

## **Evidence for the Resurrection of Christ**

### ***Part II***

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#### ***Thieves Stole the Body of Christ***

Suppose thieves did steal the body of Jesus! How would they have gotten past the Roman guards with it? What would have been their motive for stealing the body of Christ? And why would anyone steal the dead-body of Christ and leave His grave clothes behind? Surely, they would have taken the grave clothes also. All four Gospel accounts record the presence of the grave clothes in the tomb without the body of Christ. There is little or no evidence to the silly theory that thieves stole the body of Christ.

#### ***Joseph Removed His Body***

Since Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, some suggested that Joseph removed Jesus' body from the tomb. But when did Joseph steal the body of Christ? Suppose Joseph took the body of Christ, how could he have gotten past the Roman guards stationed outside the tomb? And in fact, he had gotten near the guards with the body of Christ, would they have stopped him? Certainly, the guards would have stopped him. What would have been Joseph's motive for stealing the body of Christ? He was a follower of Jesus, and if he had the body he could have come forth with it and refuted the resurrection claim, and stopped the persecution of the followers of Christ; but he did not.

#### ***The Roman Theory, or Jewish Authorities Took the Body into their Own Custody***

They certainly had a motive, [or motives] for stealing the body of Christ. But why would the authorities take the body of Christ and then charge the disciples stole it? Further, if the authorities had the dead body of Christ in their possession they could have brought the body forward and stopped this sudden movement of the Christian faith. This would have been in their favor. But they did not have the body of Christ; therefore, they did not produce it.

The eloquent proof of the resurrection echoed from the empty tomb in the life of the early church. One of the tenets Christianity rests on is the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. And because of this fact, the authorities persecuted the early with violence. They arrested the apostles, flogged, threatened, vilified,

imprisoned, and killed them. But all this was entirely unnecessary if the authorities had produced the dead-body of Christ.

If the resurrection of Christ is in fact, a lie, would the apostles and the early church have died for a lie? What led the apostles to move from chilling fear to courage? Was it not the resurrection of Christ? The resurrection of Christ gave the apostles a reference-point, an absolute, and a thought-form by which to live and judge society.

None of the objections to the resurrection, or theories against it can be proven. The dead-body of Christ was not stolen or moved away by men. The dead-body of Christ was raised to life from the dead by the power of the infinite-personal, living, sovereign, God of the universe (Rom.1: 4).

### ***The Grave Clothes Were Undisturbed***

In John 20:1-10, John the apostle emphasized the existence of the discarded grave clothes as a fact of Jesus' resurrection. John sighted two things: (1) the absence of Jesus' body, and (2) the presence of the grave clothes in an undisturbed condition.

Leading up to this scene in the tomb, one has to look at John 19:38-43. In this account, we have recorded for us, Joseph of Arimathea boldly went to governor Pilate and begged him for the body of Christ. Pilate granted his request and gave the body to Joseph and Nicodemus, the one "who came to Jesus by night" (John 3:1-2). Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds in weight, for the burial of Christ. Jesus was buried after the manner of Jewish burial customs.

A careful study of John 20 suggests three things that the apostles, John and Peter saw which led them to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead: (1) they saw the grave clothes "lying there." The word "lying" is mentioned twice in the text. (2) The head napkin was "not . . .with the lines cloths but . . .in a place by itself." The napkin was a separated cloth used for the head, as in the case of Lazarus (John 11:44). The napkin cloth used on Jesus lay on the stone slab, but was separated from the body's clothes by a noticeable space. (3) This same napkin was "not lying. . . but wrapped together. . ." The empty napkin was still preserved.

The stone slab, the collapsed grave clothes, the head-cloth and the space between them, was the sight the two apostles saw when they reached the tomb. No wonder they "saw and believed" in the resurrection of Christ (John 20:8).

### ***The Resurrection Appearances of Jesus***

The resurrection appearances of Christ cannot be taken lightly, nor can they be dismissed without merit. There was a body

of witnesses who gave testimony to the resurrection. The testimonies were not inventions they were true eye-witness accounts of the resurrection.

