

John 20:1-18
Easter Changes Everything!
WRCoB 4.17.22

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80% DAS FALAS ATRIBUÍDAS A JESUS NOS EVANGELHOS SÃO FALSAS



3/9/91

Scholars discount 80% of Jesus' sayings

By JOHN DART

LA Times-Washington Post Service

The provocative Jesus Seminar Sunday concluded six years of voting on what the Jesus of history most likely said, ruling out about 80 percent of words attributed to him in the gospels and emerging with the picture of a prophet-sage who told parables and made pithy comments.

Virtually all of Jesus' words in the Gospel of John were voted down by scholars meeting in Sonoma, Calif., including a pulpit favorite, 2:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son . . ."

Formed in part to counteract literalist views of the Bible, the Jesus Seminar, a 200-member group of mainline biblical scholars from all over the United States, has stirred controversy since its first meetings in 1985. "Televangelists on talk shows say it's the work of the devil," said founder Robert Funk, a New Testament scholar who has published widely in gospel studies.

The scholars have met twice a year examining either particular gospels or types of sayings, basing their discussions on earlier scholarship and their own studies.

Many academic colleagues have criticized,

among other things, the seminar's unconventional voting techniques — red and pink beads dropped into a ballot box for probable or possible authentic sayings; gray and black beads for sayings that allegedly reveal the theological bias of the gospel authors or the beliefs of beleaguered early Christians, but not necessarily the messages of Jesus.

Almost 200 scholars from universities and seminaries have participated; their conclusions are often the same as those taught outside of fundamentalist and evangelical circles, Funk said.

Seminar member Marcus Borg of Oregon State University, who also chairs the Historical Jesus Section of the large Society of Biblical Literature, said that his experience of teaching adults is that the findings will "feed a hunger" in the churches.

"Many mainstream Christians can no longer believe the picture of Jesus they got as children," Borg said.

Funk contended that most mainline scholars would agree with the Jesus Seminar that in the



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parallel Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, "Jesus speaks regularly in adages or aphorisms, or in parables, or in witticisms created as rebuff or retort in the context of dialogue or debate. It is clear he did not speak in long monologues of the type found in the Gospel of John."

The only saying in John that received a pink vote was one (4:44) which has parallels in the other gospels — that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

Funk had not tallied full results, but he said that in all, 31 sayings in the four biblical gospels and several apocryphal sources fell into the "red" category of authentic sayings (only 15 of which are actually different, due to parallel versions in more than one gospel). They included the good Samaritan and mustard seed parables, the advice to love your enemies and some Sermon on the Mount pronouncements such as, "Blessed are you poor, for you shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Another 200 sayings were accorded pink votes, meaning that Jesus said something similar to the recorded words. Together, the red and pink sayings totaled about 29 percent of the total; another 30 percent fell into the gray class. "A gray vote meant that some of the ideas may have gone back to Jesus, but not those words," Funk said.

Oregonian - March 9, 1991

In the 1990s, a group of Bible scholars got together
To research whether Jesus actually said
What the Gospels said he said!

They took all the early biblical manuscripts
And compared them one to another.

The criterion being that what words of Jesus were common
in the majority of those texts
Were most likely words Jesus actually spoke.

The project was called the “Jesus Seminar”
And was considered by some
To be a breakthrough study.

They discounted 80% of Jesus’ sayings
Including almost all of the Gospel of John.

One of the leaders of the Jesus Seminar, Marcus Borg
Spoke about his thoughts on Easter.

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*As a child, I took it for granted that Easter meant that Jesus
literally rose from the dead. I now see Easter very differently.
For me, it is irrelevant whether or not the tomb was empty.*

Excuse me? Irrelevant!

Now, I respect a person’s sincere quest for truth.

I know these scholars to be dedicated Christians.

But for many others, including me
The empty tomb means everything!

To me, the Apostle Paul sums it up.

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1 Corinthians 15:17, 19 NIV

**17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile;
you are still in your sins. . . . 19 If only for this life we
have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be
pitied.**

I believe Easter is the hinge on which our faith hangs.

Take away the resurrection and you end up with
The Jesus Seminar's conclusion
As summed up by the LA Times.

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Jesus [was] a prophet-sage who told parables and made pithy comments.

Gosh, Jesus has to be more than that?

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Other critics argue over the claims of Easter.

The question of course is

Did Jesus physically rise from the dead
Which, for many, is too hard to swallow?

Or was it more of a spiritual thing?

Perhaps the disembodied spirit of Jesus

Appeared as some kind of ghost-like apparition?

Or was it that in their intense grief

They mistakenly felt the presence of Jesus
And then claimed he was actually present?

Or does the empty tomb mean anything at all

As Marcus Borg suggests?

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I believe three things point to the authenticity
Of the Easter event.

The first thing is the fact that all of the Gospels

Have the women arriving first at the tomb.

If the Gospels writers wanted to convince people
That Jesus rose from the dead
They wouldn't use women as witnesses.

Sorry! In Biblical times
Women's testimonies were considered unreliable.

If they were making it up
They'd place male disciples first at the tomb.

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The second "proof," if you will
Is that the empty tomb
Was there for the entire world to see.

It was Passover! Everyone was there!

