

Shattering the Myths of Man

Mark 15:42-16:8

Introduction

We come today, to the climax of our expositional study in the Gospel of Mark. We have arrived at a tremendous place to end our study and that is, the beginning of Christianity or the empty tomb. So turn to Mark, chapter 15.

I am going to approach this a little differently in giving facts related to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I think it is fair to say that at the point in which we ended our last discussion; that is, with Jesus' crucifixion, that Christianity was finished. The Savior had died. His claims to be the Messiah had supposedly, been shattered. Many would say the death was either premature or unnecessary and it was a tragedy that Jesus was now dead.

Humanly Speaking

Six Reasons

Why Christianity Was Finished

Let me give six reasons why Christianity should have, humanly speaking, been finished.

We will begin by reviewing Mark 15:42-45, which will help with our understanding. Look at Mark 15:42a.

When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; . . .

Notice that Joseph is part of the Sanhedrin that had declared Jesus guilty and worthy of death. We do

not know, but perhaps Joseph had remained silent through all of the illegal courtroom proceedings.

We also do not know if there had been a change in Joseph's life. However, the word "waiting" is in the imperfect tense – a periphrastic imperfect tense – which means that every chance this man had, he was waiting or thinking about the kingdom. It was constantly on his mind. When he got out of bed in the morning, he thought, "Maybe today is the day the kingdom will come."

So this man, Joseph of Arimathea, was evidently, a man of faith who was hanging on to the slim threads of hope that Jesus was, in fact, that King. Notice what he does in Mark 15:42b.

. . . and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

If Joseph had not asked for Jesus' body, the customs of that day would have taken place. They would have buried Him in the Valley of Hinnom, which was also known as the "Valley of Ashes," or the "Valley of Corpses". A fire was kept perpetually burning in that valley, and the bodies of criminals were thrown in and consumed by the fire.

Look at Pilate's reaction in Mark 15:43.

Pilate wondered if He [Jesus] was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead.

Note the two times the word "dead" is used in this verse, "He was dead," "He was already dead". Continue to Mark 15:44.

And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

1. I think the first reason why Christianity was finished, from a human standpoint, was because Jesus was dead.

Jesus had been crucified. This cruel form of death was created by the Persians. One of the gods they worshiped was the god of the earth. They did not want to defile the sod with the body of a dead criminal, so they devised a way that a criminal could die above the ground. This idea of crucifixion was their solution. They would elevate the body of the criminal ten to twelve feet into the air. It was a horrible death.

There were witnesses of Jesus' death, not only of the centurion, but of the soldiers who were there. No one ever denied the fact that Jesus had, in fact, died. He was dead. Christianity should have been finished.

2. The second reason that I think, humanly speaking, Christianity was all over was because Jesus' body was mummified with over a hundred pounds of spices.

Turn to John and let us take a look at this practice. Look at John 19:39.

Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.

Now we have two men involved, not only Joseph of Arimathea, but Nicodemus. You may remember this wealthy man.

It was the practice in that day, to mummify the body with spices, both powder and liquid, and it took a lot of money. Nicodemus, being a wealthy man, was able to buy an amount used for a royal person's death and burial. He purchased a hundred pounds of spices.

Continue to John 19:40.

So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

Note that "linen wrappings" is plural. The other gospel writers talk about a linen cloth or sheet.

Evidently, they had a cloth that they took to the tomb and cut into strips, as was the practice. They laid the body on a stone tablet in the tomb and began to wrap every limb of His body in these linen wrappings. You may remember that Jesus was

wrapped in a linen wrapping as a baby when He was born. With such a poor birth, that was all they had to wrap Him in as a baby – a linen cloth. And now, that was all they had to bury Him in – a linen cloth.

The burial custom of the Jews was that they would wrap every limb of a body with the cloth strips and interlay spices. By the time they were finished, this individual was completely hidden from sight. He was wrapped completely with many yards of linen wrappings – we do not know how many. They would then, lay another separate piece on his face, which they referred to as the linen handkerchief.

Now, interwoven into the linens wrapped around Jesus were at least a hundred pounds of spices. We are going to refer back to this later in the sermon, but it is important to understand the practice and that it was done with Jesus, as well. So He was mummified there in the tomb.

The tombs were made in such a way that along the side would be a trough or ledge cut out. They would lay the body in that trough or on that ledge. This would be elevated at a particular point and they would put the head on that elevated point

So Jesus was crucified. He was dead. Now, He was mummified. There was no way He could breathe through a hundred pounds of spices and linen wrappings. He was dead, humanly speaking.

