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# FOUNTAIN

WINNIPEG CHINESE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



THE FOUNTAIN is published once every six weeks. It is supported by free-will offering from Christian friends who have the burden to see the Word of God reach as many as possible. We depend on the all sufficient grace and providence of the Lord to meet our every need. The magazine is free of charge and is sent upon request.

CUR AIN is to unite all Christian brothers and sisters who have the same burden to preach the Gospel unto all nations. We preach none other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

WHAT WE BELIEVE The Bible is the basis of our faith. We believe that the whole Bible, every chapter, every verse as originally given is inspired by God.

"You (Jesus) are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (I Timothy 1:15)

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God -- not because of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)

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"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6)

"When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" (Matthew 9:36-38)

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"..If you confess with your mouth  
Jesus as Lord,  
and believe in your heart that  
God raised Him from the dead,  
you shall be saved."

- Romans 10:9 -

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We welcome written contributions both expository and evangelistic in nature. Articles may include testimonies, short reflective prose, stories, biographies, book reviews, Bible studies, topical discussions, poems, translated works and news of Christian groups. Please avoid adopting a didactic approach. The name and address of the author must accompany all contributions. Pseudonyms may be used, but anonymous articles will not be published.

# For He Has Risen

---

For I delivered to you  
as of first importance  
what I also received,  
That Christ died for our sins  
in accordance with the scriptures,  
That he was buried,  
That he was raised on the third day  
in accordance with the scriptures.

Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead,  
How can some of you say  
that there is no resurrection of the dead?

If Christ has not been raised,  
then 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.

If the dead are not raised,  
"Let us eat and drink,  
For tomorrow  
we die."

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,  
Who was put to death for our trespasses  
and raised for our justification ---  
the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ  
for all who believe,

So that  
as Christ was raised from the dead  
by the glory of the Father,  
We too  
might walk in newness of life.

There is therefore  
now no condemnation for those  
who are in Christ Jesus.

If the Spirit of him  
who raised Jesus from the dead  
dwells in you,

He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead  
will give life to your mortal bodies  
also through his Spirit  
which dwells in you.

Blessed be the God and Father  
of our Lord Jesus Christ!

By his great mercy  
we have been born anew  
to a living hope  
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I Corinthians 15:3, 4

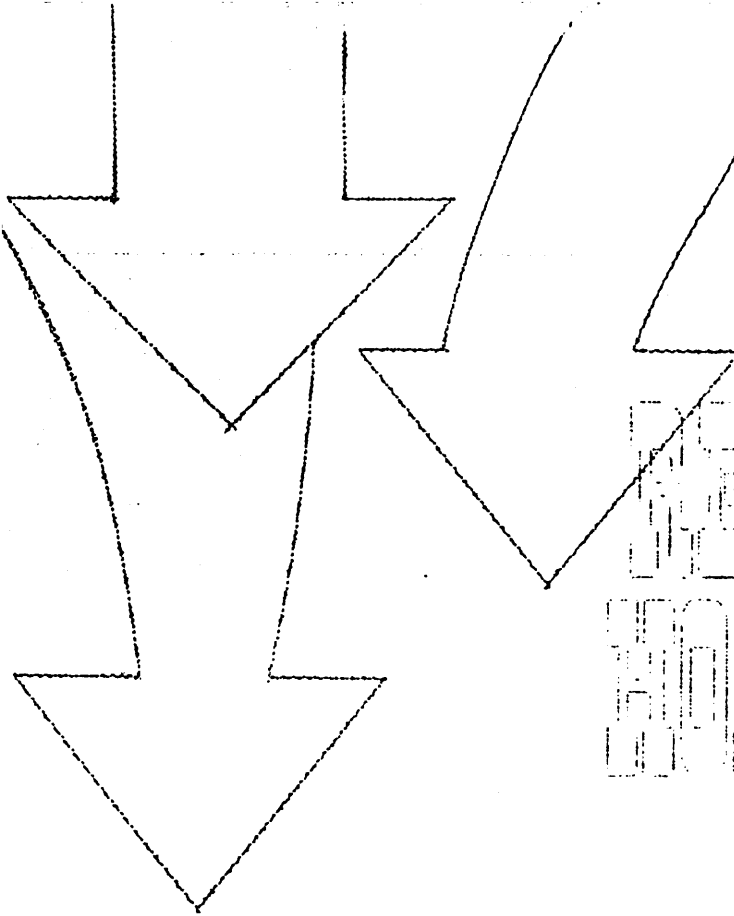
I Corinthians 15:12, 14, 17, 32

I Corinthians 15:20; Romans 4:25, 3:22, 6:4

Romans 8:1, 11

I Peter 1:3

- Revised Standard Version -



# THE RESURRECTION: HOAX OR FACT?

-S.Y.C. Lee-

The first Easter morning. It was a morning not unlike other mornings. The women were on their way to Jesus' tomb. But, unknown to them, only a little while ago, there had been an earthquake, and an angel of the Lord had rolled aside the stone of the tomb and the guards had fainted from fear.

In an age when the main concerns are the energy crisis and the pollution problem, what relevance does the resurrection which happened so long ago have? And after all, did Jesus really rise from the dead? Let us take an objective look into these two questions.

But very early on Sunday morning they (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several others) found that the huge stone covering the entrance had been rolled aside. So they went in -- but the Lord Jesus' body was gone.

They stood there puzzled, trying to think what could have happened to it. Suddenly two men appeared before them, clothed in shining robes so bright their eyes were dazzled. The women were terrified and bowed low before them.

Then the men asked, "Why are you looking in a tomb for someone who is alive? He isn't here! He has come back to life again!"(1)

(1) Luke 24:1-6 (The Living Bible)

## A. Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

Down through the ages, sceptics and atheists have been trying to come up with theories to explain away the fact of the resurrection. Some said it is a lie. Others tried to dismiss it as being a myth. Still others explained it in terms of hallucination or theft or the swoon theory. Are these explanations plausible?

