

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ – Hoax or History?

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ and Christianity stand or fall together

The Resurrection account is recorded in all four Gospels

Matthew 28:2-11

Mark Chapter 16

Luke Chapter 24

John Chapters 20 and 21

Matthew 28:1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the LORD descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where He lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold, He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him. See, I have told you.” ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.” ¹¹ While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.

How Important is the Resurrection of Christ?

There are about 4000 religions in the world. Only four of the major world religions are based on personalities rather than a philosophical system. Of the four, only Christianity claims an empty tomb for its founder.

Abraham, the father of Judaism, died about 1900 BC, but no resurrection was ever claimed for him.

Mohammed died June 8, 632 A.D., at the age of sixty-one at Medina, where his tomb is annually visited by thousands of devout Mohammedans but no resurrection was claimed.

Buddha, according to Wilbur M. Smith “The original accounts of Buddha never ascribed to him such thing as a resurrection. In fact, in the earliest account of his death, namely, the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, we read that when Buddha died, it was “with that utter passing away in which nothing whatever remains behind.”

Professor Childers says: “There is no trace in the Pali scripture or commentaries of Sakya Muni having existed after his death or appearing to his disciples.”

Theodosus Harnack says: “where you stand with regard to the fact of the Resurrection is in my eyes no longer Christian theology. To me Christianity stands or falls with the Resurrection.”

Wilbur M. Smith concludes: “If our LORD said, frequently, with great definiteness and detail, that after He went up to Jerusalem He would be put to death, but on the third day He would rise again from the grave, and this prediction came to pass, then it has always seemed to me that everything else that our LORD ever said must also be true.”

W. J. Sparrow-Simpson stated: If it be asked how the Resurrection of Christ is a proof of His being the Son of God, it may be answered:

1. Because He rose from death by His own power. He had the power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it back again. John 10:18. This is not inconsistent with the fact taught in so many other passages, that He was raised by the power of the Father, because what the Father does the Son does likewise; Creation, and all other external works, are ascribed indifferently to the Father, Son and Spirit.

2. As Christ had openly declared Himself to be the Son of God, His rising from the dead was the seal of God to the truth of that declaration. Had He continued under the power of death, God would thereby have disallowed His claim to be His Son; but as He raised Him from the dead, He publicly acknowledge Him; saying: “Thou art My Son, this day have I declared Thee such.”

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36) is wholly and entirely founded on the Resurrection. Not merely is the Resurrection its principal theme, but if that doctrine were removed, there would be no doctrine left. For the Resurrection is propounded as being

1. The explanation of Jesus's death
2. Prophetically anticipated as the Messianic experience
3. Apostolically witnessed
4. The cause of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and thus accounting for religious phenomena otherwise inexplicable
5. Certifying the Messianic and Kingly position of Jesus of Nazareth

Thus the whole series of arguments and conclusions depend for stability entirely upon the Resurrection. Without Resurrection the Messianic and Kingly position of Jesus could not be convincingly established. Without it the new outpouring of the Holy Spirit would continue a mystery unexplained. Without it the substance of the apostolic witness would have disappeared.

H.P. Liddon says: "Faith in the resurrection is the keystone of the arch of Christian faith, and when it is removed, all must inevitably crumble into ruin."

As Wilbur Smith puts it: "From the first day of its divinely bestowed life, the Christian church has unitedly borne testimony to its faith in Resurrection of Christ. It is what we may call one of the great fundamental doctrines and convictions of the church, and so penetrates the literature of the New Testament, that if you lifted out every passage in which a reference is made to the Resurrection, you would have a collection of writing so mutilated that what remained could not be understood."

Professor Milligan says: "It thus appears that from the dawn of her history, the Christian church not only believed in the Resurrection of her LORD, but that her belief upon the point was interwoven with her whole existence."

W.J. Sparrow-Simpson says: "If Resurrection is not historic fact, then the power of death remains unbroken, and with it the effect of sin; and the significance of Christ's death remains uncertified, and accordingly believers are yet in their sins, precisely where they were before they heard of Jesus' name."

B.B. Warfield puts it: “Christ Himself deliberately staked His whole claim to the credit of men upon His Resurrection. When asked for a sign, He pointed to this sign (Resurrection) as His single and sufficient credential.”

Michael Green makes the point well: “Christianity does not hold the Resurrection to be one among many tenets of belief. Without faith in the Resurrection there would be no Christianity at all. The Christian church would never have begun; the Jesus movement would have fizzled out like a damp squib with His execution. Christianity stands or falls with the truth of the Resurrection. Once disprove it, and you have disposed of Christianity.”

“Christianity is a historical religion. It claims that God has taken the risk of involving Himself in human history, and the facts are there for you to examine with the utmost rigor. They will stand any amount of critical investigation...”

John Locke, the famous British philosopher, said concerning Christ’s Resurrection: “Our Savior’s Resurrection is truly of great importance in Christianity; so great that His being or not being the Messiah stands or falls with it: so that these two important articles are inseparable and in effect make one. For since that time, believe one and you believe both; deny one of them, and you can believe neither.”

Philip Schaff, the church historian, concludes: “The Resurrection of Christ is therefore emphatically a test question upon which depends the truth or falsehood of the Christian religion. It is either the greatest miracle or the greatest delusion which history records.”

Josh McDowell, author of “Evidence that demands a verdict” says: “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon the minds of men, or it is the most fantastic fact of history.”

Old Testament Predictions of Christ’s Resurrection

Two Old Testament passages are cited as predictions of Christ’s Resurrection by the New Testament.

1. Psalm 2:7 “I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you or I have become your Father.”

This is repeated in Hebrews 1:5: “For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? or again, “I will be to him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son”?

It is specifically applied to the Resurrection in Acts 13:33-34 “What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus as also it is written in the second Psalm. “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.”

Acts 13:34 And as for the fact that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken in this way, “I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.”

2.The Resurrection of Christ is also predicted in Psalm 16:12: “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.”

Peter argues explicitly in Acts 2: 29-32 that this could not refer to David but must refer to Christ, declaring: “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the Resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself says: “The LORD said to my LORD, sit at my right hand, ³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.”

Another explicit Old Testament reference told the Resurrection is in Job 19:25-26 where Job pronounced triumphantly: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.”

This too, emphasizes the physical nature of the Resurrection of the “flesh” as did Peter in Acts Chapter 2.

The Claims of Christ that He would be raised from the Dead

The prediction of His own Resurrection began early in Christ's ministry and continued to the very end.

Early prediction of His Resurrection

John 2:19-22 Just after Jesus performed His first miracle, He predicted His Resurrection, declaring "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After He was raised from the dead, His disciples recalled what He had said.

Later prediction of His Resurrection

Later in His ministry, Jesus repeated His claim: He answered "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12:39-40)

Final prediction of His Resurrection

As He approach the cross, His predictions became more frequent and specific: "When they came together in Galilee, He said to them. "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of man. They will kill him, and on the third day He will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief. (Matthew 17:22-23) Jesus added, "No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down on my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again." (John 10:18)

Other Claims as Given by Jesus

Matthew 16:21 "From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."

Matthew 17:9 "And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."

Matthew 17:22-23 "And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men and they

will kill him, and He will be raised again on the third day.” And they were deeply grieved.”

Matthew 20:18-19 “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and will deliver Him up to the Gentile to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.”

Luke 9:22-27 “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

John R. W. Stott writes: “Jesus Himself never predicted His death without adding that He would rise, and described His coming Resurrection as a “sign”. Paul, at the beginning of his letter to Romans, wrote that Jesus was “designated Son of God in power...by the Resurrection from the dead.” The earliest sermons of the Apostles recorded in the Book of Acts repeatedly assert that by the Resurrection God has reversed man’s sentence and vindicated His Son.”

Wilbur M. Smith asserts: “It was this same Jesus, the Christ who, among many other remarkable things, said and repeated something which, proceeding from any other being would have condemned him at once as either a bloated egotist or a dangerously unbalanced person. That Jesus said He was going up to Jerusalem to die is not remarkable, though all the details He gave about the death, weeks and months before He died, are together a prophetic phenomenon. But when He said the He Himself would rise again from the dead, the third day after He was crucified, He said something that only a fool would dare say, if He expected longer the devotion of any disciples, unless – He was sure He was going to rise. No founder of any world religion known to men ever dared say a thing like that.”

Other claims as Given by Jesus

Matthew 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:9; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 26:32; 27:65

Mark 8:31-9:1; 9:10; 9:31; 10:32-34; 14:28, 58

Luke 9: 22-27

John 2:18-22; 12:34; chapters 14-16

The Testimony of History and Law

When an event takes place in history and there are enough people alive who were eyewitnesses of it or had participated in the event, and when the information is published, one is able to verify the validity of an historical event (circumstantial evidences).

William Lyon Phelps for more than 40 years Yale's distinguished professor of English literature, author of some 20 volumes of literary studies, public orator of Yale, says: "In the whole story of Jesus Christ, the most important event is the Resurrection. Christian faith depends on this. It is encouraging to know that it is explicitly given by all four evangelists and told also by Paul. The name of those who saw Him after His triumph over death are recorded; and it may be said that the historical evidence for the Resurrection is stronger than for any other miracle anywhere narrated; for as Paul said, if Christ is not risen from the dead, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also vain."

Professor Ambrose Fleming, emeritus professor of Electrical Engineering in the University of London, receiver of Faraday medal in 1928, one of England's outstanding scientists, says of the New Testament documents: "We must take this evidence of experts as to the age and authenticity of this writing, just as we take the facts of astronomy on the evidence of astronomers who do not contradict each other. This being so, we can ask ourselves whether it is probable that such book, describing events that occurred about 30 or 40 years previously, could have been accepted and cherished if the stories of abnormal events in it were false or mythical. It is impossible, because the memory of all elderly persons regarding events of 30-40 years before is perfectly clear."

"No one could now issue a biography of Queen Victoria, who died 31 years ago, full of anecdotes which were quite untrue. They would be contradicted at once.

Hence, there is an improbability that the account of the Resurrection given by Mark, which agrees substantially with that given in the other Gospels, is a pure invention. This mystical theory has had to be abandoned because it will not bear close scrutiny.”

Ambrose Fleming concluded that there is nothing in the Gospels that would cause a man of science to have problems with the miracles contained therein, and challenge to intellectual honesty, he asserted: “If such a study is pursued with what eminent lawyers have called a “willing mind”, it will engender a deep assurance that the Christian Church is not founded on fictions, or nourished on delusion or as St. Peter calls them “cunningly devised fables”, but on historical and actual events, which, however strange they may be, are indeed the greatest events which have ever happened in the history of the world.”

An example may be taken from a letter written by Sir Edward Clarke to the Rev. E.L. Macassey: “As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the first Easter Day (Resurrection). To me the evidence is conclusive and over and over again in the High Court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly as compelling. Inference follows on evidence, and a truthful witness is always artless and disdains effect. The Gospel evidence for the Resurrection is of this class, and as a lawyer I accept it unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts they were able to substantiate.”

Simon Greenleaf (1783-1853) was the famous Royall Professor of Law at Harvard University, and succeeded Justice Joseph Story as the Dane Professor of Law in the same university, upon Story’s Death in 1846, H.W. H. Knoll says of this great authority in jurisprudence: “To the efforts of Story and Greenleaf is to be ascribed the rise of the Harvard Law School to its eminent position among the legal school of United States.”

Greenleaf produced a famous work entitled “A Treatise on the Law of Evidence” which is “still considered the greatest single authority on evidence in the entire literature of legal procedure.”

In 1846, while still Professor of Law at Harvard, Greenleaf wrote a volume entitled “An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Court of Justice”. In his classic work the author

examines the value of the testimony of the apostles to the Resurrection of Christ. The following are the brilliant jurist's critical observations:

"The great truths which the apostles declared, were, that Christ had risen from the dead, and that only through repentance from sin, and faith in Him (Jesus) could men hope for salvation. This doctrine they asserted with one voice, everywhere, not only under the greatest discouragements but in the face of the most appalling errors that can be presented to the mind of man. Their master had recently perished as a malefactor, by the sentence of a public tribunal. His religion sought to overthrow the religions of the whole world. The laws of every country were against the teaching of His disciples. The interests and passions of all the rulers and great men in the world were against them. The fashion of the world was against them. Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition, reviling, bitter persecution, stripes, imprisonments, torments, and cruel deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all those miseries they endured undismayed, nay, rejoicing.

As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution. The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and unbending courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths which they asserted; and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy and terrific frequency. It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.

If it were morally possible for them to have been deceived in this matter, every human motive operated to lead them to discover and avow their error. To have persisted in so gross a falsehood, after it was known to them, was not only to encounter, for life, all the evils which man could inflict, from without, but to endure also the pangs of inward and conscious guilt; with no hope of future peace, no testimony of a good conscience, no expectation of honor or esteem among men, no hope of happiness in this life, or in the world to come.

Such conduct in the apostle world moreover have been utterly irreconcilable with the fact that they possessed the ordinary constitution of our common nature. Yet their lives do show them to have been men like all others of our race; swayed by the same motives, animated by the same hope, affected by the same joys, subdued by same sorrows, agitated by the same fears, and subjected to the same passions, temptations and infirmities, as ourselves. And their writings show them to have been men of vigorous understandings. If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication.”

