

WOULD ENEMIES OF THE JESUS PEOPLE HAVE RETURNED JESUS' BODY IF THEY COULD UPON HEARING THE RESURRECTION RUMOUR?

The gospels say that a miracle man called Jesus Christ lived. They say he died by crucifixion and three days later he rose again. The tomb he was placed in was found mysteriously empty. His body was gone. The gospels never say that anybody saw the body rising or coming out of the tomb. No evidence is given that he wasn't stolen.

If the hostile Jews or the evil Romans had stolen the body it is thought that they would have returned it to stamp out the resurrection tale. But when the early Christians were allowed into the Temple as good Jews and when Paul said that Jewish Christians avoided persecution not by denying the resurrection but that Jesus opposed Judaism as it was then (Galatians 6:12) nobody was interested in debunking the resurrection. This left the Church free to lie all it liked.

But if the theft was illegal the thieves could not return the body and bring disgrace on themselves. Robbing tombs brought execution.

Perhaps their plan went off course and they were forced to destroy the body or could not give it up. Perhaps the body was stolen from the thieves.

The argument that the theft was illegal ignores the fact that the Romans had the authority to trample on the Jews except very dangerous Jews and it assumes that the tomb of Jesus was meant to be a permanent tomb for him. The Rabbis taught that nobody should take a body from a tomb unless the tomb is only for the time being – the New Testament significantly never says Jesus was intended to stay in the tomb. It is not likely that he was for the tomb was a new one and didn't belong to Jesus or his relations. The soldiers would have been instructed to remove the body if there was danger of a huge mob coming to take it away. All they had to do was say they had been tricked by Jesus people they trusted telling them a mob was coming.

The New Testament hints that nobody bothered digging up bodies to stifle resurrection stories. We see this hint in when it does not say that John the Baptist was exhumed to prove that Jesus was not John back from the dead though many people thought Jesus was the resurrected John. It is not likely that Jesus looked like John for John had it rough and took life very hard. This shows that an impostor could have impersonated the risen Jesus and gotten away with it after Jesus was put to death and this impostor was the man who the Church reveres as the risen Lord. Anyway, back to the point. The point is that the body might not have been returned if the gospels are true had anyone stolen it and even if they did not like the resurrection reports.

The resurrection tales did not go into circulation for forty days after the crucifixion. By that time, the battered and wounded body would have been too decomposed to convince anybody that Jesus was dead. The Midrash says that the face of a corpse decomposed and was unrecognisable in three days. It forbade anybody identifying by the face alone for that reason. Bar Kappara taught the popular view that the soul keeps returning to the body for three days and gives up visiting on the third for it sees the face decomposing. Lazarus, we are told in John, was rotting after four days.

Incidentally, all this shows us is that the Turin Shroud which shows no sign of decomposition is a fake.

If Jesus had inexplicably vanished from the tomb and the resurrection story started before that then the enemies of Jesus could have presented another man's beaten and bloody body as that of Jesus. It would have been worth a try even if the Jewish people would mostly say that it was not Jesus. And if Jesus' body had been presented they would still have said that – and perhaps it was. The enemies would have done it if they were as antichrist as the Bible says. And they could have got some people to pretend to have been the thieves and send them on a holiday forever and say they were executed or been punished.

When the gospels do not mention this body that was allegedly Jesus' it shows that they were either dishonest or afraid that it was really Jesus or that Luke is telling the truth about he resurrection story only emerging after forty days.

It could have been that a substitute was nailed to the cross and removed from the tomb by the Romans in case the ruse would be found out and the real Jesus escaped from custody and made his stigmata and then manipulated his friends to think he was raised from the dead.

If the Jews were scared of a resurrection story as the Matthew Gospel maintains they might have taken the body in order to produce it once the rumour started to extinguish it. They knew that a resurrection story was inevitable if miraculous tales about Jesus were already doing the rounds and if Jesus predicted that he would arise. They had no reason to believe that the resurrection might not involve the resurrection of the whole body although God could make a risen spiritual and supernatural body out of a drop of blood. Perhaps the Jews thought that if they had the body in custody they could kill Jesus if he revived. Maybe they thought they could lock him up so that the people would never know he rose. They couldn't admit to having done anything like this for people would be saying Jesus must have had power for the Jews were afraid of it.

Conclusion

If a saint is in the same room as a hundred pounds and there is nobody else about and the money goes missing the saint stole it no matter how unlikely it is. Choosing to believe that the money dissolved into mid-air would be mad no matter who says it did. The Romans guarding a tomb from which the body vanished could only mean they took it if nobody else could have done it. Did they do it? Maybe.

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