

Did the Apostles Steal the Body of Jesus?

The apostles could have felt that taking the body of Jesus in secret from its resting place was not theft. The law would think differently!

The gospels say that a miracle man called Jesus Christ lived. They say he died by crucifixion and three days later he rose again. The tomb he was placed in was found mysteriously empty. His body was gone. The gospels never say that anybody saw the body rising or coming out of the tomb. No evidence is given that he wasn't stolen. The apostles could have taken the body to create the resurrection hoax. The gospels fail to refute the idea that the apostles did this.

The Matthew gospel says the Jews had guards put at the tomb to prevent anybody stealing Jesus' body to put out a fraudulent resurrection report. Matthew lies about the reason the guards were posted at the tomb. He says it was because the Jews interpreted Jesus as saying he would rise again. How could they when the gospels say that those closest to him did not understand him when he said he would rise? The Jews supposedly said that if Jesus was stolen to make it look like he rose from the dead this would be the last deception and worse than the first. We are not told what the first deception was. The context is about fake miracles so it must have been a miracle attributed to Jesus. Moreover, if somebody stealing a body and saying it rose is a good deception - it is not - that shows how unconvincing and lame the first deception must have been! The lies indicate that the Christians were trying to fake evidence that the apostles could not have stolen the body.

The Matthew gospel says there were soldiers at the tomb guarding it. It claims they went unconscious there because the angel that opened the tomb scared them so much that they fainted! So the guards were asleep at the tomb and so somebody could have stolen the body as they slept. It is not even said that the body was already gone at the time they fell asleep or fainted. The body could have been lying in an open tomb surrounded by guards who were in dreamland.

No real angel would scare the guards that much or even allow itself to be seen by them. The angel would know you can't have unconscious guards at a tomb. People would say that Jesus could have been taken when they were unconscious. Christianity says that there are huge difficulties if all the evidence we have for the resurrection is visions for the world is full of similar visions (for example Medjugorje and Garabandal which contradict the gospel of Jesus and are judged to be unreliable as revelations by the Catholic Church) which are considered well-attested by many. So they need to prove that the body was in the tomb but wasn't stolen and that they cannot do.

The Matthew gospel alone mentions the guard and it says the Jews bribed the guards to say that the disciples of Jesus took the body away to create a resurrection hoax. Matthew gave no evidence that the bribe took place. How could he know? The Jews and the soldiers weren't going to tell. He didn't say how he came across this information leaving us free to surmise that it was gossip and speculation. But if the Jews and Romans were saying that the body was stolen by the apostles what can we do but wonder if they were telling the truth after all? The soldiers were allegedly unconscious at the tomb due to an angel having being such a frightening sight that they fainted. The soldiers were told to say that the apostles stole the body while they slept which would mean they couldn't blame them after all. They didn't need to say they slept - it would have sounded better had they said they turned their backs on the tomb and weren't watching or were distracted by some activity away from the tomb or were attacked and rendered unconscious. If they had to admit to being unconscious anything was better than claiming to have slept on duty. They would never have said they slept. Matthew is determined to make the Jewish objection to the resurrection that the apostles stole the body look silly. This lie of his makes us suspect the apostles did possibly steal the body. Also if the soldiers ran off as Matthew says after the stone came back and other strange things happened then how did they know the body was gone? The body could have been still inside and stolen after they left. The apostles acting like they didn't care about Jesus any more (there is no evidence in the gospels that they did this - its just a Christian assumption) and saying they were surprised the body vanished and acting dumb proves nothing.

The gospels give no indication that they couldn't have done it. The apostles could never admit it because it would mean they would be guaranteed death for grave robbing at the hands of the Romans if not the Jews. Also their Church would have lynched them. Men die for pious frauds and if the apostles were martyred (and it is hotly and convincingly contended that they were not) that would explain their deaths. There is no evidence that they died for their alleged belief in the resurrection. The resurrection is supposedly the one miracle Jesus did that Satan couldn't duplicate for God is the master of life and death not him. And the problem is that the tomb was left wide open for anybody to steal the body so there is no evidence that Jesus came back bodily to life apart from visions that Satan could duplicate and Christianity admits that visions are unreliable for it rejects most claimed religious visions. Religion holds that most miracles are satanic for though they heal and do good their purpose is to promote error for most religion is wrong. Moses encountered such miracles in Egypt when he had to combat the magicians of Egypt.