## Is the resurrection a myth?

Some people have ventured to theorize a mythical origin of Christ's resurrection by trying to draw a paral-

tel between Christ and various mythical figures of pagan religions of the day. However, E. W. Yamauchi, associate professor of history at Miami University, came to the conclusion that the parallels are too superficial. Unlike the pagan notion of "resurrection", Christianity is based on "a dated experience of a historical Person".(1)

Anderson, commenting on this question, says, "It seems meaningless, therefore, to speak of legends when we are dealing, not with stories handed down from generation to generation, but accounts given by the eyewitnesses themselves or attributed to them while they were still present to confirm or deny them."(2)

If we examine the records of the resurrection events, we can find that they are (in the words of Anderson) "far too dignified and restrained; far too true to life and psychology." Moreover, their nature is so unmythical. For example, what legend-monger would ascribe the honour of the first interview with the risen Christ to Mary Magdalene, a woman of no great importance, rather than to the prominent apostles, Peter or John?(2)

#### Did the disciples lie?

This is a serious accusation. It amounts to saying the disciples were exactly opposite to what they are described in the New Testament. Is it likely that they were willing to stick to their "lies" and be persecuted and even martyred? It should be noted that this same group of people had not so long ago all deserted their master (Jesus) when He was persecuted and crucified. Professor Anderson, a British lawyer, describes this as a "psychological absurdity...that a band of men should almost overnight be transformed from craven cowards huddled in an upper room into a company of witnesses whom

no opposition could silence, by nothing more convincing than a miserable deception which they conspired to foist upon the world."(3)

#### The Theft Theory

Central to the problem of trying to explain away the resurrection is the fact that there was an empty tomb. In fact, the very first theory invented was an attempt to explain why there was an empty tomb. This was made by the chief priests and elders who were responsible for putting Jesus to death. When the guards reported to them what happened at the tomb, the testimony was not challenged (as it could not be denied). Instead, the high priests and elders had to bribe the guards to lie, saying that the disciples had stolen the body while they were sleeping. (4) How on earth could these guards know it was the disciples and not someone else who had stolen the body while they were sleeping is beyond one's imagination. One can imagine how desperate the high priests and elders must have been! Paul Little, author of many Christian best-sellers, comments that "Testimony like this would be laughed out of any court".(5)

But did the disciples really steal the body? It is important to remember that the tomb was sealed and guards were put there as an extra precaution by Pilate who had been cautioned by the chief priests and Pharisees who knew exactly what Jesus had prophesied about His resurrection.(6) Under such heavily protected circumstances, would the disciples, the women or Joseph of Arimathea or any others have dared to steal the body of Jesus? The disciples, for example Peter, who even denied Jesus before a maid, would not have had the courage to confront the guards. Moreover, the ordinary punishment for falling asleep while on watch was death.(7)

- (1) Yamauchi, E. W., "Easter -- Myth, Hallucination, or History", Christianity Today, March 15, 1974, p. 4-6.
- (2) Anderson, J. N. D., Christianity & the Witness of History, 1969, p. 91.
- (3) Ibid., p. 90.

- (4) Matthew 28:11-15.
- (5) Little, P. E., Know Why You Believe, The Way Press, 1970, p. 25.
- (6) Matthew 27:62-66.
- (7) McDowell, J., Evidence that demands a Verdict, 1972, p. 251.

So the guards would not have dared to fall asleep. Even if we assume the soldiers were asleep and the disciples did try to steal the body, the noise caused while moving the rock would surely have awoken the soldiers. Frank Morison, a British lawyer who turned from a sceptic to a convinced Christian after examining the evidence of the resurrection, calls the stone at Jesus' tomb "the one 'silent' and 'infallible' witness in the whole episode." (1)

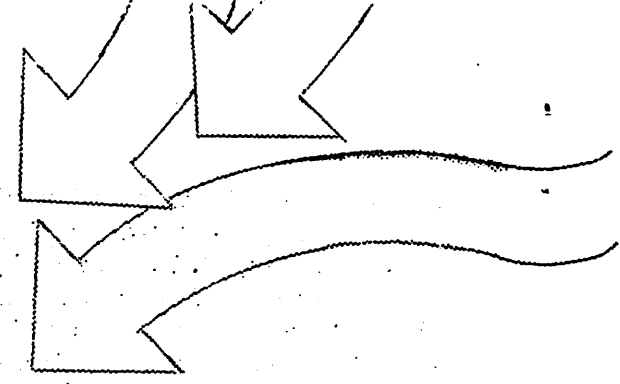
It is even more ridiculous to say that the Jewish authorities themselves stole the body. That would be doing the very opposite of what they wanted. And even if they did, why did they not simply produce the body and show that the disciples were really lying when the latter preached to so many people about the resurrection? Why did they even bother wasting money to bribe the soldiers?

Did the Romans remove the body? Again we can see that if the Romans had wanted political stability, (which Pilate did), it would have been in their best interest to ensure that the body was safely buried. It would indeed be absurd for them to initiate trouble by removing Jesus' body while on the other hand they took precautions to prevent it. The fact that they did not present the body when the resurrection was preached proves that they actually did not possess the body.

#### Did they go to the wrong tomb?

It has been suggested that it was so early on Sunday morning that the women, who were blinded by tears, went to the wrong tomb. If this were so, then Peter and John would also have gone to the wrong tomb. Let us examine this theory.

First these women had carefully noted the position of the tomb only two days previously when Jesus was buried. (2) Would they have been so forgetful?



Furthermore, they were not blinded by tears. John R. Stott, a famous theologian, says, "No mere sentiment brought them so early to the tomb. They had come on a practical mission. They had bought spice and were going to complete the anointing of their Lord's body, since the approach of the Sabbath had made the work so hasty two days previously." (3)

Even if they did go to the wrong tomb, would the Jewish authorities, the Romans or Joseph of Arimathea not have gone to the right tomb to disprove the story of the disciples? Would it not have been simple for the Jewish authorities to produce Jesus' body from the right tomb?

#### The Swoon Theory

Essentially this theory asserts that Jesus was placed in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea while He was still alive. After several hours, He was revived by the cool air of the tomb, and He arose and departed.

