

 **Main Street**
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Mark 15:42-16:8
“Empty Tomb, Absent Lord”

April 16, 2017
(Easter: The Resurrection of the Lord)

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“Following Christ From City Center!”

MARK 15:42-16:8 "EMPTY TOMB, ABSENT LORD"

Time	1) 15:42-45 Joseph Obtains The Officially Certified Dead Body (3x), 4 kai.	3 MALE OUTSIDERS
42	<i>And</i> when (Friday) evening had come, since it was "the day of Preparation," (that is, the day before the Sabbath),	Dead (3:00pm), No Family/Friend, 15:34, 37 Dual Time, c. 4:00pm FRIDAY, Footnote: Non-Jewish Readers
Act		3 Characters : Joseph (All 4 Gospels) + Pontius Pilate + Centurion
43a	a1 JOSEPH of Arimathea, a respected member of the council,	Acts 8:2, 13:29, Non-Galilean, Credentials, 14:64, 15:1 "all"
	2 who was himself looking for the kingdom of God,	Missed The Point! //Mk. 12:28-34, Other Victims Not Yet Dead?
b	3 took courage and went to PILATE,	Dt. 21:22-23, m. Sanh. 6:5, Before Sundown, Mk. 6:29(Friends Of John)
c	b and asked for <u>the body (corpse) of Jesus.</u>	Not A Sympathizer, Risky Request Made
		Three Witnesses To The Death, Two Who Touched Him
44a	a'1 <i>And</i> Pilate wondered (Gk. <i>thambeomai</i>) if he were already <i>dead</i> ;	(Should take longer!, 15:44) 1: Dead
b	2 <i>and</i> summoning the CENTURION, he asked him whether he was already <i>dead</i> .	(Death Squad, 15:39) 2: Dead
45a	3 <i>And</i> when he learned from centurion that he was <i>dead</i> ,	(No coma or swoon) 3: Dead
b	b' he granted <u>the body (corpse)</u> to Joseph.	Jews Buried Enemies (J.W. 3.377), Not To Family, "King of the Jews" Providence: Without Joseph's Intervention, Body Left To Rot
	2) 15:46 Actions Of Joseph In Two Parts: bought/stone, 4 kai.	v.46, Parataxis (kai [4x])
46a	a <i>And</i> he <u>bought a linen shroud,</u>	And he bought a linen shroud, sindon, Much To Do/Time Short/Minimum Requirements/Delegated? Action 1
b	<i>and</i> taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud,	(Not washed? Rush? 14:8) Action 2
		Issue Of Ritual Uncleaness At Passover
c	b <i>and</i> laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock;	(Rock Shelf, 1 Year, Then Ossuary) Action 3
d	<i>and</i> he <u>rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.</u>	(Tomb robbers, Animals, Is. 53:9) Action 4
		No Common Grave, Not Left To Scavengers
	3) v.47 At Least Two Women See Burial Site = No Mistaken Location.	
47	Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were observing where he was laid.	15:40-41, 47, 16:1 Two Eyewitnesses: Continuity, 6:3, Jn. 19:25 Two Sons: Joses/James (15:40)
Time/Act	2') 16:1-4 Actions Of The Women In Two Parts: bought/stone, 4 kai.	
1a	a <i>And</i> when the Sabbath was past,	Pious Jews: 1st Star, SATURDAY, 3 FEMALE INSIDERS
b	Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, <i>and Salome,</i>	3rd Added To v.47
Time/Act	<u>bought spices</u> so that they might go and anoint him.	//14:8, Rites: Cover Odor
2a	<i>And</i> very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen.	SUNDAY (double reference) vv.1-4, Parataxis (kai, 4x)
		Resurrection = Last Thing On Their Minds
3	b <i>And</i> they were saying to one another,	
Question	"Who will <u>roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?</u> "	
4	<i>And</i> looking up,	
Answer	they saw that the stone <i>was</i> rolled back– it was very large.	Passive Voice = Divine Action
		Stone Removal Not For Jesus To Get Out, But For Them To See In!
	1') 16:5-8 Resurrection Certified By Heavenly Authority (3X), 4 kai.	Unlikely Witnesses!
	As Angel = Seated, White, Right Side, God's Knowledge, Commands, Assures, Hope Of Hosea 6:2	
5a	a <i>And</i> entering the tomb, they <u>saw</u> a young man sitting on the right side (i.e. place of honor)	To Begin Anointing, Entering Tomb/Amazed (a) //14:51, 62, Angelic Speech (b)
	dressed in a white robe (i.e. an angel), and they were amazed (Gk. <i>thambeomai</i>).	Typical, 2 Macc. 3.26, 56
		Confirms Person/Fate/Place, Faithful Ones Are Finally Not Faithful
b	b1 <i>And</i> he said to them,	//1 Cor. 15:3-5, New World Revealed, 5 Parts To Divine Revelation:
6a	"Do not be amazed;	Contradiction Of Experience, Command (1)
b	you seek Jesus of Nazareth, "the one who was crucified."/	Angelic Foreknowledge (2)
c	2a He has been raised ./	(divine passive, i.e. by God) No. 1: 9:9, Raised By Tough God (3a)
d	b he is not here ./	(body exalted to glory) No. 2: Entered Kingdom (3b)
e	c see the place where they laid him./	(check it out for yourself!) No. 3: Neg. Verification (3c)
		Acts 2:23-24, Jesus Is Now On The Loose! Wild And Free
7	b'1 But go, tell his disciples <i>and Peter</i> that he is going before <i>you</i> to Galilee;	14:31, Forgiven, Command To Tell (4)
	2 there <i>you</i> will <u>see</u> him,	"going before" = proago = Military Term
	as he told <i>you</i> ."	you (3x), Verification = Promised Appearance, 9:9, 14:28 (5)
		Women Also, Jesus Leads The Faithless! Is. 42:16, 43:8 (LXX) Echoes
8a	a' <i>And</i> they went out and fled from the tomb,	terror and ecstasy + fear, Leaving Tomb/Astonished
	for trembling and astonishment (ecstasy) had come upon them;	Women Flee Like Disciples, 9:6
b	<i>and</i> they said nothing to anyone,	9:6, Gen. 45:3, Fear (4:40-41, 6:50-51, 9:6), No Heroes Among Men/Women
	for they were afraid .	phobeomai, Silence At World-Shattering Revelation Of God!! Their Lack Of Speech

