



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Scripture Reading

Week of
April 17th -23rd



Monday

- ❖ Joshua 23, 24
- ❖ Psalm 76
- ❖ John 8

Tuesday

- ❖ Judges 1, 2
- ❖ Psalm 77
- ❖ John 9

Wednesday

- ❖ Judges 3, 4
- ❖ Psalm 78
- ❖ John 10

Thursday

- ❖ Judges 5, 6
- ❖ Psalm 79
- ❖ John 11

Friday

- ❖ Judges 7, 8
- ❖ Psalm 80
- ❖ John 12

Saturday

- ❖ Judges 9, 10

Sunday

- ❖ Judges 11, 12

I Believe in the Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has been called the central teaching of the Christian faith, the heart of the Gospel, the cornerstone of our theology, and the basis of our hope as believers. Perhaps that explains why the truth of the bodily resurrection of Christ has been under attack since the very day the tomb was discovered to be empty (Matthew 28:11-15).

Over the years, many have followed in the path of those first chief priests and elders who tried to explain away the resurrected Christ. The ancient Gnostics taught that Jesus switched places with a bystander before the crucifixion and later came out of hiding to appear to His followers. Docetists proposed the idea that Jesus only seemed to have a physical body. Enlightenment thinkers imagined that Jesus swooned at the cross and later woke up in the tomb, pushed away the stone and appeared to His disciples. Present day Jesus Seminar scholars marginalize the resurrection, teaching that

it was only metaphor and not an actual event. But the Apostle Paul said, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17 ESV). We need to have a clear understanding-just why do we believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Both Jesus and the Old Testament prophets predicted

the resurrection. When the Jews asked for a sign of Jesus' authority, He said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19-22). Other instances include Matthew 20:19, Mark 14:28, and Luke 9:22. Old Testament prophecies include Job 19:25-27 and Psalm 16:10 (cf. Acts 2:31).

The detailed accounts of the resurrection found in Matthew 28:1-8, Mark 16:1-11, Luke 24:1-12, and John 20:1-18 are eyewitness records of the event. Though each author chose to include slightly different details, the four narratives stand as legitimate historical documentation. Few

events in history have as precise detail from multiple witnesses as do the accounts of the resurrection found in the Gospels.

The Roman guard that stood watching the tomb (Matthew 27:64-66) knew that falling asleep on their watch meant certain execution. It is preposterous to believe that the same timid disciples who fled the crucifixion would so soon be willing to face the danger of the guard, move the heavy stone from in front of the tomb, steal the body, and were able to accomplish all without waking the soldiers, who were conveniently asleep on duty.

The empty tomb and the uninhabited grave clothes were enough to convince John of the resurrection (John 20:8), along with the women's account of angelic testimony (Matthew 28:5-7).

I Believe in the Resurrection

...continued from page 1

Many of the details in the Gospel accounts are unlikely from the perspective of the authors, and must have been bewildering to them. For example, the fact that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene instead of a man like John or Peter would have been confusing in the male-dominated culture of the day. The disciples had seen Lazarus and others raised from the dead, but never resurrection to a glorified body like Jesus experienced—thus His ability to vanish (Luke 24:31) and to appear suddenly in a locked room (John 20:19). Including these unheard of events in the narrative shows that the authors were recording history as it occurred, not inventing fiction.

The wounds in Jesus' hands and side are evidence that it was indeed He who suffered on the cross, not a stand-in as the Gnostics taught. The scars verified by Thomas (John 20:27-28) and the meal shared with the disciples in Jerusalem (Luke 24:41-43) prove that the resurrection was physical, not a spiritual or solely metaphoric event. You can't touch a spirit; metaphors do not eat.

Jesus appeared to many people after His resurrection, including those who knew Him well, like Mary Magdalene (John 20:15-17) and the disciples. He also appeared to over 500 people at one time (I Corinthians 15:6). Nearly all would have been present when Peter preached about the resurrected Jesus in Acts 2:32. We have no record of any of Christ's contemporaries objecting to Peter's mention of the resurrection in this sermon, preached before the very people who had crucified Jesus. Many of these same witnesses would have been alive to confirm the testimony of the Gospels when they were written.

Since the beginning, Jesus' followers have suffered. The first-century church was brutally persecuted. Thousands of followers, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, withstood poverty, imprisonment, beatings, torture, and death for their belief. Tradition tells us that all but one of the Apostles died a martyr's death. If they were not completely convinced of Christ's deity and resurrection, they would not have

suffered and died for those beliefs.

