

The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ: Historical Or Mythological?

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A Study In Historical Evidences

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The Proposition: Abundant evidence from historical sources is decidedly in favor of the biblical claim that Jesus Christ was actually raised from the dead.

The Challenge: We will seek to convince you of a single miracle in the Bible - the resurrection. If we can sustain that, the rest will be easy. If not, the rest will not matter. Of course, you cannot decide until you have examined the evidence. The challenge here is like finding gold nuggets. They are not lying on top of the ground. You have to dig for them. We are wondering if a people fed on magazine literature will pay the price. Perhaps you will not feel over-challenged in relation to this historic event. The evidence is before you. We trust you will accept the challenge and will read on.

What Are The Implications Of The Resurrection?

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Think for a few moments what this event necessarily implies with reference to the following three subjects:

1. Jesus Christ. If he were raised from the dead, then inasmuch as the resurrection is the supreme sign of deity,(1) he was who and what he claimed to be. Jesus claimed to be the son of God,(2) and that he came to give us eternal life.(3) The point is if Jesus were raised from the dead, then his claims are true.

If, however, Jesus were not resurrected, his claims are false and he is guilty of fraud! What then was Jesus? It is not consistent with his claims to say that he was a great teacher, a moralist and philosopher, but that he was not the son of God as he claimed. Good men do not invent such lies about themselves. We will be forced to conclude that either Jesus was the son of God or an imposter. But which? Reason must decide on the basis of the evidence.

footnotes: 1.) Romans 1:1 2.) John 10:36 3.)John 3:14-15

2. The Old Testament Scriptures. Are these scriptures genuine history? Jesus believed them to be. He referred to the Genesis account of creation as historical fact.(4) He taught that Noah was an historical person.(5) He said that what Moses wrote is actually what God spoke through him.(6)

He also insisted that Jonah was a real person and that his experience in the belly of the fish is not Hebrew mythology, but history.(7) He taught that the entire body of Old Testament scriptures spoke of him, predicting even his death and resurrection.(8) The force of the argument is this: if Jesus were literally raised from the dead then he is divine and since He endorsed the Old Testament, viewing it as historical truth, it stands confirmed as genuine history. Reason leads us to conclude that we have only to believe in Jesus resurrection to believe the entire Bible as authentic.

footnotes: 4.) Matthew 19:4 refers to Genesis 1:26-27 5.) Matthew 24:37-39 6.) Matthew 22:31-32 Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6 7.) Matthew 12:39-41 8.) Luke 24:44-47;John 5:39

3. You. What the resurrection means to you, and this is the real reason why this effort is being made, is that Jesus died for you. What he did at the cross was preplanned to provide redemption from sin and resulting death. The resurrection will prove that the cross of Christ was no failure. It was a triumph for ruined humanity. Jesus was not martyred at Calvary. Though he was killed by men's hands, it was according to God's plan.(9) And the resurrection proved it.

footnotes: 9.) Jesus claimed that no man could take his life from him, a number of times. Finally Jesus allowed the Jews to seize him, John 18:1-11. A few days later Peter preached this was God's plan. Acts 2:22-24

Now for a fast look at the ground we have covered. If Christ has been raised then he is the son of God, the scriptures are true, and therefore mankind stands in urgent need of redemption. No thoughtful person should quickly cast aside such critical implications if he thinks for a moment they may contain the truth. Will you be convinced? That depends on your willingness to honestly weigh the evidence.

What Is The Evidence For The Resurrection?

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It is the written testimony of six men: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, and Paul. Four were apostles and claimed to be eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord. Their testimony recorded in the New Testament is the historical evidence for the resurrection. It is a mistake to think that these writers merely assert that Jesus was raised without pointing us toward the weight of historical evidence. They do not seek to convince by emotionalism, but by an appeal to the intelligence. John expresses the logic of each of these writers as he focuses upon the purpose of his book which he says was "written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."(10) He only asks that we read his book and weigh the evidence.

