



Prayer of Thanksgiving: that with the apostles, we have assurance of the resurrection in Jesus Christ. **"13 Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, 14 knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence." (2Co 4:13-14 ESV)**

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

Open Hand Food Bank – Moncton - is in need of grocery plastic bags to give out food to those in need. If you are interested in donating your unused grocery bags, you can bring them to church and someone will collect them and bring them over. Those who want to bring food to give to the **Open Food Bank** may do so by bringing to church and giving it to **Michael M.** of the Moncton congregation.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE 2018

Times of worship services: **Moncton** – 10:30 AM every Sunday **except for June 17 services will be cancelled.**

In **Saint John**, worship services will be June 10 and 24 at 2:30 PM

Communion- on the second and fourth Sunday of the month.

Address: Moncton—70 King St. —Sage building;

Saint John—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

Please pray that God will put an end to the senseless violence happening every in our North America continent and other parts of the world.

Pray that we will see the good works that God has prepared for us in advance so that we can enthusiastically participate in the on-going work He is doing now on this earth in bringing people in relationship with him in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

Please pray, as per Jesus instructions, the disciples prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:9-10) as our world is suffering so much and in need of complete restoration by the King of kings, Jesus. As we are his royal priesthood, let us proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, as we are instructed in 1 Peter 2.

Pray for the world and for all people: we live in a world that does not know the way to peace. Important to pray as we are instructed by the apostle Paul — **"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior," (1Ti 2:1–3 ESV)**

Evidence of the Resurrection

(from <https://www.gci.org/disc/11-evidence>)

Christians, Jews, and atheists agree that Jesus was crucified and buried. The crucial belief for Christianity is that he was also resurrected — as evidence that he is the Son of God, the teacher of truth, the door and the way of salvation, the firstfruits of the resurrection. There is good evidence for his resurrection.



First, most historians agree that the early disciples *believed* that Jesus had risen from the dead. Although at Jesus' death they were dejected and fearful, they were soon dramatically different: They risked their lives repeatedly to preach about Jesus. Even Christians in the second and third centuries (as well as many today) put their lives on the line to preach about Jesus. People sometimes give their lives for erroneous ideas — but only if they think they are true. People do not put their lives on the line for things they don't believe. The disciples never wavered in their belief in Jesus' resurrection. None of them ever changed their story under the pain of persecution. Even agnostic historians can

admit that the disciples believed that Jesus had been resurrected.

Now we can consider how dozens of disciples could come to such a conviction. Perhaps the first possibility we could consider is that Jesus didn't really die. Perhaps it wasn't really him on the cross. Maybe Judas led the soldiers to the wrong man, or a substitution was somehow made at the last minute (as some Muslims believe). Is it possible that all the male and female disciples were in such a state of shock that they did not recognize the substitute on the cross? Was it then a coincidence that the tomb was empty, and the disciples thought he had reappeared? All this stretches the imagination so much that this is not seriously considered.

Reconstructing the argument

How did people respond to the claims that Jesus had been resurrected? The initial reaction for almost everyone (including the disciples themselves) was probably "That's preposterous." A more serious response is reported in [Matthew 28:11-15](#):

While [the disciples] were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, "You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

Some critics believe that this story was invented by Matthew, but the story is too complex for that. It shows several levels in the argument. It reports not just a distant memory, but a fact that could be verified when it was written: unbelieving Jews were claiming that the disciples stole Jesus' body while the guard slept. Matthew probably included this passage in his Gospel to respond to such a claim, and he probably considered it as the claim most worth refuting. The unbelieving Jews apparently agreed that Jesus' tomb was empty; they made no allegations that Jesus was buried elsewhere, or that the disciples went to the wrong tomb.

To reconstruct the argument:

1. First, the disciples say that the tomb is empty.
2. The unbelieving Jews then say, that's because the disciples stole the body.
3. The believers then say, We couldn't have, because there was a guard.
4. The unbelievers say (rather than denying the existence of a guard), the disciples stole the body while the guard was asleep.
5. Finally, Matthew explains that the guard was bribed to say that this happened while he slept.

The argument assumes that in Matthew's day, the unbelieving Jews talked of a guard at the tomb. It was the first of many attempts not just to deny the resurrection, but to explain the evidence in a different way.

