

# **JESUS AROSE FROM HIS GRAVE**

By Terry Jones, March 23, 2008 - Easter Sunday  
Christ's Church at Tiffin, Ohio

**CENTRAL SERMON THEME – Jesus arose from the dead after dying on the cross to become the Savior of all who believe in Him.**

## **Matthew 28:1-7**

**INTRO.** - The comedian Woody Allen says, "It's not that I'm afraid to die, I just don't want to be there when it happens." Woody Allen is making fun of death. The Apostle Paul also mocks death in 1 Cor. 15:55 - "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The honey bee loses its stinger when it stings someone. The bee dies from losing its stinger. When death stung Jesus, Jesus yanked out death's stinger. As a result death will die because Jesus died. We celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection.

We cannot forget Jesus' death. We forget easily. We will forget 911. We will forget the present economic crisis. We cannot forget Calvary because of what Jesus did for us. In God's view Jesus suffered and died to become a substitute for the penalty for our sins. We cannot forget.

On the night of the Passover Jesus broke bread before His disciples. He gave each of them a piece of unleavened bread saying, "This is my body which was given for you." We have a symbol of the physical suffering of Jesus. (Prayer for the bread) He gave them some fruit of the vine with these words, "This is My blood which is poured out for you." Jesus' blood left His body through the wounds of the beating, crown of thorns, the nails in His hands and feet, and the piercing of His lung and heart. (Prayer for the cup)

Robby Bridgewater, a native missionary in Suriname, South America says many of the people in Suriname believe in reincarnation. Reincarnation is the belief that a person who dies will return in the form of an animal or a human being. When someone dies, the family places a bowl of flour and maybe some of the person's ashes in the dead person's room. They wait for a day to see what happens to the ashes. If a bird leaves signs in the bowl, they believe the person will be reincarnated as a bird. If a worm gets into the bowl, they believe the person will return as a worm. If they find human finger prints, that person is expected to return as a human.

People who believe in reincarnation often show interest in the Christian faith. Surinamers love the possibility of being resurrected instead of becoming an insect, an animal or another person. We prefer a resurrection over the idea of a reincarnation.

We are celebrating Jesus' resurrection and our hope of a resurrection to live forever in Heaven. Matthew and the other three gospel writers present in narrative form the story of Jesus' burial and resurrection. Jesus died but He arose.

## **I. EXAMINE THE TESTIMONY OF THE WITNESSES**

### **A. The angel announced Jesus' resurrection.**

1. A severe earthquake occurred.
  - a. Matthew Henry - When he died, the earth that received him, shook for fear; now that he arose, the earth . . . leaped for joy in his exaltation.
  - b. The earthquake was the signal of Christ's victory.
2. An angel of the Lord descended from Heaven to roll back the stone from the entrance to the tomb.
  - a. Craftsmen chiseled tombs from limestone for the entire family.
  - b. To protect the bodies of the dead a large round stone weighing maybe a ton was rolled over the opening.
  - c. Mary Magdalen and another Mary arrived with hopes the guards would help roll back the stone.
  - d. The angel rolled it back and sat on it to keep the guards from re-closing the tomb.
  - e. The stone was rolled away not for Jesus to leave but for the witnesses to see He had already risen.

### **B. The women were witnesses of Jesus' resurrection.**

1. Mary Magdalene and another Mary came to embalm Jesus' body.
  - a. God honored them as witnesses of Jesus' resurrection because they were with Him when He died on the cross and was buried.
  - b. Because women were not permitted to testify in court the witness of these women shows they were not part of a conspiracy.
2. They not only witness that Jesus had died but that He also arose.

### **C. The disciples become witnesses.**

1. Only John of the disciples stayed at the cross until Jesus' death.
2. The other disciples hid.
3. Mark 16 - The angel asks the women to tell Peter and the others.
4. These disciples also became witnesses for 40 days.

D. What did the witnesses testify about Jesus?

1. They did not testify that they saw Jesus arise from the dead.
  - a. No one witnessed the resurrection inside the tomb.
  - b. The clothes were left as if the body was still there.
  - c. John said the face cloth was rolled up and left in another place.
2. They witnessed Jesus doing what living people do.
  - a. They visually recognized Him as alive.
  - b. They talked to Him and heard Jesus speak to them.
  - c. They touched Jesus' physical body.
  - d. Jesus ate fish and bread with His disciples.
  - e. According to these experiences, they testified Jesus arose.

E. Are the witnesses reliable?

1. Jesus predicted He would arise.
  - a. Matt. 12 - As Jonah was three days in the belly of the sea monster, the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth.
  - b. The disciples did not expect Jesus to arise from the dead.
2. Enemies said His followers stole His body while the guards slept.
  - a. If they slept, how would they know someone stole His body?
  - b. The enemies also bribed people to say Jesus was stolen.
  - c. How could anyone steal Jesus' body when Roman guards would be killed if they slept on duty?
  - d. If someone had produced Jesus' dead body during the early days of the church, the church would have died immediately.
3. His witnesses were willing to die for their testimony.
  - a. James died from the sword for His witness.
  - b. Peter was crucified upside down for His witness.
  - c. Paul was beheaded for His testimony that Jesus arose.
  - d. Mark was dragged through the streets of a city behind a horse until he died.
  - e. Stephen was stoned to death for His hope.
  - f. John was persecuted before he died in the upper 90's.
4. Some critics believe Jesus never died but swooned.
  - a. *The Passover Plot* advocates this theory.
  - b. Did the Roman soldiers fail to execute Jesus properly?
  - c. This view states Jesus was unconscious but not dead when He was taken from the cross and the cool tomb helped revive Him.