John Locke was probably the greatest philosopher of his century. This British scholar says in his work “A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity” works cited by Wilbur Smith: “There are some particulars in the history of our Savior, allowed to be so peculiarly appropriated to the Messiah, such innumerable marks of Him, that to believe them of Jesus of Nazareth was in effect the same as to believe Him to be the Messiah, and so are put to express it. The principal of these is His Resurrection from the dead; which being the great and demonstrative proof of His being the Messiah, it is not at all strange that those believing His Resurrection should be put forth for believing Him to be the Messiah; since the declaring His Resurrection was declaring Him to be the Messiah.”

Dr. A.C. Ivy of the Department of Chemical Science of the University of Illinois (Chicago Campus), who served as head of the Division of Physiology in Chicago Professional College, 1946-1953. President of the American Physiological Society from 1939-1949, and author of many scientific articles said: “I believe in the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ. As you say, this is a “personal matter”, but I am not ashamed to let the world know that I believe, and that I can intellectually defend my belief...I cannot prove this belief as I can prove certain scientific facts in my library which one hundred years ago were almost as mysterious as the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the basis of historical evidence of existing biological knowledge, the scientist who is true to the philosophy of science can doubt the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ, but he cannot deny it. Because to do so means that he can prove that it did not happen. I can only say that present-day biological science cannot resurrect a body that has been dead and entombed for three days. To deny the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the basis of

what biology now knows is to manifest an unscientific attitude according to my philosophy of the true scientific attitude.”

Armand Nicholi, of Harvard Medical School, speaks of J.N.D. Anderson as “A scholar of international repute and one eminently qualified to deal with the subject of evidence. He is one of the world’s leading authority on Islamic Law. He is dean of the faculty of law in the University of London, Chairman of the department of Oriental Law at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in the University of London.

This outstanding British scholar who is today influential in the field of International Jurisprudence says: “The evidence of the historical basis of the Christian faith, for the essential validity of the New Testament witness of the person and teaching of Christ Himself, for the fact and significance of His atoning death, and for the historicity of the empty tomb and the apostolic testimony of the Resurrection is such as to provide an adequate foundation for the venture of faith.”

Benjamin Warfield of Princeton expressed in his article: “The Resurrection of Christ an Historical Facts, Evidenced by Eye-Witnesses”. “The Incarnation of Eternal God is Necessarily a Dogma, no human eye could witness His stooping to man’s estate, no human tongue could bear witness to it as a fact and yet, if it be not a fact, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins. On the other hand, the Resurrection of Christ is a fact, an external occurrence within the cognizance of man, to be established by other testimonies and yet which is the cardinal doctrine of our system: on it all other doctrines hang.”

The Testimonies of the early Church Fathers

Professor W. J. Sparrow-Simpson says that “Next to Christology, the Resurrection is undoubtedly the doctrine which held the chief place in early Christian literature: “The sub-apostolic age presents many references, but the second century yields treatises exclusively devoted to it, as, for instance, Athenagoras, and the work ascribed to Justin Martyr.”

Professor Bernard Ramm comments: “In both ecclesiastical history and creedal history the Resurrection is affirmed from the earliest times. It is mentioned in Clement of Rome, Epistle to the Corinthians (AD95), the earliest document of

church history and so continuously throughout all of the patristic period. It appears in all forms of Apostle's creed and is never debated."

William John Sparrow Simpson was an English Anglican priest and writer. He wrote the Libretto for John Stainer's Oratoria. The crucifixion, several hymns and more than 50 books. Sparrow-Simpson says: "The substance of Ignatius' Gospel is Jesus Christ, and the Christian religion consist in "faith in Jesus Christ and love toward Him, in His Passion and Resurrection." He enjoins upon Christians to be "fully convinced of the birth and passion and Resurrection."

"Jesus Christ is described as "our hope through the Resurrection." The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the promise of our Resurrection also."

"Ignatius further declares that the church "rejoices in the passion of our Lord and His Resurrection without wavering." The main facts upon which he dwells are Christ's Cross and death and Resurrection. These he groups together."

Sparrow-Simpson adds: In the Epistle of S. Polycarp to the Philippians (AD110) the writer speaks of our LORD Jesus Christ having "endured to come so far as to death for our sins, whom God raised, having loosed the pains of death." He says that God "raised our LORD Jesus Christ from the dead and gave Him glory and a throne on His right hand, to whom were subjected all things in heaven and on earth." The Risen Jesus "is coming as Judge of quick and dead." And "He that raised Him from the dead will raise us also, if we do His will and walk in His commandments."

To S. Polycarp the exalted Jesus is "the Eternal High Priest". And the saintly bishop's final prayer before his martyrdom was that he "might take a portion in the number of the martyrs in the cup of Christ, to the Resurrection of eternal life both of soul and body in the incorruption of the Holy Ghost."

Bernard Ramm concludes: "Unbelief has to deny all the testimony of the Fathers...It must assume that these men (Church Fathers) either did not have the motivation or the historical standards to really investigate the Resurrection of Christ. The Fathers, considered by the Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church and by the Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Church as authoritative or highly authoritative, respected by the Reformers, and given due weight by all theologians, are written off the record by unbelief. They are deemed trustworthy for date about apostolic or near-apostolic theology, yet in matters of

fact they are not granted a shred of evidential testimony. But this must be, or unbelief cannot make its case stick.”

The Circumstances at the scene of the Tomb

The Pre-Resurrection scene

Jesus was Dead – no death – no Resurrection

Mark 15:15-20 “And wishing to satisfy the multitude, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him over to be crucified. And the soldiers took Him away into the palace (the Praetorium) and they called together the whole Roman cohort. And they dressed Him up in purple, and after weaving a crown of thorn, they put it on Him; and they began to acclaim Him “Hail, King of the Jews.” And they kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting at Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. After they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, and put His garments on Him. And they let Him out to crucify Him.”

The whipping and scourging of a victim prior to crucifixion is described by John Mattingly: “The adjudged criminal was usually first forcefully stripped of his clothes, and then tied to a post or pillar in the tribunal. Then the awful and cruel scourging was administered by the lictors or scourgers. Although the Hebrews limited by their law the number of strokes in a scourging to forty 40, the Romans set no such limitation, and the victim was at the mercy of his scourgers.”

“The brutal instrument used to scourge the victim was called a flagrum. Of this device Mattingly comments: “It can readily be seen that the long, lashing pieces of bone and metal would greatly lacerate human flesh.”

Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, the church historian of the third century said (Epistle of the Church of Smyrna) concerning the Roman scourging inflicted on those to be executed: the sufferer’s “veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews, and bowels of the victim were open to exposure.”

John Mattingly, citing John Peter Lange, say of Christ’s suffering: “It has been conjectured that (His) scourging even surpassed the severity of the normal one. Although the normal scourging was administered by lictors, Lange concludes that since there were no lictors at Pilate’s disposal, he used the soldiers. Thus, from

the very character of these low, vile soldiers, it may be supposed that they exceeded the brutality meted out by the lictors.”

Matthew 27:27 “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before Jesus.”

After suffering the most intense forms of physical punishment, Christ also had to endure the journey to the place of crucifixion – Golgotha. Of this stage of Christ’s suffering Mattingly relates:

1. Even the preparation of the journey must have been a source of acute agony. Matthew 27:31 reads “And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.” The rude stripping of the mock royal garments and the replacement of His own garments, undoubtedly on contact with the cuts and bruises of the skin from the scourging, resulted in great pain.
2. The phrase “And they bring unto the place of Golgotha” (Mark 15:22a) would also indicate that Christ, unable to walk under His own power, had to be literally brought or borne along to the place of execution. Thus, the revolting and horrifying pre-cross sufferings were brought to a close, and the actual act of crucifying began.”

Mark 15:22-27, 29-39 records the following narrative of Christ’s crucifixion: “And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, “Place of a skull”. And they tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour when they crucified Him. And the inscription of the charge against Him read “The King of the Jews”. And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on the right and one on the left. And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, “Ha! You who were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!” In the same way the chief priests along with the scribes were also mocking Him among themselves and saying, “He saved other: He cannot save Himself. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!” And those who were crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him. And when the sixth hour had come, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth

hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” And when some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, “Behold, He is calling for Elijah.” And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on the reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, “Let us see whether Elijah will come and take Him down.” And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God.”

Mattingly says of the crucifixion itself: “It cannot be overemphasized that the sufferings endured on the cross were extremely intense and severe. The abominableness of this torture was realized by Rome’s most famous orator, Marcus Tullius Cicero, who said: “Even the mere word, cross, must remain far not only from the lips of the citizens of Rome, but also from their thoughts, their eyes, their ears.”

Michael Green says of Jesus’ physical suffering: “After a sleepless night, in which He was given no food, endured to mockery of two trials, and had His back lacerated with the cruel Roman cat-of-nine tails, He was led out to execution by crucifixion. This was an excruciatingly painful death, in which every nerve in the body cried aloud in anguish.”

Farrar gives a vivid description of death by crucifixion: “For indeed a death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of horrible and ghastly-dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, shame, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation of more pain, mortification of untended wounds – all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness.”

“The unnatural position made every movement extremely painful; the laceration of veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened. The arteries and veins, especially at the head and stomach – became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst (due to bleeding and

hypovolemia); and all these physical complications caused an internal excitement and anxiety, which made the prospect of death itself – of death, the unknown enemy, at whose approach man usually shudders most – bear the aspect of a delicious and exquisite release.”

Professor E.H. Day relates: “It is St. Mark who lays stress upon Pilate’s wonder at hearing that Christ was already dead, and upon his personal questioning of the centurion before he would give leave for the removal of the body from the cross. The Roman soldiers were not unfamiliar with the evidence of death, or with the sight of death following upon crucifixion.”

As Michael Green points out, Pilate required certification of Christ’s death: “Four executioners came to examine him, before a friend, Joseph of Arimathea, was allowed to take away the body for burial.” Green says of these four specialists who were accustomed to dealing with death: “They knew a dead man when they saw one – and their commanding officer had heard the condemned man’s death cry himself and certified the death to the governor, Pontius Pilate.”

“And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Christ, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God.” (Mark 15:39) And Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. (Mark 15:44)”

John R. W. Stott writes: “Pilate was indeed surprised that Jesus was already dead, but he was sufficiently convinced by the Centurion’s assurance to give Joseph permission to remove the body from the cross.”

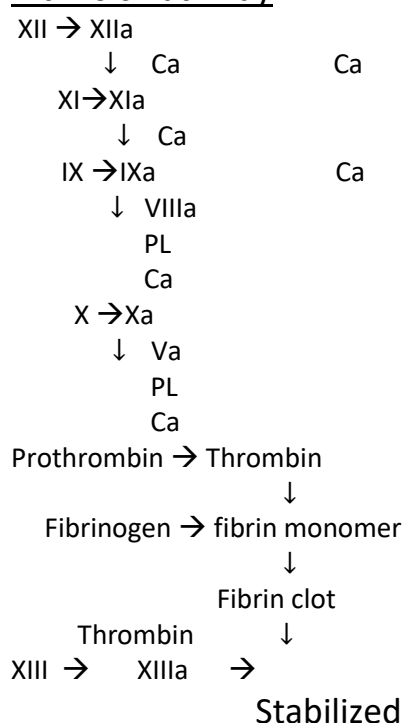
Michael Green writes of Christ’s death: “We are told on eyewitness authority that “blood and water” came out of the pierced side of Jesus (John 19:34, 35). The eyewitness clearly attached great importance to this. Had Jesus been alive when the spear pierced His side, strong spouts of blood (red) would have emerged (pumping) with every heart-beat. Instead, the observer noticed semi-solid dark, red clot seeping out, distinct and separate from the accompanying watery serum. This is evidence of massive clotting of the blood in the main arteries (heart), and is exceptionally strong medical proof of death. It is all the more impressive because the evangelist could not possibly have realized its significance to a pathologist. The “blood and water” from the spear-thrust is proof positive that Jesus was already dead.”

My humble opinion: Coagulation or clotting.

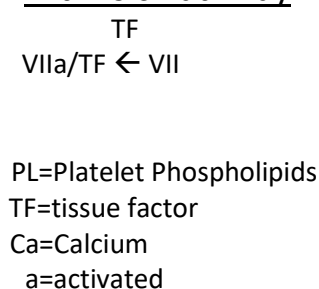
Clotting is a sequential process that involves the interaction of numerous blood components called coagulation factors. There are 13 principal coagulation factors in all, and each of these has been assigned a Roman numeral. I to XIII.

Coagulation can be initiated through the activation of two separate pathways, designated extrinsic and intrinsic. Both pathways result in the production of factor X. The activation of this factor X marks the beginning of the so-called common pathway coagulation, which results in the formation of a clot.

Intrinsic Pathway



Extrinsic Pathway



The blood coagulation cascade is initiated through either the extrinsic or intrinsic pathways. Both pathways result in the production of factor X. An enzyme that marks the beginning of the common pathway of coagulation, which culminates in the stabilization of a fibrin clot.

