

# OpenTheo

## Why Didn't Anyone Besides Matthew Mention the Resurrection of Multiple People after the Crucifixion?

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### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about why no one besides Matthew mentioned the resurrection of multiple people after the crucifixion, whether there were rainbows before Noah, and why Jesus told the restored demon-possessed man to tell people about his healing but commanded the formerly deaf man not to tell anyone.

- \* Why are there no extra-biblical accounts of the resurrection of multiple people described in Matthew 27:52, and why isn't it mentioned elsewhere in the Bible?
- \* Do you think the mechanics for the creation of a rainbow did not naturally exist before God put it in the sky for Noah?
- \* Why do you think Jesus told the restored demon-possessed man in Mark 5 to go tell his people what the Lord had done but commanded the deaf man he healed in Mark 7 not to tell anyone about the healing?

## Transcript

You're listening to Stand to Reason's hashtag STRAskPodcast with Greg Cocker and Amy Hall. I'm glad you got that right, Greg. Okay, so today I just have some miscellaneous ones.

Sometimes I get random ones that don't really fit into any category, so we're going to get a bunch of these. So this first one comes from Michelle. Hello, Greg and Amy.

I have not been able to find any extra biblical accounts of the resurrection of multiple people described in Matthew 27:52. And it's not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. Wouldn't this have been worthy of comment? Well, this is similar to the challenge about the infants that were murdered in Bethlehem by Herod and that Jesus and Joseph and Mary were able to escape to Egypt and avoid that kind of threat.

And people say, where is that in other places? Well, I'll tell you where it's at. It's in the

canonical gospels. These are historical records from that period of time.

And there is every reason to believe, as even Bart Erman does, that these are on balance reliable. And the reason he gives, and I have the video where he explains this to Jesus' mythicist guy. I'm not sure the right word.

But we have multiple accounts that are early, and they kind of cross reference each other. And then we also have additional accounts, like Josephus, for example, that bear testimony to a lot of details that are found in the gospel. So we have these different ways that historians use to determine whether a text that appears to be historical has reliable historical information.

Okay. But nobody expects that every single detail out of any given reference that seems plausible and believable given the record requires additional substantiation from other historical records to believe because many things are very singular. Details that are recorded, that are not recorded in other things.

And there are reasons for this. You don't have a 24 or 7 news cycle. You don't have satellites.

You don't have embedded reporters. You don't have cameras. You don't have digital, all this other stuff that makes information from around the world, virtually immediately accessible to us.

You have an ancient Near Eastern world where all kinds of bizarre things happen because of the nature of the world. You have the religion of the people that were there, the cultures. You have a brutal Roman Empire.

You've got brutal Greeks before them. They brutalized the Jews during the intertestamental period. And what do we have a record of? I'm not sure if there's the Maccabean revolt that's recorded in books that some people think should be in the Bible.

Apocryphal books. They're historical works that originated during the time between John the Baptist and Jesus. But if those books give you solid information about the Maccabean revolt, why should it matter whether some other person doesn't give a characterization of that? That's the basic problem here.

The Bible should not be believed unless you have external historical evidence of some sort to verify it. But they don't do that with other works. And the fact is the infants murdered in the little town of Bethlehem were probably 15 to 20 at the most.

And so it's not the kind of massacre that would make the headlines of the ancient Near East. Now in this case, we have something similar going on. I'm just playing out the... What are we looking at? Matthew 27.52. That's okay.

So consequently, thank you. So consequently, if you have a resurrection like is described there when the temple curtain is rent, Jesus dies to tell us thy father by hands. I commit my spirit.

All these amazing things take place. Why would we expect anybody else in the Roman Empire to report this? I don't see why we would expect that. Now, in our times, the idea that anybody comes out of the grave would make even CNN headlines, right? Or at least the allegation that they did.

And I said, B.C., they're going to report this kind of stuff. So it doesn't matter where the political spectrum you are, this is the kind of thing that gets reported. That is not the case there.

You just don't have the kind of news apparatus in place, nor the interest of that stuff, because all kinds of crazy things happen in the ancient Near Eastern world. And by the way, those people were completely comfortable with the idea of a supernatural realm. That's why they had pantheons of other gods that were meant to explain things that happened in nature.

So that there would be a resurrection. I mean, it was not completely implausible, given the worldview. Now, there were intellectuals at the time who thought that idea was silly.

Okay, and we see that response to Paul on Mars Hill. I think it's Acts, chapter 18, where he's making his case for his own view, preaching the sermon regarding the unknown God. And then he says God is furnished proof of this man going to be the final judge of the world by raising him from the dead.

Now they mentioned a resurrection there. These guys are scoffing. Okay.

So there are some that aren't going to believe that, but there's a whole bunch of people that it's not, it's not outside. It's not implausible. It's not outside of the realm of their worldview that something like that could actually take place.