Is it possible that Jesus did not die on the cross — he just went into a coma, and then later revived? Is this historically plausible? Would Roman soldiers botch a crucifixion and take down a body without noticing that the person was still alive? Would this severely injured person then be able to revive, unwrap his own grave clothes, roll away his own tombstone, and convince his disciples that he had good health? Then after 40 days he would never be seen again? No, this borders on the preposterous.

Perhaps the disciples helped Jesus revive. They rolled away the stone, unwrapped the clothes, bandaged the wounds, and told a story about getting their leader back alive out of the grave — a story that turned quickly into a tall tale about resurrection and miraculous appearances, a story that the disciples never tried to set straight. Not only is this historically implausible, it turns the disciples into frauds and deceivers — and yet, as we mentioned above, people do not give their lives for something they know is false. This does not provide a believable explanation for the rise of Christianity, rooted in the early first century in the conviction that Jesus had risen from the dead — and this faith spread first in Jerusalem, where the facts could be investigated most easily!

It is not historically likely that Jesus could have survived the crucifixion. Could the disciples have made up the resurrection? Did they steal the body, hide it somewhere, invent the story of a guard, and then preach a resurrection with conviction? This does not make sense. These fishermen did not make up the biggest lie in history, going against all the facts of life and death as they knew it, going against all religious beliefs of the day, going against Jewish and Roman

authorities, risking their lives to tell the story they made up, without any of them ever betraying the conspiracy. No, these people were not sophisticated liars. Their words and deeds do not suggest any such deception. Their behavior matched their message.

We might also observe that the evidence of the empty tomb is indirect. (If it wasn't empty, the Jewish leaders could have stopped the whole problem by producing the body.) Yet according to the Gospel stories, the empty tomb did not convince the disciples. They were convinced only when Jesus appeared, and it is on the basis of the *appearances* that they preached the resurrection. If they had gone to the trouble of stealing the body, surely they would have used the empty tomb as part of their evidence. But they didn't; this tells us that they had what they thought was much better evidence: eyewitnesses of a living Jesus.

As another indirect evidence of the authenticity of their faith, we can observe that the Gospels report that women were the first eyewitnesses of the empty tomb and the risen Christ — and the testimony of women was not accepted in that culture. If the disciples were trying to make up a story, they would have invented witnesses who had more credibility. It is not likely that these fishermen would have been so subtle in creating evidence, and yet be so bold in preaching.

What about the fact that the Gospel stories vary somewhat? If this had been an enormous conspiracy, wouldn't they ensure that the story was told in exactly the same way by everyone? The most believable explanation again is that the disciples genuinely believed Jesus to be resurrected, and each one told it the way he or she remembered it. Now let's consider another possibility: grave robbers (hoping for riches in the rich man's tomb) got the guards to drink so much wine that they fell asleep; then the robbers took the body and dumped it in the desert. The guards, wanting to cover up their failure and knowing the fears of the religious leaders, made up the story of the angels and the resurrection, and were bribed to blame the disciples. Then the disciples had hallucinations of a risen Jesus. However, did all the disciples have the same hallucination, several times, against their expectations, against their religious beliefs? Did the hallucination eat and drink, speak, and then suddenly cease 40 days later? This is not the way hallucinations work. The evidence does not match this hypothesis, either.

Let's consider one more idea, that the idea of resurrection was just a religious allegory (sometimes described as a "myth," meaning religious ideas expressed in allegorical stories), and Christianity made a big mistake in taking it literally for almost 2,000 years. There are several problems with this idea. First, the Gospels are not written in a mythological style. The resurrection was understood in a literal way even in the first century, when eyewitnesses of Jesus were still available to either support or refute the story. There was no time for legends to develop. The biblical writers give us history: This is what I saw. This is what it meant. They denounce the idea of myth.