3. The third reason why Christianity was finished, in human terms, is that Jesus was placed in a solid tomb and a stone was rolled in front of it.

Look at John 19:41.

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

Jesus was placed in a new tomb. You have probably heard people refer to Him being buried in a borrowed tomb. I do not think it was borrowed; I think it was permanent. I do not think Joseph of Arimathea ever thought that he would be buried there. I think he felt like he was giving away this tomb. It was the body of Jesus and it was all over.

Then, in Matthew 27:59-60, we are told,

And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.

Notice the tomb was hewn out of solid rock. There were no back doors; no exits, this is solid rock. Then he had many servants roll a large stone against the entrance to the tomb. So, there was a stone in front of the tomb.

The custom of this day, if you were wealthy enough, was that you could have your own tomb on your own private property, as Joseph did. Along the front of the tomb, a trough would be dug. Uphill in that trough, would rest a large stone that had been cut out of solid rock. It would be kept in place perhaps, by a smaller stone placed in front of this huge boulder. Then, when the body had been deposited in the tomb, they would pull out that smaller rock and gravity would do the work that would take more than thirty or forty men to do; that is, roll this stone to a resting place directly in front of the tomb.

There is an ancient manuscript in which the man who was copying the Gospel of Mark made a side note in the margin of his text. He said, "They rolled this stone that more than twenty men could not budge or move."

This copier gave his interpretive comments that were not part of the text. It struck him that such a large tomb had such a huge rock.

Engineers, in fact, have discovered, by studying the typical tombs of this day, that the opening would be between five and five and a half feet high. So, the people had to bend down to go into the tomb and do the work. They estimated that for a rock to be large enough to cover the entrance to a tomb with a five and a half foot opening, it would have to be at least, one and a half to two tons in weight.

Moving the stone in front of Jesus' tomb then, was no small feat. I imagine, when the stone came to rest in front of that tomb, Joseph, along with any disciples and women who might have been there, left with their heads hanging low, thinking, "This is tragic."

Understand that you and I know the end of the chapter; we know the end of the story, but do not let that minimize for you, the agony that these people felt. Humanly speaking, they thought, "It's finished. He's dead. He's mummified. He's buried."

4. The fourth reason as to why Christianity was over, humanly speaking, is that a Roman guard was positioned to guard the tomb.

Look at Matthew 27:62-63.

Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.'"

If Jesus was deceiving, why would they even worry? Notice what they say in Matthew 27:64a.

"Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, . . ."

Why? They say, in the next phrase of verse 64, *" . . . otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away . . ."*

I think, however, that they were just trying to keep Jesus in. In other words, "Just in case He really is to rise again, let's take every precaution to keep Him in that tomb."

They then say, to mask their fear that He really was the King, in the last phrase of verse 64,

" . . . His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."

If they were really afraid the disciples might come and steal Jesus' body out of the tomb and falsify His resurrection, you would think the Pharisees would leave the stone off and not post guards. In that way, when the body was missing, they could say, "Look, we didn't guard it, we didn't put a stone in front of it, so they obviously came in the night and stole it."

I would bet that at the end of this, they kind of smacked themselves in the head and said, "Why did we take every precaution? That proves that something supernatural happened. Why in the world did we come up with the idea to put a guard there? How would the disciples overcome sixteen armed guards?"

They probably wished they had left it alone. Yet, how clever God is in His plan.

So they secured a Roman guard. Look at Matthew 27:65-66.

Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go make it as secure as you know how." And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

Understand that this Roman guard is not like many artists have portrayed in paintings. They were not two or three cute looking guys in mini-skirts,

standing out in front of this tomb holding a couple of cardboard swords. The Greek word used to refer to the guard in this verse, indicates that this was the fighting machine of the Roman army.

A unit guard would be from four to sixteen men who were fully armed. These men were the most powerful defensive and offensive weapon of the entire Roman army. In fact, they were specifically trained to guard and protect six square feet from attack. There were at least four of these men, guarding at least six square feet, armed with spears, swords, daggers, coats of mail, and all kinds of protective defensive and offensive materials.

So I would say then, that one of the reasons you could humanly say that Christianity was finished is, not only was Jesus crucified, mummified, and buried in a solid rock tomb with a stone in front, but there was this impressive guard that no one would ever get through. We might as well consider Christianity as being finished.

5. A fifth reason that humanly speaking, Christianity was over was that they set a seal on the stone.

Look at Matthew 27:66 again.

