

Round Top Church Christian Fellowship

***Resurrection Day***

***We are Eyewitnesses***

*April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017 A.D.*

The Year of Our Lord

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(All Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.)

Welcome to Resurrection Day Worship Services. We are here to worship the Lord our God and Savior who came to be one of us two thousand years ago. We have come to know God by a few names. Yahweh and Elohim in the Old Testament are a few well-known names of God. Beginning in the first century, in the year of our Lord, we also came to know God as a man by the name of Jesus Christ. This is the incarnation. The Bible tells us this took place in John 1. Of course, the whole New Testament witnesses the event. The Old Testament prophesizes the event. Isaiah 53 is often quoted. Scholars have identified dozens of Old Testament passages pointing to the Messiah.

<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/Jesus-in-the-Old-Testament.cfm>

John 5:39 "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me;

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**Where else in history is the life of a man named Jesus Christ recorded?**

Emperor Nero blames Christians for the fire that destroyed Rome in A.D. 64, the Roman historian **Tacitus** wrote:

*Nero fastened the guilt ... on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of ... Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome..*

*Tacitus, Annals 15.44, cited in Strobel, The Case for Christ, 82.*

### **Pliny the Roman:**

*“They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food – but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.”*

Pliny, *Letters*, transl. by William Melmoth, rev. by W.M.L. Hutchinson (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1935), vol. II, X:96, cited in Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, 199.

This James, says **Josephus**, was *"the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ."*

"Testimonium Flavianum," the relevant portion declares:

*About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he ... wrought surprising feats.... He was the Christ. When Pilate ...condemned him to be crucified, those who had . . . come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he*

*appeared ... restored to life.... And the tribe of Christians ... has ... not disappeared.*

*The blue text is considered by some to be additions because a Jew who became a Roman historian would not have written these words. However, Christians are identified and the crucifixion is noted.*

*Josephus, Antiquities 18.63-64, cited in Yamauchi, "Jesus Outside the New Testament", 212.*

Perhaps there is someone here who is curious about what all this is about. I wish there was someone here who has not heard of God and His interaction and incarnation with His creation. I mean, I am glad you came this morning and have an opportunity to hear about God and his plan for your life.

This morning, we Believers come together and observe the one event in the Incarnation that sets God as Jesus Christ apart from any other miracle worker in history. That is the Resurrection. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a God thing! Meaning that, only a power beyond our understanding or capability can produce THE RESURRECTION. What is also unique about the Resurrection is that the act was not achieved for the benefit of God, but for our benefit and at no cost to us. We are not asked to throw our children or young maidens into a volcano or bloodletting their bodies on a stone altar for their amusement or price to gain favor from a god. Imagine, The God, graciously giving, without cost, His life as a human being, the LIFE that we so preciously hold. Our benevolent Creator God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that anyone who believes (surrenders) in Him will gain eternal life ([John 3:16](#)).

This statement has many implications.

1. There is a God. The great ontological question is answered. When an event takes place in human history in which man had no hand, and there is no explanation inside the laws of physics, then there is a great being (God) at work. This is obviously the Believer's

perspective. However, since God is the Creator He is the author of the physics that govern our physical world. Agree with the incarnation or not, agree with the Cross of God or not, agree with the eyewitnesses called Apostles or not, something happened that shook the world, and the world has not been the same since. God, if you will, is “A / THE” force that reached down and changed things.

2. God chose to communicate to us in our life-form and language by becoming one of us.
3. God is not calling us to Him through a path that He himself did not walk. God came as Jesus Christ and demonstrated that it is possible to successfully conquer temporal life. But to achieve this conquest, He calls us to allow His Spirit to indwell our hearts. WE call this “surrender.” This is exactly what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3. This transformation is called being “reborn of Spirit”. Jesus tells Nicodemus (the teacher of Israel) that he cannot see or enter into the kingdom of God unless he is born-again. He tells him that he must be born again of Spirit. This is the mission of God in the flesh. He communicated this message in person.
4. In achieving the “victory in Jesus”, we have been sealed in the promise of God’s Spirit to join Him in His Heaven to continue life for an eternity. This too is beyond our understanding and not fully explainable. The apostle Paul writes to the Believers in Ephesus.  
*<sup>13</sup> In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:13-14)*
5. There is an existence beyond this one. Life continues on in a new form. Jesus tells the disciples in John 14 that He has prepared a place for them and for us.

**John 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled;**

believe in God, believe also in Me.

<sup>2</sup> "In My Father's house are many dwelling places;

if it were not so, I would have told you;

for I go to prepare a place for you.

<sup>3</sup> "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again,

and receive you to Myself;

that where I am, *there* you may be also.

<sup>4</sup> "And you know the way where I am going."

<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going,  
how do we know the way?"

