

The Empty Tomb

Introduction:

- A. I want you to help me uncover a mystery.
- B. The mystery is this: How did the tomb in which Christ was laid come to be empty?
- C. This question is of paramount importance in considering the claims of Jesus.
 - 1. If it was empty because Jesus was raised, His claims are sustained. - Matthew 12:38-40; Romans 1:4
 - 2. We should not accept his resurrection uncritically, but carefully consider if there is a reasonable, natural explanation for the empty tomb.
 - 3. Does any nonmiraculous theory harmonize with the facts?
- D. an historical question:
 - 1. gather evidence (sources: Matthew 26:36 - 28:6; Mark 14:32 - 16:8; Luke 22:39-46; John 19:1 - 20:8)
 - 2. hear testimony
 - 3. evaluate witnesses
 - 4. test hypotheses
 - 5. draw a conclusion
- E. Is there a reasonable, natural explanation for the empty tomb?
- I. Background
 - A. Did Jesus die?
 - 1. agony in the garden - Matthew 26:36-44; Luke 22:39-46
 - 2. scourged - Matthew 27:26
 - 3. mocked by soldiers - Matthew 27:27-31
 - a. crown of thorns - John 19:32
 - b. physically beaten - John 19:3
 - 4. apparently unable to bear the cross - John 19:16-17; Luke 23:36
 - 5. refused to be drugged - Mark 15:23-24
 - 6. crucified - Mark 15:25
 - 7. taunted - Matthew 27:39-44
 - 8. side pierced - John 19:34-35
 - 9. death witnessed by:
 - a. the centurion - Luke 23:46-47; Mark 15:44-45
 - b. the women - Mark 15:40
 - c. John - John 19:25-30,35
 - d. acquaintances - Luke 23:49
 - e. soldiers - John 19:31-34
 - f. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus - John 19:38-40
 - B. Was Jesus buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea? - John 19:41-42; Matthew 27:60; Mark 16:4
 - 1. Joseph and Nicodemus - John 19:42
 - 2. women - Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55-56
 - 3. Jews and Roman guard - Matthew 27:62-66
 - a. watch
 - b. seal
 - C. Was the tomb empty?
 - 1. guards - Matthew 28:2-4,11-15
 - 2. women - Mark 16:1-8
 - 3. Peter and John - John 20:1-8

4. not disputed by Jews - Matthew 28:11-15; Acts 2:29-32
- D. The evidence is conclusive: Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, but on the third day the tomb was empty.
- II. Is there any reasonable way to explain the empty tomb short of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead?
- A. Did the disciples steal the body?
1. the testimony of the guard - Matthew 28:11-15
 - a. if asleep, incapable of testifying
 - b. if awake, lied
 - c. every motive to lie
 2. lack of motive to steal the body - 1 Corinthians 4:9-13
 3. lacked courage to do so - Matthew 26:56
 4. honest men (conceded by unbelieving historians) - 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12
 5. lacked ability
 - a. the guard - Matthew 27:62-65
 - b. the stone - Matthew 27:66; Mark 16:4
 6. the clothes and the orderliness of the tomb - John 20:1-7
- B. Did Joseph of Arimathea take the body?
1. man of impeccable honesty - Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50
 2. what motive?
 3. why leave clothes and orderly at that?
 4. lacked courage - John 19:38
 5. lacked ability
 6. no evidence to sustain theory
- C. Did the women go to the wrong tomb?
1. Could they forget!?
 2. They carefully noted where He was buried. - Matthew 27:59-61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55-56
 3. Peter and John independently went to the tomb. - John 20:1-8
 4. Why were grave clothes in the tomb? - John 20:7
 5. Why did the Jews invent the story His body was stolen? - John 19:41-42; Matthew 27:66
 6. Why didn't Joseph of Arimathea show them the right tomb?
- D. Did Jesus become comatose and then revive?
1. testimony to Jesus' death
 - a. soldiers - John 19:31-33
 - b. centurion - Mark 15:42-45
 - c. Joseph and Nicodemus - John 19:38-39
 2. what Jesus endured (see I,A,1-8)
 - a. embalmed - John 19:39-40
 - b. cold tomb - John 19:41-42
 3. impossibility of man just revived from coma to:
 - a. roll away the stone - Mark 16:4
 - b. overpower or slip by guard - Matthew 27:66
- Conclusion:
- A. Honest friend, how do you account for the historical fact of the empty tomb?
 - B. There is no rational, natural explanation for the empty tomb.
 - C. Thus, Jesus was indeed raised from the dead. - Matthew 28:5-6
 - D. Therefore, He is the Christ the Son of God. - Romans 1:4