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MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION

"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures," (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The Apostle Paul not only affirms that the resurrection of Jesus is the very basis our salvation is founded upon, but even goes so far as to reaffirm the absolute certainty that it actually occurred. *"...He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of*

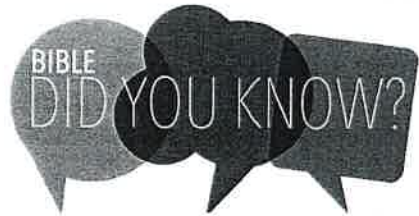
whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also," (1 Cor. 15:5-8). Paul provides several credible sources as witnesses corroborating the claim that not only was the tomb of Jesus found empty three days after His bloodied corpse had been placed inside of it, but that Jesus Himself was seen alive and well after being put to death by crucifixion. It is essential that a confident faith be built upon this astounding assertion as it is the most convincing evidence that the penalty for sin is undone through Christ. *"...and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins," (1 Cor. 15:17).* While the dark cold hand of death continues to wreak havoc through this life,

we are reminded each time its pain is felt of the sobering reality that since the days of Adam, death has been the penalty for sin. It is the resurrection of Christ which gives hope that if the Son of God was able to undo the penalty and overcome His own death, then all who are in Christ may have confidence that their punishment for sin has been reversed. *"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive,"* (1 Cor. 15:20-22). In other words, since by one man, Adam, came the curse, by one Man, Jesus, came the cure. Throughout the writings of the old testament we find countless hints and foreshadowing giving us clues how God would eventually resolve the problem of sin through Christ. In the book of Esther we have a hint of how a great salvation of God's people will be achieved through reversing a death sentence. In chapter 3, Haman successfully convinces King Ahasuerus to make a decree sealing the annihilation of the entire Jewish race. *"If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they*

be destroyed...' The king said to Haman, 'The silver is yours, and the people also, to do with them as you please,'" (Esther 3:9, 11). Due to the faithfulness and loyalty of Mordecai and Esther to the king, they were able to save their people from certain death by convincing King Ahasuerus to reverse the order. *"The king extended the golden scepter to Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king. Then she said, 'If it pleases the king and if I have found favor before him and the matter seems proper to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces,'"* (Esther 8:4-5). Interestingly, what preceded the actual reversal of the death sentence was the ironic death of Haman hanging on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. The very instrument he had intended to use to defeat Mordecai ended up being the very instrument of his own death. How fitting, since many years later Jesus would reverse the death sentence against us by defeating the power of Satan over death with the very instrument Satan used to attempt to defeat Jesus...the

cross. *"Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives," (Heb. 2:14-15).* Just as Mordecai and Esther were able to reverse the edict against their people condemning them to death, Jesus was able to reverse the effects of the Law of Moses condemning sinners to death through the cross. *"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross," (Col. 2:13-14).* The powerful force of evidence for all who are in Christ Jesus that the death sentence for our sin has been revoked lies in the empty tomb of Jesus. As Jesus was able to reverse the sentence of death through the resurrection, we have faith that our sin has been forgiven, and no longer have the fear of death over us. *"The*

sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Cor. 15:56-57).
 – Daniel Ruegg



When Menelik II, emperor of Ethiopia, felt unwell, he would eat a few pages of the bible.

There's an organization that parachutes copies of the Bible into North Korea.

The oldest near-complete manuscript of the Bible is the Codex Vaticanus which dates from around 325-350 AD. It contains both the Old and New testaments and is currently housed in the Vatican library.



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Personal Evangelism Challenge

Acts 8:4 "Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word."

As we enter this final month of 2016, we often find ourselves in a mad rush to complete the final remaining tasks on our calendar year before switching out to a new calendar for 2017 and beginning to fill in dates of what needs accomplished for next year. As we begin to prepare ourselves for a new year, the challenge is to have 12 names of individuals you know that you could have a bible study with and schedule their names, one person per month, throughout your calendar for next year. *"Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established," Prov. 16:3.* It's exciting to think of the potential for how much growth we could see here if every one of us studied with 12 people in 2017! It's amazing how hectic our lives tend to become in any given week and how quickly our days become filled with mounting items in need of our attention. Let's not let 2017 begin it's mad rush without first committing ourselves to spreading the gospel. Let's center each month on lost souls!

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Psalms 4

"Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; be gracious to me and hear my prayer. O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; the LORD hears when I call to Him. Tremble, and do not sin; meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in the LORD. Many are saying, "Who will show us any good?" Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD! You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and new wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep. For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety."