

RUMINATIONS OF A FORMER HEATHEN

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Resurrection 5

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The body was stolen. The women went to the wrong tomb. He was not really dead. The story of the resurrection was added to the writings of the Apostles somewhere around the second century. Those are the arguments against the resurrection today. I don't know. Nothing (in the natural) can explain why the Romans did not produce a body, it was nothing for them to kill somebody, anybody, and present that body as the body of Jesus. Another thing that cannot be explained is why nobody challenged the resurrection at the time when those claims were first made. Whether those claims were made in the first century or in the second century doesn't make any difference. Somebody should have said something or produced a body at any point in that continuum. A skeleton could have been produced at any time, even two or three hundred years later.

I am not relying on the writings of the New Testament for my certainty of the resurrection. The reason for not relying on the New Testament to make the argument for the resurrection is that if one starts from the position that the Gospels are a fabrication they obviously cannot be used as a source of truth. Who knows who invented the story of the resurrection and for what reason? Arguing with a heathen by citing the words of the New Testament is useless. I should know. You could not have told me anything about Jesus that I would have believed or listened to. My first reaction is a wall in your face. But I am looking at secular history and finding that there is a clear continuity of power by those who hated Christ. Why did no one rise up to deny the resurrection? Today anybody can deny the resurrection, but there is nothing, absolutely nothing, *coming from that period of history*, that says flat out that Jesus did not come back from the dead. The absence of a body and the silence are testimonies to the resurrection of Christ.

We know the history of the Romans, before, during, and after the period when the resurrection supposedly took place. We know who was married to whom, we know what they ate, who their lovers were, their intrigues, how many stab wounds

they gave each other as they killed one another, who killed whom and for what reason. The Roman History is laid out in front of us with a great deal of clarity for several hundred years. Jesus was born during the Roman occupation of Palestine, he grew up under the Roman occupation of Palestine, he was killed by the Romans, and the Roman occupation of Palestine continued right along several hundred years after that killing. There is a continuous line of history and historians going right through Jesus that overlaps him on both sides, before, during and after . This is not a lost period in history; this is not a “Dark Age” of information. There should have been a fervent, heated debate about the resurrection. There should have been faithful and true reporters-historians to testify against the resurrection, particularly among the Jewish clergy. Yet, there is this weird silence regarding Jesus, as if the persecutors of the disciples didn’t want to talk about it.

The truthfulness of the Bible is proven in the resurrection. The Bible lives in the resurrection. A good study of the resurrection is what’s needed to ascertain the truthfulness of the Bible. A good study of the resurrection, for the doubters and sceptics and cynics like me, should include these two simple questions: Why did the Romans not come up with a body, and why is there such silence regarding the resurrection?

Only the Gospels tell us of the resurrection. The great historian Ariel Durant mentions Jesus as he covers that period of time when Jesus lived but does not mention the resurrection. Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived through the period of the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. mentions Jesus but doesn’t say a word about the claims of the resurrection. It is just not reasonable, why *didn’t* they say anything? It was not in the interest of the Romans, neither of the Jews for that matter, to have this story going around that this guy had come back from the dead. All their authority would be gone. If the Romans had produced a body, obviously not the body of Jesus, but just the body of some poor soul that they killed, we would have two stories today coming from that period of history. One story would be, Jesus came back from the dead. The other story would be, no, no wait a minute, the Romans had a body.

It is recorded by secular historians that the world in which Jesus was born and lived was filled with superstition. The Roman Empire, in taking over so many

countries, had allowed the movements of people everywhere in the territory they controlled. It had brought all kinds of paganism to the land of the Jews, particularly a revival of the ancient mystery religions of Babylon. Not that they were strangers to idolatry, the Israelites throughout their history were (and are), riddled with idolatry of the non-existent gods of the heathen. The Romans themselves were highly superstitious. When Herod first heard of Jesus, he thought Jesus was John the Baptist, whom Herod had beheaded earlier, who had come back from the dead.

There were stories everywhere about people coming back from the dead. And, actually, there are stories in the Old Testament where people who had been dead were brought back to life. Both Elijah and Elisha brought people back from the dead. Jesus himself brought Lazarus back from the dead. But all those stories happened within a culture, they were hidden from the rest of the world. For the sake of the study of the Bible one has to take them at face value without really knowing their authenticity. Of course, once the authenticity of the Bible is established, one takes these accounts as absolute truths. There are stories going around today, about a resurrection someplace, in Tibet, or in Africa, in a remote village that takes a long time to reach, hidden in the jungles or on a lost peak somewhere. I've heard Christian preachers affirm having witnessed a resurrection. Myself, what can I say? I don't believe a word of it. There is always a story of something like that, somebody coming back from the dead somewhere in some remote location that usually cannot be confirmed. A favourite tactic of Satan is to mix lie with a little bit of truth. Sugar helps the medicine (poison) go down.

The world of Jesus was ripe for a story such as the resurrection. The people wanted to believe, were primed to believe. That is, some of the people. The disciples themselves didn't believe it. When Jesus talked about being killed and rising again the third day they didn't know what he meant. And were afraid to ask him.

The Jewish clergy were furious in their attempt to squelch the story. They beat up those early Christians, chased them out of town, stoned them to death. But they couldn't make them shut up. They wanted the disciples to shut up about Jesus, but they were not arguing the veracity of the resurrection.

They couldn't make them shut up because the resurrection of Jesus was not like remote stories told by a friend of a cousin. This thing, the resurrection of Christ, did not happen in a corner, as Paul correctly points out. It didn't happen in a remote jungle village, or in a lost peak somewhere. It was public and very public. This happened in Jerusalem, even today the center of attention of the world. Jerusalem was teeming with people from all over the world that had come for the Passover. This was not a sleigh of hand. Jerusalem was completely controlled by those who hated Christ and Christians. Even if one were to consider that the story of the resurrection might have been planted a couple of hundred years after the event I find it astonishing that there is no challenge whatsoever coming even from that time. What secular history tells us is that Jesus existed and that he was crucified by the Romans. As far as the story of the resurrection, they are silent. The Bible tells us of the resurrection, but the secular historians of the time and all the contrarians to Jesus are silent about it, strangely so.

The reason why the Romans did not, could not, produce a body to present as the body of Jesus is that too many people saw what happened. They saw Jesus dead, they saw Jesus alive after he had been dead. Simultaneous to the resurrection of Jesus cemeteries exploded, graves had opened and there were people coming out of their sepulchres walking around with their grave clothes on. This got seared in the psyche of all those people, Israelites, Jews from many lands who were there for the Passover. These people were believers in the God of the Bible. They saw what they saw and they could not be controlled and made to shut up. This voice ran off all over that land like wildfire. Torture, torture until death, was not enough to make them shut up.

The first Christians were all Israelites, primarily Jews, and they were the first to fasten on the resurrection. Everything that had ever been promised was coming to pass in front of their eyes. What must have been a fantasy to many, a tradition with a vague hope, the Kinsman Redeemer, the payment for sin, the resurrection of the dead, was right here, now. The resurrection was (is) the first concrete manifestation of a new Heaven and a new Earth. A full atonement, a full redemption, no more guessing, unexpected, un-earnable, once in a lifetime opportunity, eternal life. They fastened their teeth on the resurrection as pitbulls. And that is the way I'm doing it except

perhaps adding my nails to the teeth.