Did Jesus Actually Rise from the Dead?

How do we know that Jesus rose from the dead? Does it really matter whether he did or did not rise from the dead?

It seems that in recent years there have been increasingly strenuous attempts to debunk the resurrection of Jesus. And because Resurrection Sunday falls on April 1 this year, the first time in 62 years, we can be sure that there will be those who will say that the resurrection of Jesus is the biggest April’s Fool’s joke ever perpetrated.

However, people have tried for millennia to disprove the resurrection of Jesus. Immediately after Jesus’ resurrection, some of the Jewish guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and
keep you out of trouble.” So, they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day (Matthew 28:11–15).

Almost fifty years ago, an agnostic journalist, Frank Morrison, attempted to write a book refuting the resurrection of Jesus. However, after much investigation, he changed his mind and believed that Jesus did actually rise from the dead. This is how Morrison described what happened to him:

“This study is in some ways so unusual and provocative that the writer thinks it desirable to state here very briefly how the book came to take its present form. In one sense it could have taken no other, for it is essentially a confession, the inner story of a man who originally set out to write one kind of book and found himself compelled by the sheer force of circumstances to write another.

“It is not that the facts altered, for they are recorded imperishably in the monuments and in the pages of human history. But the interpretation to be put on the facts underwent a change” (Who Moved the Stone? Preface, Zondervan, 1971).

Morrison discovered that Jesus was buried on the day he was crucified and died. But three days later, on Sunday morning, his body was missing. If he did not rise from the dead, then someone took the body of Jesus. There were three groups who could possibly have taken the body of Jesus: The Romans, the Jews, or the disciples of Jesus.

The Romans would have had no reason to take the body of Jesus, since they wanted to keep the peace in Palestine. Taking the body of Jesus would have caused some people to become agitated and disturb the peace. Moreover, when that did actually happen, they could have simply produced the body if they had taken it. But they did not take it and, therefore, they could not produce the body of Jesus.

The Jews would not have taken the body of Jesus, because the last thing they wanted was a proclamation of the resurrection. As mentioned earlier, they perpetrated the false story that the disciples of Jesus took his body from the tomb.
The disciples of Jesus did not take the body of Jesus. In fact, initially they had a hard time believing that Jesus had actually risen from the dead. But, they came to believe that he had actually risen from the dead, and they preached that he had risen from the dead, and all but one disciple were executed because they believed that Jesus had actually risen from the dead. They would have been fools if they had died from something that was not really true.

The only reasonable explanation is that Jesus did actually rise from the dead. Many eye witnesses over the next forty days saw him alive and testified to this truth, as Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:3–8, “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, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.”

Jesus really did rise from the dead. And it matters because his resurrection testifies to God’s approval of Jesus’ sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins. So, let us thank God this Easter for the resurrection of Jesus!
Spring is here and the Men’s Ministry is offering opportunities for food, fun and fellowship:

On April 21 we will have our 6th annual TBPC golf tournament at Plantation Palms Golf Course located in Land O Lakes at 23253 Plantation Palms Blvd. The tournament begins at 12:30 p.m. and usually lasts approximately 4 hours. The cost will be $40.00 per player and includes fun & fellowship & prizes. This will be a 3 or 4 man scramble depending on the number of players we have. Please write “GOLF” on your Welcome Card if you plan on attending. If you have any questions please contact Brian Carrier at 813-841-9146 or brian@bcaflorida.com.

The Men’s Ministry invites everyone to attend the Tampa Bay Rays game on Friday May 4, 2018 against the Toronto Blue Jays. We have hired a large 47 passenger bus for this event and we want to fill the bus with Rays fans. The cost for this event will be $40.00 and will include a bus ride to the game, a ticket in the lower section of the stadium and food and drinks on the bus. This is a great time for all members of any age. You may also invite guests or family members to attend. The bus will leave sharply at 5:30 p.m. in order to make it to the game by 7:05 p.m. This has been a lot of fun in the past for everyone and we have pre-purchased 40 tickets. If we sell out quickly, there will still be room for 7 more to ride on the bus. If you want to purchase a game ticket only you can purchase that ticket for $17.00. We will take reservations on Easter Sunday with tickets available on Sunday, April 8. If you have any questions contact Brian Carrier at 813-841-9146 or brian@bcaflorida.com.

On Memorial Day, the Men’s and Women’s Ministries will co-host a barbeque at the church. Mark your calendars now to join us on May 28, 2018 from 12-3 p.m. As plans progress, additional details will be provided in the bulletin.
Vacation Bible School

This summer Tampa Bay Presbyterian will host a week-long Vacation Bible School called “Space Probe.” This spectacular VBS odyssey focuses on Genesis 1-9 in the Bible. During VBS, your young "Astronauts" will meet the Lord of the Universe and engage the truths of His Word through: Bible lessons, memory work, games, snacks, crafts, and songs.