This theory is hardly worth considering. Paul Little pointed out that "It is significant that not a suggestion of this kind has come down from antiquity among all the violent attacks which have been made on Christianity. All of the earliest records are emphatic about Jesus' death." (4) Even the German critic, David Strauss, who by no means believed in the resurrection, rejected the idea as incredible; Paul Little asserted. Strauss says, "It is impossible that One who had just come forth from the grave, half dead,

(1) Morison, Frank, Who Moved the Stone, Inter-Varsity Press, 1958, p.147.

(2) Mark 15:47; Luke 33:55.

(3) Stott, J.R.W., Basic Christianity, Inter-Varsity Press, 1971, p. 48.

(4) Little, Paul E., Know Why You Believe, p.26.



who crept about weak and ill, who stood in the need of medical treatment, of bandaging, strengthening and tender care, and who at last succumbed to suffering, could ever have given the disciples the impression that He was a conqueror over death and the grave; that He was the Prince of Life."(1)

Were the appearances of Jesus merely hallucinations?

Those who hold this theory claim that all the resurrection appearances of Jesus were results of hallucinations. Let us examine the nature of hallucination and how it can be compared with the accounts of the appearance of the risen Lord.

Hallucinations generally occur in people who tend to be vividly imaginative and of a nervous makeup. They are extremely subjective and individual and usually occur only at particular times and places, and associated with the events fancied.(2)

As we examine the people involved we notice that there are so many types of character and personality that it is hard to believe all these people have had the same "hallucination" in such a diverse array of moods and circumstances. There were weeping or scared women, depressed disciples, doubting Thomas and many others. Could they all have hallucinated?

One of the strongest arguments against the hallucination theory is that people who are involved in hallucinations must have an anticipatory spirit of hopeful expectation. Paul Little illustrated this by the following example: "A mother who has lost a son in the war remembers how he used to come home from work every evening at 5:30 o'clock. She sits in her rocking chair every afternoon musing and meditating. Finally she thinks she sees him come through the door, and has a conversation with him. At this point she has lost contact with real-

ity."(3) He continues to point out that not only did this type of anticipating spirit not prevail among the disciples, but also that they were "persuaded against their wills" in what they saw. For example, Mary mistook Jesus to be the gardener; the disciples thought they saw a ghost when they saw Jesus; and doubting Thomas who refused to believe what the other disciples told him about Jesus' appearance, could not but believe when he saw Jesus.

The late Dr. C. S. Lewis, Professor at Cambridge, reiterated this when he says, "Any theory of hallucination breaks down on the fact that on three separate occasions, this hallucination was not immediately recognized as Jesus."(4)

The conclusion is obvious. The disciples, the women, the five hundred people and others could not possibly have imagined it all. Their changed lives also confirmed this. It was a fact, and not a psychological construction, that they witnessed.

Many other evidences

It is impossible to exhaust the wealth of the evidences supporting the resurrection -- for example, the existence and the growth of the Christian church, the institution of the Christian Sunday and the remarkable change that took place in each of the disciples. Another amazing thing was that the resurrection was all foretold. Christ indeed has risen, as He said He would.

- (1) Little, P.E., Know Why You Believe, p.27.
- (2) Ibid., p.28.
- (3) Ibid., p.29.

- (4) Lewis, C.S., Miracles -- A Preliminary Study, 1947, p.153.  
(Luke 24:13-31; John 20:15, 21:4)

## B. The significance and the relevancy of Christ's resurrection

### The claims of Jesus

As alluded to in the last section, Jesus knew exactly what would happen to Him. On many occasions, Jesus told His disciples that He would be killed and at the same time added that He would be raised again. Moreover, what He gave were not vague suggestions. He prophesied the exact details of His death and resurrection. For example, in Matthew, Jesus told the disciples, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man (referring to Himself) will be delivered up to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up." (1) In this one statement, Jesus gave the exact predictions about:

- a. the place where He would be taken
- b. the people involved in His arrest
- c. the final authority that would put Him to death
- d. the manner of His death
- e. the exact day of His resurrection

The amazing and exciting thing is that Jesus fulfilled His own prophetic claims to the last detail. No theory can ever explain away such exact fulfillments.

### The proof of deity

Jesus Christ claimed that He had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it again. (2) Obviously no man apart from Jesus has ever made such a claim. In essence, Christ was asserting His equality with God who is the Lord and giver of life. If Christ indeed rose from the dead by His own power, then it is confirmed that He is indeed the Son of God.

The Apostle Paul made this very plain in his letter to the Romans where he says Jesus was "declared Son of God by a mighty act in that He rose from the

dead." (3) Christ's deity was reaffirmed in this final miracle.

### Heart of the Christian faith

When the transformed Peter stood up on the Day of Pentecost to preach his first sermon, the center of his message was Christ's resurrection. And this was repeated again and again by all the apostles. Their transformed lives bore witness to it. Their whole faith rested upon it. The early Christian church was built on it. Paul made this clear when he said, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain." (4)

### The hope of the world

What then if the resurrection is proven true? What if it is the heart of the Christian faith? To the twentieth-century man, what relevance does this have?

Professor William Horden has put the answer to these questions so aptly in the following way: "...The resurrection is not a mere epilogue to the Gospel. When Christ arose from the dead, it was not simply an announcement that there is a life hereafter. It was the shattering of history by the creative act of God. It begins a new era for the universe, a decisive turning point for the human race. To men held in the grip of fear and futility; to men who see only the blind laws of nature grinding on their way, foredooming man to his fate; to men who see no hope for the future of mankind, the resurrection proclaims the fact that there is a power at work in the world which is mightier than all the forces that crucified our Lord. The resurrection is not just a personal survival of the man Jesus, a phenomenon to be studied by the Society for Psychical Research; it is a cosmic victory. Furthermore, it is a victory that can be shared by men. To those enslaved by passion, crushed and disillusioned, the promise comes, 'You can share Christ's risen life!'" (5) ☐

(1) Matthew 20:18-19. (2) John 10:18. (3) Romans 1:4. (4) I Corinthians 15:17.  
(5) Horden, William, A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology, 1955, p.203.

# THE DAY CHRIST DIED

- Cephas -

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

History leaves us beyond doubt that Jesus did rise from the dead. The following story is one based on the biblical recording of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. When Jesus was bearing His cross on the way to Golgotha, the place for crucifixion, the Bible tells us that "And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross." (Mark 15:21) Except for this incident, the Bible has no more mention of Simon of Cyrene. Hence, the narrations in the story concerning Simon's presence both in the crucifixion scene and in the morning of Jesus' resurrection should be viewed as an imaginative construction by the author. Otherwise, the main facts of the story are based on records in the Bible. Mary Magdalene, who stood by the cross during crucifixion, actually met Jesus in the morning of His resurrection (John 20:11-18). And the words that Jesus speaks in the story are three of the seven utterances that Jesus actually made on the cross as recorded in the four Gospels.

It was 9 A.M. History was only a breath away from its most climactic hour.

A big wooden cross, followed by two smaller ones, led a party on the way to Golgotha. Everyone knew, at the sight of the crosses, that crucifixions were to take place. Only the worst of all criminals were put through this inhumane ordeal. What a fate! The crowd staggered along, keeping pace with the faltering progress of the crosses. More and more people joined in. Among them were mourning women, bewildered men and hostile Jewish priests.

The crowd ploughed on. There was a man from the distant country of Cyrene who joined in too. His name was Simon. He had come to the city of Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. Being a man of average height, with broad shoulders and a stout body, he was every inch a farmer. Driven by curiosity, he wanted to have a look at the men who were to be crucified. From the crowd, he had already gathered that the main figure was the one by the name of Jesus who had claimed himself to be the Messiah, the Promised One of Israel. Another unsuccessful revolutionist, Simon thought to himself, and he pushed

his way to the front to take a closer look.

THE MAIN FIGURE WAS THE ONE  
BY THE NAME OF JESUS WHO  
HAD CLAIMED HIMSELF TO BE  
THE MESSIAH.

What Simon of Cyrene saw was not what he had preconceived. Jesus did not have the sturdy build of a fighter, nor did he have the look of a rebel. His eyes were tired and yet full of compassion. Blood mixed with beads of sweat trickled down his wounded forehead and badly scourged body. He lurched forward, putting in every ounce of strength he had in his frail body. The cross was heavy.

It was pitiful. Jesus was at the point of total exhaustion. But the Cyrenian wanted no part in the crucifixion scene and decided to drop from the crowd. Just then, Jesus heaved forward and collapsed, the cross lying on top of Him. The crowd gasped. The centurion came up angrily and saw that it was useless to force Jesus to carry on. His eyes swept across the crowd and paused on Simon the Cyrenian. He shouted haughtily,

"You there, carry the cross for him."

The people around Simon gingerly stepped back. Simon knew it was useless to protest. Without a word, he swang the cross over his shoulders, and the procession moved on.

They had only a short way to go. As soon as they had come to the place for the crucifixion, Simon dropped the cross onto the ground and quickly retreated into the crowd. The less he

was involved the better, he thought to himself. From the distance, Simon could see the Roman soldiers nail the three men each to his cross, with Jesus in the middle.

Three hours had passed by. The Cyrenian began to wonder why he was still there. But he had been deep in thought. For while he was standing there he had heard the first words of Jesus from the cross. They were words that pierced the chilling stillness of the hour.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."  
What did he mean? Who was his "Father"? Who could forgive? Forgiveness? For those who crucified him? This was no ordinary man, Simon thought to himself.

"FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR  
THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY  
DO." WHAT DID HE MEAN?

Just then, the heavens suddenly became dark. But there was no thunder and lightning, nor were there any clouds. It was as if a black veil had been placed over the sun. All at once the atmosphere tensed. The soldiers straightened up, holding firmly to their spears, as if trouble was forthcoming. The warm breeze that blew a while ago turned into a mocking chill. This prevailed for three "eternal" hours.

3 o'clock. The most climactic hour had come. The whole universe stood still to witness the countdown of its



final minutes.

All was still. Then Jesus' voice broke the stillness. It was a voice tinged with agony and sorrow, a voice reverberating with triumph and yet heavy with grief.

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" Simon understood those words. He was shouting in Aramaic, a northwest Semitic dialect, the words "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

The Cyrenian retreated further into the distance. Those agonizing words sent a chill down his spine. He pulled his outer garment closer to stop himself from shivering. But the chill came from within. He could not hear the next two things that Jesus said. From the distance he saw a soldier put a sponge soaked with vinegar on a hyssop branch and held it up to Jesus' lips, supposingly to give Jesus a drink.

Then, summoning all his strength, Jesus again shouted,

"Father, into thy hands I command my spirit."

Having said that, his head flopped down. Life had gone. For a few seconds, the earth held its breath. Its heart stopped beating. Then, darkness gave way to light. The world resumed its course.

Simon of Cyrene had seen enough. He lingered no more.

Two nights had gone by. Since then the Cyrenian had heard many a tale about Jesus. He heard about the many miracles and healing this man had done. He heard also of his profound teachings. "Love your enemies?" "Do good to those who hate you?" He concluded Jesus

### HOW COULD A MAN, DEAD FOR THREE DAYS, WALK OUT ALIVE?

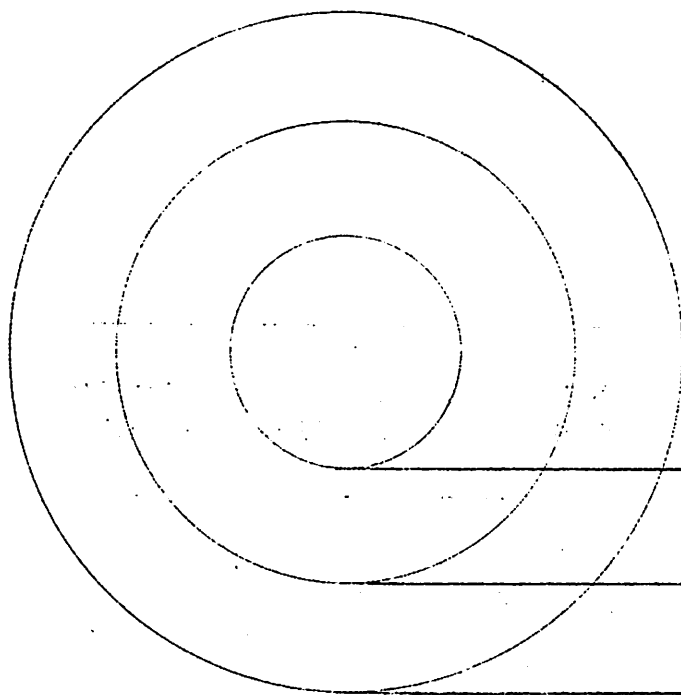
must have been a lunatic. But the very first words that Jesus spoke on the cross was "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He could not understand.

There was something else Simon heard of. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and prophesied that he would come alive again on the third day, in order that he might save his people from their sins. Profound! Incredible! Unbelievable! But Simon wanted his mind to be at rest, and his curiosity satisfied.

He headed for the sepulchre where Jesus was buried. The sepulchre had been sealed by a great stone and guards put there to prevent theft of Jesus' body. With such precautions, how could a man, dead for three days, walk out alive? No way, he thought to himself.

He walked on. Then he saw a woman coming from the direction of the sepulchre. She had a mixed expression of joy and fear on her face. He tried frantically to recall the familiar face. Then he remembered. She was one of the women who stood by Jesus' cross two days ago. (Later he found out that her name was Mary Magdalene). Hardly noticing him, she passed him by in a hurry, murmuring to herself. He caught the words, "The Lord has risen, as he said he would! The Lord has...."

Has Jesus indeed risen? Simon hurried on to the sepulchre. □



WHO

MOVED

THE STONE ?

**BOOK REVIEW** by Chris

BY FRANK MORISON

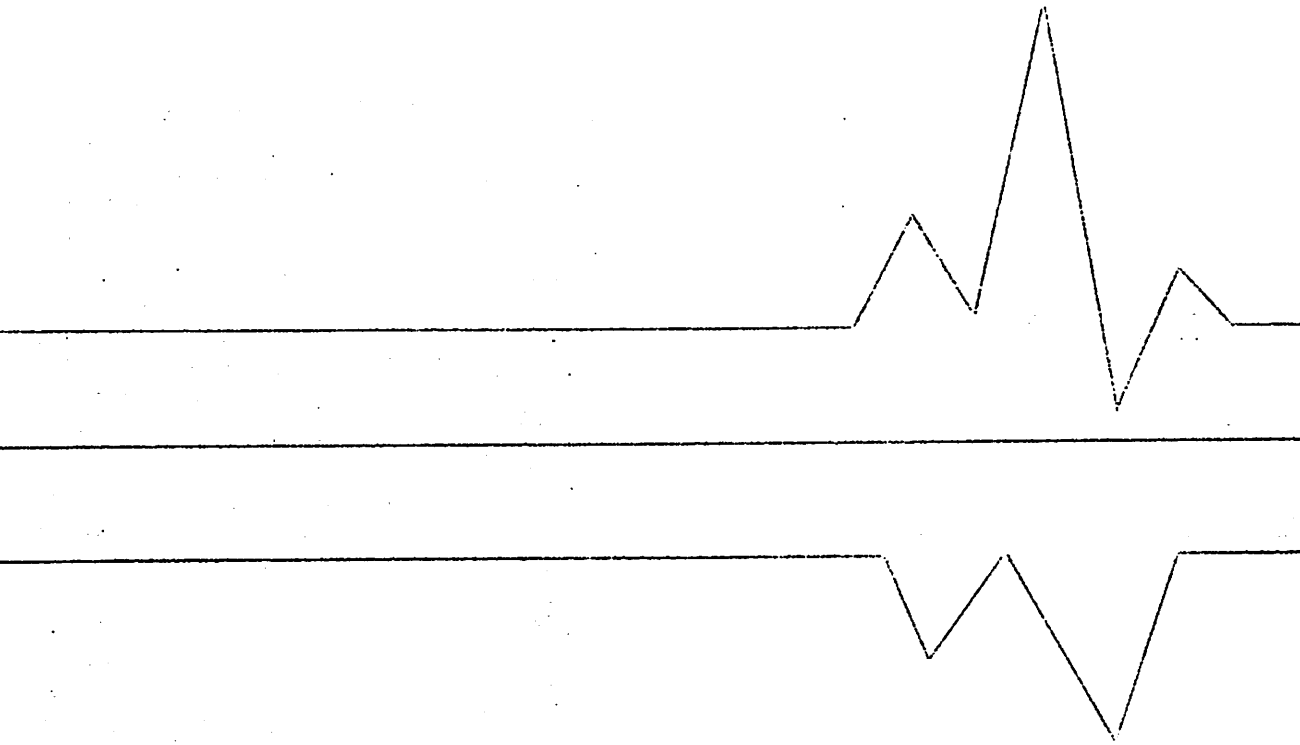
The book struck me as one which must have been written after much thought and due consideration by a man who could evaluate critically and analytically the evidences presented to him. The author is Frank Morison, and the issue under consideration is the claim of the resurrection of Jesus, a unique phenomenon that is beyond the realm of human experience.

Frank Morison was a young British lawyer in the 1930's. Throughout the book, he impresses me with his close observation of details, his ability to reconstruct the circumstances of an event out of all the closely examined materials without ignoring any of them for his own purposes, and his ability to evaluate the reliability of accounts of events by cross-checking what happened before and after the events. His ability to prove a point beyond reasonable doubt also radiates in the pages he has written.