Consider this, the opinion of some, "The guards might have been posted at the entrance of the garden that the tomb was in.

Some of them might have slept and others been awake. Within reason that should have been fine with Roman law. But they didn't see the tomb being robbed. Magdalene, we must recall, in John said that some "they" took the body from the tomb so she didn't deny that theft or removal was possible."

THE APOSTLES AND THE EMPTY TOMB

The main witnesses to Jesus having returned from the dead were the eleven apostles.

The apostle Peter, who all the gospels say was too scared to say that he was a friend of Jesus' after Jesus was arrested was said to have been at the tomb after learning that it was empty. This is a lie for when he was frightened he would not have been near the tomb and risk being accused of theft. And it would have been impossible for him to even consider going there if the guards had been or were there. The Gospels say the apostles did not believe the women so Peter was not going to risk his life for something they laughed at.

Luke 24:12 has Peter running to the tomb of Jesus before Magdalene reported a vision of him. Up to then all she saw was the missing body and angels saying Jesus rose. She was with other women. John says she had her vision of Jesus and it was then that Peter went to the tomb.

The preferred answer among believers is that Peter went to the tomb twice! If so then he was not far away and what about how bad it looks if a body goes missing nearby and you cannot stay away from the vicinity?

Is it really credible that Peter would go to a crime scene twice? The authorities had to treat it as a crime period.

Peter went into the tomb on his own and this must be assumed for the gospel of Luke says so. You have to be careful about things that possibly implicate somebody in crime.

Why would one of the gospels lie assuming one of them is lying? John does not want anybody to think Peter was at the tomb alone! He is thinking along our lines!

Peter and John, according to the John gospel, were in the tomb when nobody else was about. At that time, there was nobody saying the body had gone. That was said later. It is very suspicious.

In the John Gospel, Peter and the beloved disciple inspect the empty tomb. Luke mentions only Peter. Christians say that it is fine for Luke does not say that Peter was literally on his own. But why mention Peter alone when there was enough time and space to mention his companions? A story is a bit more likely to be true the more witnesses are named. And Luke 1 shows the gospel claimed to be verifying the gospel story. If Luke only knew of Peter then he was lying when he said that he was an expert on Jesus in the prologue. It would be very strange if he did not know all that happened that morning. The most important morning for the Church, for the Church needed to conserve all the evidence it could get its claws into. So Luke is probably saying that there was nobody else there but Peter. If I talk to John and Tom and tell Mary I was talking to Tom I am leaving John out for she does not know him and he is not relevant. But everybody is relevant in regard to Jesus' tomb and return. When logical errors like assuming that this is not the case are made in the gospels how can they be divinely inspired?

THE APOSTLES MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE THIEVES

It is said that the apostles, Jesus' closest followers, could not have stolen him out of the grave for they were spineless and except for John did not have the guts to appear at the cross. But they were not spineless for they stood by Jesus in the face of the murderous hatred of the Jews and the Romans for three years. There is no evidence that abandoned Jesus out of wimpiness – not even in the Gospels! You are not a wimp if you believe you cannot jeopardise your safety. If Jesus had magical powers they thought he could look after himself. There is no evidence in the gospels that they would not have perpetrated a pious fraud. They never say they were that honest all the time. Nor is it biblical to state that they were too stricken with grief to nick Jesus' remains. Grief and guilt could have made them steal him to give him a posthumous moment of glory.

The gospels present the apostles as scared when Jesus began to appear after his death. This includes Peter, James and John which is odd considering they allegedly saw Moses and Elijah appear to Jesus one time before. If this miracle appearance of these two dead men had really happened would they have been so sceptical of the resurrection and fearful?

