

Exalting Jesus Christ

"The Resurrection – Part 2"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Last Sunday morning in our journey through the gospel of John we've titled, "Exalting Jesus Christ," we began taking a look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - A. One of the first things we noticed about the gospel records of the resurrection is how simple and straightforward the story is told.
 1. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John seem to consciously avoid overly dramatizing the story of the resurrection.
 2. As sensational as that event was, the story is told in a very candid and straightforward manner.
 - B. Therefore, as we continue this morning by examining "Part Two" of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we're going to take a slightly unique approach.
 1. Some of the most watched programs on TV are those dealing with crime scene investigations.
 - a. Some programs feature real investigators investigating real crime scenes, while others are the highly fictionalized crime scene investigations of the popular TV dramas.

2. So, this morning we're going to step into the role of crime scene investigators and carefully examine the empty tomb of Jesus.
- C. To do this we need to do what all crime scene investigators do, and that is to provide a complete "Scene Documentation" – which is a detailed record of everything investigators see when they first arrive on the scene.
1. Of course, in our case, the only record we have of the scene of the empty tomb comes from the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
 2. Now, in all fairness, some critics say the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is biased because these men were all disciples of Jesus.
 3. However, a careful examination of their testimony shows it's everything we need to properly document the scene:
 - a. Their testimony is presented in proper chronological order.
 - b. Their testimony does not include opinions, analysis, or conclusions. Just the facts!!!!
 - c. Their testimony is very descriptive – even down to some precise details.

- d. And finally, their testimony gives us a general description of the crime scene just as it was observed by those who were first to arrive.
- D. But why are we treating the empty tomb of Jesus as though it were a crime scene? The answer is simple.
1. If someone removed the body of Jesus from the tomb without the authority to do so, we have a crime scene. Why?
 - a. First, the tomb was being guarded by soldiers who were placed there under the authority of the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate.
 - b. And second, the tomb was sealed and protected under the authority of Rome itself.
 - c. So, at the very least, if the body of Jesus was taken from the tomb while it was under the protective custody of Rome, we have a crime – a theft which is a crime punishable by death.
 2. Furthermore, if the body of Jesus was stolen, we want to look for clues that might help us to discover who stole the body of Jesus, and why.
 3. So let's begin.

BODY:

- I. Let's begin by creating our own "Scene Documentation" by recording everything we see when we arrive at the scene of the empty tomb.
 - A. To do this we'll begin by examining the record of Mark, Luke and John, and later look at some critically important evidence provided by 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** – *Now the first day of the week Mary 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 rather significant discrepancies between these three accounts.
 - 1. I plan to answer these alleged discrepancies in an upcoming lesson.
 - 2. But, for now, let's just focus on the physical evidence mentioned by these three writers.

- II. If we were standing at the tomb of Jesus and conducting a crime scene investigation by first recording everything we see, we would immediately notice several key things:
 - A. First, we obviously notice the absence of the guard.
 - 1. Those men whom Pilate had ordered to secure and seal the tomb are nowhere to be found.

2. Since there is no evidence of any foul play, and since Pilate was the one who ordered those soldiers to guard the tomb, there are only two conclusions we can reach:
 - a. Either Pilate ordered the men guarding the tomb to leave, or...
 - b. They deserted their post.
 3. And so, we take out our official CSI notebook and write this note:

What happened to the guard?
- B. Next, we notice that the large stone door has been moved away from the tomb and the Roman seal has been broken – however, there are some important details we need to mention in our *Scene Documentation*.
1. First, Matthew says it is, "*a great stone*" (**Matthew 27:60**), while Mark says, "*it was very large*" (**Mark 16:4**).
 - a. Tombs like this were closed by rolling a large circular, wheel-like stone down a slight incline over the entrance of the tomb.
 - b. Archeological evidence has determined that the average weight of one of these stone doors at 1½ to 2 tons – between 3,000 and 4,000 lbs.
 - c. However, this stone is specifically described as "great" and "very large," suggesting it may have been even larger and heavier than most.

2. But the most important piece of evidence about this stone door is its location.

a. **Matthew 27:60** – Matthew tells us that after Joseph of Arimathea had finished preparing the body of Jesus, he *"rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb."*

(1). The Greek word for "roll" in this verse is the word "kulio."

b. But when we turn to Matthew's record of the resurrection he tells us an angel of the Lord, *"rolled back the stone from the door"* (**Matthew 28:2**).

(1). In all fairness we need to mention that 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."*

(2). All the other translations simply say the angel of the Lord *"rolled back the stone."*

c. However, what is so significant here is the Greek word Matthew used – "apokulio" which means "rolled away from," or "rolled a distance away from."

(1). However, the big question is: "What was the stone door rolled away from?"

- d. Luke provides even more description by telling us that the stone door had been "*rolled away from the tomb*" (**Luke 24:2**).
 - (1). In other words, Luke says the stone door was rolled some distance away from the tomb – not just rolled away from the entrance of the tomb – but rather rolled some distance away from the tomb.
- e. However, John's account provides even more detail. He says the stone door had been "*taken away from the tomb*" (**John 20:1**).
 - (1). 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)
 - (2). Vincent says the word is used to signify something, "lifted out of" something else. (Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament)
 - (3). So, in John's description, he used a word that means "to pick up and carry away from!"
- 3. So, what's so important in knowing the meaning of all these Greek words?

