

Who Moved The Stone?

That [Jesus](#) existed, there is no doubt. There is a great deal of written historical evidence, both from Christian and non-Christian writers, supporting the fact that Jesus was a genuine historical figure, living at the beginning of the first century AD. When applying the standard criteria of historical investigation, virtually all New Testament and Near East historians assert the historicity of Jesus as certain.

[Dr Michael Grant](#) (1914-2004) wrote "Jesus: An Historian's View of the Gospels," published in 1977. In it, he applied the standard disciplines of the historian's profession and reached the conclusion that the four Gospels are sufficiently reliable to deserve the utmost respect. Subsequent discussions about the historical Jesus widely reference his work.

"If conventional standards of historical textual criticism are applied to the New Testament, we can no more reject Jesus' existence than we can reject the existence of a mass of pagan personages whose reality as historical figures is never questioned." – Michael Grant, Historian

Nearly all modern scholars are also in agreement about two key events in Jesus' life, which they consider to be accurate and certain – that of his baptism and of his crucifixion.

"There is a consensus of sorts on the basic outline of Jesus' life" in that most scholars agree that Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, and over a period of one to three years debated Jewish authorities on the subject of God, gathered followers, and was crucified by Roman prefect Pontius Pilate who officiated 26–36 AD." – [Amy Jill Levine](#)

The [criterion of embarrassment](#) is used as the metric for establishing events such as Jesus' baptism and crucifixion.

Both events are considered to be accounts which would cause a high degree of embarrassment to the author and would therefore have no reason to be invented. Christians simply would not have invented the painful death of their leader, nor the baptism of Jesus by John, as it is a story in which John baptised for the remission of sins and Jesus was viewed as without sin. The conclusion then is that these events are historically accurate.

The Resurrection of Jesus – Who Was He Really?

The debate therefore is not whether Jesus existed, but whether he was who he said he was. He claimed to be the son of God (John 5:25, John 10:36, John 1:4, John 17:1). He claimed to be the promised deliverer of the Old Testament (John 11:25; Luke 4:17-21, John 18:37, Luke 24:27). Not only that, he claimed that he would be betrayed, put to death and after three days would be resurrected to life again.

“The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead.” – Mark 9:31, NLT

It is easy to discount these claims as the words of a highly charismatic Jewish prophet, who met a cruel death at the hands of Roman power.

“That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be, since both [Josephus](#) and [Tacitus](#) ... agree with the Christian accounts on at least that basic fact.” – John Dominic Crossan

What is more difficult to explain is how Jesus could have orchestrated his own death in such a way so as to corroborate with prophecy, or, more to the point, why he would even want to.

What is more confusing and unexplainable is the effect that Jesus' death had on his followers. If, as history supposes, Jesus was a common man who lived a somewhat extraordinary life, it is hard to explain the complete explosion of the Christian faith in the years that followed. It was, after all, founded on the basis of "a risen Christ". If this was a fabrication, the rulers only had to produce the body to prove the assertion to be false. If the disciples themselves had stolen the body, it seems psychologically improbable that their story, or their conviction, would be believable or maintainable, they themselves knowing it to be false.

We have the account of Thomas, the doubter, Peter, the denier, a small group of fishermen, a gathering of a few women – simple and ordinary people without status or connections who, within a relatively short passage of time (only some six or seven weeks), were completely transformed by a profound conviction.

"The actual position is peculiar and, I believe, quite unique in history. It is that the whole party, including the nine men who had fled at the arrest, and certain independent persons who have not previously come into the story, were convinced that something had occurred which changed their entire outlook. It turned their dejection into triumph and their sorrow into an intense joy." – Frank Morrison

Despite perhaps wanting to believe otherwise, the story of the arrest, death and resurrection of Jesus carries a strange ring of authenticity. Nothing can account for the strangeness of the narrative in the Gospels. The moved stone, the empty tomb, the baffled religious leaders, the transformed disciples – let's be honest – *"by the ordinary standards of human reasoning, the mystery attached to the person of Christ ought to have terminated with his death and burial"* (Frank Morrison).

It isn't our intention in this post to prove conclusively the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is simply to bring the reader's attention to a subject, which on first glance, is assumed by many to be fabrication, but on closer inspection seems to arrive at no other explanation than that which is claimed – that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead, as asserted in the Bible!

Who Moved The Stone?

This article is an extremely condensed summary of the excellent book by Frank Morrison, entitled "Who Moved The Stone?" For anyone with a genuine interest in examining the historical accuracy of the Bible's claims regarding the resurrection of Jesus, this book is highly recommended.

Frank himself confesses that he set out to write quite a different book. He first began to study the life of Christ as a young man and did so with a very definite feeling that the history of Jesus rested on very insecure foundations. He wasn't wrong in his concerns – there was an entire school of thought throughout the 'nineties that denied even the historical existence of Jesus. Frank Morrison didn't find himself in this group at all – he says that *"for the person of Jesus Christ, I had a deep and almost reverent regard."* but he wanted to write an article, more for his own peace of mind than publication, about the supremely important and critical phase in the life of Christ – his last seven days. Ten years later, the opportunity fully arrived to study the subject as he had first wanted, and *"slowly but very definitely the conviction grew that the drama of those unforgettable weeks of human history was stranger and deeper than it seemed."*

The Christian faith hinges completely on this key doctrine of the literal resurrection of Jesus. Without the veracity of this event, Christianity falters. [The Gospel](#) isn't the good news of anything and we would have to concede that the world had been duped by one of the great delusions in history.

Of course, this conundrum is for every person to consider and decide for themselves. However, there are certain questions and discrepancies that cannot be easily explained away. We believe that an honest examination of all the facts leads to an irresistible logic of their meaning.

