

## THE MEN IN WHITE - THEY COULD HAVE BEEN THE BODY SNATCHERS OF JESUS

Jesus Christ allegedly died on a cross and was buried in a tomb. A few days later, the tomb was found empty and the body missing. It was claimed he had risen from the dead. Christians argue that nobody could have stolen him. They do not care that surprisingly the gospels only say the body was gone and nothing about how it came to be absent. Jesus could have been stolen and still risen. The Christians need to believe that the body rose and left the tomb for otherwise they have to depend on stories of Jesus' apparitions to the disciples in order to believe he saved all from death. Visions are not enough for they are common enough and one vision contradicts the next and many visions are bizarre. The entity usually does not behave in a sane way.

Angels supposedly announced the resurrection of Jesus to his followers at the tomb. The gospel does not claim to be telling us all that happened with the angels. They could have said bizarre and irrelevant things and behaved strangely. The gospels could have left that out as they wanted the relevant stuff – the bits that promoted Jesus being alive. Perhaps if we knew the full story we would have a very different impression of the women at the tomb and the disciples for listening to them.

The angels at the tomb were men for angel is simply a word for messenger. And they never affirm that the Lord was not stolen.

Mark says there was a young man in white at the tomb of Jesus when the women arrived and he never calls him an angel. John says that Magdalene saw two angels inside the tomb. In Matthew, an angel descends and rolls back the stone and speaks to the women and he resembles a bolt of lightning. Luke just mentions two men in dazzling robes who spoke to the women at the tomb. Mark is the first gospel so what it says carries the most weight. It would say if the man were supernatural so he was not.

If I met John and Tom together and tell Mary I met Tom and I don't mention John there is no lie if she does not know John and if he is not relevant. But there is no reason for Luke and John to say there were two angels when the others say one so there is a contradiction. The Gospellers knew they had to avoid anything that their critics could pick on so they had to avoid apparent contradictions so the contradictions must be deliberate and real. The Gospellers did not mean to contradict themselves but perhaps each other.

The angels could have been men for angel simply means messenger. Matthew's man like a lightning flash could have appeared as lightning flashed making him look like lightning. Or were his robes so white that they dazzled like lightning in the morning sun? Or perhaps the angel was glorious in Matthew's opinion but this glory was not visible and the lightning was normal enough. It is possible to write that a person is glorious and that people faint with awe of him without meaning that the glory caused the faint. Matthew held that God's glory is there though it cannot be seen. His faith was used to the idea of invisible glory. Matthew does not say the glory of the angel was seen. The glory aspect does not refute the supernaturalness of the angel. Matthew might be saying that the rock was shifted as a result of a lightning strike that was interpreted as an angelic force. The body snatchers might have gone with the body before the tomb was sealed or after it when they closed it again and this might be why it was open again. The man or his lightning strike moved the stone Matthew says. It was not very heavy in that case.

Matthew says the guards saw the flashing which scared them for what looked like a man would not. He says the flashing was the angel but that is only his interpretation and assumption. By the time the man was visible the guards were supposedly in a dead faint. There is no evidence that the guards saw the man or men. If they did then maybe they were the disciples the Jews told them to say stole the body from the tomb while they were asleep. The guards would then be saying they saw them and magically fell asleep enabling them to steal the body.

Why didn't the guards say men in white stole the body instead of saying it was disciples of Jesus? This suggests that they recognised the men. Why not say that angels stole the body? Both Judaism and Paganism believed in the existence of spirit beings who would steal.

We know that it was not unheard of for men to put on white robes and scare Roman soldiers. Simon bar Giora managed it in 70 AD when he managed to make the Romans think he was a supernatural being that rose out of the ground (page 21, The Second Messiah). Matthew is wide open to the objection that someone frightened the guards and when they were out cold somebody robbed the tomb. And when it was seen that robbing the grave was possible the tricksters decided to go a bit further. It could have been a joke that was too successful and made the guards faint.

The Acts report that that when Jesus ascended into Heaven the apostles saw two men who told them Jesus would return as

they had seen him go. It is not hinted that they were supernatural and the ascension which says Jesus was lifted up and hidden by a cloud could not be magical either. Luke only reports that the witnesses thought he was rising up and there could have been a fog. A man can look like he is levitating in a fog. Ascension can mean rising to the heavenly kingdom but without any visible or physical lifting up. The men were anxious to convince the apostles that Jesus would return one day. Surprisingly, they tell them they should not look up to Heaven for him to come back meaning that they would live to see it and that he had not gone there. The fact that Jesus never came back shows that they were not angels and only said what they thought. Luke only reports what they said without expressed approval. When these men played such a trick on the apostles they could have taken the body out of the tomb.

Back to the men in white. Would you go to steal a body in white robes? They would have avoided getting dirty. We hear about the robes but perhaps they had coats with them. The white robes have occult connotations. People sometimes stole bodies for use in magical rites and to make potions and philtres. Jesus' body would have been a prime target if he had had the reputation of a healer and a sorcerer the Bible tells us he had. Plus the body was already gone by the time the men were seen. Would men stay around after the body had been taken? It depends.

2 Kings 13 speaks of the bones of the prophet Elisha in the tomb having the power to heal. Such an idea could have been inspirational to those who thought Jesus' body could heal. Jesus did have a good reputation as a successful healer so his carcass would have been more potent than Elisha's dry old bones.

The white men said that Jesus rose. It is significant that the Bible does not say if they knew he rose or not. They could have been fooling the women unaware that they were nearer the truth than that they were meant to be. They had to say something like that for they could hardly say that Jesus was stolen if they did it or knew who did.

Mark's man told the ladies that Jesus was on his way to Galilee to meet his disciples there (16:7) but then the disciples encountered Jesus that day in Jerusalem (John 20). Christians say that there is no contradiction because the man meant that Jesus was to have the final or important meeting in Galilee while John reported the unimportant one. That is a mere excuse. The meeting in John is more important for it promises forgiveness which is not mentioned in the Galilee meeting.

The contradiction shows that the men were not real messengers from God for they erred. Lied would be a better word for Jesus would not have risked them going to Galilee without him being able to make it.

In Mark and Luke and John we read that the men or man in white were seen inside the tomb. They were covering up for the theft for they had no need to be inside. That is why Matthew prefers to say the angel was outside.

They were no angels when they spoiled the strength of the evidence for the resurrection by perching themselves outside and even inside the tomb. God would not have allowed them to.

Were they surprised by the women when they were inside the tomb? Did they tell them Jesus had risen to get rid of them before they would notice that they were trying to get the body out?

The tomb was gloomy and the land was probably darkish since the sun had just started to come up and the women were highly emotional. One of the men they saw could have been Jesus himself and they didn't know him and he got rid of them quickly.

The women would have been slaughtered if they spoke of men being in the tomb instead of reporting it to the authorities.

The men at the tomb makes it as unreasonable to believe in the supernatural departure of the body from the tomb as it is to believe that £100 vanished from your till by the same means when somebody who was alone and close to it could have stolen it.

Christians will say the tomb is different for nobody had the motive to steal. What are they - psychics?

Some liberals try to argue that the men at the tomb were made up. But there is no evidence for this. They have either made the mistake of thinking that they were angels and therefore dubious or they don't want them to have existed in case they took the body.

FINALLY

The men at Jesus tomb in Matthew 28 tell the women to tell the disciples to go to Galilee to see Jesus. So this is all about a vision and not the men checking out the tomb or searching to see what happened to the body. And then Jesus appears to tell the women the same message as if they are not trusted by Jesus or as if he does not know the men gave the message already. Something was going on. The men are not said to be angels or supernatural beings and so we have people at the

tomb who could have taken the body.