



DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD?



Pastor Gene Keith

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Did Jesus really rise from the dead or is this just a myth that has been handed down from generation to generation?

This is a very important question. In fact, this is THE question. It is the most important question, because if Jesus did not rise from the dead. . . . then:

- Christianity is a hoax,
- Preachers are lying to the people,
- The bodies of Christians who died trusting in Christ to save them are rotting in their graves.

On the other hand, if Jesus did rise from the dead and if He is alive today . . .

- Jesus is who He said He was. . . The Incarnate Son of God.
- Jesus is the ONLY WAY a person can know God, be saved, and get to heaven.
- Those who died trusting in Christ to save them are with Him in heaven today.
- And those who haven't repented of their sins and have not trusted in the finished work of Jesus on the cross are in deep trouble. They are lost and on their way to hell.

THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity stands or falls on the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This pastor believes that God loved the world so much He sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins (John 3:16).

This pastor believes Jesus died for our sins of the whole world.

This pastor believes Jesus was in the grave for three whole days and three whole nights.

This pastor believes Jesus came back to life on His own power on the First Day of the Week.

This pastor believes that "Whoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

PASSOVER WEEK

On this Palm Sunday 2009, let's go back 2000 years ago and think about the things that took place during the last week Jesus spent on this earth.

Palm Sunday



Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey the Sunday before the day we call Easter. We call this "Palm Sunday," because that was the day the people cut palm branches and placed them in the path of Jesus as he rode into the city. It is important to note that this was the fulfillment of one of the many

prophecies that pointed to Christ as the Messiah.

Observe The Lamb

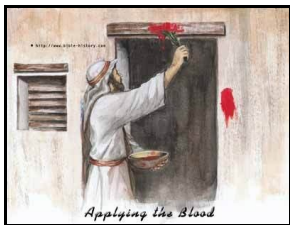


On the tenth day of this month, the Jewish families would choose the lamb they would sacrifice for the Annual Passover and then observe the lamb until the time of the sacrifice to be sure it was

without blemish and worthy to be offered as required in the Law of Moses.

That year, while the Jewish families were observing their lambs, without realizing what they were doing, they were also observing Jesus, the Lamb of God, who was going in and out of the city, teaching, preaching, and preparing to die for their sins.

"Good Wednesday"



This pastor believes in "Good Wednesday" rather than "Good Friday." We believe that "Good Friday" is a tradition that is not supported by the facts.

We believe Jesus died for our sins on Wednesday of that week.

On the very day the Passover lambs were being slain and their blood was being brushed on the door posts of each home with hyssop branches, the Son of God (our Lamb of God) was being nailed to a cross for our sins.

Ram's Horn

Every year, on this very day, at 3:00 p.m. sharp, the Jewish High Priests would climb to the pinnacle of the temple and blow the ram's horn to signal that the Passover lambs had now been slain.

On that particular day, although they did not know this at that time, the ram's horn was the signal to the people in the city that the God's Son, the Lamb without blemish, had been

chosen and was being slain for the sins of the world.

Wine mixed with Myrrh

When people were being crucified, it was a merciful Jewish practice to give those led to execution a drink of strong wine mixed with myrrh as a "pain killer" to deaden their consciousness.

Hyssop Branch

This mixture of sour wine was given on a branch of a hyssop plant. This was the very same bush the Jews used to apply the lamb's blood of the Passover Lamb to the doorposts of their homes. On that particular day, however, the end of the hyssop stick pointed to the Lamb of God who was shedding His blood for their sins.

Darkness

The Bible says that there was darkness on the earth from noon until 3:00 p.m. A first century Greek historian named Thallus (not a Christian), wrote a history of the Eastern Mediterranean world in A.D. 52, and referred to this sudden darkness. He tried to explain this as a solar eclipse, though historical records show there was no normal eclipse on that date.

Jesus Was Buried

Jesus was taken down from the cross and placed in a borrowed tomb. The tomb was donated by a man named Joseph. After being placed in the borrowed tomb, Jesus was in that grave for three whole days and three whole nights. This was the "sign of Jonah" given by Jesus in Matthew 12:39-40.

Raised From the Dead

Sometime before sunrise on Sunday Morning (the 17th day of the month), Jesus came to life and came out of the tomb.

