

# Who Moved the Stone? Study Guide

## Who Moved the Stone? by Albert Henry Ross

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# Plot Summary

"Who Moved the Stone" by Frank Morison is an ultimate example of an individual's dedication to delving in to a subject and discovering its truth, or as much of its truth as possible. Morison not only provided the information he uncovered he explained throughout the work the meticulous process he undertook in his research. He also explained his logic and reasoning for the conclusions he formulated. Of course, the subject matter in this case is quite a complex one and made more complicated by the years that have passed since the actual events occurred. The subtitle of Morison's book is "A Skeptic Looks at the Death and Resurrection of Christ," which indicates that Morison had a personal impetus in writing this book. He was apparently personally intrigued by the mysteries surrounding the events of the four days between Holy Thursday and Easter Sunday and compelled to try to determine exactly what took place.

Morison takes a long look into why there was a three-hour lapse between the time Judas slipped away and the time he returned, leading a troop of Jewish guards to Jesus. Morison readily admits that with the passage of some 2,000 years that there was only a limited number of resources which he could use in his research. Of course, he relied heavily upon the Four Gospels as well as the Gospel of Peter and a religious relic from antiquity called the Emmaus document and some other literary fragments that had survived the ages. From these sources, he speculated that Caiaphas and the other priests were not prepared for the arrest. They wanted to take advantage of the situation and scrambled to make some important decisions. Caiaphas rushed to Pilate to make sure he would be prepared to take the case of Jesus the next morning. Pilate was not eager to take on the punishment phase of the trial but was forced into a corner by the high priests.

After the arrest of Jesus, some of the disciples fled fearing they would be arrested while Peter and John apparently slipped into town behind the guards and their prisoner. Jesus was interrogated by the Sandrehen Council in the middle of the night and was treated unfairly by the questioners, the chief among them being Caiaphas. Morison concluded that Jesus was convicted by the Council by virtue of his own words.

The next morning, Jesus was taken to the Roman Court where the typically harsh and merciless Pilate seemed to have had a change of disposition. Morison speculated that Pilate's wife, Claudia, was sympathetic to Jesus and had a dream about him that made her fearful for her husband to be involved in his crucifixion. She apparently influenced him which made him tentative and resistant in taking the case. He tried to pass it off to Herod and attempted to exchange Jesus' fate with that of a serial murderer named Barabbas but to no avail. The case was his and he was tied to Jesus' destiny for all time.

After Jesus was sentenced to death and crucified, he was buried in a tomb arranged by Joseph of Arimathea. The story of Jesus seemed to be over however when Mary Magdalene and other women in Jesus' close circle came to pay a final homage to him at his tomb on Sunday, they discovered that the tomb was empty. The large stone had



been moved from the front of the cave that was serving as his tomb. They saw a man inside the tomb who was holding what appeared to be Jesus' burial garments.

Morison, as said before, connects a lot of dots and speculates about what happened and why. He provides some scenarios as to who that man was and how that large stone was moved. However, the events of those four days will be open to speculation forever and will largely remain a mystery since there is no definitive way to prove what really happened.



# Chapter 1: The Book that Refused to Be Written

## Chapter 1: The Book that Refused to Be Written Summary and Analysis

As a young man, Frank Morison began to study the life of Christ. He was compelled to do so because he felt Jesus' story rested on a very fragile foundation. Among intellectual circles in the 1990s, there was a pervasive notion that the story of his life was not reliable. What struck Morison was the physical science of the debate and science was diametrically opposed to anything purported to be a miracle. But Morison had a reverence for Jesus Christ, the man, who seemed to be a "legendary figure of purity and noble manhood" (p. 10). A harsh word about Jesus would immediately bring Morison to his defense despite any doubts he may have had about his story.

Morison began to look at the last seven days of Christ's life as the most important and critical phase of his life. When he initially began to write that book it was focused on that notion. Later, he came to understand that the days following the Crucifixion were just as compelling. He originally named the book, "Jesus, the Last Phase." He focused on the last seven days for three reasons: 1) this period was free of any claims of miracles; 2) the Gospels all devoted much attention to this phase and all told basically the same story; and 3) the trial and execution was a verifiable historical event.

Morison wanted to find out why Jesus died at the hands of the Romans, how he viewed his ordeal and how he behaved during it. That was the story Morison intended to tell. Ten years later, based on the his study of the life of Christ, he knew he had to tell quite a different story.



# Chapter 2: The Real Case Against the Prisoner

## Chapter 2: The Real Case Against the Prisoner Summary and Analysis

Morison tried to imagine how it would be if 2,000 years from now someone tried to figure out what happened in a trial that took place in 1922. What documents would be left? What fragments of information would still be available and what could have been lost? When looking at the trial of Jesus Christ, certain things immediately come to light. The proceeding took place at an unprecedented hour. What evidence there is points to the arrest being made at a late hour, possibly 11:30 p.m. The disciples could not stay awake. Both Matthew and Mark refer to three separate periods of sleep, broken up each time when Jesus returned from an area thick in foliage. Also, since it was very dark, Jesus saw the guards coming from quite a distance due to their bright torches leading the way. Christ was holding the disciples there otherwise they would have gone home and went to bed. If the supper ended by 9:30, they could have reached the garden by 10:00 and an assumption that the arrest was just before midnight is credible.

The arresting guards had two routes which they could have used to take Jesus through the lower city after his arrest - the Kidron Valley or the main Bethany Road via the Tyropean Valley. He would have been escorted through the dark streets on the eve of the 14th of Nisan, an important Jewish festival. How did the most famous of all Jews find himself in this predicament? What was at the heart of the accusations against him? Two things stand out: the peculiar nature of the charges and Jesus' own admission on which his conviction was based. Not everything the Jewish priests did on that evening was illegal - although there were some violations. It was illegal to arrest an accused at night. It was also illegal for the judges to cross-examine the prisoner once it was obvious that there were holes in witness testimony. If the judges had deemed the testimony to be false, he should have been acquitted.

There were three charges against Jesus: He claimed to be the Son of God, he threatened to destroy the temple, and he was turning the populace against Caesar. The latter charge was only added for political reasons. Pontius Pilate would have no will to condemn a prisoner to death unless the accused had committed a crime against Rome. The accusers in a Jewish trial were the witnesses. Both Mark and Matthew wrote of those bearing false witness against Christ.

Since the court rejected the testimony of the witnesses it forced even Caiaphas to feel compelled to follow Hebrew "usage in a trial for life." (18) There were three types of testimony according to Mishna law: a vain testimony; a standing testimony; and, an adequate testimony. A vain testimony was frivolous and not to be considered. A standing testimony was to be considered until proven or disproved. An adequate testimony was



that which was corroborated by more than one witness. According to Mark, there was no testimony on which there was corroboration.

Both Mark and Matthew refer to a witness who claimed that Jesus threatened to destroy the temple which would have satisfied the requirements for adequate testimony. Most probably the men didn't invent the testimony but may have distorted what Jesus said. The dangerous part of their testimony was that if Jesus used the words that they claimed he did, there could have been a double charge of sorcery and sacrilege lodged against him. The penalty for sorcery was death. But this testimony was thrown out. At the end of the hearing, the Jewish court virtually had no viable charges against Jesus. Although Caiaphas may have wanted to "fix" the proceeding, he was not all-powerful and other priests were concerned with following the letter of the law. Whatever decision made by this tribunal was not final. The matter would be brought before the full Sanhedrin panel the next morning. At that point, if the outcome was bending at all toward one side, it was in favor of acquittal.

