

Reactions To The Resurrection

Matthew 28:1-17

I. Fearful & Unresponsive Concerning The Risen Christ (1-4 – The Guards)

1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. (cf. Hab 3:2,16; Isa 6:1-5; Job 40:4)

II. Investigative & Receptive Concerning The Risen Christ (5-6: The Women)

5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. (cf. Isa 1:18; Acts 18:4; Mk 12:24)

III. Joyful & Communicative Concerning The Risen Christ (7-10: The Women)

7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

IV. Deceptive & Suppressive Concerning The Risen Christ (11-15: The Religious)

11 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers 13 and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. (cf. Acts 23:8; Rom 1:18)

V. Obedient & Worshipful Concerning The Risen Christ (16-17: The Disciples)

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. (cf. Mt 22:31-32; Jn 6:40)

Conclusion:

- There may not be a cure for Covid19 yet, but there is a cure for death. (1 Cor 15:3-4)
- There may be several religions, but there is only one Savior, Christ. (Jn 11:25a)
- There are many ways you can respond to Christ's death and resurrection, but will you consider the facts and then place your faith in Him as your Savior? (Jn 11:25b)

Discussion:

- If you haven't accepted the fact that Jesus was resurrected, what is holding you back?
- If you have accepted Jesus' resurrection, how were you convinced of its reality?
- How do you find hope in the resurrection during trials, suffering and/or this Covid19 crisis?
- How does the resurrection cause you to worship Christ?

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live.

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Introductions:

1. Reactions to the Covid19 virus are worldwide.
 - There is mourning to the over 96,787 dead from this virus worldwide
 - There is sadness over the loss of jobs. Some of our favorite restaurants and stores will not survive the economic downturn.
 - There is frustration for seniors in high school and college who won't be able to celebrate with their class of 2020 throwing their caps in the air and signing yearbooks.
2. Church-wise,
 - I'm sad we can't fill the pews to celebrate Jesus' resurrection with music, prayer and the Word – then eat bacon at our annual Easter breakfast
 - I wonder if we will ever shake hands anymore
3. Personally,
 - I miss seeing my family in person
 - I'm concerned for our family and friends on the front lines of this health battle
 - I feel sad every time we have to make wide circles to create that 6' barrier on the sidewalk or shopping aisle
4. But if our reactions are only focused on the negative, we won't get through this difficult time.
 - I love how 25 folks from church joined our Barnabas Encouragement Ministry to meet the physical needs and spiritual needs of the widows, the elderly, the sick, the immuno-compromised, the unemployed
 - I love how our church leadership (board, sponsors, fellowship leaders) is checking up on our church family
 - I love how at least 11 groups in church are continuing ministry through video-conferencing
 - I love how almost 80 devices joined in our Town Hall meeting last Sunday
 - I love how 6 families sang for the Lord and us from their homes for Easter service today
5. Our Scripture today arrives at a momentous occasion in world history where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was just crucified on the cross. He was beloved and hated. Some people mourned His death while others scoffed. The earth shook, supernatural darkness lasted 3 hours and the thick veil of the Temple was torn at 3pm Friday – the time the Passover Lamb would have been sacrificed at that Temple on behalf of Israel.
 - 3 days later, there's an earthquake, the tomb is open, the soldiers are frightened and Christ is now making appearances in His resurrected body.
 - **"If God can take the worst thing that could ever happen in the universe – the death of the Son of God – and turn it into the best thing that could ever happen – the opening of heaven to all who follow Him – then He can draw good from whatever problems we face." (Lee Strobel)**

Let's take a look at the event of Christ's resurrection from Matthew 28 as we note the reactions to this monumental event:

Matthew 28:1-17

- 1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.
- 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.
- 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.
- 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.
- 5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.
- 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.
- 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you."
- 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.
- 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.
- 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."
- 11 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.
- 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers
- 13 and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'"
- 14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."
- 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.
- 16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.
- 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

