

# DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

April 11, 1982

- I. His literal, physical, bodily resurrection is the subject of O.T. prophecy.
  - A. Explicit prophecy (Ps.16:10 "*For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither will you allow your Holy One to undergo decay*"; Ps.30:3 "*O Lord, You have brought up my soul from Sheol; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit*"; Ps.14:10 "*But You, O Lord, be gracious to me and raise me up, that I might repay them*"; cp. Ps.16:10 to Acts.2:31; 13:33, where it is quoted by Peter and Paul).
  - B. Implicit (Ps.22:22 "*I will declare your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you*" [quoted in Heb.2:12, the context of both passages speaking of victory over death]. Psalm 118:22-24 speaks of the stone which the builders rejected becoming the head of the corner. Isaiah 53:10, after describing the death of the servant of Yahweh speaks of His future, "*He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Yahweh shall prosper in His hands*").
- II. The claims of Jesus, Himself, that He would be raised from the dead (Mt.16:21; 17:9,22,23; 20:18,19; 26:32; Mk.9:10; Lk.9:22-27; Jn.2:18-22).
- III. The historicity of Christ's bodily resurrection is affirmed by:
  - A. Testimony of the early Church fathers (tradition). See pp. 202-203 of Vol.1 of "Evidence that demands a Verdict".
  - B. Testimony of history and Law (when an event takes place in history and there are enough people who were eyewitnesses of it; when the information is published, one is able to verify the validity of an historical event [circumstantial evidences]). *Ibid.* pp. 196-202.
- IV. The circumstances at the scene of the tomb (proof of historicity).
  - A. Jesus was dead, according to the following eyewitnesses: The Centurion (Mk.15:39); the multitude (Lk.23:48); the disciples (Lk.23:49); the Jews (Mt.27:62-66); the apostle John (Jn.19:34,35). *Ibid.* p. 206.
  - B. There was a tomb provided (Isa.53:9); therefore, Jesus' body was not placed in an open pit obscuring the resurrection.
    1. Subject of O.T. prophecy (Isa.53:9).
    2. Joseph of Aramithea, a rich man and prominent member of the council, was motivated by doctrine to ask for Jesus' body (Mt.27:57,58, Mk.15:42-45; Lk.23:50-52; Jn.19:38).
    3. Joseph was in a position to affect Jesus' burial in a specially prepared tomb.
  - C. The burial (Mt.27:59,60; Mk.15:46; Lk.23:53,54; Jn.19:39-42).
    1. It followed certification of death and procurement of the body.
    2. The body was cleaned, wrapped with linen and spices.
    3. It was placed in a tomb shortly before the Sabbath.
    4. Certain women saw the place where the body was placed.
  - D. The seal prevents any foul play by the guard (Mt.27:66). *Ibid.* p. 217.
  - E. The guard at the tomb provided tight security against vandalizing the tomb (Mt.27:62-66)
    1. Four Roman soldiers were assigned to guard the tomb until the third day, based on the Jews' request.
    2. They did so to prevent the disciples from stealing the body and sponsoring a hoax.
    3. The guard was assigned to the Jews who went and sealed the tomb.
    4. In fact, the explanation for Jesus' resurrection was that His disciples stole His body (Mt.28:11-15).
  - F. The disciples went their own way, refuting the contention that they stole Jesus' body (Mk.14:15 "*then all the disciples left Him and fled*").
- V. The post resurrection scene as proof of His resurrection.
  - A. The empty tomb.
    1. It was found empty by women expecting to find a body to anoint (Mt.28:5-8, Mk.16:2-8,

Lk.24:1-8; Jn.20:1).

2. Angels rebuked them for not believing the doctrine of His resurrection.
3. Peter and John, not believing the womens' account, visited the tomb and found it empty.
4. The Jews bribed the Roman guard to say His disciples stole His body, and promised to protect them from the governor (Mt.28:1-15).
5. Conclusion: All parties concerned admit to an empty tomb.

B. The grave clothes are tangible evidence against a human explanation for the empty tomb (Lk.24:9-12; Jn.20:2-10).

1. The presence and the disposition of the grave clothes speak against foul play.
2. It is unlikely anyone would remove them, especially considering how they were put on.
3. They were lying as though the body had withdrawn itself, which was humanly impossible.
4. Furthermore, the head wrapping was separated from the body wrappings.
5. A vandal, even if he had removed the wrappings, would not have thrown them in one pile.
6. Conclusion: God created this detail to encourage faith.

C. The position of the stone speaks of divine agency.

1. Mt.27:60 uses the verb προσκυλίω, proskulio: roll about.
2. Mk.16:3,4 uses the verb ἀποκυλίω, apokulio: move, roll up; indicating there was a slope at the tomb's entrance.
3. Lk.24:2 uses the verb ἀποκυλίω, apokulio: implies some distance between the tomb and the stone.
4. Jn.20:1 uses the verb αἴρω, airo: to pick up and carry away.
5. Conclusion: Why all the effort to move such a large stone?

D. The Roman guard.

1. Understanding the system they served under, one can imagine how secure the tomb was (cp. Acts.12:19). The penalty for sleeping on duty was death!
2. The angelic manifestation was of such a nature that these hardened veterans passed out (Mt.28:4).
3. Since they could not feign sleep as an excuse for failure, they went to the Jews.
4. The Jews bribed them to say Jesus' body was stolen while they slept and promised to intervene on their behalf (Mt.28:11-15).
5. So under the circumstances, they had no alternative but to go along with the priests.