So there just isn't the simply put there just isn't the apparatus or the interest in general of broadcasting this event all around. Nevertheless, we do have an historical source that describes the event. And there's no reason why we shouldn't take that seriously, especially when the worldview that is argued for or presumed in these documents is a miraculous worldview, where in fact people do rise from the dead.

Jesus did and there will be a general resurrection in the future. And that was part of even Hebrew theology. Now the Sadducees as a religious sect did not believe in the resurrection, certainly the Pharisees did.

So you have a climate there, worldviews, pagan and religious, that were aware, fully aware of a supernatural world and fully aware, excuse me, of the possibility, a

plausibility of resurrection sometimes. So this wouldn't, this would be unusual. The graves are open and people walk around and book other people, but it wouldn't be, it wouldn't be implausible to them like it is to many now.

So one last thing is some have argued, Michael Lacona, for example, that this characterization that we see there in Matthew about people coming out of the tombs is not meant to be taken literally. It's meant to be taken as a figure of sorts that is meant to communicate something else. Now I'm not really that familiar with his argument.

I just know he got a lot of trouble for making that argument or offering that as a possibility because in ancient literature of this sort you see things like that imported in for, to make a certain point, even though they were not historical, strictly speaking. So that's another possible way of looking at it. It's not what I embrace, but I'm just saying that's a, that's, that is a way of understanding those events that's on the table for many people.

Yeah, I mean, I don't even think we need to go there because a couple reasons. First, I don't think there's any other extra biblical kind of Lazarus being raised from the dead. And that plays a big part in John, but nowhere else in the Bible is that so there was, I've heard people say before that maybe John waited until everyone was dead.

So no one would be retaliated against. That's a possibility. Who knows why someone might leave it out and Matthew would put that in, but it happened with John and Lazarus and nobody blinks an eye.

So I'm not sure why. I think, I think part of it could be that it sounds more incredible to us that people would rise from the grave when Jesus dies than that Lazarus would be raised, but I'm not sure why that would be. I'm not sure why that's less believable.

And with Lazarus, you have Jesus working yet another miracle of resurrection, which he's done before and calling him forth where there is no human command or divine command from Jesus of any sort that those others would raise. It's just coincident with his death and it's meant to make kind of a statement. Yeah, but still like being raised from the dead, God can raise people from the dead.

Like it's not outside the realm of possibility given the worldview. But there are also, I think some people have an incorrect view of how this looked. So first of all, how many people were there? They said there were saints and I think sometimes people think, oh, there's the famous people of the past.

I don't think that's what he's talking about. I think when he says saints, he's probably talking about people who are followers of Jesus who had died and had not lived to see the resurrection. So it's probably local people that people would have known, not like famous people and probably not many.

So like you pointed out with the children who were killed, we're talking about a smaller population. It's, you know, people who are, and I think God could have raised them so that they could see the result of what had happened. I don't know.

I don't know why he did. There's no explanation, but that could have been why. And we have the example that there's no extra biblical account of Lazarus.

But we also know that there was a huge explosion of believers very shortly after this, and this could have contributed to it. So it's not like it's outside the realm of what we see happening in the New Testament and what we see happening after Jesus' resurrection. So yeah, I don't think it's that unusual.

We also don't have a ton of writings from the period. But don't we have people who recognize the miracle working, maybe not recognize it, but they know that he was a supposed miracle worker. There's a section in the Talmud that describes Jesus executed because he was a sorcerer.

Now, that seems to suggest that he worked miracles as a sorcerer. That's the way they interpreted it. But the fact is that he did something supernatural.

So that's an intimation, or I should say it's a corroboration of the biblical accounts that give detail about it. Okay, thank you for that, Michelle. Let's go into a question from Summer Jasmine.

Do you think the mechanics for the creation of a rainbow did not naturally exist before God put it in the sky for Noah? Well, I never thought of that. My impulse would be to think that it did. Let me back up and try to give a parallel.

When Moses parts the Red Sea, God responds by using what the East wind or something like that, a natural feature to accomplish the parting. Now, the wind existed before that, but it was used now for a very particular purpose. I don't have the text in front of me from Genesis where it says, God put the bow in the air, and this will be assigned to you.

But I don't know why there's no reason that it couldn't have happened before and is now being used as a providential sign, a promise for the future. Circumcision was a sign that identified Jewish people, but circumcision was done by Egyptians before that. So I don't, I don't.

That's exactly the note I have here. Circumcision. God choosing things to be a sign of something else doesn't mean he just created it at that moment.

Like you said with circumcision, there's another example where Aaron's rod buds to show that he's the one who's in charge and then God says, keep that as a sign. He didn't just create it for that. He has them keep it so they can look to it and when they see it, they'll think of that.