Finally, the entire New Testament confirms the centrality of the resurrection. Belief in the resurrection is a requirement for salvation (Romans 10:9). Resurrection is pictured in baptism (Romans 6:4, Col. 2:12). It is the basis of hope for our own resurrection (Romans 8:11) and the resurrection of other believers who have died (I Thessalonians 4:14). It is the demonstration of God's great power (Eph 1:19). It is why we are able to hope in God (1 Peter 1:21) and the means by which we are born again (1 Peter 3:23).

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

I Corinthians 15:22

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Corporate Arsenal Passages

God is Faithful to All His Promises

Promise 4: Promise to never be separated from His love

Romans 8:38-39

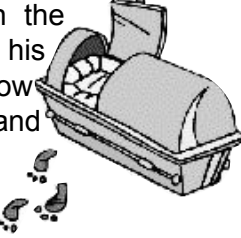
For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Tom, Risen from the Dead!

by Jim Elliff

Imagine what you would think if your good friend (we'll call him Tom) were to tell you that he is going to die due to some angry men, and then be put in the grave. You would listen incredulously at his prediction about himself, no doubt. How could he know *that* he is going to die, and *by what means* he is going to die?



Then suppose that Tom said, "Don't worry about my death, because in three days from the time I die, I'll come to life again. And I'll be looking for you."

Come on, now. This would be too much.

I'm sure you thought of Christ when I described Tom, and that what he said is precisely what the Bible claims Christ actually did. But not everybody who calls himself or herself a Christian believes that Jesus did this.

Christ's resurrection is a big notion to swallow, after all. It is no wonder that many pastors spiritualize the resurrection into something other than a rising from the dead *in a body*. You might not catch it when you listen to their words, but if you ask and they will be honest, there are many that think of Christ's resurrection in something other than corporeal terms.

Is it important for Christ to have risen in historical time/space reality? Yes it is. Consider the following:

1. *If Christ were not raised from the dead, then He is morally unable to save.* Jesus told of His future death and bodily resurrection on numerous occasions prior to it happening, and those predictions were lies if not fulfilled. Deception negates His larger message. A deceiver could not be God, or a sinless Savior. As sinful, He would not be able to satisfy the just requirements of the Father for a substitute on behalf of sinful people. If He were not raised, you should not only refuse to listen to Him; He could not save you even if you did.

2. *If Jesus were not raised from the dead, the disciples were at best fools, and at worst, liars.* What we know about the Christian life comes from the pen of men moved and guided by God to write the words we call the New Testament. The original apostles died martyrs' deaths on the basis of their belief that the resurrection took place just as predicted, and that they saw Him alive again. If it were not true, then they were either duped, or else they fabricated the resurrection as a means to shore up the movement. But would they pay the ultimate price for a lie they

had manufactured in order to have a job? Not so. Paul speaks of the absurdity of this in the following way:

And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ . . . (1 Cor. 15:14-15)

3. *If Jesus were not raised from the dead then we could not have assurance that the price of our sins has been paid.* Christ was the perfect Lamb offered in our place, the single sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all who would believe on Him. His death provided our only way of being accepted by God. Without it we are doomed. Christ's resurrection is the assurance that this was completed, and that sin and its resulting death (physical and spiritual) was fully overthrown. What assurance could we have that the work promised had been done through the means of the cross if He did not rise to verify it?

Without question, the Easter Bunny pales in comparison with this momentous event called the resurrection. And we have not even mentioned such benefits as the way His resurrection results in our own future bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-22), or how emancipation from the tyranny of sin is a necessary consequent (Rom. 6:1-14).

Tom's comeback would make the news. But, since Tom is sinful, like all other humans, he will die again-even if he were to predict his death and rising. His reappearance would be spectacular, but not saving. Lazarus was raised like that, remember, but he died again just like everybody else will, and his death did not do anything to solve the problem of sin and death. Tom would certainly make a few talk shows, and get a good book contract, but that is about it.

Jesus' resurrection, on the other hand, is permanent. He exists now in heaven in the same glorified body He had when He rose from the dead. He ascended in that same body to heaven after His resurrection. He has the power of "an indestructible life." And your salvation-spiritually and physically-depends upon it.

Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment I have received from My Father. (John 10:17-18)

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