

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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THE EMPTY TOMB – PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION

I am told that Thomas Jefferson, the father of American Democracy, clipped passages from the NT relating to the life and morals of Jesus Christ. He then pasted them in a blank notebook, which was printed after his death, and is known as The Jefferson Bible.” In his Bible the last verse reads “...and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed” Matt.27:60. He did not believe in the resurrection of Christ. Yet, my Bible continues on past that verse, and reads that after Jesus died, He was buried, then arose the third day, i.e., the first day of the week. I believe in the resurrection. It is called “the miracle” of the Bible. If the resurrection is true, then all the other miracles are possible. If it is not true, then all the other miracles don’t matter. As has been previously stated, the Resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of Christianity. Without it the cross has no meaning, the Christian faith is worthless (1Cor.15:12-19), Jesus is not the Son of God (Rom.1:4), His death redeemed nothing (Eph.1:7), there is no judgment to come and we are totally without hope. But if He is raised than all His claims are vindicated, His work was/is a success and He is Lord of all. Yes, truly Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, and the empty tomb stands today as a monument to the fact. The “first day of the week,” “in three days” “after three days,” all refer to the same day. Read Lk.24:1, 6-8, 13, 21.

The empty tomb. By itself the empty tomb does not prove the resurrection, for if the body had been found the resurrection would have been disproved. But the empty tomb plays a necessary part in the resurrection. Look at the tomb. A new tomb (Lk.23:53; Jn.19:41), thus there would have been no previous body or bones of former dead for one to see or mistake for the body of Jesus. The tomb was cut in solid rock (Matt.27:60; Mk.15:46), thus no other entrance by which Jesus could have escaped. The tomb is sealed with a great stone (Matt.27:62-66; Mk.16:4). If three women couldn’t roll the stone away (Mk.16:3), how could Jesus in a weakened condition do so? On the first day of the week it was empty? What other explanation than that He is risen. After they came to the tomb and examined it they could see the linen grave clothes and handkerchief (face cloth) all folded neatly in another place, but no body.

Let's examine what took place after Jesus died. From Matt.27:57-66 we learn that after Jesus was taken down from the cross His body was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and a great stone was rolled against the door and Joseph departed. The next day would be after sundown, when a new day begins for the Jew. This would be the weekly Sabbath. The Jewish leaders in their desperate attempts to eliminate any possibility of Jesus' body being removed from the tomb, go to Pilate, seeking to protect their evil work. They were willing to violate one of their most sacred laws to do so. They may not have believed He would rise again (they considered Him a deceiver, pretender, imposter) but somehow remembered His prediction that the sign of Jonah would be proof of His deity (Matt.12:30; 16:4), that He would rise again the third day (Matt.16:21; 17:23; 20:19). So, they ask for a guard to be placed at the tomb to keep His disciples from perpetuating a hoax. They didn't know how fearful, distraught and demoralized the disciples really were. They were in no mood to perpetuate such a hoax (Mk.16:11-14; Jn.20:19). Pilate grants their request and the tomb was secured, the stone was sealed and a guard set. The guard was probably Roman soldiers, who would have been in danger of losing their lives if what they guarded escaped (Acts 12:19; 16:27). So the tomb was now under maximum security.

By the action of the Jewish council in trying to prevent Jesus' resurrection, they produce one the strongest pieces of evidence for the resurrection. When Christ arose on the first day of the week, as promised, their securing of the tomb removed any doubt that the disciples could have stolen the body away. After the resurrection the soldiers became like dead men. They finally recover and some of them go into the city and report to the chief priests and elders. The council gives large sums of money to the soldiers to perpetuate a lie. The very ones concerned with a lie being told, are the same ones who circulate a lie. Questions: Why weren't the rulers angry at the guards? If the guards had been asleep how could they have known who could have done what? What about the earthquake and the breaking of the seal, the noise of the moving of a stone weighing probably 5 or 6 hundred pounds, people going in to steal the body. Whether the leaders believed the guards or not, they did not want the people to believe. Think to what lengths these men have gone to put Jesus to death. They had used treachery to hold Him, illegality to try Him, slander to charge Him before Pilate and now bribery to silence the truth about Him. All the evil mechanisms devised by man cannot in the end prevail against the truth. A Roman proverb says, "Great is the truth and it will prevail." The greatness and goodness of God is greater than the plots of wickedness.