June 18-22, 2018, 9:00 am — 12:00 pm       $20 suggested donation
At Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
Ages 4 years (by June 18) to 5th grade rising

Online registration is linked from the church website. 
http://tampabaypresbyterian.org/summer-vbs. For questions, email vbs@tampabaypresbyterian.org

April Birthdays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mia Jeffries</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne Vanderbrug</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence MacLeod</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waldo Kemp</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janice Thompson</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Fishburn</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison Jeffries</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Probes</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack McNulty</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Thompson</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel McNulty</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Webster</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sage Campbell</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb Massie</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HAPPENING IN APRIL

SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 9:00-9:45 A.M.: EASTER SUNDAY BUFFET BREAKFAST – Please join us. Choose an item (bring enough for 15 people) from the tear-off sheet in the narthex. Disposable containers are preferred, or label them with your name and collect them afterwards. Please have food at the church by 8:45 a.m. Individuals will be available to help get food for those who have difficulty walking or need assistance.

SUNDAY, APRIL 8, 11:50 A.M.: CONGREGATIONAL MEETING – We will hold a Congregational Meeting following the Worship Service for the purpose of electing Officers. All members are asked to attend. Bill Jeffries is eligible to be elected to the Diaconate and Rich Thompson is eligible to be elected to the Session. If you would like to nominate one of the men of our congregation for the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon, please complete one of the Nomination Forms, available at the Welcome Center, and turn it in to the church office or Clerk of Session.

SUNDAY, APRIL 8, 6:00 P.M.: SUNDAY SECONDS – Please mark your calendar and plan to attend this monthly evening worship service. The topic this month will be “What are the Means of Grace?” Childcare will be available.

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 11:00 A.M. – 1 P.M.: SISTER TO SISTER EVENT – Little Edgy, A Little Sweet: A Trendy Vase-Making Morning. See the Women’s Ministry article on p.7 for additional details.

SUNDAY, APRIL 15, 12:15 P.M.: EMPTYNESTERS LUNCHEON – The EmptyNesters will gather this month at Ruby Tuesday, 17520 Bruce B. Downs Blvd, for lunch. Looking forward to a great time together of food and fellowship. Contact the church office to reserve or for questions.

SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 12:30 – 4:30 P.M.: TBPC GOLF TOURNAMENT – Please join the men of TBPC in their 6th annual golf tournament. See the Men’s Ministry article on p.4 for details.
MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR EVENTS

YOU WILL NOT WANT TO MISS

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM:

SISTER TO SISTER: A LITTLE EDGY, A LITTLE SWEET

All of the women of the church are invited to “A Trendy Vase-Making Morning” at Ashleigh Kemp’s house. You can choose to bring a side dish to share, but it is not mandatory for attendance (salad, sandwiches, veggies, or desserts). We will learn how to make our own leather vases in honor of spring. See https://www.bhg.com for a sneak peek. We will have the necessary items available to create the craft. However, if you like, you can bring any tools you might have for leather crafting. It will be a time filled with fellowship, fun, and food. Come, join us at Ashleigh Kemp’s home at 16128 Colchester Dr., Tampa, FL 33647. Please contact Coleen Knecht at alwaysknechted@gmail.com with any questions.

MONDAY, MAY 28, 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM:

CHURCH–WIDE MEMORIAL DAY BARBEQUE

Gather your families and join the Women’s and Men’s Ministries as we co-host a church-wide barbecue to be held here at TBPC. The Church will provide hamburgers and hot dogs. Covered dishes are always welcome. Please check future Sunday bulletins for signup, suggested side dishes and desserts and other details. Please contact Nancy Kirkpatrick at nancykirkpatrick23@hotmail.com for any questions.

April Anniversaries

Richard & Janice Thompson  April 4  47 years
Todd & Melissa Bayley  April 14  28 years
Richard & Lois Gainer  April 16  69 years
Jason & Coleen Knecht  April 18  20 years
James & Cathy Turpen  April 22  14 years
"There are no plausible options that offer more than the faintest prospect of preventing the next massacre."

Stephen Chapman
Columnist and editorial writer for the Chicago Tribune.

Mr. Chapman’s thoughts are both frightening and dispiriting, especially in light of the recent massacre of 17 students and staff members at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida on Feb. 14 2018. So it is natural, prudent and wise to consider why this phenomenon continues to plague our nation. Indeed, if our culture ever arrives at the point where such devastating news is met with a shrug, we will have crossed a moral boundary over which we may never return. Yet, we must be careful to focus on the right question if we have any hope of someday proving Mr. Chapman wrong.

In cases of mass murder, we are most often focused on the question of how.

- How did the killer get access?
- How did the killer sidestep security procedures?
- How did the killer become familiar with the target location?
- How did the killer...kill?

If the answer to that last one includes a firearm, the post-mortem of the attack will most often be focused on that detail far beyond any other. Why? Deaths by firearms kindle a long-running and acrimonious debate pitting the Second Amendment’s guarantee of the “right of people to keep and bear arms” against those who maintain that gun control would prevent or at least curb wholesale slaughter in America.

