

# GCI INDIA

## MONTHLY UPDATE

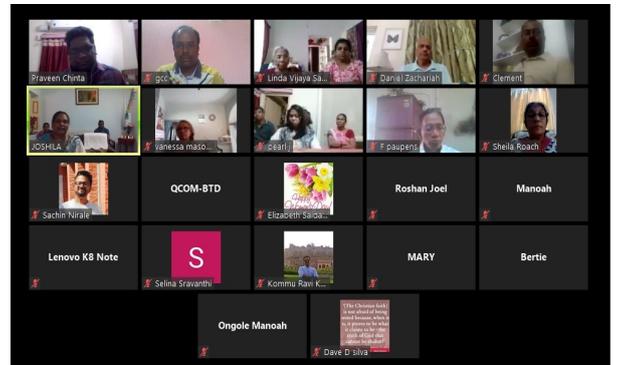


GRACE COMMUNION CHURCH, INDIA

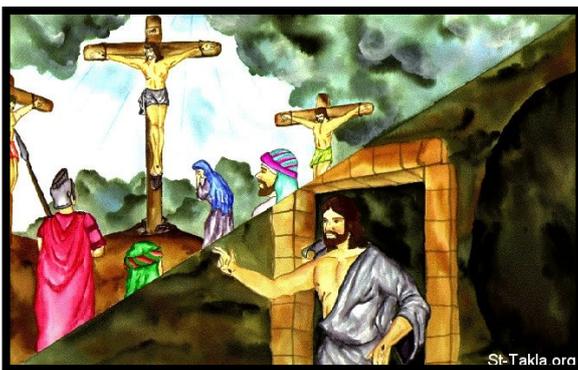
APRIL 2020

### Weekly Online Bible Study Explains Core Beliefs

Ever since the lockdown began, GCI Hyderabad leaders and members have connected online to study our core beliefs as documented in "We Believe." Pastor Dan reads each question and answer and then includes explanations where ever needed. Members give comments or ask questions after the 30 minute class. Currently Section 3 on "God the Son" is being discussed. Members have appreciated the Trinitarian focus of these discussions.



### Crucifixion and Resurrection Commemorated Online



Due to prevailing conditions in the country, members gathered online to remember the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and celebrate His Resurrection this year. Nelson Philips recounted the "View from the Cross" showing how different people react in particular ways to the crucifixion. The question for us is what is our reaction to the love of God displayed in Jesus Christ on the cross? Pastor Dan, in his message, encouraged members that, though we still live in a sense of darkness especially now with the pandemic, the stone has been rolled away and the mouth of the grave has been left open.

No one can shut it because Jesus is alive!

### Ministry Leaders Connects for New Vision

April 24: Ministry leaders from Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi connected to a special discussion on what the future vision should be for the church in India. The leaders were convinced that the administrative structure of the church should be reformed to reflect a unified, one GCI India.

### GCI Hyderabad Doctors Help in Covid-19 Fight



Two doctors in the congregation in Hyderabad are in the forefront of the fight with Covid-19. Dr. Elizabeth Manoah serves in the Primary Health Centre in a village of 70,000 people on the outskirts of the city of Hyderabad. She and her team are responsible to conduct medical checks to ascertain health conditions of the people and provide adequate medical advice and attention.

Dr. Leeann Zachariah serves in the Emergency Room for Apollo Hospitals. She and members in her team are the first responders to help patients that are brought to the hospital with varying symptoms. Patients are diagnosed and provided emergency care. Both doctors are very aware for God's protection as they remain exposed on the frontlines.



(Photo: Dr. Elizabeth, left, Dr. Leeann in her PPE, right).

# Best of Wishes To You

## BIRTHDAYS DURING MAY

- Steffi on 4<sup>th</sup>
- Steven Roach on 5<sup>th</sup>
- Sharon P. Ranjan & Suma Bala on 9<sup>th</sup>
- Saritha on 20<sup>th</sup>
- James Kemuel & Srujan on 27<sup>th</sup>
- James P. Ranjan on 28<sup>th</sup>
- Mrs. Virendra on 29<sup>th</sup>

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

- Manoah & Elizabeth on 15<sup>th</sup>
- Swarna & Balaswamy on 18<sup>th</sup>
- Clement & Lynda on 21<sup>st</sup>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

1. **Weekly Bible Studies on core beliefs every Wednesday at 4 pm.**
2. **Online worship every Sunday at 10:30 am.**
3. **Children's Church twice a week online**

## Devotional

### Christians in this Pandemic

I recently came across a news coverage in an international news channel about people protesting against the quarantine/lockdown measures. A few of the signage and banners caught my eye (picture below). Among the many mixed feelings it stirred in me, one that lingered was - where are Christians in this humanitarian crisis and what is the church's response to this?

