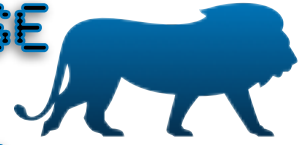


TOPIC 3.4**THE CLAIM THAT JESUS ROSE FROM DEAD WAS INVENTED HUNDREDS OF YEARS LATER AFTER HIS DEATH. FACT OR FICTION?****Conversation Points**

- ★ If scientists ever build an outer-space planetary biosphere enabling people from earth to travel there and begin a colony, I would volunteer to go and be a part of it.
AGREE or DISAGREE?
- ★ Unless someone gets married they can never truly be happy.
AGREE or DISAGREE?
- ★ There are times when I would rather skip mains and go straight to the dessert.
AGREE or DISAGREE?

Reflection

Meredith (“Merrie”) Conan-Davies was born and grew up in Tanzania, East Africa, as World War Two was drawing to an end. Her English father worked for the Colonial office in Tanzania but when anti-colonial sentiment began to get increasingly hostile, Merrie’s parents knew that it was getting too dangerous for a 5-year-old white girl. Her mother never really had much interest in raising her young daughter so was very keen to send her away to a boarding school in a foreign land. This was also the means by which her mother could concentrate on developing her religious life without the inconvenience of having to raise a child. Merrie was sent to live on a small farm in rural Tasmania.

Merrie felt rejected and abandoned by her parents which left an indelible scar on her emotionally. When she became a teenager she moved from the country to Hobart and lived with the Catholic nuns who worked at Calvary Hospital as nursing sisters. She herself then trained as a nurse also at Calvary Hospital. But Merrie began to live a double life. Despite living and working with Catholic nuns during the day, *at night* Merrie got involved in the party. She was now living in a way that she knew her mother would never have approved of! And in some way, her lifestyle was now really aimed at hurting her mother. But then all of that changed when she discovered she was pregnant. It wasn't her mother that she now feared. It was the thought that she would now bring great shame to the nuns who had been so kind to her over the years with whom she now lived and worked. Merrie then made a decision which she would later say would be her biggest regret in her life.



Douglas in Hamburg, summer 1965

After she finished her training, and now dogged with intense guilt, Merrie moved to London where she worked as a nurse. It was there that she met a young agricultural student, Douglas Gresham, whose late step-father was apparently a well known author - but not known to Merrie. Douglas instantly took a liking to Merrie and repeatedly unsuccessfully asked her out on a date. But she was incapable of believing that



Meredith ("Merrie") Conan-Davies and "Yogi" (later Lady Mountevans), 1965



Douglas and Merrie's wedding day, 2nd of February, 1967

anyone could love her after what she had secretly done. But eventually after three years of dating and many rejected marriage proposals, Merrie finally said "Yes" and they were married and then moved to Tasmania where they took up farming. Merrie expected that being married would finally be the very thing that would finally bring all the love she had always longed for.

As interest in the life and writings of Douglas's step-father, C.S. Lewis, increased over the years, Douglas was busy with international travel, speaking tours, and book signings promoting the work of his step-father. But Merrie was now feeling neglected and very angry. Merrie's frustration was increased as the responsibility for their growing family fell onto her. When she found her children's dirty dishes left on the dining table or in the kitchen sink she often picked them up and smashed them on the kitchen floor. She needed an escape. She found some cassette recordings of Douglas's step-father which she began to listen to on her *Walkman*. It was a series of talks that C.S. Lewis gave during the



Second World War, called *Mere Christianity*. As Merrie listened to her step-father-in-law something strange happened in her heart. She became curious about the Bible which Mr. Lewis was referring to. Douglas seemed to have several Bibles on his shelves so she took one and began to read it. She started reading about Jesus and what she read thrilled her. She discovered that God was the Source of the love that she had been longing for all along. She prayed and asked God to forgive and save her.

That night Jesus filled her with His love and gave her a new heart.

Douglas and Merrie went on to have five children and eleven grandchildren. They now reside on Malta and have done much to further the works of C.S. Lewis, including producing three movies in *The Chronicles of Narnia* series.



Merrie grew up in a very religious home with a very religious mother - but even despite her later interactions with Catholic nuns in Hobart, she still felt unloved. **At what point in her story did she discover true love and how did she discover it?**

The thief had nails through both hands, so that he could not work; and a nail through each foot, so that he could not not run errands for the Lord; he could not lift a hand or a foot toward his salvation, and yet Christ offered him the gift of God; and he took it. Christ threw him a passport, and took him into Paradise.

DWIGHT L. MOODY

Let the Wicked Forsake His Way, p. 12 (1881, London: Morgan and Scott)

Christianity stands or falls on whether its central claim - that Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and then raised from the dead.

It is generally accepted by scholars that Mark's Gospel was the *first* one to be written (around AD 45) and that John's Gospel was the *last* to be written (AD 63). Each of these accounts describes Christ's resurrection (around AD 30). In historical terms, these accounts appear remarkably early after the events they describe.

From the Bible

The New Testament cites three sources for the early source of the belief that Jesus rose physically from the dead: (i) eye-witness testimony; (ii) early creeds; and (iii) apostolic traditions.

1. The epistle to the Corinthians was written around AD 53 (23 years later). According to First Corinthians 15:3-4, what was the most important aspects of the gospel that Paul preached, and how did Paul learn the details it described?
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Critics of the Bible often claim that many of the New Testament books and epistles were not written until the second century or after - long after the original apostles had died. It is further suggested that this much later composition of the New Testament incorporated the growing 'legends' about Christ - His miracles, what He taught, and especially about His resurrection from the dead. But over recent years, more and more ancient copies of the New Testament books and epistles have been found which have helped scholars to date the originals to well within the first century AD.

2. Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians was one of his earliest (written before AD 50). What source of authority for the gospel (the message that Jesus had risen from the dead) did Paul refer to in Second Thessalonians 3:6? How is this evidence that the belief that Jesus had risen from dead had developed very early after Christ's death and not a century later?
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3. What does Paul's statement about water baptism in Romans 6:4 reveal about the early Christian belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead?
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Consider the evidences for the resurrection of Jesus: **(i)** The transformation of the apostolic eye-witnesses; **(ii)** Jesus had predicted it (Mk. 8:31); **(iii)** Jesus had already given *adumbrations* of His power over death (Mark 5:35-43); **(iv)** The Gospel accounts of the resurrection give embarrassing details about the apostles (this wouldn't have been included if they had made it up!); **(v)** Even today we know the burial place of Christ's body (The Church of the Holy Sepulchre); **(vi)** Hostile original opponents of Christianity who encountered the resurrected Jesus converted to Christianity (examples include Saul of Tarsus, and James the half-brother of Jesus).