

## **Week Three: The Resurrection of Christ – Was it a hoax, or is it history?**

- I. **Read Matt. 27: 33 – 54; 57 – 60; 28: 1 – 7.** What events do these passages describe in the life of Christ?
  - a. See Matt. 27: 33 – 44, and take note of Jesus' first 3 hours upon the Cross. Now read Matt. 27: 45 – 50, which describe Christ's last 3 hours upon the Cross.
    - i. Who were the men that actually tortured Christ and nailed Him to the Cross?
    - ii. What was the attitude of these men toward Christ when they crucified Him?
    - iii. What did the Roman guard say after Christ died upon the Cross (Matt. 28: 54)?
  - b. Read Matt. 27: 57 – 66. Who buried Christ, and what precautions did they take to secure the grave / tomb of Christ?
  - c. See Matt. 28: 1 – 10. What historic event occurred on the third day after the authorities had buried Christ?
    - i. Also see John 20: 19 – 29. Who did Christ appear to in this passage? What were these men, and why were they hiding from the Jewish authorities?
    - ii. Now read 1 Cor. 15: 3 – 8. How many people total encountered the Risen Christ at the time of this writing from the Apostle Paul?
    - iii. See 1 Cor. 15: 12 – 17. Why is the resurrection so important to our Christian faith?
  - d. Three popular theories that nonbelievers utilize to explain away the "empty tomb":
    - i. "The Swoon Theory" – Christ never actually died, but only fainted on the Cross. He was removed from the Cross while still alive. After Christ was buried the coolness of the rock tomb revived Him. He fought through over 100 pounds of burial wrappings, pushed open the two-ton stone rolled across the front of the tomb, and snuck stealthily past the 16 man Roman Guard unit (4 men on duty at a time) who were there to guard the tomb. Two logical arguments against this theory: First, the Roman guards who took Jesus down from the Cross were professional killers, who pierced His side with a spear to confirm Christ's death. When water and blood flowed separately from Christ's side, that did confirm His death to the guards. (In modern medicine, the separation of blood and water is still a clear sign of death.). In addition, even if Christ had not died upon the Cross, after all that torture and the crucifixion, He could never have removed the large stone by Himself and sneak by the Roman guards in His weakened condition.
    - ii. "The Hallucination Theory": Jesus did not really rise from the dead, but His followers all saw a hallucination (or a vision) of Him, because of

their disturbed state of mind at that time. The arguments against this theory: It may be remotely possible that two separate people could have a similar hallucination, but for over 500 people (all from different backgrounds and psychological experiences) to have the exact same hallucination is virtually impossible. This theory also fails to explain why the Jewish and Roman authorities did not just produce the body of Christ (if they still had it in the tomb) to squelch this new religious movement among the followers of Christ.

- iii. The "Stolen Body Theory": After Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried, His body was stolen by His disciples. Then they went out and preached a Gospel message they knew was false, at the peril of their own lives. The big problem with this theory is that the disciples all went into hiding to avoid trouble with the authorities. They were scared for their own lives. Yet, an event happened so dramatic and life-changing, that almost all of the disciples followed Christ to a martyr's death. The only one not martyred for preaching the Gospel of Christ was the Apostle John, who himself was boiled in oil and lived through it. He was then exiled to the island of Patmos, from where he wrote the final book of the Bible, "The Book of Revelation".
- iv. "The Wrong Tomb Theory": Actually Jesus did not rise from the grave, but it was just that everybody forgot where they laid His body. That would have included His mother and family, His followers, the Jewish religious authorities, the Roman guards assigned to guard the tomb, and even the owner of the tomb (Joseph of Arimathea). They all got confused and went to a wrong tomb. When they could not find the body of Christ, the rumor spread that He had risen from the grave. Seriously, how much sense do this make? It would have been more than monumental incompetence on the part of the Roman authorities who crucified Christ. And this theory assumes the ridiculous notion that even the owner of the tomb forgot where his family burial tomb was.

- II. Conclusion: Jesus' resurrection from the grave proved three things: First, that Christ was God, (just as He said); second, that Christ conquered death by His own power and we have real hope of life after death; and third, that the Christian's faith is not in vain, but is founded on a solid historical event that no person has ever been able to refute or explain. It takes far more "blind faith" for the skeptics to hold to these theories, than for the Christian who bases his / her faith in the Risen Christ!
- III. APPLICATION: Because we know that Christ has conquered death, we know He has the power to change our lives on this earth, and that we have a true hope for "the life to come".
- IV. MEMORY VERSES: 1 Cor. 15: 3 – 4, 14.