

A CHANGE OF
MINID

WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY SAYS
ABOUT REPENTANCE



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VOLUME 2

A Change
of
Mind

Jesus, a Liar, Madman, or The Messiah
Volume 2

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Claimed To Be God

Open your Bible to Mark 14.

We are going to be taking a look at the Resurrection, the things leading up to it, the things after it, and everything in between. I plan to lay down a great number of scriptures concerning Jesus, the only begotten son of God, and what he claimed to be. We will deal with Jesus prior to his resurrection and post-resurrection. It will be strongly based on Scriptures, how we see Jesus, how we look at Jesus, and what he's done and what he claimed to be.

Now Jesus was either the biggest liar that this world has ever seen, or - if he didn't think he was lying - he was the biggest madman or lunatic this world has ever seen - or the third option- he truly was the only begotten Son of God, the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. So he was either a liar, a lunatic, or the Christ. There are only three options.

The media does this quite a bit, at least the entertainment media; when someone becomes quite popular, they make it their business to analyze everything about that person and that is all you hear or read about, especially if that person says something that doesn't quite line up with what the media thinks they should say or do. They over analyze that person sometimes for days or weeks, or even months or years. They analyze everything that person says or does to see if the claims that person makes are either true or fabricated (in many cases) or if it was just all hype. It is unfortunate that scholars and laypersons (anyone really) don't take the time to analyze Jesus Christ. I know what some super spiritual ones are going to say - that the Spirit will draw a person to have that change of mind experience. That is true in a sense. But you cannot tell me if the Spirit is not drawing that Jesus is not a prominent figure in history. You cannot prove he didn't exist anymore; there is just too much evidence against that. He did exist. But if the Spirit is not drawing you, it is still amazing to me that the most prominent figure of all time is this man Jesus who revolutionized history, and the bestselling book year after year is the Bible, and still there would be so few to analyze its content and its words. Think about it. Satan has so blinded this world that they refuse to take a serious and deep look into the life of Christ. I don't care if you think he was a liar. I don't care if you think he was a madman. I don't care if you think he was the Messiah. Whatever category you fit into, common sense still dictates that you question, "Hey, why hasn't more been done in analyzing this person's life and the claims that he made,?"

Here come the excuses. "He was a madman. Why would someone dedicate that much time towards a madman?" Well if he was a madman, then use the Scriptures, use what was left as history, biblical or secular, to prove that he was a madman. Don't just make a general statement that he was a madman without a deep look inside the life of Christ. Was Jesus really who he said he was? Believe me, this is the part I don't understand. Whether I was a Christian or not, simply because of my love for history, there is no way on God's green earth that I would not have taken a serious and deep look into the life of Christ - someone who impacted the world like he did, like no other has done before or after him. I know everybody is not in love with history, and that is fine; but you're in love

with yourselves and if you think you could better yourself, even if just some of the claims he made are true, wouldn't it be worth the investigation? Think about it. Even if he was a liar, pretending to be someone he was not, wouldn't it be advantageous to look into it, just to cross that off your bucket list? Well, before you can decide who Jesus is (if you haven't already), you need to take a look and discover for yourself who he claimed he was. I just happen to look at it through the Scriptures' view point. That is my foundation. I might get to other secular history in this study, but the Scriptures are what I need to investigate and you need to investigate.

Let's start with Jesus' trial.

Mark 14:61-63. ***“But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am.”*** Jesus is responding to the question: “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus says that he is ***“and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”*** Can you imagine those people when they first heard that statement? They probably thought, “What! You're just a man just like me...and now you've elevated yourself to where you are sitting at the right hand of power, dynamic power, meaning God, and coming in the clouds of heaven?” What was the response? Verse 63, ***“Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?”*** In other words, the high priest is asking, “Why do you need any more witnesses. Case closed.”

Jesus probably isn't considered a liar at this time; he is considered a lunatic, a madman. “He is delusional. We should know. We are very religious people making these decisions about this man. We have discerned him to be a lunatic. We can't explain all these miracles that he does and these healings and deliverances from evil spirits - and those are all good works - but THIS... this takes it too far. He's a crazy person. Why do you need any more witnesses? CASE CLOSED. He just declared of himself something that none of us can, and he's just a man, therefore it is blasphemy.”

Verse 64, ***“Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.”***

They condemned him to death. This high priest knew exactly what he was asking Jesus. He was asking Jesus whether he was proclaiming that he was the Messiah, the Savior of the world—which incidentally, they were expecting at that time—if he was the Anointed One. Now if you look at Jesus' answer in verse 62, there is no doubt who Jesus thought he was, not one doubt whatsoever. And the high priest knew exactly what Jesus was saying. His response was that he tore his clothes off because he considered Jesus' response to be total blasphemy.

Case in point: Jesus claimed to be equal to God—and not just on one occasion but on several occasions, He claimed to be equal to God the Father. Talk about walking around with a title. People like to have titles, especially in the employment world: I am “president” of this or “vice president” of that or a “manager” of this... Eh, you're into titles. I'm not

against them, but you know, at least they direct you to who you need to talk to in order to get something done. But this was the *ultimate* title that anyone could place on themselves and Jesus believed it. He claimed to be equal with God.

John 10:22-33 says ***“And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt?”***—or how long dost thou hold us in suspense— ***“If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.”***

IF THOU BE THE CHRIST, THEN TELL US PLAINLY.

“Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed [pisteuo: had trust and confidence] not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck [lit. take by force] them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.” He claims to be equal with God. ***“I am my father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works [ergon: employment of the Word] have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy.”*** They just couldn't accept that he and the Father are one, saying “You are claiming to be equal with God.” They could not accept that. ***“For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”***

So here we go again. The Jews wanted to put him to death, so they pick up the stones with that intention. And Jesus called them out on the spot saying, “I have shown you many great things from the Father. For which one of these do you want to stone me?” And they replied that it was not because of those things, but because “You claim to be equal with God and that is the reason why we want to stone you.” The reason is blaspheming. Why? “Because you are a mere man who claims to be God.” They became very angry with Jesus (and that is an understatement). They were planning to stone him - put him to death. They didn't have any problem understanding what Jesus said. They knew what Jesus was claiming. He was claiming to be equal with God. These characters acted and reacted in the same way that we just saw the priest act at Jesus' trial in Matthew.

Now let's just put some flesh and blood on this. How would you react if I said I am the Christ and that I and the Father God are one? How would you react? Friend, you would think I am a lunatic, a madman. I don't think you would necessarily think I was a liar, especially if I had that much dedication to what I was proclaiming to be. So, you would come to the conclusion that this guy is delusional. He is a lunatic, a madman, a crazy person! He has lost all his marbles. His elevator doesn't reach the top floor...or however you want to define it or explain it away. You might not want to stone me, but you wouldn't want anything to do with me at all. You would avoid me like the plague. I wouldn't blame you. So, let's move on.

I am going to quickly go over some scriptures now to prove the point of what Jesus claimed to be.

John 5:17-18. ***“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.”***

Here again the Jews understood here exactly what Jesus was saying; he was making himself equal with God.

John 8:56-58. ***“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”***

Not only did Jesus announce that he existed before Abraham who lived approximately two thousand years before Jesus' time, but he also puts himself equal with God by calling himself—and everyone that was a Hebrew back then knew exactly what it meant—I AM. Only God used this title. We find it used back in Genesis when God (the pre-incarnate Jesus) was communicating with Moses, ***“I AM WHO I AM”***, when he asked God who he should say sent him. He said, ***“I AM WHO I AM.”*** Everyone knew who that meant, including the Egyptians. (I already preached a message on that. It's in the archives.) This is exactly what you would say to the Israelites that were in Egypt. Moses speaking, ***“I Am has sent me to you.”*** The Jews understood what he was saying and once again, what happens in verse 59?

“Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”

John 5:23-24. ***“That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”***

John 8:19-20 ***“Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.”*** Here we see the claim to be equal with God again. ***“These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.”***

John 14:1. ***“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”*** Once again, being equal with God.

John 14:8-10. ***“Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not***

known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.”

In other words, Jesus is saying, how can you say, “Show us the Father” when you are looking at Him? Once again, he is making himself equal with God.

So, point number one is Jesus claimed to be equal with God. In the next chapter we will pick it up with point number two where Jesus is allowing himself to be worshipped as God.

We are doing an investigation on Jesus’ life and who he said he was and who he claimed to be. We are going to go through the Scriptures - a complete study concerning Jesus the Christ, the one that came and died and rose from the grave and has promised to come back again, the one that saved our wretched souls to give us everlasting life.

That is the Jesus we need to know about.

Allowed To Be Worshipped As God

Open your Bible to John 9.

We are going to continue with asking the question: Was Jesus a liar, a madman, or the Messiah? In the first message, we looked at Jesus and his claims that he was equal with God. So, we are going to pick up right where we left off and start with another category concerning Jesus' life and what he said about himself: Jesus allowing himself to be worshipped as God.

The first example I want us to go to is in the book of John. You can read the whole chapter yourself. It deals with the man born blind and Jesus healing him. Jesus gave the blind man instructions to go wash in the pool, which he did, and he came out seeing. Of course, the Pharisees took note and got into a sort of argument with him and even with his parents. Now, go to verse 35 where it reads,

“Jesus heard that they had cast him [the man born blind] out [from the synagogue]; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe [pisteuo; trust and confidence] on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.”

“Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.” In the following verses Jesus had some other things to say, but He did not stop the man born blind, who was now healed, from worshipping Him once this person found out who He was. ***“And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.”***

Now there are many different examples in the Gospel records that we won't be able to get to because I would never finish this series, but this is the first example where Jesus allowed himself to be worshipped as God. This blind man that isn't blind any longer, once he knew who Jesus was and that He was the son of God, started trusting and having confidence in Him. The next step he took was to worship Him, and there is nowhere in this record that you will see Jesus stopping him from worshipping Him.

Remember, the point I'm making is Jesus didn't stop anyone from worshipping Him as God or the Son of God. First, Jesus makes claims that He's equal with God and now He is allowing people to worship Him. He didn't stop that practice; he ALLOWED it to continue. Why? For the obvious reason: He was truly the Son of God; he was equal with God.

Incidentally, you don't find leaders in other religions being worshipped as God. In other religions, they like to have their ego stroked and they like to have their authority over other human beings, but they go so far as saying, “I might have authority over you, but don't worship me as God.” Even Mohammed didn't do that. He said worship Allah; but he put the fear of Allah into them and he knew it, and they bowed down to him. Now he didn't stop that from happening, but he redirected them to understand that it is not him that they

were supposed to worship, it is Allah. Now you know what I think about Islam, so I won't go any further than that. If you don't know how I feel, then check out the Last Days series.

Now go to Matthew 14:33. This is the walking on water story.

“Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.”

What did they do? They worshipped him. Here again we have another example where we do not see Jesus stopping anyone in this story from worshipping him. Nowhere can you find that in this story.

Go to John 20:27-28. Jesus has already risen from the dead, and this is where he encounters Thomas and Thomas' unbelief.