The question is, are these documents trustworthy? Let's draw a parallel. Do you believe in Alexander the Great? Julius Ceasar? Napoleon Bonaparte? Of course you do. But why? History, you say. But when we refer to history we are actually referring to the testimony which someone

else has written. Where do present day historians get their information about ancient events? From testimony left by yet other men. No one doubts that Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, or that Julius Caesar ruled Rome some 2000 years ago. There is no reason for rejecting the historical accounts of these events. By the same token we cannot reject the New Testament records on any grounds of historical evidence. F. F. Bruce of Manchester University says, "The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt."(11)

Will Durant, quoting the great Jewish scholar J. Klausner, writes that, "If we had ancient sources like those in the Gospels for the history of Alexander or Caesar, we should not cast any doubt upon them whatsoever."(12)

One may conjecture that what the New Testament says is not true, but such is still merely conjecture. To be suspicious of this testimony because it is a part of the Bible is not justified on historical grounds. We believe generally what Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century had to say. What grounds can be given for not trusting the accounts of six other men of the same century whose writings have been verified archaeologically as well as historically?

footnotes: 10.) John 20:30-31 11.) F.F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents, P.15, Eedman's Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan 12.) J Klausner as quoted by Will Durant, Daesar and Christ, P.557, Simon and Schuster, New York:1944

The Reliability Of The Evidence

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The apostle Paul in writing about the resurrection laid it right on the line by saying, "If Christ hath not been raised, then...we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ."(13) That quite candidly states the issue: if Christ were not raised as the apostles said, then they lied to us. But their testimony has been verified again and again. The following should help you accept the New Testament as bonafide history.

footnotes: 13.) I Corinthians 15:14-15

I. HISTORIANS accept the gospel accounts as genuine history. There are but four books which can reproduce the life and teachings of Jesus. Those books are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. For historians to write about Jesus they must go to the four gospels for a full story.

A. Mr. H.G. Wells, author of THE OUTLINE OF HISTORY, was no Christian. He had no motive to endorse the gospels as historically reliable outside of an historical context. His comment upon the beginning of Christianity is interesting: "About Jesus we have to write not theology but

history...Almost our only sources of information about the personality of Jesus are derived from the four gospels all of which were certainly in existence a few decades after his death...But all four agree in giving us a picture of a very definite personality...In spite of miraculous and incredible additions, one is obliged to say, 'Here was a man. This part of the tale could not have been invented'. "(14) Though Wells without offering the slightest reason, other than his own philosophical pre-supposition, brands the miraculous element of the gospels as "incredible," he nevertheless admits the historicity of the gospel documents and uses them freely and authoritatively as his source material for that section of his historical work.

footnotes: 14.) H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, P.497, Garden City Publishing Co., New York

B. Will Durant, former professor of The Philosophy of History at Columbia University, and a scholar of the first rank, says, "We may conclude, with the brilliant but judicious Schweitzer, that the gospel of Mark is in essentials 'genuine history'. "(15) Concerning the darkness which accompanied Jesus' crucifixion as recorded by Mark he further comments, "About the middle of this first century a pagan named Thallus, in a fragment preserved by Julius Africanus, argued that the abnormal darkness alleged to have accompanied the death of Christ was a purely natural phenomenon and coincidence; the argument took the existence of Christ for granted."(16) We might add that such an argument took the darkness for granted, too! Thus Mark told us the truth when he said "there was darkness over the whole land: from 12:00 noon till 3:00 P.M. (17) Nor does Durant dispose of the gospel miracles as myth. He believes they happened. He reasons, "That his powers were nevertheless exceptional seems proved by his miracles."(18) This does not mean that Durant is a believer. Of these miracles he says that "Probably these were in most cases the result of suggestion."(19) However, mere suggestion would not be sufficient to raise the dead,(20) change water to wine,(21) or to sustain him as he walked upon water in the presence of witnesses. (22) But the point is that Durant believes miracles happened on the grounds of New Testament documentation. He even defends the historicity of the gospel miracles: "The fact that like stories have been told of other characters in legend and history does not prove that the miracles of Christ were myths."(23)

We are not seeking to make more of Durant's statements than he did. We are merely insisting as he does that the gospel accounts are reliable histories. After enumerating several events in the life of Christ as recorded in the gospels, he concludes: "That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so lofty an ethic and so inspiring a vision of brotherhood would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the gospels."(24)

The New Testament documents are not inventions. This is the judgment of one of the foremost historians of our day.

footnotes: 15.) Will Durant, *Op.Cit.*, P.556 16.) *Op.Cit.*, P.555 17.) Mark 15:33 18.) Will Durant, *Op.Cit.* P.562 19.) *Op. Cit.*, P.562 20.) Matthew 9:18-25; John 11:1-45 21.)

