

EASTER SUNDAY INTERLUDE
Believing The Material Evidence Of Christ's Resurrection
(John 19:38-20:31)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

As we celebrate Christ's bodily resurrection today, we honor an essential doctrine in our entire Christian faith, for 1 Corinthians 15:14 KJV states, "(If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also vain."

However, to believe in Christ's resurrection, we must believe in a miracle that does not occur in our day!

Significantly, Proverbs 20:12 KJV claims, "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them," so God has given us ears and eyes to discern true material evidence. Consequently, it is important that we examine the material evidence involved to determine the validity of the claim that Christ bodily rose from the dead.

That first century material evidence no longer exists, so we are left relying on eyewitness accounts of Jesus' bodily resurrection. We must then examine the credibility of the reports of the eyewitnesses along with the credibility of the eyewitnesses themselves to discern the material credibility of Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead.

Need: *So we ask, "Does the material evidence involved truly testify that Jesus Christ bodily rose from the dead?"*

- I. The material evidence witnessed by John and Peter testified of Christ's resurrection, John 19:38-20:10:**
- A. John 19:38-40 states that Jesus' body was buried according to Jewish custom, being "wound" (v. 40 KJV, the Greek verb being *deo*, "bind, wrap up") in linen clothes with myrrh and aloes, the same verb *deo* used of Lazarus (John 11:44 KJV) who was "bound (*deo*) hand and foot by graveclothes." (T. D. N. T., v. II, p. 60)
 - B. This practice involved winding up Christ's body in long strips of linen that were mixed with 75 pounds of sticky myrrh and the fragrant powdered sawdust of aloes. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to John 19:40; Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, 1991, p. 225) "Starting at the feet, they would wrap to the armpits, put the arms down, then wrap to the neck. A separate piece was wrapped around the head . . . (Church Father) John Chrysostom, in the fourth century A. D., commented that 'the myrrh used was a drug which adheres so closely to the body that the graveclothes could not easily be removed.'" (Ibid., p. 225-226, citing John Chrysostom. *Homilies of St. John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprint 1969, p. 321)
 - C. John 20:5-7 claims that when Peter and John came to Christ's tomb the Sunday after His death, they saw Jesus' head wrapping lying apart from His body wrapping. The Greek word for "wrapped together" (v. 7 KJV) is *entetuligmenon*, the perfect passive participle of *entulisso*, "wrap up," so the head and body wrappings were still wound up in the sticky cocoon shapes that Joseph and Nicodemus had formed them, the wrappings were still lying in the same places where they had been left with the body, but the body was gone! (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 407; Wm. D. Mounce, The Analyt. Lex. to the Grk. N. T., 1993, p. 190, 191)
 - D. When John saw this display, he concluded that Jesus' body had gone through the graveclothes without moving them by His rising from the dead even if John did not yet know that Scripture foretold this event, John 20:8-9.
 - E. [The Shroud of Turin is often said to be the true graveclothes of Jesus. However, that shroud is a single sheet that covered the entire body, both front and back, what does not "bind" the feet and hands of the body as in the case of Lazarus or Jesus, and the Shroud of Turin is absent the sticky mixture of 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes described by Josh McDowell and John's record in John 19:39-40 and 20:7. In thus holding to the testimony in John's Gospel, we believe that the Shroud of Turin did **not** comprise Christ's true graveclothes!]
- II. The material evidence witnessed by Mary and Thomas testified of Christ's resurrection, John 20:10-29:**
- A. The evidence that was witnessed by Mary Magdalene testified of Jesus' bodily resurrection, John 20:10-18:
 - 1. Mary Magdalene had initially alerted Peter and John about the open tomb, and since she assumed that some people had taken Jesus' body away, she had voiced that claim to Peter and John, John 20:1-2.
 - 2. Mary then followed Peter and John back to the tomb, and after they left, she remained, weeping, v. 10-11a.
 - 3. She stooped to look into the tomb doorway and saw two angels in white, one sitting at the head and the other at the feet where Jesus' body had lain, John 20:11b-12. They asked why she wept and she replied that some people had removed Jesus' body and she did not know where they had laid Him, John 20:13b.
 - 4. Mary turned around and saw Jesus, but in her great grief she did not recognize Him, so Jesus asked her why she was weeping and whom was she seeking, John 20:14-15a.
 - 5. Supposing Him to be the gardener of what was apparently a rich man's garden tomb (Isaiah 53:9), Mary asked that if He had taken Jesus' body away to tell her that she might take it away, John 20:15b.
 - 6. Jesus then spoke her name, saying, "Mary," and she recognized Jesus by His familiar human voice, v. 16.

