



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

44 Salusbury Road, London NW6 6NN

Charity No. 1060655

Tel: 020 7328 0869 (Manse)

Email: newlifeplondon@yahoo.co.uk

Website: www.newlifebpc.org.uk

Preacher & Church Administrator: Mok Chee Cheong 07921 929515

"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

Vol. 12 No. 12

LORD'S DAY 23 MARCH 2008

The Case for the Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10)

Introduction

The importance of the resurrection to Christianity cannot be over emphasised. The resurrection of Jesus is the most fundamental and radical of Christian doctrines.

Not every critic of Christianity would deny the existence of Jesus. What they do challenge is its claims that Jesus is God and that He was raised from the dead. Some begin by questioning if He was really dead in the first place, when He was taken from the cross. How do we know that Jesus was dead? Perhaps he only "swooned" or fainted and regained consciousness while in the borrowed tomb. Is that plausible?

JESUS REALLY DIED

Firstly, death by crucifixion is not something any person just walked away from. Death by crucifixion was essentially death by asphyxiation. We must remember that prior to His crucifixion, Jesus had been severely flogged in Pilate's Hall.

Secondly, the scriptural record tells us that when the soldiers came to break his ankles, He was already dead. John 19:32-33 The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs;

Thirdly, when he was stabbed in the chest with a spear, blood and water came out. In other words, if Jesus was still alive, the spear would have killed him. An ancient Roman author indicates that it was typical crucifixion procedure to pierce the victim with a spear to make sure the person was dead.

Fourthly, if Jesus was still alive after the experience of crucifixion and revived while in the tomb, there are some extraordinary events that need to be explained. After the trauma of crucifixion and being in the tomb without food and water for three days, a revived Jesus moved a huge grave stone (Matthew 27:60), fought off and disarmed at least one guard (Matthew 27:65-66), walked some distance to where the disciples were, evidenced no signs of his ordeal to those He met and walked with them on the road to Emmaus. This would be an extraordinary feat for someone who had...

Continued on Page 2...

undergone the ordeal of flogging, dehydration and crucifixion. When He made his first appearance to His disciples, He would have had great difficulty making them believe He had been resurrected. What shape would He have been in? He would be bleeding from his wounds, he'd be pale from the loss of blood, swollen from the beatings and very weak. In this condition he would not be able to inspire the disciples and change them into bold converts that would transform the Roman world for Christ with the gospel of the resurrected Christ. If it were false, it would be impossible for Christianity to spread the way it did in the first century if not for the resurrection that convicted the hearts of the early disciples

THE RESURRECTION ITSELF

The next challenge is, How do we know that Jesus was literally and bodily raised from the dead? Consider these quotes:

In the book "Did Jesus Rise From The Dead: The Resurrection Debate", authors Gary Habermas and Antony Flew dealt with objections to the resurrection of Jesus. On page 22, Gary Habermas lists ten key evidences for Jesus' Resurrection.

(1) The disciples eyewitness experiences, which they believed to be literal appearances of the risen Jesus... (2) the early proclamation of the Resurrection by these eyewitnesses, (3) their transformation into bold witnesses who were willing to die for their convictions, (4) the empty tomb, and (5) the fact that the Resurrection of Jesus was the center of the apostolic message, all of which require adequate explanations. It is also found that the disciples proclaimed this message in Jerusalem itself, where it is related that in repeated confrontations with the authorities, (6) the Jewish leaders could not disprove their message even though they had both the power and the motivation to do so. Additionally, (7) the very existence of the church, founded by monotheistic, law-abiding Jews who nonetheless (8) worshiped on Sunday demand historical causes as well. Two additionally strong facts arguing for the historicity of the Resurrection are the two skeptics, (9) James and (10) Paul, became Christians after having experiences that they also believed were appearances of the risen Jesus. (Habermas and Flew, *Did Jesus Rise From The Dead: The Resurrection Debate*, Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco, CA, 1987. 22.)

When balanced objectively, the odds are against those who refuse to believe the resurrection.

