

# 117. The case for the resurrection of Christ

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In our criminal justice systems, the burden of proof is heavily on the prosecutor to prove that the accused defendant has indeed committed a crime that he is charged with. The prosecutor must prove that the evidences he has must bring enough confirmations in the hearts of the jurors that they would give a guilty verdict.

In the case of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there are ample evidences of the prophecies, fulfillment, and eyewitnesses. Anyone who wants to disprove this actual event as nothing more than a hoax, has work cut out for himself. One good example of this was Lee Strobel who was an award-winning investigative journalist for the Chicago Tribune in 70's. When his wife became a devout Christian, he wanted to show to her that Christianity was nothing more than a fairy tale.

By using his investigative journalism capability, he went after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But at the end of his extensive and thorough research, he had to admit that he was wrong and he became a Christian on November, 1981. Then, he wrote a book called "The Case for Christ". I highly recommend y'all to read.

## A. THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

*Matt 28:8-10 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."*

When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, His disciples ran away from there. When He was being tried, Peter was cursing and denying that he didn't even know Him. If I were in Jesus' sandals, would I have said, "Go tell my brothers, I'm going to meet them in Galilee" – or would I have said, "Go tell those losers, I'm back and they're in deep doodoo"?

On college campuses today, many so-called intellectuals still parrot the two thousand-year-old lie: "Jesus' disciples took His body." If any of you do not believe Jesus was resurrected, I challenge you to explain to me where His body went. If the Romans had stolen it, why didn't they produce it? Christianity was ultimately the force that led to the destruction of the entire Roman Empire. If His disciples were merely hiding Jesus' body, why did they give up their lives believing in Him?

Intellectually, when I look at all the evidence, I have no other choice but to believe. The body is not there. The Resurrection is the most analyzed event in history. I also believe it is the most provable. That's why Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Truly, the Resurrection verifies that Jesus is exactly who He claimed to be – GOD!.

At the church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the place Emperor Constantine's mother Helena felt like it was the place of the true cross and the true empty tomb. There is the powerful sense of dead religion and traditionalism. Yet for hundreds and hundreds of years people have flocked to this place hanging onto this kind of spiritual deadness in a desperate attempt to find eternal life in God.

sages with many meaningless religious rituals. In other words, she'd rather feel holy with those religious rituals for her own emotional satisfaction instead of worshipping and knowing the Holy God.

We, too, often look for Jesus in the dead things – religious traditionalism, formalism, man's rules, denominational regulations, human effort, or substitutes of the flesh. We will never ultimately find Jesus in those things. We find Him only when we worship Him in spirit and in truth and believe that He is the Risen Savior of the World.

If you are standing on the top of Mount Olive east of Jerusalem toward the city, you will see thousands of tombs as well as the tomb of Rebekka, the tomb of David, the tomb of Absalom, but you won't find the tomb of Jesus that contains His decomposed remain anywhere – whether it is the tomb of Jesus that was found by the late General Gordon or the other tomb of Jesus that was designated by Emperor Constantine's mother Helena, because His body was not decomposed, rather resurrected.

Historians and shop keepers around two locations in Jerusalem argue that their place is the real place for Jesus' tomb. But the most important part of this is that Jesus is not there. He is physically in heaven.

## **B. AN IMPORTANT PARENTHESIS**

Have you ever wondered what Jesus did during those 3 days and night? Of course, you have. The best way to understand the Bible is: Using the Bible.

*Ephesians 4:8-10 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)*

The apostle Paul was quoting Psalm 68:18:

*Psalm 68:18a You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men,*

Did you notice these changes? Two of them are only slight: a transfer of a person from the pronoun of "you" to "he" and a purely stylistic transformation of a finite verb into a participle – from "have ascended" to "ascended".

The more important change is from "*received gifts among men*" to "*gave gifts to men.*" The best explanation is that the apostle Paul was drawing on an ancient oral tradition reflected in the Aramaic 'Targum' on the Psalter and the Syriac Peshitta version, both of which read, "You have given gifts to men."

I know what you are about to say, "Whatever, who cares." But I explained this to you guys, just in case some of you cannot go to sleep tonight because of this tiny biblical translation discrepancy.

