

TRUTH AND FACT

The Christian faith has its basis in actual fact. The facts it rests on had evidence that could be appealed to and if they were wrong they were capable of being proved wrong. The Gospels reported that Jesus performed miracles, and in reporting them mentioned specific names and places and times. The reports were open to investigation, and that included the possibility of being proved wrong by anyone who was at those places at those times. Christian statements are related to this real world just as much as statements like "There was a car-crash on the road outside here yesterday evening." They were open to possibility of investigation, and disproof. So the resurrection of Christ from the dead is an important point of contact with the real world we live in. Every time we say the creed we mention empirical facts like "suffered under Pontius Pilate", and "on the third day He rose again."

Indeed, the Gospel is essentially narrative statement about Jesus, in the past tense, coupled with the words, "for you and for me."

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we can affirm with certainty that the Son of God, who became a human being, indeed suffered for the sin of the world, and is alive to be our closest friend and adviser, the object of our prayers and praises.

Jesus says, "I am the truth"; and truth is a key emphasis in the Gospel according to John. What kind of truth is this? We accept the fact that no one has seen the father, though the Bible promises that we shall see God. We accept the fact that though the Lord Jesus has risen from the dead, and is with us always, we don't see Him, and He doesn't speak to us directly in an audible way. We live by faith, not by sight.

We may see no evidence that the Christian faith is all for real. There may be no miracle of healing, even though we may ardently pray for one. The Christian faith is not an object of sight. But it is no less real and sure. All we have to cling to is the cross and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, with the assurance that they were for us, and the Word of the Gospel, and the sacraments. Because Jesus is the truth and the life, He is the way to the Father.

The Christian Gospel doesn't hang in thin air, however. We have this truth on the evidence of witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, though we don't see Jesus ourselves. It is based on the witness of the apostles who saw the Lord, heard Him, touched Him, and felt Him during the 40 days before His ascension. Their ears, hands, and eyes have become our ears and hands and eyes.

We should resist the suggestion that faith in the Lord Jesus is just probable, though it is based on the Gospels as the primary source documents. It is more than that Jesus probably did rise from the dead. Our faith in Him is worked by the Holy Spirit through the apostolic word that throbs with divine inspiration, and with the reality of Jesus' resurrection. It is divine in origin. We should add that in the Gospel according to John the word "know" is often interchangeable with the word "believe." Put the other way around, this belief is as certain as knowing. And this is the basis of strong feeling about Him, and strong personal attachment to Him. His resurrection is the guarantee that our bodies will rise, and that He will come back again visibly. His resurrection is the basis for our hope. Because our faith is grounded on the reality of Jesus' resurrection, the blessings He keeps for us in heaven cannot decay or spoil or fade away.