A Brief Treatment Of Mark 15:42-16:8

Aside from possible endings, (e.g. 16:9-20 et. al.), 15:42-16:8 is the Mark's last thought unit. The structure is a 5:1 concentric pattern (1. 15:42-45, 2. 15:46, 3. 15:47, 2' 16:1-4, 1' 16:5-8). The first section certifies the death with three outsider men (Joseph, Pilate, Centurion), the last the resurrection message with three insider women (Magdalene, Mary, Salome). In sections 2//2' the themes are that something is bought (*linen shroud, spices*) and that the *stone is rolled against the tomb* (15:46d) and later *rolled back* (16:4b). At the center (v.47) two women view the burial. Inclusions are 15:44 (*wondered*, Gk. *thambeomai*) // 16:5 *amazed* (Gk. *thambeomai*) and the contrast between the *courage* (15:43b) and being *afraid* (16:8b). Other techniques are time references (15:42, 16:1, 2a) that precede actions. Three days are carefully marked: *And when (Friday) evening had come.... And when the Sabbath was passed.... And very early on the first day of the week.* There is narrative (15:42-16:2, 5, 8) and direct discourse (16:3-4, 6-7). Triples are found in the time signatures of 15:42 (*evening/day of Preparation/day before the Sabbath*) and 16:1-2 (*And when the Sabbath was past/ very early on the first day of the week/ when the sun had risen*), the threefold use of *dead* (vv.44-45a) parallel to three resurrection affirmations "been raised/not here/see" (16:6b). The dominant feature is *parataxis* (i.e. the use of an initial *And*/Gk. *kai* to advance the narrative: *and... and... and*). It's found sixteen times, four each in sections 1, 2, 2', 1'; the only section not so introduced is the center (3. v.47). An alternative pattern has the datings of 15:42//16:1 mark two paragraphs, each with three parts: 1. 15:42-45 (date + 3 men), 2. v.46 (purchase/stone), 3) v.47 women as burial witnesses // 1' 16:1 (date + 3 women), 2. vv.2-4 (purchase/stone), 3) vv.5-8 women as angelic witnesses. Such double patterns are common. The final section (1' 16:5-8) is a 4:2 chiasm with *entering the tomb* (v.5a) and *fled from the tomb* (v.8a) in the frames (a//a') and with a speech to the women (vv.5b-6) and for the men (v.7) at the centers (b//b') with *see* (v.6e//v.7b) repeated in both. Attention to intense emotions in v.8 explains the flight and the silence with two *for/gar* statements.

