



Why the scars?

One detail in the Easter story has always intrigued me: Why did Jesus keep the scars from His crucifixion? Presumably He could have had any resurrected body He wanted, and yet He chose one identifiable mainly by scars that could be seen and touched. Why?

I believe the story of Easter would be incomplete without those scars on the hands, the feet, and the side of Jesus. When human beings fantasize, we dream of straight pearly teeth, wrinkle-free skin, and attractive ideal shapes. We dream of an unnatural state: the perfect body. But for Jesus, being confined in a skeleton and human skin was the unnatural state. The scars are, to Him, an emblem of life on our planet, a permanent reminder of those days of confinement and suffering.

I take hope in Jesus' scars. From the perspective of Heaven, they represent the most horrible event that has ever happened in the history of the universe. Despite that event, though, Easter turned into a joyful memory.

Because of Easter, I can hope that the tears we shed, the blows we receive, the emotional pain, the heartache over lost friends and loved ones, all these will become memories instead of hurts, like Jesus' scars.

Scars never completely go away, but neither do they hurt any longer. We will have re-created bodies, a re-created Heaven and Earth. We will have a new start, an Easter start.

—Phillip Yancey, *"The Jesus I Never Knew"*

Easter, the celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, is the event that separates the Christian faith from all other religion and gives to it its power.



Put yourself in the disciples' place. ...

Jesus' disciples had seen Him suffer and die. They were confused and heartbroken. What about His promises of eternal life? What about His work—healing the sick, comforting the brokenhearted, loving the loveless? How could they go on if their Master was dead?

But imagine their joy when they found that, just as He had promised, after three days He had risen from the grave. He was alive, and soon He was walking with them, preparing food for them, talking with them, urging them to share His message of love. He had not failed them, and He does not fail us today.

—Chloe West

Jesus has left the cross!

Let's not only remember Jesus' death on the cross. Let's not always be seeing a Christ on the cross and the sense of suffering and death and fear that image sometimes generates. We don't have a Jesus on the cross; He's *left* the cross! We have an empty cross. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55 KJV). We don't have a Christ in the grave. We have a live Jesus living in our hearts.

He rose in victory, joy, liberty, and freedom, never to die again, so that He could redeem us as well and prevent our having to go through the agony of death of spirit. What a day of rejoicing that must have been when He rose and realized it was all over. He had won the victory; the world was saved!

—David Brandt Berg

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News Reprint

HISTORIANS SAY RESURRECTION A REALITY

By UWE SIEMON-NETTO,
UPI Religion correspondent,
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(UPI) "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and our faith is also empty," the apostle Paul wrote only a few years after the Crucifixion (1 Corinthians 15:14).

The Resurrection narrative in all four gospels is the one story on which all Christian hope is fixed. Is it a ruse? Was it the figment of the scared disciples' hysterical imagination that Jesus appeared to them after His execution?

The late Pinchas Lapide, a Jewish New Testament scholar, considers this suggestion of 19th- and early 20th-century liberal theologians preposterous: "This band of disciples was beaten and weary. Yet almost overnight it transformed itself into a victorious faith movement," he wrote.

"If this had occurred simply on the basis of auto-suggestion and self-deceit, it would have been a much greater miracle than the Resurrection itself."

In a dramatic turnaround from post-Enlightenment skepticism, historians are now inclined to give much more credence to the New Testament accounts of the Resurrection than their predecessors.

"There is so much evidence pointing to its veracity," wrote professor Juergen Spiess of Marburg University in *IDEA*, a German Protestant news service.

There have always been doubters claiming that Jesus never died on the cross. Mohammed denied it. But the Biblical passion stories are backed up by at least one irreproachable secular source:

The Roman historian Tacitus (55-120 A.D.) wrote that the "founder

of this sect (the Christians) was executed during the reign of (emperor) Tiberius by the Governor Pontius Pilate" (Tacitus, *Annals* XV).

"This corroborates Scripture," Spiess explained.

Helga Botermann, a professor at Goettingen University, has shown that in researching the Good Friday and Easter events, the evangelist Luke followed the same methodology used by modern historians. Botermann went on to state, "Thus there is no justifiable reason to approach his rendering of history with prejudicial skepticism. ... Luke's sources were also his critics. This makes it very unlikely that he embellished his story willfully with his own prejudices or intentions."

Spiess sees Christ's empty grave as a key piece of evidence for the veracity of the Resurrection story. Here he agrees with William Lane Craig, arguably one of America's finest Christian apologists. In an article published in *Truth Journal*, Lane pointed out that even "the earliest Jewish polemic presupposed the empty tomb." It simply interpreted this phenomenon differently.

"In Matthew 28, we find the Christian attempt to refute (this)," Craig wrote. "That polemic asserted that the disciples stole away the body. The Christians responded ... by reciting the story of a guard at the tomb, and the polemic in turn charged that the guard fell asleep." The long and the short of this dispute is, though, that both sides provided evidence for the empty tomb, Craig said.

Another argument against the Resurrection narrative survived in multiple variations for almost 2,000 years and was eagerly picked up by rationalist German scholars of the late 18th and 19th centuries. Christ,

they averred, did not actually die on the cross, but was taken down and placed alive in the tomb. He escaped to convince His disciples that He had risen from the dead.

Even Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, the father of modern theology, embraced this theory no serious scholar believes anymore. Craig fields two arguments against it:

"1. It would have been virtually impossible medically for Jesus to have survived the rigors of His torture and crucifixion, much less not to have died of exposure in the tomb.

"2. A half-dead Jesus desperately in need of medical attention would not have elicited in His disciples worship of Him as the exalted risen Lord and conqueror of death."

Apart from that, the risen Christ had too many eyewitnesses for the Resurrection story to have been invented. Many saw Him between His Resurrection and His Ascension. All four gospels, the book of Acts and Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians relate their stories. "Can one invent this?" asked Spiess, the Marburg historian.

Half a century ago, liberal theology's attacks on the veracity of the Resurrection story began to die down. This occurred at Marburg University where theologian Ernst Kaesemann took issue with the historical skepticism against Jesus, a skepticism ardently promoted by his own teacher, Rudolf Bultmann.

Kaesemann's new approach was much later echoed by the late New Testament scholar Norman Perrin of the University of Chicago: "The more we study the tradition with regards to the appearances, the firmer the rock begins to appear upon which they are based."

"If one wants to have assurance, one must read the New Testament," Marburg University's Juergen Spiess wrote.

Commented William Lane Craig: "The resurrection of Jesus is the best explanation for the origin of the Christian faith."