

Because He Lives
Matthew 27:57-28:15
June 16th, 2019

Big idea: Jesus truly died and resurrected bodily, just as He said He would.

Intro –

Skepticism can sometimes be very healthy.

Know of a man who sent thousands of dollars to scammers who contacted him via phone claiming to represent a ministry overseas.

Hear of people, often although not exclusively older people, getting conned out of their retirement money.

There are constant health fads that burn like wildfire through the internet.

My wife received a letter seemingly from our bank that warned our debit card had been used for fraudulent purchases and said to call a number to resolve it. When she called an automated voice asked her to enter the full 16 digit number of the card. She was rightly skeptical and hung up and called the credit union itself to make sure the letter was legit. Turns out it was, but that healthy skepticism is what protects us from scams.

It's skepticism that keeps us from buying into every false claim and conspiracy theory out there.

Imagine if someone tried to convince you that their friend, Steve, was raised from the dead. You would be skeptical. I would be skeptical!

If you told me that your friend, Steve, died, was buried in a casket in Mountain View Cemetery in Pocatello right across from Subway, and then a couple days later rose from the dead, I would be skeptical.

I would say,

are you sure it's your friend?

Did you see him or speak to him?

Could it be that he didn't really die?

But Jesus isn't your friend, Steve. His death and resurrection were predicted long before they happened by the OT and by him throughout his life. His life hung on the pegs of predictions and fulfilled them in ways that were out of his control. He was a controversial figure that provoked anger, frustration, disappointment, joy, and belonging.

In Matthews account He is anticipating future skepticism and answering those skeptics in advance.

But it's more than that. We see Jesus doing just what He said He would do, showing that He isn't a liar but He is reliable.

1. The **certain** burial with a **secure** tomb (27:57-66)
 - a. One theory people use is that maybe the women and the disciples just went to the wrong tomb.
 - i. Surely there are a lot of tombs and a lot of people around Jerusalem for the Passover. Maybe they just went to the wrong one and thought He was raised because it was empty.
 - ii. Matthew name several people who would have known just where He was buried, including Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of James and Joseph.
 - b. According to Deut 21:22-23 a body couldn't remain on the cross overnight
 - i. **Deut. 21:22-23** ²² "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, ²³ his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury

him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

- ii. Roman custom was to let the bodies remain in full site and rot until they fell off. If buried it was only by express permission of the imperial magistrate. (Carson)
- c. Joseph of Arimathea, at great risk to himself, asked for the body of Jesus and was given it. (vv. 57-58)
 - i. What do we know about Joseph?
 1. He was rich – Matthew tells us that and He had an expensive tomb from the description which confirms it.
 2. From Luke’s account we learn he was on the Sanhedrin but had not agreed with their actions toward Jesus.
 - a. **Luke 23:50-52** And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man ⁵¹ (he had not consented to their plan and action), *a man* from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; ⁵² this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.
 3. From John’s account we learn that he was a secret disciple of Jesus.
 - a. **John 19:38-40** After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.
 - ii. Mark’s account emphasizes the courage needed
 1. **Mark 15:43** Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.
 - a. He was a prominent member of the council
 - b. He had to “gather up courage” to ask Pilate for the body.
 - c. Leon Morris – whereas the crucifixion sent most of Jesus’ followers into hiding it had the opposite effect on Joseph and brought him out into the open.
- d. Joseph had the body prepared and laid it in his own new tomb. (vv. 59-60)
 - i. This tomb would have likely been cut into the rock with an antechamber then a burial chamber sealed with a cut, disk-shaped stone that rolled in a slot cut into the rock at an incline, making it easier to close but hard to open. Several men would likely have been needed to roll the large stone up the cut incline. (adapted from Carson)
- e. Two women named Mary watched opposite the grave (v. 61)
- f. The religious leaders were worried that His disciples might steal His body and claim He resurrected. (vv. 62-65)
 - i. They remembered His claims, but they didn’t believe them.
 - ii. Pilate suggested they use their own guard, the temple police who reported to the chief priests not to Pilate, which explains why they later go directly to the chief priests.