What did Jesus really say in reference to the temple? According to Mark, he said he would destroy the temple made by man and create a new one without hands (magically). The witness changed the wording slightly to say that Jesus said could destroy and rebuild the temple which varied slightly from the Gospel of Mark which indicated that Jesus said after he destroyed the temple "it would be replaced." The witness version of his words attributed a magical power to him. Christ was not a fanatic who would have made such wild claims. He was a lover of truth.

There was not agreement among the two witnesses about what he said. According to John, Jesus said if his enemies destroyed his temple, it would rise up in three days. He was speaking of his body as the temple and the three days aligns with his resurrection. The phrase "in three days" is found in all recorded references to the incident. The phrase on appears only rarely in the teachings of Christ. Like in all controversies, in order to get the bottom of what Christ said or meant, it is helpful to discern where there is agreement among the divergent statements. In the Gospel of Mark, there are three references to Christ rising again after three days. Skeptics respond that references to Jesus rising after three days was added by the author after the fact. But before the fact, divergent testimony at the trial indicated that Jesus uttered those words but what he implied was different than how the witnesses and possibly the judges interpreted it. What he probably said was in effect was, "If you kill me, I will rise again from the grave," which align with the passages from the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus was condemned to the death because of what he said under oath. Against Jewish laws, the judges tried to elicit evidence from the accused because the testimony of witnesses was discarded. It was the responsibility of the court to protect the prisoner, instead they took on the role of a modern prosecutor. Caiaphas asked him directly if he was the Christ. Matthew, Mark and Luke all wrote that he answered that he was. Caiaphas reasoned that witnesses were not needed with such a confession of blasphemy. Caiaphas felt he had to go beyond proving that Jesus had broken Jewish law. He had to portray Jesus as a threat to the power and authority of Rome. In John, Caiaphas said that it was better for one man to die than for a whole nation to perish. But



as acting High Priest of the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas would have suffered the loss of power with the emergence of a Messiah. Caiaphas, in effect, was covering all angles. He wanted to portray Jesus as being a threat to both Roman and Jewish authority. The hope was to have witness testimony that would support that notion but that didn't happen.





# Chapter 3: What Happened Before Midnight on Thursday

## Chapter 3: What Happened Before Midnight on Thursday Summary and Analysis

An important focus on the arrest and trial of Jesus was the dealings Jewish leaders had with Judas and with Pontius Pilate. First, why did the Jews need Judas? Up to the very last day, Judas appeared to be a loyal follower of Christ - attending a dinner in Jesus' honor at the house of Simon the Leper a few days before. Judas did not appear to be clandestine in his movements. The movements of Jesus were openly public and his arrest could have been accomplished any number of times. One reason that is offered in the Gospel was the fear of the people. In other words, the Jewish High Priests did not want to anger his followers. It was a delicate situation but that was only part of the reason. What was so urgent that the Jewish guards arrested him at night which was an illegal action?

There was a bigger fear. The Jewish priests feared Christ himself. Accounts of his miracles were widespread. He had cured the sick and lame. In that time and place, the possibility of such miracles was not disputed. In fact, the religious leaders may have had a tendency to believe in such miracles more than the common man. This is where timing comes into play. Why was there a three hour delay between the time Judas slipped away from the Last Supper and the time when the Jewish guards arrived to arrest him? How did Judas know where to find Jesus after that lapse of time?

What likely occurred was that the Jewish leaders were not prepared to take Jesus on that evening. They had not even decided where they would take him once arrested. The time lapse was probably due to the need for consultation. The narratives in the Gospels bear this out. There were two historical facts that explain the delay. The message from Judas brought the Jewish priests contained new information. Secondly, Christ was challenging and facilitating his own arrest. Judas might have told the priests that Jesus was speaking of death. Judas knew that Jesus was waiting for them to come and he also knew that "His spirit was already bending to the Cross." (37) The combination of these facts and Judas' personal temptation all came into play at the same time.

As far the priests, had they not arrested him their failure could have been attributed to his supernatural powers which was something they did not want to portray. It was crucial that he be arrested before the feast so that there was no delay in his trial while the feast was in progress. In other words, when Judas came to them, they took a "it's now or never" approach. Part of the consultation that the Jewish priests were involved in probably included Pontius Pilate. It is doubtful that he would have allowed a case of this magnitude to be thrust upon him the next day without his knowledge and permission. The feast was the next day and ordinarily Pilate would not have held court. Timing was everything, the arrest was made at night and at a time when the populace was

preoccupied with feast preparations. The door that the guards thought they'd have to force, opened before them. They took advantage of the circumstances. Caiaphas was the only priest who had the gravitas to meet with Pilate at such a late hour.



# Chapter 4: A Psychological Parallelogram of Forces

## Chapter 4: A Psychological Parallelogram of Forces Summary and Analysis

The first hint that the trial was out of the ordinary came from the behavior of Pontius Pilate. Reading the four Gospels, a common thread emerges that Pilate's behavior during the trial was a departure from what was known about his character. Pilate was a soldier who caught the eye of Claudia Procula. She was the illegitimate daughter of Tiberius and a direct descendent of Augustus Caesar. Pilate and Claudia married and her connections afforded him the position of Procurator of Judea and he was granted the unusual benefit of being able to bring his wife with him. He was a brash and harsh especially in dealing with foreigners and patterned his behavior after the tyrannical Julius Caesar. During his ten years in this position, three incidents defined him.

The first incident involved the Roman ensigns who he sent into Jerusalem at night signaling that he expected trouble. He allowed the conflict to progress without discussion. On the sixth day, he withdrew the troops when it was obvious that only a massacre would end the conflict. In the "Corban" affair he showed complete disrespect for the Jewish religion. He took funds from the Corban, which was the sacred treasury, for the construction of an aqueduct in the city. The Jews would have been happy with the new supply of safe water. However, the money in the Corban was to be used exclusively for religious matters. A riot broke out over the expenditure and Pilate responded by sending in soldiers disguised as citizens in to the mob. In a matter involving the votive shields, again Pilate displayed a tin ear when it came to the Jew's religious beliefs.

However, the formerly haughty and overbearing Pilate displayed behavior in the trial that was completely conciliatory to the Jews and at odds with his normal demeanor. Although he was accommodating to the Jews, he was apparently having a difficult time in acquiescing to their demands to send Jesus to his death. He seemed to be torn. He suddenly gained an astuteness which informed him to get rid of the case. This sentiment was evidenced by his attempt to shove it off to Herod, his several pronouncements that Jesus had committed no crime and his attempt to exchange Jesus for Barabbas. Why was the normally strong-willed tyrant Pilate so tentative and indecisive?

Caiaphas probably visited Pilate between 9 pm and 11 pm on the night of the arrest. He presented the case and its urgency. After he left, Pilate probably discussed the visitor's request with Claudia. Jesus was on her mind when she retired and the next day she woke to find her husband already gone. She had dreamed of Jesus that night and according to Matthew 27:19 sent Pilate a message warning him to have nothing to do with harming Jesus who was a righteous man. Pilate perhaps told Claudia his intentions



to cooperate with the Jew's request after his meeting with Caiaphas. The urgency of her message indicated that she wanted him to change his plans.

