

Pastors Corner

- Senior Pastor
- John Gregory
- Doug and Angela Hull
- Frank Welch
- Children’s Pastor

Deacons

- Rick Bennett
- Mike Golda
- Mark LaRowe
- Claude McGavic
- Kyle Reilly
- Ron Shroyer

Cancer

- Susan
- Buddy Wheeler
- Betty Ratliff
- Dan
- Joe Conard
- Okai
- Tara
- Gary Clark
- Margaret Frey
- Wyatt Fulghum

Military

Army

- Amber J. Cox
- Col. Scott King
- Sgt Matthew Lowe
- PFC Nathan Meyer
- Zack Cooper

Marines

- Jeremiah Iverson

Navy

- Motte Morrison

Friends & Family

- Nilsa Pizarro-Chronic pain
- Victor Pizarro- Dementia and Parkinson’s
- Jeff Nelson- Healing-body, mind and soul!
- Scotty - PRAISE! Improving
- Alaura- Life struggles and difficult decisions
- Will Hutchings - Back surgery
- Ron - Throat surgery
- Conant Carr - Health
- Wyatt Fulghum - Brain cancer
- Phyllis Jones - ALS
- Wess - Heart surgery, stroke
- Rodney Potter - Health
- Mack - Open heart surgery
- Marian - Health
- Sol - 4 y/o Hearing
- Jason - Surgery
- Roger Grossman - Lyme disease
- Len - Blood clots in legs
- Kathleen - Mastectomy
- Sandra Overmyer - Grieving loss of uncle

Members

- Betty Huth-Memory issues
- Palm Shores Teams
- Ed Rawsthorne - Infection
- Marcella Fielder- Health
- Maurice Cooper - Spinal stenosis
- Rosner Samma - Recovery
- Sandy & Gordon Boettcher - Health
- Art & Sonja - PRAISE - Doing well!
- Zach Cooper - ARMY
- Mary Gentry - Back surgery
- Jeanette Goins - Fractured spine
- Bill Romine - Health
- Candi Evans - Healing
- Estelle Goldsby - Health
- Hilci Benzing - Baby home and doing well
- Floyd Bailey - Neck pain
- Debi Clark - Health
- Barbara Almandinger - Eye surgery
- Margaret Bryant - Stroke
- Charlene Bowser - Health
- Bob Kiley - Blood pressure
- Mary Glee Watson - Recovery
- Cynthia Mejias - Daughter’s miscarriage
- Bonnie Partlow - Recovery
- Caleb Bennett - Head injury
- Hemsath family - Healing, Peace, Comfort

Shut Ins

- Phyllis Murphy
- Thelma Weese
- Barbara Johnson
- Harold Douberly
- Jean Basehore
- Margaret Bryant
- Paula Johnson
- Melba Gentile
- Charlie Elmore
- Doris Miles

Salvation

- Hilary G
- Chris and Troy Pettit
- Betty Lidster
- Todd and Terri Heasley
- Christie Galase
- Chris, Gracie and Cameron Hill
- Kim Harding
- Bob Fisher
- Christina and Jennifer
- Levi and Calvin Blair
- Jerry McAninch
- Steve Bell’s family
- Josh Conard
- Susie
- Nik Knoth
- Brenda Smith
- Bobby Williams
- JR
- Idelle Bee
- Herb Frith
- Meri and Krishna
- Todd Center
- Brent Shearl
- Zachary and Nicole
- Jim Evans
- Bob Luersen
- Joel Grimm



First Bradenton

Volume 15, Issue 4 • April 2019

Conquering the Grave

My name is Lazarus, and my story is a little unusual. Let’s just start with the day when Jesus called me by name. I had been dead for four days. That’s right. I wasn’t breathing. As is our custom, I had been covered in sweet spices and completely wrapped from head to toe. I was then buried in a cave. From beyond the grave, I heard the unmistakable call of the Master. “Lazarus, come forth!”

After four days I drew my first breath of fresh air, and my spirit returned to my cold corpse. What a surprise for me! I was fully alive again, as good as new.

If it’s possible, I believe the crowd (and my sisters) were even more astonished than I was. Instantly, I became a celebrity. Some folks even began to believe in the divinity of the Messiah that very day, but not everyone.

We had seen so many miracles in the few short years that Jesus walked among us. But this was definitive proof that Jesus held the ultimate power over the grave. Who can raise the dead but God alone? Therefore, Jesus must be God in the flesh. If so, then Jesus must be the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior of all humanity. In my mind this conclusion was the simplest, most obvious

explanation for what we all experienced.

Unbelievably, not everyone saw it that way. Jerusalem is always at the center of geo-political strife, but it became a real hotbed when my heart started beating again. Many of our religious leaders decided that I was as much of a threat to them as Jesus was. They decided then to kill us both.

I am sure it seemed logical to the religious leaders, but what genius tries to kill the guy who brought a man back from the great beyond and the guy who was already dead once? What makes you think you can take out the guy who has power over death?

I didn’t know if I should fear them or not. Eventually, I decided I will be here as long as God wants me to be here, and not a minute more. While I am here, my life will bring glory to Him. So we scheduled a party and invited all the neighbors to see me in the flesh again and meet Jesus. It took place not too long after my miracle. The house was absolutely full of people.

My sister Mary took a whole pound of very expensive perfume and annointed Jesus’ feet with it. The fragrance filled the entire house and lingered for days. Some of His disciples thought

the extravagance was inappropriate. They thought she should have sold the nard perfume and given the money away. It was odd. Jesus didn't see it that way. In fact, Jesus said the strangest thing. He said that she had anointed Him for His burial! The Conqueror of death was now talking about being buried. What could He mean? Would Jesus ever face death and the grave? I mean... we were at that very moment celebrating His power over death

The next day, Jesus travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast. All the folks from my party showed up waving palm branches. They shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!"

Jesus rode on a colt, the foal of a donkey, and the crowds covered the path in front of Jesus with the palm branches. This beautiful crowd on the eve of Passover was declaring to all Jerusalem that the Messiah had arrived. It was a joyous event to behold. I was caught up in the celebration. Life is so good.

It was truly joyous...unless you were one of the Pharisees or other religious leaders. They were absolutely incensed that these unlearned people were proclaiming Jesus to be the blessed son of David the King. This crowd was declaring Jesus to be God in the flesh, and they knew it. They hated Jesus for it, because they saw their own power base eroding.

Jesus celebrated the Passover that night with His disciples. We celebrate this event every year. Centuries ago, our people were enslaved by the Egyptians, and God delivered us with a mighty hand. On our last night in Egypt, our people were commanded to slaughter a lamb. The Passover lamb had to be perfect. It could have no blemish at all. After slaughtering it, we were commanded to spread the blood on the two door posts and over the lintel of the door. That night the angel of death passed through the land of Egypt. If the angel saw the blood of the perfect lamb, he passed over that house and spared the family. In all the Egyptian homes, the angel killed every firstborn

son of the men and the animals. There wasn't an Egyptian home that was not in mourning the next day. Yet every Hebrew home that was covered by the blood was spared. So every year we celebrate the extraordinary deliverance God provided for His people.

After the Passover celebration that evening, Jesus and His disciples retired to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. It was there late at night that the Jewish leaders found Jesus. Armed with swords and torches, they arrested Jesus and hauled Him off for a midnight trial. That entry into Jerusalem was not nearly as cheerful as His last one. The second crowd wasn't waving palm branches. Instead, there was murder in their eyes.

In the house of the high priest that night, they mocked Jesus and beat Him. They blindfolded Him and hit Him. Then they'd ask Him to prophesy and tell them who had struck Him. Do you think Jesus didn't know who hit Him? Yet, He chose to remain silent. He didn't say anything at all.

