

DID THE APOSTLES PREACH A FRAUD?

by Pastor Mike Taylor



16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins

18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” (1st Corinthians 15:16-20)

During the Passover season in the time of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the most horrific event in all of human history....It is the day when mankind turned on and murdered his Creator. But that murder is not the event that brought our redemption. Instead it sealed our guilt. His blood would have meant nothing, if Jesus had died and that was it.

If Jesus had remained in the grave, we would still be in our sins, and mankind would have no hope for eternal life.

1 “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:” 1st Corinthians 15:1-4)

The crucifixion of Jesus and His burial was supposed to be the end of the story, at least that is what Satan thought and what he intended.

6 “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (1st Corinthians 2:6-8)

The death of our Lord Jesus was the greatest temporary victory for the prince and power of the air, Satan the devil, but became his greatest defeat because Jesus came out of the grave.

NO PROOF OF A RESURRECTION?

A few years back, then-Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey published a book entitled, "Jesus 2000" in which the Archbishop argued it wouldn't matter if that was where the story ends or not.

"Unlike the birth of Christ and the crucifixion," he says, "Christians cannot know with the same certainty that He was resurrected. . I can tell you frankly that while we can be absolutely sure that Jesus lived and that He was crucified on the Cross, we cannot know that He was raised by God from the dead."

Are you shocked that a Anglican priest would say such a thing, that he could not know for sure, if Jesus was actually resurrected? Was he right? Is the Resurrection unknowable, apart from blind faith? Was Jesus a man Who, in the words of secular historian Josephus, 'did many amazing works' before being judged a political criminal and executed by Crucifixion, but wasn't *literally* resurrected?

We have no problem believing that Socrates, or Plato, or even George Washington and Abraham Lincoln who lived and died were real historical figures, but when it comes to Jesus, there is a huge amount of historical evidence that there was actually a historical Jesus raised from the dead. . But then again, is it possible that Jesus was just a wise man, a good teacher, or as the Koran claims, even a prophet? Was the Resurrection just a legend tacked on by His followers to deceive the world?

Sometime in everybody life, they have a twinge of doubt, at least before they were saved, if you be honest with yourself, at some point. You might have wondered is it even possible that guys like this Archbishop Carey might be right?

Let's examine that for a little bit here and see if the Resurrection , if not an outright hoax was an attempt by His disciples to shine a spotlight on the teachings of Jesus after His shocking and early death?

To observant Jews is to revere the works of past sages and the great Rabbis of history, but is it possible to be a Christian and question whether Jesus was actually raised form the dead? If Jesus lived, died and was not resurrected, would His death be enough to secure our redemption? The answer is a resounding, NO....it is not. By His resurrection His blood and His flesh were the supreme sacrifice that saved us...and His resurrection was our guarantee of future glory and the same as He received. Archbishop Carey is wrong when he says that there is no way to know with certainty that He was resurrected. And it makes a BIG difference.

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." (1st Corinthians 15:14) By Paul's own admission, if Christ is not raise, our faith is worthless and in vain. Jesus paid a terrible price for the purchase of our sins by His own shed blood, because without blood there is no remission of sins.

19 "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." (Hebrews 9:19-22)

But every man who has ever lived will die, but if Jesus Christ has not been raised from death, according to Paul, our faith is in vain. Our faith is not only in power of His shed blood, but that He lived and died and was raised to life:

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (Hebrews 9:27)

There is nothing special about a man dying...we all die. There is nothing special about death.

The fact that Jesus died on the Cross means, first and foremost, that Jesus was fully man. He lived an extraordinary life. But He died, which is the epitome of ordinary. But that is where it stops....Jesus was more than just a man...He was God in the Flesh....the perfect mirror image of God the Father in a fleshly tabernacle.

When Jesus died, Satan and the hounds of hell rejoiced because they felt they had won. They had defeated the Son of God, reduced Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, to the status of an ordinary human being. So if this Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey is right, then the greatest story ever told on this earth, should have ended at the grave.

And since the two greatest earthly authorities in Judea in the Roman occupation and the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Pharisees wanted it that way, it should have ended there, but it didn't!!

The Sanhedrin controlled every aspect of Jewish religious life, while the Romans controlled every aspect of secular life. It was in both of their interest to rid this "Jesus Movement" that the Jewish authorities hated so much, and the Roman Governor found at that time, Pontias Pilate had to prevent a rebellion. They both had to insist that Jesus die on Calvary and bury their problems once and for all.