And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

This is the same thing that was done when the prophet Daniel was thrown in the lion's den (Daniel 6:17). It was the practice that once the boulder was placed in front of the tomb, they would take a rope, perhaps some kind of twine, and attach it to one side of the tomb with special sealing clay and then, wrap that rope around the stone and attach it to the other side of the tomb with sealing clay. Then, the Roman authority would take a ring and press it into the clay. This, in effect, indicated that all of the authority of Rome was saying, "Don't touch this rock." If someone touched the rock and removed the seal and it could be proved, then the practice was that the person was crucified upside-down.

So all of the Roman authority was declaring, "It is all over. This is the last chapter. Don't mess with this tomb."

6. Reason number six that Christianity was over, humanly speaking, was that we know from studying the accounts in the gospels that the disciples were in hiding during these events.

The credibility of the disciples was gone. Their message was silent and the kingdom cause was not moving forward. These men were afraid to show their faces. They had fled the moment Jesus was arrested in the garden. Now, they were in hiding. Perhaps they were in John's home.

I would imagine, as I try to put myself in the place of one of these disciples, that I would probably be feeling tremendous confusion at this point. I would be stunned into silence. Three years of my life would have just been spent following this man Jesus, hearing His claim that He was the King. Now, He was dead. Perhaps I would be feeling angry or bitter.

The disciples were in hiding and their lips were quiet.

Sovereignly Speaking Seven Reasons Why Christianity Would Flourish

Now, as you know, in the next events, sovereignly speaking, Christianity would not be finished, but would flourish. Let me give seven reasons as to why.

1. First, the feared Roman power was ignored and the seal on Jesus' tomb was broken.

The Roman authorities put the seal on Jesus' tomb. This declared that if anyone touched it, they were declaring war on the entire Roman Empire, and if caught, they would be crucified upside-down.

So, there was the implication, in that the seal was broken, that someone more powerful than the Romans had come onto the scene. Someone willing to take on the entire Roman Empire had shown himself when the seal was broken.

Now, we know it was the power of God, who will take on any kingdom. One day, He will rule the world.

2. The second reason that Christianity would flourish, sovereignly speaking, was that the stone had been rolled away.

Turn to John 20:1. We will look at all the gospel accounts to get the fullest picture. You may know this story well and may have heard it many times, but let us take another look at it.

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.

It is interesting that all the disciples were cowards, but all the women were courageous.

Now, if we look at other gospels, the words for the stone being rolled away are interesting. There is a little Greek word to which each gospel writer would attach a different preposition in order to give the picture of where the stone is.

Mark suggests, by his preposition, that the stone was rolled uphill. The preposition that he puts in front, or “kulio,” means that it was rolled up.

Luke says that the stone was rolled up and away from the tomb. He adds to what Mark says in saying that the stone was not only rolled uphill, but was also rolled away from the tomb; separated from the tomb.

Notice what Mary saw, in the last part of John 20:1.

. . . Mary Magdalene . . . saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.

This gives us an even fuller picture because John adds the preposition that implies that, not only was the stone rolled up and away, but someone carried it away. In other words, someone literally, picked up a two ton rock and moved it, not just up that hill in that gully, but away, as if it was thrown aside.

This is fascinating because everyone who comes back on the scene knows that someone very strong, or perhaps fifty men have somehow moved this stone out of the gully and away from the sepulcher. In fact, it was lying on its side, as if someone just tossed it like a pebble. The picture is beginning to unfold that something awesome has happened.

3. Thirdly, the Roman guard fled and they had to be bribed.

Matthew 28:11-15 tells us about this.

. . . some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’ And if this should come to the governor’s ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.” And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews . . .

Now we know that an earthquake took place (Matthew 28:2). Maybe the earthquake was caused by that two ton rock hitting the ground and bouncing all over the place. Whatever it was, these Roman guards were paralyzed with fear.

Finally, when they got their senses about them, they fled. Did these Roman guards go back to the army barracks? No. They went back, as verse 11 says, to the Jewish authorities. They did that because after they had gained their senses, they looked into the tomb and found that it was empty, which meant they were in trouble.

Now they are really in trouble because, in fear, they have fled the scene. They have gone AWOL. In that day, the Romans had a cute little practice that if you went AWOL, you were killed; you lost your head.

So the guards went to the chief priests asking for protection. They asked them to go to Pilate and declare that something supernatural had happened and that they had not fallen asleep. However, the chief priests say, “We’ll take care of Pilate, but we want you to say that you were sleeping.”