Jewish days are from evening to evening, and one day in seven is set apart as a sanctuary in time. With Passover coinciding with sabbath that year, issues were even more loaded. Most of the crucified lived more than a day, but not Jesus, and to keep the land from being defiled and the crowds enraged, he must be buried before sunset (Dt. 21:22-23). If none would tend to the expensive, time-consuming mess on the eve of the festival, Joseph would; and remember, he was part of the council that condemned Jesus (14:64, 15:1). So he took the risk of going to Pilate for the corpse. Pilate was surprised Jesus died so quickly and asked for certification, which he gained from the sergeant in charge. Jesus is *dead... dead... dead*. With sunset near, Joseph buys a linen shroud, but no washing or anointing is recorded. A simple washing may be assumed; the women go to *anoint* (16:1b), not wash him. Likely aided by servants, the grisly task is accomplished on time, and when the round stone rolls in place, Joseph's duties are over, the expectation being that over the next year the flesh would decompose and then the bones put in a family ossuary box as was customary. At least two women watched the disposition and burial; they are the continuity of eyewitnesses. Markets close at sunset, and the next day is a Passover Sabbath. But Saturday evening at first star, bazaars reopen, and three women are found buying spices and unguents to keep down the stench for the vigil of mourning. Likely to avoid detection since Jesus was killed for sedition, they set out in the dark and arrive at dawn, the question being, "Who will help with the stone?" but when they arrive it's already open. The first thought would have been grave robbers. But when they stoop and enter the darkness, there sits a single angel in white, seated in the place of authority, awaiting them with a telegram. "Calm down, ladies. I know why you're here, whom you seek. God has raised Jesus; he's one of a kind, fully vindicated. He's gone, not here as you can see. You have a mission of restoration and forgiveness. Go tell the guys, and especially Peter, to head home; *there you will see him...*" They were terrified and ran away in stunned silence. Something scary, something that changes everything, something that rewires how you view Jesus and the world has been reported. How will the boys respond when told?

EMPTY TOMB, ABSENT LORD

"He has been raised; he is not here; see the place where they laid him."

An angel announces the threefold work of the divine body-snatcher.

M A R K 1 6 : 6

As a boy in the company of men, there are certain things you remember. The things they laugh at you don't yet understand, the first time a mildly suggestive joke was told in your presence and you got it, the clever sayings they use. I remember one of the later in particular.

I was about seven, which makes it 1960. Not sure where we were, maybe the hardware store on Saturday morning. My dad ran into one of his patients, only recently recovered from a near-deadly pneumonia. He must have been in his mid-80s, which means he was born around 1875. His father might have been a Civil War veteran, which somehow always amazed me.

"How you feeling, George?"

"Well doc, I'm still vertical, took nourishment this morning, and have not yet assumed room temperature." They both laughed.

As we walked out I looked up, "What did that man mean?" When it was explained that dead people don't stand up, don't eat, and quickly lose body heat," I sorta got it, but it was complicated. I had a lot to learn about being a man. A lot to learn about gallows humor. A lot to learn about the reach of generations, as Faulkner wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."¹ A lot to learn about the faith I was immersed in as a boy; being Methodist was something I inherited; finding Christ took a bit longer.

Jesus died with a gasp of congestive heart failure and asphyxiation when he could no longer push up on the nails to get a breath after six hours of torture. He then cooled to ambient temperature, which in the spring in Jerusalem runs

¹ www.goodreads.com/quotes/12124.

in the low to mid 60s. And just to make sure, a lance between the ribs to pierce the heart and release the pressure of serum and clotting blood. No more laughter round a table, no more healings and liberating exorcisms, no more resuscitations, no more life with the guy from Nazareth who was always tuned in to what the Father was broadcasting that day. He did not survive the ordeal.² Their *kingdom of God* field trip had— since last night- morphed into horror. Love and Innocence, Truth and Hope had been executed. What remained was shock and disorientation, the disbelief of “How could we have been so wrong?”

TURNING TO THE TEXT

Joseph of Arimathea was a respected figure in the ruling circles of Jerusalem and a man providentially used by God to prevent Jesus from being tossed in a common grave or left on the cross as carrion for the birds, as happened to most of the crucified.³ Joseph voted for the verdict,⁴ and the statement that “he himself was looking for the kingdom of God” indicates he missed it. The king did not show up as expected, and like other leaders he resisted Jesus as dangerous.⁵ In Deuteronomy Jews are instructed to bury a man who’s been

² See “Roman Crucifixion Methods Reveal the History of Crucifixion,” www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/crucifixion/roman-crucifixion-methods-reveal-the-history-of-crucifixion; also William D. Edwards, MD; Wesley J. Gabel, MDiv; Floyd E. Hosmer, MS, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” *JAMA*, 1986, 255(11):1455-1463.