Showed Himself Alive

For the next forty days, Jesus appeared at least ten times and showed Himself to different

people (Acts 1:3).

- Jesus appeared to couples in (Luke 24:13).
- Jesus appeared to the disciples in (John 20:19).
- Jesus He even appeared to five hundred people at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6).
- When the New Testament was written, most of those eye witnesses were still alive and could tell you what they had seen.
- During that last appearance in view of 500 eye-witnesses, Jesus gave the promise of the Holy Spirit; sent his disciples into all the world to preach the Gospel; and promised to come again to receive us unto Himself.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

1. The Resurrection is the Foundation of Christianity

We cannot over-emphasize the importance of the resurrection of Christ. Other doctrines are important! This doctrine is essential. If the resurrection of Christ is not true - then Christianity is not true. If the resurrection of Christ is not true - then the teachings of Christ and the death of Christ are of no value whatever.

If a person could successfully discredit the resurrection, then Christianity would fall like a house of cards.

2. Belief in the Resurrection of Christ is essential to salvation (1 Cor. 15:1-3)

“ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that

which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;”

(Romans 10:9-10)

“9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

3. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is an established historical fact.

The resurrection of Christ is one of the best established facts in history. Please allow us to elaborate on that point.

SIR LIONEL LUCKHOO

The following quote is from the March/April 1999 issue of the Christian Reader.



“According to the Guinness Book of Records, Sir Lionel Luckhoo is (was) the most accomplished lawyer on the planet.

This real life Perry Mason won 245 murder acquittals in a row, either before Jury or on an appeal.

Luckhoo, was also twice knighted by Queen Elizabeth. Given those qualifications (the article says) wouldn't it be interesting to get Luckhoo's razor-sharp analysis of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus?

“I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt.”

Sir Lionel Luckhoo was convinced that Jesus rose from the dead in an irrefutable demonstration of his deity. Luckhoo became a Christian and his life took a 180 degree turn.¹

WHY DO SKEPTICS REJECT THE GOSPEL?

Some people may lead you to believe that they have intellectual or academic problems with believe in the resurrection.

In the experience of this present writer, most people who reject the Gospel of Christ do so for moral problems, not for intellectual problems. They love their sins and they cannot be comfortable with the idea that there is a God who hates sin and will punish sin some day. Jesus made this clear in John 3:19.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

A CHALLENGE FOR SKEPTICS

This pastor has been in the ministry for half-a-century and he has met very few honest skeptics with open minds.

Those skeptics have spent little time examining the evidence for the Bible or the Gospel. They begin with the assumption that the Gospel is not true and then search for arguments to support their position. Most of their time is spent reading the writings of other skeptics whose only true objective is to discredit the Gospel.

These skeptics know all the answers but they've not even heard the question.

Some of the worst skeptics are apostate Divinity students who attended Liberal

Theological Seminaries or State Universities where they were never exposed to the hard evidence for the Bible or the Resurrection.

An honest skeptic must come to grips with the real issue which is this: What happened to the body of Christ?

Honest skeptics will spend some time examining the real evidence for the Bible and the Gospel and then reach an intelligent conclusion.

- History confirms that Jesus was crucified on a wooden cross.
- History confirms the fact that Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb. We know the name of the owner.
- History confirms the fact that after three days and three nights the body of Jesus was missing.
- The question is: What happened to the body?
- An honest skeptic must choose one of the following theories and base his/her life for now and eternity on that theory.

SIX POPULAR THEORIES POSED BY SKEPTICS ABOUT THE MISSING BODY

There are six (6) possible theories as to the empty tomb and the missing body of Jesus. Each of us must "pick our seat and ride."

1. The Swoon Theory
2. The wrong tomb theory
3. The disciples stole the body
4. The Jews stole the body
5. The hallucination theory
6. The Resurrection theory

¹ Christian Reader, PO Box 37029, Boone IA, 50037-0029, pages 57-58

1. Jesus was not really dead

This is called the "Swoon theory." According to this theory, Jesus took a drug that made Him appear to die. When the cool air of the tomb revived Him, he emerged alive. No reputable scholars hold this view, but let's consider it.

Sweat Drops of Blood

The Bible says that, just before Jesus was arrested by the angry mob, when he was praying in the garden, a strange thing happened. (Luke 22:44)

" And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Hemohydrosis

The medical term sweating drops of blood is "hemohydrosis" or "Hemahitrosis." This has been seen in patients who have experienced extreme stress or extreme shock to their systems. The capillaries around the sweat pores become fragile and leak blood into the sweat. ²

Beaten with Whips

Jesus was "flogged." Most people ignore this, but a doctor, by the name of C. Truman Davis analyzed Roman beatings during the first century. He concluded that Jesus must have been beaten to the edge of death. ³

(Isaiah 52:13)

"They shall see my Servant beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know it was a person standing there. So shall He cleanse many nations."

TESTIMONY OF A MEDICAL DOCTOR

According a medical doctor by the name of C. Truman Davis, here is what took place when Jesus was "flogged." "Jesus was tied to a post

and beaten thirty-nine times with a whip that had jagged bones and balls of lead woven into it.

The whip was brought down with full force upon his bare shoulders, back, and legs. At first the thongs cut through the skin. Then, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, oozing blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin.

Finally those jagged bones and led balls cut deeper until blood spurted from arteries and muscles. The small balls of lead also produced deep bruises, broken open by subsequent blows.

Eventually, the sin of the back hangs in long ribbons. . . . an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue.

Jesus Carried The Cross



After beaten to the point of death, Jesus was forced to carry his own cross 650 yards through a crowded street. His cross weighed between 80 and 110 pounds.

Some have surmised that when He fell under that load, this may have led to a contusion his heart, causing it to rupture on the cross.

Excruciating Pain

Do you know where the word "excruciating" came from? "Ex" means "out of" and "cruciate" means "to crucify." So brutal was the pain of crucifixion, the Romans coined a word to describe it. The word was "excruciating" meaning, "out of the cross."

The Nails



The nails used to crucify a man were 3/8 by 7 inches long. The wrists were considered part of the hands. T h e y points of those nails would go into his wrists between the bones (so that no bones would be

broken). These nails would go into the vicinity of the median nerve, causing shocks of pain to

² www.angelfire.com

³ Christian Reader, page 58

radiate through the victim's arms.

Another physician, Alex Metherell, who also extensively studied the crucifixion, is quoted in the Christian reader saying, this would cause agonizing pain akin to squeezing your funny bone with a pair of pliers.⁴



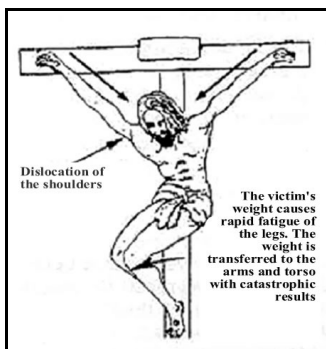
The Wooden Cross

Standing at the crucifixion sites would be upright posts, called stipes, standing about seven feet high. On this main stipe was a crude seat.

The part on which Jesus hands (wrists) were nailed was lifted up and placed on the stipe. The feet were then nailed to the stipes.

To do this the knees had to be bent and the feet rotated laterally.

(Psalm 22:14-17)



" I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my

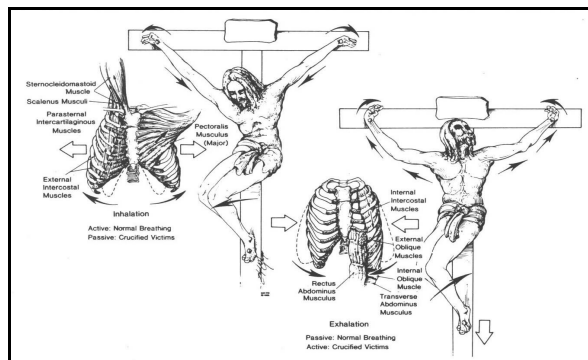
jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. 16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me."

Consider these words from the Christian Reader:

"With his wrists and feet nailed securely, Jesus

was hoisted into the air to hang. Because of the stress on his chest muscles, Jesus could inhale but could not exhale unless he pushed up with his feet to relieve the pressure. If Roman executioners wanted to hasten death, they used a mallet to shatter the victim's shin bones so he couldn't push up anymore.

The victim's lungs would slowly fill with carbon dioxide, leading to asphyxiation.



The Romans did this to the two criminals crucified with Jesus. When they came to him, they saw he was already dead. To confirm that, a soldier thrust a spear between his ribs, puncturing the sac around his heart and the heart itself, causing a clear fluid and blood to drain out. Nobody survived the torment of the cross.

