓ Jesus was physically touched (**John 20:27**).
- ✓ Jesus walked seven miles in conversation.

No séance or mental projection can account for this.

## **5. The Mistaken Identity Theory.**

### **Perhaps someone impersonated Jesus?**

But the disciples knew Him intimately. He would need to have self-inflicted the precise wounds of crucifixion to deceive even Thomas.

He would need the ability to walk through locked doors (**John 20:19**), ascend bodily into heaven (**Acts 1:9**), and perform post-resurrection miracles.

No impostor can do these things.

## **6. The theft theory: The only Option left?**

### **Where is the body?**

### **Why is the tomb empty?**

If the Jews could have produced the body, they could have stopped all apostolic preaching of the cross and resurrection.

### **Who took it?**

The **Jews wouldn't take it**, because why would they falsify a resurrection?

The **Romans wouldn't take it** because they weren't even interested in the issue.

It must have been the friends of Jesus.

This theory says the disciples came and stole His body.

When every other theory crumbles, sceptics are left with only one that at least attempts to explain the empty tomb: **someone stole the body.**

It is precisely this theory: The disciples stole the body while the soldiers slept that the Jewish leaders devised and funded in Matthew 28.

It is the most plausible of the false theories. But as we shall see, it too is impossible to believe.

## **A. The Plot.**

### **1. The soldiers report: They could not deny it.**

The scene is electrifying. It is early Sunday morning.

The women have already been to the tomb, witnessed the earthquake and the blazing angel, and are now rushing to find the disciples.

Meanwhile, some of the Roman soldiers who had been posted specifically to guard against any resurrection fraud are making their own urgent journey into Jerusalem.

**What do they report to the chief priests?**

Everything that had happened.

*V 11, Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened.*

- The earthquake.
- The descending angel, clothed in lightning white.
- The stone rolled away.
- The empty tomb.
- These soldiers were not reporting a theft.

They were reporting a supernatural event.

This is a staggering moment.

The Jewish leaders who had conspired to crucify Jesus were the first people outside of the disciples to hear the full account of the resurrection.

They heard it not from believers who might embellish the story, but from hardened Roman soldiers who had nothing to gain from a resurrection narrative.

## 2. The Leaders' Response: No investigation, only cover-up.

**How do the chief priests respond?**

**Do they investigate?**

**Do they go to check the tomb?**

Do they even consider the possibility that their own prophets **Moses, Isaiah, and the Psalms** might have foretold exactly this? Not for one moment.

**Matthew 27:42**, *“He saved others; Himself He cannot save. <sup>U</sup>If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.*

They said that we will believe if He comes down from the cross. Here is something even greater. He came out of the grave, but they didn't believe.

- They didn't even investigate.
- They didn't even go to find out.
- They didn't say that maybe it's true.
- Maybe He is the Messiah.
- Maybe He is alive.
- Maybe we ought to check it out.

Not at all.

They were so resistant and so blind and so sinful and so self-willed and so locked into their own religious belief that they would not even investigate the truth that was reported to them by the soldiers.

They refused to believe.

**2 Corinthians 4:4**, *"The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ."*

**The news brought shock and fear but not repentance, or faith.**

They were so locked into their spiritual apostasy, so vested in their own religious system, that no evidence, not even the report of Roman soldiers describing an earthquake and a blazing angel and an empty tomb could penetrate their hardened hearts.

Instead, Matthew tells us they called an official meeting of the Sanhedrin, the supreme ruling council of Israel.

**V 12**, *When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together,*

They passed a formal three-part resolution to suppress the truth.

## **The Cover-Up that reveals the Truth**

*In 1972, when the **Watergate** break-in was discovered, the Nixon administration's response was not confession but cover-up.*

*They paid hush money, coordinated stories, and pressured witnesses. But it was the cover-up itself not the original crime that ultimately proved the administration's guilt. The more desperately they worked to conceal the truth, the more loudly the truth announced itself.*

The Sanhedrin's bribery of the Roman guards in Matthew 28 operates on exactly the same principle. The very desperation of the cover-up is itself a thunderous testimony to the reality of the resurrection.

