

The Path - Christian Apologetics

Day 22: Eyewitness Testimony

In a court of law the strongest type of a witness, substantiating whether an alleged event took place or not, is an eyewitness account. The apostles and early disciples emphatically claimed to be an eyewitness of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Note their emphasis upon the fact that they were eyewitnesses of the resurrection in the following passages;

- Acts 10:39-42 “And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree; Him God raised up the third day and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto _____ chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead.”
- 1Peter 5:1 “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a _____ of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the Glory that shall be revealed.”
- Luke 1:1-3 “Forasmuch as many have taken in my hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were _____, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also; having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.”

What were the events that the apostles and early disciples witnessed?

They Witnessed the Death of Christ.

1. Luke 23:49 says “And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, _____ these things.”
2. The roman soldiers were not unfamiliar with death. They reported that Jesus Christ was dead. John 19:33 says, “ But then when they came to Jesus, and _____ that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.”
3. Pilate summoned the centurion to certify the death of Christ, which the centurion did. Mark 15:44-45 says, “And Pilate marveled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked whether he had been any while dead. And when he _____ it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.”
4. A Roman soldier thrust a spear into Jesus’ side. John very distinctly records and certifies that blood and water came from Jesus’ side. John 19:34 declares, “But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.”

They Witnessed Jesus' Burial

Matthew 27:60-61 says, "And laid it (the body) in his (Joseph's) own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulcher."

1. Jesus' body was wrapped in grave clothes glued together that weighed 75 pounds. John 19:39-40 says, "And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, and about an hundred pound weight...then took they the _____ of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury."
2. A great stone was rolled to the mouth of the sepulcher. (Matthew 27:60-61)
3. The large stone sealing the mouth of the sepulcher was left sealed. Matthew 27:66 says, "So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."
4. A _____ was stationed at the sepulcher to make certain the body was not taken. Matthew 27:64-65, "Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, 'He is risen from the dead': so the last error shall be worse than the first."

They Witnessed the Empty Tomb

1. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary saw the empty tomb. Matthew 28:6-8 says, "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the _____ where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you." Both Mary's departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word."
2. Peter and John saw the empty tomb. In John 20:4-7 the Word says, "So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; went he not in. Then cometh Simeon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."

Let me interject this comment about the theory that the body of Christ had been stolen by the disciples. The linen clothes were lying in one place, but the napkin in another. If the body had been stolen:

1. The wrapping would have been stolen too. It would have taken quite some time to unwrap a body glued together with about 75 pounds of glue.
2. The wrappings would have been spread all over the sepulcher. It would have been a very messy sight.
3. The frightened disciples would never had tried to overcome armed Roman soldiers at the tomb.
4. And of course, the stolen body theory does not account for the appearances Jesus made to the disciples for the 40 days after the resurrection. However, this is a subject we will take up in our next lesson.

Discussion:

1. Why is it significant that the disciples were eyewitnesses to Jesus' death?
2. Why is it further significant that the disciples saw His burial?
3. What is the significance of the empty tomb?
4. What is the significance of the linen clothes laying in one place and the napkin in another?
5. Why is the idea that Jesus' body was stolen by the disciple preposterous?
6. How valuable are eyewitness accounts in establishing the veracity of an alleged event?