The intrinsic pathway is activated through exposed endothelial collagen, and the extrinsic pathway is activated through tissue factors released by endothelial cells after external damage (like scouring).

Negative Feedback

To prevent over coagulation, which causes widespread clotting or thrombosis, there are certain processes to keep the coagulation cascade in check. As thrombin acts as procoagulant, it also acts as a negative feedback by activating plasminogen to plasmin and stimulating the production of antithrombin (AT). Plasmin acts directly on the fibrin mesh and breaks it down. AT decreases the production of thrombin from prothrombin and decrease the amount of activated factor X.

Protein C and S also acts to prevent coagulation, mainly by inactivating factors V and VIII.

The liver is responsible for the formation of factor I, II, V, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XIII and protein C and S. Factor VII is created by the vascular endothelium.

Liver diseases can cause lack of coagulation factors and lead to hemorrhage.

When a person dies, all the coagulation and anticoagulation factors stop function. All the blood cells (RBC and WBC) begin to separate from the serum which is a watery clear solution. The cellular portion remains dark red in color and precipitated by the gravity.

John 19:34 “But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness – his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth – that you also may believe.”

“Blood and water” mean the dead person’s blood has time to be precipitated by gravity into cellular (red portion) and watery-clear (serum).

Another reason for “Blood and water” is due to acute congestive heart failure resulting in Pericardial Effusion and Pleural Effusion. Due to prolonged torture that Jesus suffered with significant blood lost and lack of food or drink and total exhaustion, His heart went into acute congestive failure. When the soldier pierced the spear to His heart, it punctures the pleural cavity and pericardial cavity and heart itself, resulting in “Blood and water” pouring out.

Professor Chandler asserts that: “The remarkable circumstance of wrapping up the dead body in spices by Joseph and Nicodemus, according to the manner of

the Jew in burying, is full proof that Jesus was dead, and known to be dead. Had there indeed been any remains of life in Him, when taken down from the cross, the pungent nature of the myrrh and aloes, their strong smell, their bitterness, their being wrapped round His body in linens, and over His head and face with a napkin, as was the custom of the Jews to bury, must have entirely extinguished them.”

In conclusion: Jesus was dead. We can agree with the statement made by the apostle John concerning his observations of Christ’s death, as he validated his testimony of the event: “He who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth...” (John 19:35)

The Tomb

Wilbur M. Smith observes that “the word for tomb or sepulcher occurs 32 times in the four Gospel records of the Resurrection.”

The tomb of Joseph of Arimathea on Easter Morning was indeed a subject of much interest to the Gospel writers.

Matthew 27:57 “When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. ⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.”

Mark 15:42-47 Jesus is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Luke 23:50-56 Jesus is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

John 19:38-42 Jesus is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

The narratives were almost identical in all Gospels regarding the tomb of Joseph Arimathea and Christ’s burial!

The Burial

Wilbur Smith writes: “We know more about the burial of the LORD Jesus than we know of the burial of any single character in all of ancient history. We know

infinitely more about His burial than we do the burial of any Old Testament character, of any king of Babylon, Pharaoh of Egypt, any philosopher of Greece, or triumphant Caesar. We know who took His body from the cross; we know something of the wrapping of the body in spices, and burial clothes; we know the very tomb in which this body was placed, the name of the man who owned it, Joseph, of a town known as Arimathea. We know even where this tomb was located, in a garden near to the place where He was crucified, outside the city walls. We have four records of this burial of our LORD, all of them in amazing agreement, the record of Matthew, a disciple of Christ, who was there when Jesus was crucified; the record of Mark, which some say was written within ten years of our LORD's ascension; the record of Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, and a great historian; and the record of John, who was the last to leave the cross, and with Peter the first of the Twelve on Easter to behold the empty tomb."

The historian, Alfred Edersheim, gives these details of the burial customs of the Jews: "Not only the rich, but even those moderately well-to-do, had tombs of their own, which probably were acquired and prepared long before they were needed, and treated and inherited as private and personal property. In such caves, or rock-hewn tombs, the bodies were laid, having been anointed with many spices, with myrtle, aloes, and, at a later period, also with hyssop, rose-oil, and rose water. The body was dressed and, at a later period, wrapped, if possible, in the worn cloths in which originally a Roll of the Law had been held. The tombs were either "rock hewn" or "natural caves" or else hanged walled vaults, with niches along the sides." Of Christ's burial Edersheim says: "The proximity of the holy Sabbath, and the consequent need of haste, may have suggested or determined the proposal of Joseph to lay the Body of Jesus in his own rock-hewn new tomb, wherein no one had yet been laid."

"The cross was lowered and laid on the ground; the cruel nail drawn out, and the ropes unloosed. Joseph, with those who attended him, wrapped the "Sacred Body" in a clean linen cloth. And rapidly carried It to the rock-hewn tomb in the garden close by. Such a rock-hewn tomb had niches, where the dead were laid. It will be remembered, that at the entrance to the tomb-and within the rock, there was "a court" nine feet square, where ordinarily the bier was deposited, and its bearers gathered to do the last offices for the Dead." It was in "the court" of the tomb that the hasty embalmment – if such it may be called – took place."

It was customary in Christ's time to use great quantities of spices for embalmment the dead, especially for those held in high esteem.

Professor George B. Eager says of Christ's burial in "The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia". It was in strict accordance with such customs and the provision of the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 21:23) "His corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed by God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance."

Galatians 3:13 "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written "Curse is everyone who is hanged on a tree."

In compliant with the impulses of true humanity, that Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus for burial on the very day of the crucifixion. (Matthew 27:58)

The Stone

H.W. Holloman, citing G.M. Mackie says: "The opening to the central chamber was guarded by a large and heavy disc of rock which could roll along a groove slightly depressed at the center, in front of the tomb entrance."

Professor J.J. Thorburn mentions: "The enormous size of such a stone, it usually required several men to remove it." Since the one rolled to the entrance of Jesus' tomb was intended to prevent an expected theft, it was probably even larger than what would normally have been used."

Professor Frank Morison, commenting on the visit of Mary and her friends to Jesus' tomb that early Sunday morning, says: "The question as to how they were to remove this stone must of necessity have been a source of considerable perplexity to the women. Two of them at least had witnessed the interment and knew roughly how things stood. The stone, which is known to have been large and of considerable weight, was their great difficulty. When therefore, we find in the earliest record, the Gospel of Mark, the words: "Who shall roll us away the stone from the entrance of the tomb?" (Mark 16:3) We can hardly avoid feeling that this preoccupation of the women with the question of the stone is not only a psychological necessity of the problem, but a definitely historical element in the situation right up to the moment of their arrival at the grave."

Morison calls the stone at the entrance of Jesus' tomb "the one silent and infallible witness in the whole episode – and there are certain facts about this stone which call for careful study and investigation."

"Let us begin by considering first its size and probable character – the stone was large and very heavy. This fact is asserted or implied by all the writers who refer to it.

- Mark says it was "exceeding great"
- Matthew speaks of it as "a great stone"
- Peter says "for the stone was great"
- Additional testimony on this point is furnished by the reported anxiety of the women as to how they should move it. We receive, therefore, a very definite impression that it was at least too weighty for the women to remove unaided. All this has a very definite bearing upon the case."

The Seal

Matthew 27:66 states: "And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone."

Henry Sumner Maine – member of the Supreme Council of India; formerly Reader on Jurisprudence and the Civil Law at the Middle Temple, and Regius Professor of the Civil Law in the University of Cambridge, speaks of the legal authority attached to the Roman seal. He points out that it was actually considered as a mode of authentication.

Maine continues "We may observe, that the seals of Roman Wills and other documents of importance did not only serve as the index of the presence or assent of the signatory, but were also literally fastenings which had to be broken before the writing could be inspected."

In Jesus's tomb, the Roman seal affixed thereon was means to prevent any attempted vandalizing of the sepulcher. Anyone trying to move the stone from the tomb's entrance would have broken the seal and thus incurred the wrath of Roman Law.

Marvin Vincent comments "The idea is that they sealed the stone in the presence of the Roman guard, and then left them to keep watch. It would be important

that the guard should witness the sealing. The sealing was performed by stretching a cord across the stone and fastening it to the rock at either end by means of sealing clay. Or, if the stone at the door happened to be fastened with a cross beam, this latter was sealed to the rock.”

The Military discipline of the Romans

George Currie, in speaking of the discipline of the Roman guard, says “The punishment for quitting post was death, according to the law (Dion-Hal, Antiq. Rom VIII,79). The most famous discourse on the strictness of camp discipline is that of Polybius VI, 37-38 which indicates that the fear of punishment produced faultless attention to duty, especially in the night watches. It carries weight from the prestige of the author, who was describing what he had an opportunity to see with his own eyes. His statements are duplicated in a general way by others.”

Professor Currie, citing Polybius, says: “Running a gauntlet of cudgels (a short, thick stick used as a weapon) is referred to as punishment for faulty night watches, stealing, false witnessing, and injuring one’s own body; decimation for desertion of the ranks because of cowardice is also mentioned.”

Currie continues: “Vegetius speaks of daily attention to strictness of discipline by the prefect of the legion. And Vegetius certainly maintains that the earlier Romans (at the time of Christ) disciplined more strictly than those of his day.”

Professor Currie documents the following examples from the annals of Roman military history which reflect the types of disciplinary measures employed in the Roman army:

- In 418, standard bearer lagging in battle, slain by general’s own hand.
- In 390, asleep on duty, hurled from the cliff of the Capitolium
- In 252, negligence – beaten and rank reduced
- In 218, negligence – punished
- In 195, lagging, struck with weapon

Currie further comments: “Since the death penalty was assessed in 40 cases out of 102 where the punishment is mentioned, it is clear that punishment in the Roman Army was severe in comparison with that in modern army or armies.”

“Roman Army was an instrument for conquest and dominant.”

Valerius Maximus – refers to sharp observation of camp discipline and military theory as being the primary reasons for the extensive conquest and power of Rome.

What was a Roman guard?

Professor William Smith in Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities gives us some information about the number of men in a Roman guard. According to Smith, a subdivision of the Roman legion consisting of either 120 or 60 men “furnished for the tribune to whom it was specially attached. Two guards of four men each, who keep watch, some in front of the tent and some behind, among the horses. We may remark in passing, that four was the regular number for a Roman guard – of those one always acted as a sentinel, while the others enjoyed a certain degree of repose, ready, however, to start up at the first alarm.”

Professor Whedon says a watch: “Probably a guard of four soldiers. Such certainly was the number who watched the crucifixion.” Professor Whedon is quoting John 19:23 “When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took His garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier...”

Conclusion:

Mgr. E. Le Camus says in reference to the tight security measures taken at Jesus’ sepulcher: “Never had a criminal given so much worry after his execution. Above all never had a crucified man had the honor of being guarded by a squad of soldiers.”

Professor G.W. Clark concludes: “So everything was done that human policy and prudence could, to prevent a Resurrection, which these very precautions had the most direct tendency to indicate and establish.”

The Disciples Went Their Way!

Matthew shows us the cowardice of the disciples in his Gospel 26:56 “But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” “Then all the disciples left Him and fled.”

Mark 14:50 “And they all left Him and fled.”

Professor Albert Roper speaks of Simon Peter's cringing under the taunt of a maid in the court of the high priests and denying with a curse that he knew "this man of whom you spoke."

Roper asserted that "Fear, abject fear for his own personal safety brought Peter to reject the Man (Master) he truly loved. Fear, craven fear, made him recreant to the One who had called him from his (fishing) nets to become a fisher of men."

Roper continues: "They are Galileans, for the most part fisher-folk, all of them more or less strangers to cities and to the ways of city life. One by one, they had become adherents of the young Teacher from Nazareth and devoted to His way of life. They had followed Him gladly and reverently until the hour of crisis came. When He was arrested on the outskirts of the Garden of Gethsemane, they all fell back and away, awed by the torches and the clamor and the rattling sabers."

"The disciples secreted themselves in their lodgings and nothing is heard of them until the startling news is brought to them by the Magdalene on the morning of the third day. Thereupon, two and two only – have the temerity to venture forth to learn for themselves if the news brought to them by Mary could be as reported by her or was as they themselves believed, just "idle talk". The whole demeanor of the disciples is one of abject fright and self-preservation."

Alfred Edersheim asks: "What thoughts concerning the Dead Christ filled the minds of Joseph of Arimathea, of Nicodemus, and of the other disciples of Jesus, as well as of the apostles and of the pious women?"

To this question he answers: They believed Him to be dead, and they did not expect Him to rise again from the dead – at least, in our accepted sense of it. Of this there is abundant evidence from the moment of His death, in the burial – spices brought by Nicodemus, in those prepared by the women (both of which were intended as against corruption), in the sorrow of the women at the empty tomb, in their supposition that the Body had been removed, in the perplexity and bearing of the Apostles, in the doubts of so many, and indeed in the express statement: "For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead."