³ John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1994), 124-127. On the historicity of Joseph, a compelling case is made by Dale Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition And Its Interpreters* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2005), 352-363.

⁴ 14:62, 15:1. On the growth of elements surrounding Joseph, see Robert Sundry, “Trimming the Debate,” in Paul Copan, Ronald Tacelli, *Jesus’ Resurrection: Fact or Figment?* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: IVP, 2000), 105-107.

⁵ On this reading, see Sharyn Dowd, *Reading Mark* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 164-165.

executed on a tree and do it by sunset- lest a curse come on the land.⁶ Joseph obeyed, and God used it! He showed virtue by burying a political liability on Passover weekend with the risk of being cast as a sympathizer. It was after 3:00pm when he received the news.⁷ So go to Pilate, make a request, buy the linen, take down and entomb the man: a lot to do in a short time, a rush job.

Note that the word *dead* is used three times. Pilate was surprised Jesus was *dead*. Most victims survived a day or more; he's only been on the cross six hours. So he gave an order, "Get the centurion!" The sergeant who presided over the execution then verified that the rebel—*Jesus, the king of the Jews*—was *dead*, and Joseph got the corpse. It's an oral death certificate in triplicate.

Why the overkill? Why does Mark hammer the word *dead*? Because resurrection is *from the realm of the dead*. If no bodily death, no bodily resurrection, which is one reason the Koran rejects the death of Jesus that Friday.⁸ A mysterious double died in his place. "No, Islam; it was Jesus who died; it's one of the best attested facts of ancient history and it undermines your religious system!" We understand the logic. No death, no resurrection; no resurrection, no ultimate vindication, and if not so personally vindicated by God, then Jesus is not the final word from above, so guess who gets to come along

⁶ 21:22-23. For an analysis, see Craig Evans, "Jewish Burial Traditions And The Resurrection of Jesus," www.craigaeans.com/Burial_Traditions

⁷ Peter Walker, *The Weekend that Changed the World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox, 1999), 38.

⁸ See Michael Licona, *Paul Meets Muhammed: A Christian-Muslim Debate On The Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006). Also Duane Litvin, "The Real Theological Issue Between Christians and Muslims," www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/july-web-only/christianity-vs-islam-about-cross. Koran, Sura 4: 157-158 reads, "And for claiming that they killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of GOD. In fact, *they never killed him, they never crucified him* - they were made to think that they did. All factions who are disputing in this matter are full of doubt concerning this issue. They possess no knowledge; they only conjecture. *For certain, they never killed him*. Instead, GOD raised him to Him; GOD is Almighty, Most Wise" (Italics mine).

Mark 15:42-16:8. 7

six hundred years later with a supposed new and better word? Mohammed! But it is historically certain Jesus died on the cross. And if raised— which is a separate issue, he’s in a class by himself, no competitors, and this the church confesses. He’s the only true Savior, the only one God raised.

Whatever happened on Sunday, this much is sure: on Friday Jesus of Nazareth died in his early to mid 30s. Observed by the centurion, certified by Pilate, handled by Joseph: *dead, dead, dead*. Jesus is not like the myths concerning Elvis or John Lennon, that they now live secretly in seclusion after having survived. Jesus did not revive and travel to India and become an enlightened guru, as some still claim.⁹ In the words of a great Southern theologian- Jerry Clower, Jesus was *graveyard dead*. It was not a near-death experience. No pulse, no brain waves, rigor setting in. Joseph asked *for the body*; Pilate released *the body*; it was *a corpse* that was taken down and wrapped in linen; it was *a corpse* that was laid in the tomb, and it was the same *dead body* God raised and transformed and sent back in multiple confirming appearances.¹⁰ Not a spirit, not a soul, not a ghost, not disembodied but the whole of the man in an amazing new frame which in the transformation consumed the old one and left behind the negative evidence of an empty tomb. A new physics, a new biology, and a new possibility is here disclosed. Crack the atom and you get nuclear power; crack the kingdom and what you get is resurrection! This is what the church teaches, a fully embodied resurrection of Jesus only, not something less and more manageable for modern skeptics. And here I find the reasoning of Dr. John Lennox— professor of Mathematics at Oxford and quite a debater in favor of our case— very helpful.

Some argue that miracles— like Christ's resurrection— are impossible since nature is a closed system and miracles violate the laws of nature. But Lennox claims Christians don't claim that Jesus rose by some natural process that violated the laws of nature. Instead, Jesus rose because God injected enormous

⁹ “Was Kashmir Jesus’ final resting place?” *The Times Of India*, 3/11/2002, as found in “An Unholy Hoax,” www.breakpoint.org, March 30, 2002.