I. Fearful & Unresponsive Concerning The Risen Christ (1-4 – The Guards)

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- Mary & Mary, not contrary – came to the tomb, witnessed the earthquake and talked to an angel – they were curious and courageous
- But here's what is unusual – the soldiers that guarded the tomb were so frightful, they started to shake, some passed out
- Pilate told them to use their guards: 2 possibilities (Mt 27:65)
 - Temple guards - Josh McDowell describes this guard as 27 units of 10 men per unit (270 total men). Their discipline was so good that if one fell asleep, he was beaten

and burned. Each guard was forbidden to sit down or lean against something when on duty. (*The Resurrection Factor*)

- Roman guards - McDowell notes that Pilate probably wanted to insure peace with the Jews by giving them what they wanted. This Roman guard would have come from the Roman Legion, probably one of the greatest offensive and defensive fighting machines ever conceived.
- If you were trying to invent a religion in a male-dominated culture like the Roman and Jewish cultures in Israel, you would record that it was the women who were brave and the tough fighting machines as fearful
- But what was the difference – these women had a spiritual foundation – they knew Jesus personally. They served Him as their Lord and Rabbi. They saw him raise the dead and feed the 5,000. The miraculous was not unfamiliar to them.
- The soldiers witnessed an earthquake and supernatural darkness 3 days ago at Jesus' crucifixion. Now there was another earthquake and the huge stone rolled away to open the cave tomb Jesus was buried in.
- **Role Reversal:** The women were brave, the soldiers were fearful.
- Being confronted with God's holiness and work is
- Habakkuk was traumatized at God's revelation:

Habakkuk 3:2, 16 ²O Lord, **I have heard Your speech and was afraid;** O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy... ¹⁶**When I heard, my body trembled; My lips quivered at the voice;** Rottenness entered my bones; And I trembled in myself, That I might rest in the day of trouble. When he comes up to the people, He will invade them with his troops.

- Isaiah was traumatized by God's holiness:

Isaiah 6:1-5 ¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. ²Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" ⁴And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵So I said: "**Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips,** And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts."

- Job was in awe struck by God's sovereignty

Job 40:4 ⁴Behold, I am **vile;** What shall I answer You? **I lay my hand over my mouth.**

II. Investigative & Receptive Concerning The Risen Christ (5-6: The Women)

5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. **6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.**

- Mary and Mary were devoted to Jesus
- They stayed with Him all the way to the grave
- Even the disciples didn't stick around – Peter went back to fishing

Luke 26:56 But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.

- Despite legends, the real Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute nor the wife of Jesus
- There is no conspiracy, no children, no royal line
- She did come from spiritual darkness – but we read nothing specific about prostitution or adultery.
- She was a simple follower of Christ

- The City of Migdal & The Sea of Galilee
 - Ancient Magdala
 - Home of Mary of Magdala
 - Trachea (it's Greek Name) means "fish-pickling place"
 - Founded in 1st century A.D. as fishing town

- The angel invites these faithful ladies to investigate the empty tomb.
- This is a wonderful opportunity – not given initially to the 11 disciples, but these faithful ladies, friends of Jesus
- In contrast to the fearful soldiers, they took the opportunity to see the empty tomb for themselves
- Christianity is not a blind faith – it should be examined in light of God's revelation, history, and reasonableness.

Isaiah 1:18 ¹⁸"Come now, and let us **reason** together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.

Acts 18:4 And he **reasoned** in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

- "Reasoned" = *dialegomai* – a well reasoned sermon or dialogue (used 13x in Scriptures)

- "Persuaded" = *peitho*
 - "to apply persuasion, to prevail upon or win over, bringing about a change of mind by the influence of reason or moral considerations." (Vine's *Expository Dictionary*)
 - "to persuade, i.e. to induce one by words to believe" (Strong's *Concordance*)

Mark 12:24 ²⁴Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?"