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

So what did Thomas do? It took him a while to get there, but he said, “My Lord and my God.” Once again, the point that I am emphasizing is that Jesus didn't stop anyone from worshipping him as God or as the Son of God. In the last message, He made claims that He is equal with God. In this message, Jesus makes the implied statement (if you read the scriptures, and even though he doesn't say it outright) that He himself was to be worshipped also - either as God or as the Son of God.

You might say, “Well, that was his disciples; they walked and talked with Jesus.”

Alright, fair point. But what about the disciples after Jesus left? I mean the temptation is there to say, “I was a disciple of Jesus. Jesus is no longer here, but I know exactly what He said,” and with a little bit of twisting they could have turned this around and said, “He's not here, but look at the miracles I am doing.” And some of them did miracles: they healed people. They could have been tempted to say “Look at the miracles. Worship me along with Jesus Christ.” But none of them ever did. In fact, read Acts 10:24-25.

“And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.”

See, the temptation was there. The rumors got circulated that Peter healed, Peter raised Dorcas to life. I mean, these are *amazing* things, *unbelievable* things. So the first temptation for these people when they saw the apostles carrying out these acts of miracles was to bow down and worship them. Verse 26 reads,

“But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.”

Another translation has it, “I am also a man myself.” Peter would have none of it. He knew he was not to be worshipped. He was not making such claims that he should be worshipped because of the miracles. Only Jesus made those claims about himself - ONLY JESUS. His disciples never did, even though they did some powerful things themselves. And when Jesus was not around any longer, and if you had never had any sort of relationship with Jesus, when these apostles came into town and did some of the things that they did, the temptation was there to bow down and worship them—especially if one of those miracles affected your life or a family member. But the apostles would not allow it; there is no record in the scriptures anywhere that they did allowed it. They just didn't. In fact, if you think about it, not even angels would allow that. We see that in the book of Enoch, and we also see it in Revelation 19.

We read in Revelation 19:10 - ***“And I fell at his [an angel's] feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”***

Not even angels would allow that to happen. The angels refused to be worshipped. However—and this is my point—Jesus never refused to be worshipped. By allowing it, he claimed to be equal with God.

Now let's look at the indirect claims to being God that Jesus made of himself. There are direct claims and indirect claims. This is a complex Jesus; he had many opportunities to slip up and make mistakes concerning what he said about himself, but you can't find that record anywhere.

Go to Matthew 16:15-18. Here Jesus is speaking to his disciples.

“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

This is an example of an indirect way that Jesus made claims about himself. Another translations reads, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.”

Consider Acts 2:36 - ***“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”***

First, Jesus directly claims that he is equal with God, and then there are the indirect claims (using the apostles now as the mouth piece) that he was God. Now let's look at some of the scriptures that demonstrate that Jesus not only claimed by his own words that he was God, but also confirmed it by his actions. We are going to break down the things Jesus did and examine the actions in his life that confirmed that he was God. The evidence is there; you just have to break it down and see what Jesus said about himself, what that he did, and what other people claimed. What he did and what people claimed are additional indirect evidences that he was the Son of God.

Go to Mark 2:5-7. ***“When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?”***

That was the point. Now we are seeing Jesus making indirect claims about himself to being God. What are some of those indirect claims about himself?

1) He indirectly claims that he had the authority to forgive.

Now it blew the minds of the certain scribes that were sitting there, and they started gossiping among themselves trying to reason what was going on saying, ***“Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?”*** So in an indirect way, He was communicating that he was God, and now the attributes of Jesus start coming out about himself for why he's God - the authority to forgive. His actions were a confirmation of him being God, the Son of God.

Imagine some of these teachers of the Law just sitting there mumbling among themselves: “What in the heck is this man saying? He is blasphemous. Only God can forgive and God alone.”

Let's put flesh and blood on these verses. What if someone hurt you and hurt you bad (whether it is physical or mental, it doesn't matter). My friend, you are the only person who can forgive that other person - if you want to get past it, if you want to let bygones be bygones, or whatever your rationale is. If you've been hurt deeply by a person and you want to get beyond it and you want to forgive that person, you are the only one that can do that, right? The circumstance and the situation that led up to the circumstance is between you and this person. How would you feel if a third party suddenly came in and knew about what happened, and they decide to forgive the person that brought you all this hurt? You would probably think about that third party (family, friend, or foe), “Who in the heck are you? Who are you to forgive that person on my behalf? Who do you think you are?” Well, only one other person can forgive, and that is God himself. It is no wonder when you look at this story and you read it that the teachers of the Law were offended when Jesus forgave this paralyzed person of their sins. Let that sink in a bit. Some of you have been hurt by people, and you are certain they are damned to hell. They might have been wrong, and you are 100% right. (There are very few cases where I have seen someone 100% right, but let's just assume for the story's sake you are one of these

special people. You are 100% right and what that other person did 100% hurt you.) They should ask for forgiveness, but if they don't, you are going to forgive them anyway. Maybe they have a change of mind and they feel, "Hey, you know what, I didn't do you right," and you sensed that, or you heard that from that person, then you have no problem forgiving that person if you heard that from that person, correct? But what if that person never asked for that forgiveness? Now here comes Jesus and that person has had a change of mind about Jesus; and, he or she hasn't had time to deal with you about the situation, but you heard about that person's change of mind experience. You might be tempted to say, "Wait, Jesus! Hold off there a minute. That person and I still have an issue. You can't forgive that person." That is what these scribes were doing to Jesus and to this paralyzed person. The only difference is they were using the Law against it to keep it from happening by proclaiming, "Who can forgive sins but God only? I didn't see Jesus go out there and slay an animal and have that animal's blood spilled." He hasn't gone to the cross yet. The Scribes might have excused it if Jesus went through the ceremonial practices concerning the blood of animals for sin but that didn't even happen. Put yourself in these Scribes' shoes. Obviously, the Spirit was not drawing them yet, and they had to reason all this in their brain; it is hard because they are seeing miracles, but they cannot accept these miracles as being truly from the Son of God. In fact, some of the Pharisees would claim that He was doing the works of the devil (from another Gospel story), and Jesus deals with that. Put yourself in these people's shoes; that is a lot being thrown at them. Remember, these events are happening in only a few years, a short amount of time. That is a lot to chew on. Nevertheless, they were offended, but it was only Jesus who had the authority to forgive sins.

Now, let's look at the rest of the story, go to verse 8,

"And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."

In other words, they are saying, "We've never seen anything like this!"

Jesus called these scribes out: "What is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" If they had sight to see light or if they even could reason within themselves just a little bit, they would have seen that this was Jesus himself making an indirect claim that he was God and forgiving sin because he did both.

Now let's look at another one.

2) He indirectly claims himself to be life.

We find that in John 14:6-7. ***“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.”***

He is claiming to be life. Once again, put flesh and blood in this story. How would you react if someone approached you, or I approached you and said boldly to you, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through Joe Cortes?” You would be offended, my friend. You would think I am a lunatic. Jesus proclaimed that he was the way, the truth, and the life.

The apostle John confirms this in I John 5:11-12 - ***“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”***

Jesus claimed to be life, and John in his epistle confirms it. So thus far we have:

- 1) authority to forgive
- 2) claiming to give life

Now another attribute about Jesus.

3) He also claimed authority to judge.

Turn to John 5:26-27. Here we have Jesus speaking, ***“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.”***

Also read John 8:24. ***“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”***

Here is another example of his authority to judge; “You are not going to believe in Me? You are going to die in your sins.” I am not saying it; Jesus is. ***“for if ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins.”*** The verse before that reads, ***“Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.”***

Here the indirect claims of being God through the attributes that were expressed through his actions in that 3 ½ year period are clearly seen in the Scriptures. We only looked at a few, and we’re not done yet.

Authority to:

- 1) forgive
- 2) be life and give life

3) judge

Now his life was also foretold by the prophet Isaiah. Go to John 12:41.

“These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.”

John was saying, using Isaiah the prophet’s own words (if you read the verses prior), that Jesus was foretold by the prophet Isaiah. They should have expected Jesus.

I do not think there are any doubts that everything that we’ve covered shows that Jesus himself in his own words, and his followers through their actions and their words, believed that He was the Son of God and that He was equal with God.

John 5:18 says, ***“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.”***

The apostles and disciples worshipped him and believed he was the Savior; they took that message and proclaimed it to others, so they could do the same. Now there are enough scriptures I’ve given you in the last two messages proving Jesus boldly declared that He is the Savior of this world and that He also is one/equal with God.

I don’t think a person can believe that Jesus was just a good man, a good teacher, a good rabbi, or a good prophet, after they read the Scriptures I’ve given you - and even more scripture that is available for your own study that I haven’t covered yet. There are really only three alternatives once one does the study:

- 1) Jesus was a liar and misleading others (even though he did some good works and had some powerful words) and was not for their benefit (even though they did have benefit from it) but was really just out for himself.
- 2) He must have been a madman or a lunatic. The claims that he made about himself, that he was a deity, could have easily convinced many people that he was, for the most part a madman, a lunatic. It did the Pharisees for the most part.
- 3) Finally, if he was not a liar or a lunatic, then He is who He said He was; everything that He said and all the proofs to His claims would point to Him truly being the promised Messiah, the King of Kings, the Lord of Glory.

Now let’s look at those three points I just made.

If for some reason Jesus knew he was not truly the Son of God (he was not divine, and he was lying), then it means he was a hypocrite. He had everybody fooled. So, in fact he was encouraging others to be honest while he and his life was one BIG FAT LIE. Right? It could even imply that he was the devil himself and was misleading others to think he was the Savior of this world. I am sure that is what the Pharisees thought. Really, think

about it, what a *fool* Jesus would have been if he was this hypocrite, this liar - the greatest liar of all times - because his claims led him to be crucified. It doesn't make sense does it? But if it is true he was a fool and a liar and a hypocrite, how can you explain away what we read here in the Gospel record of all the instruction and examples (direct and indirect) left behind that would eventually form a religion? How could such a man, a foolish man, an imposter, teach unselfishness and self-denial and live selflessly AND have a life concerned about others (expressing everything that he would provide for their benefit) if he was a liar (a lunatic or a madman, but mostly a liar)? Liars just don't act that way. Do they?

The "works" verses "non-works" argument aside, he eventually left behind hundreds of millions of potential followers throughout the centuries who strive to be just like Jesus, using Jesus as an example. Drunkards become sober. Hookers turn away from their lifestyle. Addicts are set free from their addictions and sins. (I am just highlighting those categories but there is a whole slew of sins that all of us fall into in multiple categories.) Their lives are turned around.

How can you explain these transformations if Jesus was a hypocrite and a liar? It doesn't add up and it wouldn't make any sense. Furthermore, if Jesus was this hypocrite and liar, why would he die a horrible death? A crucifixion? If he knew he was a liar and not a deity, why would he put himself through that? He was making outrageous claims about himself. When presented with death and the kind of death he was facing including the torture that would lead up to that death, he would have retracted those lies, my friend, if he was just a man. So, the conclusion is there is no way Jesus could have been a liar.