The Post-Resurrection Scene

The Empty Tomb

J.N.D. Anderson, lawyer and professor of Oriental Law at the University of London, asks: “Have you noticed that the references to the empty tomb all come in the Gospels, which were written to give the Christian community the facts they wanted to know? In the public preaching to those who were not believers, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, there is an enormous emphasis on the fact of the Resurrection but not a single reference to the empty tomb. Now, why? To me there is only one answer: There was no point in arguing about the empty tomb. Everyone, friend and opponent, knew that it was empty. The only question worth arguing about were why it was empty and what its emptiness proved.”

Anderson says: “The empty tomb stands, a veritable rock, as an essential element in the evidence for the Resurrection. To suggest that it was not in fact empty at all, as some have done, seems to me ridiculous. It is a matter of history that the apostles from the very beginning made many conversions in Jerusalem, hostile as it was, by proclaiming the glad news that Christ had risen from the grave – and they did it within a short walk from the sepulcher (grave or tomb). Any one of their hearers could have visited the tomb at lunch break or tea break. Is it conceivable, then, that the apostles would have had this success if the body of the one they proclaimed as risen Lord was all the time decomposing in Joseph’s tomb? Would a great company of the priests and many hard-headed Pharisees have been impressed with the proclamation of a Resurrection which was in fact no Resurrection at all, but a mere message of spiritual survival couched in the misleading terms of a literal rising from the grave.”

Paul Althus, cited by Wolfgang Pannenberg says: “In Jerusalem, the place of Jesus’ execution and grave, it was proclaimed not long after His death that he had been raised (Resurrected). The situation demands that within the circle of the first community one had a reliable testimony for the fact that the grave had been found empty.” The Resurrection proclamation “could have not been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned.”

Michael Green cites a secular source of early origin which bears testimony of Jesus' empty tomb. This piece of evidence is called the "Nazareth Inscription", after the town where it was found. It is an imperial edict, belonging either to the reign of Tiberius (AD 14-37) or of Claudius (AD 41-54). And it is an invective, backed with heavy sanction, against meddling around with tombs and graves! It looks very much as if the news of the empty tomb had got back to Rome in a garbled form (Pilate would have had to report; and he would obviously have said that the tomb had been rifled). This edict, it seems, is the imperial reaction."

Green concludes: "There can be no doubt that the tomb of Jesus was, in fact, empty on the first Easter Day."

Matthew 28:11-15 "While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹² And they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they (chief priests) gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³ and said "Tell people "His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep." ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day."

The Dictionary of the Apostolic Church comments: This fraudulent transaction proceeds upon the admission by the enemies of Christianity that the grave was empty – an admission which is enough to show that the evidence for the empty grave was "too notorious to be denied."

Frank Morison in his book "Who Moved the Stone?" makes an interesting observation: "Consider first the small but highly significant fact that not a trace exists in the Acts (Book of Acts), or the Missionary Epistles or in any apocryphal document of indisputably early date, of anyone going to pay homage at the shrine (tomb) of Jesus Christ. It is remarkable, this absolutely unbroken silence concerning the most sacred place in Christian memory:

- Would no woman, to whom the Master's form was a hallowed recollection, ever wish to spend a few moments at that holy site?
- Would Peter and John and Andrew never feel the call of a sanctuary that held all that was mortal of the Great Master?

- Saul himself, would recalling his earlier arrogance and self-assurance, not have made one solitary journey and shed hot tear of repentance for his denial of Christ? If these people really knew that the LORD was buried there, it is very, very strange (for them not to pay a single visit or homage.)”

The Grave Clothes

John 20:3-9 shows the significance of the grave clothes as evidence for the Resurrection: “So Peter went out with the other disciple (John), and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple (John) outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple (John), who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.”

Commenting on John’s above narrative, J.N.D. Anderson says: “It seems that it wasn’t really empty. You remember the account in John’s Gospel of how Mary Magdalene ran and called Peter and John and how the two men set out to the tomb, John, the younger one, ran on quicker than Peter and came first to the tomb. He stooped down “peeped” inside and saw the linen clothes and the napkin that had been around the head. And then Simon Peter came along and, characteristically, blundered straight in, followed by John; and they took note of the linen clothes and the napkin, which was not lying with the linen clothes but was apart, wrapped into one place (folded up). The Greek there seems to suggest that the linen clothes were lying, not strewn about the tomb, but where the body had been, and that there was a gap where the neck of Christ had lain – and that the napkin which had been about His head was not with the linen clothes but apart and wrapped in its own place, which I suppose means still done up (holding its shape), as though the body had simply withdrawn itself. We were told that when John saw that, he needed no further testimony from man or angel; he saw and believed, and his testimony has come down to us.”

John R.W. Stott makes the following long and careful observations: “It is a remarkable fact that the narratives which say that the body of Jesus had gone also tell us that the grave clothes had not gone. It is John who lays particular emphasis on this fact, for he accompanied Peter on that dramatic early morning race to the tomb. The account John gives of this incident (John 20:1-20) bears the unmistakable marks of first-hand experience. He outran Peter, but on arrival at the tomb he did not more than look in, until Peter came and entered it. “Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.” The question is: what did John see which made him believe? The story suggests that it was not just the absence of the body, but the presence of the grave clothes and, in particular, their undisturbed condition.”

“John tells us in John 19:38-42 that while Joseph begged Pilate for the body of Jesus, Nicodemus came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pounds weight. Then together they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. That is to say, as they wound the linen “bandage” around His body, they sprinkled the powdered spices into the folds.”

Stott continues “Now supposing we had been present in the tomb when the Resurrection of Jesus actually took place. What should we have seen? – we should suddenly have noticed that the body had disappeared? – The body cloths, under the weight of 100 lbs of spices, once the support of the body had been removed, would have subsided or collapsed, and would now be lying flat. A gap would have appeared between the body cloths and the head napkin, where His face and neck had been. And the napkin itself, because of the complicated criss-cross pattern of the bandages, might well have retained its concave shape a crumpled turban, but with no head inside it.”

A careful study of the text of John’s narrative suggests that it is just these three characteristics of the discarded grave clothes which he saw:

1. First, he saw the cloths “lying”. The word is repeated twice, and the first time it is placed in an emphatic position in the Greek sentence. We might translate “He saw, as they were lying (or collapsed), the linen cloths.”
2. Next, the head napkin was “not with the linen cloths but in a place by itself”. This is unlikely to mean that it had been bundled up and tossed into

a corner. It lay still on the stone slab, but was separated from the body cloths by a noticeable space.

3. Third, this same napkin was “not lying but wrapped together”. This last word has been translated “twirled”. The Authorized Version “wrapped together” and the Revised Standard Version “rolled up” are both unfortunate translations. The world aptly describes the rounded shape which the empty napkin still preserved.

It is not hard to imagine the sight which greeted the eyes of the apostles when they reached the tomb: the stone slab, the collapsed grave clothes, the shell of the head-cloth and the gap between the two. No wonder they “saw and believed”. A glance at these graveclothes proved the reality, and indicated the nature, of the resurrection. They had been neither touched nor folded nor manipulated by any human being. They were like a discarded chrysalis from which the butterfly has emerged.

That the state of the graveclothes was intended to be visible, corroborative evidence for the Resurrection is further suggested by the fact that Mary Magdalene (who had returned to the tomb after bringing the news to Peter and John) “stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.” Presumably this means that they sat on the stone slab with the grave clothes between them. Both Matthew and Mark add that one of them said, “He is not here; for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay.” Whether or not the reader believes in angels, these allusion to the place where Jesus had lain, emphasized by both the position and the words of the angels, at least confirms what the understanding of the evangelists was: the position of the clothes and the absence of the body were concurrent witnesses to Jesus Resurrection.

Jesus Was Alive – Post Resurrection Appearances

Professor C.S. Lewis, in speaking of the importance of Christ’s Post-Resurrection appearances, says, “The first fact in the history of Christendom is a number of people who say they have seen the Resurrection. If they had died without making anyone else believe this “Gospel” no gospel would ever have been written.”

J.N.D. Anderson writes of the testimony of the appearances: “The most drastic way of dismissing the evidence would be to say that these stories were mere fabrications, that they were pure lies. But so far as I know, not a single critic today would take such an attitude. In fact, it would really be an impossible position. Think of the number of witnesses, over 500. Think of the character of the witnesses, men and women who gave the world the highest ethical teaching it has ever known, and who even on the testimony of their enemies lived it out in their lives. Think of the psychological absurdity of picturing a little band of defeated cowards cowering in an upper room one day and a few days later transformed into a company that no persecution could silence – and then attempting to attribute this dramatic change to nothing more convincing than a miserable fabrication they were trying to foist upon the world. That simply wouldn’t make sense.”

The appearances of Christ in the lives of individuals:

1. To Mary Magdalene, John 20:14; Mark 16:9
2. To women returning from the tomb, Matthew 28:9,10
3. To Peter later in the day, Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5
4. To the Emmaus disciples, Luke 24:13-33
5. To the apostles, Thomas absent, Luke 24: 36-43; John 20:19-24
6. To the apostles, Thomas present, John 20:26-29
7. To the seven by the lake of Tiberias, John 21:1-23
8. To a multitude of 500 plus believers on a Galilean mountain, 1 Cor. 15:6
9. To James, 1 Corinthians 15:7
10. To the eleven, Matt 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:33-52; Acts 1:3-12
11. At the ascension, Acts 1:3-12
12. To Paul, Acts 9:3-6; 1 Corinthians 15:8
13. To Stephen, Acts 7:55
14. To Paul in the temple, Acts 22:17-21; 23:11
15. To John on Patmos, Revelation 1:10-19

Established Historical Fact:

The empty tomb is that silent testimony to the Resurrection of Christ which has never been refuted. The Romans and Jews could not produce Christ’s body or explain where it went, but nonetheless, they refused to believe. Not because of

the insufficiency of evidence but in spite of the sufficiency do men still reject the Resurrection.

Professor E. H. Day writes: “In that empty tomb Christendom has always discerned an important witness to the reasonableness of belief. Christians have never doubted that as a matter of fact it was found empty on the third day; the Gospel narratives agree in emphasizing it; it (the burden of proof) rests not upon those who hold the tradition, but upon those who either deny that the tomb was found empty, or explain the absence of the LORD’s body by some rationalistic theory.”

Established Psychological Facts

The Transformed Lives of the Disciples

John R. W. Stott says: “Perhaps the transformation of the disciples of Jesus is the greatest evidence of all for the Resurrection.”

Dr. Simon Greenleaf, the Harvard Law professor, says of the disciples: “It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirmation the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.”

“The annals of Military Warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and unflinching courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truth which they asserted.”

Paul Little asks: “Are these men, who helped transform the moral structure of society, consummate liars or deluded madmen? These alternatives are harder to believe than the fact of the Resurrection, and there is no shred of evidence to support them.”

“Look at the changed life of James, the brother of Jesus. Before the Resurrection he despised all that his brother stood for. He thought Christ’s claims were blatant pretention and served only to ruin the family name. After the Resurrection, though, James is found with the other disciples preaching the Gospel of their LORD. His epistle describes well the new relationship that he had with Christ. He describes himself as “a bond-servant of God and of the LORD Jesus Christ...”

(James 1:1) The only explanation for this change in his life is that which Paul gives: "Then He (Jesus) appeared to James." (1 Corinthians 15:7)"

George Matteson says that "the scepticism of Thomas comes out in the belief that the death of Jesus would be the death of His kingdom. "Let us go, that we may die with Him." The man who uttered these words had, at the time when he uttered them, no hope of Christ's Resurrection. No man would propose to die with another if he expected to see him again in a few hours. Thomas, at that moment, had given up all intellectual belief. He saw no chance for Jesus. He did not believe in His physical power. He had made up his mind that the forces of the outer world would be too strong for Him, would crush Him.

However, Jesus made Himself known to Thomas also. The result was recorded in John's Gospel where Thomas exclaimed: "My LORD and my God!" (John 20:28) Thomas made an about-face after seeing his LORD risen from the grave and went on to die a martyr's death."

The following description of the change that occurred in lives of the Apostles after the Resurrection is an interesting poetic portrayal: "On the day of crucifixion the apostles were filled with sadness; on the first day of the week with gladness. At the crucifixion they were hopeless; on the first day of week their heart glowed with certainty and hope. When the message of the Resurrection first came, they were incredulous and hard to be convinced, but once they became assured, they never doubted again. What could account for the astonishing change in these men in so short a time? The mere removal of the body from the grave could never have transformed their spirits, and characters. Three days are not enough for a legend to spring up which would so affect them. Time is needed for a process of legendary growth. It is a psychological fact that demands a full explanation.

"Think of the character of the witnesses, men and women who gave the world the highest ethical teaching it has ever known, and who even on the testimony of their enemies lived it out in their lives. Think of the psychological absurdity of picturing a little band of defeated cowards cowering in an upper room one day and a few days later transformed into a company that no persecution could silence – and then attempting to attribute this dramatic change to nothing more

convincing than a miserable fabrication they were trying to foist upon the world. That simply would not make sense.”

The Apostles of Christ were the foundation stones of His church. In Revelation 21:14 we were told that the twelve foundations of the wall of the new Jerusalem will have in them the names of the twelve apostles. It is evident, therefore, that our LORD attaches great importance to these men.

Andrew was the brother of Peter, and a son of Jonas. He lived in Bethsaida and Capernaum and was a fisherman before he was called by Jesus. Originally, he was a disciple of John the Baptist (Mark 1:16-18). Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus (John 1:40). He is the first to have the title of Home and Foreign Missionary. He is claimed by three countries as their Patron Saint- Russia, Scotland, and Greece. Many scholars say that he preached in Scythia, Greece, and Asia Minor. His main purpose in life was to bring others to the Master.

According to tradition, it was in Achaia, Greece, in the town of Patra that Andrew died a martyr. When Governor Aepeas’s wife was healed and converted to the Christian faith, and shortly after that the Governor’s brother became a Christian. Aepeas was enraged. He arrested Andrew and condemned him to die on the cross. Andrew, feeling unworthy to be crucified on the same shaped cross as his Master (Jesus), begged that his be different. So, he was crucified on an X shaped cross, which is still called Saint. Andrew’s cross and which is one of his apostolic symbols.

Bartholomew

Bartholomew Nathanael, son of Talmai, lived in Cana of Galilee. Tradition says he was a missionary in Armenia.

A number of scholars believe that he was the only disciple who came from royal blood, or noble birth. His name means son of Tolmai or Talmai (2 Samuel 3:3). Talmai was king of Geshur whose daughter, Maacah, was the wife of David, mother of Absalom.

Bartholomew’s name appears with every list of the disciples (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13)

He was a man of complete sincerity, a man earnest in prayer, a man who made complete surrender to Jesus Christ. He is said to have preached with Philip in Phrygia and Hierapolis, also in Armenia. The Armenian church claims him as its founder and martyr. However, tradition says that he preached in India, and his death seems to have taken place there. He died as martyr for the LORD Jesus Christ. He was flayed alive with knives. Resurrection of Jesus Christ converted him to surrender to Christ.

James

James, the Elder, Boanerges, son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of John the Apostle; a fisherman who lived in Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Jerusalem. He preached in Jerusalem and Judea and was beheaded by Herod, AD 44 (Acts 12:1,2). He was a member of the Inner Circle, so called because they were accorded special privileges. The New Testament tells us very little about James. His name never appears apart from that of his brother, John. They were an inseparable pair. (Mark 1:19, 20; Matthew 4:21; Luke 5:1-11)

He was a man of courage and forgiveness – a man without jealousy, living in the shadow of John, a man of extraordinary faith. He was the first of the twelve to become a martyr because Resurrection changed him!

James

James, the lesser or Younger, son of Alphaeus, or Cleophas and Mary, lived in Galilee. He was the brother of the Apostle Jude.

According to tradition he wrote the Epistle of James though many conservative scholars dispute this. He preached in Palestine and Egypt and was crucified in Egypt. James was one of the little-known disciples. Some scholars believe he was the brother of Matthew, the tax collector. James was a man of strong character and one of the most-fiery type. Tradition tells us that he also died as a martyr and his body was sawed in pieces. The saw became his apostolic symbol. A little-known disciple died a martyr's death all because of Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

John

John Boanerges, son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of James, the apostle, he was known as, the Beloved Disciple. A fisherman who lived in Bethsaida,

Capernaum, and Jerusalem, he was a member of the Inner Circle. He wrote the Gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Revelation. He preached among the churches of Asia Minor. Banished to the Isle of Patmos, he was later freed and died a natural death.

John was one of the prominent apostles. He is mentioned in many places in the New Testament. His second name was Boanerges, which means Son of Thunder. He and his brother, James, the Elder, came from a more well-to-do family than the rest of the apostles, his father having hired servants in his fishing business (Mark 1:20). He may have felt himself above the rest. He was close to Peter. They were acting together in the ministry. Peter, however, was always the spokesman for the group.

It is said that an attempt was made on his life by giving him a chalice of poison from which God spared him. He died of natural causes. A chalice with a snake in it is his symbol. Resurrection changed John.

Judas

Judas Iscariot, the traitor, was the son of Simon who lived in Kerioth of Judah. He betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and afterwards hanged himself. (Matthew 26:14, 16)

Judas, the man who became the traitor, is the supreme enigma of the New Testament because it is so hard to see how anyone who was so close to Jesus, who saw so many miracles and heard so much of the Master's teaching could ever betray Him into the hands of His enemies.

His name appears in three lists of the 12 apostles (Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16). It is said that Judas came from Judah near Jericho. He was a Judean and the rest of the disciples were Galileans. He was the treasurer of the group and among the outspoken leaders.

It is said that Judas was a violent Jewish Nationalist who had followed Jesus in hope that through Him his nationalist flame and dreams might be realized. No one can deny that Judas was a covetous man and at times he may have used his position as treasurer of the group to pilfer from the common purse.

There is no certain reason as to why Judas betrayed his master; but it is not his betrayal that put Jesus on the cross – it was our sins.

His apostolic symbol is a hangman's noose or a money purse with pieces of silver falling from it.

Jude

Jude, Thaddaeus, son of Alphaeus or Cleophas and Mary. He was a brother of James the Younger. He was the one of the very little-known apostles and live in Galilee. Tradition says the preached in Assyria and Persia and died a martyr in Persia.

In Mark 3:18 he is called Thaddaeus. In Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13 he is called Judas the son of James. Judas Thaddaeus also was called Judas the Zealot.

By character he was an intense and violent Nationalist with the dream of world power and domination by the Chosen People. In the New Testament records (John 14:22-23) he asked Jesus at the last supper, "LORD, what then has happened that you are going to disclose yourself to us, and not to the world?" Judas Thaddaeus was interested in making Christ known to the world. Not as a suffering Savior, however, but as ruling King. We can see plainly – from the answer Jesus gave him, that the way of power can never be substituted for the way of love.

It is said that Jude went to preach the Gospel in Edessa near the Euphrates River. There he healed many and many believed in the name of the Master. Jude went from there to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in other places. He was killed with arrows at Ararat. The chosen symbol for him is the ship because he was a missionary thought to be a fisherman.

A violent Nationalist became a committed missionary and died a martyr's death all because of Resurrection!

Matthew

Matthew, or Levi, son of Alphaeus, lived in Capernaum. He was a publican or tax collector. He wrote the Gospel that bears his name. He died a martyr in Ethiopia.

The call of Matthew to the apostolic band is mentioned in Mark 2:14, Matthew 9:9, and Luke 5:27-28. From these passages, we learn that Matthew also was called Levi. It was a common custom in the Middle East at the time of Christ for men to have two names. Matthew's name means "a gift of God". The name Levi could have been given to him by Jesus. It is likely that James the Lesser, who was one of the apostles, was Matthew's brother, also the son of Alphaeus. Although we know little about Matthew personally, the outstanding fact about him is that he was a tax collector.

Of all the nations in the world, the Jews were the most vigorous haters of tax collectors. To the devout Jews, God was the only one to whom it was right to pay tribute in taxes. To pay it to anyone else was to infringe on the rights of God. The tax collectors were hated not on religious grounds only but because most of them were notoriously unjust.

In the minds of many honest, Jewish men, these tax collectors were regarded as criminals. In New Testament times they were classified with harlots, Gentiles, and sinners (Matthew 9:10; 18:17; 21:31,32; Mark 2:15; Luke 5:30). Tax collectors had been known to assess duty payable at impossible sums and then offer to lend the money to travelers at a high rate of interest. Such was Matthew. Yet, Jesus chose a man all men hated and made him one of His men. It took Jesus Christ to see the potential in the tax collector of Capernaum.

Matthew was unlike most of the other apostles, who were all fishermen. He could use a pen, and by his pen he became one of the first men to present to the world an account of the teachings of Jesus. It is clearly impossible to estimate the debt that Christianity owes to this despised tax gatherer. The average man would have thought impossible to reform Matthew, but to God all things are possible. Matthew became the first to write down the teaching of Jesus. He was a missionary of the Gospel, who laid down his life for the faith of his Master. Resurrection is the reason! The apostolic symbol of Matthew is three money bags which remind us that he was a tax collector before Jesus called him.

Peter

Simon Peter, son of Jonas, was a fisherman who lived in Bethsaida and Capernaum. He did evangelistic and missionary work among the Jews, going as

far as Babylon. Tradition says he was crucified, head downward. Scholars ascribe 1 and 2 Peter to him. He was a member of the inner circle.

In every apostolic list, the name Peter is mentioned first. However, Peter had other names. At the time of Christ, the common language was Greek and the family language was Hebrew. So, his Greek name was Simon (Mark 1:16; John 1:40,41). His Hebrew name was Cephas (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5 and Galatians 2:9). The Greek meaning of Simon is rock. The Arabic meaning of Cephas is also rock.

By trade, Peter was a fisherman. He was a married man (1 Corinthians 9:5) and his home was Capernaum. Jesus probably made His headquarters there when He visited Capernaum. Peter was also a Galilean and was typical of many of the other disciples. As Josephus described the Galileans, “they were ever fond of innovation and by nature disposed to change and delighted in sedition. They were over ready to follow the leader and to begin an insurrection. They were quick in temper and given to quarreling and they were very chivalrous (courteous and gallant) men. The Talmud says this of the Galileans, “They were more anxious for honor than for gain, quick tempered, impulsive, emotional, easily aroused by an appeal to adventure, loyal to the end.” Peter was a typical Galilean.

Among the twelve, Peter was the leader. He stands out as a spokesman for all the apostles. It is he who asked the meaning of the difficult saying (Matthew 15:15). It is he who asked how often he must forgive. It is he who inquired about the reward for all of those who follow Jesus. It is he who first confesses Jesus and declared Him as the Son of the living God. It is he who was at the Mount of Transfiguration. It is he who saw Jairus’s daughter raised to life. Yet, it is he who denied Christ before a maiden. He was an apostle and a missionary who laid down his life for his LORD. It is true, Peter had many faults, but he had always the saving grace of the loving heart. No matter how many times he had fallen and failed, he always recovered his courage and integrity.

Peter was martyred on the cross. Peter requested that he might be crucified head downward for he was not worthy to die as his LORD had died. His apostolic symbol is a cross upside down with crossed keys. The keys represent Peter as holder of the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Peter was a changed man after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Philip

Tradition says that Philip preached in Phrygia and died a martyr at Hierapolis. Philip came from Bethsaida, the town from which Peter and Andrew came (John 1:44). The likelihood is that he, too, was a fisherman. Although the first three Gospels records his name (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13), it is in the Gospel of John that Philip becomes a living personality.

Scholars disagree on Philip. In Acts 6:5, we have Philip as one of the seven ordained deacons. Some say this is a different Philip. Some believe this is the apostle. If this is the same Philip, then his personality came much more to life because he had successful campaign in Samaria. He led the Ethiopian Eunuch to Christ (Acts 8:26-40). He also stayed with Paul in Caesarea (Acts 21:8) and was one of the major figures in the missionary enterprise of the early church.

The Gospel of John shows Philip as one of the first of many to whom Jesus addressed the words, "Follow Me." When Philip met Christ, he immediately discovered Nathanael and told him that "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote." Nathanael was skeptical, Philip did not argue with him; Philip simply answered, "Come and see." This story tells us two important things about Philip. First, it shows his right approach to the skeptic and his simple faith in Christ. Second, it shows that he had a missionary instinct.

Philip was a man with a warm heart and a pessimistic head. He was one who would very much like to do something for others, but also who did not see how it could be done. Yet, this simple Galilean gave all he had. In return God used him. It is said that he died by hanging. While he was dying, he requested that his body be wrapped not in linen but in papyrus for he was not worthy that even his dead body should be treated as the body of Jesus had been treated. The symbol of Philip is a basket, because of his part in the feeding of the five thousand. It is he that stressed the cross as a sign of Christianity and victory because of Resurrection.

Philip the Apostle should not be confused with Philip the Evangelist, who was appointed with Stephen to oversee charitable distributions. (Acts 6:5)

Simon

Simon, the Zealot, one of the little-known followers called the Canaanite or Zelotes, lived in Galilee. Tradition says he was crucified.

The New Testament gives us practically nothing on him personally except that it says he was a Zealot. The Zealots were fanatical Jewish Nationalists who had heroic disregard for the suffering involved and the struggle for what they regarded as the purity of their faith. The Zealots were crazed with hatred for the Romans. It was this hate for Rome that destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Josephus says the Zealots were reckless persons zealous in good practices and extravagant and reckless in the worst actions.

From this background, we see that Simon was a fanatical Nationalist, a man devoted to the Law, a man with bitter hatred for anyone who dared to compromise with Rome. Yet, Simon clearly emerged as a man of faith. He abandoned all his hatred for the faith that he showed toward His Master and the love that he was willing to share with the rest of the disciples and especially Matthew, the Roman tax collector, all because of the Resurrection and teaching of Jesus Christ!

Simon, the Zealot, the man who once would have killed Matthew in loyalty to Israel, became the man who saw that God will have no forced service because he witnessed the Resurrection. Tradition says he died as a martyr. His apostolic symbol is a fish lying on a Bible, which indicates he was a former fisherman who became a fisher of men through preaching the Bible, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thomas

Thomas Didymus lived in Galilee. Tradition says he labored in Parthia Persia and India, suffering martyrdom near Madras at Mt. St. Thomas, India.

