

just the evidence



SETTING: Courtroom

PROPS: Gavel, robe, English judge wig, papers, can of nails

CHARACTERS: Judge, Prosecutor, Defendant, Jury, Bailiff

BAILIFF: (Motioning to rise) All rise, the judge is about to enter the court.

JUDGE: (Entering and motioning down) Be seated. (Looking at papers) We will take up where we left off in the hearing to determine if there is enough evidence to substantiate whether Jesus of Nazareth actually rose from the dead. Yesterday we heard the prosecutor build a case that the disciples conspired to hijack the body, made up a fake resurrection story and spread it over the world. Now, is the defense prepared to proceed?

DEFENSE: I am, your honor, but before I do, I would like permission to sum up my case from yesterday, just to be sure the jury has all the notes.

PROSECUTOR: Objection, your Honor!

JUDGE: Overruled. Proceed.

DEFENSE: (Sticking tongue out at Prosecutor) Yesterday we called the Guards at the tomb, who confessed to falling asleep and running away. I pointed out the penalty for such behavior is death. Even if one soldier falls asleep, all ten in his cohort are to be executed. My first evidence was the soldiers would not be quick to admit they fell asleep or losing the body knowing the penalty.

PROSECUTOR: Objection, your Honor. That doesn't prove resurrection. Only that the soldiers were bribed or threatened. Had some ulterior motive for lying.

JUDGE: Sustained. Proceed.

(Prosecutor sticks tongue at Defense)

DEFENSE: We then went on to show that the grave clothes at the tomb were folded. Folded! No human waking from the swoon of death and finding himself inside a tomb would have the presence of mind to fold his grave clothes before clawing his way out of there.

PROSECUTOR: Objection! Conjecture!

JUDGE: I'll let the jury decide that one on its own merits. Proceed!

DEFENSE: We then went on to question first eye-witnesses. The three women.

PROSECUTOR: Objection! It takes two witnesses—male witnesses—to verify a fact. In our system it is a time-honored tradition that a woman's testimony is only worth half of a man's. Therefore, since the defense had only three women—or one and a half men—that testimony must be stricken from the record.

JUDGE: That's a stupid law, but we aren't here to judge laws today—only the merits of your case for Christ's resurrection. Sustained! What else do you have?

(Prosecutor sticks tongue at Defense)

DEFENSE: Actually, I have the testimony of two men on the road to Emmaus that very night and eleven disciples who saw Jesus repeatedly and ate with him!

JURY: (Buzzing) Ate with him!

DEFENSE: Bread. Wine. Broiled fish.

PROSECUTOR: Objection. Jury tampering!

DEFENSE: Oh, pul-eeeeeeze. How did you come up with that one?

PROSECUTOR: I happen to know a number of the jury members are on diets, and any talk of food could sway the jury.

JUDGE: Overruled. Proceed.

(Defense sticks tongue at Prosecutor)

DEFENSE: Eleven disciples saw him. The defense would next like to call over three hundred people in Jerusalem.

JURY: (Buzzing) Three hundred?

PROSECUTOR: Objection! I was never presented with a list of the so-called 300 witnesses and did not have a chance to question them prior to the hearing, therefore their dubious testimony is inadmissible.

DEFENSE: You are free to question them all you wish. They will verify my case. They all saw Jesus after his death and will testify to that. Every last one of them!

JUDGE: Overruled! Proceed to closing

arguments. I have a chariot waiting for me outside and tickets to the Colosseum. What else you got?

(Prosecutor sticks tongue at Defense)

DEFENSE: Within 50 days of Easter, thousands of residents of Jerusalem converted to Christianity and were baptized—based on the convincing testimony of those who had seen Jesus die and rise.

PROSECUTOR: Objection! Could have been mass hypnosis.

JUDGE: What else?

DEFENSE: Within a few years, the witness of those who met the risen Christ was enough to change hearts and minds of thousands across the Roman world.

PROSECUTOR: Objection! Mass hysteria.

JUDGE: What else?

DEFENSE: Within 300 years, millions of followers and the Roman government that had once persecuted Christ's followers made Christianity the state religion.

PROSECUTOR: Objection! Mass idiots.

JUDGE: What else?

DEFENSE: Perhaps the greatest evidence of the resurrection is this: If the original disciples had, indeed, conspired to hijack the body, made up a fake resurrection story and spread it over the world, one would think that at least one of them would have denied Christ rather than face death as a martyr. They knew the resurrection was true. You couldn't tell them otherwise. They saw it with their own eyes. They touched Jesus with their own hands. And they went to their deaths—down to the last disciple—proclaiming Christ's resurrection. No one dies for a lie. One might die for a friend or a cause if one knows the cause to be true, but no one dies for a lie...no one.

JUDGE: (Pounding gavel) The jury will recess and come back with the verdict tomorrow. May I remind you, this is a serious case. How you answer the evidence will have major consequences on both sides of eternity. So, did Jesus rise from the dead? Is this testimony true? You must decide for yourself. (Pounding gavel) Court adjourned!