

The Mind of Christ

The Resurrection

Part Six

INTRODUCTION:

I. As we continue examining the evidence concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we're going to take a slightly unique approach.

A. We're going to treat the empty tomb of Jesus as though it were a crime scene, and we're going to assume the role of CRIME SCENE

INVESTIGATORS.

1. To do this, we will need to examine what crime scene investigators call "THE SCENE DOCUMENTATION" – a detailed record of everything an investigator sees when they first arrive on the scene.

2. However, in OUR case, the only report we have of the scene of the empty tomb comes from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

a. Some critics say this documentation is BIASED because these men were all disciples of Jesus.

b. However, a careful examination of their record shows it's EVERYTHING a properly documented crime scene report SHOULD be:

(1). Their notes are in proper chronological order.

- (2). Their notes do NOT include opinions, analysis, or conclusions. Just the facts!!!!
- (3). Their notes are written in such a manner as to tell a descriptive story.
- (4). And finally, their notes provide a general description of the crime scene just as it was observed by those who were first to arrive.

B. But why are we treating the empty tomb of Jesus as though it were a CRIME scene? The answer is simple.

1. If the body of Jesus was removed from the tomb WITHOUT the authority to do so, we have a crime scene. Why?
 - a. The tomb was being guarded by soldiers operating under the authority of Pontius Pilate, AND the tomb was sealed and protected under the authority of Rome itself.
 - b. So, at the very LEAST, we have the theft of a body that was the under protective custody of ROME – which is a crime punishable by death.
 - c. Furthermore, if the body of Jesus WAS stolen, we want to look for clues that might lead us to discover WHO stole the body of Jesus, and WHY.

BODY:

- I. So, let's begin by turning our attention to the SCENE DOCUMENTATION of the tomb and examine the evidence found there.
 - A. We'll be focusing primarily on the record of Mark, Luke and John, but we'll also look at some important evidence from Matthew's record.
 1. **Mark 16:1-8** – *Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away — for it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. 7 But go, tell His disciples — and Peter — that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." 8 So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

2. **Luke 24:1-12** – *Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they [“the women who had come with Him from Galilee” – Luke 23:55], and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. 5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, 7 saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’” 8 And they remembered His words. 9 Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. 11 And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.*

3. **John 20:1-13** – *Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” 3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. 11 But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said*

to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.”

- B. Critics are quick to point out what appear to be some discrepancies between these three accounts.
 - 1. I plan to ANSWER these alleged discrepancies in an upcoming lesson. But, for NOW, we want to focus only on the PHYSICAL EVIDENCE mentioned by these three writers.

- II. If we were standing at the site of the tomb of Jesus and conducting a CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION and recording all we see, we would immediately notice several key things:
 - A. First, we notice the absence of the Roman Guard.
 - 1. The guard Pilate had ordered to secure and seal the tomb is nowhere to be found.
 - 2. And since there is no evidence of possible foul play, there are only two conclusions we can reach:
 - a. Either the guard was ORDERED to leave the tomb under the order of Pilate – the only one who had the ultimate authority to relieve these men of duty, or...
 - b. These soldiers deserted their post.

- c. Well... there IS a third option, and that is the guards were abducted by aliens. But I don't really think we want to go there.
3. And so, we take out our official CSI notebook and write ourselves this note: What happened to the guard and why?
- B. Second, we notice the stone door of the tomb has been moved AWAY from the tomb, and the Roman seal has been broken.
 1. But there are a few things we need to SPECIFICALLY NOTICE about this stone door.
 - a. First, the stone is "a great stone" (**Matthew 27:60**), and "it was very large." (**Mark 16:4**)
 - (1). Stone doors used to seal tombs were large circular, wheel-like stones that were rolled down a slight incline to properly close the tomb.
 - (2). Archeological evidence has determined that the AVERAGE weight of one of these stone doors at 1 ½ to 2 tons – between 3,000 and 4,000 lbs.
 - (3). However, THIS stone is specifically described as "great" and "very large," suggesting it MAY HAVE BEEN even LARGER and HEAVIER than most.

b. But the MOST IMPORTANT evidence concerning of this stone door is its LOCATION.

(1). **Matthew 27:60** – Matthew tells us Joseph of Arimathea,

“rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb.”

(a). The word for “roll” used here is the Greek word

“kulio”

(2). Matthew’s record of the resurrection provides us with some important information.

(3). **Matthew 28:2** – Matthew says an angel of the Lord,

“rolled back the stone from the door.”

