

JESUS, ASSUMED TO BE DEAD

Joshua Welch

There are so many similarities between Jacob's son Joseph and Jesus that it is hard to avoid the typological comparisons. For example:

- Both are shepherds (Genesis 37:2; John 10:11, 14).
- Both are loved by their father (Genesis 37:3; Matthew 3:17).
- Both are hated by their brethren (Genesis 37:4-5; John 15:25).
- Both are rejected and envied for claiming pre-eminence (Genesis 37:5-11; Luke 19:14; Mark 15:10).
- Both are conspired against by their brethren (Genesis 37:18; Matthew 27:1).
- Both are stripped of their clothing (Genesis 37:23; Matthew 27:28).
- Both are sold for silver (Genesis 37:28; Matthew 26:15; 27:9).
- Both are exalted and willing to redeem their brethren after their suffering (Genesis 50:18-21; Hebrews 2:9-10).

The list of similarities could go on and on. While the New Testament never specially notes these comparisons, it is hard not to be impressed. As we assemble to *"proclaim the Lord's death till He comes"* (1st Corinthians 11:26), notice one more interesting comparison – the presumed death of Joseph himself.

After Joseph is sold into slavery to the Ishmaelites, his brothers realize they must hide their mischievous doings from their father Jacob. So, instead of telling the real story, they dip Joseph's tunic in blood and let Jacob's worst fears take over as they come home to show him the blood-stained garment (Genesis 37:31-32). Jacob presumes, *"It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces"* (Genesis 37:32-33). Of course, years later, Jacob learns Joseph is not dead. He is now a ruler in Egypt and the Savior of Israel from the famine (cp. Genesis 45:25-28; 46:29-30).

This should sound very familiar. At the death of Jesus, His disciples and closest friends were filled with sadness, presuming Jesus had died, never to be seen again (Mark 16:10-11). Yet, days later, Jesus presented Himself alive. His presence revived His deflated disciples with a living hope. It ignited an inextinguishable flame of passion for the Lord as they proclaimed Him the rest of their lives (John 20:19-20, 28-31).

On the Lord's day, we celebrate Jesus, the one who was merely presumed to be dead. Yet as Peter would later say of His death, *"it was*

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We see this rationalistic bias at work in Matthew 28:11-15. There, the chief priests bribe the guards at Jesus' tomb to say that His disciples stole His body while they were sleeping. There are significant holes in the story. If the guards were sleeping, how do they know who took the body? More seriously, if the disciples stole the body, why are they willing to suffer and die for a Messiah they know is a fraud?

However, Matthew regretfully reports that this tissue of lies, holes and all, was spread among the Jews until the day when he wrote his gospel. This isn't the behavior of people who jumped at any opportunity to believe wild stories. It's the behavior of people who would seize any plausible excuse not to believe them.

Nor was such skepticism limited to the Jews. The resurrection seemed every bit as foolish to Gentiles as to the Sadducees. Everybody knew that dead bodies didn't get up and start wandering around again!

This bias finds its voice in Festus's outburst in Acts 26:24. When Paul asserts for the first time that Jesus rose from the dead, the Roman governor can't control himself. He accuses Paul of having been driven mad by too much study. What other explanation can there be when an obviously intelligent, educated man says something so ridiculous?

Despite all this, Acts 6:7 reports that many of the priests (who were Sadducees) obeyed the gospel. In Philippians 4:22, Paul conveys greetings from the Christians in Caesar's household, the cynical, cosmopolitan heart of the Roman Empire. The gospel didn't only find a home in people who would believe anything. It also came to those who were won over in spite of themselves. When people like that (Paul chief among them) proclaim that Christ arose, we should pay attention.

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not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2:24). Why was it not possible for Jesus to stay dead? Simple. God had made a promise. Like Joseph's dream, God had promised Jesus would one day reign on a throne as Lord (Acts 2:32, 36). God keeps His promises. Now, He reigns and we celebrate His death because it enables us to rejoice in the hope of new life He offers.

**"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"**

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Men's & Ladies' Studies @ 6:20 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard
Belén, New Mexico

**Seekers Welcome.
Members Expected.**

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS...
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN"

PROVERBS 25:11

"The leg does not feel the chains
when the mind is in heaven."

– Tertullian

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 14

APRIL 5TH, 2026

SKEPTICS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Matthew W. Bassford

Many modern attacks on the reliability of the Bible depend on the stupidity of the people of the ancient world. "Everybody knows", the argument goes, "that we are much wiser than our ancestors". They were foolish, credulous people who were easy to trick with pious frauds. Thus, we should dismiss ancient testimony about the resurrection, the miracles of Jesus, etc., because the witnesses can't be trusted.

However, this doesn't reckon with what the Bible itself reveals about the people of Biblical times. Certainly, there were foolish, credulous people who lived 2000 years ago. The Samaritans who were deceived by Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8 come to mind here. Before we sneer too much, though, we should remember that there are plenty of foolish, credulous people in our society too, many of whom are well educated!

Conversely, many ancients were predisposed to reject evidence of the supernatural in their own time. According to Acts 23:8, the Jewish sect of the Sadducees taught that there was no resurrection, no angels, and no spirits. They were no more likely to accept the risen Christ than we are to accept the claims of modern-day miracles that our Pentecostal neighbors make.

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