Psychologists have broken this down and analyzed Jesus over the years. They are puzzled by Jesus' actions that led up to the cross and how he didn't bend or waver. What they are puzzled about is that because he didn't, he will be the first that they've ever examined that went through what he went through and not slip up or retract any of the claims he made about himself. There is no way he could be a liar; the way he lived, the way he cared for others, what he taught, even the way he died is proof of that.

Now if he wasn't a liar, then maybe there is another alternative. Maybe he was just a lunatic. Maybe it is possible that Jesus just imagined or thought he was God, but he wasn't. He just made a big mistake about himself. After all, he made an outrageous claim that one's destiny depends on believing in him! Was Jesus that kind of a person? Was he a lunatic?

See, psychologists don't just look at what a person says. They are trained to go deeper than that. They are trained to look at a person's emotions. If you are a disturbed individual, you are going to show inappropriate emotions (i.e. depression, severe bouts of anger, or plagued with anxiety). But when you look at Jesus from the viewpoint of a psychologist, he never demonstrates any of those emotions that he was disturbed. He had normal emotions, not those of a lunatic. He cried at the death of his friend Lazarus -that's natural for an emotionally healthy individual.

Disturbed people often have misperceptions about things also. They think people are watching them or are out to get them when nobody is watching them and nobody is out to get them. That is what they go through. Why? They're out of contact with reality. They misperceive the actions of other people and, because of that, they start accusing them of all kinds of different things that they supposedly are intending to do to that disturbed individual. Once again, we don't see Jesus going through any of that. If anything, he had a strong contact with reality. He never demonstrated paranoia; he wasn't a paranoid person. If he was disturbed, he would have been a very paranoid person because he would have understood all the real dangers surrounding him. He was always being threatened.

Have you ever met disturbed people? I have in my lifetime. They have some psychological difficulty in their life and it usually creates thinking disorders; they can't carry on a logical conversation if they tried. They always jump to faulty conclusions, and they're very irrational people. Once again, where in the Gospel records do you see that with Jesus? We don't see this in Jesus' life. He had no problem speaking clearly. He had no problem speaking directly. He had no problem speaking powerfully. Read the Gospel record. He was brilliant. And if you don't think he had amazing insights into human nature, then you haven't read it very closely and maybe it's time to take a second look at Jesus because it is way overdue.

Now from a psychological point of view, if a psychiatrist or a psychologist is examining you or examining Jesus (and like I said, this has been done over and over by psychologists) another sign of mental disturbance is crazy behavior, such as dressing oddly or not relating socially to people. But this was not Jesus; his behavior never demonstrated any of that, and he had a deep and caring relationship with a wide variety of people from different walks of life. He was loving and compassionate. He didn't have a bloated ego (like the Pharisees tried to point out, but not very successfully). It's not like he didn't have the opportunity. He was surrounded by people who adored him. We are talking about a truly maintained and balanced individual. He always knew what he was doing. He always knew what he was getting into, and he always knew where he was going. He cared about people deeply — and here is the kicker, since we're talking about caring — he cared about women and children, who at that time weren't thought of as important. He accepted people and responded to people where they were and with what they uniquely needed. He didn't condone the sin; he came to die for it.

There are no signs in Jesus' life that he was suffering from any known mental illness. There have been psychologists and psychiatrists that have come to that conclusion over and over. You can read *The Case for Christ*. There are interviews in that book concerning Jesus and his mental stability that were conducted with psychologists. They just don't see Jesus as a mentally disturbed person. So, the conclusion is he was not a lunatic.

Honestly, no madman or lunatic could have had such dedication to his mission. When is the last time you saw a lunatic — (and I am not talking about some of these religious lunatics of the past that really didn't care about the people like David Koresh or Jim Jones) — with a caring attitude that attracted thousands of people towards him, not to mention

taught with great insight. I'm sorry; those people didn't see a mentally disturbed paranoia prone individual. What they saw was a well-balanced and healthy individual who provided the way to eternal life because he provided the truth and declared that he was the way, the truth and the life.

So the final and third option is that he truly is Lord. If Jesus wasn't a liar and wasn't a madman, then there is only one other alternative left; He must be what he proclaimed to be - Our Lord and Savior! That's it. You only have three options.

Like Simon Peter said in the scripture we already read, "***You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.***" That is our alternative, and that is what people concluded. We see that in John 11:27, "***She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.***" Thomas said the same thing, "***My Lord and my God!***"

To believe Jesus was a good person and a good teacher but deny that he was what he said he was is an oxymoron because he cannot be considered good if he's lying or being a lunatic. You just can't. There is only one possible conclusion. He is what he proclaimed to be: Lord and Savior and Son of God.

In this message I wanted to point out what the Gospel record states about Jesus' attributes, his actions, and the reactions of the people who lived in Jesus' time. They came to believe him to be the Son of God. I wanted to point out to you that even psychologists can't point to Jesus as being some nut or lunatic or a madman or a liar. They may not accept that he's the Son of God, but they can't break him down either and categorize him as a mentally disturbed person because everything that he did and what he communicated and taught doesn't demonstrate that at all. So, if he wasn't those things, then the only answer is that he was the Savior of this world, the only begotten Son of God, who is equal with God—in a direct and an indirect way, not only by what he said but also by what the apostles proclaimed about him - and that he and he only was to be worshipped. Even the apostles wouldn't allow anyone to worship them; even the angels in heaven won't have any part of it. Only Jesus would be worshipped. Everything else is nothing but a big counterfeit and an angel of darkness to misguide you and have you go down a road that doesn't provide the way, the truth, and the life.

Next we will go a little bit deeper into Jesus' life and maybe even the apostles' lives and the events surrounding the Resurrection.

Old Testament Road Map

Open your Bible to Isaiah 48.

I started this series by asking several questions and those questions led to our digging into God's Word to try to find the answers. We've covered thus far:

- 1) Was Jesus a liar, lunatic, or Messiah (Savior of the World)?
- 2) The claims Jesus made about himself to be equal with God.
- 3) How he allowed himself to be worshipped.
- 4) His indirect claims to being God.
- 5) Liar, Lunatic, the Christ — the reasons why he wasn't the first two.

In this message we will be covering point number six:

Evidence of the Old Testament: The Fingerprint of God

When you look at the evidence in the Old Testament, you will come to the realization that God laid down a record of how we can eventually recognize the Messiah, Jesus. He laid down a road map for us, and it is in His Word, The Bible. I don't have time to cover all of them, but He gave us many prophecies concerning the Messiah's (Jesus') coming. All these prophecies lay down the Biblical evidence that we need to be sure that God's Word is true.

The prophecies are like a fingerprint. When you look at a lot of fingerprints, especially those of you who do police work, you go through the books or images on a computer screen and you rapidly look through them. At first glance, they all pretty much look the same, but when you really start to analyze and look closer with all of today's amplifying methods, you discover that each fingerprint is unique. This is not new information; everyone knows this. Well, the same can be said regarding God's Word concerning all these prophecies in the Old Testament about Jesus.

God does not make mistakes; He is not the author of confusion. He laid down the evidence, so we could have clarity regarding who He was eventually going to send to save this world.

This is how God operates.

Isaiah 48:3-4 states, ***"I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate [hard, stubborn], and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass."***

Here He is referring to the House of Jacob, but as a general principle, we all are like that. So, God has to lay down undeniable evidence — which He has. "Well, I don't need that. I just need to have faith. I believe." Well, count your lucky stars because you are very

fortunate; there are not many who are like you, and God knew that. He laid down evidence not only in his Word but through His creation, through the Gospel in the stars. He laid it down everywhere. That is why Paul said there is no excuse for us because everywhere we turn, the evidence is there. If the Spirit draws you, it is undeniable.

To show the same kind of operating principle that God used, go to Isaiah 55:11.

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish [and that is what it did] that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

We are all wrapped up in our present Presidential elections and other offices here in the United States that are up for grabs in November. Whoop-tee-do on who you think should be President. I’m telling you there are no prizes out there at all. Thank God, God is in control and what comes out of His mouth, He will accomplish. There is plenty about Ephraim (the United States), and about this world that He has declared, that we can trust will come to pass. How can we do that? Because when you see what He said about His Son and all the prophecies concerning him, then you can trust the rest of the word of God about other things.

My friend, these prophecies are more than good enough to know that Jesus was the Messiah, and there is no one else that can fill these shoes in history but Jesus. If you heard earlier messages I’ve preached, you’ll know I look at statistics and probabilities quite a bit. There was a messianic scholar that did the math. This Jewish scholar looked at just eight prophecies—and there are many more than that. The chances of those eight prophecies being fulfilled the way they were laid out was 1 in 100 million billion. That was just on eight prophecies. If you would take that statistic alone and analyze the probability of that coming to pass, you would say to yourself, this must be true. That number I just gave you is a number so large that it is greater than the total number of people that ever lived and walked on this planet, past and present. But yet, we form opinions about Jesus without analyzing Him. We analyze just about everything else in life, but for some reason the devil keeps some blinded to looking at the evidence and analyzing it. This same Jewish scholar said if you took silver dollars and calculated them (on the figures that I just gave you) and covered the state of Texas with those silver dollars, it would reach a depth of two feet. That is the statistical probability. And if you marked just one of those silver dollars out of all of them in that two-foot depth, and then you blindfolded a person and had that person wander around an area the size of the state of Texas, and then eventually, when they felt they were at the right spot, bend down blindfolded and pick up that one marked coin, that would be the odds on picking the one that was already marked.

Now he used this example to make the point of how impossible it would seem for all of these things to line up just on eight prophecies. Remember, I am telling you there are dozens upon dozens of prophecies. And if you take all those prophecies (if you want to calculate it out), you would need an area a lot larger than Texas and maybe even the United States of America for the example. What are the odds of Jesus not being the one that was prophesied?

God opens His mouth and what is said happens. That is my point. Back to the fingerprint analogy; if the prophecies point to one person and that prophecy is fulfilled in one person, that is unique. It then can be compared to a fingerprint, which is also unique and only belongs to one individual out of billions that have lived on this planet. That is why I encourage you to study both the Old and New Testaments that lay out the evidence, the fingerprint mapping, to find out the truth about the Messiah, the Savior, Jesus the Christ.

So, let's pinpoint this fingerprint of God and have the evidence in Scripture speak for itself.