Both Mark and Matthew wrote that Pilate asked Jesus if he was the King of the Jews. What was not recorded was what led Pilate to ask that question. According to Luke and John, there was some preliminary testimony and questioning that led to Pilate's question. But something seems to be missing between the line in John, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death," and Pilate's question asking Jesus if he was the King of the Jews. That missing exchange had to contain what Jewish laws Jesus had allegedly violated and that Jesus was "forbidding to give tribute to Caesar" which meant he was encouraging his followers not to pay Roman taxes.

When Jesus is brought to Pilate the next day, he indicated his intent to re-hear the case when he asked what charges were being leveled against the prisoner. The priests showed their disrespect by a sullen response - they would not have brought him there if he were not an evil-doer. This exchange implied that the priests thought Pilate would just rubber stamp their conviction and were upset when it appeared he was determined to re-try him. They found him to be an evil-doer. Why on earth would Pilate want to reopen the case? Pilate responded to take him back and punish him under Jewish laws which evoked the response that they couldn't put a man to death. To convince him to take the case, they reiterated the charges against him and how he was a threat to Rome. When the priest told him that Jesus called himself a King, Pilate asked him if he was King of the Jews.

The priests' surprise and obvious disappointment in Pilate's intention to try the case again or at least interrogate the prisoner indicates that there had been a prior agreement between Pilate and Caiaphas that Pilate would carry out the punishment phase of Jesus' trial. The only event that could have changed between the night they came to that agreement and the next morning was the note that Claudia sent. From his behavior, it was obvious that Pilate wanted to shift responsibility for Jesus' sentence to someone else. When all his attempts to shift that responsibility failed, symbolically had washed his hands of the affair.

Pilate felt like a failure and perhaps in an attempt to avenge the tormenting priests, he wrote in three languages in reference to Jesus that "This is the King of the Jews." (59) The priests asked him to change the wording but he refused.



# Chapter 5: The Situation on Friday Afternoon

## Chapter 5: The Situation on Friday Afternoon Summary and Analysis

Although the prosecution of Jesus was conducted by the Jewish priests, focus must be placed on Jesus' close circle during the days that led up to his arrest. There were sixteen people who belonged to that inner circle: The eleven remaining apostles; Mary, mother of Jesus; Mary, wife of Cleophas, Salome, wife of Zebedee, Mary Magdalene, and, Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. Two men of higher social class were also avid supporters: Joseph of Arimathea and the councilor, Nicodemus. All these individuals were in Jerusalem during the feast.

What were the reactions of these people and when did the full realization of what happened fall upon them? For the disciples it was that very night when Judas led the guards to him. Peter and John followed behind Jesus and the guards and slipped back into the city. The other disciples were probably panic-stricken and fled to parts unknown. The women in Jesus' circle could not have known what happened until the next day. The nine missing disciples may not have returned by the next morning. Mary and John were at the foot of the cross. Mary, the wife of Cleophas, Salome and Mary Magdalene were present but at a respectful distance.

According to Mark, Pilate confirmed Jesus' death with a centurion before allowing his body to be disposed of. All four Gospels state that Joseph of Arimathea asked permission to bury Jesus. Joseph's actions were attributed to his love for Jesus by all four Gospels. John wrote that Nicodemus, who also revered Jesus, accompanied Joseph when he procured the body for burial. The Gospel confirms that Mary collapsed in grief and exhaustion. There is mention that two of the three other women witnessed the actual burial from a distance. It is doubtful that Joseph could have wrapped Jesus and carried him a for good distance without assistance. Other than John's mention of Nicodemus, there is no mention in the Gospels as helpers.



# Chapter 6: Thirty-Six Hours Later

## Chapter 6: Thirty-Six Hours Later Summary and Analysis

After Jesus died on the cross, John was with Mary and escorted her to a place of safety. The three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary, wife of Cleophas, and Salome were in a location near the cross, Joseph and Nicodemus appeared to arrange the burial. Peter was hiding in shame for his denial of Christ and Joanna came with others to the tomb Sunday morning. What occurred, then, is that the women in Jesus' inner circle bore the full impact of the crisis alone. This is confirmed in Mark when he refers to women beholding from afar. He named all the women in his circle but none of the men. Mary Magdalene is portrayed as a leader of sorts of the women. According to Mark, Salome disappeared during the interment since Mary and Mary Magdalene were the only ones who "beheld where he was laid" (p. 70).

The women had great anxiety and personal grief over the loss of their leader. Mary, of course, suffered the most and the other women were probably greatly concerned for her. John led her away when she was probably near collapse while the other women watched from a distance. The women decided that Salome would stay with Mary to comfort her. This had all occurred by sunset on Friday with the beginning of the Sabbath, a day which would limit further activities at the tomb. The women probably rested on the Sabbath and intended to return on Sunday morning. All four writers agreed on that point. It is also noted that Mary Magdalene rose and went to the sepulcher.

According to John, Mary Magdalene was the first to witness that the stone that covered the tomb had been moved. She was horrified and ran to Simon Peter with the news that Jesus had been taken away to an unknown place. John was known to write with clarity and did not obfuscate facts. However, John wrote that Mary Magdalene said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and WE don't know where they have laid him." John did not include the names of anyone else and therefore confused matters when he portrayed Mary as being alone. Who was the "we" he wrote about? In a fragment of the so-called Gospel of Peter, there is evidence that Mary was accompanied by women friends. She was probably afraid to go alone. Luke wrote that Joanna was with her and Mark said that Salome accompanied her. Mary, wife of Cleophas, is mentioned in three of the Gospels. Regardless as to who was there, the tomb was empty when they arrived.

It was the common knowledge that a body began to decay on the third day and the women wanted to perform some rites in his honor before that natural process would begin. The mystery was how the large stone that was placed in front of the tomb was moved. The women were not expecting to find his body gone and were probably hysterical. Mary Magdalene was the youngest of the group and probably ran off to seek help from Peter and John.



# Chapter 7: On the Behavior of Two Sisters and the Men Who Fled in the Night

## Chapter 7: On the Behavior of Two Sisters and the Men Who Fled in the Night Summary and Analysis

On the night of the arrest, there were two missing groups of people who were part of Jesus' inner circle. There were the nine apostles who fled during the arrest. And there were the sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany whose absence from the Crucifixion and burial was notable. They were devout followers of Jesus. Why were they nowhere to be found? In the five days before his arrest, Jesus and his companions stayed at their home in Bethany. When Jesus and the others didn't return to Bethany on the night of his arrest, the sisters were surely concerned.

How did Peter and John become separated from the other disciples? Perhaps in the darkness they blended in with the large regiment of guards and slipped back through the city gates with them. Where did the other nine disciples go? They could have avoided confrontation with the guards by hiding in the woods and tracking of their location by keeping an eye on their bright torches. But the guards left with their prisoner and there was no apparent danger to those left behind. The nine fleeing disciples had to wonder what happened to Peter and John. They may have assumed that they were arrested, too. If the disciples fled to Galilee as some have speculated, they would have passed through Bethany. Surely they would have stopped to tell the sisters what had occurred. There are other reasons they would have returned to Bethany. They had possessions there and there was a need to warn the sisters who might also be in danger.

Since the sisters were expecting Jesus to return that Thursday night, one of them would have traveled to Jerusalem the next morning to inquire about him. But if one of them had come they would have been at the Crucifixion and burial. But if the disciples, or at least some of them, made it to Bethany, their mental state and mood would have been such that the women would have become frightened. Perhaps Judas would be leading the way to make other arrests. News generally traveled back and forth from Bethany to Jerusalem. However, there was great interest in the arrest and trial of Jesus so there probably were no travelers from Jerusalem to spread the word of what was actually going on.