So here's what it says in Genesis 9. This is a sign of the covenant which I am making between me and you and every living creature that is with you for all successive generations. I set my bow in the cloud and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between me and the earth. So it sounds to me and it says, it shall come about when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow will be seen in the cloud and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh and he goes on.

But the idea is he said, I think you could easily read that as I already set this in there. But now when I see it, I will remember this covenant and it's just something that will come up all the time that God will constantly be reminded. But I don't think it's necessary to say that there was no rainbow at all before.

Right. That's not in the text at all. It's just the significance of the bow that he placed there.

Yeah. Okay. Here's a question from Matt.

Hey, Greg and Amy, why do you think that Jesus told the restored demon-possessed man in Mark chapter 5 to go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, but commanded the deaf and mute man he healed in Mark chapter 7 not to tell anyone about the healing? I don't know specifically why it's, and again going through the circumstances there, it may be more evident. There were times when Jesus had so many crowds following him that he had to retire to some remote place to get a breath of fresh air, so to speak, or to pray, or to be with his disciples. Towards the end of his work, he actually went to Caesarea Philippi, which is on the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee.

It's a Gentile region. It's just to get away from the crowds and do some things that needed to be done. And I think part of the concern is, is Jesus did not want the crowds to follow him for the wrong reason.

And if you look at John chapter 6, you have the Bread of Life Discourse. Jesus gave four major discourses, the Sermon in the Mount. And the second was the Bread of Life Discourse, the last two of the Olivet Discourse, the last week of his life.

And then of course the Upper Room Discourse, which one quarter at least of the Gospel of John is devoted to, John 13 through 17. But what Jesus was concerned about, and certainly you see this played out the Bread of Life Discourse. He had just fed the 5,000.

Now people were coming. They wanted to see more miracles, and in fact they wanted a free lunch. And Jesus was chastising them for that, and that's why he says, don't seek for the bread that perishes, but seek for the bread that gives eternal life.

I am the Bread of Life. And he gives the Bread of Life. He had that portion of the Bread of

Life Discourse.

Okay? So I think there were times when he said, don't tell anybody because he already had his hands full. And he wasn't doing this as an attesting miracle so much as a response to deep human need. You need this, I'm going to give it to you.

But don't cause any trouble. Don't tell a bunch of people. Because then a whole bunch of people are going to come to him for a physical healing, and he's being used as a means to an end.

He is not the end itself in their mind. This was the problem with the Bread of Life Discourse. I'm the real bread.

Don't, don't, you're in for the bread that perishes. You're in for the bread that if you eat it, you will have eternal life. And you will be raised up again in the last day.

Now in the case of the one that he said, go and tell, I'd have to look more closely at that context. At one point, he told them to go show yourself to the Jewish leadership, the religious leadership, in order to as a testimony against them regarding Jesus. So there you see is trying to accomplish a different end.

I would say that the rationale is probably embedded in the context there. And I just gave a couple of possibilities. And I'm going to read one of those in a second.

I think with the Demon Possessed Man in Mark chapter five, that was in an area where Jesus wasn't going. Oh yeah, that's right. That was on the east side of the Sea of Galilee and Gentile area.

Of course, there were lots of pigs there that ran into the water, not Jews. Right. So he was going back to the and since they weren't going to be there, it was important for him to proclaim it there.

But so why wouldn't Jesus want people to spread it around in the place of where he already was? I think this gives a clue. This is in Mark chapter one and you already referenced this one. But so he he heals someone of leprosy and he started starting in verse 42.

Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed and he sternly warned him and immediately sent him away. And he said to him, see that you say nothing to anyone, but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded as a testimony to them. And that's what you were saying his goal is to say something to the priest.

But then here's what it says after that. But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly

enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas and they were coming to him from everywhere. There you go.

So there there's a reason he he wanted to be able to enter the cities and see people. But what happened was this guy who probably thought he was doing Jesus a favor. I mean, what a lesson that is for us.

When we think we know better than Jesus, I'm like, but Jesus, this is, I know you said not to do this, but honestly, this is a better thing. Yeah, that's right. Even in this case, proclaiming Jesus was actually turned out to harm is what he was trying to do.

So there's a warning for all of you, but I think that's what's going on. I think he he just didn't want the crowds for whatever reason. Anything else to add before I close this down.

I think it was good observation about the Mark passage and the the gathering to Moniex because you're right. They had they had no one. They were outside of his circle, so to speak.

And this was the man culturally near another, another Gentile that needed to go to the Gentiles and proclaim what God had done. The Gentiles want to see me. Now it's time for me to die.

You remember that? Right. All right. Well, thank you, Michelle and Summer Jasmine and Matt.

We really appreciate hearing from you. Send us your question on Twitter with the hashtag STRask or through our website at STR.org. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cogle for Stand to Reason. Thanks for listening.