



STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

- Share a recent moment when you experienced wonder. How did it impact you?
- How does life's busyness or brokenness sometimes rob you of experiencing wonder?

Text: Matthew 28:1-10

We wonder at the resurrection because it is real:

- What stands out to you about how the angel invites the women to “come and see” the empty tomb? Which of the evidences for the reality of the resurrection was most impactful for you? (See back page for details)
- How does the resurrection challenge you to embrace wonder despite doubts or difficulties?

Wonder at the resurrection leads to worship of our Lord:

- The women fall at Jesus' feet and worship Him. How does their response inspire your own worship?
- In what ways can worship—both individually and in community—renew your sense of wonder?

Worship of our Resurrection Lord fuels our work in his mission:

- Jesus commissions the women to “go and tell.” How does experiencing the wonder of resurrection motivate us to share the good news?

YOUR MOVE:

- What is one practical way you can live out Jesus' mission this week in your community or relationships?
- This week, take a moment to reflect on a wonder-filled aspect of Jesus' resurrection and share it with someone—a friend, family member, or coworker.
- Remember, wonder is powerful in creating space for God to transform and heal our lives.

Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection

1. **The Empty Tomb**
 - a. **Historical Consensus:** Many historians, including skeptics, agree that the tomb was found empty.
 - b. **Unlikely Invention:** Women, whose testimony was culturally undervalued, were reported as the first witnesses to the empty tomb. This detail is unlikely to be fabricated.
 - c. **Both supporters and opponents** of Christianity in the early years acknowledged the empty tomb, though they disagreed on its cause.
2. **Post-Resurrection Appearances**
 - a. **Numerous reports:** individuals and groups, including skeptics like Paul and James, reported seeing Jesus alive.
 - b. **Diverse settings:** These appearances occurred in diverse settings and to different groups, reducing the likelihood of hallucinations or fabrications.
 - c. **Early sources** like 1 Corinthians 15 document these appearances, including over 500 witnesses at one time.
3. **The Transformation of the Disciples**
 - a. **Courage:** After Jesus' death, the disciples went from being fearful and disheartened to boldly proclaiming the resurrection, even at great personal cost.
 - b. **Cost:** Their willingness to suffer and die for this belief strongly suggests they genuinely believed it to be true.
4. **Martyrdom of the Apostles**
 - a. Many of Jesus' closest followers, including Peter and James, were tortured and killed for proclaiming the resurrection.
 - b. People may die for beliefs they sincerely hold but are unlikely to die for what they *know* to be a lie.
5. **Conversion of Paul**
 - a. Saul of Tarsus, a fierce persecutor of Christians, dramatically converted after encountering the risen Christ.
 - b. His transformation, subsequent missionary work, and martyrdom are difficult to explain apart from the resurrection.
6. **Rapid Growth of the Early Church**
 - a. **Hostile environment:** Christianity spread rapidly in a hostile environment, even among Jewish and Roman cultures that were resistant to such claims.
 - b. **Central message:** The resurrection was central to the early Christians' faith and boldness. This is seen throughout the NT epistles.
7. **Jewish Context of Resurrection Beliefs**
 - a. The Jewish understanding of resurrection involved a general resurrection at the end of time, not an individual rising in the middle of history.

b. The emergence of belief in Jesus' resurrection indicates it was not an expected or culturally convenient invention.

8. **Failure of Alternative Theories**

a. **Stolen Body Theory:** The disciples stealing the body fails to account for their transformation and willingness to suffer for their belief.

b. **Swoon Theory:** The idea that Jesus survived the crucifixion is inconsistent with Roman execution practices and the physical trauma He endured.

c. **Hallucination Theory:** Hallucinations are typically individual experiences, not shared by groups, and they don't explain the empty tomb.

9. **Reliability of the Gospel Accounts**

a. The Gospels, written within the lifetimes of eyewitnesses, show consistency and historical credibility.

b. While not purely historical documents, their inclusion of verifiable details supports their reliability.

10. **Evidence from Non-Christian Sources**

a. Ancient writers such as Tacitus, Josephus, and others reference Jesus, his crucifixion, and the belief in his resurrection, corroborating key elements of the Gospel accounts.