

# The Resurrection of Jesus – Fact of History or Cult Fiction –

Matters of First Importance

1 Corinthians 15:1-19

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# Matters of First Importance

- Christ died according to the prophecies of the Scriptures.
- Christ was then also buried and entombed for three days.
- Christ was raised from the dead on the third day...all as prophesied by the Scripture.
- Christ was then seen, in living flesh and bone, by over 500 eye-witnesses, many of whom were still alive decades later.

**SKEPTICS – “HE DIDN’T REALLY DIE”**

# “It is a Legend” Theory

- Legends take several generations to develop.
- People were preaching the resurrection of Christ 50 days after the resurrection. Ac 2
- The Church already had hundreds, if not thousands of congregations within 20-30 years of the resurrection
- All this happened too quickly if the event were truly a legend.

# Conspiracy Theory

- The Disciples made the story up – a fiction.
- Motive?
  - Hostile Jewish culture
  - Hostile Roman culture
  - Nothing to gain – everything to lose
- The Transformation
  - The night of His arrest, they fled in terror. Mk 14:50, 60-72
  - Shortly thereafter, they boldly proclaimed Him as the Risen Lord who conquered death. Ac 2:14; 4:8
- The Empty Tomb
  - The eyewitness testimonies
  - The rapid growth of the church amidst hostile enemies
  - Conversion of radical opponents into radical proponents

# “The Disciples Stole the Body” Theory

- The tomb was secured by a great stone
- The tomb was protected by a military guard
  - “you have a guard...make it [secure].” Mt 27:65f.
  - The guard unit secured the site and placed a Roman Seal between the stone and the cave.
  - The Priests bribed the soldiers to lie. Mt 28:13
  - The Priests bribed the Governor to protect the lives of the guard unit. Mt 28:14
    - This would have been unnecessary if the guard unit were made up of Temple guards (Jews).
- Motive? Everything to lose, nothing to gain...

# “The Disciples Stole the Body” Theory

- How do we explain the disciples courage to attack 16 Roman soldiers, when they had just fled from the Temple guard a couple days prior?
  - Military ability, weaponry, tactics, armor,...???
- How do you account for the hundreds of self-proclaimed eyewitnesses?
  - Paul even appealed that many were still available for questioning and open investigation of the facts. 1 Co 15
- How do you account for the explosive growth of the Church within the first months and years in a hostile environment?
- The stolen body does not account for the radical change in the life of Saul, perfect Jew and persecutor of the church, to Paul, most influential apostle of the early church. 1 Co 15:8-10

# The “He Fell Into a Swoon” Theory

- Three days after being beaten to the point of being completely unrecognizable; having his hands and feet nailed to a cross; being so near to death as to fool Roman execution experts; being stabbed and bleeding out; then being smothered by 150 pounds of burial linens that had been soaked in spices that harden as they dry; being enclosed in a sealed and guarded cave; he somehow escaped his grave-clothes, moved the massive stone, scared the Roman soldiers so that they chose to flee and die as deserters rather than fight a man who had been beaten and crucified three days earlier; and then appeared to His disciples as a healthy and whole, uninjured, death-conquering hero.



# Problems for the Swoon Theory

- The Romans were expert executioners.
  - After breaking the two thieves legs to hasten death, they noticed that Jesus was already dead. Jn 19:33
  - Just to make sure, they pierced Jesus' side with a spear...He bled out blood and water. 19:34
    - Indications of traumatic shock and acute heart failure
- The cloths (Jn 19:38-42); the stone (Mt 27:60); the guard unit Pilate had authorized (27:65)
- How did He convince His disciples He had just conquered the grave?
- Why did He disappear from history? Why not capitalize on it?
- The Jewish Leaders never sought to punish the disciples for desecrating a tomb, and they never argued against the empty tomb.

# Undeniable Truths of the Resurrection

- The discovery was made by women.
  - Jews did not consider women to be reliable witnesses.
  - Why not cover up the story of the first discoverers?
- The resurrection was first proclaimed in the city where it was said to have occurred just two months earlier.
- The Jews themselves confirmed the fact of the empty tomb and selected a story so implausible that it was never used against the disciples.
- Paul, the former persecutor, claimed to have been changed when he met the Risen Christ. Ac 9

# Eyewitness Testimony

- Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:18)
- Peter (Lk 24:34)
- The Twelve (Lk 24:33-49; Mt 28:16-20; Jn 20:19-23)
- The “more than five-hundred,” some of whom must have been known to some in Corinth (1 Co 15:6)
- James, Jesus’ brother (15:7)
  - Jesus’ formerly unbelieving brother (Jn 7:1-9; cf., Ac 15:13-29; Gal 1:18*f.*)
- All the apostles (1 Co 15:7; cf., Lk 24:9, 13, 18, 33, 35*f.*)
- Lastly, to Paul, on the road to Damascus, 34 AD (Ac 9)

# The Supreme Affection to Love the Lord

Communion Sermon

Selected Scriptures

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# To Be Led to Christ, 2 Co 11:3b

- Paul was fearful that the 1<sup>st</sup> Century believers of Corinth might be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.
- Anyone who does not love the Lord is to be accursed. 1 Co 16:22
  - “Who would have thought that under the very eyes of Christ’s own chosen disciples, while the blood of Calvary was hardly yet dry, while the age of miracles had not yet passed away, who would have thought in a day like this there was a danger of Christians departing from Christ.” J.C. Ryle

# Christianity is not a Blind Faith

- Christianity is a rational based faith. We are to use our minds.
  - What is true is to govern our faith
- Three questions when in the midst of any experience, positive or negative...
- What do I feel, what do I think and what do I know?
  - Get to the 3<sup>rd</sup> question, what I know to be true about God.
  - What I believe will influence how I think and it will control what I feel.
    - It might not change what I feel, but I will be governed not be feelings but by faith.

# If We Get Jesus Wrong, We Miss the Faith

- Jesus Christ is the integrating centrality of the Christian faith.
  - The person defines the doctrine
- Satan wants to give us a different Jesus. Gal 1

# Christianity Is All about Jesus

- Do you believe in a resurrected Savior & Lord?
- Paul, determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 1 Co 2:2
- We...preach Christ as Lord, the Light and Knowledge of the glory of God. 2 Co 4:5*f*.
- Do you recognize that Jesus Christ is in you? 2 Co 13:5



# Christianity Is All About Jesus

- I live by faith in the Son of God. Gal 2:20
- I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.... Gal 4:19
- For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. Php 1:21
- You did not learn Christ as the Gentiles. Eph 4:17-20
- He might have first place **IN** everything. Col 1:18
- We are to proclaim His excellencies. 1 Pe 2:9

# Even in Communion

- Jesus introduces the concept in Lk 22 (see also Jn 13)
- Jesus explains it through Paul in 1 Co 11
- “Do this in remembrance of me.” 1 Co 11:24*f*.
- And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent. Jn 17:3

# Think on Christ

- A constant view of the glory of Christ will revive our souls and cause our spiritual lives to flourish and thrive. The more we behold the glory of Christ by faith now, the more spiritual and heavenly will be the state of our souls. The reason why the spiritual life in our souls decays and withers is because we fill our minds full of other things. But, when the mind is filled with thoughts of Christ, and his glory, these things will be expelled. This is how our spiritual life is revived. John Owen