

# Saints and sinners: Easter is a day of true resurrection

Choirs and congregations throughout the world will sing out on Easter with “Christ the Lord is risen today. Hallelujah!” The voice from the chancel, where the clergyman or woman sits, may not be quite so rousing. The reason is that many contemporary preachers do not believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus. One Catholic seminary instructor says he doesn’t know of “any credible Bible scholar who believes that Jesus rose bodily from the grave.” Because most ministers learn their theology in the seminaries in which these scholars teach, it is easy to see why so few ministers, at least in the liberal denominations, believe that Jesus rose from the dead physically.

Episcopal bishop John Shelby Spong, in his book “Resurrection: Myth or Reality?” (Harper,

1995), decides in favor of myth.

His scenario of the resurrection goes like this: Months after the crucifixion, a revelation came to Peter that Jesus wasn’t really dead, that “everything he stood for was very much alive.”

Jesus’ resurrection was thus a “spiritual resurrection” in which there was no body, just a “body of truth” in story form. In Spong’s view, this spiritual resurrection took on form and shape in the legends that grew up later of the empty tomb and angels rolling away the stone, and in the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus.

While surveys show that the majority of modern Bible scholars do not believe in the physical resurrection, the devout in the pews appear to be ignoring the scholars. In increasing numbers, we are turning our backs on the



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wisdom of the world and the worldly wise. Despairing of the world, we tell our modern poets, “Speak to us of heaven and angels and miracles and the power of prayer.” This has resulted in a proliferation of religious book titles and in high ratings for TV programs like “Touched by an Angel.”

At the same time, there are some modern clergy who don’t cross their fingers behind their

backs when they tell the Easter story. One is the Rev. Fleming Rutledge, an Episcopal rector in Port Clinton, N.Y.

“It is hard,” he observes, “to find a robust belief in the resurrection nowadays in the main-line churches. We hear from the pulpit about ‘a new season, new growth, new life.’ We hear words like ‘renewal, revival and rebirth’ - but not resurrection.

“Seriously, now,” he asks, “would today’s Easter sermons inspire you to come back to church the next Sunday? Put yourself in the place of the women who went to the tomb on Easter morning. Maybe the flowers were blooming and the birds were singing as the women walked along. Do you think they took comfort from that?”

“The women and the apostles did not start believing in the resurrection because they saw green grass coming up. Something more than that had to have happened. What happened is that Jesus himself appeared, and he was alive.”

If this is not the message people are hearing on Easter, that may be why the crowds in church on Easter dwindle to a precious few the following Sunday.

Easter, says Rutledge, is not a day of innocuous sentiments about crocuses in bloom and springtime in the heart. It is a day of resurrection - a true story punctuated by organ fanfare and loud trumpet blasts.

If this word ever gets out, we may no longer have empty seats in church on the Sunday after Easter. We may even have to put up extra chairs.

## Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker’s son doing ministry work his special way

By Mitch Stacy

*Associated Press Writer*  
ATLANTA — When Jay Bakker sits down for an interview, he can usually count on the question popping up: “So what’s the deal with your mother’s makeup?”

When your mom is Tammy Faye Bakker Messner, the heavily primped and painted former Christian television icon, that’s to be expected.

He’s fine with it, though, keenly aware of her place in pop culture and that most people are more interested in her grooming habits than what happened when his parents’ ministry crumbled under scandal in the late 1980s.

Bakker, 25, is fine with most things these days. He lives in Atlanta with Amanda, his wife of two years, and makes a living ministering to the young, downtrodden and misunderstood.

With studs in his ears, a gold loop through his lower lip and both of his

arms sleeved in bold tattoos, he doesn’t look like a man of God. And that’s just the point. He’s part of what he calls the “disillusioned subculture.”

Bakker is reeling a bit from the intense media interest in his book, “Son of Preacher Man,” which came out in January. It chronicles his life growing up in his parents’ “Praise the Lord,” or PTL, empire, their fall from grace and his own turmoil. He battled drugs and alcohol as he struggled to cope with his father’s imprisonment and with being a member of the country’s most ridiculed family.

