



THE FOREST HILL NEWS

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The Reality of the Resurrection

Dewayne Bryant

Of all the miracles of the New Testament, one of the most hotly debated is that of Jesus' resurrection. As with other supernatural events, many deny the resurrection completely. Belief in this key event in salvation history strikes modern critics and skeptics alike as an embarrassment for the Christian faith. We all know, they claim, that dead people simply do not rise from the dead.

The centrality of the resurrection is highlighted by Paul in his letters to Corinth. Among the several items of importance of the gospel message he includes, the resurrection of Christ is one (1 Cor. 15:3-4). The importance of this event is so great that if it did not happen, "our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ... If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (vv. 14, 17 ESV). Paul is claiming the resurrection is part of the redemptive work of Christ as well as a hope for the believer's future. Was the resurrection fact or fiction?

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

Jesus' death was hardly a surprise. He foretold His own death a number of times (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-33) although His disciples did not understand Him clearly (9:32). Jesus' foes also heard His claims. During His trial, His opponents offer a garbled account of Jesus' predictions. Some misunderstood His prediction of raising the temple – in other words, His body – in three days (John 2:19-21; Matt. 26:61). Others seem to have understood His meaning, for they asked Pilate to secure the tomb so that the disciples could not steal the body and claim Jesus had risen from the dead (27:62-66). Later on, the disciples remembered Jesus' predictions and were able to understand them clearly thanks to the advantage of hindsight (John 2:22).

The Gospels Are Reliable Sources

Despite claims of radical critics, the Gospels are reliable sources of historical information about the life of Jesus and His followers. One of the most important features of the text is verisimilitude, or the authors' accuracy in depicting the period. The Gospel writers mention real people, places and events that can be corroborated by historical and archaeological evidence. They not only have the ring of truth; they also include embarrassing details – such as fighting among the disciples (Luke 9:46; 22:24) or Jesus' humiliating death by crucifixion – that forgers or fiction writers certainly would not include. Scholars do not make such claims about gospels appearing in the second century and later, which have nothing to say about the historical Jesus.

Most importantly, the Gospels were written when living witnesses could still provide firsthand accounts of the events and dispute their accuracy should the writer have gotten anything wrong. Luke sought out eyewitness testimony in composing his gospel (Luke 1:1-4), a search for what ancients called the "living voice." Paul stated that numerous witnesses could corroborate the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:5-8). Peter and John both include statements testifying to their experience with Him (2 Pet. 1:16; 1 John 1:1-2).

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Barry M. Grider,
Pulpit Evangelist
Matthew Jones,
Personal Evangelist
Jordan Pugh, Youth

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship.... 10:30 A.M.
Afternoon Worship.... 1:30 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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The Reality of the Resurrection (continued from page 1)

Women Were the First Witnesses

The biblical Gospels indicate that women were the first witnesses to the empty tomb. At dawn, a group of women including Mary Magdalene discovered the vacant tomb. Given the fact that women's testimony was considered unreliable in a court of law (*Rosh Hashanah* 1.8), a fictional account of the resurrection would have read much differently. If the account had been made of whole cloth, the accounts would have depicted the disciples discovering the empty tomb. It might have included Peter – given his importance in the Gospels and Acts – or Peter, James and John who made up a kind of inner circle among the 12 apostles. This detail may have been considered embarrassing: the women boldly went to finish preparing the body of Jesus while the disciples were still hiding in Jerusalem.

Opponents Were Converted

The archenemy of Christ in the early church was none other than Saul of Tarsus. The book of Acts makes clear his brutality toward the early Christians. The text includes three references to Saul's activities: he consents to the execution of Stephen (8:1), dragged believers from their homes to imprison them (v. 3), and attempted to expand persecutions from Jerusalem to Damascus (9:1-2). Paul's conscience may have haunted him for the rest of his life, for he refers to his previous life numerous times (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:13).

On the way to Damascus, Paul encountered the risen Christ and was converted. His conversion was all the more dramatic because he had no personal ties to Jesus and was a respected member of the same religious establishment that plotted Jesus' doom. After his experience on the road to Damascus, Paul changed from the greatest persecutor of the church to its most zealous defender. He also authored nearly half the books of the New Testament. There would have been little incentive for Paul to choose this transformation willingly, stepping down from a position of respect to join a group who was marginalized and actively persecuted.

Jesus' half-brother James could be counted as a member of the opposition although he did not engage in the persecution of the church. The Gospels paint James and the rest of Jesus' family as standing opposed to Jesus' ministry. They believed Him mad (Mark 3:21), nor did they accept the message He preached (John 7:5). After Christ's resurrection and ascension, we read that James had a change of heart and became an associate of Paul in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19), no doubt because he had seen the risen Lord (1 Cor. 15:7).

Singular Resurrection Was Not a Jewish Belief

The Bible contains only rare examples of resurrection (1 Kings 17:22-23; 2 Kings 4:34) although a few passages seem to indicate God has power over the grave and can raise the deceased (Psm. 49:15; Prov. 15:11; Amos 9:2). During the first century, Jews believed in a general resurrection of the dead at the last day. Religious authorities ask Jesus questions about the afterlife in the New Testament (Matt. 22:23-33; Mark 10:17). This seems to stem from several passages in the Old Testament (Hosea 13:14; Amos 6:1-2; Dan. 12:2). Funerary practices, such as the use of tombs and ossuaries, seem to demonstrate an anticipation of this resurrection.

After Jesus' death, the disciples seemed distraught and disillusioned. His followers either didn't understand the references to His own resurrection or they maintained a belief in a general resurrection of the dead like many of their fellow Jews. It is unlikely they expected Him to rise from the grave. The inclusion of this detail demands an important answer: if the resurrection did not happen, why include it when it defied Jewish expectations?