¹⁰ For a recent review on Jesus’ resurrection, see Brant Pietre, *The Case For Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2016), 173-191.

power and energy from outside the system. Here is his analogy:

“Suppose that tonight I put \$1,000 in an office drawer and another \$1,000 tomorrow night. That’s \$2,000. On the third day, I open the drawer and find \$500. Obviously, the laws of arithmetic have not been broken. \$1,000 plus \$1,000 still equals \$2,000. What those laws tell you is that someone– in this case probably a thief– put his hand in the drawer and removed the money. The laws of mathematics or nature or science can't stop him from doing that.”

Lennox concludes:

“In the same way, the Resurrection of Christ... doesn't negate the laws of nature. The Resurrection shows that Someone has reached into the drawer of history and removed something: the sting of death. So unless you have evidence the system is totally closed, you cannot argue against the possibility of miracles.”¹¹

So why is the kettle boiling? A scientific answer is, “Because water has reached 212 degrees Fahrenheit.” That’s the regularity science observes. But what about another angle of explanation, one that invokes a free, personal agent? In that case, “The water is boiling *because I want a cup of hot tea.*” In the resurrection of Jesus the supreme personal agent is at work. The cosmic lawmaker reveals a level of causation we don’t yet understand, and that is divine action. Predictions from natural law are not cancelled; they are superceded. The author has written himself into the play as a surprise.

Western art often portrays the disposition of Jesus from the cross, and popular piety has been fascinated by the mysterious Shroud of Turin, but neither is an issue for Mark.¹² We may imagine what it was like to pull nails out of bruised flesh, catch the weight of the corpse, rinse away clots and dirt, wrap the

¹¹ Adapted from John Lennox, *Miracles: Is Belief in the Supernatural Irrational?* (Veritas Forum, 2013), 24.

¹² Lamar Williamson, *Mark* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1983), 281.

body in linen for a quick entombment. But we are not to picture Joseph carrying the body over his shoulder like some Marine with a dead buddy. Such things were done by the servants of a prominent man. The body was laid on a rock shelf within the tomb and a large round stone rolled into a groove cut just below the entrance.¹³ Its purpose was to keep out wild animals and discourage grave robbing for the sake of linen and spices. A year later the de-fleshed bones would be placed in an ossuary box with other family.

Verse 47 reads like a footnote, “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses *saw where he was laid.*” If my analysis is correct, this verse lies at the hinge of our story, and why this detail? To alert us it was not the wrong tomb that was found empty. They saw the whole thing and followed Joseph’s entourage to the site; he and his were under surveillance by women who were a threat to no one, but Jesus’ corpse was never out of sight. There was a chain of custody: on the cross, under the eyes of soldiers, officially into the hands of Joseph, prepared and sealed in the tomb under the watchful eye of women. When the men fled, God called others- namely Joseph and the women- to the front lines to fill the gaps of service and witness.

There is a silent place in the story that goes unnoticed, a long pause. Day one, Friday, ends as the sun sets and the first evening star appears. Day three picks up Saturday at the same time. So what of the day in between? The Sabbath Passover. All were numb; there were tears and questions. No one knew what to do. The rest of the nation entered the festivities; those who came to Jerusalem with Jesus were devastated by the sudden turn of events. Their friend lay in state in the rotunda of a borrowed tomb. It could be a squad of soldiers coming for them next, so they wait and hide.

It's near sundown on Saturday; Sabbath is ending, markets reopening. A band of women buy aromatic spices and oils to offset the odors. It's much easier to keep vigil if the stench isn't so strong. Robert Smith notes:

¹³ On the archaeology of ancient tombs and mausoleums, see John Dominic Crossan & Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 2001), Chapter 6, “How To Bury A King,” 230-270.

"It was customary... to visit the graves of loved ones for three days; the soul was thought to hover near the tomb thinking it might return; mourning reached its height on the third day when death was judged irreversible."¹⁴

That night they sleep with a mission in mind. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses (and maybe, I think, of Jesus!¹⁵) plus Salome are drawn by love into events beyond their comprehension. See them walk, spices in hand, early through the dark streets so as not to arouse suspicion. They are impressed with death; it has the final word. They do not know the kingdom of death has been plundered of a resident. They walk through the valley of the shadow and stumble into a new world.

Since there is no man, "Who will roll away the stone for us?" This sets the scene for the first indicator things are not as expected, verse 4: "And looking up, they saw that the stone *was* rolled back- it was very large." The stone is not removed so Jesus can get out but so they could see in. They are expected!

How would you know if someone had risen from the dead? Pilate certifies death, but who certifies God has acted to do something without parallel in human history, a unique event? That's the function of an angel, a messenger. Angels are step-down transformers; they dial down the high voltage of heavenly glory for domestic consumption. A visible angel is a sign of God's invisible work. God has reversed the world's judgments on Jesus. And when the angelic word is followed by appearances, the case is established. He is risen!

To describe an angel as a *young man* was typical.¹⁶ To be seated is the posture of a teacher, and the right side the place of honor.¹⁷ The white robe signals divine origin. They stoop to enter the low opening and find themselves

¹⁴ Robert Smith, *Easter Gospels* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1983), 31.

¹⁵ See Appendix II: 16.

¹⁶ PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 118.

¹⁷ Smith, *Easter Gospels*, 34.

in the reflected glory of God's presence. And no bad smell! No Lysol needed.

The message begins with reassurance, "Do not be amazed." He knows, "You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified." And just as there were three references to the death, so here are three references to Jesus' new state of being:

- 1) "He has been raised," (He's no longer dead; God did it!)
- 2) "he is not here;" (The corpse has been transformed!)
- 3) "see the place where they laid him." (Check it out!)

It's the right place. The body is stolen, but not by men. God gave Jesus a new indestructible life and the world a preview of coming attractions. God is not through; the Jesus movement goes on.¹⁸

The world through its leaders said *No* to Jesus, but God said *Yes* and vindicated him. This means Jesus is the only God-certified revelation of God. Want to know God? Then study all Jesus said and did, because God stamped it fully approved. The light of resurrection illumines and certifies the whole of his life as divine revelation. On Friday the check bounced; on Sunday God said, "Give me the check," and backed it with the bank of heaven.

If Jesus is raised, heaven is real, the afterlife assured, and beyond that the new heavens and earth of the kingdom of God. If Jesus is raised, he's available for relationship with the likes of you and me. You can know and be known.

If Jesus is raised, each time I stand at an open grave I know Jesus has already been there and kicked out both ends. All graves are temporary quarters.

If Jesus is raised, his word of forgiveness is God's word of pardon, and I need not fear. I may even- in his name- announce it to others.¹⁹

¹⁸ For an apologetic treatment, see Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2008), Chapter 13, "The Reality of Resurrection," 201-212.

¹⁹ John 20:23.

If Jesus is raised, the church is not merely a religious social club but- for all its faults- the unique custodian of divine revelation.

If raised, he and no one else has the last word about the world. He is its future, and following him puts us in tension with present arrangements.

If Jesus is raised, our bodies have permanent significance. We do not become angels but remain gendered. We are not unclothed but further clothed in resurrection. What we do with our bodies now has permanent significance.

If raised, he is the one appointed by God to judge every human being, which means the standard will not be wealth or power or knowledge or fame or patriotism or religiosity but one thing only: love of this God and people because of him. Did his love touch you? Did you welcome the changes it demanded?

If Jesus is raised, miracles are not fantasies but signs the world is accessible to God who at times surprises us with events we would not expect.²⁰ If Jesus is raised, the cosmos is not a closed shop with a clockmaker deity who wound it up and lets it run without influence. If Jesus is raised, human flesh can contain and display divine glory. God will not scrap the world for heaven but heal it all in a great resurrection.

Now the angel's message did not stop with the three-fold announcement of resurrection. It continues with a call and commission.

"But go, tell his disciples *and Peter* (That's forgiveness for a coward!) that he is going *before you* to Galilee (He's always ahead of his church!) there you will see him, as he told you." (He still has business for them!)

No Easter faith without mission. We have orders *to go, to forgive, to expect* further revelations along the way, orders to *announce* that in Jesus a new world is on the way and you can be rightly aligned with it now.

²⁰ On miracles, see the two volumes of Craig Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility Of The New Testament Accounts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011).