- g. They made it secure with the guards and set a seal on the stone (v. 66)
 - i. The guards would have watched over the tomb, the seal would have been to confirm that it had not been opened.
 - ii. Think of the safety seals that are on every bottle of medicine you buy from the store ever since someone poisoned bottles of Tylenol with cyanide and killed 7 people in the Chicago area in 1982. They still don't know who did it or how exactly they did it, but ever since then food and medicine is sealed with a tamper resistant cover so you would know if someone opened it before you.
 - iii. Think of this seal as a tamper resistant device so they would know if someone opened the tomb. It would also be an official statement that it was not to be opened.
- h. So who all knows where the tomb is with Jesus' body? At a minimum:
 - i. Joseph of Arimathea
 - ii. Mary Magdalene
 - iii. Mary the mother of James and Joseph
 - iv. The guards

2. The **surprised** women at an **empty** tomb (28:1-7)

- a. They knew where to go so after the Sabbath when it was again acceptable to visit a place of burial, they went to the tomb.
 - i. Mark adds that Salome was also there (16:1), Luke adds that Joanna was there as well as other women (24:10).
 - ii. In a culture that didn't value women, it's noteworthy that the women are here while most of the men are scattered. They were at the Place of the Skull when Jesus died, at Joseph's tomb when He was buried, and now they are at the tomb again early in the morning. Sure, they should have remembered Jesus' words that He would rise again, but we must admire their courage and loyalty.
- b. Before they arrived, an angel had rolled away the stone (vv. 2-4)
 - i. The accompanying earthquake and their appearance terrified the guards who also quaked – in fact the same root word is used of the earthquake and their quaking!
 - ii. We know this happens before they arrive because the Matthew says that this earthquake "had occurred" already and in Luke's account the women arrive to find the tomb open and empty. They don't arrive to find it shaking.
- c. The angel encourages them not to be afraid for He has risen. (vv. 5-6)
 - i. Note that the stone wasn't rolled away to release Jesus. It was rolled away to show He was already gone. It wasn't rolled away to let the Messiah out, but to let the witnesses in.
 - ii. They not only saw the tomb but saw the specific place where He had been lying.
 - 1. **John 20:6-7** And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*, ⁷ and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

- a. It was clearly orderly, the cloths were there, not what would be expected if the body was stolen
 - b. Truly He was a perfect man – some of the first things he did after his resurrection were fold his own laundry and cook a meal for his friends.
 - d. They are to go tells His disciples that He has risen and is going ahead to Galilee (v. 7)
 - i. **Mark 16:7** "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'"
 - 1. Peter who had denied him 3 times and wept in repentance – he is specified.
3. The **worshipping** women at His **resurrected** feet (28:8-10)
- a. They left with fear and great joy (v. 8)
 - i. Much like a new parent taking home a baby from a hospital. Joy that the child is born, fear as they think, "I'm not prepared for this." (Doriani)
 - b. Jesus met them along the way and greeted them (v. 9)
 - i. I love this. His literal greeting is a common greeting. Like the equivalent of saying hello or good morning.
 - ii. The Messiah has conquered death and the first thing He says in Matthew's account is a casual greeting.
 - c. They respond in worship at His feet.
 - d. He sends them to tell his disciples to meet Him in Galilee, the region to the north where they had spent most of their ministry together.
 - i. "Galilee of the Gentiles" because of its position in the far north of Israel, populated by many Gentiles, as an appropriate launching point for the Great Commission He would give them to make disciples of all nations.
 - e. Notice also that He describes the disciples as, "My brethren," or "my brothers."
 - i. Even though they had failed him, deserted him, abandoned him, denied him – he speaks with them of brotherly affection and takes initiative to call them to meet him.
 - f. The next time Matthew picks up with Jesus and the disciples, they are in Galilee. But we know from the other accounts that he also met up with them in Jerusalem.
 - i. This isn't a contradiction. Jesus didn't say he would *only* appear to them in Galilee.
 - ii. But the main teaching on their mission after He's gone will take place where most of His teaching took place – Galilee.
 - iii. **Luke 24:33-40** And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ They *began* to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. ³⁶ While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. ³⁸ And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

- iv. **John 20:19-20** So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace *be* with you." ²⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.
- v. **John 21:1** After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested *Himself* in this way.