Genesis 3:15 says, ***“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”***

This is God's judgment after Adam and Eve's rebellion. It is the first messianic prophecy. When you analyze all Scripture throughout the Bible, only one person was born of the seed of the woman. Sometimes we can read that scripture so quickly that we miss it, ***“thy seed and her seed”***. There is something here in this verse that separates the two. Again, as I said, only one person was born of the seed of a woman - only one and that is it. All other people that have lived on this planet were born from the seed of man. Jesus was not; Mary was impregnated by the Holy Spirit. I've preached communion messages on this, which you should also read at some point. (Jesus' Blood Was Sinless, *Precious Blood* series, Vol. 2; Incorruptible Blood, *Precious Blood* series, Vol. 2)

Jesus Christ was to defeat the dominion of the devil, bruising his head, but He would suffer and suffer horribly to achieve that goal because the Scripture also says, ***“thou shalt bruise his heel.”***

Now fast forward 2000 years into the future from when this was said by God. Abraham was born. You know the story. He was told to leave his hometown of Ur. He was promised a son. That son didn't come right away. Both Abraham and his wife were getting old, too old to have children, so they tried to fulfill God's promise by having Abraham sleep with Sarah's maidservant. That created many problems - problems we are still dealing with today because Ishmael was born. But Ishmael was not the fulfillment of the promise as given to Abraham by God. He was an effort of Abraham's flesh to bring about God's promise. God had other plans to keep His promise, and His promise was going to be a child from Abraham and Sarah (even though she was about 90 years old at the time). Eventually Isaac was born, Abraham was approximately 100 years old, and God laid down a promise that his son Isaac would be born, and the earth would be blessed. If you look at the genealogy, the bloodline, it narrows down the fingerprint of the Messiah to Isaac's descendants only. With all the people who were living in the world at that time, and even though Abraham and Sarah tried to take matters into their own hands and failed and produced nothing but problems then and even up to now, God remained in control as He was narrowing down the fingerprint of the Messiah, that unique fingerprint that would come only through Isaac's descendants.

Now moving forward, Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Once again, God chose Jacob, even though Esau was the first born. God chose Jacob, that heel catcher, that

rebellious individual, that conniver, that scheme-maker, whatever you want to call him - God chose him.

Go to Numbers 24:17. ***“I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.”***

Now God is becoming more specific. He is using his own fingerprint about Jesus the Messiah, and it becomes clearer that through this lineage of people this was going to happen. An individual would come out of this small group of people (in comparison to the world’s population at that time). It’s not like God said, “Out of the whole population *someone* will come as He promised.” No. You will find as we move through the Scripture, He said it uniquely and narrowed it down, so it could produce a fingerprint, the evidence we can follow to see how God’s Word comes alive and how He keeps it alive because it is the truth. It is what we can hang on to because the probabilities are so outrageously small for this to even have a chance of surviving — through not just a few years but thousands of years — and coming to pass.

Now in due course, Jacob had twelve sons, and God eventually singled out Jesse from within the tribe of Judah. We find that in Isaiah 11. Now Isaiah is looking back, but nevertheless, he points it out.

Isaiah 11:1-3 states, ***“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.”***

Now Jesse had eight children and here God is narrowing down the messianic lineage to David.

Jeremiah 23:5 tells us, ***“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.”***

Once again, He chose only a very small segment in comparison to the total population of the world; the Messiah was to be born of the lineage of David.

So far, we’ve looked at how Messiah would:

- 1) come from the seed of a woman,
- 2) be a descendant of Abraham,
- 3) be a descendant of Isaac,
- 4) be a descendant of Jacob,

- 5) be a descendant of Jesse, and
- 6) be a descendant of David.

Now are there any indications of who this Messiah would be, and can we be even more specific and focus more on God's fingerprint about the Messiah? Yes, we can. All of the following needs to be included and reviewed because basically all these points are based on only a few prophecies compared to all the prophecies we have concerning the Messiah's first advent.

Now, let's look at some of the specific details about the Messiah coming from King David's lineage.

The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

- Micah 5:2 - "***But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.***"
(The promise in Genesis 3:15)

Now most people don't realize that most of the psalms are messianic. Some scholars choose to only recognize a few psalms as messianic, but that is unfortunate.

The Messiah would be called Lord.

- Psalm 110:1 - "***A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.***"

He would be born of a virgin and called Immanuel (God is with us).

- Isaiah 7:14 - "***Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.***"

He would be preceded by a messenger.

- Isaiah 40:3 - "***The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.***"

We know who that was in the New Testament - John the Baptist. This was all written down, and the historical evidence is undeniable. Even if you want to take the position and say that Jesus knew about these prophecies and he tried to fulfill all these prophecies and that is why he did what he did, well then he would have to get other people involved too, including John the Baptist that would fulfill, "***...in the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God,***" - a messenger, a voice of one crying out to prepare the way for Jesus' coming 2000 years ago. So, John

the Baptist would have to be in cahoots and have planned this out in advance to fulfill this scripture. And again, concerning the messenger,

- Malachi 3:1 - ***“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”***

He would have a ministry of miracles.

- Isaiah 35:5-6 - ***Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.***

All you have to do is read the Gospel record to see that that came to pass also.

He would teach in parables.

- Psalm 78:2 - ***“I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old...”***

Neither David nor any other psalmist did that. That would be fulfilled in Christ.

He would enter Jerusalem on a donkey.

- Zechariah 9:9, ***“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”***

He will be a stumbling stone to the Jews.

- Psalm 118:22, ***“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.”***

He will be the light of the Gentiles. Even Jesus said himself that He came to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel — which are the ‘gentiles’ he was referring to in this point — which would then become the messengers of His Gospel, that go on to other gentiles and the rest of the world to preach the message of grace and salvation.

- Psalm 60:3 - ***“Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.”***

Here is a powerful and sad prophecy where He would be betrayed by a friend.

- Psalm 41:9 - ***“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.”***

And, of course, another familiar prophecy where Jesus is betrayed for 30 silver pieces.

- Zechariah 11:12 - ***“And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.”***

Jesus would even have to plot out with Judas and the religious establishment of his time (the ones who were trying to do him in) on the exact amount of silver pieces.

Still concerning the thirty pieces of silver, it would be thrown in God’s house for the potter.

- Zechariah 11:13 - ***“And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was priced at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”***

He would be forsaken by his disciples.

- Zechariah 13:7- ***“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”***

He would be accused by false witnesses.

- Psalm 35:11 - ***“False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.”***

He would be silent before his accusers.

- Isaiah 53:7 - ***“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”***

Remaining in Isaiah 53, we find he was wounded and bruised.

- Isaiah 53:5 - ***“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”***

He would be smitten and spat upon.

- Isaiah 50:6 - ***“I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”***

He would be mocked.

- Psalm 22:7-8 - ***“All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”***

This next scripture concerns how his hands and feet would be pierced.

- Psalm 22:16- ***“For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.”***

He would be crucified with thieves. Of course, we see that in the Gospel record, but it was prophesied in earlier scripture as well.

- Isaiah 53:12 - ***“... because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors...”***

He hung there in the middle of transgressors. And of course, in the Gospel record, he would eventually intercede for his persecutors. It is hard to imagine someone doing that who was not God.

- Isaiah 53:12 - ***“...he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”***

By the way, that is ALL transgressors, none excluded.

Still in Isaiah 53, He would be rejected by his own people.

- Isaiah 53:3 - ***“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”***

His friends would stand afar off when he was going through the last few hours of his life.

- Psalm 38:11 - ***“My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.”***

He would be an object of scorn.

- Psalm 109:25 - ***“I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shook their heads.”***

He would be stared upon as he hung there.

- Psalm 22:17 - ***“I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.”***

His garments would be divided, and lots would be cast for them.

- Psalm 22:18 - ***“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”***

He would suffer of thirst, and a concoction of vinegar was given him to drink.

- Psalm 69:21 - ***“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”***

Now of course anyone that has heard a resurrection message is familiar with this next scripture. It is a hard one to swallow, but we see it played out in the Gospel record. He would be forsaken by God.

- Psalm 22:1 - ***“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?”***

At the very last breath of his human life, he would commit his spirit to God.

- Psalm 31:5 - ***“Into thine hand I commit my spirit”***

By the way, I am way past eight prophecies, folks. Can you imagine the statistical probability of all these things happening?

His bones were not broken.

- Psalm 34:20 - ***“He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.”***

It was a common practice when people were crucified because they were being held up by their legs, so they would not suffocate while they were hanging there. They would use their legs to push their body up, helping them to breathe. When the Romans wanted it to come to an end quicker, they would break their legs and the ones being crucified couldn't support themselves any longer and the weight of their own bodies would push them downward and they would suffocate. That didn't happen to Jesus.

His side would be pierced.

- Zechariah 12:10 - ***“... they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.”***

Of course, during that time that Jesus hung on the cross, darkness and gloom would encompass the land.

- Amos 8:9 - ***“And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.”***

He would be buried in a rich man's tomb.

- Isaiah 53:9 - ***“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death...”***

His body would not see corruption.

- Psalm 16:10 - ***“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”***

He would be resurrected ascend on high.

- Psalm 68:18 - ***“Thou hast ascended on high...”***

These are more than a few prophecies, and there are many more concerning the Messiah that still had not yet come when these prophecies were given — and that can be proven. At the very least, using dating techniques that even scientists agree upon, all of these prophecies plus others were already written down no later than around 300 BC, according to scientifically accepted dating techniques. Using that as the only base for your fingerprinting, you would have to believe. How could this not be true? How could the probability of this happening just the way it was prophesied not happen? I don't want to just preach a resurrection message after the fact and talk of how the disciples would have reacted to it if it was a fraud. I want you to grasp the importance of how all these prophecies came to be fulfilled through Jesus Christ. The scientific world has no doubts or even questions any longer about the fact that most of these prophecies were written at the very least 300 years approximately before Christ was born.

I gave you a good cross example of many different prophecies showing that if Jesus were plotting all this out, so many people would have to be used to carry out this plot. They would all have to stay focused on the plan that he put out there because if one falls apart, they all tumble down like dominoes, one after another. That is what we should focus on - these prophecies. That is why I have given these prophecies to you, so you can digest this and dig for yourself into the information on when these certain manuscripts were written down prior to Jesus' arrival. It is undeniable if you look at it. We will have to look at that in the future using the scientific world and the religious world and see how we can blend it together to show you that this was not made up after Christ. They were not given after Christ came and went; they were given hundreds and hundreds of years before. The scientific world accepts around 300 b.c., but it goes back further than that, my friend.

Is it by chance? Is this the best lotto of all time? Or is this real?

Only one person fulfilled all these prophetic descriptions, and that is Jesus and Jesus alone. Only Jesus matches that fingerprint from God that we partially looked at as described in the Old Testament. Jesus is it! That means Jesus is the Way, Truth, the Life. There is no other substitution. Don't let this day go by without remembering the Table of

the Lord and remembering Him and remembering all the *wonderful* promises about Him before his coming, which He fulfilled.

If they are that accurate about his first coming (which they are), don't you think it is important to know the things about his second coming? Like how we should prepare and be involved in preparing others? I believe the Christian world has lost that **desire**. And I think the Christian Science Fiction theories, for the most part, have drained the people from the desire to alert people about what is happening—because they are off in their cockamamie world of silly theories about what is to take place.

Jesus is alive and well. God has control of history. He has marked his unique fingerprint on history concerning his son. As I started showing you, what he foretold from old has come to pass and what still hasn't, well, you can bank on it to happen just as was prophesied.

Jesus' Master Plan: Was He A Fraud?

Open your Bible to Micah 5.

