

The Old Paths

Volume 14, Issue 2

March 4, 2007

“Did Jesus Resurrect From The Dead?”

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Recent news reports tell us that movie director James Cameron claims to have located ossuaries (bone boxes) which are said to have contained the bones of Jesus of Nazareth, Mary Magdalene, and their boy, Judah. ^(1,2) Of course, such a claim has outraged those of us who believe the Bible. Yet, what does this claim mean to those of us who believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ (Lk. 24:39-43)? In simple terms, if we believe what the Bible says, then Cameron's claim that he found a box bearing Jesus' name that at one time contained His bones means NOTHING. We don't believe this man's claims because we believe the Bible account of the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week (Mk. 16:9). Christ left His tomb empty (Matt. 28:6; Mk. 16:6). No one had a chance to fill a box with His bones!

Since Mr. Cameron has made this claim, I thought it would be a good occasion for us to reexamine the facts surrounding Christ's resurrection, as well as study the Bible and see that names such as "Jesus" and "Mary" were common in the first century.

What Has The Bible Revealed About Christ's Resurrection?

The Bible not only states that Christ resurrected (Matt. 28:6; Mk. 16:6), but even quotes from

the enemies of Christ, who admitted He had risen from the dead. The Bible says that upon hearing about Christ's resurrection, His enemies, namely the chief priests and elders, offered bribes to the soldiers guarding Christ's tomb to make sure they lied about the whereabouts of the body of Christ. This fact is revealed in Matthew 28:11-15: *"Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."*

In addition to the enemies of Christ who attested to His resurrection, Christ's disciples saw the empty tomb, and then saw Him after His resurrection (Matt. 28:16-17; Lk. 24:39-43; Jn. 20:1-29). The apostle to the Corinthians said that not only did the apostles see Jesus (I Cor. 15:5, 7), but there were also in excess of 500 witnesses who saw the resurrected Christ (I Cor. 15:6)! Luke tells us that Jesus was seen by Cleopas and another man, who spoke with Him, and "sat at meat" with Him until He "vanished out of their sight" (Lk. 24:13-31). *"And last of all he was seen of me also (Paul, JJ), as of one born out of due time" (I Cor. 15:8).* The Bible says Christ resur-

rected. Therefore, there is no ossuary or tomb that could belong to the Lord! God not only makes the claim that Christ resurrected, but also records many people who were witnesses to this truth. We don't know what happened to Mary Magdalene, nor how she died, etc., but we do know that Jesus raised the third day, the first day of the week (Mk. 16:9; Lk. 24:1, 21). *"Neither his flesh did see corruption"* (Acts 2:27, 31; Ps. 16:10).

What If Christ Did Not Resurrect?

In light of Mr. Cameron's claim, some folks have been asked about the possibility of Christ not being resurrected, and what that would mean to Christianity. Amazingly, there are those who have said that their feelings and thoughts about Christ and God's word would not change *even if* Jesus did not resurrect! This should not be surprising, for there are many "religious" people today who deny Christ's resurrection. Yet, the Bible says that there are certain things that are true if Christ did not resurrect. Let us read what the Bible says and see what a serious and terrible thought it is if Christ did not resurrect on the third day as the Bible teaches.

"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:14-19).

Remember also that Jesus is "declared to be the Son of God with power, according

to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4)! It is because of the resurrection that baptism has its power (I Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3-6)! Therefore, we can see what a serious matter this is if Christ did not resurrect!

Not only is this the case, but think of the apostles and early Christians who stood before men and declared Christ's resurrection at the risk of their own lives! They preached just 50 days after the Passover where were gathered many folks who could have successfully denied the claims of the resurrection if the apostles had been lying! After this time, we see apostles consistently preaching the resurrection of Christ and risking life and limb to do so. Can we seriously conclude that men such as these would risk their lives knowing that they were lying the whole time, perpetuating a myth?

There Were Many Called "Jesus" And "Mary" In The First Century.

Those who are schooled in the first century culture tell us that the name "Jesus" (Hebrew: "Joshua") was a common name, as it is today. Therefore, we can see why Jesus was repeatedly referred to as "*Jesus of Nazareth*" by men as well as demons (Matt. 26:71; Mk. 1:24, 10:47, 14:67, 16:6; Lk. 4:34, 18:37, 24:19; Jn. 1:45, 18:5, 7, 19:19; Acts 2:22; 6:14, 10:38, 22:8, 26:9). Men called Him "*Jesus of Nazareth*" to distinguish Him from any other "Jesus" that lived in the area at the time. Such a name distinguishes Him from others such as "*Jesus, which is called Justus*" (Col. 4:11). Such a designation tells us our Savior is not the "Jesus" (i.e., Joshua, Heb. 4:8, KJV) who led the people into Canaan after Moses' death!

Just as there were many Je-

sus' during this time, there were also many women named "Mary" (Hebrew: "Miriam"). In the New Testament, we read of at least seven women named "Mary." We read about Mary Magdalene (Jn. 19:25, 20:1, 18), and Mary the mother of James (Lk. 24:10; Matt. 27:61, 28:1). We also read of Mary, the mother of Christ (Matt. 1:16, 13:55), Mary the wife of Cleopas (Jn. 19:25), John Mark's mother, Mary (Acts 12:12), a Mary who lived in Rome (Rom. 16:6), and Martha and Lazarus' sister, Mary (Lk. 10:38-42; John 11, 12).

As we can see, to read the names "Jesus" and "Mary" on a certain ossuary from the first century ought not cause a thinking public to jump to the false conclusion that Jesus did not resurrect from the dead.

Conclusion

Having studied the resurrection, may we be thankful to God for this great event, and may we prepare ourselves for the future resurrection in which "*All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*" (Jn. 5:28-29).

Let us be thankful for Christ's resurrection, for His resurrection guarantees our resurrection one day! This is what is taught in I Corinthians 15:20. "*But now is Christ risen*

from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (See also: I Cor. 15:23). In addition, we read Paul's preaching at Mars Hill when he told folks that the resurrection and judgment of men is assured because God, "*hath raised him (Christ) from the dead*" (Acts 17:31).

I do not know the reason why ossuaries have the names "Jesus," "Mary," and "Judah" carved on them, but I do know the truth about Christ's resurrection. Our Lord and Savior resurrected (Matt. 28:6)! Mr. Cameron may have made headlines with his claim, but it is not the truth.

Let us remember this fact, believe on Christ, repent of our sins, and be baptized before it is too late (Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21; II Cor. 6:2).

Endnotes:

⁽¹⁾ This claim of Cameron is not new. In fact, I remember watching a movie 5-6 years ago with a similar storyline. It starred a very young-looking Antonio Banderas and a woman who was the archaeologist who claimed to have found Jesus' tomb with His bones in an ossuary. At the end of the movie, the people discovered that the name "Jesus" on the ossuary was on there because the box contained the bones of a "disciple" of Jesus.

⁽²⁾ The bones are no longer in the boxes because when they were first discovered in 1980, the archaeologists buried the bones, per Israeli law.

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