Jesus Still Lives Today

Other leaders came and went in Judea. Military messiahs such as Judas of Galilee (A.D. 6) and Simon Bar Kokhba (ca. A.D. 132-153) may have enjoyed success for a season, but the Roman military machine inevitably crushed them and the rebellions they led. Yet a simple Jewish prophet named Jesus of Nazareth enjoyed success that spilled beyond the bounds of Judea and has enveloped the world over the last two millennia. What made Him such a success when so many others failed? This question is especially important when many must have perceived Jesus not only as a failed messiah but a false one as well (cf. Deu. 21:23).

Every other prophet and messiah from antiquity has been consigned to the graveyard of history. Their names are little known and rarely remembered. The name of Jesus may be found everywhere today in the hearts and on the lips of men and women who see His resurrection as the prototype of their own (Phil. 3:21). Believing in the resurrection of Christ is not a matter of pious naiveté, but of confidence in the historical record. An empty tomb discovered early one spring Sunday morning two millennia ago gives us persistent hope that darkness and death will never have the final word. And there is no reason to think otherwise.

(from *Gospel Advocate*, November 2016)

LORD'S TABLE

PRESIDE:	Dan Dawson	Isaac McLaurin
ASSIST:	Paul Davenport	Bob Gitter
	Caleb Hull	Kevin Knipple
	Jonathan Retana	Marlon Retana

PRAYERS

A.M. OPENING:	Marv Sowell
A.M. CLOSING:	Phil Houston
P.M. OPENING:	Tony Callahan
P.M. CLOSING:	Andrew Knipple

If you are unable to lead prayer or serve at the Lord's table, please contact Cedric Huff or Paul Connell.

RECORD, WEEK of December 4, 2016

BIBLE STUDY:	200
A.M. WORSHIP:	260
P.M. WORSHIP:	205
CONTRIBUTON:	\$18,678

OUR SICK

Irene Taylor, wife of evangelist Robert R Taylor, Jr., Methodist Hospital Central. No visitors at this time.

James Terry, recovering from surgery.

ILL AT HOME: Leta Fay Anderson, Gene Gordon, Irwin Thomas and Jerry Wright.

HOMEBOUND

Bessie Berry	Albert & Ruth House
Ann Castleman	Clarine Justice
Virginia Ditto	Ryan McCullar
Hazel Eskew	Helen Palazola
Tommy & Nell Herndon	Jerry & Betty Robbins
Anita Hopper	James Terry

INFORMATION LINE: 901-531-8849

RESTORED AND PLACED MEMBERSHIP: Terry Champagne, 8011 Atwater Lane #103, Memphis TN 38119, (901) 412-0925.

REQUESTED PRAYERS: Caleb Hull, Julia Grisham & Holly Myers.

KIRBY PINES Retirement Community worship service each fourth Sunday 8:00-8:45 a.m., conducted by Forest Hill. Our next service will be Sunday, December 25.

LEGACY ESTATES worship service each Sunday afternoon 3:00 p.m. conducted by Forest Hill.

HEARTS & HANDS

TEAM "C" (Danny Braddock) will meet Saturday, December 10 at 10:00 a.m. at the home of Keith & Annette McAlister for brunch. Please bring a breakfast dish.

TEAM "D" (Randy Elliott) will receive assignments the week of December 11.

TEAM "B" (Warren Davenport) will meet Sunday, December 18 after the morning service in the fellowship hall for a covered dish luncheon.

UPCOMING EVENTS

LADIES' and MEN'S CLASSES meet each Tuesday at 10:00 am.

LADIES CHRISTMAS PARTY Thursday, December 8 at 6:00 pm. at the home of Shaunna Hanel. Please bring a White Elephant gift (wrap something you no longer need). Also bring a favorite dish.

WINTER GET TOGETHER Friday, December 9 at 6:00 pm. All are invited! Please see the sign up sheet on the bulletin board..

TEEN/YOUTH PARTY at the Ray home, Sunday, December 11 at 5:00 p.m. Bring a \$5 wrapped gift.

RAY ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY Friday, December 16 at 6:30 p.m. If you want to eat ~ sign the sheet! It is on the bulletin board. Bring a \$5 wrapped gift.

WIDOWS' TEA hosted by Tish Clarke, Saturday, December 17, 10 a.m. – noon at the Clarke's home.

PROJECT FRONTLINE Evan and Lynn Manning have adopted a platoon of soldiers in Iraq or Afghanistan and would like to "**Recruit Your Help**"! Please write as many cards of encouragement as you can and address to "Dear Soldier." Also, a list of small items needed is on the bulletin board. Cards and items may be placed in the "camo" box near church office by Dec. 25.

CONGRATULATIONS to: Daniel Berch, Mary Claire Cox, Aneese McLaurin, Ethan Thomas & Anna Ulrich of the 1st & 2nd grade class taught by Joyce Phillips & Kathy Maund. These students learned all their Bible facts last quarter.

Last week's solution:
And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Mark 10:13-14

CORNERSTONE

Replace each letter with a different letter to reveal the scripture.

M S C K V A R M T H T Y F H T R M T G T D H F W K G T G, E T S H P Z J T P F C T E, P T R Q G L P T S V G T F Q H G T P C T G Y H F W S P P Y K P R M K V T G G F Y R M T Y P T G M S V E G D K H K R, D T H Y T L R K V A M F P K V T G G K V R M T Y T S H F Y A F E.

A = G Solution next week Y = F

The Lord, Our Defender!

Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation (Psalm 35: 1-3).

Every Man Needs:

- I. A Divine Lawyer to plead his case.
- II. A Divine Warrior to protect him from the enemy.
- III. A Divine Savior to pardon his sins.

Barry

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