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Rabbi Gellman Gets It — The Resurrection Really Matters

Friday, March 9, 2007



Rabbi Marc Gellman, senior rabbi of [Temple Beth Torah](#) in Melville, New York, is a familiar figure in the media. He is telegenic and witty, and he serves as half of the “God Squad” team on national television.

In a recent column in [Newsweek](#), Rabbi Gellman responds to the “Lost Tomb of Jesus” controversy with a very interesting analysis. In the first place, he voices his regret that an Orthodox Jewish filmmaker, Simcha Jacobovici, had made a film casting doubt upon the resurrection of Jesus.

But the main thrust of the rabbi’s argument was far more interesting. In his words:

If this was indeed the tomb of Jesus, then not only is the Christian Testament false but, worse, Christianity is a cruel deception, à la “The Da Vinci Code,” foisted on the world by Jesus’ panicky followers to help market a faith led by a dead messiah. I don’t think that is how Christianity was born, and I don’t think interfaith relations are improved when a Jewish filmmaker implies such a thing.

The really interesting part of Rabbi Gellman’s analysis is his argument that, if Jesus was not raised from the dead, and if his disciples participated in a cover-up, then “Christianity is a cruel deception” pushed by charlatans.

The rabbi is right, of course. If Jesus was not raised from the dead — really raised from the dead — then Christianity is a huge lie and a cruel deception.

Here is the most interesting section of the rabbi’s article:

Some Christian respondents to this film have said that even discovering the bones of Jesus would not seriously undermine their faith. They say that 2,000 years of tradition does not just get canned because somebody found some bone boxes in the basement of the Israel Museum. I know many Christian clergy who have told me that the main truth of Christianity for them is to love as Jesus loved and that no archeological discovery can change that spiritual lesson. I love these folks but, as an outsider, I just don’t agree that decisive refutation of Jesus’ resurrection would have no effect on Christian faith. Unlike Judaism and Islam and Hinduism and even Buddhism, which are built on God’s teachings, Christianity is built both on God’s teachings as well as on an historical event proving a transcendental miracle.

Once again, the rabbi gets it — and the clergy identified as Christians, but who think the denial of the resurrection is no big deal, do not.

The rabbi understands that Christianity is founded upon clear and unambiguous historical claims. He sees what so many liberal theologians do not — that without those historical claims Christianity ceases to be Christianity.

More:

The divide separating Christians from non-Christians is not between those who think loving all people is good and those who think loving all people is bad. The real divide is between those who believe that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day as proof that he was indeed the Messiah sent by God, and those who do not believe this article of faith and

this audacious historical claim.

Yes Rabbi Gellman, this is an “audacious historical claim.” Christians *do* believe and teach that Jesus Christ rose from the dead — a physical and historical resurrection. The rabbi is absolutely correct in asserting that, if the bones of Jesus had been found in this tomb, Christianity would be proved to be false. Those bones were not found, of course, and the scholarly community has responded to the claim with dismissal and disdain.

The more interesting question is why so many who identify themselves as Christians seem to miss what the rabbi sees. Rabbi Gellman does not believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, but he does believe that Christians must believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. He is right, of course. The rabbi gets it.

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