

THAT'S INCREDIBLE!

Matthew 28

Misinformation and lack of information concerning the resurrection of Jesus.

"The Gravy Song" That's about all some people understand about the meaning of Easter.

"The Nail" pin *"Who was crucified?"*

In spite of the fact that this is the "old, old story" about Jesus, . . .

Many people around us don't understand what Easter is about

– Even in the U.S.! – Even in Warsaw/Winona Lake!!

THAT'S INCREDIBLE! The choir's surprise

In the midst of all that death, one ocotillo sprang to life this week.

Choir walked in Wed. night to discover new life; they were looking in amazement.

Their response: "That's incredible!"

They weren't half as surprised as Jesus's followers were, when they came to the tomb and discovered *His* new life. Their response: **"That's incredible!"**

THREE INCREDIBLE FACTS (related to the resurrection):

Climax of the Gospel and final proof of Jesus' claims: Matt. 12:38

"Give us a sign we can't refute!" 39-40 => the SIGN OF JONAH =>

RESURRECTION

1. THE RESURRECTION OF THE CRUCIFIED JESUS 28:1-10

The fact of the resurrection 28:1-10

Frank Morison, a British lawyer, set out to write a book.

He planned to study carefully the final days of Christ's life and disprove the message of the gospel.

He later called it: "The Book that Refused to Be Written."

Faced with overwhelming evidence, he became convinced of its truth and trusted Christ.

He wrote one of most convincing arguments for the resurrection ever written: "Who Moved the Stone."

Years later, Josh McDowell went through the same process.

He was convinced that if he could disprove the resurrection, he could debunk Christianity.

His attempt to refute the resurrection, brought Him to faith in Christ

This story repeated countless times since first Easter morning.

THOUGH THE EVENT IS INCREDIBLE, THE EVIDENCE IS OVERWHELMING.

John Singleton Copley, one of the great legal minds in British history and three times High

Chancellor of England, wrote, **"I know what evidence is, and I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never broken down yet."**

The Lord promised it. 26:31-32 27:62-63

Aware of His promise, the leaders tried everything to stop it! 27:64-66

All their preventative measures couldn't stop Him! 28:2-4

The leaders couldn't prevent it!

The angels testified concerning it. 28:5-7

The women didn't expect it. 28:1, 5

The women saw and worshiped Him. 28:9

Kindergarten teacher in Christian school, trying to determine how much religious training a new student had, realized that the story of Jesus was new to him.

She began telling him about Jesus' death on the cross.

When asked what a cross was, she picked up some sticks, and fashioning a crude one, explained that Jesus was actually nailed to that cross, and then He died.

The little boy with eyes downcast quietly responded, "Oh, that's too bad."

Then she related that He arose again and came back to life.

His eyes got big as saucers. He lit up: "Totally Awesome!"

You don't know the whole story of Jesus if your response is still "Oh, that's too bad."

You only fully understand when your response is "Totally awesome!"

The women announced what they had seen to the disciples. 28:8, 10

Conversation between a Christian and a Muslim: The Muslim wanted to impress the Christian:

"When we go to Mecca, we can see Mohammed's coffin, but when you Christians go to Jerusalem, you find nothing but an empty grave."

The believer replied, "That's just the difference,

Mohammed is dead and in his coffin.

The founders of other religions are in their coffins.

But **Christ is risen**, and all power in heaven and on earth is given to Him!

That's incredible! That's why it's so important to disprove it! If you can disprove the resurrection of Jesus, you can write off the whole thing!

2. THE DECEPTION OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (of God's people) 11-15

They received a full report 28:11

Leaders demonstrate their motives by their reaction to the resurrection.

They knew what He had claimed.

They profess to want to stop the deception from occurring.

They take every protective measure to keep it from happening.

They are fully informed of what happened—*should provoke worship!*

They don't care! Their interest is to stop Him – NOT to learn the truth!

Religious leaders want to protect their own interests.

You observe the same thing today.

People invent all kinds of arguments against the good news about Jesus, because they don't WANT to admit their need of a Savior and trust Him!

The problem ISN'T LACK OF EVIDENCE!—it never was! —it's the hardness of our heart!

How do they respond to the report? 28:12-14

They deliberately fabricate a lie.

Rather than acknowledge their error,

they confirm their rejection and propagate a deliberate lie.

The generation that rejected the truth, accepts the lie. 28:15

Contrast that to the response of the pagan Roman guards: 27:54

Answer to the soldiers' claim:

"If you were asleep, how do you know who took Him?"

What court of law would accept that testimony?

Want to disprove the resurrection? *Produce the body!*

Or, get one of 11 who scattered out of fear to break down to save his own skin!

They hadn't just escaped. They scattered. It was "every man for himself!"

Chuck Colson comments that this was the most convincing argument for the resurrection.

After observing the Presidential staff protecting their own skin in the Watergate scandal, he's convinced Jesus' followers *NEVER* would have stuck together, unless they were convinced it was true!

Would these guys have died for a lie? [That leads to the 3rd incredible fact:]

3. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE DISCOURAGED DISCIPLES 28:16-20

The change of the fearful followers:

They ran away (fled in self-defense) Matt. 26:31a => Matt 26:56b => Mark 14:50-52

There is no indication that the disciples (except for John) ever saw the crucifixion, nor (except for John and Peter) the tomb!

They didn't expect it 28:5-7; Lk. 24:1-8, 21-26 Luke 24:21-26

It was an incredible development — even His followers didn't expect this!

They couldn't believe it! 28:17; Lk. 24:11

They worshiped Him 28:17 *When they saw him, they worshiped him*

They proclaimed it 28:18-20; Lk. 24:45-49 Matt 28:19; Acts 4:31, 33

How do YOU explain the change?

Jesus leaves disciples a challenge: *make disciples throughout the world.*

Wherever they go, they can be assured that He is with them.

A young Chinese convert named Lo became excited when he first read Matthew 28:20. Aglow with the joy of his newly discovered relationship with God, he exclaimed, "Look, it says, 'LO, I am with you always!'"

This promise became the basis of the confidence to continue in the afflictions which would soon follow (=>The "hope" Peter talks about in 1 Pet. 1; 3:21-22)

General Wellington commanded his forces at Waterloo.

When the battle was over, he sent a message in code, "Wellington defeated"

Just then fog set in, people only saw the first part, the news of "defeat."

When the fog cleared, the message continued: "Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo."

People looking at the death of Christ saw first part of the message: "defeat."

But it was a *partial* message.

At the Resurrection, God's message was completed!

Christ defeated—Satan, sin and death, at the cross.

The resurrection confirmed it!

Which group do YOU identify with?

DO YOU IDENTIFY WITH THOSE WHO TRUST THE RESURRECTED CHRIST, OR WITH THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE LIE?

The evidence is there!

Enough to convince one who wants to know the truth.

The grave is empty. **HE'S ALIVE!**

Now the choice is ours—will WE trust Him, so that WE might live?

We're not talking about a deceptive fairy tale.

There are enough of those delusions around.

The New Age movement joins eastern religions to tell us not to fear death because we will be reincarnated and return in another form, until we finally get it right.

Growing numbers of people tell about "near death" experiences in which they have supposedly seen "the other side."

"Don't worry!" They tell us.

Those on the other side have assured us death isn't what the Bible warns about.

It's really beautiful over there, so we shouldn't be afraid.

"Just do the best you can. It will all work out in the end!"

And then there's the weird one—a few years back:

"Heaven's gate" concept

encouraged many to join them in death and catch heavenly space ship to "next level."

This is no joke! We don't laugh at it! Many have been deceived.

The satanic deception tells us not to worry. "Death isn't so bad." "Go for it!"

Timothy Leary went out telling us: "death is the ultimate trip!"

God's Word tells us that death is an enemy

1 Cor 15:26 affirms that *"the last enemy to be destroyed is death."*

Death is an enemy — a defeated enemy — but an enemy nevertheless.

Christ has removed it's sting.

Family on vacation trip, traveling with windows down, when a bee entered the car.

Their little girl was terrified for she was allergic to bee stings— one sting could kill her.

Her father pulled the car to the side of the road and trapped the bee with his hand.

