

WAS JESUS REALLY BURIED?

The Christians believe that Jesus rose physically - yet changed- from the dead. They say that he was entombed and vanished from the tomb and appeared alive soon after. The tomb was found empty. The evidence is that he might not have been buried. The gospels merely say he was put in the tomb and that was observed but what if he was secretly spirited out before the stone closing the tomb was put in place? They don't give a minute by minute evidence or case for certainty. There is a gap at every vital point.

Christians say that the promise of the resurrection of Jesus is that God will save us completely body and soul for each person is complete when body and soul are together. A person is not the soul or the body but both. There is no mention of the fact that this is their interpretation. Jesus never said that. Anyway if Jesus just revived like a live burial or was just a ghost there is nothing special or spiritual about that. The idea is that Jesus returned to live in his saved and transformed body so it is not like it was before his death.

So bodily resurrection is important to Christians. If the early Christians and their critics thought that there would be an attempt to rule out fraud at the burial of Jesus or the dishonesty of anybody involved. The gospels make no such effort. They give bald statements that mean nothing. The fact that there is no awareness of people saying, "Jesus' was not in his tomb for it was a fraudulent burial" shows that the resurrection tale is pure deception and myth.

It is important to note that despite the Romans sending thousand upon thousands to a terrible death by crucifixion, there is only one example of the remains of such a man. This indicates that burying them was the extreme exception not the rule. And was the man somehow stolen from his cross? We do not know. If he was then stealing bodies was commoner than we think!

Josephus wrote that Jerusalem was razed to the ground in 70 AD: "All the rest of the wall encompassing the city was so completely levelled to the ground as to leave future visitors to the spot no ground for believing it had ever been inhabited. If the gospels were written near or after that terrible time, it stands to reason that nobody would have evidence of Jesus' tomb. Lying then was easy at that point.

But, whatever! Was he really buried?

Josephus our historian wrote that sometimes bodies were stolen to give them a dignified burial. It would not have been unknown for the likes of Jesus who died in utter disgrace to be stolen from the cross in case he would be thrown away like thrash. "Nay they proceeded to that degree of impiety, as to cast away their dead bodies without burial: although the Jews used to take so much care of the burial of men, that they took down those that were condemned and crucified, and buried them before the going down of the sun." Notably Josephus who supposedly wrote that Jesus was the greatest of men and killed because of the Jews blames the death of Ananus for the misfortunes of Jerusalem. "I should not mistake if I said, that the death of Ananus was the beginning of the destruction of the city: and that from this very day may be dated the overthrow of her wall, and the ruin of her affairs; whereon they saw their High-priest, and the procurer of their preservation, slain in the midst of their city. He was on other accounts also a venerable, and a very just man". He writes as if he knew nothing of the core Christian claim that what happened to Jesus was the start of the end of Jerusalem.

Read all about it in Josephus Jewish War 4.

"It was commonly believed in ancient times that there were two classes of spirits of the dead which were relatively easy to conjure up and were thus most accessible for the purposes of 'black magic.' The first class is that of the atafoi, spirits of persons who had not received a regular burial. The second class, relatively more numerous and less immediately attached to a specific locality, is that of the biaioqanatoi [bi-aiothatoi], spirits of persons who had died a violent death." Kraeling, Carl H. "Was Jesus Accused of Necromancy?" Journal of Biblical Literature 59 (1940): 154-155.

Here is a pagan prayer, "I beseech you, Lord Helios, listen to me [name to be supplied] and grant me the power over this spirit of a man killed violently (toutou tou bioqanatou pneumatou) from whose tent I hold [a body part]. I have him with me [name of deceased], (ecw auton met' emou [tou deina] a helper (bohqon) and avenger for whatever business I desire."

These traditions show why Christians had to lie that Jesus was buried. If he was not the resurrection would have been seen as the appearance of a ghost. It seems they had to make do with risking him being seen as a ghost for violently dying. The violent death and then resurrection was needed to appeal to people who like stories of good triumphing over evil. The traditions show why the body of an alleged miracle man might be stolen for magical rites. The possibility remains that the traditions were the trigger and catalyst for the tales of Jesus' return from the dead which over time was turned more into a resurrection story than a ghost story.

The first Christian writer Paul said that Jesus was buried "etaphe". It comes from Greek word for "taphos," which means "burial." The words do not mean tomb. Tomb is "mnema" The word for sepulchre is like it: "mnemeion". Why couldn't Paul write entombed especially if Jesus unusually was entombed!

Romans 14:9 has Paul writing: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." He seems to make a distinction between rose and revived. It is as if he thinks Jesus came around as if he had recovered from the crucifixion and rose refers to him getting transformed into a glorified being. This would diverge from the gospel template and certainly makes us wonder how reliable that template with the tomb being a considerable part of it was.

He wrote that Jesus was buried in an epistle which sought to help those believers who were falling away thinking resurrection was nonsense. Some say they did not question Jesus' resurrection but to argue, "The dead will not rise for that is too silly. But I believe Jesus rose" would not be worth answering. Nobody would be crazy enough to argue that. It would be either people can rise or nobody rises. Paul took their problem very seriously and went as far as to argue that the faith is useless if Jesus did not rise.

In that light it is significant that Paul tells us nothing about the burial. He is more interested in the apparitions of Jesus which raises problems for most apparitions even in the eyes of religion are to be ignored or debunked.

It makes sense to suppose that the burial did not come from a historical record or event but was read back into Jesus' life because of Old Testament texts which said somebody got buried. However it would not be surprising in the light of attempts to show that Jesus was the New Moses that God buried Jesus in secret as with Moses.

1 Corinthians 15:4 gets Jesus was buried from Isaiah 53:9 which was supposed to prefigure the life of Jesus. The next bit says that Jesus was brought back to the land of the living on the third day as the scriptures say. That could read as if Paul is saying the information came from the Old Testament prophecies. We must remember that even the gospels give no evidence as to Jesus rising on the third day. If he rose he could have risen as soon as the stone was rolled back. The third day thing comes from Hosea 6:2 which is not speaking of a man rising at all. Even if Paul was speaking of a historic burial, he has proven himself to be a liar so his evidence is annulled.

THE REVELATION SPEAKS

The two witnesses in the Book of Revelation who are killed in Jerusalem and left unburied and rise in three and a half days are interesting in that we have an account where there is no problem with two figures who did bigger miracles than Jesus being dumped and still rising again. It reads as if Revelation means it literally but what if there is another layer? What if the author gave us that information about them simply because the same thing happened to Jesus? He is definitely, at the back of his mind, thinking of Jesus who supposedly rose after three days after being martyred.

Revelation shows that people might not be buried even in Jerusalem which you would expect to be very particular about that sort of thing.

BELIEVERS TRIED TO MAKE THE EVIDENCE SOUND BETTER THAN IT WAS

From the internet:

Take Luke's account. There are 5 clear instances in Luke's Gospel.

Luke 23:53

In Luke 23:53, it says that Jesus was placed in a tomb "where no-one had ever yet been laid". Just to make sure that nobody could argue that people stole Jesus's body, some scribes added the words "and he rolled a great stone before the door of the tomb". No less a manuscript than Codex Bezae was altered to add "and having placed him there he positioned before the tomb a stone that scarcely twenty people could roll."

Luke 24:12 reads "But Peter, rising up, ran to the tomb; and stooping down he saw the linen cloths alone, and he returned home marvelling at what had happened."

This was just after Luke writes that the disciples did not believe the women, whose words seemed nonsense to them.

This verse is missing from Codex Bezae and some other manuscripts. The text varies in other manuscripts. Why would this verse be dropped from Codex Bezae by a scribe, especially given the reluctance of scribes to delete anything from the text?

There are far more than insertions than deletions, especially in the Codex Bezae, which is notorious for adding stuff. Was this verse added by a scribe so that it could be shown that somebody found the witnesses to the resurrection to be credible? If it was not added, then some scribes must have chosen to delete it. Why on earth would they do that? The verse is very similar to Peter's rushing to the tomb in John 20:3-10.

The word for the linen cloths in Luke 24:12 (othonia) is not the word that Luke has just used in Luke 23:53. (sindoni)

This one verse (Luke 24:12) has 3 words or phrases used nowhere else in Luke or Acts. It also uses an "historic present", which Luke shuns elsewhere, - for example of the 93 historic presents in the Markan verses that Luke used, no less than 92 were changed by him. By this, I mean that Luke uses 'he sees', when everything else in Chapter 24 is in the past tense. Notice that the NIV translates that as 'he saw'. Even they recognise that writers do not suddenly change tense for no good reason. Luke 24:12 uses words for 'stooping down', 'the linen clothes', 'went away home', which are never used elsewhere in Luke or Acts.

Exactly those words in Luke 24:12 which are not otherwise in Luke-Acts are in John 20, with John 20:5, being very close indeed. Clearly, a scribe has added in the verse. It is missing from important manuscripts, it has many non-Lukan features, but features which resemble John's Gospel and it is impossible to see why a scribe would ever have wanted to delete the verse.

Codex Bezae does not include Luke 24:40 - "having said this, he showed them his hands and feet". Either some scribe added this verse, or some scribe dropped it. It is hard to see why any scribe would drop the verse. It is easy to see why a scribe would add the verse, basing it on John 20:20. He would have had to alter it as John 20:20 mentions 'hands and side' and there was no spear-thrust in Luke's Gospel, but that would only be a small change. It would all help to show that the Gospels "recorded" a physical resurrection.

In Luke 24:3, Codex Bezae and most of the Old Latin texts do not have the phrase "the Lord Jesus" in "they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." Clearly, the phrase "the Lord Jesus" was added by a scribe to make sure that the Gospels recorded that the women went to the right tomb. The phrase "the Lord Jesus" only occurs in the Gospels here and in Mark 16:19 (another addition by a scribe!) and it is hard to see why the phrase would have been dropped if it were original to Luke's Gospel.

Luke 24:6

In Luke 24:6, Codex Bezae and most of the Old Latin texts do not have the phrase "He is not here, but has been raised". Clearly, this phrase was added by a scribe to make sure that the women knew that Jesus had been raised. It is hard to see why the phrase would have been dropped if it were original to Luke's Gospel.

We have clear evidence that Christians tampered with the text of the Gospels to make them better evidence for the Resurrection. How much tampering went on that we don't have evidence of? They would not have tampered unless there were reasons to think that trickery had in fact happened.

My comment on all that is that there were problems with the burial story.

CONCLUSION

Jesus may have been stolen from the cross not the tomb. He may have been hidden on the way to the tomb. He may have been sneaked out after getting witnesses to think they seen him being put inside it for good. The fact that there is no evidence that Jesus was legitimately moved and something went wrong so there is no record is telling. The gospels give no evidence that Jesus was buried, they only assume it. They do not even say if anybody was willing to testify. Saying Joseph buried Jesus is not evidence when the source cannot say if he would testify to that or did so. Saying somebody was buried when you were not there is not evidence for all books contain remarks that are more the musings of the writer than a statement striving for accuracy. This exposes the Christian claim that the tomb was empty indicating Jesus rose as incorrect.

FURTHER READING

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