7. Christ then said, “Stop clinging to Me (for your benefit),” the command being a present middle imperative (*haptou*) with the *me* negative particle (Ibid., *U. B. S. Grk. N. T.*, p. 408; Ibid., Mounce, p. 96), Jn. 20:17a. Jesus explained that His resurrection and coming ascension had created a new relationship with Mary that made her trying to cling to Him an improper activity in view of new relationship, that Mary and Christ’s disciples were all now part of God’s family, John 20:17b (*Bible Know. Com., N. T.*, p. 342-343).
 8. Mary left the tomb and told the disciples that she had seen Jesus and that He told her these things, v. 18.
- B. The evidence that was witnessed by Thomas testified of Christ’s bodily resurrection, John 20:19-29:
1. That same evening, Jesus’ disciples were gathered behind closed doors for fear of the Jews, and Jesus appeared to them in their midst, John 20:19.
 2. He then showed them the crucifixion wounds in His hands and side, validating His bodily resurrection, leading His disciples to rejoice when they recognized their risen Lord, John 20:20-23.
 3. However, Thomas was absent from this event, so when the other disciples later told him they had seen the Lord, Thomas said that except he saw in Jesus’ hands the holes from the nails and put his finger in those holes and thrust his hand into the spear wound in Jesus’ side, he would not believe, John 20:24-25.
 4. Eight days later when the disciples met again behind closed doors, Thomas was with them, and Jesus appeared in their midst and told Thomas to reach his finger into the holes in His hands and to thrust his hand into His side and thus not doubt, but believe that He had risen, John 20:26-27.
 5. Thomas did not bother to thrust his finger or hand into Christ’s wounds, but merely exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28) The visible presence of the Lord and His obvious awareness of Thomas’ expressed doubt eight days before convinced Thomas that Jesus was risen from the dead and was God!
 6. Jesus responded, telling Thomas that because he had seen Him, Thomas had believed, but blessed were those who had not seen the risen Lord but had yet believed in His resurrection, John 20:29.

III. However, this material evidence of Christ’s resurrection rests on the credibility of the earliest eyewitnesses of Christ’s resurrection, so we examine the credibility of those witnesses (as follows):

- A. John wrote his testimony of believing Jesus rose from the dead by viewing His empty graveclothes in A. D. 85-90 (Ibid., Ryrie, p. 1492) 18-23 years after fellow eyewitness to the tomb Peter was martyred for Christ! (cf. John 21:15-25; 2 Peter 2:13-14; Ibid., Ryrie, p. 1765) However, John still wrote that Christ rose from the dead regardless of the great threat to his life for doing so, meaning that his witness about this event was true!
- B. Also, when John wrote his Gospel, the Gnostic cult strongly opposed the Christian beliefs that Christ as God was attached to a human body and that His body would be resurrected. (Ibid., Ryrie, p. 1492, 1770) John’s testimony of believing in Christ’s bodily resurrection *just in viewing Christ’s graveclothes directly counters Gnosticism* and *boldly* asserts the resurrection of Christ even at the threat to John’s life. His witness was true!
- C. Indeed, “Harvard law professor Simon Greenleaf . . . who lectured for years on how to break down testimony and determine whether or not a witness is lying, concludes: ‘It was therefore impossible that they (Jesus’ disciples) could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact. The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and unflinching courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths they asserted.’” (Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, 1991, p. 239-240, citing Simon Greenleaf. *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965. Reprint of 1874 ed., New York: J Cockroft & Co., p. 29)

IV. Based on this material evidence of Christ’s resurrection, credible eyewitness John wrote that we are responsible to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God that we might be saved, John 20:30-31:

- A. John added that Jesus performed many other attesting signs to His disciples that John did not record, Jn. 20:30.
- B. Nevertheless, these signs about the Lord’s empty graveclothes, about His appearance to Mary Magdalene and to Thomas were recorded that we readers of John’s Gospel might believe that Jesus is not only risen, but is therefore the Messiah and Son of God, and that when we believed, God would give us eternal life, John 20:31.

Lesson: *The material testimony of Christ’s empty graveclothes, Mary Magdalene’s identifying Jesus by His familiar voice and Christ’s crucifixion wounds as recorded by John who did so at great risk to his life shows that his testimony is true. Thus, we are required by God to believe in Christ for salvation from sin to have eternal life!*

Application: *May we believe John’s testimony of the material evidence of Christ’s resurrection, and by believing, to trust in Christ as Messiah and Son of God Who died on the cross for our sin that we might have eternal life.*