The women were terrified. Adrenalin pumping, heads spinning. God is kind and merciful; God is not safe. It's easy to read the last verse as if the women never told anyone. Not so. Robert Smith paraphrases verse 8, "Awestruck and dumbfounded, they ran straight from the tomb to the disciples, without stopping to greet anyone on the way."²¹ Mark was writing to a church that knew the resurrection appearances. He does leave us hanging for a moment, dumbstruck in a new world. Anyone who has trouble with women preachers should take note who first received the message. C.S. Lewis wrote:

"He has forced open a door...locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because he has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation. A new chapter in cosmic history has opened."²²

CONCLUSION

One sleepy Sunday afternoon Phil Callaway and his five year old son drove past a cemetery. Noticing a large pile of dirt beside a freshly dug grave, he pointed excitedly, "Look, Dad, one got out!"²³

He said more than he knew. There is someone who demands your full attention. Don't say I didn't warn you! You are on his list. He wants to forgive your wickedness and flood you with his presence. He's not a dead hero; he's the same guy we read about in four biographies, and he's more than fully alive and still messin' with people. He invites you to his table today.

²¹ Smith, *Easter Gospels*, 42.

²² From his book *Miracles*, quoted in Michael Green, *The Empty Cross of Jesus* (Downer's Grove, ILL: Inter-Varsity, 1984), 132.

²³ *Men of Integrity* (March/April 2006)

APPENDIX I: APOLOGETICS: A REASONED DEFENSE OF THE FAITH

Clue No. 8: *A Minimal Facts Argument For Jesus' Bodily Resurrection* (Gary Habermas)

A. The Big Idea: What's The Big Deal About Resurrection?

The word **resurrection** (the Greek word is *ana-stasis*, which means to “stand up again” and from which we get the female name *Anastasia*), is about something specific with a particular first century Jewish meaning. It does not mean mere *resuscitation*, that Jesus was restored back to ordinary life in his current body and died later on, as with our friend Lazarus whose grave clothes had to be unwrapped after Jesus called him out of the tomb (see John 11:38-44). It does not mean, in a sentimental sense, that Jesus *lives on the hearts and minds of his friends*, as if our devotion keeps him alive. In addition, it does not mean that *his spirit or soul went to heaven and was now alive with God* so that he inherited life after death in a non-embodied form as the Greeks and some Jews taught as *the immortality of the soul*.

The word **resurrection** was a technical Jewish term used by some to refer to a hoped-for bodily transformation of the total person by the power of God at the end the age, a new creation. The human soul or spirit is rejoined to a transformed body that takes up the old into a new reality beyond death and sin and evil. The same person is downloaded into new and wonderful hardware in which their identity and recognizability is maintained. You are still you, not an angel! It's a newly embodied existence fit for the new world of God's kingdom, which is this world healed and transformed, not scrapped and tossed. Jesus regularly *resuscitated* the dead by pushing back death and calling them back to life. But only Jesus, the church claims, has been *resurrected from the realm of the dead* and come back in visits and appearances to show off his new duds! He is the only prototype. God loves male and female persons, including their gendered bodies. We are to be remade, not scrapped. The tomb was empty because the corpse put there Friday evening is now transformed but with the wounds kept open as credentials; it's really him! The resurrection is the new physics and the new biology of the kingdom of God. Only Jesus has been stamped *fully approved by God*. The charges against him are false. All he said and did is true. You can trust him. And if he's not been so bodily raised, then we are all a pack of fools just kidding ourselves. It is a big deal!

B. Six Minimal Facts That Almost All Believing And Unbelieving Scholars Agree On:

1. Jesus was crucified by the Romans as a form of extreme torture and execution with two others.
2. Jesus died. The professionals were good at it. No swoon. No coma. Dead, and Pilate knew it.
3. Jesus was buried. Most crucified victims were left as carrion, but he was buried as an oddity.
4. Two days later the same tomb was found empty. To claim theft is to admit it was found empty.
5. Followers of Jesus claimed that they encountered him after his death.
6. A non-follower (his brother James) and an enemy (Paul) believed they met him after his death.

There are multiple attempts to account for the facts. The “substitute theory” of Islam says a look-alike died in his place. This is an assertion without evidence. Some say Jesus woke up in the tomb and convinced his followers he was risen. Beaten, bloodied, speared, shoulders dislocated. Risen? No way! Was it the wrong tomb? No, the women were eyewitnesses. The body stolen? No, the linens were left behind. It was all a big conspiracy of the disciples! How can that be when at least two who were hostile saw him, and one of them his own brother? Would you be willing to die for something you knew was a lie? Oh, people were gullible then. Not really; they knew what death meant. No one comes back. Until this one! A grief-induced hallucination? Maybe one, but not so many, especially the group appearances!

C. A Credible Alternative?

What if the bodily resurrection of Jesus by God best explains all the facts? Is it crazy? You decide.

