

DID JESUS WALK OUT OF TOMB?

The gospels say that a miracle healing 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 wide open with the stone that had been across the entrance moved back and the tomb was mysteriously empty. His body was gone. Certain witnesses claimed that Jesus appeared to them as a resurrected being.

The main thing in this study is to stick to the data and account for it with a possible scenario. The fact is, Jesus being dead is not certain and survival is reasonably plausible.

JESUS COULD HAVE GOT OUT OF TOMB

Christians stress that if Jesus came around in the tomb he would have been trapped and not got out. This presupposes that he did get out only because he rose from the dead and was able to pass through the stone like a ghost.

Jesus could have been entombed alive.

All cultures are careful not to bury people alive but mistakes happen so we cannot be sure that the Romans made sure he was dead before being removed from the cross. It is not even claimed that anybody confirmed death. Pilate was surprised that Jesus was dead.

Jesus may have exaggerated how difficult it was for him to carry his cross. This could have been a tactic to avoid crucifixion.

The claims that his scourging was enough to lead to slow death are not in the gospels. The gospels could not say that for it was inconsistent with their claim that Pilate just wanted to grant Jesus some punishment but then let him go.

There is no evidence that he was nailed to the cross. John says he had nail marks during the resurrection but does not say they were cross marks. If Jesus was nailed his feet could have been tied.

Jesus was put in the tomb as if dead.

He could have got out of the tomb by himself or perhaps he was never buried in it in the first place.

It has happened, like with Aimee Semple McPherson, that a person who was thought to potentially have the power to rise from the dead that precautions were taken to let them escape from their graves. Surely the tomb would have been rigged to let Jesus out in case he would rise especially if he had been linked to people rising from their deathbeds or tombs before? That was done for Aimee Semple McPherson so why not him? Why not him more than her?

And what if the tomb was set up so people could go in and rescue him if he managed to recover?

Jesus allegedly predicted he would be back. The apostles at the time would have thought he meant just reviving from death and all would be like it was before. They did not imagine a magical body type of thing at that stage. So if Jesus rose he needed to get out of the tomb. Maybe that was why he was put in a private tomb in a private garden!

There is no evidence that the stone -

was not left ajar

that there was no lever so that if you were inside you could use it to shift the stone.

Perhaps somebody just went to the tomb to secretly get the stone to move in case Jesus needed to get out. Getting into a private garden and getting away again without being caught should have not been that difficult.

Jesus might have been laid to rest by people who were sure he was dead whereas he was still alive and got out of the tomb and met the disciples afterwards believing himself that he had risen from the dead.

Even many of the sceptics hold that Jesus was a healer and hold that he may have had strange but natural abilities. The gospels speak a lot about Jesus' healings. Curiously they seem more anxious to verify them than the resurrection of Jesus.

They get a bigger focus. If the stories are true, then it means that we can shut the mouths of those who say that Jesus rose from the dead. It means we are dealing with a man who may have faked the resurrection using extraordinary powers. Indeed that is what we should think for the resurrection evidence is poor in comparison to the evidence for the healings.

Jesus could have been using yogic techniques and healing powers on himself to survive the crucifixion and heal rapidly and get strong enough to escape the tomb. The Roman Catholic Church reports thousands of cases of people who despite all the odds get better very quickly and in an amazingly short space of time every year. But because such cases are not instant and it makes no sense to imagine God doing a miracle of healing without it being instant the Church does not recognise such occurrences as miraculous. There you have it. The extraordinary can happen and still not be a miracle.

The stone could have been moved by the earthquake Matthew mentions – Matthew does not say how the angel moved the stone so he may have thought the angel caused the earthquake to shift it. Jesus might have hid when the women looked in and left when the coast was clear. Jesus could have moved the stone himself for sometimes you can shift a heavy stone more easily with a lever. And there is no evidence that the stone was that heavy. It would have been like a round flat flag stone.

If Jesus left the tomb alive he might not have been strong enough or brave enough to close the tomb again. The open tomb may suggest that he left the usual way or that whoever took him out was in a hurry to get him medical help and left the tomb open. If Jesus had died after they would not have been able to get him back. Perhaps the guards had been told though the tomb was sealed to keep checking up on it in case Jesus would come back to life so that he could be slain again and Jesus tricked them and sneaked out when they were not looking but were inside the tomb? Perhaps the guards were bribed by Joseph of Arimathea to let Jesus go in peace if he revived.

It seems Jesus hung around outside the tomb long enough for Mary Magdalene came along and met him. Magdalene must have seen Jesus, if that was who it was, with a hoe or something when she mistook him for the gardener (John 20:15). When he had such a tool it is suspicious especially that early in the morning. He was either leaning on it or he had used it to get out of the tomb or both. The gardener would have been probably an employee of Joseph who owned the tomb and could have been in the habit of putting his implements inside the tomb. It is doubtful that the stone was heavy.

The Jews did not close tombs properly for the first three days in case the person would revive (page 89, The Turin Shroud is Genuine). They would have done this especially in the case of Jesus if they thought he could raise the dead and heal. The stone for the tomb of Jesus would have been in place well enough to keep animals out but Jesus could have got out. Or maybe he called out to a passer-by through an opening who knowing that nobody would ever know that he helped Jesus out of the tomb after moving the stone and gave him some clothes helped him. But if everybody was sure there was no hope for Jesus the tomb might have been sealed completely. But then why seal the tomb completely if the women were coming on Sunday morning? Hoare says that the bereaved occasionally employed people to watch the tomb for them in case the person would come round (page 89, The Turin Shroud is Genuine). But the Gospels imply that this was not done with Jesus when Matthew says Roman guards were needed and when he and the rest say the women worried about getting the stone moved. The watchers might have helped Jesus out of the tomb. Perhaps the Romans let them do the close watching while they just pranced about the area. By the way, the watchers would not have stayed inside the tomb to watch for the Jews thought that the tombs were religiously unclean. Ordinary Jews would have watched the tomb. The Romans would not have watched if they did for the watchers were near enough to the city to summon them at the first sign of trouble – it is possible that if the Jews got a guard that the guard was never intended to be very near the tomb all the time (a possibility that refutes the view that if Matthew is telling the truth about the guards then Jesus could not have been stolen and shows that Matthew failed to be convincing). The watchers would have probably been friends of Jesus and picked and paid by the filthy-rich Joseph of Arimathea and would have been happy to help Jesus to safety or steal his body and tell the Jews they fell asleep and some disciples stole Jesus.

Matthew does not say that anybody saw the stone being moved. He says that the angel appeared and moved the stone and make the soldiers faint but that is all. This can fit Mark who says the women came to find the tomb open. But Matthew is only guessing or interpreting and his interpretation is arbitrary and not binding on us. Don't think that the angel moving the rock means that Jesus could not have done it.

If there were Roman Guards at the tomb they might not have been looking when Jesus got out or were allowed to sleep when the watchers took over. The noise of the stone shifting would have been ignored for they were near the city and there was plenty of noise. Matthew tells just that the guards were careless even with regard to their own lives for the Jews could have had them accused of stealing the body when they were told that Jesus had vanished and a magic man appeared.

Christians say Jesus would not have been hanging around the tomb if he survived the normal way and was not a supernatural being who had no need to fear anybody. The gospels never say that he was hanging around but only that he was seen. He told Magdalene to let him go according to John so he was in a hurry to make himself scarce in case Roman guards would show up. He didn't give Mary a sensible reason to let him go. Jesus could not tell her if he survived non-

miraculously in case guards would force the truth out of her.

In John 20:17 Jesus tells Magdalene not to keep touching him for he hasn't ascended yet to God. This implies that Jesus was not glorified. He was a suffering ordinary looking and ordinary man then. He tells her to tell the apostles that he was ascending to God as if he had no intention of meeting up with them. The John gospel certainly accidentally infers that Jesus somehow managed to survive the crucifixion. It would be very odd if God raised Jesus as if he were just a normal man again to turn him into a magical being later. We read that Jesus appeared to the twelve later which could have been a vision imagined by the apostles. If they suspected Jesus was alive they could have been caught up in mass hallucination. It is not even said that they experienced all the same thing during their visions.