When the three women (Mk.16:1) came to the tomb to anoint Jesus they found the stone moved away, the tomb empty and an angel sitting on the right side. Who moved the stone? It was a large stone, probably 5-6 hundred pounds. The usual manner was that a groove was formed in front of the tomb and the stone rolled down into the groove to sit

over the mouth of the tomb. Certainly it was large enough that 3 women couldn't move it. Now on the first day it was "rolled back" (Matt.28:2); "rolled away" (Mk.16:4; Lk.24:2). John 20:1 says it was "taken away." The word used in John means lifted up, moved to another place (cf.Matt.21:21; 22:13; Jn.2:16). Putting these thoughts together we learn that the stone was rolled back, up out of the groove and lifted up and moved to another place where the angel sat on it. Who moved the stone? Man sure didn't. It was the angel (Matt.28:2). Yes, the tomb was empty on the first day of the week, and it remains empty even until this day. Jesus Christ is risen! He is alive. He is our Lord.

- Tommy Thornhill

"Evil Suspicions"

The Bible warns against the danger of "evil surmisings," [KJV] or "evil suspicions" [NASB] (1 Tim. 6:4). In 1 Chronicles 19, Nahash, the king of Ammon, died. "And David said I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me. And David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his Father." However, certain political leaders among the Ammonites were suspicious and said to Hanun, "Do you think that David is honoring your father, in that he has sent comforters to you? Have not his servants come to you to search and to over-throw and to spy out the land?"

Hanun, acting on their suspicions, mistreated and "greatly humiliated" David's servants. As a result, a damaging war of death and destruction soon followed. It was all caused by "evil surmisings," by "evil suspicions."

A suspicious attitude is hard to fight. One who has such a defiled disposition can always "justify" his reasons for feeling as he does. He sees every extended, helping hand as a clenched fist. He views your smile as proof that you are laughing at him. If you give him an egg for breakfast, he thinks you are calling him "a chicken." If you give him a peach for lunch, he thinks you are the pits. There is just no way to satisfy a negative, suspicious state of mind. Such people spread their dark thoughts to others and cause them to become wary and unsettled. They assign evil motives to even the most harmless of words and deeds. See 1 Chronicles 19 related above.

Brethren, beware of this gloomy outlook. True love is not suspicious. It "thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. 13:5). It does not assume the worst. It expects that which is good and puts the best construction on the motives and deeds of others. Love builds. Suspicion tears down. Love unites. Suspicion divides. Love trusts. Suspicion doubts. Love smiles. Suspicion glares. Love attracts. Suspicion repels. Love forgives and forgets. Suspicion remembers

what never happened. Love appreciates this article and its admonition. Suspicion says, "It was aimed at me." (For once, suspicion's fears are confirmed. It was.)

- Larry Ray Hafley, via Guardian of Truth, 08/15/96 [edited]

CONTEMPT

In Luke 18:9, we are told: "And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:"

Our English word contempt is an "ugly" word. It is the act of despising; viewing another with disdain, scorn and aversion. Having contempt makes it impossible to respect another human being; they are beneath consideration, they are worthless in one's eyes.

In the context of Luke 18:9, viewing others with contempt perfectly describes the self-righteous individual, who pretentiously esteems himself and at the same time maliciously despises others, feeling them to be worthless, of no value and despicable. This was the way that the Pharisee treated the tax collector in Luke 18. This was the way that Herod and his soldiers treated Jesus in Luke 23:11. Notice: "And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate."

It is nasty conceit whereby one has an inflated appreciation for his own virtue of righteousness. These think of themselves as just as holy as they need to be, and certainly holier than their neighbors, who would do quite well to imitate them. Tragically, their self-confident, inflated, high opinion is presented to God. They "trusted in themselves," and were not worthy to be compared to others.

Jesus said this man is not "justified," because "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:14). Let a man carefully examine his own heart with honesty and integrity: do I view others with contempt? Do I fail to respect others because I feel that they are not as righteous, virtuous, spiritual, or good as I am? The Lord is calling you to repent, humble yourself, that you may return to your house "justified" before Him. Have a "heart-to-heart" with yourself, friend: lose the arrogance. We all stumble in many ways (Jas. 3:2). "Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins." (Eccl. 7:20). All of us dare not to come short of the grace of God!

- Gary Smalley

- > "Ignorance may not kill you, but it will make you sweat a lot!"
 - > "A man cannot touch his neighbor's heart with anything less than his own!"
 - > "It is not the happy people who are thankful. It is the thankful people who are happy!"
 - > "There is no defeat except in no longer trying!"
 - > "Christ never told His disciples to stay at home and wait for sinners to come to them!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"There Is Power In A Lie!"* (Text: 2 Thess. 2:10-12); Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing!*