

“If Christ be not risen,” wrote the Apostle Paul, “then is our preaching vain and your faith is also.” If He were not, would we or our civilization even BE here? It’s hard to imagine. But just suppose for a moment that in Caesar’s well-kept archives there were a scroll, “*The Daily Papyrus and Tiber Times*” or some such, which might have read:

### ***PROVINCIAL UNREST AVERTED!***

(Dateline: Rome) – The Emperor and Senate have received a dispatch from the Procurator of Judaea, Pontius Pilatus, regarding minor disturbances in the capital Jerusalem during the religious celebration of the Jews called “Passover”. The Procurator reports that he was compelled to order an execution to maintain public order, doing so at the request of Jewish officials who had accused a Galilean preacher, one Yeshua, of capital offenses under their religious law. Examination of the suspect by the governor produced no evidence of crime against the province or against Rome, but an offer to release him or exchange him for another prisoner served only to inflame the crowds assembled. The said Yeshua and two condemned felons were crucified outside the capital, in full view of both the Jewish leaders and his followers, including his mother. Strange portents were noted including sudden storm clouds and tremors in the earth, one of which damaged sacred decorations in the Jews’ temple. The bodies of the condemned were to have been broken at sunset, but that of the prisoner Yeshua was already dead. To prevent the remains from being used to foment insurrection, they were sealed in a private tomb and kept under guard. Despite rumors the tomb has been looted, the small cult, which deserted Yeshua on his arrest, remains in hiding and is no longer considered a threat, according to Procurator Pontius’s message.

In other news, the Blue and Red Teams of Chariot racers will be featured in games dedicated to Mars on the Ides of next month. The corn dole will take place on those days, city quaestors confirmed. Weather: Continued hot...

Well, that's what THEY thought! And that's what a lot of the world thinks today. . .that it ended then for Jesus, that there's some other reason the tomb was empty, that we are fools to think anything else. But here we are, because it did NOT end there.

Instead, His scattered, confused followers joined together and not only insisted they saw a risen Christ, outside the tomb, on the road to Emmaus, in the upper room, on the shore of Galilee -- saying touch my wounds, have some grilled fish, receive the Holy Spirit -- they kept repeating the story despite death and torture, without recanting, and with explosive effect. Because it was TRUE, and the spirit of Truth, God the Holy Ghost, gave them the power to spread the Gospel by signs and wonders to thousands and ultimately millions. The Church begins with a *fact*. Jesus of Nazareth died and rose again!

Let's talk about a dirty word: Superstition. *Super* is Latin for above, *stition* from *stare*, to stand. We say 'it's just an old superstition' or 'so and so is soooo superstitious' and we're like the materialists talking about us, the believers: Believing in a God, a Higher Power, an event or order caused from above, from beyond observed reality, defies logical proof. Metaphysics, scoffed Ludwig Wittgenstein, is not a branch of philosophy but a kind of psychosis. Well, we all know the **non**-existence of God is just as impossible to prove.

But yes, it is *our* superstition -- our placing a being above our reality -- to say that a dead Jesus rose from His Grave, alive and more clearly than ever before a God-Man and Man-God. It is *The Great Superstition*, and we believe it for a number of reasons. It is founded in events as prosaic as in a news story. Its disciples like Peter, James, John, the Other James, Paul, Andrew, Thomas, and on and on, never availed themselves of the chance to retract their testimonies even when facing horrific martyrdom alone at places

and times far distant from each other. It completes and explains what the whole history of the Jews was leading up to -- and the greater picture of God's will for all humankind. And it is the best of all possible outcomes for us!

We are saved and brought to eternal life, despite our sins, by the Ultimate Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, and the proof of it is the Resurrection. It was done *for us* through Grace, undeserved and unearned lest any man boast. It's the single superstition I'd want to keep. Accepting it brings all other supernatural ideas into line. Either they come from and serve the Gospel and God, or we can ignore them.

People ask what I believe and sometimes I joke: "I believe in the Great Plea-Bargain. The Fix is In. I know the Judge's Son." Why do I believe that? Because I want to. Because I desperately need to. Because the Resurrection says once and for all that Jesus Christ is who He says He is. It says that I can act on that. And to act on belief is Faith. And as Our Lord says even a mustard seed of Faith, even the tiniest acceptance of the Great Superstition, grows into a mighty tree. For the Father and the Son send us God the Holy Spirit, and in us as Christ's Body the Spirit dwells with power that pulsates and triumphs down through the millennia. It is the inexorable power of Love.

***Is Christ risen? Oh, beloved, He is risen indeed!***

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