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## Witnesses for the Resurrection.

**A** SOCIETY of learned Jews in Russia has discussed the question, "Was Jesus Christ justly or unjustly condemned?" and after due investigation their answer was that "the anointed of the Lord" was unjustly condemned and his execution a judicial murder. We suggest to our Jewish friends that they press their investigations further and answer the question, "Was Jesus Christ raised from the dead?" and they will find the proof in favor of the fact of the resurrection so overwhelmingly strong that they cannot refuse to accept it without doing violence to their reason. The merit of his death depends upon his resurrection. If he rose from the dead all his claims are true. If he did not rise from the dead, he was an impostor, unworthy of respect for he emphatically asserted that he would be killed, buried and on the third day rise again. The Apostles staked everything on the fact of the resurrection, and we can afford to do the same, because it is the best-established fact in all history.

I desire this morning to empanel this audience as a jury and ask you to pass upon the evidence in support of this greatest fact in the world. We will call to the stand a few witnesses and let them tell what they know.

### A CENTURION'S TESTIMONY.

The first witness is the Roman Centurion, and we shall ask him as we shall the other witnesses the customary questions. Where were you born? What is your business? and what do you know of the case in hand?

The centurion replies: "I was born in Italy. On the day before the execution of Jesus and the two malefactors I received orders from the Roman Governor to report for service with a guard. I never saw Jesus before, but while we were attending to the execution darkness came on, so that we had to light our lanterns to look after the prisoners. I heard Jesus pray for those who were killing him and talk kindly with those at his side. His demeanor and words convinced me that he was not an ordinary person. 'Indeed,' I exclaimed, 'this is the Son of God!'"

### JOSEPH'S TESTIMONY.

The second witness we shall call is named Joseph. He says: "I was born in Arimathea. I am now a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. I own a suburban place not far from the hill called Calvary. I had heard Jesus preach, and saw him perform miracles before the day of his arrest, and he impressed me as being sincere and earnest. His demeanor at the trial was very striking. I was so won by him that I felt like showing him some respect. I therefore asked of Pilate the privilege of taking him from the cross and putting him in my own tomb. Pilate readily granted the privilege, and I had the honor of performing the last funeral rites."

### NICODEMUS'S TESTIMONY.

The third witness is named Nicodemus: "I am acquainted with Joseph of Arimathea, for we are members of the same council. I visited Jesus one night some time ago, and he talked with me about the new birth. I believed then that he was a teacher sent from God, for no man could perform such miracles except God be with him, but before we had finished our conversation I became convinced that he was more than a teacher—that he was divine—and though I have not publicly confessed him I have secretly worshipped him. When I heard Joseph had gotten his body I went and bought myrrh and spices, that I, too, might take part in giving him honorable burial."

### PILATE'S TESTIMONY.

Now we will call Pilate. In answer to our questions he says: "I am the Roman Governor of Judea. Jesus was brought before me for trial. After I had heard the testimony against him I decided that he was innocent. I publicly washed my hands of him, and declared that I found no

fault in him. A dream which my wife had so distressed her that she sent me word not to have anything to do with that man Jesus, but in order to please the Jews and to prevent them from accusing me of being the enemy of Caesar, I delivered him over to them to be crucified. A committee from the Jewish Sanhedrin waited upon me and declared that there was a rumor in the air to the effect that Jesus was to rise from the dead on the third day. They asked, therefore, that a guard of soldiers be furnished, so as to prevent his disciples from stealing him away. I gave them the guard, telling them to make it just as strong as they wished."

Now, from these four witnesses it is clear that Jesus Christ was crucified, was dead and buried and that his tomb was safely guarded.

### MARY MAGDALENE'S TESTIMONY.

The next witness we will call is a woman. She says: "My name is Mary and they call me Magdalene because I was born in the village of Magdala. When Jesus came through our neighborhood two or three years ago, I was sadly afflicted. I could not take care of myself, for I was possessed of seven devils, who tormented me day and night. I did not even want to come into the presence of Jesus, but my friends brought me against my will. He spoke a kind word, reached out his hand and touched me, and though I went into convulsions, I was soon in my right mind, and have been so ever since. In company with some other women who were healed of diseases or whose friends had been healed, I have been following Jesus from place to place continually. I pressed through the crowd up to the cross while he was being crucified and looked into his face."

