

The Mind of Christ

The Resurrection

Part Eight – Conclusion

INTRODUCTION:

- I. As we come to the CONCLUSION of our studies about the resurrection of Christ, I think it's important that we remember WHY we've spent the amount of time we HAVE on this subject.
 - A. The answer is really very simple. We've taken time to understand as much as we can about the resurrection of Jesus Christ because it is the very FOUNDATION of our faith as Christians.
 1. If Jesus was NOT resurrected from the dead, we HAVE NO basis for our faith.
 2. But if the resurrection of Christ DID happen, then we DO have a basis for our faith in believing that He is the Son of God, and that we TOO will someday be resurrected from the dead.
 - B. And yet, despite all the evidence supporting the Biblical account of the resurrection, false teachers and skeptics have been trying for centuries to undermine the faith of CHRISTIANS, and lead OTHERS away from BELIEVING in Jesus Christ by DENYING the resurrection.

1. In fact, this heresy began IMMEDIATELY AFTER the resurrection by the stories that the disciples of Jesus stole His body.
 2. And the heresy denying the bodily resurrection of Jesus was soon modified by the Gnostics of the first century, who did NOT believe in such things as a bodily resurrection from the dead.
 3. Even in our OWN day and time, theories ABOUND in an attempt to deny the Biblical record of the resurrection.
- C. Ordinarily, we would simply ignore these ridiculous theories and simply rely on the testimony of the resurrection of Jesus from the divinely inspired writers of the New Testament.
1. But sooner or later, either YOU or someone CLOSE to you – a close family member or friend – will be confronted by one or more of these attempts to undermine faith in Jesus Christ.
 2. When that happens we can no longer simply IGNORE the threat, but we must meet it HEAD ON!
 - a. The eternal destiny of SOMEONE we love and care about may depend on us meeting this challenge.
 3. Therefore, as we conclude our studies together about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we want to take a brief look at these theories and see how the Scriptures answer them.

BODY:

- I. But before we examine these theories I want to briefly remind you of something we discussed in a previous lesson.
 - A. Skeptics have been claiming for decades that there is no PROOF of the resurrection of Jesus.
 1. In one respect, they're correct. There is no SCIENTIFIC proof for the resurrection of Jesus.
 - a. We can't OBSERVE it in order to form a HYPOTHESIS, and since we can't form a HYPOTHESIS, we can't advance a THEORY, based on a HYPOTHESIS.
 - b. And even if we were to somehow form a HYPOTHESIS that led to a THEORY, there is simply no way we can TEST our THEORY by EXPERIMENTATION in some laboratory.
 2. But while there is no way to SCIENTIFICALLY prove the resurrection of Jesus, we CAN rely on HISTORICAL proof for believing in the resurrection of Jesus.
 - B. Think about this. How can you PROVE that some historical event occurred – a historical event like the American Revolution actually occurred?
 1. There are at least THREE ways we can do this.

- a. First, we could examine the EYEWITNESS RECORDS of those who LIVED during that time, and who actually FOUGHT in the American Revolution.
 - b. Second, we could examine the HISTORICAL RECORDS of those who lived CLOSE to the time of the American Revolution – and who KNEW some of those who FOUGHT in the Revolution.
 - c. And third, we could simply look at the RESULT of the American Revolution – the EXISTANCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
2. In the same way, we can offer HISTORICAL proof for believing in the resurrection of Jesus.
- a. We can examine the EYEWITNESS RECORDS of those who LIVED during that time, and who SAW the resurrected Christ.
 - b. We can also examine the HISTORICAL RECORDS of those “early church fathers” who lived CLOSE to the time of Jesus, and who actually were ACQUAINTED WITH some of those who were WITNESSES of the resurrection of Jesus.
 - c. And last of all, we can point to the RESULT of the resurrection – the EXISTANCE of the Lord’s church and all those who

have faith in Jesus Christ BECAUSE of the historical evidence of the resurrection.

