

FEATURE: Murder in Reverse

VOICE: Detectives seldom see a murder happen. Yet they successfully find and punish criminals.

PROF.: Let's use detective methods to investigate a "murder in reverse!"

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

VOICE: For a fictional character, Sherlock Holmes certainly had non-fictional wisdom. How did he solve so many crimes?

PROF.: I remember one principle that author A. Conan Doyle put into Sherlock Holmes's mouth. He said, "Eliminate the impossible. Whatever remains, no matter how unlikely, must be the truth."

VOICE: "Eliminate the impossible. Whatever remains, no matter how unlikely, must be the truth"?

PROF.: Yes.

VOICE: I wonder if that concept would help me answer a question that a friend is asking. He's trying to piece together some clues – to see whether Jesus Christ really came back to life.

But I suppose Sherlock Holmes's methods work only with *taking* life. Even he would be stumped by a claim that someone came back to life. That would be a "murder in reverse."

PROF.: What clues do you have?

VOICE: Not enough. Everything I've researched seems to say there were no eye-witnesses. If Jesus came back to life after being killed, it happened during the night – while no one was watching.

PROF.: Really, there are several important clues. A large crowd saw Jesus Christ being put to death one day. He was put into a tomb with Roman soldiers guarding it.

But three days later his grave was empty. Reports began circulating that people had seen him alive again. First a few reported seeing him, then groups ranging from 10 to *more than 500 people* claimed they had seen him alive.

VOICE: But how do we know these reports are true?

- PROF.: Josh McDowell assumed they were *not* true. Then he spent hundreds of hours of detective work on the subject. Since then, he has spent his life writing and lecturing on his discoveries, traveling to many countries of the world.
- VOICE: What did he learn?
- PROF.: He summarizes his research in a brochure entitled “The Case of the Empty Tomb.” In his words, “A student at the University of Uruguay said to me, ‘Prof. McDowell, why can't you refute Christianity?’ I answered, ‘For a very simple reason. I'm not able to explain away an event in history – the resurrection of Jesus Christ.’”
- VOICE: What does he mean?
- PROF.: He elaborates, “After more than 700 hours of studying this subject and thoroughly investigating its foundation, I came to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is [either] one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless *hoaxes* ever foisted upon the minds of men, or it is *the most fantastic fact of history.*”
- VOICE: How can anyone living 2000 years after Christ's death, discover which interpretation is accurate?
- PROF.: McDowell begins, “Some of the facts relevant to the resurrection are as follows: Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish prophet who claimed to be the Christ prophesied in the...Scriptures, was arrested, [was] judged a political criminal and crucified. Three days after his death and burial, some women who went to His tomb found His body gone. His disciples claimed that God had raised Him from the dead and that He had appeared to them various times before ascending into heaven.
“From this foundation, Christianity spread throughout the Roman empire and has continued to exert great influence down through the centuries.”
- VOICE: But how do we know whether those claims are facts, or fables?
- PROF.: During his 700 hours of research on the subject, McDowell discovered, in his words, “The New Testament accounts of the resurrection were being circulated within the lifetimes of those alive at the time of the resurrection. *These people could certainly confirm or deny the accuracy of these accounts.*”
- VOICE: So if anyone had made *false* claims, people would have immediately denounced them as liars. They *didn't* call them liars. That indicates the claims were probably true.

PROF.: Right. McDowell continues, “The New Testament witnesses well knew the circumstances of the resurrection. The body of Jesus, in accordance with... custom...was wrapped in a linen cloth. About 100 pounds of aromatic spices, mixed together to form a gummy substance, were applied to the wrappings of cloth around the body.”

VOICE: (SURPRISED) 100 pounds? That's about 45 kilograms!

PROF.: Yes. He continues, “After the body was placed in a solid rock tomb, an extremely large stone was rolled against the entrance of the tomb. Large stones weighing approximately two tons were normally rolled – by means of levers – against a tomb entrance.”

VOICE: Also, didn't soldiers guard the tomb?

PROF.: Yes. They knew that if they failed to do their job of making the tomb secure, they would be punished by death.

VOICE: A powerful incentive to make sure no one stole the body.

PROF.: He elaborates, “This Roman guard affixed on the tomb of the Roman seal, a stamp of Roman power and authority. Anyone trying to move the stone from the tomb's entrance would have broken the seal and thus incurred the wrath of Roman law.”

VOICE: It sounds as if McDowell did his detective work thoroughly.

PROF.: He also discovered convincing evidence that the tomb really was empty three days after Jesus was put into it. He says, “The empty tomb was ‘too notorious to be denied.’ Paul Althus states that the resurrection ‘could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned’.”

VOICE: But how do we know that these people on Sunday morning were looking at the *same tomb* that Jesus was put into on Friday?

PROF.: Prof. McDowell answers, “...we may be certain that the...authorities, who asked for a Roman guard to be stationed at the tomb to prevent the body from being stolen, would not have been mistaken about the location, for *they were there!*

“If this were the case, the...authorities would have lost no time in producing the body from the proper tomb, thus effectively quenching for all time any rumor of a resurrection.”

- VOICE: I've also heard an explanation that the crucifixion might not really have killed Jesus. Could he have just fainted from exhaustion and loss of blood? Could the cold tomb have revived him from unconsciousness?
- PROF.: Let's think about that a moment. Roman soldiers executed people frequently. They knew a dead body when they saw one. They pronounced Jesus officially dead and ready for burial.
- David Friedrich Strauss was a skeptic who did not believe Jesus Christ had come back from the dead. But after extensive research, he had to admit, "It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulcher, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, ...could have given...the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life... Such a resuscitation...could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship."
- VOICE: So Josh McDowell simply followed the technique detectives use: "Eliminate the impossible. Whatever remains, no matter how unlikely, must be the truth."
- He soon realized the alternatives were impossible. So the most logical explanation of the known facts about Jesus Christ, was resurrection.
- PROF.: Dr. Thomas Arnold was a history professor at England's famous Oxford University. His writings included a three-volume *History of Rome*. He wrote, "I have...for many years...[studied] the histories of other times, and [examined] and [weighed] the evidence of those who have written about them. And I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God has given us, that Christ died and rose again from the dead."
- VOICE: But the road *from life to death* is a "one-way street." I've never seen anyone travel *from death to life*.
- PROF.: One basic fact that appears throughout the Bible, is that God can do things that humans can't. Why would the super-human creator, limit himself to merely human actions? Why wouldn't God do God-like actions?
- VOICE: That's a good question. Why would the all-powerful God not act like God?
- PROF.: Starting out as a skeptic, Prof. McDowell spent 700 hours researching the evidences for the resurrection. He wrote, "The theories advanced to explain the resurrection from natural causes are quite weak; they actually help to build confidence in the truth of the resurrection."

VOICE: That's an interesting statement! “The theories advanced to explain the resurrection from natural causes are quite weak; they actually help to build confidence in the truth of the resurrection.”

PROF.: He adds a statement by British scholar Brook Foss Westcott, who wrote, “Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no historic incident better...supported than the resurrection of Christ.”

VOICE: No incident in history has stronger evidence than the fact that Jesus came back to life after being put to death.

PROF.: If we're willing to believe that God can act like God, we can easily accept that he raised Jesus Christ back to life.

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

© Original article copyright 1992 Josh McDowell Ministry,
<http://www.leaderu.com/everystudent/easter/articles/josh2.html>. Used by permission.
This version copyright 2014 Trans World Radio. All rights reserved.