

THIS IS OUR FAITH!

3. ... SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE ...

DID JESUS RISE FROM THE DEAD?

It's a tremendous story - but can it really be true that Jesus died on the Cross and then rose from the dead?

After all, there are many who will tell us that such things just don't happen - or that Jesus lives in our hearts, so we don't need to believe he actually came back to life.

But to reject Jesus's resurrection cuts to the heart of Christianity. What on earth is the point of his suffering and death on the cross, if it all just ended in defeat? It all becomes pointless, a waste of time

From the earliest times, the opponents of Christianity denied the resurrection - even made fun of the idea - and Christians had to defend it.

St Paul himself writes in his first letter to the Corinthians, that if there is no resurrection, then everything we believe is a complete waste of time.

Of course, if you start with the idea that people do not rise from the dead (because it 'just doesn't happen') then you have already made your mind up, no evidence can convince you that it might be true. But this is just prejudice, and is not rational.

Let's start with an open mind. Is there evidence that it might true?

Well - first, we can be sure that Jesus truly died on the cross. We are told that when the soldier put the spear in his side 'blood and water' came out. This proves Jesus had suffocated and was dead on the cross.

Secondly, everyone knew where Jesus' body was placed. The women visited the tomb. They knew who the tomb belonged too. Soldiers even guarded it. They knew the person who the tomb belonged to. No one seems to have denied any of these facts.

Thirdly, even the enemies of the first Christians agreed that the tomb was empty after his death. It would have been easy to prove he'd not risen if his body could be found. It couldn't. It has disappeared. None of those who reject the resurrection try to show where the body was - on the contrary, they try to explain where it had gone (typically they said the disciples had stolen it).

And fourthly - most importantly - when Jesus was arrested and crucified his disciples fled in fear for their own lives. One of them had betrayed him. Another denied he ever knew him. Yet in three days they were transformed from fear to joy. No longer afraid that they might die, they were ready to give their lives for what they had seen. They were prepared to die for their claim that the body had disappeared and that Jesus - who had truly died - had now returned to life. Hardly the action of frauds and liars. And their message has spread throughout the world ever since.

What more proof could we need?

FROM THE CATECHISM

What does it mean when we say in the Creed that Jesus “descended into hell”?

From the Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (125): “This “hell” was different from the hell of the damned. It was the state of all those, righteous and evil, who died before Christ. With his soul united to his divine Person Jesus went down to the just in hell who were awaiting their Redeemer so they could enter at last into the vision of God. When he had conquered by his death both death and the devil “who has the power of death” (Hebrews 2:14), he freed the just who looked forward to the Redeemer and opened for them the gates of heaven.”

(See also the Catechism of the Catholic Church 632-637)



A Day of Reflection

Find out more by joining others on a Diocesan day on Saturday 24th November at Cardinal Griffin High School, Cannock. 9.30am to 3.30pm

Coach leaves: Holy Trinity Newcastle 8.00am and St. Augustine's Meir 8.20am
Cost per person £7. Please bring a packed lunch.

To book a seat on the coach and to select one afternoon workshop contact: John Macdonald 01782 388390



This is is Our Faith is a weekly leaflet to accompany the Doorways to Faith groups which are meeting in the parishes of Fenton and Hanley during the Year of Faith (October 2012 to November 2013). The leaflet is produced only while the groups are meeting - so there are no leaflets during holiday periods.

CAN YOU ANSWER?

Last Week: Are the accounts of Jesus in the Gospels accurate - or made up a long time after the events?

Answer: The Gospels are admittedly not written as books of history alone - as St John's Gospel says they are written 'that you may believe'. There are differences of emphasis in the Gospels too, but in the main the stories are reproduced in very close detail from Gospel to Gospel - almost word for word - and the Gospels often include eyewitness detail, such as precise words spoken in the original languages - they are clearly not imaginative inventions. In the ancient world stories would be learnt off by heart long before they were written - and the stories are clearly ones which have been told over and over again - so they could have been corrected if there had been false information. In fact, when there is historical information available from elsewhere it always accords with the Gospels. As a witness to historical events and real people they are as good a source as any in the ancient world.

Next Week: If Jesus saved people by his death and resurrection and leads them to heaven, what about those who came before Jesus (Moses, Abraham etc) and also those who never heard of him or are good people but follow other religions?

For the answer come along to "Doorways to Faith" are read this leaflet next weekend.

Doorways to Faith

Sessions are held at 3pm on Sundays (4.30pm on Nov 18th) in the Newman Room, Downey Street, Hanley and at 4.30pm on Wednesdays in Our Lady's School, Watkin Street, Fenton.

Part One: The Creed

... suffered under Pontius Pilate ... Nov 18 & 21

I believe in the Holy Spirit Nov 25 & 28

The Holy Catholic Church Dec 2 & 5

... resurrection of the body Dec 9&12

The Word of God Jan 6 and 9