

Alleluia, Christ is Risen! Do you believe that?

Do we really? Live our lives knowing that the ultimate battle with evil has been won. That the price is paid, that we are free and that love really is stronger than death? Or do we think. Well maybe... but maybe the disciples made it up, maybe it was just their wistful thinking, maybe its because we can't face the reality of death and need a way out, maybe its just years of tradition and we just kind of go along with it too. Maybe Jesus taught lots of good things and died a tragic death, and then all this Son of God and Resurrection stuff just got added on later?

Maybe, maybe..

But, as St Paul said, 'If Christ is not risen from the dead then we Christians are of all people most to be pitied.' Whatever the value of the church to society, it would be based on a falsehood, at best a mistake at worst a lie. St Paul was right. None of us are here just because of tradition or habit, we're here today because in one way or another we seek after truth, the truth that will set us free.

So can we believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Can it make sense?

Well, perhaps he never really died on the cross. He was just in a coma and came back to life in the coolness of

the tomb? But this was a Roman execution. They were professionals, breaking the legs of those on each side of Jesus, piercing his side with a spear to ensure he really was dead. We can be sure they knew he was dead before releasing his body.

But perhaps soldiers stole the body from the tomb? But why? And why not produce it as soon as all the talk of resurrection began?

Perhaps the disciples imagined the whole thing. They were distraught with grief. Sometimes we see things at those times, we feel we've half seen the one we've lost, or heard their voice, or start speaking with them as if they were there. But those are all natural bereavement experiences and they don't normally make people want to tell all the world about them!

Perhaps his friends made up the stories then, to save face, to show their families they'd not just followed another Messianic loser. But if you knew something to be a lie, would you spend your life proclaiming it? It wasn't exactly the way to fame and riches after all! Would you be willing to face persecution and your own death, as the disciples did, for the sake of something you knew to be a falsehood?

And anyway, so many people met with the Risen Lord. Over 500 according to Paul, many of whom, he pointed out, were still alive. In those early days there were many who could talk of speaking with, touching, eating and drinking with Jesus after his resurrection. In this scientific age faith has faced many new challenges.

But when we go back to the resurrection of Jesus I for one have to say that it makes best sense of the facts as we know them.

It had never happened before, and has never happened since, but then we believe Jesus' death and resurrection to have been a once and for all event, a once and for all sacrifice for the sins of the world, a once and for all triumph of the power of love.

Yes Lord I believe that you are the Christ, the Lord of all. 'Anointed by God with the Holy Spirit, you went about healing all who were oppressed by the devil, you were put to death on the tree, but raised by God on the third day, you appeared to those who had loved you, you went on to testify that you hold all things in your hands. And yes I believe, with St Peter and all the saints, that you are alive still, that you are here, now, and that whoever believes in you will receive forgiveness of sins and new life, true life in your name.'

Jesus Christ, our Lord is risen. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Amen.