

NO CORPSE!

[The following events actually happened. This account is based on well attested historical documents.]

The setting is a proud eastern country, many hundreds of years ago. It was occupied by a severe, cruel, foreign world power. A week long religious festival was in progress. People had flocked to the capital. At such times, the populace enjoyed the celebrations and national feelings ran high. Additional troops had been detailed to the city. You can imagine the tension.

It was early Sunday morning. The capital had hardly begun to stir. It was still dark. Outside the city wall a group of women were carrying spices. They were on their way to a tomb to embalm the body of a very dear friend and teacher.

Three days before, Rabbi Yashua had been publicly executed by the foreign soldiers. The trial had been a travesty of justice. Rabbi Yashua was renowned for his goodness. However, leading members of his own nation resented and feared his popularity. So much so they wanted him dead! Furtively they seized him in the dark of night. An irregularly convened court pronounced him guilty. He was mocked and beaten. Through all this he conducted himself with absolute composure. Not one word of malice or resentment escaped his lips. Even so they declared he deserved to die. Yes, the information is all there in the documents.

The occupying power had reserved for itself the right to pass the death sentence. So, still in the early morning, manacled, he was hustled to the Governor's palace to have the verdict endorsed. The Governor had him flogged until the blood

flowed from his wounds. Many died from such brutality. Convinced of his innocence, the Governor urged his release. To force the Governor's hand, his enemies brought a trumped-up charge of treason. Intimidated by the thought of appearing disloyal to his august and mighty Emperor, the Governor handed Rabbi Yashua over to the executioners.

The women watched from a distance as the soldiers spiked him to a gibbet. They saw one soldier drive a spear into his side, thus ensuring that he was dead. Sunset approached, marking the start of their day of sacred rest. To bury the body after sunset was considered sacrilege. A secret admirer, Councillor Yousef, moved with compassion, gently removed the body from the gibbet.

He placed it in the new tomb he'd had prepared for himself. The tomb was in a garden near the place of execution. It was a cave carved out of the rock face. Another secret admirer, a fellow councillor, brought embalming ointments. Together, hurriedly, they wrapped the body in a new, white linen sheet, with a napkin wound around his head. The women sat nearby, watching. In the ground in front of the small entrance was a groove, sloping down across the entrance. A large, flat sided, round and very heavy stone was placed in the groove, held back with a chock. At last the chock was removed and the stone rolled down across the mouth of the tomb. This was designed to deter grave robbers. The women carefully noted the location of the tomb, then made their way home in the encircling gloom and prepared still more spices, their own token of love.

So the day of sacred rest now past, the women approached the garden. They asked each other

who would be able to roll back that heavy stone. Intent on discharging this last token of respect for their beloved friend, it seems they had not thought about that problem.

They did not know that their nation's leaders had gained permission for the tomb to be secured. According to the records this "imposter", as they called him, had claimed that, should they kill him, he would rise from the dead the third day. So the stone had been firmly sealed and a guard of several soldiers stationed there. That was to stop the companions of Rabbi Yashua from stealing the body and then claiming he had risen. His companions however were too disillusioned and frightened to conceive or attempt such a plan.

Nor did the women know that earlier that morning, the guards had fled from the garden, terror-stricken. They had seen a glistening man in pure white clothes, roll that weighty stone away and then sit on it. According to the records, having examined the site later, the national leaders bribed the guard to say the disciples had stolen the body whilst they were asleep. That is the story that was spread around. How could those disillusioned, fearful, ill-equipped tradesmen have overpowered highly trained professional "fighting machines"? Why the guards had not been promptly executed for failing in their duty is a mystery. For that was standard practice in those days.

The bereaved women arrived to find the tomb open and the body gone! The grave clothes were there, and to one side, the napkin neatly folded; but no corpse! Instead they saw two men in shining white clothes. They told the women that Rabbi Yashua had risen from the dead. Experiencing a mixture of elation and fear

the women ran to tell his grieving companions. Not one believed them. They thought the women were talking nonsense. Two of the men went to see for themselves and found everything exactly as the women had said, but no corpse! What had happened to the corpse?

According to the records, reliable witnesses subsequently had several rendezvous with Rabbi Yashua. On one occasion as many as five hundred are reported to have met him. Six weeks later his companions saw him rise into the air and disappear into the clouds.

The evidence for the tomb being empty is very strong. Sceptics have rarely questioned that. They usually concentrate on trying to explain away its significance. One suggestion is that he did not really die. Yet no-one could have survived that spear thrust. Also; the authorities, his companions and his enemies knew he was dead. Another idea is that another person was mistakenly executed instead of Rabbi Yashua. However his own mother, his closest companions and the authorities knew that the man spiked to the gibbet was Rabbi Yashua. Yet hundreds of years later, people remote from the event, conceived such fanciful theories. How could they know better than the those who were actually there? No satisfactory answer has been given, other than the one contained in the records.

Those who saw him after he rose from the dead went everywhere telling everyone about it. If this was a malicious rumour spread about to discredit the authorities, they had only to present the corpse to public view to silence it. In spite of persecution, torture and execution, none of those witnesses ever went back on their word. It might be possible for one or two to maintain a

false testimony in the face of persistent threats and torture. But when there are many involved, some are bound to renege. Yet there is no record of any of the witnesses ever varying in their claim that they had seen the Lord Jesus raised from the dead. All down the ages, this testimony has been consistently related by his followers. Having read "Yashua the Craftsman" you know that "Jesus" is the English equivalent of the Hebrew name "Yashua".

One legacy of those events is baptism. Ever since those days baptism in water has been practised. It remains a continuous testimony to this day, to His death, burial and resurrection. The Lord Jesus died, was buried and rose from the dead, therefore the repentant person is buried in the water and raised from the water. In this we bury our old way of life and rise to a new life. Our sins are forgiven. That is the way God planned it. The documents state that the Lord Jesus died for our sins. His resurrection vindicates it. Jesus the Christ went through it all for you. Now it is up to you to respond.

There is no corpse because he is risen! He is ascended. He is in heaven. If we trust and obey him, we will go to be with him for ever.

If you would like a fact sheet on the documentary evidence, or other information, please write, stating your request, to:-

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Sequel to the pamphlet "Yashua the Craftsman"