(a). However, the words *“from the door”* do not appear in the earliest manuscripts. In fact, the KJV and NKJV are among the FEW translations that include the words *“from the door.”*

(b). All the OTHER translations simply say the angel of the Lord *“rolled back the stone.”*

(c). But what is so SIGNIFICANT HERE is the Greek word Matthew used – “apokulio” which means “rolled AWAY from,” or “rolled a DISTANCE away from.”

- (4). **Mark 16:4** – Mark says the women who came to the tomb following the resurrection saw that the stone had been “rolled away” – the same as Matthew’s account.
- (a). But the QUESTION is: The stone was rolled a
DISTANCE AWAY from WHAT?
- (5). **Luke 24:2** – Luke provides even more description by telling us that the stone door had been “*rolled away from the tomb.*”
- (a). Luke tells us the stone door was rolled some
distance AWAY FROM the TOMB – not just the
DOOR of the tomb – but some distance away from
the ENTIRE TOMB.
- (6). **John 20:1** – John’s account provides even MORE detail. He says the stone door had been “*taken away from the tomb.*”
- (a). Strong says the Greek word here is “airo” (ah'-ee-ro);
which means to lift up; by implication, to take up or
away. (New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and
Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew
Dictionary)

(a). Vincent says the word is used to signify something, “lifted out of” something else. (Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament)

(a). So, in HIS description, John used a word that means “to pick up and carry away from!”

2. The most significant thing about THIS evidence is that the stone door was NOT merely ROLLE back from the door enough for someone to squeeze through to gain entrance to the tomb.
 - a. This 1 ½ to 2 ton stone door was moved “AWAY from” the TOMB (not just the ENTRANCE of the tomb, but from the TOMB itself).
 - b. And the DISTANCE of the stone door from the tomb gives the appearance that someone actually LIFTED the stone door and CARRIED IT AWAY from the tomb.
 - c. This would be like crime scene investigators coming to investigate the overnight theft of the contents of a bank vault only to find that the thieves had not simply OPENED the bank vault door, but had actually REMOVED IT from it’s hinges, and CARRIED IT out into the parking lot.
3. And so, we make the following note in our official CSI notebook:
How many men would it take to carry a 1 ½ to 2 ton stone door

some distance away from the tomb, and why would they do it in the first place?

C. The third thing we notice, upon closer examination, is that the body of Jesus is missing from the tomb.

1. We all know the BIBLE tells the body of Jesus was missing from the tomb, but is there ANY OTHER SOURCE that would SUPPORT that claim? The answer is YES!
2. Do you remember the TOLDETH JESHU (Family History of Jesus) – that anonymous 12th century writing that attempted to discredit the deity of Christ by saying the body of Jesus was actually found?

Here's the story:

- a. *Yeshu was put to death on the sixth hour on the eve of the Passover and of the Sabbath... They buried him outside the city.*

On the first day of the week his bold followers came to Queen Helene with the report that he who was slain was truly the Messiah and that he was not in his grave; he had ascended to heaven as he prophesied. Diligent search was made and he was not found in the grave where he had been buried.

A gardener had taken him from the grave and had brought him

into his garden and buried him in the sand over which the waters flowed into the garden.

Queen Helene demanded, on threat of a severe penalty, that the body of Yeshu be shown to her within a period of three days. There was a great distress. When the keeper of the garden saw Rabbi Tanhuma walking in the field and lamenting over the ultimatum of the Queen, the gardener related what he had done, in order that Yeshu's followers should not steal the body and then claim that he had ascended into heaven. The Sages removed the body, tied it to the tail of a horse and transported it to the Queen, with the words, "This is Yeshu who is said to have ascended to heaven." Realizing that Yeshu was a false prophet who enticed the people and led them astray, she mocked the followers but praised the Sages.

3. While NO CREDIBLE Jewish scholar believes the body of Jesus was EVER found, they DO ADMIT this story AFFIRMS the common belief among Jews up through the 12th CENTURY that the TOMB of Jesus WAS EMPTY and the body of Jesus WAS MISSING three days after His crucifixion.

4. What is even MORE interesting is that the TOLDETH JESHU is a collection of Jewish myths about Jesus that can be traced back to the 2nd CENTURY.
 - a. This means Jewish historic literature has ALWAYS accepted the EMPTY TOMB as a HISTORICAL FACT.
 - b. *"Yeshu was put to death... They buried him... Diligent search was made and he was not found in the grave where he had been buried..."*
 5. And so, we take out our official CSI notebook and record the fact that the body of Jesus is missing.
 - a. And so, we write: WHAT HAPPENED to the body of Jesus? If it WAS stolen or moved, WHO is responsible, and WHAT was their motive?
- D. The FOURTH thing we notice about the tomb is that it is cut out of solid rock.
1. Matthew, Mark and Luke – all three – affirm that the tomb was cut or hewn out of solid rock.
 - a. While many people were buried in graves, those who were more affluent had tombs that were either in natural caves, or that had been cut from the sandstone rock commonly found in that region.

