

**THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION
EASTER SUNDAY 2008**

Luke 24:1-7

Introduction: Dr. Paul I. Maier, professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, concluded that, *"If all the evidence were weighed carefully and fairly, it is indeed justifiable, according to the canons of historical research, to conclude that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was empty on the morning of the first Easter. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources, epigraphy, or archaeology that would disprove this statement."* The Apostle Paul lays it out very forcefully in *1st Corinthians 15:13-17*. The lynch-pin of Christianity rests and rotates around the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ.

A. The crucifixion of Jesus

1. We should be aware that Jesus went through six distinct trials – one before Annas, the high priest (*John 18:13*); another before Caiaphas (*Matthew 26:57*); the third before the Sanhedrin (*Matthew 26:59*); the fourth before Pilate (*Matthew 27:2*); the fifth before Herod (*Luke 23:7*); and the sixth before Pilate again (*Luke 23:11-25*). There were three Jewish trials and three Roman trials. It was the Jewish authorities, in conjunction with the Roman authorities, that delivered Jesus to be crucified.
 - a) Death by crucifixion developed into one of the world's most disgraceful and cruel methods of torture. Cicero called it *"the most cruel and hideous of tortures."* Josephus, the Jewish historian who was an adviser to Titus during the siege of Jerusalem, called crucifixions *"the most wretched deaths."*
 - b) After the verdict of crucifixion was pronounced by the court, it was customary to tie the accused to the post at the tribunal. The criminal was stripped of his clothes, then severely beaten by the lictors or scourgers. The whip, known as a flagrum, had a sturdy handle to which were attached long leather thongs of varying lengths. Sharp, jagged pieces of bone and lead were woven into them. The Jews were limited by law to 40 lashes. The 39 was a safety factor in case they miscounted. The Romans had no such limit and most likely exceeded that amount in the case of Jesus.
 - c) Dr. Truman Davis, a medical doctor who meticulously studied crucifixion from a medical perspective, described the Roman flagrum used in whipping. *"The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across a person's shoulders, back and legs. At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. The balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally, the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue."*
 - d) After placing a crown of thorns upon His head, they began to mock Him, saying, *"Hail, King of the Jews."* They spit on Him and beat Him with rods. Then they led Him away to be crucified.
2. The resurrection of Jesus
 - a) After being taken down from the cross and prepared for burial, He was placed in a tomb. He remained there for 3 full days and nights, totally paying the price for the redemption of man, and then He arose from the dead. In a literal sense, the tomb was not empty. Instead, an interesting phenomenon occurred. When John and Peter looked inside the tomb, they saw something startling. There were grave clothes, in the form of a body, slightly caved in and empty, like a cocoon. Undisturbed, the body was gone.

Conclusion: The first thing that stuck in the minds of the disciples was the empty grave clothes, undisturbed in their form and position. On several occasions, Christ appeared alive after the cataclysmic events of Easter. Later, the resurrected Jesus was seen by over 500 people. Thank God, we saw Him by faith when we received Him into our hearts. How do I know He lives? He lives within my heart!