Thanks to the advancement in technology and through the far reach of social media, we can now be up to date with all that's going on across the world, in spite of the lockdowns. The anguish for livelihoods lost, shrinking of the economy and restricted lifestyles are very apparent. It is tragic to see so many people have lost jobs/businesses, some are dealing with pay cuts, and those who are living from paycheck to paycheck are the worst hit (especially daily wage workers). These are times that people look for hope, something to cling on to when everything else is taking a hit.



This is where Christians have a unique chance to put His love into action and give empathetic HOPE to the hopeless. While we are thankful for the resources we have to tide over these lockdowns and enjoy the much-needed rest and time with the family, there is a need to look beyond our own. Let us take this opportunity of showing to the world, who God the Father is, who Christ is...and what HIS love means to us and plays out towards others.

Two scriptures that comes to mind are, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets (Mat 7:12). "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience ... (Col 3:12).

Perhaps we could look in our own neighborhoods and see if we can help the elderly to get groceries or medicines. With proper authorizations we could arrange for food grains/ masks/ or, even one meal to our migrant labourers who are out of work, to the homeless, to widows and families of the frontline workers (police, med staff, drivers, cleaners etc..) who are risking their lives so that we are safe and protected. Pray with someone who is emotionally down. And we ourselves could use this time to draw closer to the Lord, meditate upon HIS words and be encouraged to press on toward the goal, the prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ (Phil 3:14). Because we are blessed to be a blessing, may God grant us the strength to be a blessing to all those around us and may we experience His blessings in abundance.

# GROWING IN GRACE

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS FOR LIFE

APRIL 2020

## CHRIST'S RESURRECTION - HOPE OF OUR SALVATION

"If Christ has not been raised," the apostle Paul taught, "your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). The resurrection of Jesus Christ is of momentous importance for every Christian, indeed for everyone on this planet. Because Jesus Christ conquered death, we, too, will live again — and so will our friends and relatives who have already died. That is why the most exhilarating message human ears have yet heard was the one announced to some astonished women outside a rock tomb in first-century Jerusalem: "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (Luke 24:5-6).

**A foundational teaching.** The resurrection of Christ has always been the central teaching of Christianity. "If the resurrection is not historic fact, then the power of death remains unbroken, and with it the effect of sin" (James Hastings, *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. 2, page 514). Michael Green in *Man Alive* is emphatic: "Without faith in the resurrection there would be no Christianity at all." W. Robertson Nicolls, quoting another writer, puts it plainly: "The empty tomb of Christ has been the cradle of the church" (*The Church's One Foundation*, page 150).

**Anchored to history.** To mention Jesus Christ and his life, death and resurrection is to get to the root of the Christian faith, for Christianity claims a basis in historical fact. "There are ancient myths in pagan literature about dying gods who attained some form of resurrection," writes Philip Rosenbaum, "but no other sacred writing intersects human history the way the Bible does. For it is the historical fact of Christ's life, death, and resurrection that separate God's Word from all others" (*How to Enjoy the Boring Parts of the Bible*, page 116).

But the New Testament accounts have come under intense scrutiny and attack. Scottish philosopher David Hume argued in the 1700s that miracles — including Christ's resurrection — violated all known workings of natural law. In our century, theologian Rudolph Bultmann concluded, "An historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable." In light of such arguments from rationalists and critics, it is no wonder that theories have been devised for the events of crucifixion week:

The Swoon Theory: The idea that Jesus didn't really die but faked a death on the cross, then tricked his disciples into thinking that he had conquered death, only to live out his life elsewhere.

The Theft Theory: The idea that the disciples, other sympathizers, perhaps robbers or someone else, stole the corpse. This is the oldest and most widespread argument against Christ's resurrection.

These are bold contentions, almost as bold as the resurrection claim itself. They are rhetorical daggers aimed at the very vitals of the Christian faith. Peter wrote, "We did not follow cleverly invented stories...but we were eyewitnesses" (2 Peter 1:16).

**Who is right?** What about the Swoon Theory? This theory suggests that Jesus Christ plotted — for whatever reasons — the biggest hoax in history. Did Jesus, by some amazingly cunning strategy, fake a death on the cross? Let's keep in mind that the four Gospels are the primary documented evidence for Christ's death, burial and resurrection. We have good internal evidence for believing. These writings are emphatic that Jesus Christ's execution was a public and state-certified spectacle (Mark 15:29).