# Chapter 8: Between Sunset and Dawn

## Chapter 8: Between Sunset and Dawn Summary and Analysis

There was speculation that the disciples stole Jesus' body. There are no modern day theologians who ascribe to that scenario. The character of the apostles would not have allowed this to occur or to lie about it if it somehow did occur. There were six possible approaches to the empty grave - four assume the missing body to be a historical fact and two others take the position that the women were mistaken or they lied. The six scenarios were: 1) Joseph of Arimathea moved the body to a more desirable location; 2) the Romans ordered the body to be moved; 3) Jewish authorities ordered the body moved so that the tomb would not be venerated as the grave of a martyr; 4) Jesus was not really dead when he was placed in the tomb and recovered; 5) the women were confused about the tomb's location and looked at another spot; and 6) the story about the women claiming that the tomb was empty was fiction. An analysis of these scenarios follow.

Joseph of Arimathea removed the body.

This scenario carries some weight. Joseph may have placed Jesus' body in the tomb temporarily and planned to move it later. However, why would he choose to move the body at night? Why not in the daylight when it would be much easier? Had he decided to move the body in the morning—which would have been more reasonable—the women who came to perform a ritual would have encountered them. A scenario of Joseph and some helpers working at night in the dark with torches and removing Jesus' wrap before taking his body out does not seem plausible.

There has been speculation that Joseph just wanted to adhere to the Jewish law of burying the dead before sunset. But if that were the case, he would have been just as concerned with burying the other two crucified men who died with Jesus but he was not. Additionally, there is apocryphal literature to support that Joseph was dressed down by the priests for his actions on behalf of Jesus which indicates that he gave special attention to Jesus' burial. Since Joseph was part of the higher echelon of society he had already lost the respect of his peers by publicly supporting Jesus. By making a public proclamation, he showed his love and devotion for him. Would he then have violated the burial site that he had arranged out of his adoration for Christ? Finally, when the disciples returned to the city and declared that Christ had risen, Joseph could have easily disproved that claim by revealing the location of a second grave.

The authorities - Jewish or Roman - removed the body.

There are reasons, although slight, that one of the authorities would have ordered the body to be moved. Pilate was relieved that his part in the ordeal was over. There was probably not much that could have persuaded him to get involved again. The Jewish





priests, by tradition, may have come to Pilate about the burial to gain his assurance that the body would not be moved. But had the priests, for some unknown reasons, asked Pilate for permission to move the body and in the unlikely event that he approved the request, the priests would have done so in a public way and any talk of resurrection would have died on the vine. And if there was such a claim, the priests could have simply produced his remains.

Jesus did not really die on the cross.

The human part of Jesus - his earthly body - could not have survived the lacerations, wounds and the loss of blood that he suffered.

The women made a mistake.

The speculation was that it was dim that early morning and Mary Magdalene and the others mistook what they saw or went to the wrong tomb. But they encountered a gardener who was already at work. Gardeners don't generally work in the dark. Dr. Kirsopp Lake, in his book, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," theorized that the women probably made a mistake. He opines that the women did not immediately report their discovery because the disciples were not in Jerusalem. The disciples only heard the story when they returned weeks later.

But not all the disciples were missing. Peter was there and John was with Mary at the cross. It is quite reasonable to assume that efforts would have been made for the security of the women, some of whom were mothers of disciples. Lake's theory keeps the women in town for several weeks. But they did not live there. What would they have done and where would they have stayed for weeks? The Jewish priests could have certainly produced the gardener if it was true that the tomb was undisturbed. The historic facts and apostolic literature strongly support the fact that the tomb was empty.

The grave was not visited by the women.

The whole thing was fiction! Historical fact belies this theory at every level which the succeeding chapters will delve into.



# Chapter 9: The Historic Crux of the Problem

## Chapter 9: The Historic Crux of the Problem Summary and Analysis

The profound conviction that Christ had risen from the grave was initially shared by a small group of people. It was not just two "hysterical" women who came to believe that he had risen, it was the entire body of disciples. Word about the phenomenon rose quickly and was rapidly spread far and near by. But the news originated from a small group of simple, common people - not kings or those of high rank. It would almost seem impossible but that was what happened.

It was seven weeks after the Crucifixion that the first public statement of the resurrection was made. But it was forty years between the events that Luke wrote about it in Acts. Although witnesses had died, the elapsed allowed time for the legend to either die or gain strength. The initial gap of seven weeks left the door open to skepticism. If Jesus rose on Easter Sunday why didn't his disciples shout it from the rooftops? But the disciples did not wait to tell their story. They began immediately to speak of it among themselves and their believers. That the public proclamation was made later is irrelevant. At the time it was announced, there was another feast and during the interim Jesus' small circle became enmeshed in the account, giving themselves time to absorb and understand what had occurred. In Acts, the disciples are characterized as emerging with great emotion into the crowds to tell them of the Resurrection. Of course, some scoffed at them and some thought they had consumed too much wine.

The proclamation caused a huge controversy. The people were upset because if the Resurrection had occurred, the Jewish priests had lied to them and had destroyed the Messiah. No one could take a middle-of-the-road position. Jesus had either risen from the grave or he had not and he was either the Messiah or he was not. Acts provides evidence that there were many attempts at repressing the word of the Resurrection and many arrests of the disciples over the first four years when the Christian community began to grow. This increased devotion to Christianity occurred prior to the first major persecution under Saul of Tarsus. After release from prison, the disciples were warned not to preach in the name of Jesus ever again. Despite all the attempts to quash the movement, Christianity was gaining adherents at an ever increasing rate. There was no indication that any special interest was ever paid to the tomb itself again. The assumption that the tomb was empty seemed to be universally accepted.

How did the disciples set about converting people, convincing them that Jesus was the Messiah and had risen from the dead? It could not have been through an emotional plea. The Jewish people were very smart and sophisticated and could have been swayed only by logic. And as word spread, so did the controversy which raged in synagogues for many months. It was in Jerusalem where word of the Resurrection was



first spread - the city where the tomb could be visited and his absence could be verified. The populace was being readily convinced as evidenced by Luke's declaration that 3,000 people were converted in just one day.

How did the disciples initially come to believe in the Resurrection? They were honest men who in the years to come were persecuted for their beliefs yet remained unwavering in their devotion. The disciples shared the same strong beliefs and none were doubtful. They spread the word to the masses of the intellectual center of Jerusalem. As Christianity blossomed there were constant attempts to stop it - acts of suppression, threats, persecution, arrests. Nothing was able to halt the spread of the movement. But the Jewish priests could have done the simple thing and led the masses to the tomb to reveal the decayed body of Christ. That act alone could have virtually destroyed Christianity. The vacant tomb was the final and unimpeachable witness for Jesus.



# Chapter 10: The Evidence of the Principal Fisherman

## Chapter 10: The Evidence of the Principal Fisherman Summary and Analysis

There are three men who could provide conclusive testimony in this matter. Peter was the unchallenged leader of the Christian movement for several years. Like the other two men, James the Just and Saul from Tarsus, they ultimately suffered from their convictions. In a way, Peter was an unexpected leader to emerge. He had been rebuked by Jesus himself for not savoring "the things that be of God" (p. 119). Then of course there was Peter's infamous denial of Jesus after his arrest. But Peter had his good points. He was loyal and lovable. He had a hair-trigger temper but was quick to acknowledge when he was wrong.