John 2:1-11 22.) John 6:16-20 23.) Will Durant, Op.Cit., P.562 24.) Op.Cit., P.557

C. A Russian Historian. It may be interesting to note that for the last few years of official Soviet line "has conceded that Jesus did, in fact, live and that the New Testament Gospels are not forgeries but, in the words of one Russian scholar, 'definite fact.'" (25) If we multiplied the list of quotations from historians it would come out the same. Historians accept the gospels as genuine history.

footnotes: 25.) John Allen Chalk (quoting from "News and Views" P.600, Commonweal, Sept.23,1966) Herald of Truth radio program, transcript number 842

II. THE GOSPELS bear upon themselves the marks of genuine history.

A. The gospel narratives are not like myths which happened once upon a time. Myths are not located among people and places that can be verified. But the gospels are set within the historical context of the first century. Jesus' birth is related in an environment that can be and has been verified. The political figures and events contemporaneous with Jesus' birth are described. Caesar Augustus decrees a census in Judaea which is accomplished during the time Quirinius is governor of Syria. This is the reason for Joseph's going to Bethlehem with his family to be enrolled. And while there, Jesus was born in an over-crowded condition where a stable was the only available residence.(26) Luke's Gospel informs us: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Teberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tatrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness."(27)

Another has observed about that statement that: "Every political and religious figure mentioned here is historically verifiable. Why would any half-smart forger or semi-literate inventor of myth want to tie his character to so many people who lived at the very time he wrote? There is but one solution: Jesus of Nazareth is an authentic historical character."(28) Luke, who wrote his gospel to a governmental official,(29) documents his source material as having come directly from eyewitnesses in whose company he often traveled. He writes the books of Luke and Acts documenting every event with time, place, and governmental officials which are historically verifiable. These events, like the life and conversion of Saul of Tarsus had "not been done in a corner,"(30) that is, in seclusion. The gospels are not unsupported myths. They are the accounts of real men and of actual events.

Though the gospel writers did not write for today's critics it would yet seem that they challenged their contemporary critics to find a flaw. In substance they said: here are the facts, check them out!

footnotes: 26) Luke 2:1-7 27) Luke 3:1-2 28) John Allen Chalk, Herald of Truth radio transcript number 840 29) Luke 1:1-4 where Luke addresses his gospel to "most excellent Theophilus." This title is applied onlly to governmental officials in Luke's writings. Cf. Acts 23:26; 24:2-3; 26:25 30) Acts 26:26

B. There are four gospel accounts. If we believe the history of Josephus of

the first century or that of Horodotus of the 5th century B.C., then on what grounds can we reject a history written by four contemporaries? Especially, as stated by the late Dr. A.T. Olmstead, probably the most distinguished authority in the field of ancient history, inasmuch as the gospels were "written down and circulated while those leaders (of the Jews) were yet living and able if they wished to refute them."(31)

footnotes: 31) Wilbur M. Smith quoting A.T. Olmstead, "Therefore Stand," P.401, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan

III. The Writings Of The Apostolic Fathers between AD 90 and 160 very nearly reproduced the New Testament. F.F. Bruce of Manchester University says that, "It is evident from the recently discovered writings of the Gnostic School of Valentinus that before the middle of the second century most of the New Testament books were as well known and as fully venerated in that heretical circle as they were in the Catholic (i.e., universal) Church."(32)

Here was a collection of documents written during the same generation of people among whom the events transpired and were quickly circulated among them. They were accepted as authoritative among the churches. They were reproduced by men like Polycarp who sat at the feet of the apostles themselves. Unless we conclude the genuine historicity of the gospel accounts we are, as states Will Durant, "Driven to the improbable hypothesis that Jesus was invented in one generation! " (33) Can you imagine the up-coming generation embracing a religion which promised them persecution and death when they knew it was a lie? If we cannot conclude that the New Testament documents are genuine history then we can conclude nothing with certainty. When we read the New Testament we are reading facts, not fiction.

footnotes: 32) F.F. Bruce, OP.Cit., P.19 33) Will Durnat, Op.Cit., P.555

The Evidence For The Resurrection

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Reason function is not to discard the evidence without an investigation. It is rather to sit in judgment on the evidence and to draw an honest conclusion in relation to the claims. Let us now examine the evidence for the resurrection with reason's function as our guide.