He grimaced as he took the sting in his own hand.

Then he released the bee.

The little girl again panicked.

The father calmed her by showing her the bee's stinger in his own hand.

He had born the pain and removed the bee's stinger.

That's what Christ has done for us.

He has removed the sting of death.

Now death's victory is gone. Death has been "swallowed up in victory."
We need fear it no more. It can't hurt us — not because "death isn't really so bad," but because our Lord bore the pain, so that we might live!

That's incredible!

Because He died, and rose again, we can be sure we too will rise to new life.
Are you a doubter, like some of the disciples, or a transformed follower of Jesus?

The hope of new life.

We are frequently reminded of the reality of death.

As people from our church family experience that reality:

"To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

That when *"living is Christ,"* then *"dying is gain."*

We are repeatedly reminded that **"we don't mourn as those who have no hope."**

We mourn our loss. But we don't mourn for them!

For we have a hope. It's based on reality.

Because He lives, we too shall live!

Paul Harvey: Philip's egg—Philip was a 9-year-old in a Sunday school class with 8-year-olds.

He suffered from Down's syndrome.

3rd graders can sometimes be cruel, and weren't quick to accept Philip, because "he was different!"

One Easter, the teacher brought plastic eggs for each child.

Each was to go outside, find a symbol of new life and place it inside their egg.

Then they would open their eggs and each child would explain how that was a symbol of life.

The youngsters went out to look for their treasures.

When they came back, they placed them on a table and the teacher began to open each one.

One child found a flower.

Another had a butterfly.

When the teacher opened the last one, nothing was in it.

The kids reacted in disgust.

The teacher was about to go on when she felt a tug on her blouse. It was Philip.

"That's my egg," he said. "I have new life, because the tomb's empty."

The youngsters were silent.

They knew he had found the best symbol of all.

Philip soon became ill. Not long after that he died.

On the day of his funeral, nine 8-year-olds attended that funeral.

At the close, they walked to the front, not with flowers, but with a symbol to go in that grave—eight empty eggs.

Because the tomb's empty, Philip LIVES!

That's incredible!

Woman, whose favorite holiday was Easter.

She had a habit of introducing herself this way “Hello, I’m Edith Burns. Do you believe in Easter?”

As people talked about eggs and chicks and new clothes, she had many opportunities to share the true meaning of Easter and some trusted Christ as a result.

Edith discovered she had cancer and wouldn’t live much longer,

her response: “Now I’ll get to celebrate Easter Forever!”

In her last days, she talked so much about Easter that those who cared for her began to call her Edith Easter.

Phyllis was one of her nurses, an angry woman who avoided talk of God or the meaning of Easter;

she avoided Edith as much as she could.

Strangely, Edith never asked Phyllis, “Do you believe in Easter?”

Each time they met, Edith just said, “Phyllis, God loves you. I’m praying for you.”

One day Phyllis asked, “Why do you ask everyone else if *they* believe in Easter, but you never ask me?”

“Ah, Phyllis.” Edith said, “I’ve wanted to so many times, but the Lord impressed on me not to ask, until you asked!”

Then she took her Bible and explained why Christ died that she might have life, and told her about the hope of the resurrection of Christ.

That day, Phyllis trusted Christ as her Savior.

A few days later, Edith asked Phyllis what day it was and Phyllis responded, “Why, it’s Good Friday.”

“No.” said Edith, “For those who trust Christ, every day is Easter!”

On Easter Day, Phyllis was there when Edith went to “celebrate Easter forever.”

When she walked out of Edith’s room that day, she walked up to the next person she met.

“My name is Phyllis Cross” she said. “Do you believe in Easter?”

Because He lives, we too shall live!

Bill Gaither wrote:

God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus.

He came to love, heal, and forgive

.He lived and died to buy my pardon.

An empty grave is there

to prove my Savior lives.

Because **He** lives, **I can face tomorrow.**

Because **He** lives, **all fear is gone.**

Because I know He holds the future,

and life is worth the living, just because He lives.

That’s incredible!

How about you, do YOU believe in Easter?

Are you trusting Him this morning?