Criminal use of firearms certainly has tallied an enormous number of deaths in America’s modern era. Even so, mass murder has been around for hundreds of years here. Consider a sampling from our nation’s history:

- 1780: Revolutionary War deserter Barnett Davenport murdered five members of the Mallory family after they fell asleep one bloody night on their farm where
Davenport was employed as a farm hand. He started by beating the father with a swingle which ultimately broke under the force of his attack. Undeterred the killer replaced the swingle with an unloaded rifle he found near the bedroom door and continued the beating. As the father fought back, the mother was awakened and Barnett struck her as well. He continued the blows until both Mr. and Mrs. Mallory lay silent. Finally, he set a fire that took the lives of the children.iii

- Antoine Probst, a Civil War deserter, used an axe to savagely murder eight people at the farm where he served as a farm hand: his employer, his employer's wife, four of their children, a fellow farmhand and a cousin who was visiting.iv

- In the waning years of the 1800s, one Dr. Harry Howard Holmes carefully planned the murders of guests at his Chicago hotel during the time of the 1893 Worlds Fair. According to biography.com, "Holmes planned out his killings and executed his victims in grisly fashion. He built his "Murder Castle" with meticulous detail, allowing him to suffocate victims within airtight rooms at his own discretion and listen to their cries for help from the comfort of his office'. Another source of Holmes' crimes stated he was officially charged with 27 murders, however using missing persons records at the time that number could have been as high as 230.vi

- May 18, 1927: the caretaker of Bath Consolidated School in Michigan laid dynamite charges around the school over a period of months then set a timer to trigger the explosions during a time when school was in session. Forty-five people died.vii

- After a violent argument with a former live-in girlfriend at a Bronx nightclub in March of 1990, Julio Gonzalez started a gasoline fire inside then trapped the customers and staff in the club killing 87.viii

- Motivated by an article in an Al-Qaida propaganda magazine, brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev detonated homemade pressure-cooker bombs as runners crossed the finish line at the 2013 Boston Marathon. Their low-tech weapons killed 3 and wounded 260.ix

- In what was the most deadly terrorist attack in the history of the United States prior to September 11th 2001, Timothy McVeigh set off a fertilizer bomb hidden in a rented box truck that he parked in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City. The blast killed “168 people including 19 children, injured more than 650 others and damaged or destroyed over 300 buildings.”x

- September 11, 2001: Al Qaida terrorists used box cutters and knives they smuggled through security to hijack aircraft that they flew into the twin World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. A fourth, possibly targeting the Capital, White House or Camp David, crashed in a Pennsylvania field thanks to the heroism of hijacked passengers who fought back and thereby ensured the aircraft failed to hit its target. All told, just shy of 3,000 people died that day.xi

Quite a tragic litany of blood and pain. In these eight cases alone, 3,343 people were killed via mass murder. What does it matter to the latest debate about firearms and mass murder?

Did you notice none of the eight cases above involved a firearm? Yet, we didn’t outlaw swingles, axes, hotels, dynamite, gasoline, matches, pressure cookers, fertilizers, box
trucks or airplanes. If we had, any number of other implements of death could have replaced them.

Is Mr. Chapman right then when he asserts “There are no plausible options that offer more than the faintest prospect of preventing the next massacre?”

Could be. Unless, that is, we’re willing to shift the focus of our post-mortem from “How” to “Why.” Why is history so full of murderous events like those above? Perhaps a brief review of the facts surrounding the world’s first murder would be instructive.

Cain was angry because his offering to God was not acceptable to Him, but God was pleased to accept Abel’s offering. The applicable footnotes in the Reformation Study Bible explain why: In accordance with God’s requirements, “Abel brought both the first and best of his possessions to God; Cain brought neither.”

God asked Cain why he was upset about the consequences of his disobedience, and told Cain that if he did well, He would accept him and his offering. At the same time, He warned Cain of the consequences of not doing well: “Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” Cain didn’t. Why not? It seems clear that Cain put his own desires above God’s.

Isn’t that the foundational reason for these indiscriminate killings in our country?

Perhaps the most cogent explanation of this phenomenon in scripture is from Judges 17:6: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

We don’t have a king in America; that’s good. What’s not good is that as a country we’ve turned away from the King of Kings. Until we as a nation serve Jesus Christ as Lord, Mr. Chapman will be right. We should each do whatever we can to encourage such a transformation.

---

1 A wooden instrument like a large knife that is about two feet long, has one thin edge, and is used for beating and cleaning flax (https://tinyurl.com/ybyzb9w5)  
 2 https://gizmodo.com/in-1780-americas-first-mass-murder-was-a-crime-of-unc-1706814529  
 3 https://tinyurl.com/cbjgjpzr  
 4 https://tinyurl.com/y9t5sben  
 5 Ibid  
 6 https://tinyurl.com/y8zw77kr  
 7 Ibid  
 8 https://tinyurl.com/y25zue8  
 9 https://tinyurl.com/ybqf3nwq  
 10 https://tinyurl.com/ydd33ncx  
 11 https://tinyurl.com/y9qj47qk  
 12 See top of page 1