III. Joyful & Communicative Concerning The Risen Christ (7-10: The Women)

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- The Talmud, a sacred Jewish text, illustrates how the testimony of women were
 - "Sooner let the words of the Law be burnt than delivered to women." (*Talmud, Sotah 19a*)
 - "Any evidence which a woman [gives] is not valid (to offer), also they are not valid to offer. This is equivalent to saying that one who is Rabbinically accounted a robber is qualified to give the same evidence as a woman." (*Talmud, Rosh Hashannah 1.8*)
- Despite this, God transformed the role of women. They are the first witnesses defying Jewish and Roman tradition.
- But it was not about "Women Power," but about "Resurrection Power."
- Mary and Mary were excited to share.
- Their emotions were fear, joy and eagerness to tell the disciples.
- Then Jesus meets them.
- Their first response is worship.
- Christ affirms to them that they are the first witnesses – telling the disciples to go to Galilee.
- What is your reaction to the resurrection of Christ?
- Is it impactful enough to you that your emotions are fear and joy – or has it become blasé?
- Are you eager to tell people about it or are you embarrassed?
- These women had no education, no titles, no community status – but God chose them as God has chosen us to share the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

IV. Deceptive & Suppressive Concerning The Risen Christ (11-15: The Religious)

11 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told **the chief priests** all that had taken place. 12 And when they had assembled **with the elders** and taken counsel, they **gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers 13 and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'**" 14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

- I've heard people say that "it doesn't matter what religion you are as long as you're sincere."
- But what matters are facts and truth.
- There are many religions that are sincere, but sincerely wrong.
- These religious leaders were Jewish – they called for the crucifixion of Christ. They were religious, but they didn't know how to deal with the fact of the empty tomb.
- They ended up bribing the soldiers to lie about the body of Jesus being stolen by the disciples

- **There lies don't add up:**
 - Were all of them asleep at the same time?
 - If they were asleep - they would be put to death.
 - **If they were asleep - how did they know what happened?**

- Habermas & Licona: "The 'minimal facts approach' considers only data that meet two criteria:
 1. The data are strongly evidenced.
 2. The data are granted by virtually all scholars on the subject, even the skeptical ones.

A skeptic ought not be allowed to merely cite apparent contradictions in the Bible and say that the Resurrection has been disproved. The "minimal facts approach" builds a case using facts with a high degree of certainty, facts that any skeptic probably accepts. These facts need to be addressed. If a skeptic takes a position that even the majority of skeptical scholars reject, we can argue individually for the minimal facts that we are using. So if a skeptic prefers to take another position, that's okay. In doing so, the believer now has an opportunity to present much more data in support of the argument for Jesus' resurrection. The skeptic will need to respond."

Gary R. Habermas; Michael R. Licona. The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus (Kindle Locations 377-379). Kindle Edition.

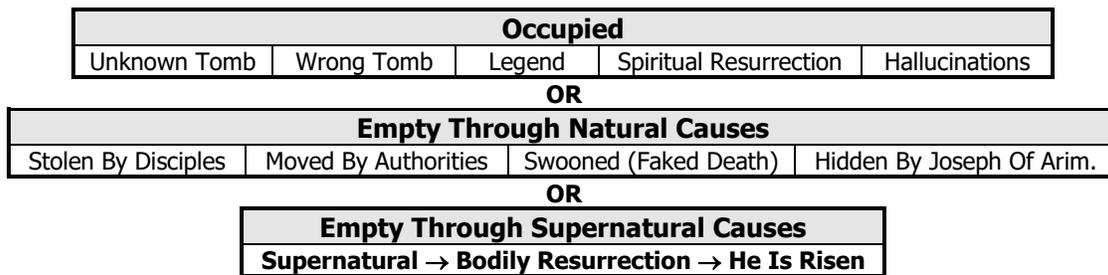
- Gary Habermas reviewed 3,400 works by both liberal critics, scholars and conservative writers and the majority accept the following 12 points as historical fact:
 1. Jesus died by crucifixion. (non-Christian ancient sources: Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, Mara Bar-Serapion, Talmud)
 2. Jesus was buried.
 3. His death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope, believing that his life was ended.
 4. The tomb was empty a few days later.
 5. The disciples had experiences that they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus.
 6. The disciples were transformed from doubters who were afraid to identify themselves with Jesus to bold proclaimers of His death and Resurrection.
 7. This message was the center of preaching in the early church.
 8. This message was especially proclaimed in Jerusalem, where Jesus died and was buried shortly before.
 9. The church was born in Jerusalem and grew rapidly.
 10. Orthodox Jews who believed in Jesus made Sunday their primary day of worship.
 11. James, the half-brother of Jesus, converted to the faith when he saw what he believed was the resurrected Jesus.
 12. Paul was converted to the faith after his experience which he believed was with the risen Jesus.

Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*, (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1996), p. 158.

- **To avoid clear evidence, imaginative theories have been thrust to explain away the supernatural nature of the resurrection of Christ:**
 - Hugh Schonfield detail his belief in *The Passover Plot* that Jesus was revived from an appearance of death (Swoon theory).

- Philosopher Robert Greg Cavin argues that Jesus had a twin brother named Hurome, who was separated from Jesus at birth. Hurome sees his long lost twin on the cross and assumes Jesus' identity after stealing the body on the cross.
- John Dominic Crossnan, from the Jesus Seminar, believes that Jesus' body was exhumed then consumed by wild dogs.
- Judaism believes the resurrection never happened
- Muslims deny that Christ was crucified, thus never being resurrected.
- Jehovah's Witnesses state in their Watchtower publication: "the King Christ Jesus was put to death in the flesh and was resurrected an invisible spirit creature. Therefore the world will see him no more. He went to prepare a heavenly place for his associate heirs, 'Christ body,' for they too will be invisible spirit creatures." (*Let God Be True*, p. 138, Watchtower, cited by Hanegraaf, *resurrection*, p. 9)
 - Jehovah's Witnesses "suggest that Jesus' physical body was discarded, destroyed, or dissolved into gases" (Hank Hanegraaff, *resurrection*, p. xix)

Josh McDowell's Reasons (from *The Resurrection Factor*) That Christ's Tomb Was Either:



- How will you deal with the facts and the logic of Jesus' resurrection

Acts 23:8 ⁸For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.

Romans 1:18 ¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who **suppress the truth in unrighteousness**,

V. Obedient & Worshipful Concerning The Risen Christ (16-17: The Disciples)

16 Now **the eleven disciples went to Galilee**, to the mountain to which **Jesus had directed them**. 17 **And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.**

- The 11 disciples (minus Judas) were directed by Christ to a mountain in Galilee. They obeyed.
- The initial thought for several of them might have been: Why go if He was dead? This is crazy.
- V. 17 – some doubted
- V. 17 also says that they worshipped Christ – the appropriate response for a Savior that gave up His life but also resurrected Himself
- 3 days in the grave proved this was not an illusion, a magic trick
- In His resurrection, death has been defeated, sin has been crushed

- The words that Jesus spoke to them before His death now made sense:

Matthew 22:31-32 ³¹ And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living."

John 6:40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Conclusion:

1. **There may not be a cure for Covid19 yet, but there is a cure for death.**

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

2. **There may be several religions, but there is only one Savior, Christ.**

John 11:25a ^{25a} Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.

3. **There are many ways you can respond to Christ's death and resurrection, but will you consider the facts and then place your faith in Him as your Savior?**

John 11:25b ^{25b} Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live.

Discussion:

- If you haven't accepted the fact that Jesus was resurrected, what is holding you back?
- If you have accepted Jesus' resurrection, how were you convinced of it's reality?
- How do you find hope in the resurrection during trials, suffering and/or this Covid19 crisis?
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