

INTRO:

- Thank you Pastor Ryan for inviting me today.

I want to share a bit about the mission God has given me...

BUT I want to wrap that mission in a message.

First, I want to introduce you to my wife and daughters:

[Slide]



- This is my wife Heather with each of our girls - photo around 8 yrs ago.

Hope just turned 36. Erin is 31...

AND Heather and I celebrated 43yrs of marriage in March.

42 years ago,

at a Chi Alpha training school the

Lord spoke to me that I was to get a

PhD in Early Church History...then
teach in a seminary.

Heather and I led XA at
the Univ of Alabama for **11 years**.

It took **14 years** for me to finally go to
school for my degree.

After getting my PhD it took another
24 years for God to open the door to
teach in a seminary.

[Slide-2]

Continental Theological Seminary

CTS

Here I am
standing in
front of our
Admin



building - which dates to the
15th or 16th century. CTS has just
celebrated our 65th anniversary.

I am in my second year as a
professor at **CTS**...in Brussels.

My PhD from the Univ of St Andrews
is in Early Church History...I teach:

- Church History [thru the 12th cent.]
- various NT classes

- Synoptic Gospels
- and Christian Spirituality

The goal of our school has always been to raise up men and women who will plant churches in Europe, Africa and the Near East.

Each year we have students from 25-30 nations.

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I also want to introduce you to my website churchhistory101.com.

What You Will Find at Church History 101

CH101 attempts to accurately present the data of the early church. How do we know what happened after the New Testament period? We have an enormous amount of documents from the first three centuries written by those who were leaders. It is amazing that we have so many written sources.

Unfortunately there are many web sites where you can find all kinds of misleading information on the early church. The early church fathers are not easy to read or understand - not easy to read because they tend to be



Blog Articles by R.A. Baker

"Western" Individualism in Christian Faith (4 Parts)

This series addresses the argument that Western Christianity is overly focused on the individual.

[Personal Forgiveness in the New Testament](#)

How Can a God of Love Also Have Wrath? (4 Parts)

This series is a response to those who mock the idea of God's wrath and judgement.

WHAT'S NEW ON CH101

The United Arab Emirates have pulled out of OPEC

This is BIG news.
[Read this article by Shane Rosenbaum](#) posted on the *Jewish Journal*. Rosenbaum is a distinguished writer, a lawyer and has taught law at the



Thane Rosenbaum

JEWISH JOURNAL


The Coming of the Ishmael Accords

What's New - Part TWO

An Introduction to the Desert Fathers

Shortly after the Roman Empire stopped persecuting Christians a mist of complacency began to develop in the Church. Christians were no longer under threat - even the great Emperor had been a Christian! Now there were no martyrs, so how would a young man prove he had steel in his soul? Fed up with a lazy church, many answered the call of the cross by venturing into the desert to live a life of prayer, humility and hardship. This group of men lived alone in caves...seeking God. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* allow us a glimpse into the lives of these men and

Introduction to The Desert Fathers


PDF

Church History 101

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I started this site 2005 to share basic history with Christians.

Over the years I have received scores of questions via e-mail. THAT became a big part of the site. In 2015 the site passed 1 Million visits.

My email address is on the bottom of every single page...and I answer every single email I receive.

[8 min]

So, let's get into the text today to see what the Lord would say to us through the scriptures.

[Slide]

Jesus in the Midst

of Doubt

Luke 24

+ + + Let's Pray + + +

We are going to look at the famous story of Jesus appearing to two men "On the Road to Emmaus"

I am going to quickly tell the story, [which, BTW is how the first Christians would have heard it...NOT from reading the text.]

...then we will look at the text and I want to point out a few details.

On Sunday morning,
after the disciples have been told by
the women that the tomb was empty
and Christ has been raised...

Two men are walking to Emmaus, a
small village around 9 miles from
Jerusalem.

These two men are talking...
(they are not in the group of the 12
disciples)

They are probably both asking
questions:

- why is the tomb empty?

- where is Jesus?
- what are we supposed to do now?

As they are walking and talking about these things a man comes up behind them and asks what are they talking about?

The men are stunned...

How can you NOT know about what has happened?

[that makes it seem like Jerusalem was in a state of shock]

They tell the man and rather than being shocked...

the man begins to explain how the Messiah had to be executed.

The man references the OT scriptures.

When they get to Emmaus...it is getting dark.

They ask the man to come stay with them...so He does.

When they sit down to eat, the man prays...and tears the loaf of bread.

Suddenly, the two men realized...

IT WAS JESUS!!!