The death of this Jewish Rabbi called Jesus the Christ, was the biggest political event in their lives at the time. Everyone knew about it. People talked about it, reasoned about, and mourned about it for a long while. As a consequence, precautions were taken with the trial, crucifixion, burial, entombment, sealing, and guarding of Christ's tomb that the circumstances would be well publicized throughout the Jewish community. Pilate and the Sanhedrin made sure that the tomb was secured with a Roman seal that could not be broken on pain of death by crucifixion.

The Apostles had proven themselves no heroes as they had all scattered when Jesus was arrested and went into hiding...Peter had denied his Lord three times, so he sure was not going to lead a guerrilla band to capture and move the body of Jesus. It is totally unthinkable that any of them would dare break that seal and perpetuate a hoax by removing the body of Jesus secretly by night...

When Jesus arose from the dead and the women came to the tomb, the tomb had been covered with a 2.5 ton boulder that they knew they could not move. So how were the Apostles to steal a body away without making so much noise, that even if the Roman soldiers were asleep (which is unlikely, as it brought them certain death if they failed in their duty) it would have not have been possible. But here was the open tomb the women discovered. Jesus had long left a closed up tomb, right through the walls. And an angel sitting on the top of the rolled back stone asking the women:

2 "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." (Matthew 28:2-6)

When the Apostle hurried to the tomb after the women reported it to them, they found the empty tomb, the disciples didn't fan out to the far reaches of the Empire with their story. They went straight back to Jerusalem. If their claim was false, it would be the last place to try and preach it.

If the report had not been true, then the story would not have lasted but maybe a day or two, but the empty tomb was an established fact and the whole city was in astonishment.

In addition to the claims of the Apostles, both Romans and Jewish records of antiquity admit that an empty tomb was indeed found and that Jesus was nowhere to be found. They had to make up a story fast that survives to this day. They paid the soldiers off to say that the disciples of Jesus had stolen Him away. With what we just discussed, logically, how was that possible? Would you mess with a Roman soldier holding a sword who had no problem killing you for trying to retrieve the Body of Jesus from a tomb? Let alone the size of this boulder that covered the opening? Not hardly.

People could come and see it was empty for themselves. They could see the stone that had been rolled back. I'm sure many of those who mourned the death of their Messiah, came and saw the tomb, and the stone rolled back. I'm sure many came who were highly skeptical, as were the Jewish authorities. But according to the historical record that were so hostile to the events, it gives even a greater weight to the evidence.

Inside the tomb, all who came and looked inside, saw the grave clothes that bore the resemblance of where a body was laid. If Jesus had been entombed alive and somehow escaped, why were the grave clothes still lying as they were around a man, but no form was inside? It eliminated that conspiracy theory to those who came to look.

It also eliminated the theory that the body had been stolen, because the grave clothes would have had to be unwrapped. But here they lay as if the contents had suddenly disappeared and vanished. What was more obvious to the those who came was the burial napkin that wrapped our Lord's head. It was lying neatly folded at the head of the platform, where His head would have been.

The burial napkin sent a message all on its own. In local custom, when the master of the house finished a meal, he would wad up his napkin and throw it on the plate, signaling to his household staff that the meal was over. If instead, he was excusing himself for some other reason before finishing, he would fold his napkin neatly and lay it beside the plate, signaling to his household staff that "I am coming back." OH, Yes, He is...

THE APOSTLES BEGIN TO PREACH JESUS FEARLESSLY

After the events that transpired of the many people who saw our Lord alive, into the thousands during the 40 days before His ascension back to the right hand of the Majesty on High, the apostles preached Jesus fearlessly, and without worrying about what the Jewish authorities, the Romans, or the people thought. For preaching a resurrected Jesus was social suicide. They were disowned by their families, their friends and all who were disbelieving, because of their faith. They were arrested, imprisoned, and ultimately given the choice to recant their beliefs, or face a slow painful death by whatever means the authorities could dream up for an execution. All they had to do was admit they had made the whole story up. The Apostle Peter, this uneducated, brusque of words fisherman became a spiritual powerhouse. He who denied our Lord three times, became the leader of the 12 apostles, preaching Jesus Christ, Him crucified and raised from the dead without thought of their own safety:

16 "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:" (2nd Peter 1:16-19)

Think with me here for a minute. If they knew that their preaching was a lie, and in vain, why did they throw their lives away for a lie? If you had been with them and saw what they saw and been in their shoes, saw the Master heal the sick, give sight to the blind, make the lame walk, raise the dead, and walk on water, what would you have done if you had witnessed what they witnessed? And then you saw Him ascend into heaven and He promised you no matter what happens, heaven awaits and He would be with you till the end of this Age.

