

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“Peter proceeded to speak: You know...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power...(but) they put him to death, hanging him on a tree.

But God raised this man on the third day and granted that he be seen (by us).”

Acts of the Apostles 10: 34 ff

A question. Would you take it on the word of another that a human being who died a horrific death had actually been raised to life? That was what was claimed for this Jesus of Nazareth. Who can believe such things? Who ever rose from the dead? Ever? In the history of the world? How can this be? There are questions. Many, many questions. Why should we believe? How do we know that his followers didn't make this up? To put a happy ending on a story that ended very, very badly? Trying to put a good face on things.

A reasonable question. But. What's the likelihood that a small group of uneducated, unsophisticated men would concoct such a story in the face of a Roman execution where literally anybody who wanted to, could watch this Jesus suffer and die? What's the likelihood that those who huddled fearfully in the Upper Room, devastated by the agonizing and cruel death of a truly good man, and in full fear of the power of the Romans and the Religious Authorities, would somehow find it in themselves, pushing past their own disappointment and devastation, and put forth such a story? Just to try to wring some sort of vindication out of the worst tragedy?

I mean, really. It's just not probable. Visit your own grief. Remember your own moments of devastation. Were you even thinking of trying to put a happy face on things? Grief and devastation consume us. They do. So. Could it be that they didn't make this up after all? That they were just as surprised as anyone that Jesus rose from the dead? That they found it difficult to believe it themselves? But there he was. The One whom they had seen died. There he was. Eating. Speaking. Showing his wounds. Explaining the meaning. I mean, what if it is all true? Do we grasp the implications not just for Jesus but for us? If we believe in him then we can conquer death too? Isn't that precisely what Easter means? And that, my friends, is the question of the week.