



The Master's Mariner

March 2016.

Ian Porter

“It Can't Happen, so it Didn't Happen!”

There's a certain logic to that statement, which was made to me one evening when discussing Jesus' resurrection over dinner.

Sadly, my fellow guest wouldn't consider any of the evidence that supported the case for Jesus' physical resurrection. In contrast to the popular stereotype of Christians, he was the one being 'narrow-minded' - refusing even to consider the evidence put before him!

Is Jesus' resurrection the best explanation for that evidence, or are explanations more compelling?

I've included six points of evidence that point to the resurrection as the only cogent explanation for that evidence.

1: The Empty Tomb of Jesus

That Jesus' tomb was empty on that Sunday morning could not be denied, even by Jesus' enemies.

Positive evidence from a hostile source is strong evidence that the account is genuine.

Two major theories have been advanced by unbelievers:

- someone stole Jesus' body, or that
- the women and disciples went to the wrong tomb.

Neither the Jews nor the Romans had any motive to steal the body. If they had had reason to move it, all they had to do to debunk the disciples' claims would be to show people where Jesus' body now lay. Jesus' disciples were too shattered and disillusioned to have any reason for trying to overcome the guards



and steal it. For them, Jesus was dead – the accounts embarrassingly record they never considered that Jesus' talk of resurrection might be true.

The women who went to the tomb never expected it to be empty. They went with spices to place in the body wrappings. They had been to the tomb before, when Jesus was being buried - they knew where it was. Even if they had gone to the wrong tomb, all that was needed to quash the resurrection rumours was for the authorities to have shown them (and everyone else!) the right tomb. And Jesus' burial cloths were left neatly folded inside - hardly the act of grave robbers.

2. The Female Eyewitnesses

In the ancient world, the testimony of a woman was regarded as having no credibility; their testimony was not allowed in court.



If these accounts had been fabricated, men, not women, would have been the witnesses to Christ's resurrection. Yet the Bible says that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene and other women. Even the apostles dismissed Mary's testimony when she told them the tomb was empty!

That women were the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection is testimony to the authenticity of the account.

3. The Apostles' New-Found Courage

After the crucifixion, Jesus' apostles hid behind locked doors, terrified they would be executed next. But something happened to change them from cowards to bold preachers.

People do not change that much, and that suddenly, without some major influence. That transformation occurred when they met, spoke with, ate with, and touched Jesus - now bodily risen from the dead. Jesus appeared to them and to other people in different locations and for a specific period of time. He met them in the locked room, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, on the road to Emmaus and on the Mount of Olives.



4. The Changed Lives of James and Others

Before Jesus' death, James - a brother of Jesus - was openly sceptical that Jesus was the Messiah. After the risen Jesus appeared to him, James became a vigorous leader of the Jerusalem church and was eventually stoned to death for his faith. What had caused James and the other apostles to become firm believers and effective missionaries? They declared that it was only because they had seen and touched the risen Christ.

5: A Large Crowd of Eyewitnesses

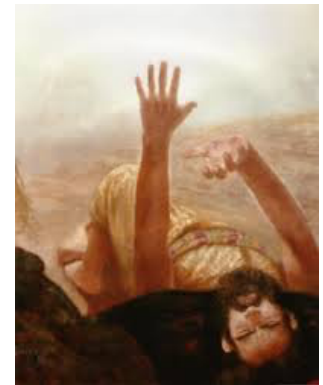
St Paul mentions (1Corinthians 15:6) that the risen Jesus appeared, not only to many individuals and small groups, but to a large crowd of more than 500 eyewitnesses; and that, at his time of writing (about 55 A.D.) most of these eye-witnesses were still alive.

Psychologists know that a large crowd of people cannot share a common hallucination.

Smaller groups (such as the apostles) and individuals (e.g. Cleopas and his companion) also saw the risen Christ in various locations and, in the case of the apostles, they touched Jesus and watched him eat food. The hallucination theory is further debunked because, after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, sightings of him stopped.