The disciples were not deceived, nor were they deceivers. They just tell us what they saw, and it is clear that they believed that Jesus died and was buried and was resurrected. They believed this because they saw it with their own eyes.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ([1 John 1:1-3](#))

The disciples believed that Jesus rose from the dead. The most plausible explanation is that Jesus actually rose from the dead. All other theories are far-fetched and historically unlikely. When we also take into consideration the need for God to intervene in humanity to save us, and the Old Testament predictions of a suffering servant who would give his life for his people, the explanation that makes the most sense is that the disciples believed that Jesus was resurrected because Jesus appeared to them and told them he was resurrected. That is why they had such a transformation in their beliefs, and why they preached with such conviction. As Luke puts it, by looking at the evidence we "may know the certainty of the things we have been taught" ([Luke 1:4](#)).

Michael Morrison

For further reading:

William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989).

N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Christian Origins and the Question of God, volume 3. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003).

7.1 What are the Holy Scriptures? (Excerpt from *We Believe – GCI - You are encourage to read and study it all. I believe you will find it a great blessing.* <https://resources.gci.org/we-believe>)

By God's grace, the Holy Scriptures are sanctified to serve as God's inspired Word and faithful witness to Jesus Christ and the gospel. They are the fully reliable record of God's revelation to humanity, culminating in his self-revelation in the incarnate Son. The Bible is therefore foundational to the Church and is viewed as infallible in all matters of faith and practice.

7.2 What is in the Holy Scriptures?

The Bible is made up of 66 books-39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament. The Old Testament contains the record of God's creation of all things, the revelation of God's design and provision for humanity, humankind's original disobedience, God's covenant with Abraham, God's calling of Israel to be his people, God's law, God's wisdom, God's saving deeds, and the teaching of God's prophets who present God's promises. The Old Testament points to Jesus, revealing God's intention to redeem and reconcile the world through Christ in fulfillment of God's promises. The New Testament contains the record of Jesus' birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension, the Church's early ministry, the teaching of the apostles, and the revelation of Christ's return and the fullness of his eternal kingdom. The New Testament shows us God's ultimate purposes and their consummation. (2 Pet. 1:20; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 2:13; Gal. 1:12)

7.3 How are the Old Testament and New Testament related?

The Old Testament shows us God's covenant promises revealed first to Abraham, then to Israel. The New Testament reveals to the renewed people of God (the Church), the ultimate fulfillment of those covenant promises. The Old Testament prepared the people of God to recognize and receive the fulfillment of God's Word in Jesus Christ. It also shows how the people of God were to live by faith in the promises of God as Israel, a particular chosen people. The New Testament shows the church how to live by faith after the fulfillment of those promises by Jesus Christ and in hope of their ultimate consummation upon Christ's bodily return. (Heb. 1:1-2; Gal. 3:24-25).

7.4 What does it mean that the Holy Scriptures are "inspired"?

It means that the Bible is "God-breathed." The Holy Scriptures were given by the Holy Spirit through prophets and apostles and were preserved by the Spirit as the revelation of God and his acts in human history. They are not simply a collection of human opinion. Jesus gave his apostles authority to speak and teach for him, and a unique gifting from the Spirit to do so (Luke 9:2; Mark 3:14; Mark 16:20; Luke 22:35; Acts 16:10; Rom. 1:1; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; 1 Thess. 4:2)

7.5 What does it mean that the Holy Scriptures are "the written word of God"?

Because the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is rightly called the written word of God. Though God is revealed to us in his mighty works (including the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the living Word of God), God's works and will are made known to us through the inspired words of Scripture, the written word. The written word of God is to be understood and interpreted as the Word that belongs to Jesus Christ, who personally appointed authoritative representatives to preach and preserve in writing an authorized witness to him, empowered by the Holy Spirit. (1 Thess. 2:13)

7.10 How do Christians relate to the Holy Scriptures?

We expect God to use them uniquely to teach, rebuke, correct and train us to live in communion with God. The written word of God is God's gift to grow in us faith, hope and love for God, and to teach us how to live out that relationship in all we think, do and say. Therefore, on a regular basis, even daily, we seek to hear, read, study, learn and inwardly digest the Bible. By becoming intimately familiar with the whole of Scripture, seeing its parts in terms of the whole and its living Center, Jesus Christ, we will understand that the biblical story is our story as well. This encourages us to live in ways that conform to that story rather than to worldly influences. (Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 10:17; Col. 3:16; Luke 4:4)

GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—www.gci.org, www.worshipim.ca,

www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton; <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKazyWhmKmdZy69vJcFfPg>. For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—evatour47@outlook.com