Christians may say the Jews did not think the apostles or disciples took the body when they had to bribe soldiers to falsely blame them as Matthew records. But the Jews could have asked the soldiers to lie and blame the apostles or disciples and have still thought they did do it. The lie was accusing them without seeing them. The accusation could be evidence that there were eyewitnesses who saw the apostles steal the body. And perhaps the witnesses vanished when it could have led to a trial.

Perhaps the apostles had sound alibis when they were not accused of the theft and arrested. The gospels give us no grounds for thinking that they had for they didn't say where the apostles were and if they were in all night the day Jesus vanished.

They don't know if they had alibis or not. If they were arrested and cleared would have been told about it especially in the Matthew gospel. Somebody had to be accused and convicted one way or another if the bribe story is true. But it could have been any disciples for any reason and not the apostles. The gospels don't mention anybody being found guilty of the theft which makes us suspicious of them. If the Jews had gone to the trouble of making it look like disciples of Jesus stole his body they would have had to frame some of them for it. And we must especially be suspicious of the gospels when they pretend that the resurrection is irrefutable despite the poor evidence they offer.

One might think that if the apostles had stolen Jesus they would have fled the country for they would be put to death if they were rounded up and proven or "proven" guilty. But many did worse and still stayed put. The apostles were afraid to even try to get out of the country for they were in hiding after Jesus died (John 20:19). The hiding would have prevented the apostles from having a reasonable alibi. If they had hid then they would have been in big trouble. But they were not so the hiding may have been invented to explain why they could not have stolen the body.

Val Grieve in *Verdict on the Empty Tomb*, page 11, says that since all the guards at the tomb could not have been asleep at the one time, the disciples could not have carried Jesus away from the tomb. But the guards who were awake would not have been watching the tomb but watching the sleepers. They did not care about the tomb when they let them sleep. Grieve thinks the apostles had no motive for stealing Jesus. What about remorse and guilt? If they could restore Jesus to favour in the eyes of the people by saying he was miraculously removed from the tomb they would have eased their own guilty agony.

Christians say the apostles did not steal the body of Jesus for they died for their belief that Jesus rose. But theft would not stop a resurrection or a resurrection story. Even if the body showed up it would be concluded as with St Paul that the body is the seed of the resurrection body and so there is no need for the whole body to be raised. And the apostles could have died for lies if they thought the lies would and could improve the world.

Evidence for the apostles being capable of stealing the body is that Jesus clearly told them he would rise though they later pretended they did not understand what he was saying at the time and their devotion unto death for him. And why were Peter and another at the empty tomb when they knew they could get accused of robbing it or of interfering with the scene of a crime? And they were supposed to be in hiding and in fear for their lives!

They must have been able to deny that they were there for they would have if they could have or perhaps it did not matter then when the gospel was written for they were dead.

But when they went to the tomb and risked danger instead of asking the authorities for information it had to be the case that they were doing something more important – robbing the grave. The peeking was only an excuse for their presence at the tomb.

Then the apostles started boasting about supernatural experiences that could not have really happened. God wouldn't send them apparitions of Jesus for he wouldn't forgive men who had stolen the body and back up their lies.

John says that two disciples entered the tomb of Jesus after Magdalene had found the body gone despite the fact that that was a serious crime under Roman law deserving either deportation or execution (*Historical Evidence and the Empty Tomb Story – A Reply to William Lane Craig, Jeffrey Jay Lowder*) – it would have deserved execution in their case for going near the scene of a crime which was a stolen body in this case. They would just have easily been there before she found the body missing and stolen the body when they were that recklessly brave. They were capable of it. Men who would risk their lives to nose into a tomb would far more easily steal the body.

The Jewish traditions simply ignore the resurrection and make no attempt to refute it which suggest that it was an entirely visionary experience with no disappearing body and unworthy of focusing on. The official Jewish records and the Talmud never accused the disciples of taking the body though that was supposed to be their chief argument against Christ according to the New Testament. The Talmud concentrates on condemning Jesus but never tries to give any proof that he was a fraud which is important.

When the gospel claims that the theft story was the Jewish apologetic against the resurrection of Christ and the Jews never stressed it at all the gospel is lying. Why? Some would say it was because the story was made up to shut up the witnesses who knew that the body was stolen by the apostles and not to shut up the Jews in general.

