

## A) *Appointment in Baghdad*

"A rich and mighty prince once walked in his garden when one of his servants came rushing in. The servant cried that he had just encountered the Angel of Death in the marketplace and was startled by him. It appeared as though Death were seeking him. So, he begged his master to give him his fastest horse so that he could make haste and flee to Baghdad, which he could reach that same evening. The master consented and the servant galloped off on the horse.

On returning to his house, the prince himself met the Angel of Death, and questioned him, 'Why did you terrify and threaten my servant?' 'I did not threaten him; I only showed surprise in still finding him here. This very evening I have an appointment in Baghdad to meet him,' said Death."

– *Appointment in Baghdad, an old Middle Eastern Tale* – Author Unknown.

### Questions to consider?

- What's the truth that comes across in this story?
- What do you think about death?
- Do you believe death was meant to be a part of life?
- If there was a way to escape death, would you be interested in knowing what that way is?
- Other points or questions you may have in regard to death?

## B) *Christianity*

Christianity is unique in this: There is one thing upon which Christianity stands or falls. If you can prove that this one thing did or did not happen, you can actually prove Christianity is valid as the only true religion or invalid as a purely false religion.

**Question:** Can you guess what that one thing is?

*Biblical Reference...*

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

Matthew 28:1-8 ...<sup>5</sup>The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay...

### *C) The Evidence/Impact of the Resurrection of Jesus*

1. The emptiness of Jesus' tomb is the reason he is so widely known, and arguably, the most influential person in all human history. No one as popular as Jesus ever claimed as much as he did about himself and did "so little" as other popular people – never wrote a book, nor traveled 200 miles from home...

- Time is split by him.
- Two of the biggest holidays ever center around him.
- Most world religions have a place for him in their teaching.

2. It was the reason why the early Jewish Christian Church suddenly switched their worship from Saturday to Sunday.

3. It served as the centerpiece of the early church's preaching.

Acts 2:22-36, 4:2, 33 ...<sup>4:2</sup> They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead...

\* It is also the climax of all four gospels. See Matthew 28:1-8. For the other Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection, see Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-49, and John 20:1-21:14.

4. The resurrection of Jesus is the only thing that could possibly validate Jesus' claims about himself.

John 2:18-19<sup>18</sup> Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." John 2:20-22<sup>20</sup> The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"<sup>21</sup> But the temple he had spoken of was his body.<sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

5. Interestingly enough, the Bible's credibility depends on Jesus' resurrection as well.

(Consider John 2:20-22 above.)

## D) Proof for the Resurrection?

### 1) The Bible says it happened (*Admittedly biased - not necessarily a bad thing*)

- OT: Passages like Genesis 3:15, Psalm 22, and Isaiah 53 speak of the resurrection of God's suffering Messiah 4000BC-1000BC-700BC. There are over 300 prophecies spanning the OT age which the Messiah would fulfill.

- NT: See above.

### 2) Secular facts that help demonstrate the truthfulness of Christ's resurrection to all mankind.

a. The rapid spread of the early church in a hostile environment shows something amazing happened..

I. The Roman government was hostile to Christianity.

"Therefore to scotch the rumor (that he had set fire to Rome), Nero substituted culprits and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christ, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself... vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race" ... Annals, xv. 44. (Tacitus 64 AD, 35 years after Jesus' crucifixion.)

II. The Jewish leaders - the people were split - were hostile to Christianity

(Acts 8)

"At this time there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. Many people among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship.. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have reported wonders. And the tribe of Christians named after him, has not disappeared to this day." (Jewish Antiquities xviii,65) – Jewish historian Josephus.

b. Interesting facts these secular writings point out...

I. Jesus was a real historical figure.

II. Jesus' tomb was really empty.

*Question: Any ideas on how some explain the emptiness of Jesus' tomb?*

## ***E. Possible Explanations about Jesus' empty tomb: (The 5 most popular ideas follow...)***

- 1) Theft theory:** The disciples stole the body and made up the story. This was first used by the Jewish leaders (see Matthew 28:11-15). It is still popular today.
- 2) Swoon theory:** Christ didn't die but fell into a coma. The cool of the tomb revived him and he left the tomb.
- 3) Spiritual resurrection theory:** Jesus' body remained in the grave. His spirit rose. This is taught in some historically Christian churches. But . . . .
- 4) Hallucination theory:** Jesus' followers had a hallucination that he rose.
- 5) Muslim explanation:** Jesus was never crucified. It was just somebody who looked like him (Ahmed Deedat's book "*Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction*").

***Answers: 1. Theft theory – Tomb was guarded well & disciples died for their faith. 2. Swoon theory – Revive from crucifixion? 3-5. SR, Hall, Muslim Theories – Don't explain why his tomb was empty.***

\*"A British journalist and lawyer named Frank Morison set out to write the authoritative book exposing the resurrection as a myth. However, after painstakingly studying the evidence, he became a Christian, saying there was no question that the resurrection has 'a deep and profoundly historical basis'" ("Case for Christ," Lee Strobel)... There is no solid explanation for why his tomb is empty except for the resurrection. It should be said, however, that believing in this is still a matter of faith, but it is not to be considered blind faith.

\*A number of years ago, a rather prominent Jewish scholar, Pinchas Lapide, scoffed at easy dismissals of an event of such worldwide significance. In his book, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, Lapide argued that one must concede the emptiness of Jesus' tomb and the subsequent radical transformation of his disciples.

In Jesus' resurrection, God has given us a real historical event as a firm foundation on which to found our faith. In addition, our risen Lord did not keep us guessing about where the truth is, but pointed us directly to the Bible which is also founded on his resurrection. That is why we study the Bible and not other "scriptures." By studying the Bible we are only following the directions of Jesus, the resurrected Lord!

**Question:** *Why do you think we would begin a look at Jesus, Christianity, Faith Lutheran Church, Concepts about Hope, Happiness, Love, Life with such a lengthy talk about Jesus' resurrection?*

***F. Four important things Jesus' resurrection means:***

1. Having an historical event as the foundation of Christianity separates it from all other religions.
2. We can't ignore someone who has power over death, nor can we ignore that person's Teaching – the Bible alone. Why would we really want to, right?

Luke 24:25-27 - He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

3. Jesus would be an authoritative source, if not the only source, to turn to in moments of trouble and in those times when you question who you are and what your purpose in life is. Also the one who would not only have thoughts about what happiness, hope, love and life are, but the one who defined those very things and brought them into being.
4. Jesus would be the only person who holds the key to your immortality, to the "fountain of youth."

**Question:** What choices do we really have when it comes to understanding Jesus? Because of the claims he made about himself and his great influence, he really only left us with four options – Legend, Liar, Lunatic, or Lord? From the above there is overwhelming evidence that he truly existed (not legend), couldn't have lied or been a lunatic (influence and resurrection).

**For Further Study:** The four Gospels in the New Testament all speak about Jesus as they emphasize the same and different aspects of his life. These are the only eye witness reports we have of Jesus. Read the **Gospel of Mark** so that you can get a clearer picture of who Jesus was and what he did. Or take a look at the Gospel of John to understand what he truly claimed about himself. This will help give some valuable background for the next number of discussions. (Eventually read all the Gospels.)