

RETURN from the DEAD

the resurrection of Jesus

Part 2: *Is The Resurrection Reasonable?*

INTRODUCTION – Death As Counter Intuitive

Karen Armstrong, Dean Hamer, William James...

Ecclesiastes 3:11

RESURRECTION – The Evidence

KEY POINTS:

- The Disciples didn't expect it. There was no reason to make up the resurrection.
 - The Gospel writers didn't base their stories on Scripture (e.g., Jesus isn't described in terms of **Daniel 12:2-3**). Matthew regularly connects events in his Gospel with Old Testament Scripture, but not when he tells the story of the resurrection of Jesus. Christ's resurrection is a kind of unexpected mutation of classical Judaism.
- Christ's resurrection didn't help their story.
 - Resurrection was not considered a sign of the Messiah.
 - Women were the first witnesses.
 - Resurrection was a stumbling block for Pagans and Jews, since Pagans didn't believe in bodily resurrection (e.g., **Acts 17:32; 1 Corinthians 1:23**) and Jews believed it would happen all at once at the end of the age (e.g., **Daniel 12:2-3**).
 - A *spiritual* resurrection would have been easier to "sell" to Jews and Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 15

John 2:18-21; Luke 24:36-43; Acts 12:15

AGREED FACTS:

- Jesus was killed by crucifixion (see Josephus, Tacitus, Thallus, and the Talmud).
- The body of Jesus was buried and then discovered by women to be missing.
- Many people experienced Jesus alive again on many occasions under various conditions.
- The Disciples believed Jesus had risen from the dead, despite their expectations that the Messiah would not die and rise again.
- The Apostles died for this belief. No defections, no recantations, no exceptions.
- Even Jesus' brothers, who doubted him during his life, became believers.
- Resurrection was preached from early on in Jerusalem.
- Early church changed their day of celebration from Sabbath to Sunday.

Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10
- The Jesus movement continued to follow a man everyone knew had died.
- There is no record of tomb veneration of Jesus, a common ancient practice.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MESSIAH MOVEMENT – THE FAITH THAT WOULDN'T DIE!...

If a Messianic leader was killed their followers had two choices: 1) Give up the revolution or 2) Find a new Messiah. Why didn't the early Christians do either? We have no explanation – other than the resurrection. They certainly didn't give up, but grew faster than anything known in the world before or since. By 64CE Josephus records that there were "vast numbers" of Christians in Rome, (whom Nero blamed for the starting the great fire) – in Rome! And there is NO record of them ever calling on one of Jesus' relatives to carry the torch. Why not James? He was a prominent church leader and would have made a perfect messiah replacement. Josephus (in *Antiquities 20*) refers to James simply

as "the brother of the so called Messiah". No, early Christians didn't give up or find a new Messiah, but chose an unprecedented option – they continued to follow the Messiah that had been killed by their enemies. Why?

But What About The Jesus Tomb?

In 1980 ten limestone bone boxes (ossuaries), dated to the first century, were discovered in an excavated tomb in a Jerusalem suburb. Six inscriptions were discovered that could possibly be tied to biblical characters: *Yesua, bar Yoseph; Mary; Mariamne e Mara (Mary the Master); Yudah, son of Yesua; Mathew; Yose*. DNA analysis identifies that tissues from the ossuaries of Yesua and Mariamne were not related, raising the possibility they may have been married. (The DNA does not connect these ossuaries with any one specific historical "Jesus". For that, they would have to compare the DNA samples with samples from ... uh... er... um... the shroud of Turin?) According to Cameron and Jacobovici's documentary, the statistical probability of finding these names together in one cluster is 1 in 600. They also theorize that Yudah, son of Yesua could be the unnamed "beloved disciple" in John's Gospel who "cuddles" with Christ at the last supper.

BUT... The tomb carried the bones of over 35 different individuals, about half were from ossuaries. Some ossuary inscriptions were written in Aramaic, others in Hebrew, and one other (Mariamne's) in Greek, suggesting they were not buried in a similar time period. The names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were extremely common in the first century – about 25% of the women in Jesus' day were named Mary. About 10% of men were called "Yesua" (Jesus). The only contribution DNA testing offers so far is that this particular Yesua was not related by blood to this particular Mariamne. That's all. If we go with the theory that this is the tomb of the biblical Jesus, then other historical facts (see above) become impossible to explain. Besides, if this is the family tomb of Jesus and Mary, who invited Matthew? And why in Jerusalem rather than Nazareth? And why no record of this family in history? A married Messiah would have been an easier "sell".

CONCLUSION – What Evidence Do YOU Need?

John 20:24-28

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP...

1. After briefly reviewing this week's message, share one thing that most challenged, convicted, or encouraged you.
2. What were your thoughts and feelings when you first heard that someone claimed to have discovered the tomb of Jesus and his family? Why?

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

3. Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-19**. a) What verse or idea stands out to you the most? Why? b) This document is dated to the mid 50s CE. How does that fact contribute to the evidence of Jesus' death and resurrection? c) In your own words, what is the "Gospel" / "Good News" of Jesus? d) In **verse 5** Paul says Jesus appeared to "the twelve", when technically there were only eleven at that point (Judas had killed himself). How does this connect with issues discussed in our "Scripture Scandals" series? e) How does **verse 8** suggest that believers today should not expect a vision of Jesus like the one Paul had? f) Why do you think Paul says we are still in our sins if Jesus is not raised? Why not just say that if Jesus was never raised then there is no God, no sin, no judgment and we should just party hard and live for ourselves?

SO WHAT?...

4. What next step do you need to take in relation to the Gospel? Commit to Christ? Get baptized as a community celebration of that commitment? Tell others about Jesus? Embody the Gospel by serving others like Christ? Pray for each other about this.

Bruxy Cavey @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, April 15 / 22, 2007