Conclusion

The apostles may have stolen the body of Jesus from the tomb.

FURTHER READING

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Conspiracies and the Cross, Timothy Paul Jones, Front Line, A Strang Company, Florida, 2008
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The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail, Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, Corgi, London, 1982
The Jesus Event, Martin R Tripole SJ, Alba House, New York, 1980
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The Second Messiah, Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, Arrow, London, 1998
The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, Raymond E Brown, Paulist Press, New York, 1973
The Womb and the Tomb, Hugh Montifiore, Fount – HarperCollins, London, 1992
Verdict on the Empty Tomb, Val Grieve Falcon, London, 1976
Who Moved the Stone? Frank Morison, OM Publishing, Cumbria, 1997

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Still Standing on Sinking Sand, Farrell Till,
www.infidels.org/library/magazines/tsr/1997/1/1sink97.html

Why I Don't Buy the Resurrection Story by Richard Carrier
www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/resurrection/index.shtml

A Naturalistic Account of the Resurrection, Brian Marston
<http://www.phlab.missouri.edu/~c570529/PhilosoStop/resurrection.html>

This site argues that somebody unknown stole the body to stop the apostles stealing it or venerating it and lost it and argues that the witnesses of the risen Jesus were lying because no effort was made by them to preserve first hand reports of what was seen and how and when. It argues that since the apostles had followed Jesus at great personal sacrifice and now he was dead they invented the resurrection to save face. Also the inclination of people at the time to believe in dying and rising gods may have overwhelmed them and made them lie to themselves that Jesus had risen. He answers the objection that a lie like that would need a large-scale conspiracy for lots of lies start off with a small group of people and if the lies are attractive other people will believe them. Plus he says that Jesus could have rigged events to make sure he would fulfil Old Testament prophecy so the Christians should not be saying the gospel story is true for it fits old prophecy. When a story fits something like a prophecy or another story, the story is made up. End of. And especially when it fits prophecy that isn't prophecy at all. I would add that owing to the total absence of evidence that Jesus was nailed to the cross and the fact that the gospels never say any of his friends were close to the cross that Jesus might have been tied to it and the Christians later assumed he was nailed because the psalm seemed to say so.

The Case For Christianity Examined: Truth or Lies?
www.askwhy.co.uk/awstruth/ChristianCase.html

Historical Evidence and the Empty Tomb Story, A Reply to William Lane Craig by Jeffrey Jay Lowder
www.infidels.org/library/modern/jeff_lowder/empty.html

The Resurrection, Steven Carr
www.bowness.demon.co.uk/resr.htm

Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead? Dan Barker versus Mike Horner
www.ffrf.org/debates/barker_horner.html

Craig's Empty Tomb and Habermas on the Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus
www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/indef/4e.html

Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus' Tomb by Amos Kloner
www.bib-arch.org/barso99/roll1.html

Who Moved the Stone? Review by Steven Carr,

www.bowness.demon.co.uk/stone.htm This tells us that if you assume that two contradictory books are true in all they say and try to make them fit you will manage it but the result will be contrived. You are really still assuming they are true and have no proof for it. This observation should be a warning to the fundamentalist Christians who say there are no contradictions in the Bible. They have no faith in the Bible at all for they are only assuming it is right. If they really believed, they would not need to work out and produce laughable far-fetched ways of reconciling Bible contradictions. They wouldn't do that with anything else but the Bible.

Morison claims that Peter's clever and unbiased mind was behind the first Gospel, that of Mark. But Morison only assumes this for there is no evidence that the gospel is clever and unbiased or that Peter had much if anything at all to do with it. Morison then tries to make out that the claim of Luke that the apostles waited seven weeks before saying Jesus had risen from the dead is too detrimental to the evidence for the resurrection to be true. In other words, the evidence for the resurrection is right and any evidence against it is wrong! That is bias if I ever seen it. He then makes out that these things which undermine the pro-resurrection evidence prove it happened. So the evidence against the resurrection makes the evidence for it stronger! How ridiculous.