

Jesus was risen from the dead

Unbelievers throughout the New Testament have denied Christ's resurrection. So today, we find so many scoff at the idea of a risen Lord. Many have lost the true meaning of Easter with its resurrection message.

On that first Easter morning, there was a great earthquake, and an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone. When the guards came to their senses, they went into the city and told the chief priests "everything that had happened." We presume they must have told the unvarnished truth - "The tomb is empty. There was another earthquake. An angel came down, rolled the stone away from the tomb, and said that Jesus had risen. All we can say for sure is that the disciples did not steal His body while we were on duty."

On hearing this, the chief priests do not even bother to try to dispute the facts with the guards. They accept their report as accurate and true. After all, the report is not coming from the disciples or some other interested party. So, the first thing the chief priests did was to consult with the elders of the people. They had worked together to accuse Jesus before Pilate (27:12); now they worked together to try to cover up the truth. The chief priests of Jesus' day bribed the soldiers to tell the story that Jesus' disciples had stolen His body at night while the soldiers were sleeping (Matt. 28:11-15). In so doing they hardened their hearts against God. Matthew does not say where the money came from to pay off the guards. Maybe it came out of the same account from which they had gotten the 30 pieces of silver for Judas Iscariot. Matthew also records that this story was widely circulated among the Jews to this day.

Today many critics of the Bible dismiss the resurrection of Jesus as something the disciples imagined. They deny that it is a historical event (as Karl Barth and Rudolph Bultmann did in the age of neo-orthodoxy). The following quote from a liberal Roman Catholic theologian is illustrative of what we so often hear from biblical critics today:

The resurrection: It's historicity. Did it happen? *Something* happened after the death of Jesus... Jesus' followers were convinced that He had indeed been raised from the dead... Is it a historical event, therefore? The answer has to be "No" if by historical one means an event that could have been photographed as it was occurring, or that a disinterested person could have observed happening. There is no indication in the New Testament record that the early Church believed the

resurrection to have been in the very same category of history as the crucifixion. [*Notice how this writers assertion ignores the evidence concerning how the apostles described themselves as eyewitnesses to Christ's resurrection, as mentioned numerous times in the Scriptures*] ... To concede that the resurrection is not a historical event in our ordinary sense of historical event [*something open to scientific investigation and verifiable by neutral witnesses*] does not mean the resurrection was not a real event for Jesus with historical implications for others... It would seem better to speak of the resurrection as *transhistorical*, or *metahistorcal* [*terms used to reject the historical nature of Christ's resurrection*], rather than unhistorical.

All we can say is that those who deny the historical nature of Christ's resurrection lose the assurance of a risen Saviour and all He has done to save us. They have shipwrecked their faith (1 Tim. 1:19). On the other hand, we have the assurance of our forgiveness and eternal life in heaven because of Jesus' resurrection. With the hymn writer we say:

He lives, and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives my mansion to prepare,
He lives to bring me safely there.

Hymn 103 v.5