Everyone saw Jesus tried, beaten, and crucified
They saw Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus
Carry the lifeless body to the tomb.

They saw the soldiers
Setting up guard over the tomb.

It was a very public event.

On Sunday, they could look in and see for themselves
The tomb was empty.

That much everyone knew.

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The third thing is the fact that the four Gospel accounts
Differ so much from one another.

The authors didn't get together
And collaborate their stories.

And even if they were written at different times
The later Gospel writers
Could have made sure their stories matched.

But they didn't.

And yet the writers all agreed
The tomb was empty

They all agreed, people literally saw Jesus.

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Another little talked about piece of evidence
I think intriguing, is the description of the burial cloths.

In the English Standard Version
John describes it like this.

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6b He saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.

That's a curious thing?

If the body was stolen they would have hurriedly
Carried the body out burial cloths and all. Right?

OR, if Jesus had never died but just fainted
Would he have bothered to fold the face cloth?

Wouldn't he had plodded out of the tomb

Much like Lazarus when Jesus raised him from the dead?

Instead, there were

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In the place where Jesus had lain

And removed by SOMEONE

In no rush to flee or to escape being detected.

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Not many deny the evidence of the empty tomb.

Many will, however, deny the physical resurrection of Jesus.

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The disturbing problem with the resurrection

Is that nobody immediately recognizes Jesus.

Something about his physical appearance is unrecognizable.

In today's passage, Mary thinks he's the gardener.

Later that evening, the disciples locked in the upper room
Don't recognize him
Until he shows them his hands and side.

The two on the road to Emmaus
Walked along beside Jesus and fail to know him.

And still later, when the disciples were fishing
Jesus comes along the shore to prepare breakfast.

And it took a moment before they recognized him.

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Seems strange doesn't it?

I've not heard a decent explanation for this.

But each account claims to have seen a physical body.

They didn't see a ghost or an apparition.

They didn't sense his presence or felt him close.

They saw a physical body and they knew it was Jesus.

Something about him triggered their recognition.

Mary recognized Jesus when he calls her by name.

Thomas recognizes him by the marks of his crucifixion.

The two on the road to Emmaus
Recognize Jesus when he breaks bread!

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John Dominic Crossan,
Another member of the “Jesus Seminar”
Wrote about the encounter on the road to Emmaus.

7

Emmaus never happened; Emmaus always happens.

Meaning that these stories are not meant to be taken literally

They just point to some larger spiritual truth!

Well, that’s one way to explain away the Easter event.

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Some like to compare the resurrection with spring
Though meaningful as an analogy
It doesn’t do justice to the resurrection.

Nature is indeed wonderful!
And it’s a sweet comparison but it’s not accurate.

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The claim of Christianity is much, much, more astounding!

For the claim is that Easter actually occurred
In a particular moment in time and history.

That God intervened into the Created Order.
Went against God’s own cycles of life and death
And raised Jesus from the dead

That’s the claim!

Jesus, the Son of God, PHYSICALLY rose from the dead
By the power, the same power
That created all things on heaven and earth!

That's the power of the Resurrection!

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That particular Easter morning changed everything!

No longer will death have dominion!

No longer will death have the final say!

No longer is death to be feared.

Christian understanding is that eternity

Begins with the resurrection of Jesus!

8

John 11:25-26 NRSV

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

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Easter changes everything!

If not for the empty tomb

And the encounters with the Risen Lord

If not for the willing-to-die-for-conviction

That Jesus physically rose from the dead

If not for the promise of eternal life in the Easter episode

The faith would have died along with Jesus.

However, they believed the reports of the empty tomb

They believed the eye witness accounts
Of encounters with Jesus

The Holy Spirit empowered them as promised by Jesus.

They were convinced that the Easter story
Changes everything!

And consequently, the Christian faith remains today.

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What do you suppose keeps the Nigerian Christian
Hopeful and courageous in the face of persecution
By Boko Haram and Muslim extremists?

What is it that keeps them going?

Is it Jesus' parables and pithy comments?

No! It's Easter. It changes everything.

What gave the enslaved African hope to carry on
In the face of such despair and hopelessness?

What gave Christians throughout the years
Patience, persistence, faith, and courage,
As they faced death and destruction?

The power of the resurrection.
It changes everything.

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Why do 75% of all the great hymns emphasize eternity?

Because it is the great assurance of the Christian faith.

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Another progressive-minded Christian theologian
One of my favorite Christian writers

Frederick Buechner once had a conversation
With his aging mother.

She asked him
“Do you really think anything happens after you die?”

He replied, “Yes, something happens.”

But rather than continue the conversation
Due to the difficulty of his mother’s hearing
And her general fear of death

Buechner wrote her a letter.

In it, he discussed his thoughts concerning eternal life
And then he closed his letter with this key point.

It differs from the Jesus Seminar’s Markus Borg
Who said Easter was “irrelevant”.

Buechner, a progressive and sophisticated thinker, wrote

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*I believe that what happens to us after we die is that we
aren’t dead forever because Jesus said so.”*

Because Jesus said so!

And so, the question is this.

Is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ irrelevant
As Marcus Borg suggests?

Or is it the very thing that actually has the most relevance?

It's your call!

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10

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NRSV

³For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴ and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,

Brothers and Sisters, Easter changes everything!