

COVER UP

We hear so much these days about cover-ups. The news is full of them. Benghazi, the NSA collecting data on everyone, the IRS targeting certain groups to silence their viewpoints. It's discouraging, but it's certainly not anything new.

Probably the most famous, yet at the same time the worst cover-up in history was the one following the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Jewish officials had persuaded Pilate to secure the tomb and place guards there to ensure that Jesus stayed dead and buried. He had told people He would rise from the dead in three days, and they wanted to make sure that did not happen. When it did, and the guards were witnesses of it, something had to be done. The Jewish leaders cooked up an alibi – while the guards were sleeping, Jesus' disciples had come in the night and stolen his body – and bribed the soldiers with a wad of cash, promising to keep them out of trouble if the governor should hear of it.

Any thinking person could see right through this implausible story. First, if the guards were sleeping, how would they know what happened? Second, if they admitted to being asleep while on guard duty, they would be in serious trouble. Some time later, when Peter was miraculously released from prison by an angel, Herod ordered the guards to be executed. (See Acts 12:1-19.)

Thirdly, all the disciples had fled when Jesus was betrayed. Peter and John followed Him to the trial, but the only disciple mentioned as being at the cross when Jesus was crucified was John. Jesus commended His mother into John's care (John 19:27) and it would seem logical that after Jesus died, John would have taken Mary home. None of the disciples (except possibly John) saw where the tomb was.

And finally, supposing the disciples had come to steal Jesus' body, how could they have done so without waking the guards? They would have to have brought torches for light and rolling the stone away would not have been a quiet endeavor, nor a quick one. I suppose the soldiers could have been so drunk they would sleep through it, but knowing the penalty for sleeping on guard duty would argue against that.

So what's my point? I guess it's that we need to take seriously the warnings of Scripture. Some that come to mind are: "Whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open . . . Consider carefully what you listen to" (Mark 4:22-24). And "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16). We need to be wary because "the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light" (Luke 16:8). We should follow the example of the Bereans who "examined the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11) In secular matters, and even more so in spiritual matters, we need to be really listening, really thinking, and checking the facts, looking for truth.