The Journal of American Medicine

An article in the prestigious JAMA concluded: "Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound in his side was inflicted. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge."

Christian Reader

The article in the Christian Reader concluded:

"Even if Jesus had not died on the cross and had revived in the tomb, think of the condition he would have been in when he appeared to his disciples. He wouldn't have prompted them to launch a world wide

⁴ Christian Reader, page 59

movement on his behalf. They would have pitied him and rushed him to a doctor."

2. The Disciples went to the Wrong Tomb



Another theory was that the women went to the wrong tomb and found it empty. The truth is, we know where the real tomb was; we know the name of the owner; and it was

heavily guarded and a large stone covered the entrance to the tomb.

3. The Disciples Stole the Body

A third theory is that the disciples stole the body and then went out and lied about a resurrection that really didn't take place.

Testimony of Women

First of all, if the disciples made up the story, they would not have said that women discovered the empty tomb. In Jewish culture of that day, women had a low status and didn't qualify as legal witnesses. The disciples would have said that some MEN discovered the grave empty.

Chuck Colson



Chuck Colson was a special counsel to Richard Nixon during Watergate, and he saw how special conspiracies fall apart under pressure. Colson said: "Is it really likely that a deliberate cover-up, a plot to perpetuate

a lie about the Resurrection, could have survived the violent persecution of the apostles, the scrutiny of early church councils, the horrendous purge of first-century believers?"

4. The Jews or Romans Stole The Body

A fourth theory is that the body was stolen. Neither the Jews or the Romans had reason to move the body. The Jews had Jesus killed and

they wanted him to stay dead. If the Jews had stolen the body, don't you think they would have enjoyed parading it down the main street of Jerusalem, to silence the disciples, as they were preaching the resurrection on every corner?

5. The Hallucination Theory

Another theory is that the people who claimed to have seen Jesus alive after his crucifixion were hallucinating.

Testimony of a Psychologist

Gary Collins, president of the National Assoc. of Psychologists, says No! Collins said: "Hallucinations are individual events and cannot be shared between groups."

Collins also discounted the possibility of "Group Think," where a group of people encourage one another through the power of suggestion to see visions. This psychologists reminds us that the disciples were not anticipating a resurrection.

Testimony of another Doctor

Both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were written by a medical doctor by the name of Luke. In Acts 1: 1-3 Doctor Luke wrote:

"Acts 1:1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: 3 To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Testimony of the Apostle Peter

The apostle Peter, ran away from Jesus, denied Jesus, but later returned to Jesus and died as a martyr. History reminds us that Peter requested that he be crucified "up side down."

Read what Peter said: (2 Peter 1:16-18).

16 "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."

Testimony of a former Terrorists

Another great piece of evidence for the resurrection is the conversion of the arch-enemy of the early church, Saul of Tarsus. He would be classified as a "terrorist" today.

- Saul had dedicated his life to the destruction of the church. Then something happened!
- This terrorist was converted. This enemy of Christ claimed that Jesus had personally appeared to him and called him to preach.
- After that experience, that man spent the rest of his life preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.
- His ministry finally came to a climax when he was beheaded for his faith in the city of Rome.

Testimony of Skeptical Lawyer

The author of the article in the Christian Reader we have been quoting from is named Lee Strobel. Strobel is a lawyer. Listen to what he said:

"Yale Law School trained me to be rational, and my years of sniffing for news at the Chicago Tribune had only toughened my cynical personality.

But intrigued by changes in my wife after

she became a Christian, I spent nearly two years studying evidence for the resurrection. I emerged convicted and gave my life to Christ.

I have covered scores of criminal trials as a legal affairs journalist, and I never saw one with 515 witnesses."⁵

SUMMARY

Well, what about you? Where do you stand? Which one of the six theories will you base your life on from now through all eternity?

1. The Swoon Theory?
2. The wrong tomb theory?
3. The disciples stole the body theory?
4. The Jews stole the body theory?
5. The hallucination theory?
6. Or the Resurrection theory?

The resurrection of Christ is one of the best established facts in history and if you will believe this and turn from your sins, you will be saved.

I'LL BE PRAYING FOR YOU!

Pastor Gene Keith - April 12, 2009
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⁵ Christian Reader, page 58