C. But there's one other thing we need to remember.

1. When examining ANY historical record, the HONEST historian will accept those things as factual UNLESS they are proven otherwise.
2. Furthermore, this means the HONEST historian will not have ANY PRECONCEIVED CONCLUSIONS, but will honestly examine ALL the evidence and let the EVIDENCE lead him to reach certain conclusions.

(1). In other words, the HONEST historian will not REJECT a historical record SIMPLY BECAUSE he doesn't happen to AGREE with it.

D. It's important to remember these things, because as we look at the theories that have been advanced to deny the resurrection of Jesus – EVERY theory rejects the BIBLICAL historical record without ANY VALID HISTORICAL reason for doing so, and ALL are based on PRECONCEIVED CONCLUSIONS because those who advance these theories don't want to ACCEPT the truth of the resurrection.

II. Of the NINE theories that have been advanced over the years to deny the resurrection, FIVE of these claim that the tomb of Jesus was NEVER

EMPTY, while the remaining FOUR admit the tomb WAS empty, but try to provide some NATURAL explanation for the empty tomb. Let's briefly look at each of these.

A. The first theory is what is often called THE UNKNOWN TOMB

THEORY:

1. This theory says, in all probability, the disciples of Jesus never knew what happened to the body of Jesus following His crucifixion, because the Roman executioners more than likely threw his body in a common shallow grave – something they did to all who were crucified.
2. But a discovery in 1968 dealt a serious blow to this theory – although some groups, like the fanatical fringe group known as The Jesus Seminar, still hold to this theory.
 - a. Prior to 1968, it was commonly believed that those who died by Roman crucifixion were buried in unknown, unmarked, common graves.
 - b. But in June of that year the remains of Yohanan Ben Ha'galgal was unearthed in a family tomb outside of Jerusalem, and forensic evidence proved beyond ANY DOUBT WHATSOEVER that Ha'galgal had been CRUCIFIED.

- c. And yet, he had NOT been buried in a common, unmarked grave, but rather in his own family tomb.
3. But this theory TOTALLY IGNORES the HISTORICAL record.
 - a. First, we're told Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin and secret disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate to personally request the body of Jesus be given to him.
(Matthew 27:57-58; Mark 15:42-45; Luke 23:50-52; John 19:38)
 - b. Second, the Scriptures say Joseph of Arimathea prepared the body of Jesus for burial (with the help of Nicodemus, another prominent member of the Sanhedrin and believer in Jesus), and placed the body of Jesus in Joseph of Arimathea's own new tomb. **(Matthew 27:59-60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53; John 19:40-42)**
 - c. Plus, a group of women, which included Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus, were sitting across from the tomb, watching, and took special notice of the location of the tomb because they planned to return to the tomb after the Sabbath to anoint the body. **(Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55-56)**

- d. If, for some UNFATHOMABLE reason, the disciples and the women didn't know the location of the tomb, certainly Joseph of Arimathea knew – it was his own tomb.
 - e. This theory also assumes that the Jewish religious leaders and Pilate didn't know where Jesus was buried – and yet, Pilate had a detachment of up to 16 Roman soldiers seal and guard SOMEBODY'S tomb. And if it wasn't the tomb of JESUS, whose tomb was it, and what happened to THAT body?
- B. Another theory that is remarkably close to the UNKNOWN tomb theory is the WRONG TOMB THEORY:
- 1. This theory says, since the disciples of Jesus didn't know for sure where He was buried, they all went to the WRONG tomb on the first day of the week following His crucifixion, and finding THAT tomb empty, they ASSUMED Jesus had been resurrected.
 - 2. However, THIS theory ALSO ignores all the evidence.
 - a. When the women returned to the tomb three days after Jesus had been crucified and buried, they NOT ONLY found the tomb empty, but they have a young man (other accounts say angels) telling the women, *"He is not here; for He is risen, as*

He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay..." (Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:3-6)