I. The Life and Teaching of the Apostles. Shortly after the crucifixion the apostles began to preach that Christ had been raised from the tomb and that they were witnesses that he actually lived again.(34) This testimony they preached in the face of persecution and hardship until finally they were all martyred. What could possibly have motivated them to endure such a life of affliction for a lie which they themselves had invented? Simon Greenleaf, regarded by most students of law as the foremost authority on the law of evidence, who became Royall Professor of Law at Harvard University, wrote in 1846: "The great truths which the apostles declared, were, that Christ had risen from the dead...This doctrine they asserted with one voice, everywhere, not only under the greatest

discouragements, but in the face of the most appalling terrors that can be presented to the mind of man...As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution...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...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...If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication." (35) As another has observed, "You cannot conscientiously preach lies with power like this."

All agree the apostles were sincere. Yet some have conjectured that they were eager to believe in the resurrection and jumped to that conclusion when they heard the report that his tomb was empty. That exposes an ignorance of some of the facts, however, for not only were the apostles reluctant to believe the reports of his resurrection, (36) but it required a personal appearance of Jesus to convince them,(37) and a special appearance to convince Thomas. (38) The apostles accepted the fact of Jesus' resurrection only after they had seen him.

Some have attempted to reflect upon the mental skill of the writers. This reveals they have yet to read and discern their books. Even Will Durant says of the first gospel that it must be ranked as a masterpiece among the world's literature. (39) Neither the charge of lies, nor of jumping to conclusions due to overeager desires to see him raised, nor hallucinations can be even slightly sustained. Only the conclusion that they actually saw the resurrected Lord will stand the test of both time and of honest investigation.

footnotes: 34) Acts 2:32;3:14-15; 5:29-32' 10:39-41; and so on throughout the book of Acts 35)Wilbur M. Smith quoting Greenleaf, Op.Cit., P.424-425 36) See Mark 16:9-14 37) Luke 24:36-41 38) John 20:24-29 39) Will Durant, Op.Cit., P.556

II. The Change Which Took Place in the Apostles. How shall we account for the immediate,overnight change which occurred in the apostles' nationalistic concept of the kingdom? What would it take to change a communist to a capitalist? or vice-versa? It would take much education over a long period of time. Even then success could not be guaranteed. The material concept which the apostles had of the kingdom of God(40) grew out of centuries of Jewish nationalism, and they persisted in this, despite Jesus' constant explanations, even to the day of his ascension. Then of a sudden, according to Jesus' promise, a scant ten days later, they began to sing a different song to an entirely different tune. All the Messianic prophecies of the kingdom are now, said the apostles, fulfilled in a spiritual kingdom; the great prophecies of peace to all nations are now fulfilled in those who have made peace with God through the

remission of sins by faith in Jesus Christ. They are also now in total doctrinal agreement and they preach it without the slightest variation until death. This was a change of great breadth inasmuch as it even embraced the doctrinal unity of Simon the Zealot, the right wing militant party-member who advocated the overthrow of the Roman government, and Levi the Publican, whose leftist views led him to purchase from the Roman government the right to tax his own people. Even their opposing politics dissolved into union with their present greater spiritual concept and never appeared again. This is a change which cannot be explained by natural processes.

footnotes: 40) See such passages as Matthew 16:21-23; 20:20-21; John 6:15; Acts 1:6

Whence cometh such phenomenon? Length of time to produce such a change out of their educational background simply was not available. But the fact of that change in a very short moment of time stands historically immutable. One has commented, "Nothing is more remarkable in the whole history of Christianity than the dull perception of the disciples; they persisted in their unspiritual and material conceptions of the kingdom of God even after the resurrection was an accomplished fact." (41) H.G. Wells, still using the gospels as his historical source material, delights to speak of Jesus' disciples as extremely unperceptive persons saying of them, "They were ridden by the old Jewish dream of a king, a Messiah to overthrow the Hellenized Herods and the Roman overlord, and restore the fabled glories of David...They thought he was just another king among the endless succession of kings, but a quasi-magic kind."(42) It is interesting that Wells never attempts to explain how these men ever became endowed with such brilliant spiritually perceptive qualities overnight!

