

# Resurrection of Jesus Christ – Hoax or History?

Dr. LALITH MENDIS

**W**as it not enough that Jesus Christ lived an exemplary life and died a sacrificial death? No, it is not enough. If we are to live as He lived He has to live in us. Good examples do not assure good follow up. He had to come back to life and live in us. That is what He said he would do, that is what prophets prophesied and that is exactly what happened. While there are many ways to prove the point, the best and obvious testimony to His resurrection is a person who has died in his former life and now he lives the Christ's life in all His life pursuits.

## **Christ Himself said He will die and be raised up**

Mat - 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the Third Day.

## **Prophets Said Messiah Would Be Resurrected**

Psa 16:10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

## **Proof For Christ's Resurrection**

1. As He arose from death we receive new life when we repent and believe and receive Christ into our hearts. The fact that He lives in our hearts is proof of His resurrection. "You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart". In His name there is forgiveness of Sin and in His name we can live above sin being conscious that He lives in us.

2. There is One body the Church formed by those who have experienced Christ's Life. Visible Body of Christ, the Church, is proof that He arose.

## **Woman Was First**

Since Mary Magdalene features prominently in the Resurrection narrative a note is apposite. It is said, "she was delivered of seven demons". Mark 16:7. Magdala was on the East bank of the Sea of Galilee, an area known as Gadara, settled by many Gentiles with the Ten Cities known as Decapolis. Its non-Jewish character is proven by the Swine industry of which the Prodigal son became a part. Luke chapter 15. Mark chapter 5 records the story of the man from Gadara who was possessed with a Legion of Demons (6,000). So Mary Magdalene hailed from a demon infested area.

It is not said she was of bad character. She was not the one who anointed Jesus with perfume in the House of Simon the Pharisee. Lk 7:33. She supported Jesus' Ministry with money and travelled around with other women with Jesus' preaching band. This tells us that she was financially independent and probably very powerful. Not many women travelled as she did. There is no hint of impropriety in her relationship with Christ.

It is her important social standing that made her a credible witness in a male chauvinistic society that existed at the time. Prof. J.N.D. Anderson argues that female witnesses were usually cast aside (as later critics of Gospel Narratives did) and that they were retained as the first witnesses of

the empty tomb enhances the authenticity and credibility of Gospel narratives.

## **Once I was Dead –**

Let us consider the scenario of Christ's resurrection and its relevance to us.

1. He was wounded and bleeding – He died. So are we bruised- battered, dead in Sin and trespass; laid in a tomb.
2. His body was bandaged with expensive aloe and myrrh; but external spices cannot give life. So are we bandaged with excuses and human remedies. What people see is a facade of bandages. A surrogate personality. When resurrection comes our grave clothes are removed. We have healing and life again.
3. To get to the Body was not easy – it was in a tomb. The stony covering implies man made prejudices and our stony heart. Resurrection breaks through all this.
4. Authorities placed their seal on the tombstone. He cannot come out is what the seal said. Similarly different words spoken by authority figures or ourselves may keep us in a tomb. Resurrection breaks through again.
5. Roman Guards kept watch over the body in the tomb – when we approach someone, we also meet demonic guards who resist entry into that person's heart and life. They must be bound. Lk 11:19-22

Charles Wesley – Christ has burst the gates of hell. Vain the watch, the stone, the seal

## **RESURRECTION**

1. It will not be possible to hide a



dead body in a crowded city like Jerusalem during Passover.

2. Jews ensured that Roman guards watched the embalming procedure and the casting in the tomb to prevent rumours arising.
3. When Apostles preached that Christ was risen, if it was a lie, the obvious thing to do was to produce the body.
4. Resurrection was the only explanation for fearful disciples to be so bold after seeing the Risen Christ
5. Jewish authorities documented the death of Jesus of Nazareth

"On the eve of Passover they hanged Yeshu (of Nazareth) and the herald went before him for forty days saying (Yeshu of Nazareth) is going forth to be stoned in that he hath practiced sorcery and beguiled and led astray Israel. Let everyone knowing aught in his defence come and plead for him. But they found naught in his defence and hanged him on the eve of Passover" (Babylonia Sanhedrin 43a) – "Eve of Passover".

## **Why Did John Believe?**

What did John the apostle see when he peeped into the tomb early

on the Resurrection morning (having outrun Peter) that made him believe Christ was risen from death rather than that the body was stolen? Joh 20:7, 8 and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. John saw the head cloth which wrapped Jesus's head in the Jewish burial process was separate and obviously blood stained. The rest of the linen wrappings served as a caked bandage having been bound with 80 kg of embalming spices brought by Nicodemus, the Sanhedrin member. The caked bandages which were wrapped around the body had collapsed like an encasement when the body slipped out in the resurrection. This is what made John believe.

On hearing of Mary Magdalene's report of a rock rolled and the Tomb empty, John who was younger outran Peter to the Tomb. Yet he waited for his senior to enter the tomb first.

Jn 20 (7) and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in

a place by itself. (8) So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.

Both of them were inside the tomb. This needed a spacious tomb uncommon in those times. The tiniest detail in Scripture may have significance. The Garden Tomb (archaeologically dated to First Century CE in Jerusalem, adjacent to Golgotha (Rock Face with a skull) thought to be Christ's Tomb donated by Joseph of Arimathea, is spacious and must have been obviously built by a rich man in anticipation of his death – which was the custom of the time. As narrated two men could at once enter the first compartment of the tomb that provides for the family to enter the tomb for laying spices on the body, as was the Jewish custom. Scripture is always proven true when authentic corroboration was possible with Archaeology and History.

Proof of the Pudding – Many claim that their lives have been changed by meeting the Risen Lord Jesus – this even includes scientists like the head of the Human Genome Project

– Francis Collins

