

Preparation Study
Sunday, April 8, 2012

Jesus Rose from the Dead

Why is belief so hard for some people, even when the evidence is overwhelming?

MONDAY STUDY

Read Matthew 27:62-66 and answer the following questions:

- *How did the chief priests and Pharisees describe Jesus to Pilate? (“that deceiver”)*
- *What’s ironic about this? (Jesus said it was the Jewish leaders who had been deceived, according to Matthew 22:29. And later, when they tried to claim that the disciples had stolen Jesus’ body, they were the ones who were doing the deceiving.)*
- *When Pilate told the Pharisees to use the guard to make the tomb “as secure as you know how,” what do you imagine they did?*
- *What were the Pharisees referring to in verse 64 when they said “the last deception will be worse than the first?” What did they consider to be the first deception? (Unclear from the Scripture. It probably was a reference to Jesus’ claim that He was the Son of God. This was what brought the charge of blasphemy in Matthew 26:63-65.)*
- *Why do you think people worked so hard to discredit the resurrection of Jesus? Are people still working today to discredit the resurrection?*
- *Is it significant how many soldiers there were? (It isn’t crucial to the story. If it was, God would have given us the number. However, the more soldiers there were, the more incredible it would be for all of them to have fallen asleep at the same time, which is what the Jewish leaders would eventually claim happened. Also, even two armed soldiers would have been difficult for the disciples to overpower in order to steal Jesus’ body. The fact that there were probably more than two makes this idea even more implausible.)*
- *How does this detail strengthen your belief in the truth of the gospel?*
- *What does the level of security tell you about how threatened the priests and Pharisees were by Jesus?*

Summary: Jewish authorities were convinced that Jesus was really dead. If He truly wasn’t dead, His resurrection doesn’t matter. They took all of these precautions to prevent His followers from tampering with evidence and making it look like He really did rise from the grave; they knew He would gain greater popularity and following if this happened.

TUESDAY STUDY

Read Matthew 28:5-8 and answer the following questions:

- *Do you think the women went to the tomb with any expectations that Jesus wouldn’t be there? What basis do you have for your answer?*
- *Imagine going to the grave of someone you know. How would you truly respond if their casket was empty and all evidence pointed to a resurrection?*
- *Why did the angel tell the women not to be afraid? (There was an earthquake. Jesus wasn’t where they thought He would be. There were Roman soldiers passed out in fear on the ground in front of them, according to verse 4. Wouldn’t you be afraid?)*
- *How did the angel communicate urgency to the women? (By saying “go quickly”)*

- *Why do you think it was important for the women to go quickly to tell the other disciples?*
- *Is there still an urgency to our message? Why or why not?*
- *Have you ever communicated a message to someone with a mixture of “fear and great joy?” What was it? (when we first told our parents we were getting married; the first time we told people we were pregnant, etc.)*
- *Why did the women go to the tomb in the first place? (to finish the job of preparing Jesus’ body for burial) Since they wanted to honor Jesus, don’t you think they would have kept looking until they found the tomb, if indeed they were simply in the wrong place?*
- *Remember that two of the women had been to the tomb already (Mt. 27:61). So why was it significant that the angel said, “Come and see the place where He lay?” (Since they had been there just two days before, the idea that they had gone to the wrong tomb is far-fetched).*
- *If this was the wrong tomb, doesn’t it stand to reason that there was a “right” tomb somewhere else, and that the Pharisees would have quickly helped everyone find it?*

Summary: As we think about building our case for the Resurrection, so far all we have done is establish that the the tomb the truly dead Jesus had been laid in was now truly empty, and that the disciples did not steal the body. We have the word from an angel that Jesus is alive, but up to this point, we still haven’t seen the resurrected Jesus. That’s what we will talk about in the third point.

WEDNESDAY STUDY

Read Luke 24:13-16,32-33,35 and answer the following questions:

- *What does “the same day” refer to in verse 13? (Sunday, the same day the women came to the tomb) Why is witnessing something with your own eyes considered more powerful than the word of someone else?*
- *Verse 14 says they were “arguing” about what had taken place. What do you imagine were the two sides of the argument?*
- *What external factors might have kept the disciples from recognizing Jesus?*
- *Why might Jesus not have wanted the disciples to recognize Him right away? (He may have wanted to remind them of what had been said in the Scriptures before He made Himself known to them (verse 37). Or He might have known they needed to talk through all of their hurt and confusion before He revealed Himself (verse 19-24).*

Summary: This lesson has attempted to methodically lay out the basis for our belief in the risen Christ. We’ve used the word proof a lot. Do you think the case for the resurrection is convincing enough to literally bet your life on it? Because that is exactly what we are asking people to do every time we talk with them about giving their lives to Christ.

THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY STUDY

Read the following articles contained in this study packet:

1. The Reality of Jesus’ Resurrection;
2. The Resurrection in First Century Jewish Thought;
3. The Women at the Tomb
4. Women as Eyewitnesses
5. The Chief Priests in Jerusalem;