### **3. The three-part resolution of the Sanhedrin**

#### **a) Bribery.**

**V 12**, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers,

Matthew uses the word **Arguria**, silver money.

This was substantial.

They had bought **Judas for 30 pieces of silver**.

Now they needed to multiply that amount across an entire squad of soldiers. But they were willing to pay any price.

The empty tomb was an existential threat to their authority. If the people believed Jesus had risen, the entire religious establishment of Israel would unravel.

The theological irony:

These same leaders had used **30 pieces of silver to bring Jesus to the cross**. Now they are using **much more to try to keep Him in the grave**.

But all their silver was powerless before the power of His resurrection.

#### **b) A scripted lie.**

**V 13**, saying, *“Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’*

This was the official narrative. The soldiers, who had reported a supernatural event, were now paid to replace that truth with a fabrication.

They became as Matthew's text strongly implies the first preachers of the anti-gospel.

The irony is piercing. Men who had seen the glory of God at the tomb, who had fallen like dead men before a heavenly

messenger, were now enlisted in the service of darkness for money.

**Proverbs 17:23**, *"A wicked man accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of justice."*

**c) Political protection.**

**V 14**, *And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure."*

The soldiers knew Roman military law well. Falling asleep on duty carried the death penalty.

The Sanhedrin therefore promised to use their political influence with Pilate to protect any soldier who spread this story.

The cover-up was not merely religious, but it was a fully coordinated political conspiracy.

**d) The propagation of the Lie.**

**V 15**, *So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*

Matthew is writing about **30 years later**, somewhere around **63 A.D.** At this very time 30 years later, this is the dominant theory circulating among the Jews that the disciples stole the body.

- The soldiers knew the truth.
- The Jewish leaders had every reason to know the truth.
- The soldiers had been there.
- They had experienced the phenomena to some degree, yet they were not believers.

On the contrary they become preachers of the anti-gospel.

The early church father **Justin Martyr**, writing in the mid-second century over a hundred years after the resurrection confirms that this was still the most common Jewish explanation.

The lie endured. But so did the truth and the truth was far more powerful.

## **B. Why the lie destroys itself?**

**Seven fatal problems:**

Matthew includes this passage not merely as a historical footnote, but as a devastating apologetic for the resurrection.

Every element of the theft theory collapses under examination.

Here are seven reasons why it is impossible to believe the lie.

**a) The cowardice of the Disciples.**

These were men who had fled in terror when Jesus was arrested.

Peter, the boldest of them denied knowing Jesus to a servant girl by a fire (**Matthew 26:69–74**).

They were locked in an upper room.

**Why?**

**John 20:19**, *"On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them."*

**How could these same cowardly men have summoned the courage to overpower a squad of professional Roman soldiers, roll away a sealed stone, and carry off a body all in the dark of night?**

**b) They had nothing with which to Bribe.**

The Sanhedrin had to pay 'much money' to convince the soldiers to lie.

The disciples had no such resources.

They were fishermen and tax collectors not men of means.

The very fact that the soldiers required significant payment to spread the story tells us they needed an incentive to lie. You don't pay people to tell the truth.

**c) The neatly folded Grave Clothes.**

If the disciples had stolen the body, they would have grabbed it and fled as quickly as possible.

*John 20:6–7, Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.*

The burial cloths were lying in perfect order, and the face cloth was folded up separately.

This is the scene of an orderly exit, not a frantic theft. Men stealing a body in the night do not stop to unwrap and fold the linen.

**d) Roman soldiers do not sleep on Duty.**

The penalty for a Roman soldier falling asleep on watch was death.

The night was divided into watches of three hours, with soldiers rotating. It is militarily inconceivable that an entire squad would fall asleep simultaneously at the most critical hour of their assignment. Especially when on the very morning they had been specifically warned.

**Matthew 27:63–64**, saying, *“Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’<sup>64</sup> Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’ So the last deception will be worse than the first.”*

#### **e) The logical Self-Contradiction.**

This is perhaps the most devastating problem of all.

The story says: 'Tell them the disciples came and stole Him away while we slept.'

Think about that for one moment.

If they were asleep then **how do they know what happened?**

You cannot be both asleep and a credible witness to a theft.

The story is self-condemning.

It destroys itself in a single sentence. Matthew highlights this absurdity precisely because it exposes the lie for what it is.

**f) Men do not die for a lie they invented.**

Within weeks of the resurrection, the disciples were publicly preaching it in Jerusalem the very city where Jesus had been crucified, before the very authorities who had killed Him.

Within years, nearly all of them would be martyred for this message.

Men die for beliefs they hold to be true.

Men do not die for a hoax they deliberately invented.

If the disciples had stolen the body, they alone would have known the resurrection was false. No person voluntarily dies for something they know to be a lie.

***Legal scholar Simon Greenleaf, a professor of evidence at Harvard Law School and one of the greatest authorities on legal testimony in the nineteenth century, applied the standard rules of evidence to the resurrection accounts and concluded: 'The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most certain event of ancient history.'***

*Greenleaf noted particularly that the disciples' willingness to suffer and die for their testimony given that they had every opportunity to recant and save their lives — was, by any legal standard, the highest possible validation of the truthfulness of their witness.*

### **g) The enemies' silence about the Body.**

If the Jewish leaders believed the disciples had stolen the body, they would have launched an immediate investigation.

They would have arrested the disciples and demanded to know where the body was. They would have searched every home in Jerusalem.

Instead, in **Acts 4**, when the disciples are arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, **the council does not even ask: 'Where is the body?'**

They simply order them to stop preaching. This silence is thunderous.

This tells us that even the leaders knew there was no body to find.

## **C. The evidence cannot be overturned.**

### **1. The Testimony of more Than 500 Witnesses.**

The resurrection is attested by an extraordinary cloud of witnesses. Paul, writing to the Corinthians only **22 years after** the resurrection, lists ten separate post-resurrection appearances of Christ:

1. **Mary Magdalene (John 20:14–18).**
2. **The other women (Matthew 28:9).**
3. **Peter alone (Luke 24:34).**
4. **Two disciples on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13–32).**
5. **Ten disciples in the upper room (John 20:19).**
6. **To disciples, including Thomas (John 20:26–28).**
7. **To seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21).**
8. **More than five hundred people at once (1 Corinthians 15:6).**
9. **James (1 Corinthians 15:7).**
10. **Apostles at the ascension (Acts 1:9).**

**1 Corinthians 15:6**, *"He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep."*

Paul's point in mentioning the five hundred is forensic most of them are still alive. You can go and ask them.

- This is not legend.
- This is living, verifiable testimony.

## **2. The Testimony of enemies: The greatest proof of all.**

Matthew's inclusion of this passage becomes most significant.

We would expect the friends of Jesus to testify to His resurrection. But the testimony of His enemies is far more powerful, precisely because it is so unexpected and so reluctant.

- The Jewish leaders did not investigate the resurrection.
- They did not question whether it might be true.
- They immediately convened the Sanhedrin to suppress it.

### **Why?**

Because the soldiers' report left them with no alternative explanation.

They knew no theft had occurred.

They knew the disciples had not done it.

But they could not afford to let the people believe Jesus had risen and so they paid a great price to silence what they could not refute.

Their very desperation is the most eloquent testimony imaginable. Innocent men do not pay hush money.

Authorities who have the truth on their side do not need to purchase a counter-narrative. The magnitude of the bribe is the measure of the threat they felt from the truth.

### 3. The Transformed Lives of the Disciples.

#### The Most Dramatic Transformation in History

On the evening of Passover when Jesus was crucified, the disciples were shattered, scattered, hiding, weeping, and despairing.

- **Peter** had denied his Lord.
- **Thomas** was sunk in doubt.

The women prepared spices for a dead body. Not one of them expected a resurrection.

They didn't even expect Jesus to rise.

**Luke 24:11**, *"When the women came and told them Jesus was alive, their words seem to them as idle tales."*

**John 20:9**, *"They knew not the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead."*

They weren't anticipating a resurrection.

Because of that they were moaning and groaning in sadness.

**What transformed them from cowards who never believed in a resurrection to heroes who fully believed in it?**

Yet in fifty days on the day of **Pentecost**, these same men stood in the streets of Jerusalem the very city where Jesus had

been crucified and declared before tens of thousands that Jesus rose again.

They were not eloquent, educated, brilliant, strong orators, masters of eloquence and logic.

- They were not charmers.
- They were not persuasive.
- They were poor, simple, illiterate some of them.

**Acts 2:32**, *This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.*

### **What changed them?**

- Not a borrowed body.
- Not a ghost.
- Not a hallucination.

### **The reality of resurrection of Jesus Christ!**

The risen Christ, in His physical, glorified body, had stood among them, eaten with them, shown them His wounds, and breathed His Spirit upon them.

The transformation of the disciples from cowering fugitives to fearless martyrs is one of the most powerful proofs of the resurrection.

Remember that these disciples are cowards.

When the soldiers came into the garden to capture Jesus had predicted at that time that all the disciples would forsake Him and flee.

This had been predicted in The Old Testament prophets as well.

When the Romans soldiers came along with the chief priest and others came into the garden of Gethsemane there was Jesus with His disciples. They come into the garden. The Lord speaks His name and they all fall down.

The disciples sort of feel like they are in a good situation, a little bit invincible. Peter takes a sword and ready to fight. The Lord's beside him, he feels secure.

The Lord tells him after he struck the ear from one of the men that's there to put his sword away. He puts the ear back on the man and allows Himself to be taken captive.

As soon as He allows Himself to be taken captive, they enter into a state of panic, and they just run to hide. They were afraid.

- They don't want to confront this group.
- They were afraid of them.
- They have too much power.
- They could lose their lives.

When Peter is confronted a little later in the courtyard by the fire on several occasions, he denies Jesus Christ. He denies knowing Him. He denies following Him.

**If the disciples came and stole the body, how did they get the courage to come when they knew there would be a Roman guard?**

**How are we going to believe that these cowardly men who would not stand to defend or stand alongside the living Christ whose power they had just seen displayed against those men?**

**How are we to believe that they would now take their stand without the living Christ against the same people they were afraid of with Him?**

Absurd.

They were basically huddling somewhere in fear. They weren't about to come out against the Roman army.

Peter, the boldest and strongest and most courageous of them, at least verbally, denied Jesus Christ even to a little girl.

The disciples didn't have anything. They had nothing with which to bribe.

## **D. Why Matthew Includes this the Apostasy of Israel?**

**Why does Matthew end his account of the resurrection not with the triumphant testimony of the disciples?**

But with this dark episode of bribery and lies!

The answer is twofold.

### **1. The full and final national rejection.**

Matthew's gospel is written specifically for a Jewish audience. It traces the messianic credentials of Jesus from the very first verse.

**Matthew 1:1**, *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:*

Repeatedly, it shows how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Repeatedly, it records how the leadership of Israel rejected Him.

- They rejected His birth by Herod slaughtered the innocents.
- They rejected His ministry by accusing Him of being demonic.
- They rejected His claims by plotting His death.
- They used betrayal, injustice, blackmail, and force to bring Him to the cross.

Now, confronted with His greatest miracle yet they reject even that.

- They don't investigate.
- They don't repent.
- They bribe soldiers to spread a lie.

Matthew is showing us that the apostasy of the nation of Israel was complete.

Every opportunity had been given.

Every miracle had been performed.

Still they would not believe.

This passage stands as Matthew's final, formal testimony to the hardness of Israel's rejection.

**Isaiah 53:3**, *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."*

## **2. The unexpected witness is the Strongest witness.**

Matthew also includes this passage because the unwilling testimony of enemies is always more powerful than the willing testimony of friends.

A defendant's friends may be biased. But when the prosecution's own witnesses destroy the prosecution's case, that is a different matter entirely.

The Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers were not trying to prove the resurrection. They were trying to disprove it.

Yet every element of their response, the urgency of the Sanhedrin meeting, the scale of the bribe, the absurdity of the story they devised, the political protection they had to arrange screams in unison: **The tomb was empty and they had no natural explanation for it.**

## **Conclusion:**

### **The Tomb that couldn't stay closed**

*In the Soviet Union, communist authorities spent decades attempting to erase Christianity. Churches were burned. Pastors were imprisoned. Bibles were confiscated. The state's propaganda machine declared religion dead.*

*But when **the Iron Curtain fell in 1989**, the world discovered that the Church had not merely survived but it had flourished underground.*

*House churches had multiplied.*

*Faith had deepened.*

*A lie built on state power, imprisonment, and propaganda could not silence the truth of the risen Christ.*

*What the Soviet state learned at the cost of seventy years and millions of lives is what the Sanhedrin discovered in **A.D. 33**.*

*You cannot keep Jesus in a tomb, no matter how many soldiers you post, no matter how much money you spend, and no matter how carefully you craft your cover story.*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a pious legend invented by grieving followers. It is a historical event attested by more than five hundred eyewitnesses, validated by ten separate post-resurrection appearances, confirmed by the transformation of cowardly disciples into fearless martyrs, and most astonishingly corroborated by the desperate, bribe-funded cover-up of its most powerful opponents.

The theft theory, the only lie with any chance of explaining the empty tomb, destroys itself.

You cannot be asleep and a witness.

You cannot bribe someone to tell the truth.

You cannot explain why men who invented a hoax would die for it.

You cannot explain the neatly folded grave cloths, the silence of the Sanhedrin about the body, and the explosive growth of the resurrection movement in the very city where it supposedly happened.

**Acts 2:24**, *"God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."*

The great preacher **Charles Spurgeon** once said: *'Christ's resurrection is the cornerstone of the arch of our salvation. Remove it and the whole structure falls.'* The enemies of the cross tried to remove it. They failed. The grave could not hold Him. Death could not keep its prey. The stone was rolled away not to let Jesus out, but to let us in: to let us see that He had already left, triumphant over the last enemy.

## **A Personal Appeal**

**G.B. Hardy** asked the right questions:

**Has anyone defeated death?**

**Has He made a way for me to do it also?**

The answer to both is the same.

Yes!

Jesus Christ defeated death in His own body.

Jesus Christ has opened the way for every person who believes in Him.

There are only two responses to the resurrection.

You can be like the Jewish leaders confronted with the evidence and still refusing to believe, choosing the darkness of spiritual apostasy and committing the most devastating act of self-destruction a human soul can commit.

Or you can be like Thomas who, when he saw the risen Christ, fell to his knees and declared: **'My Lord and my God!'** (John 20:28).

To deny the resurrection is to deny your only hope.

To receive it is to receive eternal life.

**Romans 10:9-10**, *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Salvation is equal to eternal life.

Salvation is equal to deliverance from sin.

Salvation is equal to hope.

Salvation determines our eternal destiny in the presence of God in the glories of heaven forever.

Salvation belongs to those who believe in the resurrection and who confess Jesus as Lord by that resurrection and therefore identify themselves with Him.

Death has been defeated.

The tomb is empty.

The stone is rolled away.

The only question that remains is this:

**What will you do with the risen Christ?**

***He arose! He arose! Hallelujah — Christ arose!***