Frank Morison did not set out to prove the validity of the claim of the resurrection of Jesus. Before he went to search on his own, he had not believed in the resurrection of Jesus and many other accounts of the mira-

cles that Jesus performed. The divine nature of Jesus, of which the resurrection was a final proof, was to him a result of the "overgrowth of primitive beliefs and dogmatic suppositions." Though he regarded Jesus as "an almost legendary figure of purity and noble manhood", he was extremely perturbed by Jesus' claim to be God. "For the sake of my own peace of mind," he decided to see for himself what Jesus really was.

Faced with a tremendous problem as to understand the real Jesus, Frank Morison went to search the Bible and particularly the four Gospels of the New Testament. In my opinion, he took the Bible, or at least the New Testament, as reliable historical documents because if the Bible had been a fiction, as many take it to be, his conclusion, no matter how logical and convincing it might be, would also have been fictitious. He did not give any defence on his basic assumption which I think is justifiable. The books of the New Testament were written well within the time when many, friends or foes, who had known Jesus personally



were still alive and would be able to correct any exaggeration and inaccuracy about the description of the life of Jesus. However, Frank Morison did not take the Bible as divinely inspired. Such was the position he took when he studied the Bible in detail.

In this study, he concentrates on the last seven days of the life of Jesus. He gives three reasons for so doing:

1. This period seemed remarkably free from the miraculous element which on scientific grounds I held suspect.

2. All the Gospel writers devoted much space to this period, and, in the main, were strikingly in agreement.

3. The trial and execution of Jesus was a reverberating historical event, attested indirectly by a thousand political consequences and by a vast literature which grew out of them."

(1)

Who Moved the Stone starts off at the Last Supper and the trial of Jesus on Thursday night. Frank Morison follows the development of events through Friday when Jesus was tried

before Pilate and later crucified in the afternoon. At this stage of his research, Frank Morison had gained no further insight into the whole matter than just to recapitulate what he had learned concerning Jesus in a Christian prayer, the Apostles' Creed, "...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried..." and he still refused "to utter another word" because what follows in the prayer is, "...the third day, He rose again from the dead." Frank Morison had not changed his opinion about the resurrection yet.

What happened after the crucifixion really surprised Frank Morison. He wrote, "By all the ordinary standards of human reasoning, the mystery attaching to the person of Christ ought to have terminated with His death and burial." (2) However, Christianity did not die with the crucifixion of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus were transformed from cowards who fled at Jesus' arrest and crucifixion to men full of courage on the Day of Pentecost, a Jewish festival fifty days later. They were found, from then on, preaching everywhere the resurrection of Jesus

even in the face of severe social pressure and persecution. Within the first century, most of the disciples died to this cause. Frank Morison concluded that something must have taken place in those thirty-six hours from the Friday afternoon when Jesus was crucified to early Sunday morning, which changed the entire outlook of life of these men. No explanation other than the one that the disciples offered -- that Jesus has risen from the dead -- could account for this change.

Frank Morison also discovered that Jesus was publicly declared by his disciples to have resurrected only fifty days after His crucifixion, and the place where this incredible message was delivered was right in Jerusalem, in close vicinity to the tomb where Jesus was supposed to be laid. The time and place would have been most inconvenient for the disciples to make this claim about Jesus if it were false. The Jewish leaders who crucified Jesus would have been ever ready to extinguish this claim which carried very far reaching implications. The tomb must have been

examined repeatedly and the dead body searched for everywhere. The reason why the hostile Jewish leaders did not find the dead body to counter the claim of resurrection was that the dead body was nowhere to be found. The only counter attack they gave was that Jesus' disciples had stolen the body. Yet if the disciples had indeed stolen the body, the claim of resurrection was a lie, and the disciples would not have been willing to die for preaching it, as they had. The only logical explanation is again the one the disciples offered -- that Jesus Christ has risen.

"It is not that the facts themselves altered, for they are recorded imperishably in the monuments and in the pages of human history. But the interpretation to be put upon the facts underwent a change. Somehow the perspective shifted- not suddenly, as in a flash of insight or inspiration, but slowly, almost imperceptibly, by the very stubbornness of the facts themselves."(3)

In his search for the truth, Frank Morison, was able to remain objective though he had the preconception that Jesus could not be God. He refused to ignore any evidence, be it for or against his preconceived idea. With a reverent attitude, a critical examination of first-hand materials, and a searching soul, Frank Morison came to know that Jesus has resurrected and that He is God. He was moved to accept Jesus, who lived here on earth about two thousand years ago and who is still living today, as his Saviour and Lord. It is written in the Bible, "Seek and you will find." Frank Morison sought, and he did find.

- (1) P.11
- (2) P.68
- (3) Preface



# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

- Al Hiebert -

If you were asked to suggest one theme that predominates in contemporary preaching, what would you say? Probably you would think first of salvation or more specifically of Christ's death for us. Certainly that is a most important and significant message.

But if you were asked to identify the predominant theme of the early apostles' preaching as recorded in the New Testament, what would you say now? Certainly salvation and the death of Christ were important to them. But even more prominent in their preaching was the triumphant affirmation of Christ's bodily resurrection from the grave. This was the theme of Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost where he stressed that in His resurrection Christ fulfilled David's prophecy of Messiah (Acts 2:24-27, 30-32). Preaching Christ's resurrection led to Peter and John's imprisonment. In his discourse to the philosophers in Athens,

Paul boldly declared the resurrection of Christ and it was this note that brought different reactions of mocking, interest for more, and faith among his audience (Acts 17:31-34). Eight of the thirteen sermons in Acts speak of the resurrection of Christ. Why was this particular theme? Why was Christ's resurrection so significant to the early church?

Let us begin our study by taking a look at how our Lord Himself viewed the significance and implications of His resurrection.