“It’s been healing, but it’s been really hard to constantly relive, relive and relive the past,” Bakker admits over lunch at a downtown restaurant. Slight of build, he wears blue work pants, a black T-shirt, a denim jacket and black sneakers. His dark hair is cropped short, and he wears a neatly trimmed goatee and sideburns that reach the bottom of his jaw.

“I’m ready to look for the future,” says

Bakker.

Millions of PTL viewers remember him as “Jamie Charles,” the pudgy-cheeked little boy on Jim and Tammy Faye’s TV show with his older sister, Tammy Sue. He grew up on the set of the “PTL Club” with his family’s 2,200-acre South Carolina retreat and theme park, Heritage USA, as his personal playground. Bodyguards tended to his every need. Every year, 600,000 copies of his school picture were mailed out to ministry supporters.

All that crashed down in 1987 when Jim Bakker’s dalliance with Jessica Hahn became public, and the family was driven from Heritage USA. In 1989, Jim Bakker was sent to federal prison for overselling lodging guarantees at Heritage USA and diverting millions in ministry money.

Jay, 13 at the time, was already drinking. Soon he was smoking marijuana and tripping on acid. He fell deeper still

when his mother divorced his father in 1992 and married family friend Roe Messner.

Hurtling through his teens looking for the next party, Bakker also endured constant mockery of his disgraced family, not only on “Saturday Night Live” but also by other Christian broadcasters.

“As a kid it broke my heart, it tore me to pieces,” he says. “When you become an adult you realize that nothing is sacred — they make fun of everybody. But when you’re a child, you don’t understand that.”

While struggling to get sober in 1996, Bakker hooked up with the Rev. Philip Bray, a former drug dealer who runs the Safehouse shelter for the homeless in the shadow of downtown Atlanta’s Ritz-Carlton.

Bray offered to give Bakker a place to live, office space and a salary to start Revolution, a progressive ministry offering punk-rock music and uncondi-

tional acceptance for the skateboarders, goths, drug addicts and other outcasts who come to the Bible studies and Friday night concerts.

“I’m not about promoting Christ,” he says. “I’m about attracting people to Christ. I’m not out there (screaming), ‘You need to get Jesus! You need to get your life together!’ I’m out there saying, ‘You know what, this is what I’ve got, and if you want to know more about it I’d like to share it with you.’”

Bakker often talks about his family during his weekly Bible studies. If people show up because they’re curious to hear Jim and Tammy Faye’s son preach, that’s fine with him.

“Jay’s life isn’t his parents,” says 18-year-old Josh Cook, who has been coming to Revolution for the past two years. “And Jay’s life isn’t his tattoos.”

Bakker was approached about writing a book following a well-received story about him in Rolling Stone magazine in

1999. A high-school dropout whose dyslexia makes reading difficult, he dictated his story into a tape recorder and worked with writer Linden Gross.

“I cried all the way through it,” Tammy Faye Bakker Messner says. “I was wishing I could somehow go back and change things for him.”

Messner calls her son’s journey a “miracle,” and is dismayed when she hears people in some circles criticize him because of his radical appearance.

“Some Christians are so mean,” she says. “I had the same thing with my eyelashes and makeup. People couldn’t see beyond that.”

Jay Bakker remains unflinching in defense of his father. The book paints Jim Bakker as a victim who trusted the wrong people and did nothing wrong knowingly beyond his tryst with Hahn in 1980. Jay Bakker blames others for his family’s woes — a naive interpretation, some reviewers have said.

### Bible Baptist Church

**Pastor:** Don Crutcher  
Fifth & Broadway  
899-7368

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9 am  
Worship Service: 10 am  
Evening Service: 6:30 pm  
**Wednesday:** Evening Bible Study: 7 pm

### Calvary Gospel Church

**Pastor:** Rev. Steve Rains  
Fourth & College • 899-3605  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am  
Morning Worship: 10:30 am  
Evening Worship: 6:30 pm  
**Wednesday:** Family Night: 7 pm  
Adult Bible Study and Youth Group  
**Saturday:** Prayer Meeting: 5-7 pm