6: The Conversion of Saul / Paul

The conversion of Saul records the most drastically changed life in the Bible. As the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus, he was an aggressive persecutor of the early church. When the risen Christ appeared to Saul on the Damascus Road, he became Christianity's most determined missionary. Having changed his name to Paul, he endured five floggings, three beatings, three shipwrecks, a stoning, poverty, and years of ridicule. Finally Nero had him beheaded because of the threat his ministry posed to Nero's cult. What could make a person willingly accept - even welcome - such hardships? Paul himself declares that it happened because he encountered Jesus Christ who had risen from the dead.



This is why Paul was able to write to the Christians in Corinth: 1Corinthians 15:

14 ... *if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.*
15 *We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.*
16 *For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.*
17 *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*
18 *Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*
19 *If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

No-one could write in such a way unless he knew – absolutely – that Jesus had risen from the dead and truly was who he claimed to be:

[God's] Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead. (Romans 1:3-4)

This Easter, we pray that you might come to know, trust and praise the risen Lord Jesus ever more deeply and joyfully!

Capt. Jack Starmans



Over the past three months I've had many Gospel conversations on board ships, in our buses and in our Centre. I note these Gospel conversations down in a pocket book, and pray for the people I've

spoken with. Sometimes, when I'm talking with seafarers about Jesus, you can see a hunger in their eyes. Most come from Roman Catholic or Greek / Russian / Serbian Orthodox backgrounds. These seafarers are very familiar with the rites of organised religion but, sadly, most are unfamiliar with the Bible and have very little idea about how Jesus fits in. They don't understand what Jesus' death and resurrection really means.

That's where we come in; we introduce them to the Jesus of the Bible. I encourage them to read the Bible and to entrust their lives to the risen Lord Jesus Christ, and not to anything else – even 'religion'.

Recently, while driving some seafarers into the city, we were talking about some of the differences between the Bible's teachings and what some Churches/Denominations teach. One seafarers became upset that we could even suggest that there were such differences. For him, the Church's authority surpassed the Bible's. He was so steeped in the traditions of the Church that he had become closed to hearing God's word, despite (or because of?) the truth that:

'the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.' (Hebrews 4:12)

Thankfully, the three other seafarers in the conversation were happy to learn more. One of them took a Bible back to the ship with him.

Back in December I met a female cadet from Malta. As I drove her and other seafarers back to port we talked a lot about why people do

evil things. She was naive about the true nature of humanity, so I challenged her to read Genesis 1-11. Not only did she read it but she has written pages of questions to me about it. I pray for her that she will realise our / her deep need for forgiveness and come to faith in Jesus, who – alone – is able to save her.

These are some of the highs and lows of sharing God's Word with those who visit our shores on merchant ships.

Chaplain George Gayagay

After Christmas, there is a noticeable reduction in ship arrivals.

Consequently, there are fewer seafarers coming ashore. A number of vessels also began new charters that involved wholesale crew changes.



On 'YM Keelung', the Filipino crew I visited were to be replaced by Indians. Ironically, the Indian crew of 'British Harmony' I visited at the Bulk Liquids Berth were about to be replaced by Filipinos!

Now that 2016 is well under way, ship arrivals are picking up and we often have a full bus load (i.e. 23 seafarers) coming to the Centre.

Crew visiting can be a heart warming time of meeting a crew who, after lonely weeks at sea, share their joy being able to go ashore and reconnect with their loved ones at home.

When we visit seafarers on board, we bring Christian reading materials with us, which are usually welcomed by the crew. Sometimes, however, the crew are either working, or sleeping and we have to leave without actually meeting with anyone. In such instances, we simply leave our material (our bus timetables, Centre Flyers, magazines and Christian material) in the mess room for the seafarers to read at their leisure.

Recently, however, I visited a vessel that had a diverse crew mix of Indians, Chinese and

Filipinos, serving under a Bulgarian Captain. I was able to spend some time with them in the mess during their coffee break. Each wanted a copy of the Christian material I had with me, especially the booklet 'The Gift of God'. At the moment, this booklet is available only in English and Tagalog (Filipino), so I was able to provide Tagalog copies for the Filipinos and an English version for the Hindu Chief Mate. I had other material for the Chinese, but it would be terrific if we could have a Mandarin copy of 'The Gift of God'!

On another vessel, the Filipino crew asked me about Cabotage ('Cabotage' is the movement of goods between ports in one country by vessels registered in another country). In Australia, foreign crews undertaking a Cabotage voyage must be paid at Australian Award Rates. This crew knew that crews in some other vessels had received Cabotage payments, whereas they hadn't. They began to suspect that their Captain may not have been passing on their entitlements.

A little while ago I had asked Ian about 'Cabotage' and he had explained to me that, whereas a foreign-crew of a vessel carrying goods *between* Australian ports would receive Cabotage payments for that part of their voyage, crews on vessels transporting cargo



between an Australian port and a foreign port would not receive it.

When I told them the facts of the situation, they understood that they were not being cheated. Yes, they had got their hopes up and were disappointed that they would not be receiving a significant bonus, but at least they knew that they were not being ripped off!

Chaplain Un Hui Tay



At a Fundraising Committee meeting, Mr Tim Sims of Pacific Equity Partners (a generous supporter of The Mission) suggested that we might arrange to get some video footage of seafarers' lives,

showing what it's like to work on board the vessel. This video would then be shown at Fundraising events and Deputations.

Tim contacted Simon Hunter of Myth Film Company, who has done some amazing work in that area, and we 'got the ball rolling'.

It was difficult to find a vessel where the Captain was willing to allow a film crew to go on board. Finally, after much searching, the Captain of OOCL Houston agreed and invited the video crew to go on board in January.

Simon and his Assistant, Alex, spent about 3 hours on board, filming from the deck to the bridge and from the engine room to the mess room. Simon was delighted with the footage.

In order to have more variety, he asked if we could arrange for him to film on board another vessel. We have arranged for Simon to film on board 'Malte Rambow' when it next berths at Port Botany. Please pray that the filming will be a great success for all concerned!

Recently, Ian asked me to visit C, a Christian seafarer on board a visiting cruise vessel, and to bring him some Indonesian (Alkitab) Bibles to use in a Bible Study group on board.

I went hunting for some Indonesian Bibles and I thank God for the generosity of an Indonesian Christian couple, who kindly donated six bibles. A few weeks ago, I went on board the vessel to visit the crew and to meet with C. While waiting to meet him in the crew mess, I was able to distribute our brochures, maps to our Mission, gospel tracts and magazines. After a long wait, C appeared and was glad to see me. I gave him the Alkitab, Easter Gospel booklets (English & Chinese) and the Chinese 'Life' Magazines for him to share and distribute to his colleagues. Although our meeting was fairly brief, C quickly shared a request for prayer, *'Please pray for us on board as we encounter many problems.'* We paused and I prayed for him, the Christian fellowship, the crew and passengers on board the vessel. The vessel will come back in 2018. Please remember our brother and his team in your prayers.

Annual General Meeting

The 50th AGM of the Mission to Seafarers, Sydney is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 13th April 2016 at 12:30pm.

A light lunch will be served from 12:00pm. For printing, catering, and seating purposes, would you please let us know if you plan to attend the meeting?

- Telephone: 02 9241 3009; or
- Email: flyingangelsydney@gmail.com

I look forward to being inundated with acceptances!



Seafarers' Psalm?

Translating the Bible into different cultures will always be a challenging task! I have friends who translated the New Testament into

a language in Papua New Guinea. One of the things with which they struggled was, 'How do we translate words or concepts that have no local equivalent?' An example of this was the Bible's frequent references to sheep – an animal unknown to most PNG villagers. Because sheep were such a valued animal in Israel, should they use the villagers' most valued animal as an equivalent? If so, 'sheep' would become 'pig' and, consequently, 'lamb' would become 'piglet'. Jesus as the 'piglet of God who takes away the sin of the world'? It doesn't quite fit – especially as the pig was an unclean animal for Jews!