Already at the beginning of His earthly ministry (John 2:13-20), we find Christ pointing far ahead to His resurrection as the vindication of His exercise of divine prerogatives to stop people from turning the Temple into a market. Imagine the audacity of a young carpenter of Nazareth who came to Jerusalem to throw out of the Temple the duly authorized merchants and money-changers who were selling sacrificial animals and providing coin-exchange service to the Temple worshippers. How dare He walk into the Temple of God as if He owned the place and revoke the licenses of those who made Temple offering and sacrifice more convenient for the foreign worshippers? Of course He was challenged to show His credentials to speak as God about what could

or could not be done in God's house which He quite self-assumingly called "My Father's house". The "sign" He pointed to in support of His divine authority: bodily resurrection three days after being killed! That was a fantastic challenge that no other man had ever dared to make. Either He was insane or He actually did possess the divine authority that He claimed in His Temple cleaning operation. What would happen three days after His death would decide that question.

A time of public preaching and more private teaching followed which included not only the exercise of divine prerogatives such as the right to forgive sins (e.g. Mark 2:5-12), but also the direct affirmation of union with the Father (John 10:30, 14:9), which clearly established Jesus' claim to fully deity. In this situation the Pharisees came asking Jesus for a sign in support of His claims. The one Jesus offered was that of Jonah, namely that as Jonah was in the whale's belly three days, so He would be in the earth (i.e. buried) three days, followed by a bodily resurrection in demonstration of the truth of His claims (Matthew 12:38-40).

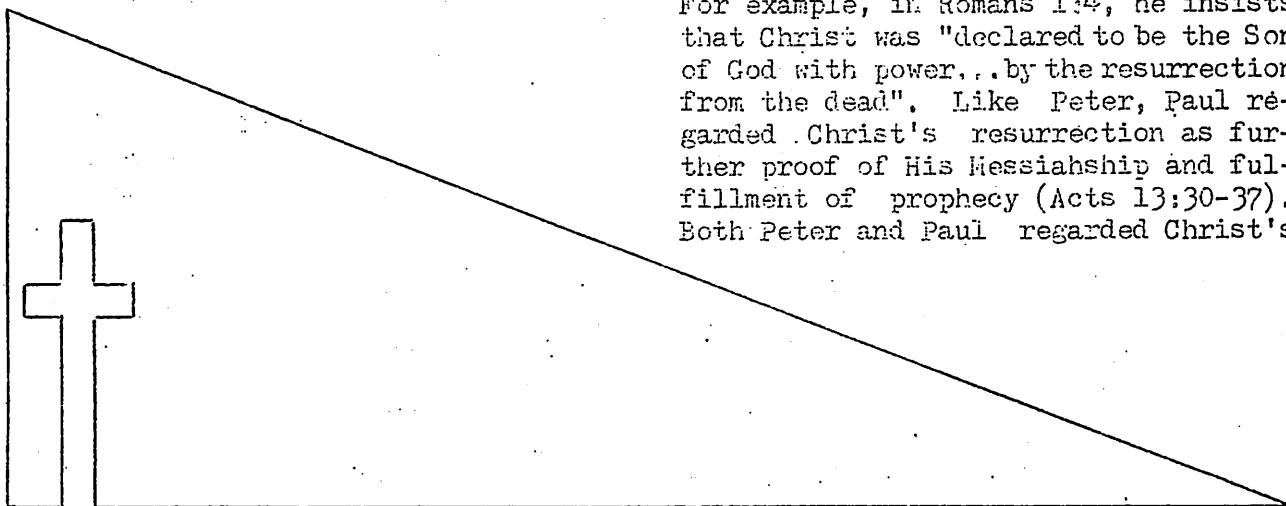
At Caesarea Philippi, when Peter first recognized Him as the Messiah, the divine Son of God, Jesus added support to that confession by giving further details of His death and resurrection on the third day (Mark 8:27-31).

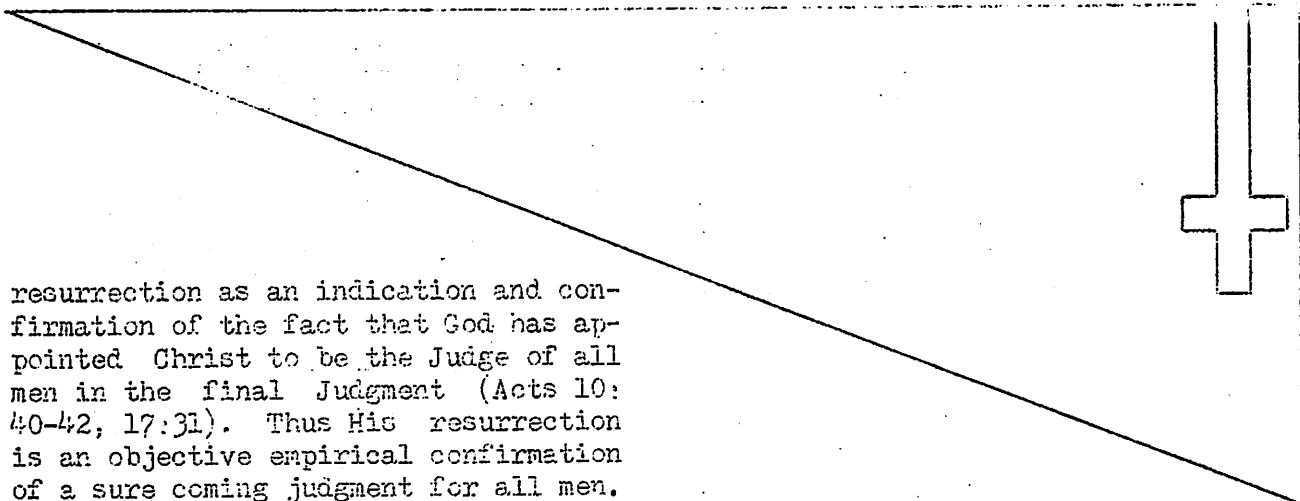
Thus for our Lord the resurrection clearly carried the significance of be-

ing an objective demonstration of the truth of His claims, primarily of His deity, but secondarily also of the atoning nature of His death (Matthew 20:28, 26:28).