For these guards to say they were sleeping, they would have to be bribed. If guards were caught without their arms, they would be killed. If they struck a higher ranking officer, they would be killed. If they deserted their posts, they would be killed. And, if they were caught sleeping, they would be killed.

These guards were probably saying, “Wait a minute! You want us to tell Pilate what? That we were sleeping?! And that the disciples came while we were sleeping and took the body?! How much is it worth to you?”

I really believe, and we will have to read between the lines of the most ancient manuscripts, that these chief priests gave these guards enough money for them to retire on. If Pilate agreed and protected them, their credibility as soldiers was gone. This was a fighting unit and all sixteen of them were taking a nap. The credibility of their prowess in battle was finished. They now appeared foolish before the eyes of their comrades. They probably gave them enough money to comfortably retire.

So the Roman guards fled the scene and were bribed. They were bribed as well, because their lives were in jeopardy.

4. Fourthly, Christianity would flourish, sovereignly speaking, because both the Jews

and the Romans admitted the tomb was empty.

It is fascinating, ladies and gentlemen, that neither the Jews nor the Romans ever denied the tomb was empty. They never said, “No, you were mistaken. Let’s go back to the tomb.” – although I am sure they did. I would bet the entire city of Jerusalem went to that tomb to take a peek. They saw that stone moved away, unless the Pharisees had somehow put it back in the trench. The Romans declared, by their silence, that the tomb was, in fact, empty. They never denied it.

This leads me to take a moment to declare once again, the tremendous hatred and jealousy of Jesus Christ that the Pharisees and religious leaders had. It was bad enough to see Him heal the blind man and then, to see Him raise the dead. They began by rejecting His words, and then they rejected His works, and ultimately, that led to rejecting Him as a person.

The same thing can happen in your life and mine. If you reject His word that He is the Savior, and you reject His works in what you see in the lives of other believers, as John testified, and you reject the tremendous transformation that has taken place because of Him in the lives of people you know, then one day, you will ultimately, reject Him, as you are now, in part.

It is tragic that even after this empty tomb, there was no revival among the Sanhedrinists. You would expect them to call a meeting and say, “Look, men, we really made a mistake. There’s no doubt in our minds now that this man is really God. Did you see that rock? Let’s figure up the facts. He was in that tomb and now He’s gone. And, we’ve had to bribe those soldiers to lie.”

How in the world could they live with themselves, knowing they bribed the soldiers to tell a lie? When the soldiers came back and said, “You won’t believe what’s happened! An earthquake . . . the stone . . . paralyzed with fear . . . the body gone . . .”

Yet, these religious leaders continued to reject Him. I really think, my friends, that if Jesus Christ had appeared to the Roman Empire, declared His Kingship, set up His throne, and visibly reigned that they would *still* have rejected Him. And so would you and I, had we been there.

5. The fifth reason that Christianity would flourish, sovereignly speaking, was the

fascinating fact that the grave clothes were undisturbed.

Look at John 20:6-7.

And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

Literally, the linen wrappings were lying in their folds.

At this point, just over seventy-two hours have passed since Jesus has been put in a mummified state. In these hours, in the coolness of that tomb, the encasing in which He had been placed would have grown hard, in fact, it would have become like cement.

These linen wrappings would harden with the spices and it would become something like a shell or a cocoon. When these disciples looked into that tomb and stepped into that tomb, they saw the linen wrappings, not scattered all over; not lying all about that tomb, but still in their folds; still literally shaped like a man. It would be like seeing a body laying on a bed with a sheet over it and the place where the head and feet are sticking up can be seen, but yet, there is no body there. These wrappings were still lying in their folds. Obviously, Jesus Christ had simply evaporated out of those folds. And the linen napkin was still laying right in its place. It is suggested that it had even been folded. It is as if Jesus evaporated out of these wrappings and as if He evaporated through the walls.

Do you remember that Jesus went to see His disciples? He had that power. He evaporated out of that cast or shell and left everything right there, just like it had been when He had been left.

Now there are three different Greek words used for “saw”. These give us three different ways that people respond to the truth. I want to point this out because it gives us a powerful truth.

Look at John 20:1-2a.

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, . . .

It says that Mary Magdalene came and “saw the stone”. The Greek word is “blepo,” which means that she saw and never thought for a moment about what had occurred; she simply saw and took off running. John 20:2b records what she says.

. . . and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

She did not really catch on to what had happened. She simply saw and ran.

Look at John 20:6-7.

