**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

**On KTTR (99.7 FM) Every Sunday at 8:30 a.m.**

**Rolla, Missouri**

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**Was Jesus Raised from the Dead? (Part 2)**

When we ended our program last week we were looking at some of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We mentioned last week that the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian’s faith. Paul said that Jesus was *“declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”* (Rom. 1:4) If Jesus was not raised from the dead then He was not the Son of God, and our faith as Christians means nothing. But if He was raised from the dead then He is the Son of God, He is Lord and we must all listen to Him. If Jesus was raised from the dead, then all the Bible is true. We then can see the importance of this question, “Was Jesus raised from the dead?”

We also mentioned last week that the New Testament scriptures, which are primary sources for information concerning Jesus, are reliable historical documents. They were written by men who lived in the days that Jesus lived on this earth. Some of them were men who lived with Jesus, they walked with Him, and they give eye witness testimony of what they saw and heard. And also when the New Testament documents were being circulated, many of the men and women who were alive at the time of Jesus death, burial and resurrection were still living. These people could certainly have confirmed or denied the accuracy of their accounts. Another piece of evidence that these are reliable historical records is that they tell us that the first witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus were women. They record that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene and then to other women before He appeared to the apostles. According to Jewish principles of legal evidence, women were invalid witnesses. They did not have a right to testify in a court of law. What this tells us is that if the resurrection story was made up by Jesus’ disciples (as some claim), it would have been highly unlikely for them to include women in the story, especially as first witnesses. But the Gospel writers had no choice but to report it the way they did because that was how it happened. The point is these are not made up stories.

The tomb where Jesus’ body was laid was found empty the third day after His death. That is an accepted historical fact. But how did it become empty? Last week we were looking at some of the explanations that unbelievers give for the empty tomb that does not include the resurrection. We were showing how their explanations fail to fit the evidence. Let us consider a couple of others.

Some suppose that Jesus never actually died on the cross, but that He was taken from the cross in

haste and buried while there was still life in the body; in the dampness of the tomb consciousness was regained, and under His own physical strength He walked out of the tomb. This is sometimes called the “swoon theory.” Jesus didn’t really die, He just swooned on the cross.

But the fact is He did die! When the soldiers came and broke the legs of the thieves crucified with Jesus, it says, “*But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they* *did not break His legs*.” (John 19:33) Pilate, the Roman governor enquired of the Centurion whether He was dead and the word from the Centurion was, He was dead (read Mark 15:44-45). His death was made certain. John 19:34-35 says, “*34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and* *water came out. 35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he* *knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe*.”

And also if He had been placed in the tomb alive, He could not have emerged through human strength. Remember, there had been great losses of blood by means of the scourging and the crucifixion. If He was alive He would, no doubt been very weak. A “great stone” blocked the entrance of the tomb. Matt 27:60 says that Joseph “*rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed*.” Mark records that the stone was “very large” and the three women who came to the tomb early on the first day of the week felt that they were not strong enough to roll it away (Mark. 16:1-4) Some have stated that the stone could have weighed from one and a half to two tons. Therefore, in His weakened state Jesus could not have moved the stone and then escaped from the soldiers who were there guarding the tomb. The swoon theory, then, is not a reasonable explanation for the empty tomb.

Someone may ask, could the body have been overlooked? Some tombs in that day would have more than one dead body in them. Is there a possibility that Jesus’ body was confused with another body? His body was there, but they just didn’t realize it was His. No, this could not have happened because there was no other body in that tomb. It was a “new tomb.” (Matt. 27:60) Luke 23:53 says it was “*a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever* *lain before*.” Peter and John surveyed carefully the contents of the tomb. John 20:5-8 “*5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying* *there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into* *the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had* *been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place* *by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and* *he saw and believed*.” The body could not have been overlooked.

The only explanation for the empty tomb remaining is that Jesus was raised from the dead to which the apostles gave testimony. The facts in this case admit to no natural explanation. Either: we admit that Jesus arose through supernatural strength, or we deny the evidence before us. Since the evidence is the same kind which establishes any historical event, to deny it is to deny history. If we are willing to accept history we must accept the miracle of Christ’s resurrection.

But, one of the strongest evidences of the resurrection of Jesus are the witnesses. There were many who saw Jesus alive after His death. They didn’t see someone off in a distance that looked like Jesus and then concluded “that must be Jesus. He is risen.” No, Jesus appeared to several more than once and they saw the print of the nails in His hands and the hole in His side where He was pierced (John 20:19-20). They saw Him eat food (Luke 24:41-43). He appeared to the women. He appeared to the apostles more than once and to other disciples. Paul said He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at once (1 Cor. 15:6). It was not just one or two that Jesus appeared to, but many saw Him after His resurrection. If a man was being tried for theft or for murder today, what kind of evidence would the prosecution want? Some of the best evidence is credible testimony. We have credible testimony of the resurrection of Christ. Peter said in Acts 2:32, *“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.”*

And notice, the apostles were claiming to be witnesses of the resurrection in the very city where it was purported to have happened and no one was able to controvert it. They preached a resurrected Christ in the place and at the time when it was fully possible to check every piece of evidence, to interrogate every witness. The only reasonable conclusion is that they were telling the truth and had nothing to fear from an investigation of their claim.

Some claim that the disciples just hallucinated the appearances of Jesus. But this goes against the demeanor of the disciples. They were slow to believe that He was alive. Mark 16:11 says *“when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her* [that is Mary Magdalene], *they did not believe.”* You remember that Thomas said he wouldn’t believe unless he saw the print of the nails in His hands, and put his hand into His side (John 20:25). And Jesus appeared to hundreds. Did they all hallucinate? And this theory also does not coincide with the historical situation. Again, where was the actual body, and why wasn't it produced? This theory does not adequately explain the apostles’ testimony.

And also the subsequent lives of the apostles are proof that Jesus was raised from the dead. The apostles spent their lives preaching the resurrected Christ under the most difficult and trying circumstances. They were cursed, hated, driven out of cities, imprisoned and tortured because of their preaching. Many died for what they preached. Would this group of men have been so motivated by a story which they knew to be a lie? That is not reasonable. The more reasonable conclusion is that these men were testifying to what they knew to be the truth. Jesus Christ arose from the dead.

And we mentioned earlier Paul said that Jesus appeared to over five hundred brethren at once in 1 Cor. 15:6, and Paul said there “the greater part remain to the present.” In other words most of these people were still alive when Paul wrote the 1 Corinthian letter in about 55 AD., and they could be questioned. Josh McDowell quotes from Dr. Edwin M. Yamauchi, who was associate professor of history at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Dr. Yamauchi says, "What gives a special authority to the list (of witnesses) as historical evidence is the reference to most of the five hundred brethren being still alive. St. Paul says in effect, 'If you do not believe me, you can ask them.' Such a statement in an admittedly genuine letter written within thirty years of the event is almost as strong evidence as one could hope to get for something that happened nearly two thousand years ago."

My dear friends, there is evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead. And that proves that He is the Son of God and He is Lord and Savior. Why not give your life to Him today?

If you would like a free audio CD copy or a transcript of today’s program and of last week’s program on the resurrection, just give us your name and address, and we will be glad to send them to you, absolutely free of charge.

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