

## **THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD: THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST!**

Text: I Corinthians 15:1-4

For most of my life I have been preaching the Gospel of the Son of God. Although there are some things I would do or say differently now, I can honestly say I have no regrets having spent my lifetime preaching nor do I have any regrets that the greater theme of my life has been the Gospel. Let's examine the three phases that comprise the Gospel.

### **I. Death According to Scriptures**

I Corinthians 15:3 says, *"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."*

John, the Beloved disciple of Jesus was consumed with verifying the Deity and veracity of Jesus. In his Gospel alone we witness no less than five statements he brings out that Christ was fulfilling the Scriptures. Please make note of John 13:18: *"I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me."* John 17:12: *"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled."* John 19:24: *"They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."* John 19:28: *"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."* John 19:36: *"For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."*

Alfred Edersheim, the great scholar on the life of Christ documents no less than 456 prophetic fulfillments of Old Testament Scripture by our Lord. Professor Peter Stoner has done research incorporating 600 of his students to

help him “do the math” in an attempt to discover how likely Christ could have fulfilled His prophecies if accomplished through coincidence. He concluded that if only 8 of the prophecies of Jesus were true that is as likely as 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power. Here’s what that looks like: 100,000,000,000,000,000. Stoner says, “Suppose that we take 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They’ll cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one?” To wrack your brain a little further the professor wanted to show the likelihood of the chance that Christ fulfilled 48 of His prophecies by coincidence and now we have moved to the likelihood of 1 to the 157<sup>th</sup> power. To conserve space, imagine 1 with 157 zeros place behind it. Here’s Professor Stoner’s summation: “Electrons are very small objects. They’re smaller than atoms. Even if we counted 250 of these electrons each minute, and counted day and night, it would still take 19 million years just to count a line of electrons one-inch long. With this introduction, let’s go back to our chance of one in 10 to the 157<sup>th</sup> power. Let’s suppose that we’re taking this number of electrons, marking one, and thoroughly stirring it into the whole mass, then blindfolding a man and letting him try to find the right one. What chance has he of finding the right one?” And this is the possibility that only 48 of Christ’s prophecies were fulfilled by mere coincidence. According to Emile Borel, French mathematician, “Once one goes past one chance in 10 to the 50<sup>th</sup> power, the probabilities are so small that it is impossible to think that they will ever occur.” In other words, Christianity’s veracity has moved well beyond mere chance!

## **II. Death Affirmed by Burial**

The Bible says in I Corinthians 15:4a says, *“And that he was buried....”* Our Lord was buried because He, in fact, did die. The Bible says in Matthew 27:50, *“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.”* In Mark 15:37 it reads, *“And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.”* Luke 23:46 says it like this: *“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”* John 19:30 says, *“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”* John 19:33, 34 is a passage that removes all doubt to Christ’s death, *“But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there*

*out blood and water.*" This is important to know, because some unbelieving skeptics try to assert that our Lord did not truly die. Some say He swooned and was revived in the coolness of the tomb. Yet how ridiculous could one be to think that One who went through the debilitation of the crucifixion event could take His pierced hands and remove a one to two ton rock up a slope and escape?

Another attempted scenario given was that Christ was stolen by the disciples of the Lord. This was referenced in Matthew 28:13-14, where the Jewish elders gave large amounts of money to the soldiers guarding the tomb to attempt to prove the theft. If the body had actually been stolen, the soldiers would have died for allowing this to take place and the disciples would have been captured and punished as well.

The record of His burial is given in Matt. 27:58-60; Mark 16:43-47; Luke 24:50-56 and John 19:38-42 when Joseph of Arimathea requested and was granted the deceased body of Jesus. Why was Joseph so eager to retrieve the body of Jesus? We have insight in Luke 23:51: *"(The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God."* John points out that Nicodemus, another ruler of the Jews, aided Joseph in the preparation and burial of Jesus. It is significant to notice, *"Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid"* (John 19:41).

It is important to know that Christ died for a very practical reason. You see Christ's death verified by His burial is also verification that my sins and your sins have been thoroughly atoned for. *"For in that He died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 6:10,11). *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit"* (I Peter 3:18). Without Christ's death, the covenant of the New Testament would not have been in force as spoken Hebrews 9:16,17: *"For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."*

### **III. Death Arrested by Resurrection**

I Corinthians 15:4b says, *"...and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."* Death was conquered by Christ's resurrection from the grave! Why is our Lord's resurrection so important? Paul said it like this: *"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins"* (I Corinthians 15:16,17).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is important because through His resurrected life we are assured we that we, too, shall rise, as the Lord Jesus said, *"...because I live, ye shall live also"* (John 14:19). I could not stand with confidence at the grave of a believer if it were not for the resurrection. Yet in truth, I stand with absolute assurance that we, too, shall live beyond the grave because of the resurrection of Christ. *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (I Thessalonians 4:13,14).

Jesus' resurrection is so important on a practical basis because the Bible says, *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:4). Too often Christians view our life on earth drastically separate from our life in the hereafter. Actually, eternal life begins the moment we believe (John 5:24) and so also does our resurrected life. Paul promotes this thought in Colossians 3:4, *"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."* Here the apostle tells us both truths in one verse! In other words, we shall appear with Christ in our resurrected bodies upon His return, but thanks be to God, He is our life right now!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.