My friends felt that the only way to remain true to the Scriptures and avoid great confusion for the villagers was to 'take the hard road', and teach the people about sheep, shepherds and other things that were culturally foreign to them. It was the right decision!

How might Psalm 23 be rendered more culturally relevant for seafarers, without compromising its profound truths?

Recently I led a time of prayer and praise on board MV Portugal. I tried to communicate the truths of the Psalm in a manner to which Kiribati seafarers might more easily relate.

- o A PSALM for those on the PORTUGAL.*
- 1 The LORD is my pilot; I shall not be adrift.*
- 2 He makes me arrive safely in good harbours. He leads me into a safe anchorage.*
- 3 He relieves my stress. He leads me in safe channels of obedient, godly living for his name's sake.*
- 4 Even though I sail through dangerous waters, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; You are my chart, my GPS, my Sat-Phone - You comfort me.*
- 5 You prepare a fireboat welcome before me in the presence of captured pirates; You give me the esteem of my colleagues; my gratitude overflows.*
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the stateroom of the LORD forever.*

When Westerners read this 'Seafarers' Psalm', it can seem 'clever' and 'witty'. It's not meant to be, because it's meant to be read by 'non-Westerners'. Nevertheless, I put it here for comment because some may have suggestions as to how its relevance may be improved.

Thank you!

One of the great pleasures of speaking about the Mission at various venues is the occasional opportunity to meet some of our supporters face to face. It is very humbling to meet people who have supported our ministry for many, many years. Some of these people are not at all well off and their support is given sacrificially, very generously and without any thought of fanfare or public applause.

You are models of giving and for this we thank and admire you greatly!

And yet, there is a case for the recipient to want to applaud the generosity of the giver.

When I rode from Melbourne to Sydney last year, The Australian Marine Pilots Institute asked me conclude the ride at a function they were holding on board *James Craig* in Darling Harbour. There, they ‘passed the hat around’ and made a significant donation towards the purchase of a new bus. It was a nice way to finish the ride – who knows, it might have been more if I hadn’t been in lycra!

As if to confirm my suspicions, Capt. Neil Farmer of AMPI contacted me recently to ask how AMPI might make a further donation.

Unfortunately, I was unable to meet Neil to accept AMPI’s donation but Gary King, our p/t Accountant, was driving the bus that day and was able to meet Neil and Capt. Matt Stannard and accept the cheque on our behalf.



Capt. Neil Farmer and Capt. Matt Stannard of AMPI presented a cheque for \$5000.00 to The Mission. This money will be used to assist seafarers enjoy precious time ashore and make contact with their families. Pilots are very familiar with the hardship some seafarers endure with lengthy periods away from home and with the good work the Mission does to assist them.

Filipinos

The Philippines provides more seafarers than any other country, accounting for about a fifth of the world’s 1.2 million seafarers.

In the 1960s, only 2,000 Filipinos worked in international waters. But after the 1970’s oil crisis and new regulations allowing ships to hire crew from countries with lower wages, companies set out to reduce labour costs. Filipinos emerged in the 1970s-1980s as the best option for the mostly European-owned businesses. *“They are fluent in English, they are Christians, and they accept cheaper pay.”*

Still, many Filipinos are hyper-aware of their own potential replacement. So, they set out to distinguish themselves from other seafarers.

The special brand the Filipinos have created involves an adventurous spirit, creative troubleshooting and an eloquent way of telling stories about their skills. One Filipino captain boasted of the handiness of Filipino sailors. *“The Filipino, he can fix anything ... Other nationalities, if they see there are no spare parts, will say, ‘Okay, that’s it, we’ll wait ‘til we’re in port’. But Filipinos will get it working again. They’ll make a new part or fix one.”*

A 3rd Mate spoke of how adventure fits into the Filipino’s ‘brand’: *“This is a man’s job. You’re away from your family, you’re in the middle of the sea and you see nothing but that and the sky for one month. If you want adventure, seafaring is your type of job. But given the loneliness, the waves and the heavy work, seafaring is a hard job. Most land-based jobs are safe, [but] when a seaman boards a ship, one foot is already in the grave.”*

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