

NICK GUY & THE EMPTY TOMB AFFAIR

NICK GUY, VOLUME 1

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THEME: What happened to the body of Jesus three days after His crucifixion?

NOTES: The resurrection of Jesus is central to Christianity. Indeed, without a resurrection there is no Christianity. If Jesus had simply been crucified and buried we would have no hope beyond this life. Jesus' teachings and example would still be valuable in showing us how to live good lives, but He would have no power to remove from us the guilt of sin.

In this installment of the Nick Guy Series we deal with the three main explanations as to what happened to the body of Jesus after He was laid in the tomb.

THEORY #1 - THE SWOON THEORY: The first theory is called the "Swoon Theory." This explanation holds that Jesus did not really die on the cross, but rather only fainted. His body was placed in the tomb where He revived, rose up, rolled the stone away from the entrance to the tomb and walked out, appearing to His disciples claiming to be their "risen" Savior.

Problems with the Swoon Theory, Problem #1: Crucifixion as practiced by the Romans, was a very brutal and effective form of execution. It would be very unlikely that a victim of crucifixion would escape death.

Even before the execution is carried out, the condemned man was tied to a post and brutally whipped. The whip they used had a sturdy handle with long leather straps on it. Sharp, jagged pieces of metal and bone were woven into the straps, and when those pieces hit the body they ripped and tore the skin off of the victim's back. The beating that preceded crucifixion could be enough to kill a man, but the Romans were whipping a victim just up until the point of death.

As to crucifixion itself, the victim was nailed to the cross. With his arms over the cross beam, the executioners pounded nails just at the depression at the front of each wrist. The legs were placed together and a large nail was driven through them, with the knees bent a little bit. It was hard for the victim to breath. In order to do so he would have to pull himself up. As his arms grew tired, cramps began to develop, making it harder to do this. Because the pectoral muscles were paralyzed and the intercostal muscles couldn't act, he would be able to take air in, but he couldn't let it out. By pushing up with his knees, he'd able to breathe out.

Eventually carbon dioxide would build up in the lungs and bloodstream and the cramps began to subside. This allowed him to push up to exhale from time to time. After a while, orthostatic collapse through poor blood circulation to the heart and brain would

occur. Under normal circumstances death would be caused primarily by heart failure. This whole ordeal could last up to 3 days. But, many times, the Romans would break the legs of the victims. This kept them from being able to raise themselves up to breathe, and cause them to die sooner.

Now, in the case of Jesus, the Biblical account records that the Romans, finding Jesus already dead, didn't break his legs, and that He remained on the cross only three hours, not three days. In spite of that fact that the Romans were very efficient in their executions, could it be that His body was removed from the cross before He actually died?

Perhaps, except for this: The Bible also records that, rather than break Jesus' legs, the Romans put a spear into His side, causing blood and water to pour out. If for some reason He wasn't dead already, that spear would have killed Him for sure. The water that came out of His side was undoubtedly from the sac of pericardial fluid that surrounds the heart. The spear must have ruptured this sac which would have caused sudden death.

Problems with the Swoon Theory, Problem #2: Even if Jesus had somehow survived crucifixion, a fair question to ask is: Would He have been able to remove the stone that sealed His tomb?

Jesus was buried in a tomb that have been hewn out of rock, like a cave. Tombs of this type would have an entrance of about 4½ to 5 feet high. In front of the entrance would be a trough or a groove cut into the rock, with the lowest part directly in front of the entrance. Above the entrance, off to one side, a stone weighing between 1½ to 2 tons would be placed, which would be held in place with a block. Once the body was placed inside the tomb, the block would be removed, allowing the stone to roll down the groove and cover the tomb's entrance.

It would be impossible for a man, especially one who had just survived a brutal beating and crucifixion, to have the strength to move a 1½ to 2 ton stone uphill from the entrance of the tomb.

Also, even if Jesus had survived the crucifixion and had been able to move the stone from the entrance of the tomb, in His beaten and battered condition, how likely is it that He would have been able to inspire His disciples to believe that He was a conquering King?

THEORY #2 - THE STOLEN BODY THEORY: The second theory holds that the disciples of Jesus came at night, snuck around the sleeping Roman Guard stationed to watch over the tomb, and stole His body, claiming afterwards that He had risen from the dead.

Problems with the Stolen Body Theory, Problem #1: As with the first theory, the weight of the stone covering the entrance of the tomb presents a problem. Even eleven

men would have a tough time rolling a 1½ to 2 ton stone uphill. And performing this feat without disturbing the sleeping Roman Guard.

Problems with the Stolen Body Theory, Problem #2: Roman Guard Unit stands as one of the finest fighting units to ever exist.

A Roman Guard Unit would consist of anywhere from 4 to 16 men. Each man was responsible to protect the six feet of ground around him. Sixteen men could protect an area of 36 yards against a large force of men and be able to hold it. Important in this feat was the placement of each man. Four men were placed directly in front of what they were sent to protect. The other 12 would be asleep in a semi-circle in front of them. Each group of four take a four hour shift. So, every soldier would stand guard for 4 hours and rest for 12. To penetrate this defense, one would first have to walk over the guards on the ground, and then face those standing.

The Roman Guard were well-armed and well-trained. A leather corset covered their breast, with something like scales of iron or bronze over that. They wore a helmet of iron on their head. They also carried a shield for protection. A pike, a sword and a dagger were their offensive weapons.

Discipline in the Roman Army was very strict. If a soldier were derelict in their duties, could be executed. That kind of penalty inspired the Roman Soldier to be very faithful in his allegiance and very attentive to his duty.

The likelihood of eleven civilians being able to overcome a Roman Guard Unit must be considered next to impossible.

Problems with the Stolen Body Theory, Problem #3: An explanation offered, in fact, according to the Biblical account, the one the Roman Guard was bribed to use, is that the disciples of Jesus stole His body while the Guard slept. Even if the Guard was derelict in their duty to this extent, how sound of sleepers must they have been for the disciples to move the 1½ to 2 ton stone from the entrance of the tomb without disturbing their slumber? Also, if they were asleep at the time, how did the Roman Guards know that it was the disciples who stole the body, or that the body was even stolen at all?

Problems with the Stolen Body Theory, Problem #4: It must also be remembered that ten of the eleven disciples of Jesus suffered martyrdom (with the eleventh, John, being tortured and exiled) for proclaiming something (the resurrection of Jesus) that they would have known to be a lie. It does not seem likely that anyone would suffer to the extent they did for something they know to not be true.

THEORY # 3 - THE RESURRECTION THEORY: The final theory is that Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried in the tomb, and three days later rose from the dead. Odd as it might seem, when all of the data is examined and weighed, this is the most likely of the three theories to be true.

Jesus appeared at numerous times to numerous people after His resurrection. The list includes:

- To Mary Magdalene, shortly after his resurrection (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18).
- To the women returning from the empty tomb (Matthew 28:8-10).
- To two disciples on the road to Emmaus. (Mark 16:12,13; Luke 24:13-35).
- To Peter (Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5).
- To his disciples, with Thomas being absent (Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23).
- To his disciples, this time with Thomas present (John 20:24-29).
- To his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 28:16; John 21:1,2).
- To 500 believers at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6).
- To James (1 Corinthians 15:7).
- To his disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20).
- To his disciples at His ascension into heaven (Luke 24:50-53; Act 1:1,2).
- To Paul, on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6; 1 Corinthians 15:8).

RESOURCES: One of the best resources on this topic is Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. He also deals a bit more in depth in his book *The Resurrection Factor*. www.josh.org or www.leestrobels.com