"This thing was not done in a corner," Paul argued before King Agrippa, the most influential Jewish official of his day (Acts 26:26, NKJV). How right he was. Jesus Christ's mortal enemies — the leadership elite of his nation — were on the scene. They were watchfully determined to stamp out the Jesus movement (John 11:46-53). That is why they schemed behind closed doors to carry out their plot, at risk to their own standing among the people (John 7:25-52). It had to be the perfect crime.

Pontius Pilate, the chief Roman official on the scene, double-checked to verify if Christ had died (Mark 15:44-45). The testimony of John 19:23 and Mark 15:39 indicates that at least four Roman soldiers, including a centurion, carried out the execution. You can be sure that Roman occupation troops of the first century knew what death was.

Consider this: Would Christ's foes — opponents eager to crush out the infant Christian movement — have allowed Christ, once in their clutches, to fake a death? This hardly seems logical or consistent with their motives and with the biblical narrative. John Stott demolished the Swoon Theory with common sense. He asks if we can really believe that after the rigours and pains of trial, mockery, flogging and crucifixion he could survive...in a stone sepulchre with neither warmth nor food nor medical care? That he could then rally sufficiently to perform the superhuman feat of shifting

the boulder which secured the mouth of the tomb without disturbing the Roman guard? That he could appear to the disciples in such a way as to give them the impression that he had vanquished death? ... Such credulity is more incredible than Thomas' unbelief. (*Basic Christianity*, page 49)

**First-century propaganda.** The oldest argument advanced against Christ's resurrection is the intriguing theory that Christ's body was stolen. This is a significant claim. The one crowning blow to disprove Christ's resurrection would have been a public display of his body. A display of the corpse would quickly end any "myth" that was developing about the resurrection of Jesus.

Public exhuming have happened more than once in history; why didn't the rulers of first-century Judea do that? There was a good reason: The body could not be found. Christ had been bodily resurrected. The Gospel account makes the most sense.

The rulers of Jerusalem "gave the soldiers a large sum of money" to circulate the story that Jesus' disciples stole his body (Matthew 28:11-15). The Theft Theory is indefensible, no matter who the robbers supposedly were. If the guards were sleeping, how did they know who had stolen the body? Second, the Jerusalem hierarchy had outsmarted themselves — they had posted a guard to prevent this very sort of thing from happening.

As Paul Little asks in *Know Why You Believe*: "What judge would listen to you if you said that while you were asleep, your neighbour came into your house and stole your television set? Who knows what goes on while he's asleep? Testimony like this would be laughed out of any court."

In his book *The Resurrection and the Life*, George Hanson made this point: "The simple faith of the Christian who believes in the Resurrection is nothing compared to the credulity of the skeptic who will accept the wildest and most improbable romances

rather than admit the plain witness of historical certainties."

Any explanation, to be credible, must fit all the facts. The Theft Theory doesn't. The case against it is devastating. Even the existence of the New Testament church is evidence that something happened in Jerusalem, something no adversary could explain. There is no doubt that these defences of the resurrection ring true. Sincere and learned scholars have laboured hard to nullify the claims made against Jesus Christ's resurrection.

**A question of faith.** Christianity is more than a series of clever arguments. It is more than a list of intellectual debating points that can be argued back and forth. This is why the validity of the Gospel testimony does not remain at the mercy of the latest "debunking" best-seller or archaeological find in the Middle East. In the end, Christianity rests on faith, faith based on a living and ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ, a living Saviour!

Thomas wanted the strongest form of proof: "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were...I will not believe it" (John 20:25). Thomas saw, he tested, and then he believed (verses 26-28). Yet Jesus followed this dramatic encounter with the words: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (verse 29).

As Oliver Barclay wrote: "The historical Jesus Christ was an amazing power in the lives of men years after his death. It is not so much the fact that a miracle happened.... The chief reason that the disciples spoke so often about it was that Jesus was alive and with them again" (*Reasons for Faith*, page 115). This is why the disciples came storming out of Jerusalem and so influenced the world with their message (Acts 17:6). The living Christ had changed their lives. He can do the same for you.

[GCI Archives](#)

#### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

GCI INDIA MONTHLY UPDATE is published by Grace Communion Church in Hyderabad, India to provide news of church activities and to stimulate Christian growth through Biblically insightful articles.

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