18 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. " (Matthew 28:18-20)

Then along comes some despot and says, "if you don't deny what you heard, saw, and experienced, we will send you to Heaven right now!"

So, you KNOW that Jesus did all those things and that He is God. OR -- and this is the big one -- you KNOW that He did not and is not. But you were there. You KNOW.

So there were the Apostles, who saw what they saw, heard what they heard and they are given a choice...what would they do? What would you do?

Before you answer, since you were a witness, remember there are TWO possibilities. In the one possibility, you KNOW He is a fraud. In the other, He MUST be God.

Looking from that perspective, figuring out which possibility was the right one is easy. Nobody dies to knowingly perpetuate a lie. One guy? Well, maybe he *is* nuts. But ALL of them? Not a chance...you don't die for a fraud.

Again, Jesus Christ was executed at Golgotha in full view of thousands of witnesses. Three days later, He was resurrected bodily and over the course of the next forty days seen alive by thousands more witnesses.

The story of His resurrection was unchallenged by living eyewitnesses, and so profoundly changed them that Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee who despised Christ and persecuted His followers, became the Apostle Paul, the greatest witness to the truth of the Resurrected Jesus.

8”Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

9Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

10But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

11Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

12For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (1st Timothy 1:8-12)

THE COMING AGE OF LAWLESSNESS

I know I speak of this time a lot, but it is that important. For it is a time I would not wish on my worst enemy. There is coming a time, when millions of people will suddenly vanish from the face of this earth, and you'll remember my words. If you are so unfortunate to be reading these words and that event has taken place and you are frightened, confused, but remember when you sat in a pew in your local church and this “Jesus stuff” just didn't interest you at the time....

You will remember and your head will fall into your hands or falling to your knees. Yes, my friend, you just missed the most important event ever to happen in all of human history next to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Looking back, and you wonder why almost 2000 years ago, brave men of faith, of courage, and conviction all went to their death, save one found in the Apostle John, not for a lie, not for a fraud, but for the risen Son of God. Some scoff at what the Bible professes and the Holy Spirit had men who were moved to write what they heard and saw, but for a witness of the Lord of Glory standing before them, in His glorious changed body of flesh and bone. Seeing His nailed scarred hands, and His pierced side and though at first doubting, the realization crashed in on their minds, that Jesus IS GOD....He had risen.

When you are thinking on these things, I pray you will make the choice that you could have had before the missing millions hit your news channels. Jesus is the only choice if you are wise and believe by faith.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him, might be saved” (John 3:16-17)

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man cometh to the Father, but by Me.” (John 14:6)

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” (Romans 10:9)

I pray you are a believer at this time, RIGHT NOW and have put your faith in Jesus. My mission in this the rest of my life, is to preach the soon coming of my Lord Jesus Christ. If I can save even one, from going through that terrible period known as the Tribulation, then my focus on prophecy and the Lord Jesus Christ soon return will not have been in vain. Have you met my Jesus? Have you believed by faith on what He did by dying, shedding His blood for you and me, and the completing what made it possible for each of us to live with Him in glory forever...He was raised to life.

14 “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:14-18)

Don't wait...the Tribulation could come crashing down on this world very soon...It could happen tomorrow...the only chance to win Victory over this world and avoid the soon coming wrath of God, and the persecution that will envelop this whole world is to believe on what I have just told you....Make that commitment today...it's simple...Just ask Jesus to come into your heart right now...He will honor your cry of repentance and save you to the uttermost.. FOR JESUS IS THE REAL SAVIOR...NOT A FRAUD. History proves it and eye witness testimony confirms it.

This is Pastor Mike Taylor, praying your receive the Truth found in my Lord Jesus Christ...He will save you right now....If you need prayer, or more explanation of what we have discussed, or counseling, or just a listening ear. Email me at realteam1999@sbcglobal.net,