In the last section, we looked at the evidence from the Old Testament, and I gave you dozens of scriptures which lay down a road map of messianic prophecies which are unique; they are the fingerprint of God. I made six points thus far in the teaching:

- 1) Was Jesus a liar, lunatic, or Messiah (Savior of the World)?
- 2) The claims Jesus made about himself to be equal with God.
- 3) How he allowed himself to be worshipped.
- 4) His indirect claims to being God.
- 5) Liar, Lunatic, the Christ — the reasons why he wasn't the first two.
- 6) The evidence of the Old Testament - the fingerprint of God

In this message, we are going to focus on point number seven...

Did Jesus Deliberately Try to Fulfill the Messianic Prophecies?

Some would argue, "Of course, once he was born he knew what those messianic prophecies were, and he would try to fulfill them." Others would say he couldn't fulfill all of them, not even come close, because it was quite impossible to do it as a man, a man like you or me in the flesh. So, there are people that object and claim, "Isn't it possible that Jesus deliberately tried to fulfill the messianic prophecies?" They use their rhetoric to try to confuse people and to bring doubt into their minds, and not only doubt but also confusion. Therefore, they rule out quickly that Jesus truly was the messiah, and they conclude that it is all made up. It's just a fictional story.

I listed for us some of the prophecies last time; when you break down certain ones of these prophecies, you must ask the question: How could one try to fulfill some of these prophecies? We will start with Micah 5:2. Remember, Jesus (if he was just a man) had to fulfill this prophecy before he was born because he would have to somehow place himself in the right place at the right time so that he could be born at that location to fulfill this prophecy. The prophecy reads as follows.

Micah 5:2 - ***"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."***

This is prophesying where the messiah, Jesus the Christ, would eventually be born - the exact location. Think about it; hundreds of years prior to Jesus even being born. And not just any Bethlehem, Bethlehem Ephratah.

In Jesus' day, there were two Bethlehems. Since there were two Bethlehems, which one was it?

“But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah”—since there were two Bethlehems, the word ephratah, meaning ‘fruitful’, is added to distinguish between them. Micah named the place where Christ was to be born seven hundred years before he was born there.”

How could Jesus plan this out before he was born if he was not the son of God? If he was just another man, just like you and me, there is no way that could have been done. It is impossible. No one doubts that Jesus was an historical figure because all the evidence that we have that he existed. Whether you believe he was the son of God or not is not even the point I’m trying to make right now. The point is he existed. He was a real person. Whether he was the son of God or not is up to you to decide. I believe he is. He was the Messiah, the Christ.

And this prophecy was given seven hundred years before he was born. There is no way that Jesus, if he was not the son of God, could have planned that out. “Why?” you ask. BECAUSE HE WASN’T BORN YET. It’s obvious. He was born there in Bethlehem Ephratah. One author writes:

“After seven hundred years, with so many intervening events, there was little likelihood that one in the line of David could be born in Bethlehem. It was almost entirely out of the question. The odds were against it. No members of the family of David were living in Bethlehem any longer. They were scattered. The Dispersion had driven them from the land. There was one family in the line of David living in Nazareth; yet Bethlehem must be the place where the Son of God was to be born, according to Micah.

The circumstances which led up to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem are so familiar to us that we may not realize how remarkable they were. The record in Luke’s Gospel gives us some of the details: Caesar Augustus signed the tax bill which moved Mary out of Nazareth. If that little donkey on which Mary rode had stumbled and Mary had fallen, Jesus would probably have been born somewhere along the route. But—I say this very carefully—that little donkey could not have stumbled, because seven hundred years earlier Micah had written that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem [Ephratah]. The little donkey got her there on schedule; it was timed from eternity. It was more punctual and precise than any jet plane could be in our day.

“Out of thee shall he come forth unto me.” The words unto me indicate that this One was coming to do the will of the Father and to accomplish His plan.

“Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” His birth, the Incarnation, has to do with His humanity. He

clothed himself with humanity when He came to Bethlehem. But His existence was before his birth.”

Prophesied seven hundred years before he was born in Bethlehem Ephratah, at the right place and at the right time. It is physically impossible that Jesus could have deliberately planned out this fulfillment of prophecy if he was not the son of God. He couldn't have done it if he was human like you and me. Yes, he came in a tent of human flesh, but he still was the son of God, born of a virgin named Mary, impregnated by the Holy Spirit to fulfill this prophecy. It just can't be done if he was just another person like you and me. So, there is no way he could have deliberately tried to fulfill this messianic prophecy. My point is - it just can't happen.

When you look at Isaiah 7, it tells you the manner of birth. Now again, he would have to fulfill this prophecy in advance, before he was ever born. I'm trying to show you the messianic prophecies that make it totally physically impossible for it to happen unless there was divine intervention, as was promised.

We find his manner of birth in Isaiah 7:14 - ***“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin”—He was very clear; a young woman virgin— “shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”***

Has that ever happened before in the biblical record? No. Has it ever happened after? No. Do you know any one who has claimed to be a virgin and that can be medically verified to be true who suddenly finds herself pregnant? No. Once again, it is a physical impossibility.

Not only do we have a place of birth, but we have a manner of birth as well. If Jesus was just a man like you and me, that would make this impossible to accomplish. No matter how good of a planner and organizer of events Jesus was, there is no way that could have been done. In addition, let's see now how he gets other people involved.

Isaiah 40:3 - ***“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”***

Now the first verse says, ***“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.”***—announcing something is coming, and someone is going to announce it or proclaim it before it comes. ***“Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”***

This gives us insight into the ministry of John the Baptist; he was the forerunner, the announcer of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we find verses in the New Testament that show us that this was fulfilled. We'll be going to a few of those. Once again, this was announced hundreds and hundreds of years prior to the event taking place and someone coming on the scene as an announcer, proclaiming that someone is coming. That announcer was none other than John the Baptist proclaiming that Jesus Christ was coming.

Matthew 3:1 - ***“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*** That word ‘repent’ (if you remember the teaching) means to have a change of mind, i.e., “Yes, we know what you have been practicing since the Mosaic Law was established, but now you need to have a change of mind about what was ready to take place.” Matthew 3:3, ***“And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”***

Now this would mean that John the Baptist and Jesus would have to be in cahoots to carry out the fulfillment of this messianic prophecy, and the prophecy that a proclaimer, an announcer, would precede Jesus Christ. So, if you believe that both Jesus Christ and John the Baptist were human just like you and me, then you would conclude that they were in cahoots together. They are only about six months’ difference in age. They were closely related. So, this was a family plan to try to further whatever the family agenda was. The problem with that is both men, if that is all they were, died horrible deaths. John the Baptist didn’t have any successor. Neither did Jesus. He had disciples who became apostles and kept proclaiming what he commissioned them to: to preach the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But that didn’t go very well in Israel. In fact, they start losing their lives, e.g., James — even though he wasn’t a disciple at the time when Jesus carried out his 3 ½ year ministry before his death and resurrection. We see the horrible death that James experienced in Jerusalem. It was not a very well accepted message even though thousands did have a change of mind experience and started putting their trust in Jesus Christ. The majority still rejected Jesus as the Messiah, as the Christ. What was the purpose? Before John the Baptist would lose his head, he could have denounced all this nonsense and saved his life and said, “No, no, no. This is just a crazy plan me and Jesus put together, to see how far it could go and see how many people we could defraud and acquire as followers.” He could have given any number of excuses. Both these men, if that is all they were, including Jesus, could have changed their minds before their horrible deaths, but they didn’t.

We see also in Mark (Luke and John also recording) the same thing being said about John the Baptist.

Mark 1:1 - ***“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets [the Old Testament prophets], Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”***

Place of birth, manner of birth, and now in cahoots with another family member to try to defraud a gullible audience...The only problem is if all they were was mere men. I can see John the Baptist turning more easily (if that is even a possibility) from the story he was telling when his life was on the line and he was about ready to lose it. It’s the same for Jesus if he was just another man. Crucifixion was no picnic, my friend. It was a horrible death. What they did to Jesus before he even died on that cross was horrific. He didn’t just suffer a normal crucifixion. It went way beyond that.

So, John announced Jesus prior to his arrival, and it was a messianic prophecy that both these individuals would be part of that plan. Could it have happened? Sure, possibly, but I doubt both would have stayed true to the story when facing the horrible circumstances of the reality of their day when they were just about ready to lose their lives.

Not only did he have to fulfill so many other messianic prophecies - dozens upon dozens - but he also had to coordinate between himself and John the Baptist (as we just saw) a message that would cause people to become accusers and have poor reactions to what they were saying — especially Jesus. John the Baptist never claimed to be the son of God. He never claimed to be equal to God. Jesus did.

Now, did Jesus deliberately try to fulfill the next two verses concerning his accuser's reactions? It says here, in advance, that his accusers would not react well.

Psalm 118:22-24 reads, ***“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.”*** They rejected Jesus. ***“This is the LORD'S doing [or this is from the Lord]; it is marvellous in our eyes.”***

You know the reasons why if you are truly born again. What is “marvelous” is what the Lord did even though he was refused; he became the head stone of the corner. This next verse, which I have preached on before, has been used so out of context. Silly Christians go around saying this, and they don't know the context of the verse. ***“This is the day [that appointed time, when Jesus rose from the grave] which the LORD hath made...”*** In previous teaching, I told you to circle the words “hath made”. What did he make? He made himself a sacrifice. Therefore ***“we will rejoice and be glad in it.”*** Not because something turned out well - to your benefit - and you go around saying, “This is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.” That is not what you are supposed to do with this verse. You can be thankful for your blessings and give Him thanks and praise Him for it, but don't take scripture out of context. My whole point here though was to look at his accuser's reaction in Psalm 118; it was prophesied that he would be refused. However, if you go Isaiah 53:3, it is also prophesied what would happen, which did happen. Of course, you might say Jesus' message was unbelievable. It went against every religious thought possible, and no one would accept the claims he made about himself that he was equal to God, whether they were direct or indirect claims.

Isaiah 53:3 tells us - ***“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”***

Jesus was the smartest man that ever walked this planet if he could devise a plan to do all the things that were prophesied including being rejected and refused and despised, to not be esteemed on purpose. When was the last time you heard anybody preach or teach, whether religious or non-religious, sayings about themselves because they want you to hate them, despise them, and reject what they have to say? If they are looking for rejection, why go through all that agony to get it? It doesn't make any sense. It doesn't add up. People usually say things to get someone's approval or at least to agree with

them. These messianic prophecies say just the opposite. He would bring good news that people didn't think was that good. In fact, they thought it was evil. They thought the message was from the devil, not from God. Like I said, who does that? No one that I ever met. No one that I ever read about except Jesus: "I want you to reject me, so you can kill me. And not just put a sword through my heart, but I want to die in a horrific manner." It doesn't add up.

Now go to Zechariah. I want to look at another point of how these things are physically impossible and unconceivable in our minds - that Jesus would try to fulfill these prophecies, some of which he couldn't physically do anyway because he wasn't born yet. In addition, he would have to bring other actors in the story that was going to be played out. He had to convince them to go into cahoots with him to make sure all these prophecies would become fulfilled, so he could claim he was the son of God.