Jesus was not seen rising from the dead. He is even presented as disguising himself after the resurrection which is surely strange behaviour for a man who had supposedly been turned into a magical being by the resurrection. Instead of explaining to the witnesses of the resurrection that his body is a real body with magical properties he uses tricks like eating fish to supposedly make this point. That would only confuse them. He was too real.

His tacky burial wrappings might not have stuck to him like superglue especially if he was sweaty, dirty and bloody so he could have slipped out of them easily. He had plenty of time to get them off and he had to for they were an encumbrance. Jesus was buried in haste for the Sabbath was close so he might not have been well wrapped up in the bandages. He must have left the tomb naked or if the burial was just before nightfall on Friday because of the Sabbath which started on Friday night there could have been unused cloths in the tomb that he could have worn. There were plenty of clothes hanging out to dry for him to take. Jesus had to get help so nakedness would not have made him unable to leave the tomb.

There is no evidence that if Jesus survived the cross he would have bled to death in the tomb. The wounds need not have been that serious. The cloths would have functioned as bandages and the sticky ointments would have stopped the blood and been antiseptic. But even without them he could have been okay.

Jesus could have walked despite his wounded feet for he had to walk for his life. That would have made him switch off the pain.

There is no evidence that nails pierced Jesus' feet so he could have walked out of his tomb. The New Testament picks out bits of Psalms as prophecies of Jesus disregarding the context. It might have done exactly the same with Psalm 22 which speaks of a man having his hands and feet pierced. It never says the whole Psalm is about Jesus.

If Jesus got out himself and the guards found him they might have taken Jesus to Joseph of Arimathea who had taken responsibility for the tomb. And even more so when he represented the Sanhedrin and if they were behind the attempted execution for it was their concern. He could have bribed them to say nothing and Matthew says they were corrupt. If Pilate had wanted to save Jesus and made no secret of it though the Jews fanatically hated Jesus, the Romans could not have allowed Jesus to be free for it would look as if Pilate had deliberately bungled the execution for fear of the Jews. They might have taken him to Joseph on Pilate's instructions to be concealed and eventually taken out of Palestine.

If Jesus' feet left blood marks on the floor of the tomb these could be explained otherwise. The funeral party had trod on bloody ground or blood dripped off Jesus as he was being interred. And Jesus' friends were at the tomb before it could be checked out after Jesus vanished so they might have covered the marks in case they would point to Jesus having escaped.

The women may have believed that Jesus probably survived when they went to the tomb laden with ointments to anoint Jesus if it had already been done as John says. They intended to treat his injuries.

Jesus allegedly predicted he would rise again as a sign from God. The problem is that he never actually said how he had risen from the dead or exactly what he meant by this when he showed up after the crucifixion. We don't have his testimony that he did indeed rise magically. The apostles wouldn't have believed him if he said he had not risen. Thus efforts to make the resurrection proof for Jesus being this or that are futile.

The dreadful book, *The Resurrection Factor*, claims that if Jesus had come round after a faint and this led to the resurrection story then this would be far more miraculous than a resurrection (page 120). But at least it is naturally possible. Strange things do happen and more easily than miracles do. They are more probable than miracles therefore if something could be a world record it should be taken to be one rather than to be a miracle for you must only believe in miracles when they are the only explanation. This silly book would have us believe that people have never mistaken dreams and shadows for ghosts! As we have seen, Catholicism studies thousands of alleged miracles every year that comprise rapid healings but which are dismissed as non-miraculous though real for a true miracle of healing is not rapid but instant.

The evidence for a magical restoration of life is dubious.

Conclusion: Christians insist that Jesus could not have got out of the tomb in his condition. Yet they contradict this by saying he had healing powers. They should not be so confident then that he really came back from the dead. He could have put himself in a healing trance and was mistaken for dead. Then he lied or thought that he rose.