

## CHRIST IS RISEN! ALLELUIA! EASTER 2011



- ☐ Alleluia! Christ is risen!
- ☑ He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

So goes the cry throughout the world on this most holy of Sundays. The angel proclaims the good news. ***“He is not here; He is risen.”*** Eyewitnesses see Him. Not just one but many, over 500, He appeared to the women including Mary Magdalene, He appeared to Cephas, James and to the apostles. Not just for a moment but for forty days. Not simply in a vision, but visibly, physically and touchably present. He was seen, heard and touched. He ate food with them. It’s simply a matter of fact, a historical fact. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, alleluia.

Don’t succumb to the arrogance of our age that says, “Those poor first-century dolts would believe anything. They believed the earth was flat and the sun rotated around the earth. Who could blame them? They would have believed in the Easter bunny if Jesus had told them to? Of course they believed Jesus rose from the dead.” But the women didn’t believe it initially. They were wondering who rolled that great stone away, who violated Jesus tomb? They were alarmed at the empty tomb and the angel. They ran away in fear and told no one the good news. And even when they finally understood and told the disciples, no one believed them. They knew better, dead people don’t rise.

Don’t succumb to the myth-makers, or those who write books or movies designed to make money, those who would say the apostles or the church made this up as an inspiring story. These are the eye-witness accounts of men whose yes was to be yes and whose no was to be no. These men told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help them God! These were men who had nothing to gain and yet everything to lose, including their own lives. They saw Jesus risen from the dead. And a lot more people saw Jesus than those who saw George Washington cross the Delaware River to attack the enemy yet who doubts that fact of history?

Don’t succumb to the scientific materialism of our age that says, *“Virgins do not conceive and dead men don’t rise.”* Yes, normally this is true. But this is no ordinary man and this is no ordinary death. This is God in the flesh come to bear your sin and conquer your death. This is the One who predicted He would do this at least three times. This is the One whom the Scriptures foretold would rise on the third day. His Word is vindicated. His mission accomplished, His sacrifice accepted.

What if Christ is not raised? What if, as modern scholars speculate, Christ is raised “spiritually,” as a figment of our religious imaginations? What if this is simply an inspiring myth to make us courageous in the face of death? What if the bones of Jesus lie in some unmarked Middle Eastern grave or in a box on a shelf in some cave outside of Jerusalem? What then?

If Christ is not raised, then our preaching is pointless, the work I do is waste of time, and your faith is empty. Faith in Jesus saves only if Jesus saves, and Jesus saves only as He is risen from the dead. If Christ is not raised from the dead, then all the believing in the world doesn’t amount to anything. It’s useless, empty, a waste of time. You may as well sleep in on Sunday morning, if Christ is not raised.

If Christ is not raised, the Scriptures are a collection of lies, misrepresentations, the greatest hoax ever perpetuated on mankind. If Christ is not raised, then God is a liar, the apostles are liars, the women who claim to have seen Jesus are liars, the martyrs who gave their lives rather than deny Christ were deluded. If Christ is not raised, then He is a false prophet, deserving the death He received. He is not a great teacher, a moral example, or anything else but a fraud and a liar and the greatest deceiver the world has ever seen. If Christ is not raised, do yourself a favor and find another religion, or better yet, just be an atheist. It's a lot simpler.

If Christ is not raised, then you remain in your sins, and you better get busy trying to atone for them. If Jesus is not risen, we have no basis for saying that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He might be, but how can we be sure God accepted His work? Maybe He did, maybe He didn't. And He said He would rise on the third day. What then? Can we trust anything Jesus said if He didn't rise from the dead?

If Christ is not raised, then the dead are lost. Those who have fallen asleep in Jesus have perished. They're gone. There's no hope of ever seeing them again. Just hold them in your photographs and memories, because that's all you have. If all we have is a book about a dead Jesus who inspired some people to write inspiring lies so we can feel good about ourselves in this life, we are the most pitiful bunch of religious saps that every to walk the face of the planet, and shame on us for succumbing to such God delusions. We should have known better. Let's just eat, drink, and live it up for tomorrow, we're dead and gone.

But the fact is that Christ is risen from the dead, a fact attested by eye witnesses who would not change their testimony no matter what. Every detail fits. It defies our experience but it makes sense. The stone is rolled away. The sealed, guarded tomb is empty. The burial cloths are folded neatly like a freshly made bed. Eye witnesses saw Him, heard Him, touched Him, ate with Him, and they testified against hostile cross-examination, torture and death. Their testimony speaks to us even today.

So let's be done with this religious blathering about *"I know He lives because He lives in my heart."* He lives is a fact not an action of your self imposed faith. The body of Jesus is risen. He actually conquered Death with His dying. He did it for the world and for you. He lives whether you believe it or not. And because He lives, because He is risen, we need to take seriously every word that comes from His mouth, such as:

***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:16)***

***"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me lives even though He dies, and whoever lives and believes in me never dies forever." (John 11:25)***

***"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."(John 6:53-54)***

These are not the words of a liar or lunatic but of the One who died on a cross and rose from the dead. Christ is risen from the dead. That's what gives this Sunday, and every Sunday, a unique joy. The Russians even call the first day of the week on their calendars "Voskresenie" that is, "Resurrection Day." (That's a lot better than the Day of the Sun, don't you think?) I wonder what

our atheists would think if they had to refer to Sunday as Resurrection Day. I'm sure they'd be in court trying to change the calendar.

Christ is risen! The Word of God is vindicated.

Christ is risen! Your faith is not in vain.

Christ is risen! His sacrifice for sin is accepted.

Christ is risen! Your sins are atoned for and you are forgiven.

Christ is risen! Death lies defeated, the grave has lost its sting.

Christ is risen! And in Him all the dead will rise.

Christ is risen! Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we live!

And we shall live forever because Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed Alleluia. In Jesus Name, amen and amen.

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus. AMEN!