APPENDIX II: WOMEN AT THE CROSS AND TOMB (Culpepper: 567)

Mark 15:40, 16:1	Matthew 27:56	Luke 23:49	John 19:25
1. Mary Magdalene	1. Mary Magdalene	1. The women who had followed him from Galilee, Mary, called the Magdalene	4. Mary Magdalene
2. Mary, the mother of James the younger and Joses	2. Mary, the mother of James and of Joseph		1. His mother
3. Salome	3. The mother of the sons of Zebedee		2. His mother’s sister
			3. Mary, wife of Clopas

APPENDIX III: WHAT THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OFFICIALLY TEACHES CONCERNING THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST
(The Book of Discipline 2016: 66, 73)

1. The Article of Religion, Article III: Of the Resurrection of Christ

“Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.”

2. The Confession of Faith, Article II– Jesus Christ.

“We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all men will be judged.”

SUMMARY OUTLINE OF CHURCH TEACHING (Thomas Oden)

A. The Resurrection: Christ Rose from the Dead

1. The resurrection of Christ is a central truth of our faith
2. He now lives in his resurrected body
 - a. A real body
 - b. A glorified body
 - c. A body having all things pertaining to the perfection of human nature

B. Christ’s Ascension, Session, and Intercession

1. Christ ascended into heaven
2. Christ sits at the right hand of the Father
3. Christ presently intercedes for the faithful

C. Christ’s Return To Execute Judgment At The Last Day.

APPENDIX IV: WHY EASTER MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

(Pastor Phil Thrailkill, St. Luke UMC newsletter article, April 18, 2011)

“There ain’t gonna be no Easter this year.”

“Why not?” Dr. William Lane Craig responded to his student.

“They found the body.”

Dr. Craig- a Christian philosopher- makes this comment, “Despite his irreverence, my friend displayed an insight often not shared by modern theologians. Many are willing to assert that Jesus rotted in the grave, but that the resurrection still has value as a symbol of ‘newness of life’ so Christianity can go on quite nicely as though nothing were changed. My friend’s joke implied that without the resurrection Christianity is worthless. He was right.”

If true, Jesus’ bodily resurrection is finally a statement about what God thought of the man. Thus far resurrection has happened only once, and to only one person. The world- meaning a conspiracy of church and state- said a big *No* to him on Friday, but the one he called *Father* said a big *Yes* and raised him in the power of the Spirit. The whole of who he was- body and soul- was utterly transformed. It was still Jesus, but with marvelous new bodily powers that defy our limits. The nail prints were there as credentials, but he could appear and disappear as he chose, even inside closed rooms (John 20:19-31). Jesus has the complete and unquestioned backing of the One who sent him. The movement he launched paused at his death, then picked up new speed after Easter. And if he has been validated as no one else, then his words and deeds have an authority beyond any other. The whole of his life is divine revelation, meaning that everything he said and did- even casually- is the truth of God. Sin and evil and violence and injustice do not have the last word. Jesus does! The whole world- groaning as it does under its current burden of death and decay- will at the end of the age be transformed just like the corpse of Jesus, and we along with it. What we do now in his name- every deed of love and witness- will last into the world to come. But the best news is that the One we read about in the Gospels is both alive and available to any and all who enroll as his apprentices in a new way of life. My testimony is that for all my sins and betrayals- and for all my stupidities and frailties, I cannot explain my life and the new life at work deep within me apart from the risen Jesus. But, were his corpse to be identified, I would have to admit that the biggest adventure in my life has been one, great, colossal fraud. Either the tomb is really empty and Jesus truly and bodily risen, or the whole of Christianity is intellectually and morally bankrupt. It all- and I do mean all- rises or falls on the facticity or fraud of one single event. Did God do this thing to a dead Jesus?

I end with ten facts most historians agree on.²⁴ 1) Jesus died due to the rigors of crucifixion and 2) was buried. 3) His disciples despaired because his death challenged their hopes. 4) The tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered empty on Sunday. 5) The disciples had real experiences they believed were appearances of Jesus. 6) The disciples were transformed and were even willing to die for the truth of the events they witnessed. 7) This gospel message was the center of preaching in the early church. 8) The message was proclaimed in Jerusalem, the city where Jesus died. 9) The primary day of worship became Sunday, the day Jesus was reported to have risen, and not the Jewish Sabbath. 10a) James, Jesus’ previously skeptical brother, was converted when he believed he saw the resurrected Jesus. 10b) Paul, a leader in the persecution of the church, was also converted by a real experience which he believed to be the risen Jesus. What think ye? Has he interrupted your life?

²⁴ As compiled by Gary Habermas, “Jesus’ Resurrection And Contemporary Criticism: An Apologetic,” *Criswell Theological Review* 4: (1989), 159-74.