The question then arises, "How did flurried fanaticism yield so quickly to sobriety?"(43) The answer is consistent with Jesus' teaching and apostolic claims. Jesus taught that he must ascend to heaven and send the Holy Spirit in order that he might superimpose that divine knowledge upon the apostles, who would then speak by divine guidance.(44) If, then, Jesus' claim that the Spirit's impartation of the knowledge be rejected as the explanation, and at the same time the apostles' claim that the Holy Spirit did come and give them that knowledge(45) be also rejected, then what is a reasonable alternative consistent with the facts of history? The facts are, there was a change in the apostles' concept, knowledge and perception of the Messiah and his kingdom. That change occurred without sufficient lapse of time for any natural educational processes to produce such a change upon any one of them, much less upon them all! What then is unintelligent about accepting a supernatural explanation, especially when natural forces cannot explain the matter and if no alternative can be supported with historical evidence contrary to the claims?

The argument, then, is this: the historical record says that Jesus promised that the apostles would receive the Holy Spirit and the apostles' claim is that the Spirit came. But for the Spirit to have descended upon the apostles Jesus had to be raised from the dead in order to ascend to heaven and dispatch that power upon them. If this is not the case, then both Jesus and the apostles are convicted of fraud. Which position is more

reasonable and more easily accepted in the light of the facts?

footnotes: 41) Wilbur M. Smith quoting E. Diggs LaTouche, P.395 42) H.G. Wells, Op.Cit., P.503 43) John McNaugher, The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, P.9-10, Pittsburg 1938 44) Study John 16:7,13 45) Luke's claim for the apostles, Acts 2:1-4; Pauls claim, I Corinthians 2:12-13; Ephesians 3:3-5; Peter's claim, I Peter 1:12

III. The Evidence Of The Empty Tomb. The evidence we now focus upon is universally recognized as historically factual. There are but three major facts to consider, but these have become the hallmark of Christian evidences.

A. The Tomb In Which Jesus Was Laid was found on the third day to be both opened and empty. A very pertinent question must be answered, Who rolled away the stone and who removed the body of Jesus? Were they friends or enemies? That it was absolutely neither of these is conclusively seen from the historical records. Matthew records for us that the Jews who killed Christ obtained from Ponius Pilate both permission to seal the tomb and a Roman guard to thwart any attempt to remove Jesus' body from it.(46) The disciples of Jesus could not have removed the body if they had wanted to inasmuch as Roman soldiers were fiercely dedicated to their duty, which in this case was to keep the contents of that tomb safely undisturbed. On the other hand, the Jews' intention is revealed in their own request of Pilate "that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day."(47) All of Jesus' resurrection predictions were for the third day. Upon that day the Jews would go into the tomb and bring out the corpse for a display of Jesus' failure to rise and so smash Christianity before it got started. The desire of the Jews was to keep the body of Jesus in that tomb. As to who opened the tomb and removed the body we must, then, reply that Jesus' disciples could not and the Jews would not.

Who, then, opened the tomb and took away the body of Christ? The same history which tells us of Jesus' life, death and burial also tells us that "an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone."(48) By what stretch of logic can we accept the New Testament documentation of the historical Jesus and of his life, deeds, teachings, death, burial and that his tomb was opened and empty on the third day and then reject the same historical record which says that an angel rolled away the stone? Is that not a bit inconsistent? Says Will Durant of the tomb on the third day, "They found it empty."(49) The same record from which Durant secured that historical truth also says that an angel came and rolled away the stone. Consistency, thou art a gem.

footnotes: 46) Matthew 27:62-66 47) Matthew 27:64 48) Matthew 28:2 49) Will Durant, Op.Cit., P.573

Why was the stone rolled away? The tomb was already empty. It was rolled away to allow human eyes to see that the body was gone. A little spiritual arithmetic begins to add up to look as if Jesus were raised from the dead. If not, what is a reasonable alternative? That is, on the basis of the facts as we have them?