- b. Furthermore, it had been less than 72 hours since two of these women had sat across from the tomb, taking special notice of the tomb's location. Do you really think they would forget SO QUICKLY where Jesus had been buried?
 - c. And once again, if the women and the other disciples went to the wrong tomb and assumed Jesus had been resurrected, then EVERYBODY went to the wrong tomb – the Jewish religious leaders, the Roman guard, and even the ANGELS of the Lord.
 - d. It would take a LOT of faith (blind faith) to believe something so absurd.
- C. Another theory that has gained popularity over the years is what is known simply as the LEGEND THEORY or the MYTH THEORY.
- 1. This theory says the resurrection accounts are nothing more than LEGENDS or MYTHS that cropped up YEARS AFTER the time of Christ.
 - 2. But this theory falls apart COMPLETELY because the ACCOUNTS of the resurrection of Jesus were circulated and written down by the ORIGINAL EYEWITNESSES.

- a. The women who were told by the angel that Jesus had been resurrected, also SAW and TALKED WITH the resurrected Jesus. **(Matthew 28:9-10; Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18)**
 - b. The apostle Paul gives a whole LIST of those to whom the Lord personally appeared following His resurrection – including 500 people at once, many of whom were still living when Paul wrote this in 56 CE. **(1 Corinthians 15:1-8)**
 - c. Other writers of the New Testament (all of whom wrote BEFORE 96-98 CE) testified to the fact that THEY had been eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ.
 - (1). Peter and all the apostles **(Acts 2:32; 2 Peter 1:16)**
 - (2). John **(1 John 1:1-3)**
 - (3). Paul **(Acts 9:1-9; 22:6-16; 26:12-18; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8)**
 - d. And so, it is pure nonsense to say the story of the resurrection is some LEGEND or MYTH that was developed over the centuries following the days of Jesus.
- D. Another theory that is equally baseless is what is commonly called the SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION THEORY.

1. Those who promote this theory say the beliefs of a SPIRITUAL resurrection go all the way back to the first century beliefs of the GNOSTICS.
 - a. The Gnostics of the first century denied the BODILY resurrection of Jesus, claiming that the TRUE resurrection of the spirit of Jesus occurred when His spirit was FREED from His flesh at the crucifixion.
 - b. In other words, the resurrection can only take place when the spirit is free from the flesh, free from the pain and the pleasures of physical existence – that’s how a Gnostic would describe Jesus' resurrection. Not a resurrection of a mass of flesh and sinful temptations, but a rising of the spirit up out of the physical nature.
2. And yet this assertion COMPLETELY disregards a number of historical facts. For example:
 - a. When Jesus first appeared to His disciples, they were terrified, thinking they were seeing a SPIRIT. But Jesus reassured them by saying, *"Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."* **(Luke 24:39)**

- b. And even after TOUCHING the Lord, and STILL thinking He might be a spirit, Jesus asked for food and ate a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb. **(Luke 24:40-43)**
 - c. Matthew's account says the women to whom Jesus appeared, *"held Him by the feet and worshiped Him."* **(Matthew 28:9)**
 - d. And do you remember the opening words of John: **1 John 1:1-4** – *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life — 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us — 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.*
3. And so, we can reject the SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION theory because the disciples of the Lord not only SAW HIM, but TOUCHED HIM, and he ATE with them.
- E. Another theory that is very close to the SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION theory is what is often called the HALLUCINATION THEORY.

1. This theory says the disciples only THOUGHT they had seen the resurrected Jesus, but in reality, we're merely HALUCINATING.
 - a. A HALLUCINATION is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as, "a false sensory perception in the absence of an actual external stimulus" – which is another way of saying "seeing something that isn't actually there."
2. From a purely medical point of view, there are some real problems with this theory.
 - a. First, only certain KINDS of people have hallucinations – usually those who are PARANOID or who suffer from schizophrenia.
 - b. Second, no two people have the EXACT SAME hallucination – the DETAILS of what was seen vary SIGNIFICANTLY.
 - c. Third, hallucinations are usually restricted to WHEN AND WHERE they occur – usually at the same time of day or night, and generally in the same place or vicinity of where previous hallucinations were seen.
3. This theory falls completely apart for several reasons.
 - a. Those who saw Jesus were HARDLY suffering from PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIA – remember, Jesus was seen by all the disciples (including the Lord's brother's who didn't

believe in Him in the first place), AND by men like PAUL who was an ENEMY of Christianity, AND by over 500 people AT ONCE – are we supposed to believe that ALL OF THESE WERE PARANOID SCHIZOPHERNICS? **(1 Corinthians 15:1-8)**