DEALING WITH OBJECTIONS

The Disciples Stole The Body

Some have suggested that the disciples stole the body of Jesus and fabricated the resurrection story. The first problem with this theory is that it is flawed right from the beginning. There is not a single shred of evidence to support it. Later, when threatened with death, the disciples could have saved themselves by coming forward with the truth. All they would have needed to do was state that Jesus' body was stolen, show the authorities where they had put it and their life would have...

Continued on Page 3...

been spared. Under the threat of death, not one disciple changed his story concerning the resurrection of Jesus. Why would they be willing to die for a lie? It is almost humanly implausible. The disciples died declaring what they knew to be true - Jesus Christ is alive.

The Roman Authorities Removed The Body

Others have suggested that the Roman authorities removed the body of Jesus from the tomb. If this is so, then why didn't they produce it to silence the apostle's claim that Jesus was alive. There is only one reason why the Roman and Jewish authorities failed to do so; they had no body to produce!

The tomb was not totally empty. The tomb of Jesus was not totally empty in that there were wrappings left behind by the Lord. John 20:6 Simon beheld the linen wrappings lying [there,] and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

John Blanchard offers the following thoughts concerning this phrase.

The word 'lying' seems straightforward, but there is more to the original Greek word than meets the eye, because it is commonly used of something done in an orderly way. This means that the linen winding-cloth was not carelessly discarded. But there was something else. The head-cloth was 'folded up by itself, separate from the linen'. One scholar says that 'folded up by itself' means something like 'twirled about itself', and another that it 'aptly describes the rounded shape which the empty napkin still preserved'. (Blanchard, *Will The Real Jesus Please Stand Up?*, Evangelical Press, Durham, England, 1989. 115.)

This suggests that the body of the entombed one had passed through the burial cloth without disturbing it. Scripture tells us that when John realized the significance of those collapsed grave clothes, he "believed." What convinced him was not merely the absence of the body, but the way in which the grave-clothes were lying. It was a miracle authenticated by circumstantial evidence.

The So-called Eye Witnesses Were Hallucinating

The most powerful piece of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is the Bible's reliable record of His appearances. There are written testimonies to this by the 4 gospel writers, Paul and Peter, three of whom are actual eye-witnesses - and they record eleven separate appearances over a period of forty days. These evidence corroborated a genuine resurrected Lord (see the *Willmington* guide for this list).

1. His Appearance To Mary Magdalene

Mark 16:9 He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons.

2. His Appearance To A Group Of Women Between The Tomb And The City

Matt 28:9 Jesus met them and greeted them. And they worshiped Him.

Continued on Page 4...

3. His Appearance To Two Disciples On Their Way To Emmaus

Luke 24:15 Jesus Himself approached, and traveled with them.

4. His Appearance To Simon

Luke 24:34 "The Lord has appeared to Simon."

5. His Appearance To A Group Of Disciples

Luke 24:36 while they were telling these things, He stood in their midst.

6. His Appearance A Week Later To Disciples Behind Closed Doors

John 20:26 with Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, "Peace [be] with you.

7. His Appearance By The Sea Of Tiberias

John 21:1 Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias,

8. His Appearance To More Than Five Hundred At The Same Time

1Cor 15:6 He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom were alive at that time

9. His Appearance To James

1Cor 15:7 He appeared to James, and then to the apostles;

10. His Appearance To The Eleven On A Mountain in Galilee

Matt 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth.

11. His Appearance In The Vicinity Of Bethany

Luke 24:50-51 He led them near Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. .

12. His Appearance To Paul

1Cor 15:8 and last of all, He appeared to me also.

Some have challenged that what the New Testament describes as Jesus' appearance to "more than 500" followers was a "mass ecstasy or hallucination." It is, incredible to believe that "more than 500" followers were simultaneously caught up in "mass ecstasy." It is unthinkable that 500 people would have the same hallucination at the same time. It would require a greater leap of faith and would be a greater miracle than the resurrection itself if it were true! However, there is no authenticated evidence for such conjectures or concocted theories at all. The only reasonable explanation is that they were not hallucinating but actually saw the resurrected Christ in person.

Some skeptics suggested that what the disciples saw was some kind of spirit or ghost. This cannot be collaborated by Scripture. Consider these post-resurrection actions and comments by our Lord and the actual circumstances that dismissed this idea:

Continued on Page 5...