Look at the betrayal of Jesus in Zechariah 11 and what he was sold for - thirty pieces of silver. We also see this in Psalm 41 - that Jesus would be betrayed. It is a messianic psalm also. Unfortunately, scholars have only given a few psalms the messianic title. There are a lot more than a few and Psalm 41 is one of those. Verse 9 was referring to a future time also when Jesus would be betrayed by a trusted one.

But here in Zechariah 11:12 it says - ***“And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”***

And if we go to the New Testament, we can see Judas' betrayal, and we see that he actually received 30 pieces of silver. Let me show you something else:

“This is a very remarkable prophecy that has been literally fulfilled in a most remarkable way. Notice Matthew's record: “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, ‘What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?’ And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver” (Matt. 26:14-15). This is exactly the price that Zechariah mentions. It is quite interesting that the chief priest didn't want to pay very much. I wonder if Judas had a little difficulty agreeing on the price— “So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.”

“A goodly price” is sometimes translated a “lordly” price. I think an even better word would be a fancy price. You have heard the expression, “Well, that's a fancy price for such and such an article.”

“Thirty pieces of silver—imagine that! They paid very little for Jesus.

They cheapened His message and they cheapened his life — both the religious establishment and the one that betrayed him.

“They weren’t willing to pay a high ransom price of several million dollars to have Him delivered to them. No, they would give only thirty pieces of silver. How cheap that was. What did Judas do with the thirty pieces of silver? “And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”

Which is what we find at the closing of Zechariah 11:13, ***“And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”***

Once again, Jesus would have to be in cahoots now with someone who followed him for 3 ½ years - someone with an emotional connection. He would have to convince this person to betray Him. He would have to convince him not only to betray Him, but also to receive 30 pieces of silver for it. This person that would betray him would have known that this betrayal would cost Jesus his life.

But that is not where the story finishes. Judas, realizing what he had done, then committed suicide. “I want you to arrange my betrayal, which will lead to my death, and then I want you to commit suicide afterward.” Why? Because this is what the Old Testament said about how this prophecy would be fulfilled. Everything we know about Judas, including how he was a zealot for revolution, is he wanted Jesus to be the messiah, the conquering messiah, not the deliverer that would save our spiritual souls. He wanted a deliverer that would conquer the Roman Empire. When Jesus didn’t turn out to be what he thought Jesus should be, he turned on Him. Then eventually realizing what he did, he committed suicide. When you add all the pieces up (and these are just a few of the pieces), it is such an elaborate story with so many details that there is no physical humanly possible way that Jesus could have pulled all this off. The statistical improbability of it is mind-blowing.

And that was just getting Judas involved. What about others who were involved?

Psalm 22:18 - ***“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”***

This is where the soldiers are casting lots for his clothing. Now, either before he went to the cross (when he was getting beaten by these Roman soldiers) or while he was hanging there, he would have had to convince the Roman soldiers to cast lots for his clothing. What do you think a Roman soldier would do looking up at Jesus? He would probably say, “Say what?! What are you asking? Are you serious? You are there dying, and you are worried about your clothing and what we do with it?” Again, it doesn’t make sense

and is totally irrational. But here are the Roman soldiers casting lots for his clothes. This prophecy was written almost 1000 years before it had even taken place.

So now he has to get the soldiers in the big plot and plan that he has — which doesn't make any sense — to be in cahoots with him concerning his clothing. Let's go to verse 16 of that same psalm. He would have had to convince the Roman soldier to crucify him — which is not much of a problem, so it really isn't an argument — but this psalm would say exactly how he would be crucified, ***“For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me”*** — This is a bad translation in the King James. It should be *strike* or *beat me*, which happened — ***“they pierced my hands and my feet.”***

That is exactly what happened to Jesus. Once again, he is a master planner. Now, again, as he was hanging there, he would also have to plan out the people's reactions. In the same psalm, verse 7 says, ***“All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD [lit. he rolled himself onto the Lord] that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”***

He would have to plot out not only what was going to happen between the Roman soldiers and himself, but now also the people who were onlookers reacting to him by mocking him as he hung there on the cross dying.

Go back to Isaiah 53. He would even have had to plan out his burial, which would include obtaining a location where he would be buried, which we see in verse 9.

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death[s]”—it is not 'death' singular, but 'deaths' plural, in the Hebrew. He even planned out his burial, ***“and with the rich in his death[s];”*** he would be buried by someone that would allow him to be buried in the location in a tomb which ordinary people would not be buried that were not wealthy. Even this detail he would have had to plan out, which he did.

It just doesn't add up that he was not the son of God and he was just a master planner who was able to put all the pieces together before he was born, including how he would be born. If you accuse Jesus of intentionally trying to fulfill these messianic prophecies, you are accusing him of being dishonest. He's not even a good person, if that's the case; he is a deceiver and the biggest deceiver that has ever walked this planet.

You might ask yourself, “Is it possible that these messianic prophecies that we see here in the Scriptures were written at or after the time of Jesus and therefore fulfilling themselves because it was after the fact?” I guess if you are satisfied with not knowing the truth you would think that way.

For the most part, by accepted theologians and historians, the Old Testament was completed c. 450 BC. But that was not the only thing that was completed. We also have a Septuagint (LXX) version, which is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, which was initiated by Ptolemy of Philadelphus. He reigned around 285-245 BC, give or

take a few years. So this Septuagint version of the Hebrew Old Testament now in Greek happened somewhere about 250-255 years before Jesus was even born. No one that I know of, both religious and non-religious, argues about the Septuagint compilation. Now we know the Hebrew scriptures are much older than this, and very few people even argue that. But we also have another piece of evidence and that evidence is these same prophecies were translated into Greek from Hebrew approximately 250 years before Christ ever walked this planet. How can you explain then the fulfillment after the fact when you have all these messianic prophecies before the fact? No one argues about the Septuagint and its formation approximately 250 years ago.

What I am saying is only one person ever fulfilled all these Old Testament prophecies concerning a future messiah and that was Jesus when he arrived on the scene. He is the Christ. He is the Messiah. He truly is the Savior of this world.

I just gave you a few scriptures. If you were to lay out all these messianic prophecies as evidence in a court of law, it would be "CASE CLOSED: Jesus is the Savior."

I always have people saying to me, "I don't know if I can trust Jesus." "I am having a hard time trusting the Lord." You have a hard time trusting the Lord because, for some reason, you cannot be convinced that all these messianic prophecies are actual facts about Jesus Christ and that He fulfilled everything. If you can believe all this, and I just gave you a few, anything that ever happens in your life is really icing on the cake because bottom line is this: if you can believe all this and put your trust in the death and resurrection and all of the fulfilled prophecies that go along with it, then you have no problem trusting Jesus about anything in your life. Why don't we trust the Lord? Because we have not been taught the rightly divided word of God to solidify all these truths.

"Well maybe it is because the Spirit didn't draw the person." Don't give me that nonsense. The Spirit does a lot of drawing. That is why you see four different types of soil in the New Testament... 75% failure rate. I believe there is such a high failure rate because the Bible is not laid out. That is what I am trying to do in this very brief bible study on the death, resurrection, and fulfilled messianic prophecies of Jesus Christ. Believe me, this study is brief, but gives enough information to get you started in your own study. Yes, this volume might be 7, 8, 9 or 10 messages, but it is still brief. There is so much evidence to look at if you had sincere desire to know. Unfortunately, there are some preachers behind pulpits don't inspire the desire to know. I don't want to be guilty of that. I believe all of this is good news that leads to Jesus. I'll do what I can to show the world that Jesus is the Savior of this world, CASE CLOSED.

Jesus Gave Advanced Notice about the Resurrection

Open your bible to I Corinthians 15.

In previous teaching we covered:

- 1) Was Jesus a liar, lunatic, or Messiah (Savior of the World)?
- 2) The claims Jesus made about himself to be equal with God.
- 3) How he allowed himself to be worshipped.
- 4) His indirect claims to being God.
- 5) Liar, Lunatic, the Christ — the reasons why he wasn't the first two.
- 6) The evidence of the Old Testament - the fingerprint of God
- 7) Did Jesus deliberately try to fulfill the Messianic prophecies?

In this message, we examine point eight:

Jesus Gave Advanced Notice about the Resurrection

Among all the religions in the world the last 2000 years, only one claims an empty tomb for its founder. Only one claims that its founder is still alive: Jesus is not dead, and you can experience Him in your life daily. There is only one like that in all the religions that have come and gone and are still around in the last 2000 years. And if there is no resurrection of the dead, none of us have hope, and we are very miserable creatures knowing these 70-80 years that we are lucky to live.

The Apostle Paul makes it very clear.

I Corinthians 15:13 - ***“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:”***

So if you believe there is no such thing in the future or the past of a resurrection of dead people, that means you don't believe Christ came out of that grave either and you believe that Christ is dead. He is not risen. He is not sitting at the right side of the heavenly Father ruling and reigning. Someday soon, He will come back and finish what He started. If you don't believe He rose from the dead, then what you believe in is silly.

“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”

What you have put your trust and confidence in to believe to be true is really just a wasted effort. Maybe you keep on doing it because you are stuck in that tradition of doing it. Maybe that is what your parents did. Maybe that is what your parents' parents did, and you just following the tradition of practicing that religion which you really don't believe has

any practical purpose in your life because you don't really believe Christ came out of that tomb.

I Corinthians 15:15 - ***“Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.”***

Not only did these say that Christ didn't rise from the tomb, but also that God had no picture in it because He wasn't even involved in raising Christ from that tomb. So Jesus must have been a liar and so is God if there is no resurrection.

“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins [or, Your sins have not been removed]. ”

Now you might think this is strange, but there is a growing segment in the Christian belief system that believes that Jesus never came out of that tomb. You can do the research yourself. I don't have the time to do it in this series. It is shocking. It is surprising. I was surprised. Why even practice Christianity if you don't believe Jesus came out of that tomb? Because if he didn't, then everything he did that led up to it was one big lie to start with and he was a fraud, which would point to him being a lunatic and a liar.

I Corinthians 15:18 - ***“Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable [lit. pitiful].”***

We are pitiful if this is it. But, Jesus is still alive 2000 years later, and we can experience him daily. The Resurrection, if you really think about it, is the foundational stone. If it was not, it would have collapsed a long time ago. That is why Paul could boldly say in verse 20, ***“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”***

Paul had no doubts; there was just too much evidence. He was obviously closer to the time period than we are now. I have been slowly laying down the evidence of how impossible it would be to make all this up. The statistical probability of it just happening by chance is phenomenal. I mean, you can't even measure it.

Now Jesus did make some outlandish claims about Himself: that he would die, he would allow himself to be killed and he would raise on the third day. In Matthew, we have Jesus' own words that He must die.

Matthew 16:21- ***“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem [which He did], and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes [which He did], and be killed [which happened], and be raised again the third day.”***

This is Jesus' notice about what was about ready to happen shortly after He said these words. He was giving advanced notice about His death and resurrection. It is not just in this verse. We also read it in chapter 17 of Matthew.