III. All those theories try to say the tomb of Jesus was STILL OCCUPIED, but attempt to EXPLAIN the resurrection by offering UNPROVABLE and REDICULOUS theories. Let's now look at those that ADMIT the tomb was EMPTY, but try to offer some NATURAL explanation for the disappearance of the body.

A. Last week we examined the theory that says the DISCIPLES STOLE THE BODY.

1. But when we examined the Biblical historical record, we found that they neither had the MOTIVE, nor the OPPORTUNITY or ABILITY to steal the body of Jesus.

a. The tomb was guarded by what could have been as many as 16 fully armed, combat ready Roman soldiers – who would protect the tomb and its contents to the death. **(Matthew 27:62-66)**

- b. Add to that the fact that the disciples acted COWARDLY – they had ALL forsaken Jesus and fled for their own lives when He was arrested. **(Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50-52)**
 - c. Furthermore, the disciples apparently WEREN'T EXPECTING the resurrection because they didn't believe the report of the women who said they had SEEN the resurrected Christ.
(Mark 16:1-12; Luke 24:8-12)
 - d. And, they locked themselves behind closed doors because they were TERRIFIED upon hearing about the resurrection, and possibly that THEY had stolen the body. **(John 20:19-20)**
2. Therefore, there is simply NO REASON to believe the disciples of the Lord had the MOTIVE or the OPPORTUNITY to steal the body of Jesus – let alone the COURAGE to do so.
- B. We also looked at a similar theory that says the AUTHORITIES STOLE THE BODY.
1. This theory claims that the body of Jesus was either removed from the tomb by the Jewish or Roman authorities to keep it from being stolen.
 2. But this theory ALSO falls apart when the Biblical evidence is closely examined.

- a. The Jewish and Roman authorities wanted the body of Jesus to stay right where it was, so that in three days they could open the tomb and prove Jesus had NOT been resurrected.
(Matthew 27:62-66)
 - b. That's why BOTH the Jewish and Roman authorities wanted the tomb of Jesus PROTECTED and GUARDED.
 - c. But the real DEATH BLOW to this theory is the fact that NEITHER the Jewish or Roman authorities could PRODUCE the body of Jesus as evidence that He had not been resurrected. They simply DIDN'T HAVE THE BODY!
- C. Then comes my favorite theory – the RESUSCITATION THEORY or SWOON THEORY.
1. This theory says did NOT actually die on the cross, but merely FAINTED.
 - a. And because medical knowledge was not all that great at the time, everyone just ASSUMED Jesus was dead.
 - b. But when He was placed in the coolness of the tomb, He REVIVED, and when His disciples SAW HIM, they automatically ASSUMED He had been resurrected.

2. This is without doubt the most ridiculous of all the theories. To accept this theory, you must IGNORE all the BIBLICAL evidence, and believe that Jesus:
 - a. Was NOT physically exhausted after a sleepless night and being dragged from trial to trial during the early morning hours.
(Matthew 26:47-27:31; Mark 14:43-15:20; Luke 22:47-23:25; John 18:1-19:16)
 - b. Survived the WHOLE CRUCIFIXION: meaning, He SURVIVED being SCOURGED and suffering from a TREMENDOUS loss of blood (when MANY men died); SURVIVED the torturous walk to Calvary carrying His OWN CROSS, and SURVIVED the crucifixion of being NAILED to the cross. **(Matthew 27:32-55; Mark 15:21-41; Luke 23:26-49; John 19:17-30)**
 - c. SURVIVED having a Roman spear thrust in His side, which NOT ONLY punctured His LUNG, but pierced His HEART.
(John 19:31-37)
 - d. Somehow SURVIVED being wrapped mummy style with grave cloths saturated with a hundred pounds of wet, sticky, gooey spices (through which it would have been IMPOSSIBLE to

BREATHE). **(Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42)**

e. Managed to get Himself out of the cocoon-like wrapping of grave cloths without UNWRAPPING them or CUTTING them.

