

## **RUMINATIONS OF A FORMER HEATHEN**

Copyright Walter Arcel

**Resurrection 4**

www.graceandsanity.org

W. Arcel e-mail, [gen315@charter.net](mailto:gen315@charter.net)

Grace and Sanity Ministries, September 2009

The problem with denying the resurrection is to have an answer to the question, what happened? If not the resurrection, what happened? There is a strange silence around the resurrection. The other question I can't get out of my head is, why did the Romans not produce a body? The silence regarding the resurrection is strange. But why the Romans did not produce a body is just as strange. If the claim of the resurrection was all the Christians had, why did the Romans not provide a body? They needed a body to counteract the wild claim that Jesus had come back from the dead. They should have gotten one and they had all the necessary means to do so. No one could resist them. They could enter any town, break any door, kill anybody. Why didn't they just kill somebody, anybody, and present that as the body of Jesus?

Of course, it would not have been the body of Jesus. Jesus had it; he had his own body, the one beaten with lashes, wounded by thorns, with nail holes in hands and feet, and a lance gash on its side. But the Romans could have faked all that, it should have been very easy for them to do it. The body would not have been the body of Jesus but it would have served the purpose of contradicting the claim of the resurrection. If that had happened, we would have two stories today: one, Jesus came back from the dead; the other, no, no, wait just a minute, the Romans had a body. Some people say that the story of the resurrection was added to the writings of the Apostles during the second century, long after the crucifixion. The story was put there to strengthen the faith of the believers. The small band of Christians was persecuted everywhere, and had to be strengthened if the fledgling religion was to survive. There are many subscribers to that sort of thinking. These people must think that the rest of the world was paralyzed at that time or that the Christians had such power at their disposal that they were able to write history as they saw fit. That has to be the assumption. What else could you figure? The early Christians added the story of the

resurrection into their writings long after the crucifixion of Christ, and once the story was written down nobody could contradict them. During the second century, the Christians imposed their will on the existing world and subdued them into silence. They also burned all the books contradicting the resurrection. That would explain why there are no writings today, coming from that period of time, saying that the resurrection did not happen. The powerful Christians who controlled all the governments of the world burned all the books that denied the story of the resurrection.

Another assumption is, or has to be, that all the historians in the world fell asleep for a couple of centuries, and when they woke up the story of the resurrection was there and they had no choice but to go along with it. And, of course, the Christians had unlimited amounts of power to force people into believing the lie; or, if not believing it at least having to acquiesce to it. The unlimited power of the Christians and the falling asleep of all the historians in the world are the reasons why today we have the story of the resurrection, and silence. That explains why there are no writings coming from that period of time challenging the resurrection. Those early Christians had enough power to write history as they saw fit; they inserted the fable of the resurrection and coerced people into believing it. I don't know, what can I say? My internal committee is just not happy with that conclusion. Even if I accept the burning of the books and the powerful coercion of the Christians, it does not explain why the Romans did not produce a body.

There is a member in my internal committee in charge of wondering, and he is still wondering. For one thing, he knows that the rest of the world was not paralyzed. There were historians at that time recording events as they happened. And he also knows that the early Christians had absolutely no power whatsoever, certainly not around 125 A.D, as the latest documents of the so-called New Testament are dated. As is common knowledge, Christianity was not even legal until Constantine made it legal, sometime around 312 Anno Domini. For at least three hundred years after the crucifixion, Christians were hunted like dogs.

When Jesus was crucified in 33 Anno Domini, the Romans were in charge of everything. The Romans were in charge before, during, and after the death of Jesus.

We have their history. It is not pre-historic, it is historic, it is recorded, we have it. Another member of my committee is in charge of unbelief. Now he refuses to believe that the story of the resurrection is false. He knows that at that time, the Romans were in charge of all physical activities, secular and pagan activities, and all military and societal security. The Romans were in charge of all that. The Jews were in charge of all activities concerning the Scriptures. Neither the Romans nor the Jews had any reason to tolerate the spread of the word regarding the resurrection. Everywhere that mattered; in religion, in the social fabric, in the military realm; it was the haters of Christ who were in charge, not his friends. It is very important to realize this, that it was the haters of Christ who were in charge, not his friends. And all of them stood to lose their power over the people if the resurrection had really happened.

The Jewish historians of that time were alive and well. There is the Talmud (two of them, the Palestinian Talmud, and later the Babylonian Talmud) completed much later than the New Testament. These books contain materials that were compiled over centuries that include the Babylonian captivity, times spanning from Daniel to Ezra and Nehemiah. These books were completed around the sixth century Anno Domini. showing that the Jewish historians and/or scribes were around (just like the Romans) before Christ, during Christ, and after Christ. The Jewish historians of the Talmud were there hundreds of years before Christ and hundreds of years after Christ. What we call today the New Testament was contemporary to the Talmud(s). There is no gap anywhere. The Jewish historians should have been screaming that the resurrection story was false, they had plenty of time to do it and the Romans might have even appreciated a theological refutation of this growing problem. If the resurrection had not happened, those writers would have been the first ones to jump on it, and today we would have writings from them, from that time, saying that the resurrection did not happen.

As far as the Romans were concerned, they were in no position to allow this group, the Christians, to grow. Things were going crazy and all this nonsense was threatening the existing order. The Romans tried to stamp out the Christians. The Romans were always finding new ways to kill Christians. They would impale them on lances, cover them with pitch (gooey petroleum), and set them on fire to light up

the roads. They would tie their arms and legs to four horses and rip them apart. They would feed them to lions, etc. They had a lot of fun killing Christians and, I must say, were fairly creative in doing so. The object was to make them recant and deny that the resurrection had occurred. But they couldn't make them shut up. Why?

Today, 2000 plus years after the events anybody can deny the resurrection. Some the main theories are, the body was stolen; the women went to the wrong tomb, he was not really dead. That the disciples stole the body is an old story, actually the very first one. The Bible records the theft of the body as one of the things the Jews were concerned about. The Jewish clergy went to Pilate and demanded that he put guards at the tomb; otherwise, the followers of "that man" were going to steal the body and then claim he had come back from the dead. So, Pilate complied. He could not figure out why the Jews had wanted to kill Jesus in the first place, but since he had already acceded to their demands to crucify Jesus, (against his better judgment, by the way) why not put some guards at the tomb? Give them what they want and they'll shut up. The Jews had been so determined to have Jesus killed that they would have made a big stink if the disciples stole the body. Pilate did not want anybody reporting to Caesar that he could not handle Palestine, which had been a constant source of trouble for the Roman Empire. So, Pilate ordered guards to be stationed at the tomb. Better safe than sorry. Nobody was going to steal that body. Matthew 27: 66 says: "So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

The story goes on from there to say that, after the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre. And they didn't go to the wrong one, they had watched where the body of Jesus was laid. Among other things, the women had brought spices. They wanted to put spices on the body of Jesus to mitigate the odour, because he was either stinking by then or was soon going to be. There was no expectation on the part of the women to even imagine what had happened, that Jesus had shaken off the grave like an old garment.

Be done next time.