

Who in the ancient world would ever try to \*prove\* the resurrection by making up a story that women, in particular, discovered Jesus' empty tomb? Weren't women seen as complete unreliable witnesses? Their testimony never even accepted in a court of law? If someone want to prove that Jesus had been raised — and that therefore the tomb was empty — they would have invented \*men\* at the tomb (reliable witnesses) rather than \*women\* (untrustworthy). Right?

I've been asked this question several times since my recent post on Jesus' women followers not doubting the resurrection. The reason anyone ever has this question is because it is a favorite claim of Christian apologists wanting to prove that Jesus really was raised from the dead. Proof? The tomb really was empty. How do we know? We have witnesses. How do we know we can trust the reports of these witnesses? No one would have made them up: the witnesses in the stories are always \* and no one would invent "unreliable" witnesses to back up "proof-claims."

When I was an evangelical Christian, I too used that argument (with some vehemence, I might add). But even when I had become an agnostic I thought it was probably a historical tradition, that women must have found an empty tomb: it's found in all four Gospels, for example, and the fact that the stories indicate precisely it was \*women\* who found the tomb did not seem like something Christians would want to make up. And so, as an agnostic, I had to come up with alternative explanations for why the tomb was empty.

But when I actually got down to \*think\* about it (very few people reflect much on arguments they have heard so often), I ended up changing my mind. Completely. And for reasons I continue to think are compelling. It is dead easy to realize why the story started to circulate in early Christian circles. I first realized this ...

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