(John 20:5-8)

f. Rolled back a 1 1/2 to 2 ton stone door and moved it completely AWAY from the tomb – not just the ENTRANCE of the tomb – as if He had actually CARRIED it away. **(Mark**

16:4; Luke 24:2; John 20:1)

g. Fought off a contingent of up to 16 fully armed, combat ready Roman soldiers. **(Matthew 27:62-66)**

h. Walked the length of Galilee and appeared healthy to His disciples.

3. Do we need to say anymore about this theory?

D. And finally, there is what is called the PASSION PLOT THEORY.

1. This theory, first introduced by Hugh Schoenfield in his work, THE PASSION PLOT, says Jesus actually believed He was the Messiah and plotted with Joseph of Arimathea a detailed plan to arrange what would appear to be a resurrection.

- a. The theory says Jesus knew all the prophecies about the Messiah, and arranged His life to conform to those prophecies so it would look as if He actually FULFILLED them.
- b. Then, at the time of His crucifixion, He arranged to be administered a drug (in the wine vinegar He was offered on the cross) that would make Him lapse into unconsciousness.
- c. The plan was for Joseph to take His body to one of his tombs, and when the drug wore off, Jesus would appear alive and reveal Himself as the Messiah.
- d. BUT, everything went wrong when the Roman soldier thrust a spear into His side and He died.
- e. Before dawn on the third day, His body was taken away and disposed of so that His grave would appear empty.
- f. When Mary and the other women arrived at the tomb, they saw some unknown young man who was part of the conspiracy and assumed he was the resurrected Jesus.
- g. Then, on four occasions, this young man appeared to the disciples of Jesus and convinced THEM he was the risen Christ.

2. Let me answer this PASSION PLOT theory by simply saying Schoenfield completely disregards ALL of the historical evidence showing that:
 - a. Jesus not only died,
 - b. But was buried in a GUARDED tomb,
 - c. And was BODILY resurrected from the dead,
 - d. And appeared to His disciples, including over 500 at once,
 - e. Then ascended into heaven while His disciples watched.
- E. And so, after examining ALL these theories, there is only ONE conclusion we can come to – HE IS RISEN!
 1. The apostle Paul boldly proclaimed that Jesus was, "*declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*" (**Romans 1:4**)

CONCLUSION:

- I. And so, we leave our examination of the resurrection of Jesus Christ – confident in the fact that the historical evidence OVERWHELMINGLY supports the faith you and I have as Christians. And, with just two more lessons, we will bring our year-and-a-half long walk together through the life of Christ to a close.

- A. But, perhaps NOW you can better understand why the sermon of Peter and the other apostles Pentecost had such impact that 3,000 devout Jews were baptized into Christ in just one day.
 - 1. There was simply no way ANYONE could LOGICALLY DENY the testimony of the apostles who said Jesus was resurrected from the dead, and has ascended into heaven.
 - 2. That resurrection PROVED BEYOND DOUBT, that this same Jesus was Lord and Christ.

- B. If you're not a Christian, or a child of God who has wandered from your faith in Jesus Christ, I have only one question – WHY?
 - 1. Why are you waiting to give your life to Christ? The evidence is clear. He IS the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
 - a. Why aren't you willing to come to Christ in complete obedience, being baptized for the remission of YOUR sins?
 - 2. And why are some of you risking another day – another MOMENT – by REMAINING out of fellowship with the Christ Who DIED for you and by Whose BLOOD you were redeemed?
 - a. Heaven is too precious and too wonderful to miss.