

Plain Path

Weekly newsletter of the Fry Road church of Christ

Sunday, December 7, 2014

Volume 19, Number 49

“Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path... Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart” (Psalm 27:11-14)

HISTORY DECLARES ...

by Bob Pulliam

“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.”

(Luke 1:1-4)

NO RATIONAL, INFORMED PERSON rejects Jesus as an historical character. And yet there are still some who would suggest that Jesus did not exist. Perhaps their unreasonable stance is due to their rejection of His miracles. Because they have never seen a miracle, their disjointed logic concludes that miracles could never have taken place. Therefore, Jesus must not have existed. Their explanation for the resurrection is that Jesus' followers invented it.

Our first obstacle on the road to faith is determining whether Jesus ever existed. We believe many people existed who are lost in a sea of history. Muhammad's existence is doubted by none who are reasonable. We know of Greek philosophers by their writings and references to them by historians. Alexander's four successors are a matter of history because historians have asserted their existence. Can we doubt the existence of Jesus if history tells us that He existed? Whether or

not you believe claims about Him, you must conclude He did exist, if you want to be reasonably consistent on the subject of history.

Ordinarily, I provide a great deal of scripture in these articles. Because of this article's premise, I ask you to bear with me as I briefly turn to other sources.

The Successful Invention?...

Did the Roman Catholic Church invent the character Jesus, and His trial, death, and resurrection? The Catholic Church dates from the year A.D. 606. Before that time, the New Testament was already in existence. Fragments from the trial of Jesus in the Gospel of John have been found that date to around A.D. 125. The entire New Testament can be found in the Latin Vulgate which dates to A.D. 325. The existence of the New Testament before the formation of the Catholic Church is well attested, and only denied by unreasonable souls.

(Declare, continued on pg 2...)

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(Declare, continued from pg 1...)

That the gospel was being proclaimed in the days of the apostles, as declared in Acts, is confirmed by secular sources. Josephus was a Jewish historian who records the existence of many characters found in the Bible. Pilate, Herod, Felix, Festus, Caiaphas, Ananias, and many more are found in his works. His histories provide an excellent means of verifying the historical authenticity of the Bible. The character of each historical figure in the Bible is always in line with the profile presented by Josephus. We may read of the deaths of John the baptist, and James; not to mention the events surrounding Herod's unlawful marriage, about which John accused him. Jose-

phus gives us details on the uprising of Judas, mentioned in Acts 5; the famine mentioned in Acts 11; and the death of Herod Agrippa in acts 12. Josephus also speaks of Jesus, and while some doubt the authenticity of statements regarding Jesus, none doubt that Josephus *did* mention Him.

Another early source is the historian Thallus, who wrote in the mid-first century A.D. While none of his works exist in their entirety, we have references to his work by later writers. One such reference is to the third book of his histories, and tells of him trying to explain away the darkening of the sun as a natural eclipse at the time that Jesus died (which is impossible since the Passover occurred at the full moon). A Roman historian named Tacitus (born A.D. 52), wrote concerning the great fire of Rome in A.D. 64. About the rumor that Nero had started the fire, which was widely spread, Tacitus wrote:

Therefore, to scotch the rumour, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, from whom they got their name, had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor; and the pernicious superstition was checked for a short time, only to break out afresh, not only in Judea, the home of the plague, but in Rome itself, where all the horrible and shameful things in the world collect and find a

home.

(Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals*, xv. 44)

Another historian, writing around A.D. 120 said:

Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men addicted to a novel and mischievous superstition.

(Suetonius, *Life of Nero*, xvi. 2)

If there were "Christians", then there was a Christ after whom the Christians were named. And what "superstition" could Seutonius and Tacitus be writing about? That a man exists would not be called a "pernicious superstition". Teaching that he was raised from the dead would be called just that. What does that tell us? Clearly, not only did Jesus exist, but the doctrine of His resurrection was being circulated at a very early date.

Conclusion...

Other sources could be cited, but the bottom line is this: Jesus was, at the least, an historical character (not a myth), deserving of our attention. This should prompt us to evaluate the claims made concerning him. Those who will not give honest evaluation are less than honorable in their evaluation of history.

So... If Jesus was an historical character, and His crucifixion in the days of Pontius Pilate is a matter of historical fact, then the evidence concerning His resurrection deserves our attention and evaluation. Next weeks article: ***The Resurrection Declares.***



THIS WEEK'S DAILY BIBLE READINGS

NEW TESTAMENT READING

HEBREWS 11 - 13;
REVELATION 4 - 11

December 7 - 9

OLD TESTAMENT READING

PSALMS 51 - 68

December 10 - 13

I TIMOTHY 4:13

FAMILY NEWS & NOTES

*News and Notes of Interest
to Fry Road Members*

Because of the large number of visitors to our services, we would ask those wishing to identify with the congregation to do so by expressing this interest directly to the elders.

Upcoming Meetings & Events:

Gospel Meeting (Dee Bowman)
January 11 - 14, 2015

Gospel Meeting (Carl McMurray)
April 12 - 15, 2015

V.B.S.
June 21 - 25, 2015

Annual Singing
September 12, 2015

Gospel Meeting (Jim Deason)
September 13 - 16, 2015

Sick and Shut-Ins

Sections have been removed to preserve members' privacy

Sermons:

Next Sunday:

Jesus Christ:
Man of Mercy

Tonight:

Come to the
Mountain

Birth ...

Grief Stricken

Preaching Abroad...

FOR THE RECORD

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

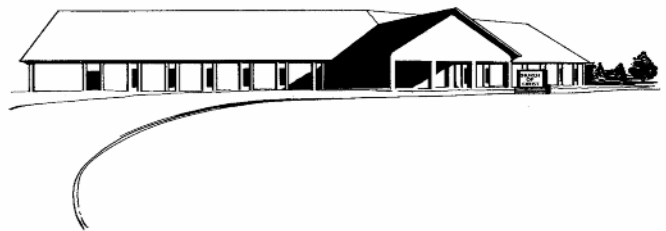
MONTHLY ASSIGNMENTS

Sections have been removed to preserve members' privacy

IN KEEPING WITH OUR LONG STANDING AGREEMENT, THOSE SERVING PUBLICLY ARE REMINDED TO PLEASE DRESS IN A MANNER RESPECTFUL OF THE GOD WHOM WE SERVE.

ELDERS:

Ruben Amador
Matthew Heaton
Donnie Mangrum
Steven Martin
Steve Voss



DEACONS:

John Coleman	Ken Dunsmore
David Ellison	Ray Farrell
Aubrey Garner	Steve Geraci
Steve LaGrasta	John Light
Mike McMurray	Jason Mock
David Stevenson	Glenn Tomblin

TIMES OF SERVICES

Sunday Bible Classes	9:30 AM
Sunday Morning Assembly	10:30 AM
Sunday Evening Assembly	6:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Classes	7:30 PM

EVANGELIST & EDITOR:

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