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him,

"I am the way,

and the truth,

and the life;

no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

We have preached the direct correlation between the above passage and Scripture in Revelation 19 and 20 before. We accept that God as Jesus did not come the first time to judge the world. However, upon the return, God as Jesus, He is the judge. This is exactly what Jesus is teaching in John 14. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." Many view this as an exclusive claim. However, this teaching is for the whole world. All people who have ever lived are included with this teaching of Jesus. All people will be finally judged at the Great White Throne Judgement (GWTJ). Jesus chooses words for us to

understand in human terms. The simplicity of the father and son relationship is easy for us to comprehend. The truth is that Jesus is the Father. The Trinity is not separated. We see the embodiment of God as Jesus. It is accepted that the word "Trinity" is not in the Bible. But the three titles are together in Matthew 28:19. The Trinity is God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Biblical evidence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit being the same is seen when Jesus breaths His Spirit into the apostles in John 20

<sup>21</sup> Jesus therefore said to them again, "Peace *be* with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

<sup>22</sup> And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-22).

God incarnates himself as Jesus Christ who lives with us and teaches us the way and the truth and the life. If we surrender to Jesus' way and truth we will gain life. In this context, Jesus is presenting eternal life. Remember, Jesus is talking about a place He is going to prepare and He will be there also.

Therefore, at the GWTJ there is Jesus (The Father) who everyone will have to pass through (His judgement) to gain entrance into Heaven. It can also be said that everyone will pass the GWTJ to get to Hell. Those going to Heaven have their names recorded in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. Those going to Hell have their names recorded in the Books of Deeds. "From the foundation of the world" is the part that frustrates many people. This is for God to manage and carry out. This is not man's business or authority.

Those who have been studying their Bible and have read the book of Revelation are familiar with GWTJ in Revelations 19:10-13.

**10 . . . For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."**

<sup>11</sup> And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it *is* called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

<sup>12</sup> And His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and upon His head *are* many diadems; and He has a name written *upon Him* which no one knows except Himself.

<sup>13</sup> And *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God.

### And in Revelation 20: 11-15

<sup>11</sup> And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

<sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds.

<sup>14</sup> And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

<sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

**Looking at the Cross** - God, as Jesus, speaks to us from the Cross. He says a number of things.

#### 1. Luke 23:34:

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.

2. Luke 23:43: Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.
3. John 19:26–27: Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother.
4. Matthew 27:46 & Mark 15:34

My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? Psalm 22

5. John 19:28: I thirst.
6. John 19:30: It is finished. (From the Greek "Tetelestai" which is also translated "It is accomplished", or "It is complete".) - It is Finished.
7. Luke 23:46: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Here we see God in the flesh as Jesus the Messiah referring to Himself as Father. Again, we see the anthropomorphic assignment of a father-to-son relationship in the New Testament. God makes it simple for us to grasp the oneness of His being in the flesh. This is obviously part of God's omnipresence. Jesus tells us that if we have seen Him we have seen the Father and the Father and He are one (John 10:30; 14:9). In addition, Jesus is asked by His prosecutors and judges if He is the Messiah, if He is the "Son of God." By this charge, they are accusing Jesus' of His claim to be God, which in fact He did claim, and Satan and the demons know Him as God as we will point out.

**Here are the charges and admissions at Jesus' trial.**

- "I am." (Mark 14:60-62)
- Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" <sup>62</sup> **And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."** <sup>63</sup> And tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of



witnesses? <sup>64</sup> "You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

- Same event chronicled in Matthew and Luke and Jesus' response:

**"Yes, it is as you say." (Matt. 26: 63-65)**

**"You are right in saying I am." (Luke 22:67-70)**

We can list a number of reasons the Jewish leadership demanded Jesus be put to death. Jesus was obviously a threat to their established positions in the community. The main reason Jesus was sentenced to death was for His claim to be God. This was blasphemy to the Jews. The "Son of Man" and the "Son of God" phrases are names identifying deity. The "Son of Man" occurs over eighty times in the Gospels. In addition, evil spirits call to Jesus as the "Son of God" in Mark 3:11. And, at His Temptation in the Wilderness, Satan challenges Jesus, "If you are the 'Son of God' . . ." (Matthew 4).

All of these references paint a picture that God came to be one of us, and, for our simple understanding, God decided to present the oneness of father and son. This created the visual opportunity for God to model perfect humanity as He designed from the beginning.

**John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.**

<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.

<sup>3</sup> All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

<sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

<sup>5</sup> And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

**Continuing in the same chapter of John . . .**

<sup>14</sup> And the **Word became flesh**, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

God became one of us in order for us to see that it is possible for you and I to have victory over this life. However, this victory can only come to us by our surrendering to God's will. This takes us back to Nicodemus. We must be reborn of Spirit. Only God can do this. Man has no authority over this and cannot control it. We do have the ministry of telling others about God's plan for their lives. God has chosen to work His salvation plan through us as part of the creation.

Victory in Jesus, is the same as Victory in God. Why? Because they are one and the same. This is what the Cross did. The Cross of God/Jesus defeated death and sin which has no power over the Gospel. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Romans 8:2)

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

<sup>50</sup> Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

<sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

<sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

<sup>53</sup> For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

<sup>54</sup> But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, **"Death is swallowed up in victory."**

<sup>55</sup> "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;

<sup>57</sup> but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

We are eyewitnesses is the title of this sermon. Were we at the Cross two thousand years ago? No. Did we live in the time of Jesus and met Him during His earthly ministry time? No. Are we like Saul who Jesus came to on the road to Damascus and changed his life forever? Saul's name was changed to Paul at that point. We are