

TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch /Opening Prayer by: Ken Coleman

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Phillip Strickhausen

#578 We Will Glorify

#543 Wonderful Words of Life

Scripture Reading by: Rock Cary

#324 Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?

Lord's Supper and Contribution

#480 Blessed Assurance

Sermon: Low in the Grave He Lay

Mark 15:40-47

#915 Trust and Obey

#470 Victory in Jesus

Closing Prayer by: Jerry Mallernee

**We will have our 4th Sunday evening
Fellowship meal at 5:00 p.m.**

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship

Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

September 26, 2021

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

Galatians 5:1

Jesus Lived and Died

In our sermon this morning, we will look at the burial of Jesus. Mark records that a number of women had followed Jesus from Galilee and were present at his death, and he names three specifically: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome (**Mark 15:40-41**). The two Marys see where he is buried (**v. 47**). And then all three of them go to anoint Jesus' body on Sunday morning and find the tomb empty (**16:1-8**). They thus serve a critical role as eyewitnesses to Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection.

That directly addresses a question that is sometimes asked by skeptics: can you *prove* that Jesus existed? We have talked about this before in different ways, but I think it is good to revisit it from time to time, not only so that we are at least somewhat equipped to answer that question, but also to bolster our own confidence in the matter. The absolute best resource at our disposal is the New Testament itself, particularly the four Gospels. Skeptics, of course, dismiss these as untrustworthy sources, supposedly written long after Jesus' life by people who were not eye-witnesses who had an agenda in promoting Jesus. But there are a number of problems with making assertions like this. For one, it is an open question whether the Gospels are the work of eye-witnesses. Many would argue they are written by them or are based on them; in fact, every time we have a title preserved for them, dating back to the 2nd century it is by the traditional authors: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, 2 of whom were apostles.

Furthermore, the idea that an account of Jesus' life must be contemporary with him would undermine virtually all we know about ancient history if it were a necessity. What we know about the emperor Tiberius, for example—the ruler of Rome when Jesus was an adult—is mostly from two historians named Tacitus and Suetonius, who wrote 80 years later. Should we doubt the existence of Tiberius on these grounds? In fact, just like in a modern biography, some distance can actually be beneficial in fully grasping the subject. The gospel accounts were written between 20-60 years after the death of Jesus. It would be much like someone writing a biography of John F. Kennedy or Ronald Regan today, for instance, in terms of the time frame.

Then there's the fact that the argument that the gospel writers have a vested interest in the subject and so are biased and untrustworthy is self-defeating. All historians have an agenda, a point of view; you cannot write history without it. The historian must, among other things, select the topic they will write about, choose the sources they will use, and interpret that to persuade other people about truths of the past. This selection and interpretation is always made by people with a particular perspective on the

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Jackie David, Walden David's mother has covid.

Gary Frazier has been in the hospital for a heart procedure.

Mike Little had surgery a few weeks ago and is still in the hospital.

Monica Leal is having gall bladder problems and will be re-evaluated in 2 months.

Continued Prayers

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Gwen Pettit, Gary Nielsen, Harold & Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Frank & Tina Garcia, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Winston Leifester, Caitlin Smith, Oscar Cantu, Jo Ann Modisette, Ka'Leisha Jones

Shut Ins

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy Mc Intosh

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Mwanza, Africa,
Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Sept. 27th at 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 26th we will have our monthly fellowship meal at 5:00 p.m.

Bridal Shower for Hailey Noel bride elect of River Lucy, Sunday, Oct. 3rd from 2-4 p.m. She is registered at Amazon and Walmart.

We will have a blood drive on Monday, October 4th from 4-8 pm in the fellowship room.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Oct. 5th at 8:00 a.m.

<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>	<u>Minister</u>
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Danny Balch	
Don Taylor	Phillip Strickhausen	
Robert Ward		

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world, who have presuppositions and beliefs they bring to their work. That's true of ancient and modern historians alike. After all, those who think Jesus was a myth are trying to persuade people of their viewpoint too!

All that is to say, we can trust the New Testament as a reliable source, even beyond the fact that we trust it by inspiration, strictly on historical grounds. When Mark calls those three women as eyewitnesses, we can believe it. Nevertheless, because some will preemptively write it off, it is important for Christians confronted with this question to be aware of the historical evidence for Jesus outside the Bible.

There are a number of references to him in classical sources. The earliest firm one is found in the correspondence of Pliny the Younger. While serving as governor of Bythinia in 111, he wrote to the Emperor Trajan for guidance on dealing with accused Christians. For Pliny, the most remarkable feature of Christian assemblies was the singing of hymns to Christ as divine, his language implying that Christ was once human.

In addition to Pliny, two prominent historians of antiquity mentioned above reference Christ. The first is Suetonius, most famous for his work *The Twelve Caesars*, a biography of Roman emperors from Julius Caesar to Domitian. In his biography of Claudius, Suetonius writes, "Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from the city" (Suetonius, *Divus Claudius*, 25). *Chrestus* was a fairly common name, and it is possible that this is a troublemaker otherwise unknown to history. More likely, Suetonius confused it with the uncommon *Christus*, which would have been pronounced almost identically, and his statement evinces dissension in the Jewish community caused by the introduction of Christianity to Rome.

A more thorough reference comes from the greatest Roman historian, Tacitus. In his *Annals*, he gives an account of the great fire of 64, which he blames on Nero:

To destroy this rumor Nero supplied as perpetrators, and executed with elaborate punishments, people popularly called Christians hated for their perversions. (The name's source was one Christus, executed by the governor Pontius Pilatus when Tiberius held power. The pernicious creed, suppressed at the time, was bursting forth again, not only in Judaea, where this evil originated, but even in Rome, into which from all directions everything appalling and shameful flows and foregatherers. (Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44.2-3)

Tacitus is lauded for his accuracy and detail, and it is thus notable that the proper name, the location, the time period, and the principal figures all accord with the account presented in the Gospels.

Aside from these references to Jesus by distinguished Romans, there are more obscure classical sources we might note, as well as Jewish sources like the historian Josephus and the rabbinic writings. We have only scratched the surface here. But these are sufficient to corroborate the details of the New Testament, broadly speaking: Jesus lived in Palestine; he was crucified under the governorship of Pontius Pilate; and he had followers even after his death. Can you prove that Jesus existed? The answer is unequivocal: yes.

Bryant Perkins

"Stand Firm in...Liberty"

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