Did the apostles agree with Christ's assessment of the significance of His resurrection? Thomas certainly did. When he made his personal inspection of the authenticity of Jesus' bodily resurrection his conclusion was: "My Lord, and my God!" There was no mistaken identity possible in this post-resurrection appearance of the Lord whom Thomas knew so well, and there remained no further possible grounds for doubting His full deity. John also agrees with this assessment when here at the climax of his gospel he makes his purpose for writing it clear: to assemble a series of "signs" that would lead the reader to faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God -- a faith that would bring eternal life to the believer (John 20:30,31). It is important to notice that the sign which John regards as the capstone or clincher to the case is Christ's bodily resurrection.

Peter also agreed. Not only at Pentecost, but also at the healing of the lame beggar (Acts 3:15) and in his proclamation of the gospel to Cornelius the gentile (Acts 10:40-43), he was proclaiming Christ's resurrection. Paul made no doubt about his position on Christ's resurrection, both in his public preaching and in his writings. For example, in Romans 1:4, he insists that Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power... by the resurrection from the dead". Like Peter, Paul regarded Christ's resurrection as further proof of His Messiahship and fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 13:30-37). Both Peter and Paul regarded Christ's





resurrection as an indication and confirmation of the fact that God has appointed Christ to be the Judge of all men in the final Judgment (Acts 10:40-42, 17:31). Thus His resurrection is an objective empirical confirmation of a sure coming judgment for all men.

In I Corinthians 15 Paul devotes a full chapter to spelling out further implications of Christ's resurrection. Here he shows that even our assurance of salvation from sin depends on the resurrection. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins" (v.17). The resurrection demonstrated God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for our sins. His actual bodily resurrection in the empirical realm makes clear that we are not merely trusting a myth. Certainty and confidence are based on the empty tomb. In Romans 4:24,25 Paul talks of Jesus being raised "for our justification", suggesting that we would have had no grounds for confidence in Christ's sacrifice without the resurrection of Christ.

Paul also points to Christ's resurrection as the guarantee that we too will rise from the dead when Christ returns (I Cor.15:12-58, esp. vs.20-23 and 51,52). This gives believers a whole new attitude to death (I Thess. 4:13-18). It is an essential aspect of the Christian hope (Rom.8:10,11; I Peter 1:3). Christ's own promises of our resurrection were given substance by His own resurrection (John 6:40).

In the Old Testament the supreme confirmation of God's power, particularly His unlimited ability to save, was His deliverance of Israel from Egypt through the Red Sea. In the New Testament the supreme sign of God's power was Christ's resurrection. This

then becomes the basis of our assurance that God is able to supply all our needs particularly through Christ's present intersection for us (Heb.7:23-25).

In fact, Christ's resurrection forms an absolutely essential central link in the chain of events in His over-all career, the significance of which stand or fall together. In this sense, without His resurrection we could not be sure of His real deity, Messiahship, or the atoning efficacy of His death. Had He not risen from the dead, His prophetic ministry before death would have been thrown into serious doubt, since such a failure to fulfil His repeated predictions of His resurrection would have made Him a false prophet. Without His resurrection He could not have ascended to heaven to be our eternal High Priest; nor could He have become the promised King to reign from David's throne forever (Luke 1:32,33). Had He not risen, He could not have sent the Holy Spirit as He promised (John 16:7), nor would He have had the demonstrable power to bestow eternal life as He promised (John 11:25). If He had stayed in the tomb He could not have become the Head and Shepherd of the Church and all creation (Eph. 1:20-23), nor could He have given gifts to the church (Eph.4:8) or spiritual power and authority to His believers (Matt.28:18; Acts 1:8), nor could He have raised believers to a new position with Him (Eph.2:5,6). The marriage of

Christ the Bridegroom with His bride the church (II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7) logically depends on the fact of His resurrection from the dead, as does His deliverance of a conquered world to the Father at the climax of history (I Cor. 15:24-28). Little wonder then that affirmation of Christ's resurrection is regarded as essential to salvation (Rom. 10:9).

As believers we are instructed to identify with Christ in His death and resurrection. Positionally, at our conversion we died with Christ to the authority of sin and Satan and rose again to a new life of being alive only to God (Rom. 6:3-16). Now the challenge is for us to experience this resurrected life practically in our daily experience, on the basis of our new position in Christ (Gal. 2:20). Since our death and resurrection with Christ, Satan is no longer our Lord -- we owe him no allegiance. In our new resurrected life our only allegiance is to God, our only concern is to set our affections on Him and His "things above" values (Col. 3:1-3). The sacrament of

baptism dramatizes symbolically our identification with Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). In our new life we need to experience the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10), we need to live for Him who died for us and rose again (II Cor. 5:15).

Christ's bodily resurrection also demonstrates clearly to us that the body in itself is good, not inherently evil as some neo-Platonist Christians have thought. His incarnation already indicated this but His resurrection confirmed that in the eternal state the soul is reunited with a physical body (Luke 24:39), though it is a glorified body without the frailties we now experience (Phil. 3:21).

No wonder the early church exulted in our Lord's resurrection. It formed an essential central link in the gospel story along with other essential links. Its objective authenticity together with its numerous far-reaching implications gave the apostles fearless boldness to proclaim the resurrection of Christ before kings and philosophers, to the conviction and salvation of many.

\* Mr. Al Hiebert is a professor at the Winnipeg Bible College, Otterburne, Manitoba. This article was originally given by him as a talk in one of the regular meetings of the Winnipeg Chinese Christian Fellowship. □

## ANNOUNCEMENT:

In view of the expanding circulation and the need for further improvement, we are contemplating to change the present printing method of The Fountain from mimeographing to that by offset machine in the near future. We have been considering this matter for the past year and we now feel that the time is ripe for us to decide on this move. We are well aware of the fact that a greater commitment is indispensable for making this decision, and we also anticipate that if a more sophisticated printing method is adopted, radical changes in the nature of editorial work have to be made. Financially, we estimate the cost of an offset machine and other necessary accessories to be approximately 8,000 Canadian dollars. At present we are at the final stage of decision-making, and we will inform our readers of the final outcome of the whole matter in the next issue of The Fountain. In the meantime, we need fervent prayer support from our readers, asking the Lord to guide us according to His will!





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