They dragged Him off to Pilate. Then, they paraded Him before Herod and back to Pilate. He was beaten and abused by the rowdy soldiers. He was so bloodied, He was hardly recognizable. The early morning rabble was not the same crowd from the triumphal entry. The religious leaders had incited them, and they were yearning for a show. Thirsty for blood, they cried out, "Crucify Him."

Eventually, Pilate acquiesced in an effort to keep peace in the realm. The soldiers laid a cross on Jesus' bruised shoulders and led Him away to the place of the skull for execution. They nailed the Master to a crude tree to watch Him die slowly.

I could not see the future, nor could I understand Jesus' meek response. He said nothing in His own defense. Like the Passover lamb, He was lead away to slaughter. Like all my friends, I was aghast. How could this be? He raised me from the dead. How could He just roll over and die? He had the power. Why didn't He do something? Why was He allowing this horrendous execution?

It was three agonizing hours as we watched our

beloved Friend and Savior suffer and die. About noon, darkness covered the entire region and a massive thunderstorm rolled in. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "IT IS FINISHED!"

Then, He hung His head and drew His last breath. As He did, the massive, heavy temple veil that separated the most holy place from the holy place was torn in two from top to bottom. The most holy place where God dwells was exposed to humanity.

Unbelievably, the great Conqueror of Death died. I was so conflicted. How could this be? I just didn't understand. Why was I alive? Why was He dead? My grief was unbearable.

Jesus was buried in a nearby tomb, a new cave that had been carved in the stone. It had never been used. Like me, He was covered with about 100 pounds of spices and rolled up tight in grave clothes. He was laid in the cave on the slab prepared for Him. Then a stone was rolled over the entrance to the cave, barring access and enclosing the stench of rotting flesh. Just like when I was laid to rest, everyone thought it was the end. I had to wonder though what lay in store. I knew He was the Messiah. I knew He had power over death. What did He have planned now?

Three days later on Sunday morning following Passover, Jesus rose from the dead. The stone was rolled away up the hill, and He walked out breathing again. Some women of our group saw Him first, then His disciples. At one point, over 500 people saw Him at one time. I can't tell you the joy in my heart when I saw Jesus again. He really had conquered death, and not just for me.

During that fateful Passover celebration, Jesus became our Passover lamb. Like a sheep before the shearers, He didn't speak a word. He was a perfect, sinless Man. He willingly surrendered His life. Jesus' blood spilled out all over the rugged tree to which they had nailed Him. As the Passover lamb's blood covered the house and prevented the angel of death from entering, even so Jesus' blood covers us and spares us the sting of death. No longer are we consigned to the grave to rot. With Jesus we live for all eternity. Jesus' sacrifice grants us full access to heaven where we enter



into the realm of God. It was so fitting that Jesus would die on Passover. Yearly we recounted the story that foreshadowed this incredible event. No longer do we fear the angel of death as we pass from this life to the next. Jesus paid the price for all my sin so that I could live forever with Him. He offers the same to you, if only you believe and apply that precious blood to the door posts and lintel of your heart. Then the angel of death will pass over you as well. Then you will be free. Death will hold no sting for you. Together we will dwell in the house of God for all eternity.

Will you take a moment this Easter season to read the original documents and see how the eye witnesses expressed their conclusions of these events? Take a moment to read John 11–20. Like Lazarus was dead and buried, we are all dead in our sins. When Jesus calls our name, we choose to answer. Like Lazarus, we can be raised to new life right here and now. We can enter into the Kingdom of God. We can live again to bring glory to God. Jesus has power over death. Jesus is the sacrifice for our evil thoughts and deeds. Jesus is our access to God. Will we repent and turn away from our hopelessness, vanity and pride? Do we really believe Jesus? Will we say, "Yes!" to His call? Will we make Him the Boss of our lives? Jesus longs to hear your voice. Talk to Jesus now and tell Him what's in your heart.