But seriously, what does it mean in v9 and 10? Does it mean that Jesus descended to somewhere in the lower parts of the earth before he ascended to heaven? And what does this "*led captivity captive*" mean?

I am glad that you have that inquiring mind. If you use a cross-reference Bible or the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, it explains to us easily:

This refers to Jesus' preaching to the spirits in 'hades' that was described in 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6.

*1 Peter 4:6 For this reason the Gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*

Where do you think that the spirits of Abraham, David, Daniel, Isaiah, Elisha, and other God-believing and God-fearing OT saints were before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? They couldn't be in heaven. They all were in hades, a.k.a. Sheol waiting for the Messiah to set them free and take them to heaven.

*Luke 16:22-26 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'*

But did you also notice from what Abraham said to the rich man in v26? Those who rejected God while they were alive could not go to heaven from hades. In other words, this is not the purgatory that Catholic theology wants their people to believe.

When these captives in the captivity of hades heard the life-saving message of Jesus Christ which they already believed in faith while they were alive on earth, they received Jesus into their hearts and Jesus led their spirits to heaven as He ascended.

Only when Christ returned to the Father could He send His Spirit and His Spirit's gifts. The Ascension, then, is central, which is why Paul took the time to explain it more deeply.

### **C. MARY'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE RISEN CHRIST**

*John 20:14-18 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.*

Mary's weeping was the loud lamentation, so characteristic of the Jewish people when they express their sorrow. There is certainly nothing wrong with sincere sorrow, because God made us to shed tears; and weeping is good therapy for broken hearts. Please don't tell other Christians not to cry when they are sorrowful because they just lost someone they love. Do what this verse says:

*Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

But the sorrow of the Christian must be different from the hopeless sorrow of the unbelieving world, because we have been born-again with a living hope by the resurrec-

tion of Jesus Christ from the dead. We do not weep because our believing loved ones have gone to heaven, rather because they have left us and we miss them.

Why did Mary not recognize Jesus in v15? First, she wasn't expecting Him to be alive and secondly, her eyes probably were filled up with tears so that she couldn't see Him well. But when she heard Him calling her own name just the way He used to, immediately she recognized His voice.

Last Sunday, Karen and I celebrated our 37th wedding anniversary as I told you guys. She has put up with me for all this time. Now that we've been together long, I can even recognize her quiet coughing in a noise filled room like here before the service starts.

When Mary realized that it was the Lord Jesus, she had a death grip on Him and clung onto Him. She was not about to let Him go anywhere without her. This shows us a very important fact about the resurrected body of Jesus. It is a tangible actual glorified body, not a spirit like Jehovah's Witness' false doctrine about Jesus' resurrection.

Mary Magdalene called Him, "Rabboni!". 'Rabboni' is a Greek word which has an Aramaic origin. The title Rabboni is used in only one other place in the Gospels, Mark 10:51. "Rabbi" and "Rabboni" were equivalent in terms of respect. In later years, the Jews recognized three levels of teachers: rab (the lowest), rabbi, and rabboni (the highest). Some English translation says, "Master" instead of "Teacher," it is good, too. In this case of the definition of "master" is not the owner of slaves, rather teacher, like a martial art master.

Jesus told her, "*Do not cling to Me.*" It is not that He didn't want her to greet Him, but to tell her that she had an assignment to do – letting His disciples know about His resurrection and His message.

Did you notice the subtle shift in Jesus' choice of words in v17? In the Upper Room, He had called His disciples "His friends" in John 15:15. Now they are His brothers, sharing the same Father, becoming children of God. And this new relationship, made possible by Jesus' Resurrection, is available to all who believe in Him.

#### **D. APPLICATIONS**

##### **1) When we make ourselves available to the Lord to be used by Him, He will.**

We have a choice to spread the Good News of Jesus like these women or hide away like the fearful disciples.

##### **2) Our love for Jesus will never go unnoticed by God.**

We know from John's Gospel that when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found it empty, she initially thought someone had moved Jesus' body to another grave. Seeing a Man she supposed to be the gardener, she asked, "*Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.*" (John 20:15). How did Mary think she could move the body of Jesus all by herself? I don't believe that she was thinking about it logically. She loved Him deeply enough to not care about it. Because of that, she received the privilege to become the first messenger of the resurrection of Jesus to His disciples.