4. The **deceptive** leaders with **bribed** soldiers (28:11-15)

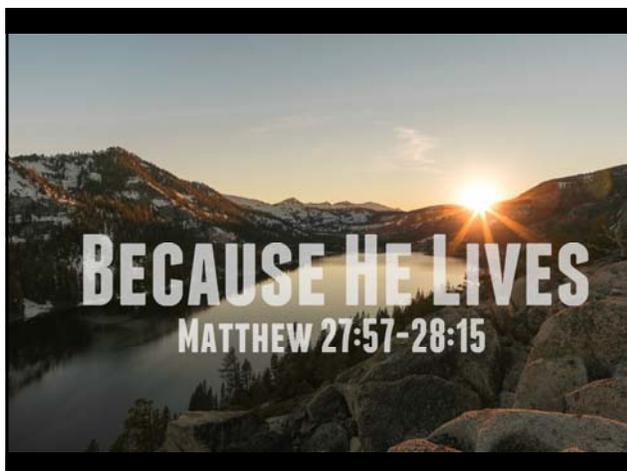
- a. The guards reported what happened to the Sanhedrin (v 11)
- b. The Sanhedrin pays off the soldiers with a large sum of money to say the disciples stole the body while they were sleeping. (vv. 12-14)
 - i. They have to promise to win over the governor because this is a significant offense. The punishment for sleeping on guard, stealing from within the camp, or deserting a position out of fear was the same – a particular beating with sticks and stones that was almost always fatal. If they survived they were outcasts.
- c. The story was still repeated in Matthew's day, perhaps 2-3 decades after the events. (v. 15)
 - i. Early second century writings by Justin Martyr show that it was still being actively circulated.

5. What is now true because Jesus really did rise from the dead? (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

They are worded as negatives – if Christ has NOT been raised, then here are the ripple effects. But, since the opposite is true, we can consider the opposite of the statements as well.

- a. There is **rational** cause to believe in Christ. (vv. 12-14)
 - i. It is not in vain – not without cause
 - ii. There are good, logical, evidence based reasons to be a Christian.
 - iii. The historical evidence that Jesus really died and really rose is really strong.
- b. We are telling the **truth** about God. (vv. 15-16)
 - i. Worded in the negative in the passage – “if we are saying that the God of our forefathers raised Jesus, but He didn't, then we are not telling the truth about God. We are in error.”
 - ii. But if this is true, then Jesus is THE truth, not a truth but the very essence or foundation of truth.
- c. We are no longer in our **sins**. (v. 17)
 - i. The heart of the gospel is that He died for our sins and was raised showing that the payment was made in full, accepted by the Father, and fully sufficient.
 - ii. If it was just a guy dying an unjust death as an act of love, but it didn't really do anything for us, then the full weight of our disobedience to the Father still rests on us. Our guilty conscience must be handled another way.
- d. Those who have **died** in Christ now **live** with Him. (v. 18)
 - i. “Fallen asleep” is a way of describing death.
 - ii. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-14** But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

- iii. Because He conquered death for us, we know that we will conquer death in Him.
- e. Any **sacrifices** made for Him in this life are worth it. (v. 19)
 - i. **1 Corinthians 4:11-13** To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; ¹² and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; ¹³ when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, *even* until now.
 - ii. Are you living in such a way that you are to be pitied if Christianity is not true?
 - 1. Are your finances effected in such a way that people should feel bad for you?
 - 2. Do you deny yourself certain pleasure that the world runs after that if there are no moral bounds people could say that you failed to seize all the pleasure you could in this short life?
 - 3. Do you roll out of bed early on your one day you could sleep in so you can gather with other believers to worship?
 - iii. Or are you virtually indistinguishable from the world? Is your life practically identical with no sacrifices, no self-denials?
 - iv. Because Christ rose, we can live not for today but for the long tomorrow.



1

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