VI. The post resurrection appearances as proof of Jesus' resurrection.

A. The appearances.

1. To Mary Magdalene (Mk.16:9; Jn.20:14).
2. To women returning from the tomb (Mt.28:9,10).
3. To Peter later in the day (Lk.24:34; 1Cor.15:5).
4. To the Emmaus disciples (Lk.24:13-33).
5. To the apostles, Thomas absent (Lk.24:36-43; Jn.20:19-24).
6. To the apostles, Thomas present (Jn.20:26-29).
7. To the seven by Lake Tiberias (Jn.21:1-23).
8. To 500 disciples on a Galilean mountain (1Cor.15:6).
9. To James (Jesus' brother; 1Cor.15:7).
10. To the eleven (Mt.28:16-20; Mk.16:14-20; Lk.24:33-52; Acts.1:3-12).
11. At the ascension (Acts.1:3-12; Lk.24:50-53).
12. To Paul (Acts.9:3; 1Cor.15:8).

B. The nature and importance of these appearances (Acts.1:3: ἐν πολλοῖς τεκμηρίοις, en pollois tekmeriois) constitute decisive proofs which would hold up in any court.

VII. The enemies of Christ and the early Church gave no refutation of the resurrection.

A. They were silenced.

1. In Acts.2 there was no refutation of Peter's sermon.

2. In Acts.25 the Jews tried, but could not disprove Paul's assertion (they resorted to name calling).

B. They mocked.

1. In Athens (Acts.17:32; the intellectuals rejected it).

2. Before Agrippa and Festus, Paul explained that the resurrection was based on "*sober truth*" and "*not done in a corner*" (Acts.26:23-26).

3. Both groups laughed it off.

VIII. False theories concocted to explain away the resurrection.

A. The swoon theory says:

1. Christ never actually died (this is refuted by the testimony of eyewitnesses, including His enemies, that He did die).

2. He wiggled out of His grave clothes and left them undisturbed.

3. He rolled back the stone in His weakened condition.

4. He convinced His disciples He was resurrected (which makes Him a liar).

5. He later died, of which there is not a shred of evidence.

B. The theft theory.

1. This view was spread among the Jews (Mt.28:11-15).

2. The popularity of this view among the Jews can be seen in the writings of Justin Martyr (cir. 100-165AD, *Ibid.* p. 193), Tertullian (cir. 160-200AD), and others. *Ibid.* pp. 247-248.

3. This theory does not account for the guard, the initial cowardice of the disciples, the grave clothes, etc.

C. The hallucination theory attempts to explain away the post resurrection appearance.

1. The psychological makeup of the disciples is against this.

2. They were not imaginative or high-strung, but afraid (women), remorseful (Emmaus pair), and incredulous (Thomas).

3. Hallucinations are based on an individual's subconscious and past experiences.

4. They are subjective and very individualistic, obviating this theory as an explanation for an appearance to 500 people on one occasion.

5. It also contradicts the N.T. evidence.

6. So the variety of times and places is against this. And all believed only after great persuasion.

IX. That the women, and subsequently everyone else, went to the wrong tomb (one professor Kirsopp Lake).

A. The womens' visit to the right tomb is one of the best-attested events in the N.T.

B. They carefully noted where the body was placed.

C. Furthermore, an angel said in Mt.28:6 "*Come see the place where the Lord lay*".

D. If the women went to the wrong tomb, then the authorities could have easily pointed out the right one.

E. This was not a public cemetery, but a private burial spot.

F. Such a theory also fails to take into consideration why a gardener (young man) was there at that hour.

X. Conclusion: All false theories arise from unbelief and do not explain:

A. Established verifiable historical facts (no body produced).

B. The transformed lives of the disciples in the face of intense persecution (quotes, pp. 237-238, established psychological facts).

C. The institution of the Church and 1,900 years of Church history (centuries of opposition).

XI. Theological implications of the historical fact of Christ's resurrection.

A. Christ's bodily resurrection is the Father's declaration that all Christ said and did was true (Ps.2:7 "*You are My Son, this day* [cp. Acts.13:33] *I have begotten You* [seal of approval])."

B. Soteriological belief in the efficacy of Christ's work depends on Christ's resurrection, for he who

denies one must deny the other (Acts.1:21,22; 2:23,24,31,32; 3:14,15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39-41; 13:29-39; 17:30,31; 26:22,23).

- C. Ecclesiologically, His resurrection explains the existence of the Church (Acts.2, Pentecost.
- D. Eschatologically, it explains the future resurrection of the Royal Family (1Cor.15:20-24) and the whole family of God.
- E. Christologically, the resurrection is the guarantee of Christ's future ministries at the right hand (Ps.2).
- F. Negatively, Paul explains the centrality of Christ's resurrection to doctrine and faith (1Cor.15:12-19).
- G. To Paul the ideas of resurrection and immortality are inseparable and complimentary (1Cor.15:42,50-54).

XII. The resurrection body of Christ described (Lk.24:36-45; 1Cor.15:44).

- A. Not subject to the limitations of time or space (1Cor.15:43b, post-resurrection appearances).
- B. Capable of eating and drinking (but not needed to sustain it) Lk.24:42.
- C. Capable of space travel (Acts.1:9ff).
- D. Not subject to disease, pain (1Cor.6:13), or death (1Cor.15:9,42,53; Rev.2:11; 20:6).
- E. Created out of His existing body (1Cor.15:42-44,50-58).
- F. Christ's body is the pattern for ours (Phil.3:21; 1Jn.3:2).
- G. A person's individual glory in resurrection body varies based on growth and production in time (1Cor.15:41,42,48,49).

Reviewed: December 2, 1998