Then Jesus disappears!

The men are so excited that they leave the house they were in and went directly **BACK** to Jerusalem to tell the others.

THE witness of these two brothers convinces the disciples that Jesus really had risen.

Then Jesus appears to them all.

Now, I want to point out a few things in this text that we can easily miss...

[Slide]

They stood still, **their faces downcast.**

18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting

Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

Why are their faces downcast?

These men are distressed...

v17 uses a Greek word that means they were sad...or gloomy.

If you read all four gospels...

The men did not believe the women when they reported that the tomb was empty and that Jesus had risen from the dead.

[Slide]

Then as they tell the stranger their story in v21 they say,

...we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.

[Slide]

24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, **BUT...they did not see Jesus.**”

This is another piece of evidence that the disciples were having trouble believing the story.

AND this why, as an historian, the gospels have such credibility.

The gospels do not hide the struggle...it is obvious that the

disciples did NOT (at first) believe that Jesus had risen...

The scriptures do not make the disciples into Marvel comic book heroes! They are flawed men! Just like us.

This gives us hope.
God will not reject us because we sometimes doubt.

[16min]

So, please let me conclude this story ...and my message.

These two Christian brothers are discouraged,
walking down a road together...

- their faith is shattered
- they do not understand what God is doing...

AND Jesus shows up...and walks with them...without being noticed.

THIS is the God we serve.

He walks **WITH** us during times of struggle...and we don't see Him.

Sometimes He allows the struggle.

Sometimes He causes the struggle.

To push us...

To make our faith stronger.

BUT He always walks WITH us in the struggle.

In Psalm 77 the writer describes such a struggle:

[Slide]

v1 I cried out to God for help;

I cried out to God to hear me.

Over the last 24 years of waiting for God to put me in a seminary to teach...I have had some very difficult

moments when I was just like these brothers.

[Slide]

v4 I was too troubled to speak.

v7 “Will the Lord reject me forever?

Will he never show his favor again?”

I realize this seems overly dramatic, but there were many times that I felt this way.

When I finished my PhD I applied for just over 130 teaching jobs...BUT was never hired.

I was living upstairs in my parents' home with my wife and two children...

in Dothan, where I graduated high school.

I did not want to see ANYBODY who might ask me,

"Hey, what are doing these days?

Where are you working?"

[21min]

I came to the place where I told the Lord, "I'm going to apply for ANY job that I can do.

If someone offers me a job...I'm going to take it.

You seem to do a good job of closing doors...so if I get an open door...I'm taking it."

I was living in the kind of fog that these two brothers must have felt on the road to Emmaus.

I landed a marketing a in N.Carolina working for a software company on the NASDAQ.

One of my XA students was a Manager at this company.

I did a two week "trial" and after the first week they put a contract on the table.

My eyeballs just about popped out of my head -- the salary number was double what I had ever made.

I signed it right there.

It was a good job.

I worked 60+ hours a week.

I learned a great deal on this job.

Around my third year I was promoted to be the Marketing Manager...I was given a raise, a 401k, stock options.

But deep down I was miserable.

"Am I ever going to teach?"

I came to hate the job...

Every day as I drove into work I

asked God,

"Why am I working here?"

Am I ever going to do service in the

Kingdom again?"

The company was sold...everyone

was laid off...

I started my own little company as a

consultant and did pretty well.

Ten years later I was asked to restart a church in Troy Alabama. I did that for 8.5 yrs.

But this whole time...every couple of years...I would find myself in a place of internal struggle....

"What am I doing?

Am I ever going to teach at a seminary?"

After 24 years of this struggle...

Out of nowhere...

another former XA student sent me an email asking if I would be

interested in teaching at this missionary seminary in Belgium.

I decided to check my Social Security status...And to my utter surprise the amount I would draw was more than DOUBLE what I had seen in years prior.....WHY?

Because the software job that I so hated...and wondered WHY God had me there...

My Social Security draw is based on the salary I made while in that company.

God knew what He was doing...
I had no clue.

At the end of Psalm 77 the writer
says this:

[Slide]

v18 the earth trembled and quaked.

v19 Your path led **through the storm,**
yet your footprints were unseen.

In the struggle, it can FEEL like
Jesus is not there...

But He is there...

He is walking with us...we just don't

recognize Him.

I feel like I failed during many points
in this journey...

My attitude was always my
weakness.

God wants us to learn to trust Him
and just be faithful to do whatever
we have in front of us.

He is with you!

If you WANT Him in charge of your
Life: Then He is.

Just hang on.

+ + + LET'S PRAY + + +