

Sunday School Notes 28 April 2019: The Mystery of the Disappearing Body

Did any of you watch *Dora* when you were little? If so, you will remember that every time the children watching were asked to help solve a mystery. I don't think you still watch *Dora* but maybe you still like mysteries. Perhaps you enjoy reading mystery stories?

Today we are going to explore a mystery which is over 2000 years old! It was actually solved long ago, but people don't always like the answers that were found and so over the years they have kept on asking questions. We can't visit the site of the mystery because it is too far away and it has been built over for centuries. All the clues there have been trampled on and lost. Instead we shall look at documents.

Problem: The body of Jesus, disappeared after he had been crucified by Romans.

1. Who knew where his body was placed?

Joseph of Arimathea a secret disciple although he was a Pharisee made his tomb available. (John 19:38)

Nicodemus helped to carry it there. (John 19:39)

Pilate knew where it was going to be placed – not sure if he knew exactly which tomb. (Mark 15:43-45)

Some women from Galilee saw them place it there (Luke 23: 55, Mark 15:47)

2. When did it disappear?

The women who went out to the tomb to clean up body on the Sunday morning were shocked to find the tomb empty. (Luke 24:1-3). This was confirmed by Peter and the disciple and another disciple (Luke 24:12, 24)

It has never been found since. (2000 years have passed without any sign of it!)

3. Could any of them have moved it secretly?

No: A big stone was rolled in front of the cave tomb (Mark 15:46). The women couldn't have moved it and there were soldiers on guard so anyone else would have been seen.

4. Could they have gone to the wrong tomb?

Possible – but not likely. Anyway then the body would have been found in the right tomb when everyone started to talk about it being missing. .

5. Perhaps Jesus just walked out of the tomb? Perhaps he wasn't really dead?

Crazy idea! The Romans knew how to kill people properly. Anyway they checked by piercing his side and discovered the blood had already separated so he was dead. (John 19:33)

Besides, how could someone who was weak after beating and crucifixion and without any food have the strength to move the stone?

6. What did the soldiers on guard duty say?

They reported that there had been an earthquake just at daybreak and that the stone had rolled back (Matt 28: 2-4). They got such a fright that they fainted.

They were bribed by the chief priests to say that his disciples came by night to steal the body while we slept. The chief priests would make sure they didn't get into trouble for saying this. (Matt 28:11-15). There was no need for a bribe if this was true.

7. Could the disciples have stolen the body?

The guards would have stopped them. At that time the disciples were scared and had run away.

8. Is there any other evidence?

Yes: The gospel writers said that many people saw the risen Jesus on a number of occasions.

Could these be hallucinations? When someone disappears it is easy to think you have seen see them – because you want to see them so badly. But these people didn't expect to see Jesus. They had seen him die or knew people who had seen him die.

On one occasion 500 people saw him at the same time – no such thing as a 'group hallucination'? (1 Corinthians 15: 6)

Could these be lies? Not likely that all those people lied or that they would continue to lie when trouble began.

This is when they began to realise what Jesus had been talking about when he told them he would rise again.

Conclusion? Jesus really did rise from the dead. His body was not just stolen and hidden.

What does it matter?

It matters because if Jesus is not alive, I and thousands of others are living lives based on a lie. Horrible!

It matters because if these things are true, Jesus is not an ordinary person – ordinary people don't come alive again on this earth. So, I must study his words carefully.

And when I do so, I discover that God loved me so much that he died so that I can be rescued from sin and can be part of his new kingdom. When I look around at the earth and all its evil, I am filled with joy at the thought. I belong to a risen Lord!