And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

Note the second use of the word “saw” in verse 6. This is the Greek word “theoreo,” from which we get our English word “theorize”. Peter comes and enters the tomb and simply saw all of these facts. He then, began to theorize; that is, he began to count one plus one plus one equals . . .

About the time Peter is trying to figure everything out, we read that John “saw”. Continue to John 20:8.

So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.

The Greek word for “saw” in this verse, is “horao”. John “saw and believed”.

Some people see, yet they see without seeing; they see blindly. Some see the facts and then, begin to theorize. They think, “I wonder what occurred here?” and they begin to run all the different possibilities through their mind. However, John, with a heart of faith, came in and “horao”. He saw with a heart of understanding, which is implied in the definition of that Greek word. John “saw and believed”. There are people who do the same today.

6. Another reason, number six, that also makes a small contribution to proving that Christianity would flourish was that the women were selected as the first witnesses.

This is fascinating because in that day, if you were a woman, your testimony did not hold up in court. In fact, if a woman saw someone killed; if she stood there, watched it all, knew where the murderer lived, and had all the facts, and then, reported it, it

would not matter because she was a woman. Her testimony would not hold up in court. So it is interesting that all the gospel writers tell us the first witnesses to the fact that Jesus Christ was alive were women.

Think about this for a moment. If this whole thing had been fabricated, do you not think the disciples would have had a little more savvy and come up with a credible person as the first eye witness rather than include women, since they knew they did not matter? These disciples were kind of dumb! Yet, it works in the reverse, proving that they did not fabricate this testimony because if they had, women would have been left out. But they are so bold as to declare that women were the first to see Jesus.

7. Finally, Christ was seen by more than five hundred other people.

It is one thing to be seen by one, two, three, or four people. They could get together and say, “Okay, now let’s get the facts together.” It is another thing to be seen by more than five hundred and all of them agree that Jesus is alive. (I Corinthians 15:6)

This reminds me of the story of the high school teacher who had four boys skip the morning classes. They told the teacher later, “Teacher, we missed classes because we had a flat tire.”

The teacher immediately separated the four boys and said, “All right, write down on a piece of paper which tire it was.”

That was a smart teacher!

When five hundred people get together, plus the disciples, including the two men on the road to Emmaus, plus the women, as the gospels tell us, it would be expected that there would be a problem with the facts among them. Yet, they all agree that Jesus is alive.

Naturally Speaking

Six Theories

That Unbelievers Would Fabricate

Before we conclude, let me give a few theories that exist concerning the events at the tomb. Imagine, had you been there, and had you been a religious leader, you would have had to think fast. They called an immediate council and basically said, “All right,

men, let's not accept Him. Let's find an answer to what happened out here."

I will give six theories that have been fabricated and propagated by unbelievers throughout history.

1. The first theory is a fairly obvious one that the disciples faked Jesus' resurrection by stealing His body.

I would have loved to have been a lawyer living at this time and given a chance to cross-examine one of the Roman soldiers who had been at the tomb.

Because of the fact that the Pharisees had told them, "Look, you tell everybody . . .," by the way, they had sent representatives out from Jerusalem to all of Macedonia telling the story that Jesus' body had been stolen. They were set on getting the word out that His body had been stolen because they were fearful that the truth would get out. So they said to the soldiers, "Tell everyone you were sleeping and the disciples came and stole the body."

I would have loved to get one of those guards up on a witness stand.

"All right, let's start from the beginning. What happened?"

"Well, I fell asleep."

"Then what happened?"

"Well, the disciples came and stole the body."

"Now, wait a second, if you were sleeping, how do you know it was the disciples who stole the body? When did you begin sleeping with your eyes open?"

Their entire theory was riddled with problems. It would never even hold up in a court.

Let me make one other point about this theory. If the disciples had indeed, stolen the body; if they had fabricated this whole resurrection story; if they had made this story up, do you think a lie would have turned them from cowards to crusaders? Do you really think that the disciples would have been willing to come from being trembling, fearful men in hiding to now being martyrs of the church who were willing to die, as they all would do? No, they would not do that for a lie. However, they would do it for the truth.

2. The second theory that was fabricated and propagated by the leaders, and even by some today, is that the authorities stole Jesus' body from the tomb.

This theory that the authorities came along and stole the body is even more brilliant. This makes a lot

of sense because where did the church begin? In Jerusalem, the hometown of these religious leaders. And what was the major message? Jesus is alive! So what do you think the authorities should have done? Produced a dead body.

