

## **THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION (Part 1)**

**“Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified.  
He has risen; He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.”**

**Mark 16:6b**

This was the first Easter message, which the women at the open tomb received from the angel. God’s creation is governed by the principles of death, burial and resurrection. In Genesis, we read: “Every seed shall produce fruits after its own kind” (chapter 1:12). Jesus said: “Unless a kernel of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But when it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24). This means that Jesus speaks of His death as a glorification rather than a tragedy. He teaches us that the way to fruitfulness often leads through suffering and death.

### **Jesus’ death and resurrection**

The Christian belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is not blind faith. In fact, there is more empirical evidence for it than for any other event in ancient history. Numerous eyewitnesses saw Him, talked with and some even ate with Him both before and after His death and resurrection. The first person to whom He appeared at the open grave was Mary Magdalene. Next, He met His disciples several times and during forty days, also many others. At one occasion, Jesus came into sight of more than 500 people. The last is reported in Paul’s first letter for the Corinthian church (chapter 15:6). Paul mentions that most of these witnesses were still alive at the time of his writing. The four gospels are written a bit later. Nevertheless, except Luke, their writers Matthew, Mark and John were eyewitnesses, themselves, and most of the other witnesses were still alive at that time, too.

### **Not a Myth**

From the beginning, sceptical voices came up with a theory saying that these stories were myths fabricated by Jesus’ followers who wanted to deify Him. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such criticism reached a climax in international theological disputes. One popular personality within this stream was the German Rudolph Bultman. In England, there was an agnostic professor of Renaissance Literature at Oxford University who had specified himself as an expert in mythological literature. His name was C.S. Lewis. Independently from his personal beliefs as a scientist, he evaluated that from the beginning when reading the four gospels, he realized strong deviations from typical criteria identifying myths.

### **Typical critic arguments:**

a) His disciples stole the body (Matthew 27: 62-66; 28: 2-4; 11-15)

According to Matthew already when Jesus was buried, the Sanhedrin came up with the first conspiracy theory. They remembered Jesus’ words that He would die and rise after three days. For them, He was a betrayer, but they feared His influence on the people. Their perception was that the disciples could come, steal the corps, hide it and claim Jesus’ resurrection. This was why they asked the Roman governor Pilate to let the grave be officially sealed and guarded for three days. The gospel continues that on the third day, the watchmen saw an angel rolling away the stone from the tomb. Because of this, they were terrified and fell down, unconsciously. When the soldiers gave report of what had happened, the chief priest bribed and told them to spread the fake news that the disciples would have stolen the corps while they had fallen asleep. The question is: If this had been the case; how could the soldiers have reported what

had happened? Why couldn't the authorities also present the body of Jesus as a proof? In addition; if the soldiers could not fulfil their obligation, they usually would have had to pay for this with their lives!

b) The women missed the tomb (Matthew 28: 5-8)

If the women would have missed the right tomb, why didn't the authorities go to the right tomb to bring Jesus' body? Additionally, Peter and John would not have made the same mistake, and Joseph of Arimathea could have identified the right tomb, because it was his and he had buried Jesus there, himself.

Shortly after the stone had been rolled away, Mary Magdalena, Mary the mother of James, Solome and other women arrived at the tomb. After the Passover as it was common in their tradition, they wanted to embalm the corps with oils they had prepared, themselves. When they saw that the tomb was open and empty, they were afraid. Then they saw an angel who told them that Christ had risen from the death and that they should report this to the brethren.

The woman had gone to where the men had not been able to go because of fear. In their surrounding culture, women hardly counted as witnesses. The fact that they were there first to receive the Good News before the male disciples shows that God respects women highly. Therefore, we should also give a great appreciation for modern women.

c) Islam- the coma theory (John 19: 38.39)

Many Muslims say that Jesus was not dead, but fell into coma, so He later was revived in the tomb. Nevertheless, all records agree that Jesus really died on the cross. Pilate, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea confirmed it. In general, historians count Roman crucifixions as absolute deadly. If Jesus had not died, He could hardly have survived three days in the tomb, and He could not have come out from the grave clothes. Modern ideologists say that for them, it doesn't make sense when Jesus announced that within three days, He would rise again. They argue that in between, there were not exactly three days. However, in the culture of the oriental world up to date, a half day is counted as a full day. Jews, Greeks and Romans as well as all people who lived in Arabia counted days alike. Therefore, they considered a part of Friday, all of Saturday and a part of Sunday as three days.

Another proof of Jesus' resurrection can be seen in His disciples who didn't have much influence in the society, but they received great boldness to confront the religious politicians up to a point that they made them responsible for the blood of Jesus. If the disciples had not seen Jesus alive after His death, they would not have accomplished this.

d) Jesus lost consciousness

A recent argument says that Jesus only had lost His consciousness because of the exhaustion, pain and loss of blood. This is not realistic. Those who prepared Jesus for the burial would have noticed that He was not dead, and they would have sought medical help for Him. The question is also if He would have been strong enough to get out from the grave, by Himself. In His weakness and all alone, He could not have rolled the stone away, which weighed over a tonne. He could not have overcome the guards. Moreover, He could not have walked miles on feet wounded by spikes.

History stands on the fact that death is inevitable, and no human can avoid it. However, Jesus broke that circle. He conquered death by rising from the grave, and He verified His resurrection by appearing before many. His resurrection is the great confirmation of the new covenant just as the Exodus of the Children of Israel was the great confirmation of the old covenant. Paul states that if Christ had not been risen, then there would have been no deliverance from sin (1st Corinthians 15: 14-17). As Christians, we believe there is a glorious eternal life ahead of us. Jesus broke the bondage of death, and his resurrection is up to date the most amazing news the world has ever heard.

May the love of God, which passes human understanding, grant us the revelation knowledge that we need to continue believing in Him! May He grant us wisdom, patience, peace and health in these troublesome pandemic times! Our "African Church Father" Augustinus (354-430 A.D.) wrote: "Every human soul searches for rest and our souls are restless until we find ourselves in Jesus' saving arms."

If you have not received Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, I recommend Him to you. Amen.

Easter greetings and blessings, yours  
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