2. And so, once again we take out our trusty CSI notepad and write:
Tomb is cut from solid rock with only one entrance. No OTHER way out.
- E. But the most PROFOUND evidence at the tomb is what was LEFT BEHIND inside the tomb – the grave cloths and the handkerchief or napkin that covered the face of the body of Jesus.
1. If you remember, after learning that the body of Jesus was missing from the tomb, Peter and John raced to the garden tomb to see for themselves.
 - a. **John 20:5-8** – John arrived first, and the text says, *And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.*
 2. So, what is so significant about seeing the linen grave cloths *"lying there"*?
 - a. When John said the grave cloths were *"lying there,"* he used a word that means "to LIE OUTSTRETCHED" – not merely

lying, but lying OUTSTRETCHED – lying OUTSTRETCHED in the shape of a wrapped body whose legs were extended and whose arms were held tightly to the sides.

- b. The grave cloths were NOT unwound and left strewn around as if someone had unwound the cloths and removed the body.
- c. The grave cloths were still LYING OUTSTRETCHED in the form of a dead body – but the dead body was NO LONGER INSIDE.
- d. And so, what Peter and John saw were the linen grave cloths still wrapped tightly – still in the shape of a body (like a cocoon), laying in the exact location where it had been placed originally, and perhaps partially or completely collapsed due to those strips having had been saturated in 100 lbs of gooey, pasty spices – BUT the body of Jesus was gone from INSIDE.
- e. To Peter and John, it would appear as if the body of Jesus had somehow evaporated into thin air THROUGH the grave cloths.
- f. Coffman, in his commentary on John wrote this: “Those linen cloths remained in the exact position AS IF THE LORD HAD STILL BEEN WOUND THEREIN. The impact on John was the same as if he had seen the linen cloths WALKING! The

position of those medical bandages in which the body was wrapped absolutely demanded the conclusion that Jesus had risen THROUGH THEM... leaving them undisturbed, as if he had still been in them. The miracle of those undisturbed cloths was the clincher in John's mind, proving that Jesus had risen from the dead. John gave this evidence in his Gospel, because it was the evidence that convinced him.”

3. But what is EQUALLY significant is the fact that the handkerchief or napkin that covered the face of the body of Jesus was lying OUTSIDE the cocoon-shape grave cloths.
 - a. In fact, it was neatly rolled up or folded (depending on which translation you read), and lying off by itself, SEPARATE FROM the grave cloths.
 - b. If the handkerchief was ANYWHERE, we would NATURALLY expect it to be INSIDE the cocoon-like shell of grave cloths that had surrounded the body of Jesus.
 - c. What in the world is the handkerchief doing OUTSIDE the grave cloths, and neatly lying off by itself? And how did it GET there?
4. And so, we take our trusty CSI notebook and write: Grave cloths still in original place, still in it's cocoon-like shape, with no visible signs of

having been tampered with, but collapsed because the body is no longer inside – almost as if the body had evaporated. And, the handkerchief is neatly lying in a completely separate place in the tomb. Question: What happened to the body of Jesus, how was it removed from the grave cloths without unwrapping them, cutting them, or disturbing them in any manner, and why is the handkerchief that once covered his face now lying outside by itself?

CONCLUSION:

- I. Time's run out, so our examination of all this evidence is to be continued...
 - A. Now that we have the detailed record of all we've found at the scene of the tomb of Jesus, we can begin our investigation by examining some theories put forth in an attempt to explain these things.
 1. We want to answer several questions, including:
 - a. What happened to the guard?
 - b. Why was the stone door to the tomb moved completely away from the tomb itself, and who moved it?
 - c. And what happened to the body of Jesus, how was it removed from the grave cloths without disturbing them, and what's the significance of the location of the handkerchief?

- B. If you lived in the days of Jesus, would all this wonderful evidence move you to believe in Jesus and devote your life to being a disciples of His?
1. The answer to that question depends on how you see Jesus now.
 2. Do you believe Jesus was resurrected from the dead, and that He's coming again someday?
 3. Whether or not you believe this doesn't change the truth of these two facts – Jesus rose from the dead, and He's coming again.
 - a. Therefore, you can either DENY and REJECT the truth, or you can ACCEPT and OBEY the truth. Which will it be?