Thomas was his Hebrew name and Didymus was his Greek name. At times he was called Judas. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us nothing about Thomas except his name. However, John defines him more clearly in John's Gospel. Thomas appeared in the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-16), in the Upper Room (John 14:1-6) where he wanted to know how to know the way where Jesus was going. In John 20:24-25 we see him saying unless he sees the nail prints in Jesus' hand and the gash of the spear in His side he will not believe. That's why Thomas became known as Doubting Thomas.

Thomas became certain by doubting. By nature, he was a pessimist. He was a bewildered man. Yet, he was a man of courage. He was a man who could not believe until he had seen. He was a man of devotion and of faith. When Jesus rose, He came back and invited Thomas to put his finger in the nail prints in his hand and in His side. Here, we see Thomas making the greatest confession of faith, “My LORD and My God.” Thomas’s doubt was transformed into faith.

Thomas was always like a little child. His first reaction was not to do what he was told to do and not to believe what he was asked to believe. The good news to him was always too good to be true. By this very fact Thomas’ faith became great, intense, and convincing. It is said that he was commissioned to build a place for the king of India, and he was killed with a spear as a martyr for his LORD. His symbol is a group of spears, stones, and arrows!

The Transformed Lives of 2,000 years of History

Just as Jesus Christ transformed the lives of His disciples, so men throughout the past 2,000 years have also had the same experience.

Verdict

The established psychological fact of changed lives, is a credible reason for believing in the Resurrection. It is subjective evidence bearing witness to the objective fact that Jesus Christ indeed arose on the third day. For only a risen Christ could have such transforming power in a person’s life.

An Institution: The Christian Church

A basic foundation of the establishing of the church was the preaching of Christ’s Resurrection:

Acts 1:21-22 “So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the LORD Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when Jesus taken up from us – one of these men must become with us a witness to His Resurrection.”

Acts 2:23-24 “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men, ²⁴ God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. (death)”

Acts 2:31-32 “He foresaw and spoke about the Resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.”

Acts 3:14-15 “But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of Life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”

Acts 3:26 “God, having raised up His servant, sent Him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

Acts 4:10 “Let it be known to all of you and to all of the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead – by Him this man is standing before you well.”

Acts 5:30 “The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging Him on a tree.”

Acts 10:39-41 “And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.”

Acts 13: 29-39 “And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead, ³¹ and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm: “You are My Son, today I have begotten you.” ³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, “I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.” ³⁵ Therefore he says also in another Psalm, “You will not let your Holy One see corruption.” ³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. ³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sin is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and by him everyone

who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses.”

Acts 17:30-31 “The times of Ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.”

Acts 26:22-23 “To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

The Phenomenon of the Christian Sunday

The Jews’ original day of rest and worship was Saturday because it was said that God had finished His creation and rested on the Seventh day. It was written into their holy laws. The Sabbath is one of the supporting columns of Judaism. One of the most reverent things in the life of a Jew was the keeping of the Sabbath. The Christians met for worship on the first day of the Jewish week in acknowledgment of the Resurrection of Jesus. These Christians actually succeeded in changing this age-old and theologically-backed day of rest and worship on Sunday. Yet, remember these Christians were Jews Themselves! Keeping in mind what they thought would happen if these were wrong, we must recognize that this was probably one of the biggest decision any religious body of men have ever made!! How are we to explain the change from Saturday to Sunday worship without the Resurrection.

J.N.D. Anderson observes that the majority of the first Christians were of Jewish background and had been fanatically attached to their Sabbath. It took, therefore, something extremely significant to change this habit; it took the Resurrection to do it.

The Phenomenon of Christian Sacraments

- (1) **Holy Communion** (Acts 2:46; John 6; Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24)

The Holy Communion or the LORD's Supper is a remembrance of His death, but we read in Acts 2:46 that it was a time of joy. "And day by day, attending the temple together and Breaking Bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts." Now, if there was not a Resurrection, how could there be joy? The memory of the meal which led directly to the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus, their LORD, would have been an unbearable pain. What changed the anguish of the Last Supper into a communion of joy the world over?

Michael Green comments: "They met Him in this sacrament. He was not dead and gone, but risen and alive. And they would celebrate this death of Christ, in the consciousness of His Risen Presence, until His longed-for return at the end of history (1 Corinthians 11:26). We possess a short eucharistic prayers from the earliest Christian Community, from the original Aramaic-speaking Church (1 Corinthians 16:22). Here it is Maranatha! Maranatha means "Our LORD, Come!" How that could have been the attitude of the early Christians as they met to celebrate the LORD's Supper among themselves is quite inexplicable, unless He (Jesus) did indeed rise (Resurrected) from the dead on the third day."

(2) **Baptism** (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:1-6)

Colossians 2:11 In Christ also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,¹² having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

The Christians had an initiation ceremony – baptism. This is where they dared to differ again with Judaism. The Jews continued in circumcision and the Christians followed their LORD's command about baptism. A man had to repent of his sins, believe in the risen LORD and be baptized. Now, what did baptism symbolize? There is little doubt or argument about this! Paul explains that a man in baptism is united to Christ in His death and Resurrection. When he enters the water, he is dying to his old sin nature, and he rises out of the water to share a new Resurrected life of Christ. There is nothing in Christianity older than the sacraments, and yet they are directly linked to the death and Resurrection of Christ. How is one to account for the meaning of Christian Baptism if the Resurrection never took place?

The Historical Phenomenon of the Church

The institution of the church, then, is an historical phenomenon, explained only by Jesus' Resurrection. Those sacraments which Christianity observes serve also as a continual evidence of the Church's origin.

L.L. Morris comments of the first believers who witnessed Christ's Resurrection: "They were Jews, and Jews have a tenacity in clinging to their religious customs. Yet these men observed the LORD's Day, a weekly memorial of the Resurrection, instead of the Sabbath. On that LORD's Day they celebrated the holy communion, which was not a commemoration of a dead Christ, but a thankful remembrance of the blessings conveyed by a living and triumphant LORD. Their other sacrament, baptism, was a reminder that believers were buried with Christ, and raised with Him. (Colossians 2:12) The Resurrection gave significance to all that they did."

Inadequate Theories: concocted to explain away the Resurrection

"Futility of Futilities! All is Futility" or

"Vanity of Vanities! All is vanity." Ecclesiastes 1:2b

The following is a compilation of the most popular theoretical explanations that have been put forth to explain away the Resurrection of Christ. Each theory will be considered in turn with the corresponding refutation. It becomes apparent with research that every objection to the Resurrection has a reasonable alternative for belief.

J.N.D. Anderson, the British attorney, is quite aware of the importance of good evidence in judging a case's veracity. Concerning the testimony which history gives to the Resurrection, he writes: "A point which needs stressing is that the evidence must be considered as a whole. It is comparatively easy to find an alternative explanation for one or another of the different strands which make up this testimony. But such explanations are valueless unless they fit the other strands in the testimony as well. A number of different theories, each of which might conceivably be applicable to part of the evidence but which do not themselves cohere into an intelligible pattern, can provide no alternative to the one interpretation which fits the whole."

Let us examine the following theories:

Islamic Holy Books

Islamic holy books are certain religious scriptures that are viewed by Muslims as having valid divine significance, in that they were authored by God (Allah) through a variety of prophets and messengers, including those who predate the Quran.

Quran. Among the group of religious texts considered to be valid revelation, the five that are mentioned by name in the Quran are:

- (1) The Tawrat (Torah) received by prophets and messengers amongst the children of Israel
- (2) The Zabur (Psalms) received by David
- (3) The Gospel, received by Jesus
- (4) The scrolls of Abraham
- (5) The scrolls of Moses

Major Books in Islamic religion:

- (1) Quran is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be a revelation from Allah. The Quran is divided into chapters (surah), which are then divided into verses (ayah). Muslims believe the Quran was verbally revealed by Allah to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel (Jibril) gradually over a period of 23 years, starting in late 609 AD, when Muhammad was 39, and concluded in 632 AD, the year of his death. Muslims regard the Quran as the most important miracle of Muhammad, a proof of his prophethood, and the culmination of a series of divine messages that started with the messages revealed to Adam and ended with Muhammad.
- (2) Tawrat (Torah). The tawrat is the Arabic name for the Torah within its context as an Islamic holy book believed by Muslims to have been given by God to the prophets and messengers amongst the children of Israel. Muslims identify Tawrat with the Pentateuch of the Hebrew Torah as well as with Talmudic and Midrashim writings.
- (3) Zabur (Psalms). The Quran mentions the Zabur, interpreted as being the Book of Psalm as being the holy scripture revealed to King David (Dawud). Many Muslim scholar consider the Book of Psalm as a book of praise and not administering law.
- (4) Injil (Gospel). The Injil was the holy book revealed to Jesus (Esa), according to the Quran. Most scholars and Muslims believe that it refers not to the New Testament but to an original Gospel, given to Jesus as the word of

Allah. The current canonical Gospels of the Bible, in the belief of Muslim scholars, are not divinely revealed but rather are documents of the life of Jesus, as written by various contemporaries, disciples and companions. Muslims believe the Gospels of the Bible neither represent nor contain the original Gospel from Allah.

Additional Scriptures

- (1) Scrolls of Abraham which were given to Abraham and later used to Ishmael and Isaac.
- (2) Scrolls of Moses, mentioned twice in the Quran. Some Muslim scholars believe it is identical to Torah of Moses.
- (3) Book of John the Baptist

Hadith, the record of the words, actions and the silent approval of the Islamic prophet Muhammad as transmitted through chains of narrator. It is transmitted reports attributed to what Muhammad said and did.

It is the “backbone” of Islamic civilization. For many the authority of Hadith is a source for religious and moral guidance known as Sunnah which ranks second only to that of the Quran, which Muslims hold to be the word of Allah revealed to Muhammad. The great bulk of the rules of Sharia (Islamic law) are derived from Hadith rather than Quran.

The Swoon Theory

Resuscitation not Resurrection

- 1. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ – the supreme vindication of His claim to deity – was declared in the Quran, as nothing more than an elaborate hoax.

Islamic View on Jesus’ death and Resurrection

The biblical account of the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus recorded in the Christian New Testament is traditionally rejected by the major branches of Islam. The various sects of Islam have different views regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus. Traditionally, mainstream Muslims believe that Jesus was not crucified but was bodily raised up to heaven by God (Allah).

Ahmadi Muslims reject this above belief and instead contend that Jesus survived the crucifixion, was taken off the cross alive and continued to preach in India until his natural death.

Quran 4:157-158 - That they said (in boast) “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah”; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is exalted in power, wise.

Islamic scholars and commentators of the Quran have abstracted different opinions and conflicting conclusions regarding the death of Jesus.

- (1) Some believe that in the Biblical account, Jesus’ crucifixion did not last long enough for him to die.
- (2) Other opine that God gave Jesus’ appearance to the one who revealed his location to those persecuting him. He was replaced as Jesus and the executioners thought the victim was Jesus, causing everyone to believe that Jesus was crucified.
- (3) A third explanation could be that Jesus was nailed to the cross, but as his soul is immortal, he did not “die” or was not “crucified to death”; it only appeared so.
- (4) Yet others maintain that Allah does not use deceit and therefore they contend that the crucifixion just did not happen, therefore no resurrection.

According to the Islamic teaching, the Jews did not kill or crucify Jesus but it only appeared to them as if they had, because Jesus had been raised up by God according to the Quranic narrative.

Given the historicity of Jesus’ death and the Islamic theological doctrine on the supposed inerrancy of the Quran, most mainstream Muslims and Islams scholars deny the crucifixion and death of Jesus. They deny the historical reliability of the Gospels, claim that the canonical Gospels are corruptions of the true Gospel of Jesus. As for their portrayal of Jesus dying, and they also claim that extra-Biblical evidence for Jesus’ death is an alleged Christian forgery.

According to the Islamic scholar Muhammad Asad, the crucifixion of Jesus did not take place, nor there any substitution “for Jesus, a person closely resembling him.”

To this day there is a shrine that supposedly marks Jesus’ real burial place in Srinagar, Kashmir.

2. As the 19th century dawned Karl Bahrdt, Karl Venturini and others tried to explain away the resurrection by suggesting that Jesus only fainted from exhaustion on the cross, or he had been given a drug that made him appear to die, and that he had later been revived by the cool, damp air of the tomb.
3. Conspiracy theorists bolstered this hypothesis by pointing out that Jesus had been given some liquid on a sponge while on the cross (Mark 15:36) and that Pilate seemed surprised at how quickly Jesus had succumbed (Mark 15:44). Consequently, they said, Jesus’ reappearance wasn’t a miraculous resurrection but merely a fortuitous resuscitation and his tomb was empty because he continued to live.
4. While reputable scholars have repudiated this so-called swoon theory, it keeps recurring in popular literature. In 1929 D. H. Lawrence move this theme into a short story in which he suggested that Jesus had fled to Egypt where he fell in love with the priestess Isis.
5. In 1965 Hugh Schonfield’s best seller “The passion Plot” alleged that it was only the unanticipated stabbing of Jesus by the Roman soldier that foiled his complicated scheme to escape the cross alive, even though Schonfield conceded, “We are nowhere claiming...that the book represents what actually happened.”
6. The swoon hypothesis popped up again in Donovan Joyce’s 1972 book “The Jesus Scroll”, which contains an even more incredible string of improbabilities than Schonfield’s according to resurrection expert Gary Habermas.