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### Church of Christ

401 Caldwell  
899-6185

**Sunday:** Bible Study: 9:45 am  
Worship Service: 10:45 am  
Evening Service: 6 pm  
**Wednesday:** Bible Study: 7 pm

### Church of the Nazarene

**Pastor:** Matthew Delp  
Third & Caldwell  
899-2080 or 899-3797

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:45 am  
Worship Service: 10:50 am  
Evening Service: 6 pm  
**Wednesday:** Evening Service: 7 pm

### First Baptist Church

**Pastor:**  
Fifth & Center • 899-3450  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am  
Morning Worship: 10:30 am  
Evening Worship: 6 pm  
**Tuesday:** Mens’ Prayer Group: 5:30 am  
**Thursday:** Ladies’ Bible Study: 10 am

### Seventh Day Adventist Church

**Pastor:** Bobby Potter • 332-3956  
**Saturday:** Sabbath School: 9:30 am  
Worship Service: 11 am

### First Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)  
**Pastor:** Loren Strait

Eighth & Arcade • 899-5233  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am  
Worship Service: 10:30 am

**Activities:** Junior High & High School Youth Groups, Adult Bible Study, Choir, Men’s and Women’s Groups, Devotions Study, Monthly Fellowship  
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### First United Methodist Church

1116 Sherman  
899-3631

**Pastor:** Rev. Carol Moore-Ramey  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am  
Worship Service: 10:30 am

### Sonrise Christian Church

Ninth & Caldwell • 899-5398  
**Minister:** Tony Kafka

**Youth Minister:** Doug Bean  
**Sunday:** Worship Service: 9:30 am  
Sunday School: 10:45 am  
**Wednesday:**  
Junior/Senior High Meeting: 7 pm  
Adult & Children’s Classes: 7 pm

### Emmanuel Lutheran Church

13th & Sherman • 899-6161  
**Pastor:** Scott Grimshaw  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 8:45 am  
Worship Service: 10 am  
**Wednesday:** Confirmation: 6 pm



## Our Lady of Perpetual Hope

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#### United Methodist Church

**Pastor:** Leonard Cox  
399-2468

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9 am  
Worship Service: 10:15 am

### Goodland Bible Church

109 Willow Road • 899-6400

**Pastor:**

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:45 am  
Morning Worship: 11 am  
Evening Worship: 6 pm  
**Wednesday:** Call for location

### Grace Fellowship Church

104 E. Hwy 24 • 899-6423

**Pastor:** Bob Snyder • Residence: 899-0134  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 10 am  
Worship Service: 11 am

### St. Paul's Episcopal Church

13th & Center

899-2115 or Rectory 899-2114  
**Priest:** Father Charles Schneider  
**Deacon:** Gretchen Talitha  
**Saturday:** Church School: 4 pm  
Holy Communion: 5 pm  
**Wednesday:** Bible Study: 7 pm  
Sr. Warden for emergencies during the week 899-2067

### Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

1200 15th Street • Burlington, CO • (970) 664-2470

**Sacrament Meeting:** 9:30 am  
**Sunday School:** 10:45 am  
**Priesthood/Relief Society:** 11:30 am

### Word of Life Foursquare Church

223 E. 10th  
899-5250

**Pastor:** John Coumerilh

**Sunday:** Worship Celebration &  
Kids’ Church: 10:30 am

### United Methodist Church

**Brewster:**

**Pastor:**

Worship Service: 10:45 am CST  
Sunday School: 9:45 am CST

**Winona:**

**Minister:** Rev. Bob Winters  
Worship Service: 9 am CST  
Sunday School: 10:15 am CST

### Iglesia Del Dios Vivo

La Luz Del Mundo

Spanish Speaking Church

**Minister:** Esteban Ortiz B.

1601 Texas • 899-5275

**Daily Prayer:** Sunday thru  
Saturday: 5 am & 6 pm

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 10 am

### Our Lady of Perpetual Help

**Pastor:** Father Daryl Olmstead  
307 W. 13th • 899-7205

**Sacrament of Reconciliation:**  
4:30-5 pm Saturday or by appointment

**Mass Schedule:**

**Saturday:** 6 pm

**Sunday:** 8 am and 10:30 am

**Spanish Mass:**

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