

The Garden Tomb

John 19:30–42

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. *The Resurrection Is Central to Christianity—*

1. In the words of Theodosius Harnock, “Where you stand in regard to the fact of the resurrection is in my eyes no longer Christian Theology; to me Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection.”
2. Jesus made it so:
 - a. John 2:19
 - b. Matthew 12:40
 - c. Matthew 27:63
 - d. Luke 24:21
3. The Apostles made it so (I Corinthians 15:12–19)

B. *The Resurrection a Historical Certainty—*

1. Numerous theories have been propounded to explain away the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
 - a. The wrong tomb
 - b. The stolen body
 - c. The swoon theory
 - d. The hallucination theory
 - e. The Simon theory
 - f. Numerous others too silly to dignify by mentioning them.
2. None is seriously held to be the theory which explains the fact that the tomb was empty. Why?
 - a. The evidence is so overwhelming that no honest, intelligent inquirer can set the evidence aside.
 - b. This itself is evidence in favor of the resurrection.

II. DISCUSSION:

A. *The Physical Evidence: The Tomb of Jesus (Luke 24:1-3)*

1. It was a solid rock tomb (Matthew 27:60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53).
 - a. There was no possibility of entrance from outside (Mat. 27:60, Mark. 16:3–4; Luke 24:10).
 - b. There was no possibility of escape from within (John 19:39–40; 11:44).

2. It was a new tomb (John 19:41; Luke 23:53).
 - a. There was no mistaking the body.
 - (1) His was the only body in the tomb.
 - (2) “wherein was never man yet laid”
 - (3) “wherein never man before was laid”
 - b. There was no possibility of attributing the miracle to another (II Kings 13:21).
 - (1) Elisha died and was buried in a sepulcher.
 - (2) While another man was being carried to burial a band of Moabites approached. The men put the dead man in Elisha’s sepulcher because it was nearby. When his body touched Elisha’s bones he returned to life.
 - (3) There never having been another body in this tomb it was not possible to attribute the miracle to a cause other than the fulfillment of His own predictions (John 2:19; Matthew 12:40).
3. It was a borrowed tomb (Matthew 27:60)
 - a. The sepulcher belonged to Joseph of Arimathaea. It was “his own new tomb.”
 - b. It was donated for the burial of Jesus because it was nearby in a garden adjacent to Golgotha which helped overcome the constraints of time because the Sabbath was nigh (John 19:41–42; Mark 15:42).
 - c. That the disciples did not know the location of this tomb is dismissed by this simple fact.
 - (1) I have burial plots in Canute, OK. While you may not know where that is, I am quite familiar with the location.
 - (2) It is not unusual to make provisions for where one will be buried (cf. Genesis 23).
 - d. Furthermore, the selection of this burial place fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 53:9).
4. It was a guarded tomb (Matthew 27:65)
 - a. A “watch” of Roman custodians consisted of “four quaternions” or four squads of four men working in shifts every four hours (see: Acts 12:4; cf. Matthew 28:11–15).
 - b. The placing of this watch further refutes the idea that the wrong tomb was visited on that resurrection morning.
 - (1) Not only did Joseph know where his tomb was located, but the Jewish and Roman authorities knew where it was.
 - (2) The obvious concern of the Jews that Jesus some how gain credibility in the eyes of the people demanded that they find out where the body of Jesus had been laid to rest.
 - (3) The need for Pilate to secure his position over the Jews after the events of the previous day necessitated that he secure the right location. Therefore, he entrusted the matter to the Jews themselves.
 - c. That no mischief was accomplished is evident from the facts:

- (1) Such a force could easily have repelled eleven men (Luke 22:38).
 - (2) The report of the soldiers and their subsequent bribery as recorded in the text of Matthew substantiates it (Matthew 28:15).
5. It was a sealed tomb (Matthew 27:66)
- a. "So they went and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone..."
 - (1) The seal was not intended to make the sepulcher impregnable (Daniel 6:17).
 - (2) The seal represents the authority and protection of the Roman government (1 Kings 21:8; Esther 8:8).
 - b. It prevented the tomb from being opened without it being detected.
 - (1) Verifies Jesus was dead and in the tomb (cf. Romans 4:11; I Corinthians 9:2).
 - (2) Discouraged a fraudulent removal of the body (Daniel 6:17; Revelation 5:9).
 - (3) It served the same purpose as the "yellow police ribbon" at a crime scene serves today.
6. It was an inspected tomb (Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55–56)
- a. The tomb location, situation and condition were well known.
 - (1) Joseph of Arimathea had hewed it out himself (Mat. 27:60).
 - (2) Nicodemus, the women and John had been to the tomb on Friday evening (Jno. 19:35-42).
 - (3) The Pharisees and Sadducees knew where the tomb was (Mat. 27:66).
 - (4) The Roman guard knew where it was (Mat. 28:13).
 - (5) Both Mary, Peter and John were all three at the same tomb on Sunday morning (Jn. 20:2-8).
 - b. Was the body of Jesus "misplaced"?
 - (1) Based on the narrative accounts, the tomb of Jesus was the most visited spot in Jerusalem that Passover weekend.
 - (2) It is possible that someone may have gone to the wrong tomb, but impossible that everyone would have gone to the wrong tomb!
7. It was an empty tomb (Luke 24:1-3).
- a. All parties to the burial of Jesus agree that He was dead (Mark 15:42-47; John 19:31-42).
 - b. All parties to the burial of Jesus agree that His body was in the tomb (Matthew 27:63–64; 27:66; Mark 15:45-47).
 - c. All parties to the burial of Jesus agree that the tomb was empty on Sunday morning (John 20:2-8; Matthew 28:11-15).

B. The Eyewitness Testimony—

- 1. The appearances of Jesus to Individuals :
 - a. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18)
 - b. Simon Peter (Luke 24:34; I Corinthians 15:5)

- c. James [the Lord's brother] (I Corinthians 15:7)
 - d. Saul (Paul) of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-9; I Corinthians 15:8)
2. The appearances of Jesus to small groups
- a. The women (Matthew 28:9)
 - b. The two on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:33-35)
 - c. The Eleven without Thomas (John 20:19-23)
 - d. The Eleven including Thomas (John 20:24-29)
 - e. The seven disciples in Galilee (John 21:1-14)
 - f. The Eleven on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:4-13; I Corinthians 15:7)
3. The appearance of Jesus to five hundred brethren at one time (I Corinthians 15.6):
- a. One man's testimony might be rejected.
 - b. A small group might be mistaken on one occasion.
 - c. A large gathering does not share a hallucination.
4. Are these witnesses credible?
- a. What possible motive would any have for perpetrating such a lie?
 - b. Paul is the test case (II Corinthians 11:21-33).

III. CONCLUSION:

A. The Garden Tomb Is Unlike Any Tomb Associated with Religion—

1. The Tombs of the other founders of the world's religions—
 - a. Buddha is buried in Uttar Pradesh, India
 - b. Mohammed is buried in Medina in modern Saudi Arabia.
 - c. Confucius is buried in Kufow, Shangdon Province in China.
2. Each of these tombs is occupied and regularly adorned by worshippers paying their respects to the DEAD! However, Christians remember Him who died, was buried and ROSE on the third day and ascended into heaven to come again.

B. Do You Have the Hope of the Garden Tomb?

1. Believe unto righteousness (Romans 10:9-10)
2. Repent unto Life (Acts 11:18)
3. Confess unto salvation (Romans 10:9-10)
4. Be Baptized unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)