

# **The Resurrection Factor – Part 3**

*Josh McDowell*

## I. Introduction.

A. The Apostle Paul said that if there is no resurrection the faith is in vain. (1 Corinthians 15)

B. The resurrection is key to the Christian faith.

## II. Historical background concerning the resurrection.

A. The stone covering the grave was very large. The Greek language carries the sense that the stone was surprisingly large. Some early manuscripts say that it would have taken fifteen men to move it. It was probably around two tons.

B. Pilate grants the Jewish authorities permission to guard the stone.

1. It was either the Temple guard or the Roman guard. If the former, there was extreme repercussions for falling asleep.

2. It was probably the latter though because there was a bribe given when the grave was found empty - they must have never found reason to accuse them of deficient duty.

3. The Roman Guard was a sixteen man fighting unit that was able to protect an area of ground against an entire battalion by reputation. They used psychological warfare as well. Some accounts say there were four, but at times they were broken up.

4. Pilate had a religious, political, economic, and social problem - this justifies the presence of the guard.

C. A Roman Seal was placed on the tomb not to prevent break in but to act as an authenticating device. The Romans put it on to put a guarantee of protection on something and to act as a ward against those trying to break in - there was severe discipline for those trying to break the Seal.

## III. Historical detail during the resurrection.

A. No one would have had the courage to break the Roman Seal.

B. If a Roman Guard unit failed they would often be crucified upside down - they were highly disciplined.

C. The Gospel writers describe the stone as being rolled away at a large distance from the entire tomb as would have been totally unnecessary. Additionally, the stone was rolled up an incline from the tomb.

D. The tomb was empty. The Jews admitted that the tomb was empty - getting a hostile voice to admit this gives the empty tomb solid ground. Christianity began in Jerusalem and anyone could confirm that the tomb was empty there when it began.

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## STUDY GUIDE

### *Part 1: What do you see?*

1. How is the character of the stone described? What is notable about the description of its placement after the resurrection?

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2. What dual role did the Roman Seal play in securing a position?

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3. What two reasons make the empty tomb solid evidence in attesting to the fact of Christ's resurrection?

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### *Part 2: What do you think?*

1. In your opinion, which was more likely present at the tomb of Jesus - the Temple Guard or the Roman Guard? Defend your choice.

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2. Why is it reasonable to think that Pilate would have supplied fifteen guards within the context of Christ's crucifixion to guard the tomb?

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3. How might the validity of the resurrection be changed if the Jewish leaders had not tried to cover up the data? If this were true, would there have been enough evidence to support the resurrection of Christ?

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**Part 3: What will you do?**

1. In light of the speaker's historical survey, how important is it to take into consideration background material when studying the Scriptures? What will you do to take the historical and cultural setting more into account in your reading of the Scriptures?

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2. Based upon the content of this message, how will you defend the resurrection of Christ? Which arguments will take precedence over others?

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3. In trying to cover up the cause of the empty tomb, the Pharisees offer a contrasting attitude towards that that the Christian should possess? What place does proclaiming the empty tomb have in your life? What can you do to make it more central?

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