Matthew 17:22 - "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry."

They were distressed; they were grieved when they heard this news.

Mark 10:32 - "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid." Amazed and afraid. "And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again."

Three days later, He was going to rise.

Luke 9:22 - "Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day."

Again, Jesus predicts his death and resurrection. Here we have it in one gospel record after another. Now these aren't all the scriptures; I just wanted to give you a few. So, as I said, they were distressed. They were grieved when they heard this news. They were amazed. They were fearful. This kind of news was not accepted well by his disciples. They were expecting a savior who would deliver them from the Roman Empire. They wanted deliverance from the Roman Empire. They wanted to see the Roman Empire defeated, and they thought Jesus would be the one to do that. Everyone knew of a coming messiah, and they thought this messiah was supposed to defeat its enemies once and for all. That didn't happen, and Jesus never gave any inclination that this was his mission. Even though they were taught and heard Jesus' words repeatedly, it didn't sink in. They refused to believe it. In fact, in Matthew it reads,

Matthew 16:21 - "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." He gave advanced notice to His disciples of what was going to come down. But, "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him."

Big Mouth Peter didn't like what he was hearing. Now he just acted out what they all were probably thinking. They were all believing that if he was the Messiah, this wasn't supposed to go down the way Jesus said it would. He was acting out what they all were thinking but didn't have the nerve yet to say, but Peter did.

“...and [he] began to rebuke him saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”

Now Jesus reply was, **“Get thee behind me, Satan.”** Not that Peter was Satan himself, but he was being his representative or his mouthpiece at the time — because the last thing Satan wanted to see was Jesus going to the cross to remove the sin of this world. As I said before, he removed all sin no matter where it is, past, present, and future. He removed all sin. Now it won't benefit you any if you don't have a change of mind and recognize Jesus and what he has done. It won't be beneficial to you, but he came to remove all sin and Satan knew that. Satan was using every angle he could, including his own close disciple to say and rebuke, **“Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be [or happen] unto thee.”**

As I mentioned, they were full of grief. This was the last thing they wanted to see happen. Why? Because they still didn't understand the scriptures, and John makes that every clear.

John 20:9 - **“For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.”**

How could they know not the scripture when Jesus over and over gave them notice of what was going to happen? How could they not know? The women who saw the empty grave came back and gave a report, and they knew how horrific Jesus' death was, but they still refused to believe what he said, what he gave advanced notice about regarding what was going to happen, that could have happened.

Let's put this in perspective, folks, for you and me. I can maybe somewhat understand our doubt. We've never seen anyone come back to life who was officially dead for three days and nights. That is a long time to be dead; but, these apostles actually saw Jesus bring people back to life that were not just dead 5 or 10 minutes or even for a couple of hours, but were dead for days. He brought them back to life. He had that power. Wouldn't you think twice, “Well if he could bring those people back to life, why could he bring himself back to life?” They were dense at that moment. They were spiritual blockheads. Why? They didn't put any trust in the Scripture on what exactly was going to happen. They didn't put any trust in Jesus while he was still living in the flesh and blood body concerning his statements about what was going to happen. Over and over he reminded them of what was going to take place. In other words, they were faithless, non-trusting, probably disappointed, and still grieving that Jesus was not the messiah that they hoped he would be. Now to their credit, they turned that around and each one of them (except maybe John) would go to their death proclaiming Jesus was the messiah.

“For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.”

What they were hoping was if Jesus was going to die, he would die for them as their savior freeing them from the Romans. What they eventually realized is that Jesus died so they could be set free from their sins. That is what they kept proclaiming once that truth

sunk in. Now, with all Jesus' sayings and teachings, this truth was only understood after the fact of the resurrection, not before. If you think you are a slow learner, what about these guys?

Next time we will look at the evidence of Jesus' death and resurrection and maybe even explore some of the possibilities of why Jesus may not have been risen from the dead. I believe that He was, but let's look at it from a different perspective and play the devil's advocate — not to convince ourselves that he didn't arise from the dead, but to convince others that He did.

In this message I wanted to point out the advanced notice Jesus gave his disciples. They didn't believe it, they didn't trust it, and they were still in shock when He came and appeared to them after His resurrection. Yet, they became heroes of faith, apostles that would take that message of the Good News and be willing to die for it if necessary to bring eternal life to others. That is quite a change, if you ask me. The only way that kind of change could take place is by seeing the evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. Maybe you can convince me that one or two of these turned into lunatics themselves and perpetuated a lie, but it wasn't just these disciples that would die for their faith in Christ. We know about the disciples because they are in the Scriptures, but what about the scores that died around the same time for the cause of Christ that are not talked about, that are not preached about, that were willing to go to their death if it meant bringing life to others? If we have time in this series, I'd like to look outside the 11 or 12 (if you count Paul) in that period that also paid the price. Either all these people were all crazy or they knew something they could put their trust and confidence in based on what they heard and saw. To them, it was worth dying for if necessary.

Could Jesus Survive the Crucifixion?

Open your bible to Matthew 27.

In this message, we are going to go into the kind of beating Jesus received.

Matthew 27:26 - *“Then released he [Pilate released] Barabbas unto them [the Jews crying for Jesus’ death]: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.”*

When they had severely beaten Jesus, when they had whipped him, when they had scourged him, that is when he was released to go die on a cross. So our question is this:

Could Jesus have survived the crucifixion?

Some translations read that Jesus was flogged. Flogging, or whipping, or scourging was very cruel. It usually consisted of thirty-nine lashes. But we already know by historical records that are available that most of the time it ended up being more than just thirty-nine lashes. They use a certain whip that has a braided leather thong with metal balls and pieces of sharp bone.



Flagrum

This image doesn't show the bones, but it has the metal balls. It is representative of the idea of what you would be flogged with.

It would cause deep bruises and contusions, and the sharp bones would cut through the muscles. Many times, the spine would be exposed because most of the time, they'd beat you as you were facing forward against a log or a tree, leaving exposed your back, your buttocks and your legs. This whipping would cause deep cuts that were concentrated from the shoulders, down the back, and all the way down to the legs.

Eusebius was a third century historian. His words were, *“The sufferer’s veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews and bowels of the victim were open to exposure.”*

Now many people who were flogged died before they even made it to their crucifixion. Jesus didn't, but many did. They would go walking to their place of crucifixion under tremendous pain, and some underwent Hypovolemic shock. Hypovolemic shock is when you lose a lot of blood caused by the scourging. The medical definition for Hypovolemic shock is as follows:

“A form of shock; a condition where the heart is unable to supply enough blood to the body because of blood loss, circulatory failure, or inadequate blood volume.”

It was cruel, folks. Jesus was beaten savagely before He even made it to the cross. Why am I even mentioning this? Because there are some people who believe that Jesus was able to resuscitate in the tomb during those three days and three nights and that He survived the cross. He couldn't have survived the cross. They only mention that because they do not realize what He went through before getting to the cross and even on the cross. His death was complete.

Here is some info about flogging:

Brutal flogging was normal before any crucifixion...

It was normal and not out of the ordinary to be flogged before you were crucified.

...except maybe in the case of mass crucifixions when the number to be killed each day allowed no time for the whips. For example, at one time, after the beginning of the general rebellion of the Jews against Roman tyranny after 66 AD and before the expulsion from the Holy Land of thousands of the more prominent survivors, the rate of crucifixion was reported to be as high as 500 per day, men women and children.

The flagrum was a whip with a short handle and generally two or three long thick thongs, each weighted at some distance from their extremity with lead balls or mutton bones. [Some included both.] In action, the thongs cut the skin, while the balls or bones created deep contusions. The result was significant hemorrhage and considerable weakening of the vital resistance of the victim. In compensation, if one may call it that, this weakening shortened their agony on the cross

Hebrew law was strict on this [the number of lashes one would receive].

The limit was no more than 40. By the way, do you think they would be that strict with Jesus? I don't think they ever wanted somebody dead more than Jesus.

The Pharisees, in order to make sure that they never broke the law, gave only 39 lashes. The Romans had no limit, except for the fact that the victims should be left with just enough strength to carry their crosses to the place of execution. As the man who condemned Jesus to be flogged was Pilate, the Roman Proconsul, the number of lashes could be unlimited. The Gospels report that Jesus could not carry his cross without calling to an onlooker for help. This suggests a very severe beating. Those who have studied the traces of the flogging on the Shroud [The Shroud of Turin] have identified over 100 lash marks.

I already told you my opinion many years ago, I believe the Shroud of Turin was Jesus' burial cloth.

[Note: [Click Here](#) to listen to *Sudarium & The Shroud*, preached in 2009; In the Pastor's Library under the subheading "Books" can be found the written material, *Sudarium*.]

What were the methods of flogging?

- *The victims were tied to columns with their hands above their heads, so we seldom find lash wounds on the arms or forearms.*

Examining the wounds on the Shroud for instance and what they could microscopically pick up when they were able to examine it tells a great deal.

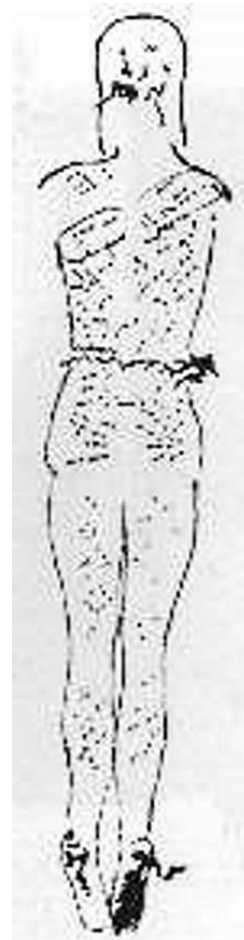
- *The marks are all over the trunk of the body, head, shoulders, and upper legs.*

We know there would be marks on the head because they put a crown of thorns on his head, piercing into his skull.

- *Most are on the back of the body indicating that the victim was tied so that he faced the column.*

We can see the bloody mess in this artist's rendition all the way down to His bloody feet, which were nailed to a cross.

- *There are no traces on the forearms which must have been raised above the head.*
- *There are many traces on the chest, indicating the victim was not tied to a wide column but most probably to a thin one, for example a post, so the lashes could wrap around the body.*
- *The number was between 100 and 120, mostly in groups of two or three.*
- *They are in a fan shape, spreading out from two origins, one on each side of the body. The centre of the wounds inflicted from the right are a little higher than those inflicted from the left. The probable explanation is that the executioner standing on the right was taller than the one standing on the left. One of them showed a tendency to lacerate the legs.*



(I think the Catholic Church should release the Shroud so that it may be further examined with more detail. I don't know why they won't. It would only prove Jesus was wrapped

around with that burial cloth and probably shut the mouths of a lot of these naysayers that say it is not the burial cloth. The original cloth was in a fire about 1100-1200 years after it has been used as a burial cloth. To restore it, another piece of cloth was sewed onto the original linen cloth to try to repair some of the damage the fire had caused. The naysayers make their assumptions on a corner piece sample of the cloth that basically was the patchwork repair section, which had been added to the original cloth following the fire. It's bad science as they examined the wrong section of the cloth, not a piece of the original linen... but that is another long story.)