Peter was a fisherman by trade and had a simplicity of character. There is no evidence of his intellectual brilliance. But it was his openness and honesty and seniority that gained him the leadership role. Peter made his first declaration on the day of Pentecost in a clear and definitive manner. He said the words, "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we are all witnesses," (121) which was a contemporary way of referring to something that had just recently happened.

When Luke wrote about the Pentecost declaration in Acts he did not mention the women. In fact, they were not mentioned again after their discovery of the vacant tomb. What probably occurred is that the story of the empty tomb was immediately spread throughout every level of society. And there was probably speculation that the disciples had stolen the body because they were missing, too. The women were, therefore, not needed to verify the story of the empty tomb because everyone knew about it. One could conclude that Peter was a witness himself to the empty grave and didn't need the women to verify what he had seen himself.



# Chapter 11: The Evidence of the Prisoner's Brother

## Chapter 11: The Evidence of the Prisoner's Brother Summary and Analysis

Josephus a writer who was against the Christian movement wrote of James the Just who was Jesus' brother. Josephus wrote of his stoning in AD 62. James, who was initially against Jesus' ministry, became a martyr because of his adherence to the cause. In AD 57, Paul was returning to Jerusalem for perhaps the last time. Luke tells the story in Acts which indicated that at that time James was the leader of the movement and Paul was probably reporting to him on his mission. Going back a few more years to AD 50, James attended the Council of Jerusalem which was held to discuss policy as it related to the conversion of Gentiles. A stumbling block was the rite of circumcision imposed by Mosaic Law. James was recorded as giving the presidential and decisive vote. It was in AD 44 when Peter was imprisoned that James first stepped in as a leader. There is one earlier reference to James written by Paul from Antioch in AD 36. Paul makes a reference that James was on a level with Peter as a leader of the movement.

How did James come to be such a devotee of Christianity when he was initially opposed to the movement? The hostility that James the Just had for Jesus was recorded in several passages in the Gospel of Mark. Joseph was not mentioned when Jesus began his ministry so he was probably already dead. There is only mention of his mother and brethren. Even when Jesus came to his family hometown, Nazareth, James and his other siblings apparently did not attend his meetings. Matthew and Luke may have dropped these references in their writing because James had changed and was still alive and had become the leader of the movement. James the Just certainly had a conversion and was not a man of delusions. In the end he believed so fervently in his brother that he died for his cause.



# Chapter 12: The Evidence of the Man from Tarsus

## Chapter 12: The Evidence of the Man from Tarsus Summary and Analysis

The most believable witness is always an impartial one. Saul from Tarsus came to Jerusalem right when Christianity was struggling under its adversaries. He was a Hebrew who was well-educated and had traveled widely. He took the side of the priests who were trying to suppress the movement. But in the end, he joined in the Christian movement. When Saul came to Jerusalem Christianity was growing rapidly. Contrary to some speculation that the High Priests did nothing to stop the spread of Christianity, there are references to their intervention and to the constant debates and arguments among the people. Saul was also known as Paul and the names are interchangeable.

Saul was probably well-informed of the controversies that consumed Jerusalem at the time of his arrival. Saul led the Great Persecution against the Christians - it was the greatest fight they had faced up to that time. He returned to Jerusalem three years after the Persecution as a converted Christian. He undoubtedly heard about the vacant tomb before and after his conversion. There was no reason for the disciples to tell Saul anything but the truth - they had enough problems as it was. One indisputable fact is that none of Jesus' followers worshiped at the tomb or payed homage to Jesus there because they knew that the tomb did not contain his body, that it was empty.

In the Synoptic Gospels which are those of Matthew, Mark and Luke there is an authorship connection with Paul. Paul believed that Jesus would return in glory to earth. He was certain that it would happen in his lifetime. Many early Christians shared that belief. Paul believed that the dead would become glorified spirits at the moment of the second-coming. Everything about Paul points to his belief that the tomb of Christ was vacant on Easter Sunday.

When Saul appeared on the scene, there was no controversy over whether the body was missing. Everyone agreed that it was. However, the Christians believed that Jesus had risen from the grave while the Jews believed his body was stolen. Saul most certainly took on the belief of the Jews. The start of the Great Persecution was marked with the stoning death of Stephen. What followed were more assaults, raids and imprisonments. It got to be unsafe for anyone to confess to being a Nazarene. Saul got word that Damascus was suffering from the heresy resulting the influx of fugitives. He traveled there and when he was near the city, a brilliant light - brighter than the noon-day sun - temporarily blinded him. After he recovered, he had been converted. The hate was gone from his heart and, after he recovered his sight, he went on to Damascus and preached there. What happened to Paul on that road? He may have had a vision or heard a voice. Paul's conversion was enduring and his belief never wavered.



# Chapter 13: The Witness of the Great Stone

## Chapter 13: The Witness of the Great Stone Summary and Analysis

One of the most important elements of the burial site is the large stone that was placed against the entrance to the tomb. It appeared that no one visited the tomb after the burial once the Romans and priests were assured that the body had been interred. According to Mark, the women came early to the tomb and found the stone moved. Inside there was a young man holding a white garment. He said something but the women were too upset to understand what he said. The behavior of the women was normal. When one encounters the unexpected it can be a jarring experience.

The passage also points out that the stone was large and heavy. How was the stone moved? From without or from within or by supernatural agency? Could Joseph of Arimathea have returned? If he came alone, he could not have moved the stone. If he came with others to help him, once the word spread about the Resurrection, surely one of his workers would have spoken out. If Joseph did have the body moved, he would not have left someone behind in the tomb. Who was this man if he did exist? Maybe he was a gardener who was curious about the opened tomb and wandered in and was trying to figure out what happened himself. As stated earlier, the disciples would have been distraught and would have had no will to move Jesus' body. Saul's conversion is testimony to the honesty and beliefs of the disciples.

There are also the reports of the a guard who to watch over the tomb. The guard kept watch overnight on the first night. The priests were subservient to Pilate. Pilate had dramatically washed his hands of Jesus. In Matthew, the priests ask for Pilate's help in guarding the tomb the day after the burial. Pilate told the priests to use their own guards to protect the tomb. The priests then acted on their own. "So they went and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them." (156) Could the guard or guards moved the stone?

When the women found the empty tomb and the young man inside, according to Mark he told them not to be amazed that Jesus had risen and was not there. He told them to tell Peter. There was speculation that the young man was an angel. But if he was just a young man who happened by and was curious about the open tomb he may have been just as surprised as the women were when they appeared. They were probably terrified to see the tomb open with someone inside holding what was probably Jesus' garment and see that the body was missing. They ran in terror and if the man said the words that appear in Mark, he was probably shouting them after the fleeing women. Was this man real or a myth?



The young man told the women that Jesus would see them in Galilee. That is backed up by a passage in Mark that cites Jesus saying that "after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee." (162) He said these words on his way to Gethsemane. Probably only the disciples could have been witness to those words. The young man who was found at the tomb by the women may have just been a curious young Hebrew man who wanted to visit the grave of Jesus.

Perhaps others knew in the city of Jerusalem that the stone had been moved and that the grave was empty the night before the women discovered it. And perchance a young man had also overheard Jesus as he walked to the Garden of Gethsemane with his disciples telling them that he would rise after death. That would have been enough impetus for such a man to rush to the tomb to see if Jesus was missing from it.





