

“What Have They Done With His Body?”

John 20:1-18

DO WE BELIEVE BECAUSE OF EVIDENCE OR BECAUSE OF FAITH?

1. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins is the cornerstone of the Christian faith.

- And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 1 Corinthians 15:17
- If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. 1 Corinthians 15:19

2. By necessity, believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a matter of faith.

- Faith is necessary for salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9
- Faith is necessary because we are separated from these events by time, culture, and language.

3. At the same time, there is an abundance of historical evidence to support the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

‘THEY HAVE TAKEN HIM AWAY’ – THE MYTH OF THE STOLEN BODY

1. Who would want to ‘steal’ Jesus’ dead body out of the tomb—and what would be their motive?

- The Roman government or soldiers? They had nothing to gain initially by stealing Jesus’ body.
- The Jewish leaders? They could have produced his corpse to disprove his resurrection.
- People who wanted to desecrate His body? They would have publicly displayed it.

2. The tomb was guarded by soldiers. Matthew 27:62-66

- The Roman punishment for failing on guard duty was death. Ref. Acts 12:18-19

3. The graveclothes were still in the tomb and left folded. John 20:5-7

- Burial practices in that culture at that time included wrapping the body with linens. John 19:39 (75 pounds!)
- Why would people stealing Jesus’ body unwrap it, then fold the linens before they left?

4. Would the disciples have taken Jesus’ body to begin a ‘legend’ that He did, in fact, rise from the dead?

- 10 of the 11 remaining disciples ended up being killed for their faith (only John was not martyred).
- Many people have died for religious fanaticism—but how many have died for what they knew was false?

5. When did the myth of the stolen body begin?

- Matthew (28:11-15) says the Jewish religious leaders made up the myth immediately following the resurrection.

¹¹ While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹² And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers ¹³ and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

- And—in a different way—it was in the mind of Mary Magdalene. John 20: 2,13,15

ENCOUNTERING THE RESURRECTED JESUS—MARY MAGADELE’S STORY

1. Mary Magdalen’s experiences with Jesus.

- She was one of the women who accompanied Jesus and his disciples in their ministry. Luke 8:3
- Jesus had freed her from seven demons. Luke 8:2
- She personally witnessed the crucifixion. Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25
- She accompanied Jesus’ body to the tomb—and watched the stone rolled over the entrance. Matthew 27:61

2. The morning of the resurrection.

- Mary Magdalene and a small group of women went to anoint Jesus’ body. Luke 23:55-24:3
- Mary Magdalene was the first witness to see the resurrected Jesus. John 20:14

→ Why are you weeping?

- Mary Magdalene saw Jesus—but at first didn’t see that it was him.

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22