"After they had buried him I could not rest; so, early in the morning, on the first day in the week, I went to the sepulchre in which they had put him. There I saw a bright form which frightened me. On turning round I beheld a person whom I took to be the gardener, for he looked like any other ordinary man, but when he called my name I recognized in the tender voice that it was Jesus. I fell before him and would have clasped his feet, but he would not let me. He told me to go and tell his disciples that he was risen from the dead and would soon meet them. I saw him several times after this, and am absolutely certain that it was the same Jesus who was crucified and buried."

### THOMAS'S TESTIMONY.

Our next witness is a very important one. His name is Thomas. He says: "I joined myself to Jesus because he won my heart and he went about doing good. I am of a skeptical turn of mind. It is difficult for me to believe anything unless I have positive proof. When I heard the story that Jesus had risen from the dead, I could not credit it. I said I would not believe until I could thrust my fingers into the prints of the nails and the spear. I was in despair of ever seeing him again. I had decided to go about secular business and give up all relations to him, but while in a meeting with his friends one evening suddenly he appeared in the midst without coming through the door. He spoke to me of my doubts though evidently no one had told him about them, and invited me to touch him; but now I did not need that proof. I could but exclaim, 'My Lord and my God!' Yes, there is no doubt of the fact that the Jesus whom I saw and worshipped was the same that was crucified and buried."

### JOHN'S TESTIMONY.

Call next the Apostle John. He says, "I was once a fisherman and lived near the Sea of Galilee. We prospered in the business, so that my father, Zebedee, was wealthy enough to hire servants to help him. One day, Jesus coming along, told my brother James and myself to follow him, and he would make us fishers of men. We left our father and friends with the nets in the boat and went right away after him. There was

something in his manner and face that impressed us. I have been very close to him for the past three years. I was with him on the mountain top when a bright cloud overshadowed us. We heard a voice from the cloud, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' We saw the forms of Moses and Elijah, who talked with Jesus. I was also with him the night he was captured. On one occasion at supper he permitted me to lean upon his breast. I stood beside the cross while he was dying and heard him say to his mother, as he looked at me, 'Behold thy son,' and then he said to me, as he looked at her, 'Behold thy mother.' I took her to my house and expect to provide for her as long as she lives."

"Early in the morning on the first day of the week, after he had been crucified and buried, Peter and I were going to look at the tomb, when Mary, the last witness, met us and said that she had seen the Lord. We quickened our pace at once and ran to the sepulchre. I reached it first, but hesitated to enter. When Peter came up, he went right in."

"One morning after we had been fishing we saw a form on the shore, which I recognized as Jesus. Peter was so anxious to meet him that he put on his fisher coat, and leaping into the water swam ashore. We brought the boat after him as rapidly as possible, and there we found a fire built on the sand with fish on it. We ate breakfast together. I am certain that the Jesus I saw, talked with, ate with, walked with now and then for nearly forty days, was the same person that was crucified and buried."

### PETER'S TESTIMONY.

Let the Apostle Peter now take the stand and give up his testimony: "I was once a wicked, swearing fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. My brother Andrew one day told me that he had found a wonderful person whom he believed to be the Messiah. Andrew brought me to him and I at once determined to give up my business and cast my lot with him. I thought however, that he would make himself a temporal king and displace Caesar, and when he allowed himself to be arrested my heart failed me. I followed him at a distance and while he was on trial went in and warmed myself by the fire. One of them recognized me as a disciple of his, but I denied it with an oath. Then I went out and wept over my sin, but did not have the courage to go with John to the place of execution. When I went into the sepulchre, as John has said, I found it empty, but there was no evidence of robbery. The linen napkin which he wore about his head was carefully folded up and laid aside. There was no confusion. The place looked as if it had been occupied by a living person, who, when he went out, left everything in order. I saw him, as John testified, on the shore of the sea, and ate with him. I know it was the same person who was arrested, tried, crucified and buried."

### PAUL'S TESTIMONY.

Our next witness is a little man with a stammering tongue, but his eye is bright and every feature shows great intelligence and strength of character. He says: My name is Paul. I was known once as Saul of Tarsus because Tarsus is my birthplace. I am a Roman citizen and a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. I never saw Jesus while he was on earth, but had heard a great deal about him. Some of his disciples whom I regarded as fanatics were on trial before the court of which I was a member. One of them was named Stephen, and he talked so boldly and impudently that we decided at once to stone him to death."

I went with the executioners to the place of stoning, and watched their outer garments, which they laid at my feet while they killed him. He met death so bravely that I was deeply impressed, but I still thought I was doing God's service to exterminate this defiant sect and rid the earth of their presence. So, after getting my credentials from the court, I started to Damascus, to look after Christians who were there. As we were