# Chapter 14: Some Realities of That Far-Off Morning

## Chapter 14: Some Realities of That Far-Off Morning Summary and Analysis

There has never surfaced one shred of evidence that the body of Christ was taken to Joseph's garden. All the sources - the Gospels, Gospel of Peter and the Emmaus document - all provide basically the same account of what happened. The literary verdict is unanimous and must be given its proper weight. No one visited the burial sight - no followers or the concerned or the curious. There is no record of controversy surrounding the burial during those first four years after his death when Christianity skyrocketed in popularity. Why was Jerusalem the heart of the blossoming movement? Jerusalem had never fully welcomed him. Galilee was the city of smiles and his home base with a populace who embraced him. There is one answer to these questions: the story of the women was true - it was a fact of history - Jerusalem was the spiritual home of Jesus.

What adds more credence to the story is the identity of the women. They were in his inner circle and adored him. Mary Magdalene was extremely close to him. Several of the women were mothers of disciples. Jesus was the age of their sons. It was a maternal motivation that brought these women to pay a last tribute to him. If the figure was an angel, they would not have been afraid. They came early because, according to Mark, "They feared lest any man should see them" (p. 173). What is the most compelling of all is that the disciples preached for years about Jesus and how he had risen. Everyone in Jerusalem knew where the empty tomb was that the disciples preached about. Anyone could have gone there to verify what the disciples were teaching - and they probably did.

The women didn't go to the wrong tomb. They saw the young man in the tomb holding Jesus' garments. They fled to tell Peter. Immediately, word spread throughout the city about the incident. Literary accounts support that the tomb was vacant. The women were not used as witnesses because everyone already knew about the empty tomb. Followers of Jesus were charged with the crime of taking his body but it was a futile task to prove or disprove. The heart of Christianity was in Jerusalem and there was no more appropriate place for it to reside because it was where Jesus had been crucified, buried and had risen.

Many myths originated from those days. There was a passage in Matthew that the women had encountered a band of angels. The young man in the tomb was actually a young man and not an angel but that didn't stop word from spreading about the great angel of Matthew and other rumors like the stone moved by itself or that the angels moved it aside.



Mark captured the authentic and beautiful story of Jesus. He believed that Jesus had predicted his own death and resurrection. Mark described the vigil in the Garden and the midnight arrest. He wrote clearly about the trials before Caiaphas and the Roman Court. He provided an account of the Crucifixion that was clear yet poignant. Mark told the story of the women finding the empty tomb.



# Chapter 15: The Servant of the Priest

## Chapter 15: The Servant of the Priest Summary and Analysis

In Mark, there is the clear story of what occurred during Jesus' ordeal. However, there is no explanation offered as to how the stone was moved. The other Gospels do not offer an explanation. There was never speculation that the risen Jesus moved the stone by his strength and power. On the question of the guard or guards who were dispatched to watch the tomb, there is literary evidence that they fell asleep. The guards, of course, were forbidden to fall asleep however they were recruited on short notice and were probably exhausted from doing double-duty. No one was about in the darkened area around the tomb so it is understandable and conceivable that they drifted off.

An old fragment existed from the Gospel of the Hebrews which described how Jesus appeared to James, his brother. It was written by Paul and confirms the devotion of each of these men who were at first against Christianity but were converted and became devout. In the passage in Hebrews, there is a reference to a garment, "Now the Lord, when he had given the linen cloth unto the servant of the priest" (p. 192). Was that what the young man was holding when the women encountered him and did Jesus appear first to him? Perhaps something - a rattling of the trees - woke one of the guards and beckoned him to the tomb. Was it he "the servant of the priest" who Jesus first appeared to? Was it one of the guards who told the women that Jesus had risen?



# Characters

## Jesus Christ

Jesus was off to himself in an isolated part of the Garden of Gethsemane on Thursday evening as eleven of his disciples slept nearby. They had just finished the Last Supper and their stomachs were full and they had consumed too much wine. Jesus came to wake them several times but they only drifted off again. He needed their support because he was aware of the destiny that awaited him and that was about to unfold. It was a destiny he understood but one that was difficult and one for which he was in need of their company and comfort.

But Jesus had twelve disciples. One had slipped away. Judas Iscariot had left the gathering and traveled to see Caiaphas, the Jewish High Priest of the Sandrehen Council who wanted to arrest Jesus for blasphemy. When Judas returned to the Garden leading the way for a regiment of Jewish guards, Jesus was bound, arrested and taken away. He was tried that very night and, by his own words, found guilty and sentenced to death. But the Jewish leaders could not lawfully execute a criminal and therefore the punishment phase of the case had to be carried out by the Roman Government in the person of Pontius Pilate.

Although Pilate was reluctant to take on the matter, the priests forced him into a corner. Jesus was crucified and buried in a tomb arranged for by Joseph of Arimathea. The mystery of Jesus of Nazareth reached its frenzied apex when the large stone was moved from in front of the cave that served as his tomb. On Easter Sunday, three days after his arrest, just as he had predicted he rose from the dead and became the symbol and foundation of a new religious movement that would rock the world.

## Pontius Pilate

Pontius Pilate was the Governor or Prefect of Judea and had jurisdiction over Jerusalem. He resided in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' arrest and subsequent conviction for blasphemy by the Jewish High Priests after he was tried before the Sandrehen Council in the wee hours of Friday morning. Caiaphas rushed to Pilate's residence that dark night to explain that it was urgent that Pilate carry out the punishment phase of the trial of Jesus Christ. Pilate was not anxious to take on such a controversial case, especially the bitter end of it, but Roman law did not allow the Jews to execute those found guilty of crimes that warranted the death penalty.

Pilate's wife, Claudia, was in Jerusalem with him. On the night before Pilate was to sentence Jesus to be crucified, Claudia had a dream about him. She thought that Jesus was a good man and when she woke the next day, Pilate was already gone. She was so distraught that she sent a message to Pilate advising him not to get involved in the execution of Jesus.



Pilate who was generally cold and merciless had a different demeanor when he met with Caiaphas and his prisoner, Jesus. His change in attitude was probably due to Claudia's note. Pilate tried to shift the responsibility for sentencing Jesus to Herod but it failed. Pilate was unconvincing when he recommended that Jesus' life be spared and that the vile murderer Barabbas take his place on the cross. Finally, he ordered his execution then washed his hands of the matter. His inscription in referring to Jesus in several official documents was "This is the King of the Jews ." The Jewish priests were appalled and pleaded with him to change the words but he refused.

## **Caiaphas**

Caiaphas was the Jewish High Priest who hired Judas Iscariot to lead his guards to Jesus so they could arrest him. Caiaphas was anxious to sentence Jesus to death because he feared the influence he seemed to have over the people.

## **Mary, Mother of Jesus**

Mary, Mother of Jesus, knelt at Jesus' cross during his crucifixion. She was in such devastation after he passed away that John felt compelled to lead her away from the foot of the cross where she mourned him.

## **Judas Iscariot**

Judas Iscariot was one of Jesus twelve disciples. He was paid by Caiaphas to betray Jesus. Judas led the Jewish guards to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane so they could arrest him.

## **Peter**

Peter, or Simon Peter as he became known, was one of Jesus' disciples. He was shamed after Jesus' arrest when he denied knowing Jesus. After Jesus died, he emerged as one of the leaders of the Christian movement.

## **Saul of Tarsus**

Saul of Tarsus, who was also known as Paul, was dispatched to lead the Great Persecution of the Christians four years after Jesus' death. On the road to Damascus, he was temporarily blinded by a brilliant light after which he was converted to Christianity and became an ardent devotee.