- a. The most significant thing about this evidence is that the stone door was not merely rolled back from the entrance just enough for someone to squeeze through.
 - b. This 1½ to 2 ton stone door was moved "away from" the tomb (not simply moved "away from" the entrance of the tomb, but moved "away from" the tomb itself).
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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 its hinges, and carried it out into the parking lot.
 - e. The actual location of this 1½ to 2 ton stone door is enormously significant.
 - f. Who in their right mind would go to such extremes to move a 1½ to 2 ton stone door some distance "away from" the tomb just to steal the body of Jesus?
4. And so, we make the following note in our official CSI notebook:
- Why was this 1½ to 2 ton stone door moved some distance "away*

from" the tomb just to steal the body of Jesus, and how many men would it take to move the door that far?

- 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 says the body of Jesus was missing from the tomb on the third day, but are there any other sources that would support that claim? The answer is, "Yes!"
 2. During the 12th century some anonymous Jewish author wrote a book called the *Toldeth Jeshu* (Family History of Jesus).
 3. The purpose of that writing was to deny the resurrection and thus discredit the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - a. The story claims the body of Jesus was secretly removed from the tomb and buried in another location to keep the disciples from stealing the body and claiming that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead.
 - b. The story also says the body of Jesus was then produced to show that He was still dead and had not been resurrected as He prophesied – all of which made Jesus a false Messiah.
 4. Here's the story (I underlined some important phrases we need to notice):

- 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.

5. It's important to know that every credible Jewish scholar admits this is a fictional story, and that the body of Jesus was never actually found.
 - a. However, this story shows that it was commonly believed by Jews up through the 12th century that the body of Jesus was missing from the tomb three days after His crucifixion.
6. 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 that Jewish historic literature has always accepted the empty tomb of Jesus 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..."*
7. And so, we take out our official CSI notebook and record the fact that the body of Jesus is missing from the tomb. We write:
 - a. *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 hewn out of solid rock.
1. Matthew, Mark and Luke all testify that the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea – the tomb where Jesus was buried – had been hewn out of solid rock.
 - a. In our previous lesson we said that many people in the days of Jesus were simply buried in graves.
 - b. But the burial places of those who were more affluent were either natural caves, or man-made tombs that had been cut out of the sandstone rock commonly found in that region.
 2. And so, once again we take out our trusty CSI notepad and write:
The tomb is cut from solid rock with only one entrance. No other way out.
- E. But the most profound evidence we discover at the tomb is what was left behind inside the tomb – the grave cloths and the handkerchief or napkin that covered the face and the body of Jesus.
1. If you remember, when Peter and John learned that the body of Jesus was missing from the tomb, they raced to the garden tomb to see for themselves.
 - a. John arrived first, and the text says: **John 20:5-8** – *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 Greek word that means "to lie outstretched" – not merely lying, but lying outstretched.
 - b. This means the grave cloths were lying there in the shape of an outstretched body whose legs were extended and whose arms were bound tightly to the sides.
3. Peter and John did not find the grave cloths unwrapped and strewn about the tomb as if someone had unwound the cloths to remove the body.
 - a. The grave cloths were still lying "outstretched" in the form of a dead body – but the body was no longer inside.
 - b. Peter and John saw the linen grave cloths still tightly wrapped mummy-style in the shape of a body (like an empty cocoon),

and laying in the exact location where the body had been originally placed – except there was no body inside.

- c. In fact, what they most likely saw was this cocoon-like wrapping partially or completely collapsed due to fact that those linen strips had been saturated in 100 lbs of gooey, pasty spices. It would have collapsed because the body of Jesus was no longer inside.
 - d. To Peter and John, it would appear as if the body of Jesus had somehow evaporated into thin air through the grave cloths.
4. James 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."

5. 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. Handkerchiefs or napkin were placed on the face of deceased before their head was wrapped with the grave cloths.
 - d. So, what in the world is the handkerchief doing outside the grave cloths, and neatly lying off by itself? And how did it get there?

6. So, once again we take our trusty CSI notebook and write:
 - a. "Grave cloths still in original place, still in their cocoon-like shape, with no visible signs of tampering. Wrappings are partially collapsed because the body is no longer inside – almost as if the body had evaporated.

The handkerchief is neatly folded, lying in a completely separate place in the tomb.

Questions: 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 napkin or handkerchief that once covered the face of the deceased now lying outside by itself, neatly folded?"

CONCLUSION:

- I. Time's run out, so you'll have to come back next week when we put all this evidence together and begin to carefully analyze it.
 - A. We now have a detailed record of all the evidence we've found at the scene of the tomb of Jesus.
 1. So, next week we'll begin to analyze the evidence to see if the evidence supports some of the theories that have been put forth to explain the empty tomb.
 2. Among the questions we will answer are:
 - a. What happened to the soldiers guarding the tomb?
 - b. Why was the stone door of the tomb moved a distance "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 neatly folded handkerchief?
- II. If you lived in the days of Jesus and knew all these facts, would you believe someone had stolen the body of Jesus, or would you believe He was resurrected from the dead just as He prophesied?
- A. When we examine all this evidence you'll see that it points to only one conclusion.
 1. Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead as He promised, and is therefore the Son of God.
 2. In fact, evidence that proves the resurrection and affirms the deity of Jesus Christ is overwhelming and irrefutable.
 - B. But the most important question for you is this: What are you going to do with that evidence?
 1. Are you going to acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior, obey Him, and be faithful to Him all the days of your life?
 2. Or are you going to ignore the evidence and go on your way living your life the way you want?
 - C. Whether or not you believe in the resurrection won't change the truth of these two irrefutable facts:

1. Jesus rose from the dead and is now sitting at the right hand of God in heaven, and...
 2. He's coming again someday to judge the world by rewarding the righteous with eternal life, and by condemning the unrighteous to everlasting punishment.
- D. So, in the end all this leaves you with only two choices:
1. You can deny the truth and reject Jesus as Lord and Savior, or...
 2. You can accept the truth and obey and faithfully serve Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords.