

## Starbucks: The Land of Opportunity!

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This paper is about a fictional encounter I had with Ed while studying in Starbucks. One of the things I love about studying in Starbucks is that you never know who you will run into and what that conversation might lead too. I hope you enjoy the conversation below; I tried to use different apologetic methods while writing this dialogue. As a side note, I did begin an email exchange with a co-worker but he bailed on me after I sent him the first email.

JAY: Hi, mind if I sit here?

ED: Not at all, pull up a chair.

JAY: Wow, this place is packed out!

ED: Yeah, no kidding. Must be finals time. Everyone who walks in here buys a coffee plops down and starts studying.

JAY: That's why I'm here. I've got a huge apologetics exam in a couple of weeks and I better get cracken'.

ED: Apologetics? Where do you go to school?

JAY: Reformed Theological Seminary, I'm training to be a pastor.

ED: Really. Well you probably would not have enjoyed my religion class today.

JAY: Why do you say that?

ED: We talked about the resurrection of Jesus, or better put, the lack of a resurrection.

JAY: Interesting topic...what's your take? Do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus?

ED: When I was growing up, maybe. I went to church when I was young and that is what the church teaches, but I've kinda gotten over the whole God thing and after today and all the evidence our professor gave, not a chance.

JAY: I'd be interested to hear what he said if you have the time?

ED: Sure, in fact, I have my notes right here.

JAY: Sounds good.

ED: There are four major reasons my professor gave in order to disprove the resurrection of Jesus. The first one, describes Jesus as not really dying. Basically when Jesus was on the cross he lost consciousness, he didn't really die. Due to all the blood he lost during his beatings and hanging on the cross, and the fact that his body was in such pain and shock its more likely that Jesus passed out rather than died. So when the guards took his body down and laid it in a cool tomb his body revived and Jesus went and visited with his disciples. This is an over simplification, but I think you get the idea.

JAY: Yeah, I understand what you are saying. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever seen movies like Braveheart or Gladiator?

ED: Yes, I love those movies!

JAY: Me too! Now think about the executioners in those moves. What is there sole job in life? What do they live to do?

ED: Kill people.

JAY: Right, if they messed that up then they were not only out of a job, but could potentially lose their life as well. Roman soldiers were some of the most ruthless, brutal, and knowledgeable men of the world at that time when it came to killing. They were expert killers. It's hard to believe that a group of Roman soldiers couldn't tell if a person was dead or not. They performed thousands upon thousands of these types of executions. This does not even take into account the amount of blood Jesus lost during his beatings and the fact that he was stabbed in the side to make sure he was dead. Again this does not even take into account the asphyxiation that occurs from being crucified. Even if he were to survive there is no way he could move the two-ton rock in front of his tomb by himself. I just find it impossible to believe that a man going through what he went through was supposed to move by himself a two-ton rock and then take on

several guards after that. I don't think a man in his position was quite up to that. Heck, I couldn't do that in the condition that I'm in.

ED: I guess you make a pretty good argument. I thought this was probably the weakest of his four positions.

JAY: I just want you to know there is another side to the arguments you are hearing. But let's here what else your professor has to say.

ED: Another view, which I think holds water, is that the disciples of Jesus came and stole his body.

JAY: If this is true then what evidence do you have to support such a claim?

ED: One example can be found in Justin Martyr's Dialogue Against Trypho where it says, "the Jew speaks of one Jesus a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified; but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven." Also, Reimarus says, "The disciples of Jesus purloined the body of Jesus before it had been buried twenty-four hours, played at the burial-place the comedy of the empty grave, and delayed the public announcement of the resurrection until the fiftieth day, when the decay of the body had become complete." Think about it, the disciples had all the reasons in the world to steal the body of Jesus. They had left family, jobs, comforts, and much more to follow this man. Could you imagine the humiliation of admitting that the man you gave up everything for was not who he actually claimed to be? At least if they stole the body they save some face.

JAY: Ed, you are right in that this theory has been around for a long time. But that is exactly what it is, a theory. Did you know that the bible even addresses this situation?