## **James the Just**

James the Just was one of Jesus' brothers. He was diametrically opposed to Jesus' ministry when he first began his work. However, after Jesus died, James became devoted to Christianity and became one of its leaders. His devotion led to his martyred death.

## **Mary Magdalene**

Mary Magdalene was one of the few women in Jesus' inner circle. She and some of the other women who were close to Jesus, came to the tomb on Easter Sunday and found that his tomb was empty.

## **The Man in the Tomb**

When Mary Magdalene and the other women visited the tomb on Easter Sunday, they found a young man who was holding some white garments, perhaps Jesus' clothing. The identity of this man has never been determined. Some even thought he was an angel.



# Objects/Places

## Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus and eleven of his disciples were in the Garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper. It was in the Garden where he was arrested by Jewish guards after they were led to him by Judas Iscariot, his twelfth disciple who had betrayed him.

## Jerusalem

The trial, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus occurred in Jerusalem. Pontius Pilate was the Prefect of Judea and had jurisdiction over Jerusalem.

## The Sandrehen Council

Jesus was tried before the Jewish Sandrehen Council on the night of his arrest. Caiaphas was acting as the head of the council during the trial.

## The Roman Court

Although the Jewish Council found Jesus guilty and condemned him to death, the priests had to take him to the Roman Court because the law forbade them from carrying out executions.

## The Tomb

After Jesus died on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea arranged for him to be buried in a tomb. On Easter Sunday, his body was missing from the tomb and his followers believed that he had been resurrected.

## Galilee

Jesus was from Galilee and he told some of his followers that after he had risen from the dead, he would see them in Galilee.

## The Crucifixion

Jesus was condemned to be nailed to the cross until he was dead. He died from the blood he lost from the wounds that he sustained.



## **The Gospels**

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are considered the Four Gospels. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are also known as the Synoptic Gospels because their accounts are very similar.

## **The Gospel of Peter**

The Gospel of Peter was the early writing of Peter but was not made part of the Holy Bible.

## **Emmaus Document**

The Emmaus Document is a fragmented, archaic piece of Christian literature that Morison used as a resource for writing his book.





# Themes

## Mystery

There are many mysteries that surround the days between Holy Thursday when Jesus was arrested and Easter Sunday when he was resurrected. The mysteries began to bubble up on the very days of the events. Modern Christians probably do not focus on the mysteries that surround their religion. Christianity is taught and preached in a definitive way and there is little or no attention given to aspects of the last days of Christ that were at one time enmeshed in unknowns.

There are uncertainties about the night of Jesus' arrest. Why did Caiaphas and the High Priests of the Sanhedrin Council need Judas to lead them to him? Jesus was not in hiding and conducting his ministry in a very open manner. Also, there was a lapse of three hours between the time Judas slipped away from the others at the Garden of Gethsemane and the time he returned with the guards. This length of time indicates that the priests were not prepared to make the arrest that night. Why did Judas act prematurely?

When Jesus arrived at the Council in the wee hours of Friday morning, he was immediately subjected to interrogation and trial. According to Jewish religious laws, such a proceeding was illegal at night. Why did the priests break their own laws and hold Jesus' trial at such an hour? Also, according to their laws, the witnesses to a crime fundamentally served as the prosecution. The council of priests was designed to be an impartial panel. When the priests discarded testimony as not credible, if the priests had followed the law, they would have found Jesus innocent. Instead, they began interrogating him themselves and found him guilty - a verdict that was based on Jesus' own words.

Some of the biggest mysteries which have lost the attention of the modern Christian surround the burial of Jesus. There is no definite answer as to how the large boulder that had been placed in front of the cave that served as Jesus' tomb was moved. Mary Magdalene and some other women who were followers of Jesus came to pay homage to him at his tomb and were shocked to see that the large stone had been moved. More surprising and mysterious than the moving of the rock was the young man they encountered inside the tomb holding what presumably was Jesus' burial robe.

There was controversy at first about what happened to Jesus' body. Some felt that the Romans or Jews had ordered it moved. Others believed that the disciples stole his body. But the body was never found and soon the people, even those who were not followers, began to accept that he had been resurrected.

These mysteries and others have been discounted or accepted by Christians and are no longer issues to them. Their faith has overcome any doubts that these unknowns may have generated.



## Devotion

The devotion to Jesus Christ and Christianity is an underlying theme throughout the book, "Who Moved the Stone." The book is an account of the four days from Holy Thursday when Jesus was arrested to Easter Sunday when he was resurrected. In the very first segment the adoration and devotion that the disciples have for Jesus is undeniable. And that love and devotion was mutual in his role as their leader and savior. Given the level of devotion that the disciples had for Jesus, it was jarring that one of his own, Judas Iscariot, abandoned that devotion and betrayed him. It was a traumatic turn of events that one of his erstwhile devotees would turn on him and forsake him in what turned out to be such a final act.

After Jesus was buried, the devotion of his followers did not wane. In fact, it only increased. Mary Magdalene, who was the only woman within his very close circle, came to his tomb to pay homage to him on Sunday morning. She was accompanied by other women, several of whom were the mothers of disciples, who also wanted to honor him and pay their respects. It was these devoted women who were startled and terrified when they came upon the tomb and saw that the large, heavy boulder that had been placed across the entry to seal it off had been moved. Inside they saw a young man with what appeared to be Jesus burial garments but Jesus' body was not there. It was missing.

Although there was much speculation about what happened to Jesus' body - whether the Jews or Pilate ordered it moved or the disciples stole his it - but it came to be accepted that Jesus, as he predicted he would, had risen from the dead. The resurrected Christ became the heart of Christianity and its symbol. Peter and the other disciples began to preach the teachings of Jesus and converted many people over to Christianity. The Christian movement won over many devotees in the first four years of the movement that the Jews were terrified of its power and ordered a persecution.

But the league of devoted followers of Christ only grew no matter what was done to discourage or destroy it. In the Gospels, there is literary evidence that in one day alone, 3,000 new devotees joined the movement. While Caiaphas and the other Sandrehen Jews were trying to get rid of Christ, they failed even in death. He became more powerful and garnered even more devotion after his crucifixion.

Two of the most devout of Christ's followers were his brother, James the Just, and Saul of Tarsus who became known as Paul. They were both initially opponents of Christianity. Saul, in fact, led the Great Persecution against Christianity. In the end, both men were converted and remained devout for the entirety of their lives.

## Dedication

"Who Moved the Stone" by Frank Morison is an ultimate example of an individual's dedication to delving in to a subject and discovering its truth, or as much of its truth as possible. Of course, the subject matter in this case is quite a complex one and made



more complicated by the years that have passed since the actual events occurred. The subtitle of Morison's book is "A Skeptic Looks at the Death and Resurrection of Christ," which indicates that Morison had a personal impetus in writing this book. He was apparently personally intrigued by the mysteries surrounding the events of the four days between Holy Thursday and Easter Sunday and compelled to try to determine exactly what took place.

Morison took no short-cuts and made no quick assumptions in his work. He lays out every possible scenario that had some credence in each element of the four-day drama that was to become the foundation for the Christian religion. Although an admitted skeptic, Morison showed how he was persuaded by the accounts found in the Four Gospels, especially when he saw the same stories repeated in basically portrayed in the same way by all four writers.