*“Now, let me ask you something profound yet troubling. If you became believers because you trusted the proclamation that Christ is alive, risen from the dead, how can you let people say that there is no such thing as the resurrection. If there’s no resurrection, there’s no living Christ. And face it – if there’s no resurrection for Christ, everything we’ve told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you’ve staked your life on is smoke and mirrors. Not only that, but we would be guilty of telling a string of bare-faced lies about God, all these affidavits we passed on to you verifying that God raised up Christ – sheer fabrications if there’s no resurrection. If corpses can’t be raised, then Christ wasn’t, because he was indeed dead. And if Christ weren’t raised, then all you’re doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever...but the truth is, Christ **has** been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries.” 1 Corinthians 12-20, MSG*

To purchase “Who Moved The Stone” by Frank Morrison, [Click Here](#)

The Gospel Of Good News

When we think of the gospel, we can tend to think of it in only 'New Testament' terms. We might be of the impression that the gospel was something that came about around the time of Jesus and subsequently spread throughout the world by his followers. While this is somewhat true, upon more extensive reading we learn that the message of good news is much older than we thought. Yes, it concerns Jesus but it was preached long before his actual birth. In reality, it's a message as old as time itself and its inception stretches right back to the garden of Eden. And it's a message of good news and hope for all people!

A Little Background On The Word "Gospel"

"Good news" is the English translation of the Koine Greek word 'euangélion' (εὐαγγέλιον) (εὖ eû "good" + ἄγγελος ángelos "messenger"). In Old English, it was translated as 'gōdspel' (gōd "good" + spel "news"). The Old English term was retained as 'gospel' in Middle English Bible translations and has subsequently been carried forward into Modern English translations.

Incidentally, our modern word, evangelise or evangelist comes from the original Greek and carries the same meaning – one who preaches or tells good news, a 'messenger of good'. The writers of the gospels are sometimes known as the Four Evangelists, for this reason.

The message of 'good news' is taught throughout the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and it's certainly no coincidence that these books are collectively known as The Gospels.

But What Is The Good News?

The Gospel is described as “the good news of the Kingdom of God and the things which concern Jesus Christ”. Jesus himself preached about the coming kingdom of God, together with John the Baptist. Later, men like Paul the Apostle and Peter continued the message of good news

“Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” – Mark 1:14, KJV

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ . . . And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom . . .” – Matthew 4:17, 23, NIV, KJV

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptised.” – Acts 8:12, HCSB

“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!” – Acts 28:30-31, NIV

In The Beginning...

[God's purpose](#), from the beginning was populate earth with people He could call His family, who were like him in every way. God created humans with this in mind and established the principle of **free choice**. He wanted us to **choose** Him, to **want** to be like Him. This kind of living, that reflects a desire to honour God and manifest His character to the world is what God calls the beginning of the kingdom of His son ([Colossians 1:13](#)).

Unfortunately, when given the choice, humanity chose wrong. We acted in a way completely foreign to God's character. Motivated by pride and selfishness and driven by impatience, we chose to "make ourselves like God" on our terms, not His. This choice, the first act of sin in the world, brought about its awful consequence – mortality, and being driven from God's presence in shame and disappointment. This is the story of Adam and Eve and their banishment from the garden of Eden.

Jesus Is The Good News

Yet God didn't give up. His desire to be at one with us, to complete His purpose with humanity, was so intrinsic that He immediately put in place a plan to bridge that ravine, to heal the breach between Himself and His creation. He did not allow His purpose to be compromised by our choice. This extraordinary plan was revealed in [His son, Jesus](#).

"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." – 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, BSB

The saving acts of God, due to the work of Jesus on the cross and Jesus' resurrection from the dead, bring reconciliation ("atonement") between people and God and it is a message of hope for the whole world (Luke 14:15-24). Through Jesus, we have forgiveness of sins and the blessing of God's grace.

The Message Isn't New

It would be easy to assume that the gospel was introduced by Jesus during his earthly ministry. Yet, this message isn't new

at all – it's much older than that and, in fact, Revelation 14:6 calls it 'the eternal gospel', "proclaimed to all those who dwell on earth."

In Galatians 3:8, we read the following: "Scripture foresaw that God would justify the [Gentiles](#) by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." Here, Paul is referencing a time in Abraham's life, [shortly after he left Ur](#), when God blessed him and told him the purpose He had with him.

"I will bless those who bless you, but I will put a curse on anyone who puts a curse on you. Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you." – Genesis 12:3, CEV

This blessing is further clarified by the words of Peter the Apostle in Act 3:28, where he was addressing the Jews, Abraham's descendants. He tells them, "You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in your descendants shall **all the families of the earth be blessed**. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to **bless you**, in **turning away every one of you from his iniquities**." (Act 3:25-26)

Jesus Christ himself revealed that the Kingdom of God has been prepared for us for far longer than we can imagine.

"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." – Matthew 25:34, ESV

God's plan of blessing has been in place since the beginning. It was made known to Abraham and he was promised a descendant who would fulfill God's promise of blessing for the world, first to the Jewish people and then, to all peoples of the world. In this way, Abraham was able to look forward in

faithful anticipation of the future when the saviour would be born, to fulfill the promise of blessing made to him. Jesus confirms this, when speaking to the Jews (who doubted he was the one who had been promised).

“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” – John 8:56, NIV

Our Purpose Is God’s Purpose

Our purpose and the reason for our creation is to be part of God’s family. The good news is that through Jesus, we can be! We can become part of God’s family and part of His kingdom community right now, saved through the work of Jesus. Not only that, we can look forward to a future that is full of hope and blessing, trusting in God’s promise that has been established from the beginning of the world.

God has great plans for you, if you choose to accept them. The gospel message is one of hope and blessing and **everyone** is invited to take part.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – Jeremiah 29:11, NIV