

Easter Day 2018

He is not here; he has risen!

Luke 24:1-6a

I don't know how many of you noticed the sign out the front on the way in....

We've kept it under wraps but can **finally** share with you that we've sold the church (here) at Sunshine Beach.... *(Photo with 'sold' sign)*

And the date?

1st April!! //

"He is not **here**; he has **risen!**" – announced the messenger to the **scared** and **frightened, grieving** women who came to the tomb early in the morning....

He is not **here**, he has **risen!**

Let me ask you – this claim that Jesus rose from the dead – it is **hoax** or **history**?

it's a **good** question to ask on **April fools' day!**

Because it's **completely** possible that in the whole Jesus-rising-from-the-dead story, we've **all** been April-fooled... totally **hoodwinked!**

I'm sure you've got some fabulous April fools' stories to tell – either where you've **planned** a brilliant prank, or been the **victim** of a brilliant prank...

How's **this** for a prank? // *(run video)* – it's the story of the Swiss Spaghetti harvest – when the respected BBC show *Panorama* announced on 1st April, 1957, that thanks to a mild winter, Swiss farmers were enjoying a **bumper spaghetti** crop... here they are – pulling **spaghetti** down from the **trees**... viewers were calling the BBC wanting to know how they could grow their **own spaghetti tree!!** //

People are **easily fooled**... //

Are **we among** them? /

Was the **resurrection** of Jesus a **fabrication**? – to keep the myth alive that Jesus was **God**?

Was the **resurrection** of Jesus merely the product of a creative **imagination**? – by the disciples who wanted to hope against hope that he wasn't really gone?

Or was it an **hallucination** of the **masses** – grief stricken that their whole world had been turned upside **down**... and they '**saw**' Jesus in their **mind's** eye... and were **convinced**?

Fabrication? Imagination? Hallucination?

He is not here! He has risen.

Hoax or history?

Two things (at least!) are required for this to be **history**

1. **No body**

The consistent evidence from eye witnesses was of an **empty tomb** and **no body**.

The women who went on Sunday morning said there was **no body**

Peter and John who went to check out their bizarre story... saw **no body**...

And no authorities ever came up with the body to put the claim to **bed**

It's **true** someone may have **stolen** the body...

...but the tomb was **guarded** by elite **Roman soldiers**

...the **Jews** had no reason to steal the body and every incentive to come **up** with it

...the **Romans** had no reason to steal the body because they wanted all this Jesus fuss to go **away**

...and the **disciples** were **broken** and **grieving** and **confused** and **scared**... locking themselves away in a room thinking they'd be killed next... it's **unthinkable** that they would steal the body and then be prepared to be **killed** for the **lie**!

There was an **empty tomb** and **no body**... //

Second – if Jesus was raised to life, Jesus needed to have been:

2. **Seen alive!**

And there were **many** reports that Jesus was seen alive...

On one occasion by more than **500** people at a time...

...it wasn't **concocted**... the author of that report published within **30** years of the event – and actually says in his report – go and ask those who are still alive and saw him... some have died he says – most are still **around**...! “Check out my story,” he challenged!

If I wrote up a report of a certain ball tampering in Cape Town 30 years from now, saying it **never happened**...

...how long do you think it would take for my report to be **discredited** and then never see the light of day **again**?

Those who were **there** and **saw** it, would **immediately discount** it.

And if a report was written within 30 years of Jesus being around that said 500 people saw Jesus alive and no one actually **did**...? **That** report would never have seen the **light of day**....!

There was /

No **body**

There were

Plenty of people who reported seeing Jesus' **alive!** //

I'm not an **historian**... but here is what I understand about how historians view this...

They say that they cannot **prove** whether or not Jesus rose from the **dead**...

They can only explore why it was widely **reported** that Jesus was seen again...

When they explore **all** the possibilities about **why** it was **reported** that Jesus was seen **alive**... they say that the **clearest** and most plausible **explanation** as to why people were reporting that Jesus was seen **alive**... is because he **WAS in fact** – seen **alive!**!

He is not here. He has risen. ///

But so **what?**

So let me finish with these two questions

1. What if it's **HOAX?**
2. What if it is **HISTORY?**

HOAX?

If it's a **hoax**, then the whole of Christianity falls apart.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead – if someone comes up with the body... then **nothing** about the Christian faith survives.

All the Old Testament prophecies are **false**

We have no **clue** who Jesus is

Jesus was a **liar** or he was **mad**

And if he **hasn't** therefore come from God – if he **wasn't** God turned up in **human flesh** – we have **no idea** whether God even **exists!**

If Jesus' resurrection was a **hoax?** – then we all walk away

Close up the churches

Shut down the charities

Put **away** your **Bibles**

Stop **fooling** yourself that God is real,

that he **cares**,
that **servicing** him is **real**,
that **prayer** makes a **difference**,
that there will be **justice** in the end or
that there is a **life to come!** //

If Jesus didn't rise, **none** of it is **true**, **none** of it **matters**, **none** of it is **relevant**. **Walk away!**

What if it is HISTORY?

Then like our Easter advertising this year has said – this is one weekend in history that changed the world **forever**. //

Changed the world forever? Yes, because there's **justice**, there are **answers**, there is **hope** and we have a **future**.

Changed the world forever? Yes, because we can be confident not only about the **existence** of God, but the **presence** of God in our **world** and in our **lives** – and also the **power** of God, the **love** of God, the **justice** of God and the **mercy** of God.

Changed the world forever? Yes, because now we **know** that there is a world **beyond this** where all **wrongs** will be put **right**, and we'll live in **perfect relationship** with **God**

It's **true**, then it **matters**... it's **significant**...

If it's **true**, then there is **nothing else more important** in this world than **welcoming** and **embracing** the God who loves you **so much** that he gave his Son to **die** and **rise again** so that you can be **forgiven** and have **eternal life**. //

Let me finish with a question... if Jesus rose from the dead and changed the world forever, let me ask you – has he changed **your** world?

Changed your world because you've said '**sorry**' for all you've mucked up and claimed his promised forgiveness?

Changed your world because he's daily **shaping** you and making you more like **Jesus**?

Changed your world because nothing matters **more** than living in the **presence of** and for the **honour of** the one who **died** and was **raised** for **you**?

April fool?

Hoax or **history**?

Hoax – none of it **matters**

History – it's the most important truth in the all the world – and needs to be the most **important** and **precious** and **wonderful** and **life-changing** truth in **YOUR WORLD!**