Morison took on the question about the three-hour lapse between the time Judas slipped away from the Garden of Gethsemane and the time he returned with the Jewish guards who were there to arrest Jesus. From the Gospels and other religious literature, fragmented as it may have been, Morison concluded that the priests were not prepared for his arrest and had to hurry to make some major decisions - profound decisions, as it turned out, that would rock the world and change religious face of the world forever. Morison devoted himself to learning more about each element of the story with an equal amount of fervor and dedication.

As complicated as the mysteries were and as difficult it was to discern some of the Gospel passages some of which he includes in the book and all of which were written in an antiquated manner and often in metaphor, Morison demonstrates his strength of purpose. He struggled through the mysteries with his limited resources and shared with his readers the arduous steps he took in coming to his conclusions.



# Style

## Perspective

"Who Moved the Stone? A Skeptic Looks at the Death and Resurrection of Christ," was written and researched by Frank Morison who was an English journalist. The story is told by Morison. The point of view is sometimes his own as he describes to the reader the steps he took in arriving at some of his conclusions and the thought process he went through during the long process of researching and writing this book. The majority of the book is written from the third person narrative as he tells the story of the last days of Christ and his resurrection.

Morison wrote this book in 1930. He had a deep interest and curiosity about the life and times of Jesus Christ. He was particularly interested in the Resurrection story and had become a non-believer from the teachings of skeptics who gained attention at the turn of the century. While he set out to prove that the resurrection of Christ was merely a myth, through his long research and study he came to believe in the Biblical record and the journey became a personal victory for him. "Who Moved the Stone" is considered to be a classic work on the validity of the Resurrection.

The forward is written by another newsman, Lee, Strobel, who is an expert on the life of Christ having written "The Case for Christ." He explains that he was a skeptic like Morison and that they both became seekers of spiritual truth. He recommends "Who Moved the Stone?" a book, he writes, that the author never intended to write.

## Tone

"Who Moved the Stone?" by Frank Morison is an-depth look into the mysteries surrounding the arrest, trial, crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Its tone is serious and even scholarly. Morrison first explains the mystery or conflict about a specific element of the story. He then presents the various scenarios that could be the possible solutions to the mystery. There are passages that are chock full of so much detail and twists that one has to read and re-read the section to fully absorb the point he is attempting to make.

Morison writes the book from the standpoint of an innocent who starts out on a journey of understanding and states his intention to have have no preconceived ideas or bias. He begins the book with the arrest of Jesus and lays out all the questions that surrounded that night. He goes about responding to each question or point of contention in a methodical way. Since the events took place some 2,000 years ago, he readily admits that his research could only go so far and that some of his conclusions were facts mixed with speculation and logical dot connecting.

One can sense through his words how dedicated he was in finding answers to the puzzling aspects of Jesus' last days and then his resurrection. Although he does not

believe any frustration, there is an underlying hint that he wanted to uncover more than his limited resources allowed him to.

## Structure

"Who Moved the Stone?" by Frank Morison is separated into fifteen chapters and is a quasi-investigative report on what happened from the night of Jesus' arrest through the Sunday when he was resurrected. The subtitle of Morison's book is, "A Skeptic Looks at the Death and Resurrection of Christ" and sets the premise for the work. The book is structured in basically a chronological order; however, the author often revisits various aspects of the events of those days throughout the book.

First, Morison looks deeply into the night of Jesus' arrest. He first imagines how difficult it would be to re-investigate a modern crime 2,000 years from now. He readily admits that the resources are limited, fragmented and in many cases simply gone. Morison relies chiefly on the Gospels and other religious literature that has endured through the centuries.

Morison then delves into Jesus' appearance before Caiaphas and the other Jewish High Priests and their unorthodox treatment of him. The investigation then moves on to Jesus' appearance on Friday morning, Good Friday, before the Governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. The author found evidence that Pilate did not want to take the case but it was forced on him.

Lastly, Morison looks into the circumstances that occurred after the Crucifixion and burial. He describes how the women in Jesus' inner circle discovered an empty tomb when they came to pay final homage to him. One of the biggest mysteries about these four days - and there were many mysteries - was who moved the large stone that covered the entrance of the cave that served as Jesus' tomb. If Morison was able to adequately solve that mystery is something no one will be able to say with any certainty.

## Quotes

"In attempting to unravel the tangled skein of passions, prejudices, and political intrigues with which the last days of Jesus are interwoven, it has always seemed to me a sound principle to go straight to the heart of the mystery by studying closely the nature of the charge brought against Him" (Chapter 2, p. 13).

"If, therefore, by some magic reversal of the centuries we could have stood at some vantage point in old Jerusalem about midnight or shortly afterward on that memorable 14th of Nisan, we should probably have witnessed a small party of men leading a strangely unresisting figure through the darkness, along the rocky define that skirted the precipitous eastern face of the temple wall, up the historic causeway at the southeastern angle of the city wall to the headquarters of His avowed and inveterate enemies" (Chapter 2, p. 15).

"The prospective Prisoner Himself was strangely willing, and in some inexplicable way seemed to be facilitating their plans. From the purely political side the course was clear. The door they expected they would have to force stood open" (Chapter 3, p. 40).

"Outwardly, it has all the placidity of still waters, but beneath the apparent stillness there are deep and hidden currents that make it incomparably the greatest and most profoundly interesting psychological study in history" (Chapter 4, p. 43).

"The apostle John was found with Mary the mother of Jesus at the foot of the cross, and, if the inferences we drew are correct, he left shortly after the final agony to escort his charge to a place of safety and retirement" (Chapter 6, p. 68).

"Not until the great cry had gone up and the vast crowds poured back into the town is it probable that any real news of what was transpiring in Jerusalem percolated out to the surrounding villages, and by that time the sun was setting and the Sabbath was at hand" (Chapter 8, p. 87).

"There is a far earlier and more authoritative testimony in the letters of Paul, of Peter and and of James the Just, and in the admittedly historic network of Christian churches stretching from Jerusalem through Asia Minor to the catacombs at Rome" (Chapter 9, p. 105).

"Yet the original material form which we have to derive this dynamic force consists of a habitual doubter like Thomas, a rather weak fisherman like Peter, a gentle dreamer like John, a practical tax gatherer like Matthew, a few seafaring men like Andrew and Nathaniel, the inevitable women, and at most two or three others" (Chapter 9, p. 105).

"And Jesus said until them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" (Chapter 11, p. 131).

"It [the body] is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (Chapter 12, p. 141).

"Be not amazed: ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, which hath been crucified: his is risen; he is not here: behold, the place where they laid him! But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you" (Chapter 13, p. 160).

"And [Jesus] saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing the tings which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them" (Chapter 14, p. 186).



## Topics for Discussion

What type of personality and demeanor did Pontius Pilate normally have? How did he react when the case of Jesus was passed on to him? What person changed his attitude toward Christ?

What theory does the author offer for the lapse of time between the departure of Judas from the Garden of Gethsemane and the time he returned with the guards who were there to arrest Jesus?

Why did the women go to the tomb on Sunday morning? What frightened them away? Why were they not required to bear witness about the tomb being empty?

What conversion did James the Just have and how was he related to Jesus? What opinion did Saul, also known as Paul, initially have about Christianity? What occurred that changed him when he was on the road to Damascus?

Who emerged as a leader in the Christian movement after Jesus' death? Why was it somewhat surprising? Describe the growth of the movement after the Crucifixion.

Who was the young man in the tomb? How many different scenarios does the author have about who he may have been?

Who could have moved the stone? How many different scenarios does the author present about who might have moved it? Is there a definitive answer?