

People

TODAY

Section E . . . Sunday, April 3, 1983

To live again

By **JAMIE BUCKINGHAM**

Senior Minister, Tabernacle Church, Melbourne

We live in a world of astounding scientific achievement. Yet man, with all his technical ability, is still powerless over death.

Scientists die. Presidents are assassinated. Gamblers cash in their chips. Criminals are executed. Victims are murdered. Thugs are bumped off. Preachers pass away. Saints are martyred. Doctors expire. Even undertakers get laid out.

Death is the one inescapable fact of life.

Thus the question asked by Job so many years ago still rings in the heart of every living soul: "If a man die, shall he live again?"

Jesus gives the answer. "I am the Resurrection and the Life," he told his mourning friends in a cemetery one afternoon. "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."

Then, to demonstrate that, he called into a grave where his friend Lazarus had been buried three days. "Lazarus, come forth!"

It was the first instance in all history where a dead man had risen from the grave.

Jamie Buckingham, senior minister at the interdenominational Tabernacle Church since its inception 16 years ago, is author of 33 books and numerous magazine and newspaper columns. His latest book is 'A Way in the Wilderness.'



A week later, Jesus himself, crucified and buried, was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit. His victory over death signified the power of God over every force in the universe. It is that victory we celebrate this Easter Sunday — a victory which was not limited to the man Jesus, but is available for all who believe in Him this day.

In the century following, the believers (they were

Easter's message is hope

called Christians) multiplied by the thousands. They gathered in groups called churches — and became families of people who loved and cared for one another.

In those early days church-going was anything but popular — even on Easter. Men and women who revealed they were followers of this Risen Christ were immediately arrested by the tyrannical Roman government. They were then given the opportunity to recant their faith. Or die. If they were willing to say "*Caesarus este kurios*" — Caesar is lord — they were released. But thousands of them, having tasted the freedom of the Spirit, refused to deny their Lord. Instead they humbly said "*Christus este kurios*" — Christ is Lord.

When this happened the authorities would shackle their hands to their ankles and kick them into underground, rat-infested cells to await their execution.

But they knew that even though man might kill their bodies — in Christ they would live again. Resurrected.

So, while waiting death, some of them scratched on the walls of their cells the earliest symbol of Christianity. Those scratches, discovered many years later, became the symbol of the Resurrection. They are called the *orans*: a stick figure in profile of a man with his

hands raised. It remains the symbol of Easter. Caesar could shackle their hands to their ankles, but the inner man, set free by Jesus Christ, was still praising the Lord.

Last year, on a flight to Australia, our Qantas Airline jet made a night stop in Fiji to refuel. After a couple of hours on the ground, we took off just before dawn on our final leg to Sydney.

As we climbed high into the clear night sky where the glittering stars shone as pinholes of brilliance from the inky canopy, I could see, behind us, the rose hue of the coming dawn.

We leveled off at 40,000 feet. The pilot came on the intercom. "If you keep your eyes on the ocean below," he said, "you will see a rare but beautiful phenomenon — the arrival of a new day."

I pressed my face against the window. I had read of what airline pilots call "the terminal" — the end of night. But I had never actually seen it.

Suddenly, coming over the eastern horizon at more

See MESSAGE, 2E

To Live Again:

MESSAGE, From 1E

than 1,000 miles per hour, was a distinct line — shimmering on the ocean — far below. It stretched as far as the eye could see — from New Zealand in the south to Guadalcanal in the north. Although we were flying at more than 600 miles per hour, it was rapidly overtaking us. On one side of the line was night. On the far side was day.

I watched, my face glued to the window, as the edge of dawn swept across the South Pacific — forcing the darkness to flee. As the terminal raced westward, it swept past our plane and swooshed over the western horizon, transforming our darkness into magnificent light.

I thought of the words of St. Paul — “We shall not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye . . . the dead will be raised imperishable.”

All this came to mind again last Sunday afternoon. My wife and I had left our Palm Sunday church service early to drive south to Pompano Beach to attend the memorial service for our dear friend, Catherine Marshall. Later that evening we sat in the quiet, familiar house in Boynton Beach, reminiscing and sharing the loneliness with her husband, my old friend and longtime editor, Len LeSourd.

Sitting there in that living room, filled with the warm memories of so many times together — times shared not only because we were writers, but because we were friends — I found myself staring at one of Catherine's

Easter's message is hope

earlier paintings. It was an oil, hung over the piano, of a rock cave in the side of a mountain.

I recognized it as the artwork which had appeared on the cover of one of her first books, "To Live Again." From the interior of the cave emanated a brilliant light, flooding the painting with radiant splendor.

I struggled with tears of grief — a normal reaction to losing a loved one. I grieved not so much for Catherine, who I knew was experiencing the resurrection, as I grieved for my old friend, her husband.

Yet as I sat, staring at the painting, I felt a strange sensation. It was the same sensation I had on that airplane to Australia when we had been consumed by the edge of dawn as it swept us into the coming day. No matter how hard I struggled to fly into the darkness,

I was consumed by the resurrection.

I remembered those closing sentences in "To Live Again." Catherine was talking of her journey out of grief following the death of her first husband, Senate Chaplain Peter Marshall. The funeral was over and she was driving back to her home from her mother's farm in Virginia:

A question nagged at my mind, wouldn't let go. The future? To what do you go home now?

At moments when the future is completely obscured, I thought, can any one of us afford to go to meet our tomorrows with dragging feet? God had been in the past. Then He would be in the future, too.

Across the hills light was breaking through the storm clouds. Suddenly just ahead of the car an iridescent rainbow

appeared — hung there — shimmering. I hadn't seen a rainbow for a long time.

I drove steadily into the light.

That's it. That's what happened to my special friend last week. Turning her back on her struggle to fly into the darkness — she faced the on-rushing dawn — and welcomed it with upraised arms. The *orans*.

Someone has said the man with an argument is always at the mercy of a man with an experience.

Men may argue religion. They debate ethics. They fight and squabble over doctrinal issues. But all voices are stilled at the open tomb.

Christ has risen! And because He lives, we, too, shall live again.

Hallelujah!