In 1982 “Holy Blood, Holy Grail” added the twist that Pontius Pilate had been bribed to allow Jesus to be taken down from the cross before he was dead. Even so, the authors confessed, “We could not – and still cannot, prove the accuracy of our conclusion.”

As recent as 1992, a little-known academic from Australia Barbara Thiering caused a stir by reviving the swoon theory in her book “Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scroll”, which was introduced with much fanfare by a well respected U.S. publisher and then derisively dismissed by Emory University scholar Luke Timothy Johnson as being “the purest poppycock, the product of fevered imagination rather than careful analysis.”

The Swoon Theory

“Swoon means faint from extreme emotion with partial or total loss of consciousness.” According to this view – Christ never actually died on the cross, but only swooned. When he was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, He was still alive. After several hours of rest, He was revived by the cool air of the tomb, arose and departed.

Professor J.N.D. Anderson says of this theory that it was “First put forward by a man name Venturini a couple of centuries or so ago. It has been resuscitated in recent years in a slightly different form by a heterodox group of Muslims called the Ahmadiya, who used to have their main headquarters at a place called Qadian and who have their English headquarters in a part of London called Putney.

Their explanation runs like this: “Christ was indeed nailed to the cross. He suffered terribly from shocks, loss of blood, and pain, and He swooned away; but He did not actually die. Medical knowledge was not very great at that time, and the apostles thought He was dead. We are told, are we not, that Pilate was surprised that He was dead already. The explanation assertedly is that He was taken down from the cross in a state of swoon by those who wrongly believed Him to be dead, and laid in the sepulcher. And the cool restfulness of the sepulcher so far revived Him that He was eventually able to issue forth from the grave. His ignorant disciples could not believe that this was a mere resuscitation. They insisted it was a Resurrection from the dead.”

The Refutation

We have given extensive evidences that “Jesus was dead” beyond any medical or physical doubts! We are not going to repeat it again.

Professor T.J. Thorburn mentions the following as what Christ suffered at the hands of Pilate: “The agony in the Garden, the arrest at midnight, the brutal

treatment in the hall of the High Priest's palace and at the praetorium of Pilate, the exhausting journey backwards and forwards between Pilate and Herod, the terrible Roman scourging, the journey to Calvary, during which he fell exhausted by the strain upon His powers, the agonizing torture of the crucifixion, and the thirst and feverishness which follow." I might add – the bleeding resulting in hypovolemic shock and acute congestive heart failure.

Thorburn observes: "It would be difficult to imagine even the most powerful of men, after enduring all these, not succumbing to death. Moreover, it is recorded that the victims of crucifixion seldom recovered, even under the most favorable circumstances."

He concludes: "We cannot state the insuperable objections to this theory than in these words: "Then" says Keim, "there is the most impossible thing of all; the poor, weak Jesus, with difficulty holding Himself erect, in hiding, disguised, and finally dying – this Jesus an object of faith, of exalted emotion, of the triumph of His adherents, a risen conqueror, and Son of God! Here, in fact, the theory begins to grow paltry, absurd, worthy only of rejection."

J.N.D. Anderson remarks of the hypothesis that Jesus did not die: "Well, it is very ingenious. But it won't stand up to investigation. To begin with, steps were taken – it seems – to make quite sure that Jesus was dead; that surely is the meaning of the spear-thrust in His side. But suppose for argument's sake that He was not quite dead. Do you really believe that lying for hour after hour with no medical attention in a rock-hewn tomb in Palestine at Easter, when it is quite cold at night would so far have revived Him, instead of proving the inevitable end to His flickering life, that He would have been able to loose Himself from yards of grave-cloths weighted with pounds of spices, roll away a stone that three women felt incapable of tackling and walk miles on wounded feet."

John R. W. Stott asks, are we to believe "that after the rigors and pain of trial, mockery, flogging and crucifixion He could survive thirty-six hours in a stone sepulcher with neither warmth nor food nor medical care? That He could then rally sufficiently to perform the superhuman feat of shifting the boulder which secured the mouth of the tomb, and this without disturbing the Roman guard? That then, weak and sickly and hungry, He could appear to the disciples in such a way to give them the impression that He had vanquished death? That He could

go on to claim that He had died and risen, could send them into all the world and promise to be with them unto the end of time? That He could live somewhere in hiding for forty days, making occasional surprise appearances, and then finally disappear without any explanation? Such credulity is more incredible than Thomas' unbelief."

Those who propose the swoon theory also have to say that Jesus once He had revived, was able to perform a miracle of wiggling out of the graveclothes which were wound tightly about all the curves of His body and leave without disarranging these at all.

Merrill C. Jenney explains the graveclothes: "In preparing a body for burial according to Jewish tradition, it was usually washed and straightened, and then bandaged tightly from the armpits to the ankles in strips of linen about a foot wide. Aromatic spices, often of a gummy consistency were placed between the wrapping or folds. They served partially as a preservative and partially as a cement to glue the cloth wrapping into a solid covering...John's term "bound" is in perfect accord with the language of Luke 23:53, where the writer says that the body was "rolled in linen".

"On the morning of the first day of the week the body of Jesus had vanished, but the graveclothes were still there."

"The wrappings were in position where the head had been, separated from the others by the distance from armpits to neck. The shape of the body was still apparent in them, but the flesh and bone had disappeared...How was the corpse extricated from the wrapping, since they would not slip over the curves of the body when tightly wound around it?"

Professor E. H. Day says: "The physical improbabilities of the supposition are indeed overwhelming. Even if we were to reject the account of the guarding of the sepulcher (in obedience to the dictates of a criticism which finds in it an inconvenient incident) there remains the difficulty of supposing that Jesus just recovered from a swoon could have rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher, for it was very great."

It is absurd to suppose that Jesus could have fought off the Roman guard even if He had managed to roll away the stone. Such men as would have kept the watch

should scarcely have had difficulty in dealing with “a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulcher.”

Professor Day says: “A long walk, followed by the appearance to the disciples at Jerusalem, is inconceivable in the case of one recovered from a swoon caused by wounds and exhaustion.”

Professor E.F. Kevan makes the following comments on this point: “On His feet, which had been pierced through and through only two days back, He walks without difficulty the two leagues between Emmaus and Jerusalem. He is so active, that during the repast He disappears suddenly out of sight of His fellow-travelers, and when they return to the capital to announce the good news to the apostles, they find Him there again! He has overtaken them. With the same quickness which characterizes all His movements, He presents Himself suddenly in the room in which the disciples are assembled.

Are these the actions of a man who had just been taken down half-dead from the cross, and who has been laid in a grave in a condition of complete exhaustion. No.”

If Jesus had merely revived from a deathlike swoon, He would have explained His condition to the disciples. Remaining silent, He would have been a liar and deceiver, allowing His followers to spread a Resurrection Proclamation that was really a resurrection fairy tale.

Conclusion

With George Hanson, one can honestly say of the swoon theory: “It is hard to believe that this was the favorite explanation of eighteenth-century rationalism.” The evidence speaks so much to the contrary of such a hypothesis that it is now obsolete.

The Hallucination Theory

The view – All of Christ’s post Resurrection appearances were really only supposed appearances. What really happened was this: People had hallucinations.

The Refutation

Were Christ's appearances that important?

C.S. Lewis says: "In the earliest days of Christianity an "apostle" was first and foremost a man who claimed to be an eye-witness of the Resurrection. Only a few days after His Crucifixion when two candidates were nominated for the vacancy created by the treachery of Judas, their qualification was that they had known Jesus personally both before and after His death and could offer first-hand evidence of Resurrection in addressing the outer world (Acts 1:22). A few days later, St. Peter, preaching the first Christian sermon, makes the same claim – "God raised Jesus, of which all are witnesses (Acts 2:32). In the First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul bases his claim to apostleship on the same ground – "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen the LORD Jesus?"

Would it matter if Christ's post-Resurrection appearances were visions?

C.S. Lewis: If the view which regards all of Christ's appearances to have been mere hallucinations were true, then the value of the apostolic office would be nil.

Gresham Machen adds: "...that the Christian church is founded upon a pathological experience of certain persons in the first century of our era. It means that if there had been a good neurologist for Peter and the others to consult, there never would have been a Christian Church."

J.N.D. Anderson, in speaking of "the credibility of the apostolic witness" says that it will either "stand or fall by the validity of their testimony."

What is a vision? Professor Wilbur Smith says: "The most satisfying definition of a vision I have seen is the one by Weiss. "The scientific meaning of this term is that an apparent act of vision takes place for which there is no corresponding external object. The optic nerve has not been stimulated by any outward waves of light or vibrations of the ether, but has been excited by a purely inner physiological cause. At the same time the sense-impression of sight is accepted by the one who experiences the vision as completely as if it were wholly "objective"; he fully believes the object of his vision to be actually before him."

Were Christ's post-Resurrection appearances visions?

Mere visions were not the experience of the disciples; the testimony of the New Testament totally opposes such a hypothesis.

Hilary Straton has said: "Men who are subject to hallucinations never become moral heroes. The Effect of the Resurrection of Jesus in transformed lives was continuous, and most of these early witnesses went to their deaths for proclaiming this truth."

The hallucination theory is not plausible because it contradicts certain laws and principles to which psychiatrists say visions must confirm:

- Generally, only particular kind of people have hallucinations.
- They are those whom one would describe as "high-strung" highly imaginative and very nervous and self-isolated.
- The appearances that Christ made were not restricted to persons of any particular psychological make-up.

John R. W. Stott says: "There was a variety of mood:

"Mary Magdalene was weeping; ...

"The women were afraid and astonished...

"Peter was full of remorse...

"and Thomas of incredulity

"The Emmaus pair were distracted by the events of the day and week...

"and the disciples in Galilee were distracted by their fishing...

"It is impossible to dismiss these revelations of the divine LORD as hallucinations of deranged minds."

Hallucinations are linked in an individual's subconscious to his particular past experience.

- They are very individualistic and extremely subjective

Heinrich Kluerer in Psychopathology of Perception cites a famous neurobiologist: "Raou Mourgue, in his fundamental treatise on the neurobiology of hallucinations, reached the conclusion that variability and inconstancy represent the most constant features of hallucinatory and related phenomena. For him the hallucination is not a static phenomenon but essentially a dynamic process, the

instability of which reflects the very instability of the factors and conditions associated with its origin.”

It is extremely unlikely, then, that two persons would have the same hallucination at the same time.

The Appearance that Christ Made Were seen by Many People.

Thomas J. Thorburn asserts: “It is absolutely inconceivable that as many as five hundred persons, of average soundness of mind and temperament, in various numbers, at all sorts of times, and in diverse situations, should experience all kinds of sensuous impressions – visual, auditory, tactual – and that all these manifold experiences should rest entirely upon subjective hallucination, we say that this is incredible, because if such a theory were applied to any other than a “supernatural” event in history, it would be dismissed forthwith as a ridiculously insufficient explanation.”

The Appearances that Christ Made could not have been “erroneous” perceptions.

W.J. Sparrow-Simpson says that “The appearances of the Risen Master may be analyzed according to human senses to which they appealed, whether the sense of sight, or of hearing (auditory) or of touch (tactile). The different phenomenon may be conveniently grouped together under these division.”

First, as to the sense of sight. This is naturally first, as the initial form of gaining their attention. It is described in the Gospels by various expressions:

- “Jesus met them and said “Greetings”. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped Him. (Matthew 28:9)
- Luke 24:31 “And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him.”
- Luke 24:37 “But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And Jesus said to them “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your heart? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”
- John 20:18 “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the LORD.”
- John 20:20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the LORD.

- John 20:25 So the other disciples told Thomas “We have seen the LORD.” But he said to them “Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into His side, I will never believe.”
- John 20:29 Jesus said to Thomas, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”
- John 21:12 Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask Him “who are you?” They knew it was the LORD.
- Acts 1:3 Jesus presented Himself alive to them after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Appeal is made by the Risen LORD in these appearances to the nail marks of the wounds inflicted in the passion.

Luke 24:29, 40 Luke speaks of the hands and the feet.

John 20:20-25 John mentions “His hands and His feet.”

Matthew mentions neither.

Second, the appearances of the Risen Christ are reported also as appeals to the sense of touch.

Luke 24:39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

Luke 24:42, 43 The disciples gave Him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and He took it and ate before them.

Third, Professor Thomas Thorburn says: the hallucinatory vision at the tomb in Mark 16:5-7 has an Auditory experience.

Mark 16:5 “And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. ⁷ But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.”

Matthew 28:9, 10 “And behold, Jesus met them and said “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.” Here Jesus was seen and touched by the women.

The Theft Theory: The Disciples Stole the Body.

Matthew 28:11-15 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹² And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³ and said, “Tell people, “His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep. ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

The Theft Theory as recorded in Matthew was popular among the Jews for some time is seen in the writings of Justin Martyr, Tertullian and others.

Professor Thorburn makes the following observations: “In Justin’s “Dialogue Against Trypho¹⁰⁸, the Jews speak of “one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified; but His disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where He was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven.”

“So also Tertullian says: “The grave was found empty of all but the clothes of the buried one. But, nevertheless, the leaders of the Jews, whom it nearly concerned both to spread abroad a lie, and keep back a people tributary and submissive to them from the faith, gave it out that the body of Christ had been stolen by His followers.” And again, with a fine scorn he says: “This is he whom his disciples secretly stolen away that it might be said that he had risen again, or the gardener had taken away, in order that his lettuces might not be damaged by the crowds of visitors!” This statement we find repeated in Jewish mediaeval literature.

John Chrysostom of Antioch (347-407 AD) said of the theft theory: “For indeed even this establishes the Resurrection, the fact that I mean of their saying, that the disciples stole Him (His body). For this is the language of men confessing, that the body was not there. When therefore they confess the body was not there, but the stealing it is shown to be false and incredible, by their watching by

it, and by the seals, and by the timidity of the disciples, the proof of the Resurrection even hence appears incontrovertible.”

The Refutation. The Empty tomb has to be explained somehow.

Professor E.F. Kevan says that while the empty tomb does not necessarily prove the Resurrection, it does, however, present two distinct alternatives. Kevan writes, “Those alternatives are not that the empty tomb was either a Divine work or a human one.” Both of these choices must be objectively considered and the one with the highest probability of being true must be accepted.

Kevan continues: “No difficulty presents itself, however, when the decision has to be made between such alternatives as these. The enemies of Jesus had no motive for removing the body; the friends of Jesus had no power to do so. It would have been to the advantage of the authorities that the body should remain where it was; and the view that the disciples stole the body is impossible. The power that removed the body of the Savior from the tomb must therefore have been Divine.”

La Camus puts it this way: “If Jesus, who had been laid in the tomb on Friday, was not there on Sunday, either He was removed or He came forth by His own power. There is no other alternative.

Was He removed? By whom? By friends or by enemies? The latter had set a squad of soldiers to guard Him, therefore they had no intention of causing Him to disappear. Moreover, their prudence could not counsel this. This would have made the way too easy for stories of the Resurrection which the disciples might invent. The wisest course was for them to guard Him as a proof. Thus they could reply to every pretension that might arise: “Here is the corpse. He is not risen.”

“As for His friends, they had neither the intention nor the power to remove Him.”

Wilbur Smith says: “These soldiers did not know how to explain the empty tomb; they were told to say what the Sanhedrin told them to say and bribed so that they might repeat in fear this quickly concocted tale.”

That the disciples stole Christ’s body is not a reasonable explanation for the empty tomb. The guard’s testimony was not questioned. Matthew records that

“some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.” (Matthew 28:11)

Professor R.C. H. Lenski remarks that the message that Jesus’ Resurrection was delivered to the high priests through their own witnesses i.e. “the soldiers they themselves had posted, the most unimpeachable witnesses possible.” The testimony of the guard was accepted as being entirely true; they knew the guard had no reason to lie.

Wilbur M. Smith writes: “It should be noticed first of all that the Jewish authority never questioned the report of the guards. They did not themselves go out to see if the tomb was empty, because they knew it was empty. The guards would never have come back with such a story as this on their lips, unless they were reporting actual, indisputable occurrence, as far as they were able to apprehend them. The story which the Jewish authorities told the soldiers to repeat was a story to explain how the tomb became empty.”

Professor Albert Roper, speaking of Annas and Caiaphas, says: “Their hypocritical explanation of the absence of the body of Jesus from the tomb proclaims the falsity of their allegation, else why should they have sought to suborn (bribe) the perjured (willfully told untruths) testimony of the soldiers.”

The Jews, then, by not questioning the veracity (truth or accuracy) of the guard’s testimony, give tacit assent (silent approval) to the emptiness of Christ’s tomb. Their concocted tale that the disciples stole the body of Jesus is only a lame excuse, put forth for lack of anything better.

Much precaution was taken in securing the tomb against the theft. To the disciples such measures would have been an insurmountable obstacle in any plan of grave robbery.

Professor Albert Roper says: “Let us be fair. We are confronted with an explanation which to reasonable minds cannot and does not explain; a solution which does not solve. When the chief priests induced Pilate to “command that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day.” the factual record justifies the conclusion that the sepulcher was in very truth made secure. Reasoning, therefore, from that record, we are inescapably faced with the conclusion that

the measures taken to prevent the friends of Jesus from stealing His body now constitute unimpeachable proof that they could not and did not steal it.”

Fallow's Encyclopedia says: “The disciples could not resist Roman power. How could soldiers be armed, and on guard, suffer themselves to be overreached by a few timorous (nervous, lack of confidence) people?”

The depression and cowardice of the disciples is a hard-hitting argument that they could not have suddenly become so brave and daring as to face a detachment of soldiers at the tomb and steal the body. They were in no mood or have any courage to try anything like that.

Wilbur M. Smith says: “The disciples who had fled from Jesus when He was being tried, neither had the courage nor the physical power to go up against a group of soldiers.” “These disciples were in no mood to go out and face Roman soldiers, subdue the entire guards, and snatch that body out of the tomb. I think, myself, if they had attempted it, they would have been killed, but they certainly were in no mood even to try it. On Thursday night of that week Peter had proved himself such a coward, when a maid twitted him in the lower hall of the palace of the high priest, accusing him of belonging to the condemned Nazarene, that, to save his own skin, he denied his Lord, and cursed and swore. What could have happened to Peter within those few hours to change him from such a coward to a man rushing out to fight Roman soldiers.”

Professor A. Roper says: “There is not one of that little band of disciples who would have dared to violate that sealed tomb even if there were no Roman soldiers guarding it. The thought that one of them could accomplish such an undertaking in the face of the preventing measures which had been adopted is utterly fantastic.”

If the soldiers were sleeping, how could they say the disciples stole the body?

A.B. Bruce says of the Roman guard: “They were perfectly aware that they had not fallen asleep at their post and that no theft had taken place. The lie for which the priests paid so much money is suicidal; one half destroys the other. Sleeping sentinels could not know what happened.”

Professor David Brown remarks: “If anything were needed to complete the proof of the reality of Christ's Resurrection, it would be the silliness of the explanation

which the guards were bribed to give of it. That a whole guard should go to sleep on their watch at all, was not very likely; that they should do it in a case like this, where there was such anxiety on the part of the authorities that the grave should remain undisturbed, was in the last degree improbable.”

The soldiers would not have fallen asleep while on watch – to do so would have meant death from their superior officers.

Professor A.B. Bruce writes: “The ordinary punishment for falling asleep on the watch was death. Could the soldiers be persuaded by any amount of money to run such a risk? Of course they might take the money and go away laughing at the donors, meaning to tell their general the truth.

Could the priests expect anything else? If not, could they propose the project seriously? The story has its difficulties.”

Edward Gordon Selwyn cited by Wilbur Smith, comments on the possibility of the guards’ falling asleep: “That without an exception all should have fallen asleep when they were stationed there for so extraordinary a purpose, to see that the body was not stolen – is not credible: especially when it is considered that these guards were subjected to the severest discipline in the world. It was death for a Roman Sentinel to sleep at his post. Yet these guards were not executed; nor were they deemed culpable even by the ruler, woefully chagrined (distressed or humiliated or embarrassed) and exasperated as they must have been by failure of their plan for securing the body – that the Jewish rulers did not believe what they instructed and bribed the soldiers to say, is almost self-evident. If they did, why were not the disciples at once arrested and examined? For such an act as was imputed to them involved serious offence against the existent authorities. Why were they not compelled to give up the body? Or, in the event of their being unable to exculpate (exonerate, acquit) themselves from the charge, why were they not punished for their crime? It is nowhere intimated that the rulers even attempted to substantiate the charge.”

William Paley, the English theologian and philosopher, writes: “It has been rightly, I think, observed by Dr. Townshend, that the story of the guards carried collusion (conspiracy or illegal cooperation) upon the fact of it: - “His disciples came by night, and stole him away, while we slept.” Men in their circumstances would not

have made such an acknowledgment of their negligence, without previous assurances of protection and impunity.”

The stone at the tomb was extremely large. Even if the soldier were asleep and the disciples did try to steal the body, the noise caused while moving such a rock would surely have awakened them.

Professor Wilbur Smith says: “Surely these soldiers would have been awakened by the rolling back of a heavy stone, and the taking out of the body of Jesus.”

David Brown writes: “But – even if it could be supposed that so many disciples should come to the grave as would suffice to break the seal, roll back the huge stone, and carry off the body – that the guards should all sleep soundly enough and long enough to admit of all this tedious and noisy work being gone through at their very side without being awake.”

The Grave clothes give a silent testimony to the impossibility of theft.

Merrill Tenney remarks: “No robber would ever have rewound the wrapping in their original shape, there would not have been time to do so. They would have flung the cloths down in disorder and fled with the body. Fear of detection would have made them act as hastily as possible.”

Professor Albert Roper says: “Such orderliness is inconsistent with grave desecration and body-snatching. One brash enough to undertake such a mission, if one could have been found, would assuredly not have practiced such orderliness, such leisureliness, such calm. It is certainly not in keeping with similar felonious acts with which we are familiar that criminals practice such studious care to leave in a meticulously neat and tidy condition premises which they have looted or vandalized. On the contrary, disorder and disarray are the earmarks of a prowling visitor. Such acts, in the very nature of things, are not performed in a leisurely manner. Their perpetration calls for haste in which tidiness plays no part. The very orderliness of the tomb, testified to by John, proclaims the absurdity of the charge that the body of Jesus was stolen by His disciples.”

Chrysostom writes: “And what mean also the napkins that were stuck on with the myrrh; for Peter saw these lying. For if they had been disposed to steal, they would not have stolen the body naked, not because of dishonoring it only, but in

order not to delay and lose time in stripping it, and not to give them that were so disposed opportunity to awake and seize them. Especially when it was myrrh, a drug that adheres so to the body, and cleaves to the clothes, whence it was not easy to take the clothes off the body, but they that did this needed much time, so that from this again, the tale of the theft is improbable.”

“What? Did they not know the rage of the Jews? And that they would vent their anger on them? And what profit was it at all to them, if He had not risen again?”

Simon Greenleaf, the famous Harvard Professor of Law, says: “The grave-clothes lying orderly in their place, and the napkin folded together by itself, made it evident that the sepulcher had not been rifled nor the body stolen by violent hands; for these garments and spices would have been of more value to thieves, than merely a naked corpse; at least, they would not have taken the trouble thus to fold them together. The same circumstances showed also that the body had not been removed by friends; for they would not thus have left the graveclothes behind. All these considerations produce in the mind of John the germ of a belief that Jesus was risen from the dead.”

The Disciples were men of honor

James Rosscup says: “The disciples were men of honor and could not have foisted a lie upon the people. They spent the rest of their lives proclaiming the message of the Resurrection, as cowards transformed into men of courage. They were willing to face arrest, imprisonment, beating, and horrible deaths, and not one of them ever denied the LORD and recanted of his belief that Christ had risen.”

J.N.D. Anderson, the British lawyer, says: “This would run totally contrary to all we know of them: their ethical teaching, the quality of their lives, their steadfastness in suffering and persecution. Nor would it begin to explain their dramatic transformation from dejected and dispirited escapists into witnesses whom no opposition could muzzle.”

Acts 4:8-12 “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead – by His name this man stands here

before you in good health. He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

Wilbur Smith explains: “The power of God so came down upon Peter on the Day of Pentecost that on that one day, in a sermon occupied, for most part, with the truth of the Resurrection of Christ, 3000 souls were won to the LORD. One thing is true: Peter was at least preaching what he believed: that God had raised Christ from the dead. You cannot conscientiously preach lies with power like this. The disciples went on preaching the Resurrection until the whole world was turned upside down by faith in this glorious truth. No, the disciple did not and could not have stolen the body of our LORD, Jesus Christ.”

John R.W. Stott: “The theory that the disciples stole Christ’s body simply does not ring true. It is so unlikely as to be virtually impossible. If anything is clear from the Gospels and the Acts, it is that the apostles were sincere. They may have been deceived, if you like, but they were not deceivers. Hypocrites and martyrs are not made of the same stuff.”

Conclusion: He Is Risen, Christ Is Risen Indeed! Jesus Christ is Risen!

Simon Greenleaf, Harvard Law Professor says: “all that Christianity asks of men – is, that they would be consistent with themselves; that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things; and that they would try and judge its actors and witnesses, as they deal with their fellow men, when testifying to human affairs and actions, in human tribunals. Let the witnesses be compared with themselves, with each other, and with surrounding facts and circumstances; and with surrounding facts and circumstances; and let their testimony be sifted, as if it were given in a court of justice, on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth.”

G.B. Hardy said, “Here is the complete record:

Confucius’s tomb – occupied

Buddha’s tomb – occupied

Mohammed's tomb – occupied

Jesus' tomb – Empty.”

Let the evidence speak for itself!