ED: No, but don't you think the bible is a little bias? After all aren't the followers of Jesus the ones who wrote the book?

JAY: Let me address the claims above that you were making and then we can talk about the bias of the bible. In fact I would say that everyone who reads anything, facts included come to those statements with a personal bias already in hand. We can talk about that in a minute though. Sound good?

ED: Ok

JAY: About the stolen body, in Matthew 28:11-15 it says, "While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away

while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day." There are several facts we can take from this text and other historical evidence as well. First notice that the guard's testimony is the first witness to the event and their testimony was received as entirely true because the guard had no reason to lie.

ED: But what if the guards were in on it to begin with.

JAY: What benefit do they gain from this? In fact, because this happened under their watch they could have easily been executed for allowing this to happen. The only thing that appears to save their skin is the chief priest coming up with a lie and buying them off.

ED: Keep going.

JAY: In addition it would have been impossible for a band of disciples to move the stone away from the tomb and grab Jesus' body without the Roman Guard waking up and taking action against them. Even if it were possible for all of the soldiers to sleep through this ruckus, then how could they say the disciples stole his body? How were they so certain it was the disciples if they didn't see anyone? One more point.

ED: I'm listening.

JAY: If the disciples did take Jesus then where did their courage all of a sudden come from? The disciples who fled during Jesus' trial and at least one even denied to a servant girl of all people that he was ever with Jesus. They were too distraught, depressed, and cowardly to do such a thing. This was not a time when they would be ready to take on the Sanhedrin and Roman guards, risking their lives for the body of Jesus. These are just several of the many reasons why it would be foolish to think the disciples stole his body. If the disciples didn't have the courage or will and the guards and Jews didn't want his body missing, then how do you explain the empty tomb? Jesus rose again. Just like he said he would. The bible is very clear and emphatic about this.

ED: There you go with the bible again. Why does everything keep coming back to the bible? I mean I think there are good things in that book but it's not the end all book.

JAY: Ed, for me everything in one-way or another comes back to the bible, God's written word. I believe that there is a creator/creature distinction (here I draw the circles) meaning that there is a Personal God who created, governs, and sustains this world. In light of his creating this world he has given us (creatures) certain obligations that we are to live by. The bible spells out very

clearly what is required of us. Hence, the bible, as the word of God informs me how I ought to think about this world and live in this world.

ED: Well, that's all good for you but I don't believe in God or buy that God stuff. It's just a crutch to help you deal with life.

JAY: That's probably one reason you don't believe that Jesus was resurrected from the grave. If you don't believe in God then it would be logical to disbelieve the claims that Jesus was the son of God and had the power to raise himself from the grave.

ED: One of them, the other is that you just don't see people who have been dead for three days come back to life.

JAY: What would it take for you to believe that Jesus rose from the grave?

ED: I'm not sure...I'd have to think about that.

JAY: Would you have to see him? It seems like historical evidence and arguments won't convince you. I know we haven't addressed all the arguments put forth by your professor but there are good arguments from my side to all his objections.

ED: See him might do it, but even if I did see him how would I know that I'm not dreaming or something. How do I know it would really be him?

JAY: So even if you did see Jesus you would probably dismiss it as a crazy occurrence or daydream then?

ED: Honestly, yes.

JAY: Basically what you are telling me is that no matter what happens to you in life you always interpret facts according to your beliefs?

ED: What do you mean by that?

JAY: Well if you don't believe it is possible for a person to be raised from the dead after three days then these beliefs control how you will interpret the facts about the resurrection. If you believe something to be a certain way then all other interpretations become invalid at that point.

ED: I see, but it works the same way for you correct? Since you believe it is possible for someone to be raised from the dead then you interpret the facts of the resurrection as true because you believe resurrection is possible.

JAY: That's correct. Our beliefs drive the way we interpret facts. Our presuppositions drive how we interpret the information we gather.

ED: Well if you have one set of presuppositions that are different from mine then where does that leave us? Because I am going to keep interpreting the facts of the resurrection the way my professor did and you are going to interpret the information a different way.

JAY: Well, lets go back to the question of God. You stated earlier that you don't believe in God. Therefore any evidence that I try to give for the proof of God you are just going to dismiss because this is not your belief, correct?

ED: Correct.

JAY: Well, let me ask you this...how do you decided what is morally right and wrong? For instance is it wrong for me to steal your car?

ED: Of course it's wrong for you to steal my car.

JAY: What makes it wrong?

ED: The law says that you can't do that!

JAY: What makes our laws right?

ED: Our society dictates what rules we are to live by and if we break them then there are consequences.

JAY: So our society arbitrarily defines what is right and wrong by the laws it writes?

ED: Hmm...

JAY: What if a child was visiting a society where it was ok to kill other people and while visiting this society they decided to rape, mutilate, and kill her. Is there anything wrong with that?

ED: Yes, there is something terribly wrong with that.

JAY: If there is no Absolute Personal God then who defines what is right and wrong? Because you see if there is no Absolute Person God then each individual is left to him or herself to determine what is right and wrong. If this is the case then everything is relative and subjective. Therefore who are you to say that killing that child was wrong?

ED: Basically you are telling me there are only two alternatives?

JAY: Correct. Either the universe is completely impersonal, meaning that everything is reduced to matter and chance, which in turn means there is no

purpose for anything. Or a Person who has a reason and purpose for everything that happens and has given us a standard by which we can know what is morally right and wrong created the universe.

ED: Let me guess, this standard is the Bible?

JAY: Yes, the bible clearly teaches what is right and wrong. You see I can say that it is wrong to kill that child because the bible clearly teaches that it is wrong to kill innocent people. Just like I can say its wrong to get drunk, commit adultery, lie, steal, abuse people, etc. I know these things are wrong because God's word tells me that they are wrong, not because of some arbitrary rule mandated by society.

ED: How do you know the bible is God's word? How do you know it not some book made up throughout history with an agenda to will to power over people?

JAY: The bible claims to be God's word. Paul tells us that Scripture was 'breathed out' by God. In fact, the Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God. He used language in order to communicate his truth to us in a way that we would be able to understand it.

ED: Big problem Jay. You are using the bible to prove the bible.

JAY: Your right but earlier you were using your own presuppositions to prove your point. Whether you presuppositions be reason, gut feeling, or whatever remember we all have our presuppositions. My point is that some presuppositions can be lived out while others cannot. Do your presuppositions work? Do they answer the big questions of life? Do they give purpose?

ED: I could live life just like I am now and be happy for the most part.

JAY: I don't think you could, not if you truly lived by your presuppositions. In fact I would go so far as to say that if you were happy you were being inconsistent with your presuppositions. The reason being if there is no God then there is no meaning in life. Nothing counts, there is no right or wrong. You can't have happiness without meaning. Life void of meaning is despair and that is where you are at if you are true to your presuppositions.

ED: I see. This is something that I need to consider.

JAY: If the God of the bible is the true creator of this universe and if he has given us his word, which I believe he has, the question then becomes, have you followed God's standards, his moral commands?

ED: Not perfectly. But it's not like I've gone out and killed anyone either. If you were to put my life on a scale I would say there has been more good than bad.

JAY: Ed, if you were to stand before the God of the universe right now, do you think he would be pleased with you? Do you think he would let you into heaven? Remember his standard is perfection.

ED: Not if his standard is perfection.

JAY: This is why the resurrection of Jesus that we were talking about earlier is so important. The bible teaches that Jesus Christ came to bear the penalty we deserved for not obeying God completely. The judgment that we deserve for disobedience to God was put upon Christ and the perfect life that he lived was accounted to those who believe upon him and put their faith in him. The resurrection shows that God's wrath was satisfied and that one day we will be resurrected like Christ was and enjoy the presence of this wonderful and loving God.

ED: From what you are saying our presuppositions not only influence how we live but also radically effect what happens to us when we die.

JAY: Correct you are my friend.

ED: Hmm...Oh no! Look at the time. Jay, I have to go and pick up my sister now, but can we talk about this more another time? You have given me a lot to think about and I need some time to process this.

JAY: Sure, how about we meet here this Friday at 1:00pm and continue our discussion?

ED: Sounds great!

The End.

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