The Women Clasped A Physical Body

Matt 28:9 Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.

He Manifest Physical Abilities

Luke 24:30 He took the bread and blessed [it,] and breaking [it,] He [began] giving [it] to them.

He Stated That He Was Not A Spirit

Luke 24:36-42 He stood in their midst. And He said to them, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for **a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.**" He showed them His hands and His feet He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate [it] before them.

THE EFFECT on THE EARLY CHURCH

The truth of the resurrection affected the growth and vitality of early church in at least two ways. **First**, it became the center of their message. Revived by the reality of the resurrection, they went everywhere proclaiming the crucified, resurrected, ascended Christ. **Second**, they lived with a glorious and lively hope, as in 1 Thes 4:14-18.

According to Paul, the early church was... looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:13-14)

Consider the fact that also the believers at Thessalonica had... turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus. (1 Thes 1:9-10)

Conclusion

The Christian faith is vitally founded on the life, death and resurrection of its founder, Jesus Christ. If there is no resurrection then Christ is not God and our faith is in vain but the truth is that the risen victorious Saviour is alive and he triumphed over the grave and hell and so will we one day at our resurrection and live forever more in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:51-58). While belief in the resurrection is a matter of faith, it is faith based upon persuasive and credible evidence. In view of the facts, the only sensible conclusion to this matter is that Jesus was raised from the dead and that He is alive at this very moment. It is by faith that we embraced this fact with or without evidence concerning the resurrection and this is the only hope for fallen mankind, a risen Saviour who is coming back again to receive us unto him forever.

*Rev Jack Sin, Maranatha B-P Church, S'pore
(adapted from Grace B-P church bulletin dated 23 March 2008)*

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

CHURCH THEME: WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING. (Philippians 2:12)

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	<i>Today: 23/03/2008</i>	<i>Next Week: 30/03/2008</i>	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We like to welcome Marianne Thomson and Anna Dellago to our morning worship service last Lord's Day.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Pr Mok Chee Cheong	Jonathan Kim	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Pastor Jeff O'Neil	Pr Mok Chee Cheong	
<i>Message:</i>		The Full Extent of Christ's Obedience	
<i>Text:</i>	Judges 16:21, 22	Philippians 2:5-11	
<i>Organist:</i>	Anthony	Pr Mark	
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	Pr Mark Chen	John Poh	NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Preacher:</i>	Pastor Jeff O'Neil	Pr Mok Chee Cheong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome: We would like to welcome Pastor and Mrs Jeff O'Neil. • Gospel Outreach – 11:30am on 24 Mar: The gospel outreach, followed by a BBQ, will be held tomorrow at 11:30am. Do invite your family and friends to attend this event. Do pray for Ps Jeff O'Neil as he prepares for the message. • Seminars on 5 & 12 Apr (3:30pm): Rev Jack Sin will be conducting a couple of seminars in place of the Saturday Bible Study. Please refer to the insert for more details. • Sabbath School: Please note that class is held at the Library after the morning worship. You are encouraged to bring children of ages 6-12 for the lessons. • Book Table: Please feel free to browse the book table for materials that are of interest to you. • Daylight Savings: Please take note on 30 Mar, the clocks will be going forward by 1 hour.
<i>Message:</i>		The Heart of Wisdom	
<i>Text:</i>	Acts 16:14	Proverbs 2	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Sophia	Joy	
Other Duties			
	<i>Today: 23/03/2008</i>	<i>Next Week: 30/03/2008</i>	
<i>Ushers</i>	Daniel/Yetta	Josiah/Sharon	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	No Class	Esmeralda	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Constance	Maureen	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>Bible Study:</i>	No DHW Class	No DHW Class	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 28 Mar	7:30pm	Young Adults Fellowship: Combined Meeting with SGAT	
Sat 29 Mar	4:00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Led by Pr Mark Chen	
Last Week's Worship Service Collections			
Offering:	£391.08	YAF: £9.60 Lunch: £35.63	
Memory Verse			
<i>Last Week (Mar 08 Wk 3): Psalm 121:3</i>			
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.			
<i>This Week (Mar 08 Wk 4): Psalm 121:4</i>			
Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.			