I think the religious leaders would have paraded the body of Jesus all around Jerusalem. That would have crushed Christianity right away. However, the authorities, who supposedly stole the body, never produced the body.

3. There is a third theory that is propagated even today, called the Passover Plot.

Briefly, in this theory, everything concerning Jesus was a charade. Jesus was an impostor and He came along and wanted to be the Messiah. He knew the Old Testament and all the prophecies related to His death and His resurrection. So, in order to be the Messiah and in order to fool everyone into thinking that He was really the Messiah, He was planning to go to the cross, but fake His death. He was going to make sure He was taken off the cross before He was dead. And notice, the soldiers did not break His legs. That is proof that He was never really dead. Then, once He was in the tomb, the disciples would come and take Him out and He would present Himself to all of Jerusalem as the living Lord. This is called the Passover Plot.

However, the whole theory is ruined by one soldier who got out of line and, for crying out loud, speared the Lord. That was not part of the plot. He was not supposed to do that. Some over-anxious soldier, to prove that Jesus had died, took his spear and plunged it into His side, perhaps even piercing the heart. As a result, Jesus did, in fact, die. He never was the Messiah, it was all a plot. He did die and never rose again.

Now, this whole plot hinges around the facts that first, the spear was thrust into the side and secondly, that there were never any soldiers at the tomb so that the disciples could come in and get the body and, of course, bury Him silently. There is a problem with this.

The propagator of this Passover Plot, who is living today, from what I understand, says that there were no guards because the only gospel account of guards guarding the tomb is Matthew. However, if he would read the other accounts, he would realize that the only gospel account of the spear being plunged into the side, thus ruining the plot, is in John. So why decline to accept Matthew because he is the only one

and yet, take as a central part, the fact that the Passover Plot was shattered by the soldier piercing the side of Jesus, as presented in John.

Do you see what the propagators of this theory are doing? They are picking and choosing. They are taking some things because, “that makes sense to our view,” and not taking others because, “this doesn’t fit our view, so we’re going to discard all of this.”

4. A fourth fabricated view is the swoon theory or the resuscitation theory.

This is the theory that Jesus Christ went through all of the trials, was beaten half to death in the half-way death or scourging, was so weak He could not even carry the crossbeam, was finally crucified, with spikes nailed into His forearms or wrists and His feet, and finally, was declared dead, but He was really not. Then, He was mummified with over a hundred pounds of spices, placed in a tomb, guarded by soldiers, but guess what happens? After three days of not eating and not drinking, instead of growing even weaker from all that has happened, He grows stronger! And, He breaks out of the shell of His linen wrappings, pushes over a two-ton stone, takes on sixteen soldiers, and declares Himself King of Jerusalem. I like this view – it makes a lot of sense.

5. A fifth theory that unbelievers have fabricated is the wrong tomb theory.

This is simply that the disciples got their directions mixed up when they went to the tomb to see Jesus and went to a tomb that was empty; that is, they went to the wrong tomb. This means, of course, that the Roman soldiers were at the wrong tomb, and that Pilate had sent them to the wrong tomb, and that the Pharisees and religious rulers had all gone to the wrong tomb, as well. They were just all confused.

6. Finally, there is the hallucination theory.

This theory is that no one ever really saw Jesus. He never really came out of the grave, but everyone hallucinated. So, five hundred witnesses hallucinated. The women hallucinated, the disciples hallucinated, and in fact, all of Jerusalem about this time, hallucinated. This view makes a lot of sense too.

Oh, my friends, these views would be more of a miracle than just simply believing the records of the gospel accounts, the falsehood that we see in the leaders, and simply coming to the conclusion that what Jesus said He would do, He did. Jesus came out of the tomb! There is really no other way to explain it. There is no way to fabricate the truth, unless you deny or ignore the obvious.

Conclusion

Now let me conclude by saying one thing. Just as Jesus said He would come into the world, He came. He fulfilled all the prophetic elements of Old Testament prophets. Just as it was prophesied that the Lamb would be slain for the sins of many, Jesus Christ died. The prophets even declared that He would be buried and He was, in fact, buried.

If all of these have turned out to be so, what about the last thing that we are waiting for? What about the prophecy that Jesus is going to come again; that He will come back and rule and reign, not only for the thousand year Millennial Kingdom, but ultimately, forever. That, as well, is true.

You and I have the privilege of standing on this side of the events thus far, and we have seen the prophecies to be true. Let us not ignore the fact that Jesus *will* come again.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 4/3/1988 by Stephen Davey.

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