1. The appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-18). Mary identified the resurrected body as the same person she knew before the resurrection. She saw the same material body.
2. His appearance to Mary Magdalene and the other women (Matt. 28:1-10). Several things about this passage are that: (a) they saw the empty tomb, (b) they saw Him, (c) they heard Him, and (d) they worshiped Him.
3. His appearance to Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5; John 20:3-9). Paul mentioned, "He was seen of Peter." Peter also saw the empty tomb.
4. His appearance to two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). These two disciples not only saw Jesus, but they also talked with Him and ate with Him.
5. His appearance to the ten disciples (Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23). They saw Him, heard Him, touched Him, and ate fish and honey with Him. Disciple, Thomas was not present at this appearance.
6. His appearance to the eleven apostles (John 20:24-31). Thomas was present that time. Thomas wanted some proof of Jesus' physical resurrection, and he got it when Jesus invited him to touch His wounds, and Thomas did (John 20:27). Thomas then bowed in worship and acknowledged Christ as his "Lord and God."
7. His appearance to all the apostles at the giving of the "Great Commission" (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18). He defeated Satan, robbed the grave of death, He was victorious over sin, shame, and guilt, and offered free salvation to all who would come to Him. As the sovereign, living Lord, He has all "authority and power" in heaven and on earth. As the living Lord He has "all authority over our lives."
8. His appearance to five hundred disciples (1 Cor.15:6). When the apostle Paul wrote this, many of those who had seen the risen Lord were still alive.
9. His appearance to James (1 Cor.15:7). Jesus, "appeared to James."
10. His appearance to all the apostles before His ascension (Acts 1:4-8).
11. His appearance to Paul after the ascension (1Cor.15:8). The conversion of Saul who became the apostle Paul was attributed to the resurrection of Christ (Acts 9:1-9).

The resurrection of Christ is believed throughout Christendom, and celebrated on every “Lord’s Day” as an historical fact. The resurrection of Christ is the crowning miracle of the Christian faith and the divine seal for all obedient believers.

Obedient believers are those who accept the full and complete work of Christ on the cross, and trust in the infinite value of that work alone. These are the ones who have a pledge of their own future resurrection to eternal life, because of the resurrection of Christ.

The resurrection of Christ is; therefore, a test upon which the truth-claims of the Christian faith rest. The resurrection of Christ is either the greatest miracle, or the greatest delusion which history has recorded.

Throughout the life of the church, and the spread of the Christian through-forms, and truth-claims, the resurrection of Christ has been presented as an actual miraculous event in harmony with Jesus’ history and character.

Can the resurrection of Christ be reasoned out of the flow of history? Can we logically reason away the apostolic accounts of the resurrection of Christ and the evident start of the Christian faith? If, in fact the resurrection of Christ is not true, then, why is there the concerted effort to dismiss it, or to destroy the mountain of evidence we have available for us to examine?

One must either admit to the resurrection as a miracle, or frankly acknowledge the resurrection of Christ as an inexplicable mystery. The resurrection of Christ is not analogical, it does not correspond to, nor can it be compared to anything in other faiths. Only Christianity claims a resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ is a fact that will affect your life whether, or not you believe it. Believing in Jesus “is to have eternal life, rejecting Him is eternal death” (John 3:18; 3:36). These two passages teach that Christianity rests, on an antithesis, and if in fact, that Christianity is not resting on an antithesis then, Christianity is meaningless.

### ***Summary***

If we approach the evidence with our minds already made up, then, the miracle of the resurrection of Christ cannot happen, and no amount of evidence will convince us that the resurrection did happen.

Look again at: The Jewish leadership, Pilate, Herod, the trump-up Jewish and Roman charges and trials, the crucifixion of Christ, the death of Christ, His burial, the Roman guards at the tomb, then women who came to the tomb, the disciples at the tomb, the accounts of the appearances of Christ resurrection, the transformation of the disciples, the birth of Christianity, the

separation of Christianity from Judaism, and the existence of the historic Christian Church. There is in fact, sufficient evidence for the resurrection of Christ; the resurrection of Christ indeed, *did* happen in history!