Such unthinking conjecture as, "Maybe it was a grave robber" does not

take into consideration that the purpose of ancient grave robbing was to steal the valuables which were buried with the deceased, not the bodies themselves. Nor does this consider that the tomb was still under Roman guard.

To raise the question whether Jesus actually died is both shallow and premature for that still does not begin to explain how he got out of the tomb. But suppose that somehow he got out of the tomb, and somehow got past the guards, how, even then, could such an emaciated quivering body which had been beaten, bruised, torn in crucifixion and pierced by Roman spear, inspire in fearful disciples a glorious vision of victory over death for evermore? In point of fact, he would, if only human, be in urgent need of their help, not they of his. Those who look for an alternative to the resurrection will have to do better than that.

B. The Grave Cloths in which Jesus was wrapped after his death present an evidence unanswerable. So strong are the implications of the grave cloths to the claim for the resurrection that many, while they do not deny the historicity of the matter, simply pass by the subject without mention. The apostle John, who refers to himself as "the other disciple" records that he and Peter "both ran together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb; and stoing and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in. Simon Peter therfore also cometh, following him, and entered in the tomb; and he beholdeth the lineth cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself (50)."

The implications consequent upon these facts are as follows: The tomb was not a mess of strewn wrappings. The large linen face cloth in which the head was wrapped was neatly folded and laid in a separate place. Who did it? Why, if not Jesus? Whoever it was was in no hurry. Nor were the grave cloths desheveled, but they were "lying." William Barclay, professor of New Testament at Glasgow University, and renowned as a scholar of New Testament Greek, insists that the Greek text actually means that the cloths were "lying in their folds (51)." That is, they were in a cocoon type shell as if Jesus has simply passed through them without disturbance! Other facts add power to implications which the reader has by now, no doubt, begun to perceive. When Jesus raised Lazarus the eyewitness account says, "He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go (52)."

Consider that Lazarus could not loose himself being bound hand and foot with grave-clothes. Others had to let him go. The point is, Jesus was bound the same way. John testifies that Joseph of Arimathaea acquired the body from Pilate (53)."

Notice, he was prepared for burial "as the custom of the Jews is to bury." In other words, just like Lazarus was bound for burial, so Jesus was bound hand and foot together with face napkin and spices. Those spices were a very sticky substance. The question which must be answered is this. Who unwrapped Jesus, in unhurried manner rolled up the face napkin, then painstakingly, and with the skill of an artist, re-wrapped those sticky

grave cloths back into their original shape so perfectly that they appeared as if they had not at all been tampered with? And all of this went unobserved by curious passersby! Who can believe it? It is far easier to believe that Jesus burst the bonds of death by an exertion of his own divine power and passed through the grave cloths in the same manner he passed through the walls of the tomb and also into the room in which the disciples waited behind bolted doors (55).

It is not without good intelligence acting soundly upon reliable evidence that scientists, like Werner Von Braun, and historians of renown like A. T. Olmstead believe in the resurrection and deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The evidence is both clear and decisive. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not mythological; it is an historical fact.

footnotes: 50) John 20:4-7 51) William Barclay, The Gospel of John, Vol. 2, P.310, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia 52) John 11:44 53) John 19:38 54) John 19:39-40 55) John 20:19

A Matter Of Conscience

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There is one last matter to consider in relation to the resurrection...and your conscience. The New Testament says that God waited to destroy the earth with a flood until Noah had finished the ark of safety, "wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (56)." There are three subjects mentioned here of importance: baptism (immersion) in water, a clear conscience, and the resurrection of Jesus. What is the relation of the three? It is that Jesus was raised from the dead and in that act has proven his deity and right of authority to command. His last word on earth commanded men to be baptized "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (57)." These words, "into the name of," mean, "into the possession of." Therefore, if one believes in the Lordship of Christ Jesus as manifested in his resurrection but will not obey his commands, can that person have a clear conscience toward God?

If you are not a Christian you are encouraged to place your confidence in Christ to save you by renouncing the life of sin and self, confess Christ as the Son of God and Lord of your life and be plunged into the liquid grave of baptism for the remission of your sins. You will thereby be saved to faithfully serve him in this life that you may lay hold of the life that is life indeed.

How is your conscience?

footnotes: 56) I Peter 3:20-21 57) Matthew 28:18-19

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