

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

RLJ-1992

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PART 89: THE BIG LIE

INTRODUCTION

An angel of the Lord descended from heaven to the tomb. The light emanating from him was blinding and the Roman soldiers watched in amazement as he broke the seal, effortlessly rolled the stone aside and sat upon it; seemingly defying the guards, who were overcome with fear at the sight. **Matthew 28:2-4**

The women were approaching the tomb to embalm the body of Jesus while the Roman watch was simultaneously making their way into the city to the palace of Caiaphas. **verse 11a**

THE BIG LIE

With great fear the Roman soldiers told how a powerful being of light had rolled away the heavy stone covering the entrance to the tomb, Jesus had walked out looking unhurt, and then He simply vanished from sight. **verse 11b**

Such startling news was important enough for Caiaphas to justify a council of political and religious leaders. They were shaken by the news of Jesus' apparent resurrection; the God-man had a persistent way of surprising them with unexpected actions and they discussed what should be done.

1. The disciples of Jesus would undoubtedly claim Jesus had been resurrected.
2. It was also not improbable that the God-man would publicly appear to cement the idea that He was the Messiah.
3. If so, the guilt associated with putting Jesus to death would be attributed to them despite their careful scheming.
4. They were forced to acknowledge that the Roman watch at the tomb had failed to prevent His body from being stolen.
5. They concluded the only solution was to bribe the soldiers and have them spread a lie in an effort to convince the public that the body of Jesus had been stolen.

verse 12

It is interesting that the ungodly Jewish leadership did not send their own soldiers to verify that Jesus was not in the tomb; the testimony of the Roman soldiers was sufficient to convince them that the God-man's body was gone.

Even though a detachment of Roman soldiers had described a supernatural display of power that should have resonated with the Jewish religious leadership given the interaction of angels in the Old Testament, they chose to harden their hearts and offered the soldiers a large sum of money to conceal the truth and propagate the lie that they had fallen asleep and the disciples of Jesus had taken the body. **verse 13**



This course of action was absurd for the following reasons:

1. A Roman watch consisted of four men. How likely was it that they fell asleep... in the open air of a cemetery... all at once?
2. What is the probability that Roman soldiers failing to do their duty? Not likely given that such a failure was a serious offense that left the other soldiers in the unit vulnerable to attack. This is why the offender(s) was/were beaten to death with clubs in front of the unit to serve as a deterrent to the other men.
3. Were the four Roman soldiers sleeping so soundly that they were not awakened by the noise associated with a great stone in front of the tomb rolling aside and the subsequent removal of Jesus' body?
4. How likely was it that the eleven apostles came to the tomb unseen and left with the body of Jesus without being observed by anyone?
5. Since the Roman soldiers were soundly asleep, how did they know the disciples of Jesus were the culprits?

Caiaphas assured the Roman soldiers they would be protected. They only needed to propagate the lie, and when it inevitably came to the ears of Roman authority, no harm would come for this pretended breach of duty because bribes would be paid.

The ungodly Jewish leadership knew the character of Pontius Pilate and the army officers; they could easily be bribed to keep quiet. Pilate would let things be as he had until the Sanhedrin had demanded he step in prior to the death of Jesus. They had no intention of doing so concerning this matter. **verse 14**

The unscrupulous soldiers took the bribe money and proliferated the big lie. Matthew makes a point of saying the lie was going strong years later when he wrote his account. **verse 15**

Matthew's narrative was written sometime before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. This event was prophesied by Jesus and such a disastrous incident would certainly have been noted by Matthew.

FULL CIRCLE

This action of Caiaphas ironically verified what Jesus had stated about someone rising from the dead and people refusing to believe it. **Luke 16:27-31**

The lie that the apostles stole the body of Jesus is still repeated today in Jewish history books. The following information is a contemporary view of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus from the viewpoint of Caiaphas, except in this case his name was Solomon Grayzel, a rabbi displaying the same characteristics. He authored the book, *A History of the Jews*, which was a compendium of Judah's destruction in 586 B.C. to the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948.

A HISTORY OF THE JEWS

by Solomon Grayzel

Jewish Publication Society of America, 1948

Excerpt from pages 135-136

The soldiers nailed Joshua to the cross. Over his head they fastened sign upon which they inscribed the crime for which he had been condemned to die. It read: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews". A small group of sad onlookers stood by. Were they still expecting a miracle? Was he still expecting to be saved.

He could not endure the torture for long. Late in the afternoon he expired, but not before he had uttered the anguished cry: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" words found in the Book of Psalms.

The Hope Restored – Among the Jews it was considered a disgrace to leave a dead body exposed. Joshua's friends bribed the Romans to give his body to them. They tenderly laid it in a cave near by, covered the entrance to the cave with a huge rock, and agreed to return, in order to bring the body to proper burial.

They scattered; the end of all their hopes had come. But when some of them came to keep their appointment at the cave, they found it empty. The body had mysteriously disappeared. For those who had but yesterday expected a miraculous deliverance, who had been taught the coming of the Messiah meant the resurrection of the dead, it was not impossible to see a miracle in the emptiness of the cave.

Clearly their beloved leader may have died, but he had been resurrected and taken up into heaven. Some day soon, if his words were to be believed, he would return and live among them to the end of time.

The Nazarenes – This hope his followers ever refused to yield. They used to gather in the garret [a top floor room] of one of the houses where one of them lived. This small group

of Galilean Jews used to recount the stories of Joshua's life and their experiences with him. The more they talked about him the more marvelous were the stories they found to tell.

They read the holy books (Old Testament), and the more they read them the more references to their departed leader they thought they discovered. Someone made a collection of these references, and used them to persuade other Jews of the truth of their belief that Joshua the Nazarene was the expected Messiah.

The tragedy of Joshua was now over; the glorification of Jesus had begun. But the tragedy of the Jewish people who he had loved was continuing and was destined to be intensified in his name.

The viewpoint expressed by Grayzel is indicative of modern Jewry. This fabricated story has been around for 2,000 years and the Jews who believed it perished. The men and women were taken to hell, where you can imagine they cursed Caiaphas and the host of rabbis for circulating an insidious lie which condemned them to hell and an eternity in the Lake of Fire. **Revelation 20:11-15**

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?