F. Applic. - I believe because the witnesses are reliable.

1. Illus. - Professor Blaiklock says, "I claim to be an historian. My approach to Classics is historical. And I tell you that the evidence for the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ is better authenticated than most of the facts of ancient history . . ." E. M. Blaiklock *Professor of Classics Auckland University*
2. Ex. - Chuck Colson was Richard Nixon's lawyer who went to prison for his role in the Watergate Scandal. While in prison he was converted to Christ. He uses the Watergate Scandal to illustrate the testimony of the disciples for Jesus' resurrection. In the Nixon situation one by one people became brave enough to break away from the cover-up to tell the truth. Of the numerous witnesses of Jesus' resurrection someone would have revealed the truth if His resurrection was a fraud. Under the threat of death not one witness changed their story. The witness's evidence is strong.

## II. REALIZE THE MEANING OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

### A. Proves that Jesus is God's Son.

1. Ro. 1:4 - Jesus was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.
2. Jesus' resurrection did not make Jesus' God but revealed Him as God.
3. Illus. - We want proof that Jesus is God. A young American engineer went to Ireland to work in a new electronics plant. It was a two-year assignment that he had accepted because he wanted to earn enough to marry his long-time girlfriend. She had a job near her home in Tennessee. Their plan was to pool their resources and put a down payment on a house when he returned. They corresponded often, but as the lonely weeks went by, she began expressing doubts that he was being true to her because of the attractive Irish girls. The young engineer wrote back, declaring he was paying absolutely no attention to the local girls. "I admit," he wrote, "that sometimes I'm tempted. But I fight it. I'm keeping myself for you." In the mail, he received a package containing a note from his girl and a harmonica. "I'm sending this to you," she wrote, "so you can learn to play it and have something to take your mind off those girls." Her boyfriend replied, "Thanks for the harmonica. I'm practicing on it every night and thinking of you." At the end of the two-year stint, the engineer returned to the United States. He caught the first plane to Tennessee to be reunited with

his girl friend. Her whole family waited with her, but as he rushed forward to hug her, she held up a restraining hand and said sternly, "Just hold on there a minute, Billy Bob. Before any serious kissin' and huggin' gets started here, let me hear you play that harmonica!" Bits & Pieces, October 15, 1992, pp. 17-18.

4. Jesus proved He is God with His resurrection.
- B. Verifies the truth of Scripture.
1. Psa. 16:10 - You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.
  2. Psa. 110:1 - The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make a footstool for Your feet."
  3. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, these Scriptures would not be true.
  4. Peter quoted both of these prophecies at the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection.
- C. Assures our own future resurrection.
1. Because Jesus died and rose again, we shall one day be raised to be like Him (1 Thes. 4:13–18).
  2. If we do away with His resurrection, we have no hope.
  3. Illus. - A devout Christian man faithfully served as an Elder and shepherd in his church. One day tragedy struck as he and his wife were leaving the church building. She suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died shortly in a hospital. After her death, he went through heart surgery. After the heart surgery his health did not improve very quickly. In a Bible study the subject of Christians receiving a new heavenly body after they die and are resurrected was studied. He raised his hand to ask, "Did you say we get a new body?" "Yes," the teacher answered. He asked, "In that case, could I get an advance on my new body?"
- D. Proof of a future judgment.
1. "Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man who He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).
  2. All power to judge us belongs to Christ.
- E. Gives power for Christian living.

1. It is only as His resurrection power works in and through us that we can do His will and glorify His name (see Rom. 6:4).
2. Illus. - In *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith*, William J. Bausch writes: "In the Greek Orthodox tradition, the day after Easter was devoted to telling jokes. . . .They felt they were imitating the cosmic joke that God pulled on Satan in the Resurrection. Satan thought he had won, and was smug in his victory, smiling to himself, having the last word. So he thought. Then God raised Jesus from the dead, and life and salvation became the last words."
3. Applic. - The remarkable change in the early believers is another proof of His resurrection. One day the disciples were discouraged and hiding in defeat. The next day they were declaring His resurrection and walking in joyful victory. In fact, they were willing to die for the truth of the Resurrection.

**CONCLUSION** - In his sermon, "Easter as an Earthquake," William Willimon concluded: "In the fifties, in China, there was a devastating earthquake. But as a result of the quake, a huge boulder was dislodged from a mountain thus exposing a great store of wonderful artifacts from a thousand years ago. A new world suddenly became visible. "When the stone was rolled away (from Jesus' tomb), and the earth shook, we got our first glimpse of a new world,

a world where death doesn't have the last word,

a world where injustice is made right, and innocent suffering is vindicated by the intrusion of a powerful God. "The women came out to the cemetery to write one more chapter in the long sad story of death's ascendancy, one more episode of how the good always get it in the end. This is the way the world ends, not with a bang but a whimper of resignation at death's dark victory. "And then – the earth heaved, an angel appeared, the stone was rolled away, Caesar's soldiers shook. The angel plopped himself down on the stone in one final act of impudent defiance of death before the soldiers and said to the women, 'Don't be afraid. You're looking for Jesus? He isn't here.' "Then that angel turned to the soldiers and said, 'Be afraid. Everything your world is built on is being shaken.'