We can calculate the amount of destructive energy that was transferred to the body during the flogging, i.e. the total kinetic energy in all those swinging lashes, which was converted on impact into destructive force.

- The number of lashes was 100 to 120, so let's calculate with 110 as an average.*

- The weights at the end of each thong or lash were two lead balls, each 1 centimetre in diameter, having a total weight of about 18 grammes. To this we can add 2 grammes for the weight of the leather (assuming that at least 5 centimetres of leather hit the target at the same time as the lead weights); so the total weight was about 20 grammes.*

Now we need to know the speed of the blow when it hit the body. This can be assessed by comparison with known facts from another activity with similar movements -- throwing a javelin. It is held directly in the hand, about 60 centimetres from the shoulder, and its launch velocity is around 100 kilometres per hour, i.e. about 28 metres per second.

How does the whip compare with this javelin throw? Well, if we count 60 cms for the length of the swinging arm, 50 centimetres for the length of the handle, and another 70 centimetres for the length of the thongs to the the lead weights at the extremity, it is clear that the radius of arc from the shoulder to the lead weights is about 1.8 metres, three times longer than the radius of swing when a javelin is launched. This tripled radius means that the velocity at the circumference can be tripled also, giving a terminal velocity of around 90 metres per second. (Out of conservatism, let us reduce this to 60 metres per second. After all, this is not rocket science. We just need approximations to get a general idea of the kinetics, and the amount of energy that gets smashed into, and absorbed by, the victim's body).

The total energy transferred during the flogging is therefore around $(1/2 m v^2) \times 110$, i.e. 396 kgm, or around 3883 joules. What does this mean? Well, the kinetic energy in a 9mm parabellum round fired by an

automatic pistol or sub-machine gun is only 36.5 kgm, so the total energy transferred by the flogging was equivalent to the energy conveyed by the impact of nine 9mm bullets. For readers more familiar with a 0.357-inch Magnum, one of the most powerful handgun / munitions combinations available, the kinetic energy of a round fired from this is 100 kgm, so the energy transferred by the flogging would have been equivalent to the energy released in the impact of four 0.357 magnum rounds.

The ballistic specialist, M. H. Josserand, used a coefficient of efficiency for munitions, which he called stopping power (StP). This corresponds to the energy of the projectile (in kgm) multiplied by its surface in cm².

$$1 \text{ StP} = 1 \text{ Kgm} \times 1 \text{ cm}^2.$$

He devised a trauma scale, relating StP values to the pathological consequences.

- lower than 5: no effect of shock.*
- between 6 and 15: light shock.*
- between 16 and 35: reduced shock.*
- greater than 35: serious shock and stunning, knock-out or unconsciousness.*

In the case of this flogging, we have calculated, from the total energy of 396 kgm, and an impact surface area of 2.5 cm², that the StP would be 990. This is 28 times the amount of impact energy required to knock a man out of combat. With two thongs on a whip, the 110 lash marks must have resulted from 55 lashes (arm swings), and each of these 55 contained enough energy to stun the victim. Obviously, in using this comparison, we must remember that an impacting pistol round releases its energy more rapidly than a whip lash, and thus causes greater devastation, but the overall order of magnitude is the same, so it is easy to see how devastating a flogging is to the human body.

Let us calculate now, the area of skin surface damaged, and the volume of muscular-cutaneous contusion

When something is banged brutally against, or into, your flesh, each impact compresses violently the muscular-cutaneous plane situated immediately underneath the impacting object, and also a margin of at

least 5mm around it. In this flogging, the surface affected by each impact was about 8 cm², and the volume bruised 12 cm³. Multiplying this by 110 impacts we get a surface area of 880 cm², and a bruised volume of 1320 cm³, i.e. 1.3 litres. This is a huge volume of crushed tissue in which the cells are gravely damaged, their membranes ruptured, and their contents liberated and leaking.

Now don't worry if you don't understand all of this. Just seek to grasp the point.

The extremely serious nature of the trauma received is discussed elsewhere with the physical and pathological effects of the flogging in other sources.

I think we don't really need to go into all of that because I think you get the point.

The images created by the yellow stains seen [on the linen] are three dimensional but have no particular orientation. On the contrary, the wounds caused by the flogging have a direction, and seen from an angle of 45 degrees, one can see, with the aid of a computer, which traces were caused by the whip on the left, and which by the whip on the right. This characteristic is seen only in the flogging. No other mark on the shroud shows any particular orientation. We see here a detail which escapes any attempt at falsification. There is no doubt that the body wrapped in the shroud suffered a severe flogging with weighted whips.

Fifty-five lashes with a force of a .357 Magnum in firepower. Like this study said, the firepower of a .357 Magnum comes at you much more rapidly, which is why it causes the type of damage it does. By comparison, the force of the scourging gets distributed differently, but the impact is still the same. That is what Jesus went through. Whether He received thirty-nine or fifty-five will only depend upon how that whip was designed. Whether it was thirty-nine or fifty-five, it still would not make any difference. He was severely beaten before He was handed over to be crucified — and He was unmercifully crucified. We read the following in John 19:16-19.

“Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led him away.

And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

After being beaten, after being scourged, after the impact of a modern-day firearm (. e.g., .357 Magnum) ... not only was He whipped and scourged, but He was also beaten, with a crown of thorns digging into His skull, and undergoing tremendous pain. I can't even imagine the exhaustion that came with the pain. Many times, in the situation

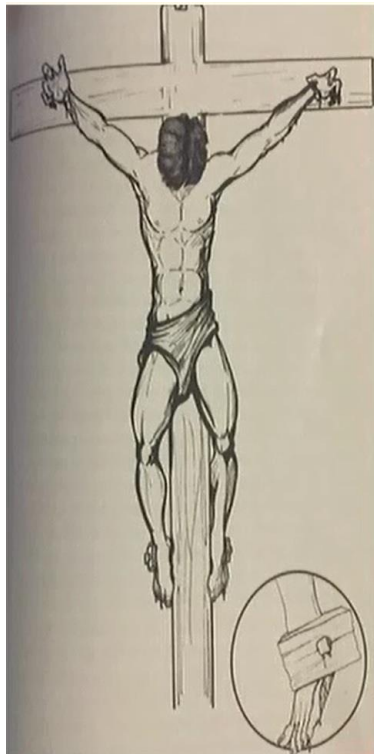
of dealing with my back, I find myself exhausted because of the constant pain. I can't even imagine what Jesus went through.

I don't believe Jesus carried a cross up to Golgotha like in the movies. I think it was just a piece of wood that would eventually hang on another piece of wood to be crucified. But before he got to that crucified state, after being beaten severely, in exhaustion, in excruciating pain, he had to carry a piece of the cross to his execution. Once there he was laid down on the cross. His hands were stretched out on the horizontal beam and nailed to the cross. The nails were about five to seven inches long with a very sharpened point at one end. The nail would probably go through the median nerve in the wrist — which created more excruciating pain that would in itself be really unbearable.

In fact, most people don't know this. We use the word excruciating quite a bit. A new word was created because of this and that word was "excruciating", which literally means (not modern definitions) "out of the cross".

Then they hoist Jesus up and the cross beam was attached to the vertical pole. As I said, it was not like the cross you see everywhere in churches. And of course, hanging on that cross the way he was hanging probably dislocated both shoulders. His feet were pierced; his wrists were pierced. To exhale those being crucified had to push on a block at the lower end of the cross, tearing more into ripped up feet because of the nails. Then a slow death resulted; they would eventually suffocate.

Now the other two that hung along with Jesus were not so severely beaten. They didn't have a crown of thorns. The Romans gave Jesus all they could give Him without killing Him. It is amazing He didn't die because, as I said earlier, many died because of the scourging before they reached the cross.



This is a good example that displays how Jesus was hung, except I do not believe he was hung on a “+” shaped cross. Move the cross beam to the top of the pole and that is how Jesus was hung, wrists pierced. Instead of one foot on top of the other, they were nailed on the side as displayed at the bottom right of the image.

This is not a very uplifting message because I want to prove the point that there was no way that anyone could survive this type of brutality. There is just no way. Now go to John 19:31-35.

“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was a high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare

record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.”

To speed up the death of a criminal who was being crucified or if the timing wasn't right (i.e., so it wouldn't fall into the Sabbath day), the Jewish leaders insisted that the legs of any be broken. Why? Because doing that prevented them from pushing off that wood block at the base of that cross to lift themselves up so they wouldn't suffocate, providing them the ability to get air in their lungs. If they didn't have that ability, death would come very quickly. They would die of asphyxiation. What the Scripture is saying is the soldiers did come around, at the request of Jewish leaders, to make sure they didn't die into the Sabbath day because they needed to die before the Sabbath day.

There is a medical doctor, a physiologist at one of the universities of Europe, and he wrote:

“When the soldier pierced with a spear the side of Christ, He was already dead; and the flow of blood and water was either a natural phenomenon explicable by natural causes or it was a miracle. That St. John thought it, if not to be miraculous, at least to be unusual, appears plainly from the comment he makes upon it, and from the emphatic manner in which he solemnly declares his accuracy in narrating it.

Repeated observations and experiments made upon men and animals have led me to the following results—

When the left side is freely pierced after death by a large knife, comparable in size with a Roman spear, three distinct cases may be noted:

- *1st. No flow of any kind follows the wound, except a slight trickling of blood.*
- *2nd. A copious flow of blood only follows the wound.*
- *3rd. A flow of water only, succeeded by a few drops of blood, follows the wound.*

Of these three cases, the first is that which usually occurs; the second is found in cases of death by drowning and by strychnia and may be demonstrated by destroying an animal with that poison, and it can be proved to be the natural case of a crucified person; and the third is found in cases of death from pleurisy, pericarditis, and rupture of the heart. With the foregoing cases most anatomists who have devoted their attention to this subject are familiar; but the two following cases, although readily explicable on the physiological principles, are not recorded in the books (except by S. John).

- *4th. A copious flow of water, succeeded by a copious flow of blood, follows the wound.*
- *5th. A copious flow of blood, succeeded by a copious flow of water, follows the wound.*

Death by crucifixion causes a condition of blood in the lungs similar to that produced by drowning and strychnia; the fourth case would occur in a crucified person who had previously to crucifixion suffered from pleuritic effusion; and the fifth case would occur in a crucified person, who had died upon the cross from rupture of the heart. The history of the days preceding our Lord's crucifixion effectually excludes the supposition of pleurisy, which is also out of the question if blood first and water afterwards followed the wound. There remains, therefore, no supposition possible to explain the recorded phenomenon except the combination of the crucifixion and rupture of the heart.

That rupture of the heart was the cause of the death of Christ is ably maintained; and that rupture of the heart occurred I firmly believe... (The apostle John recording a minutely detailed description of his observations at Golgotha.)

Others have come to the following conclusion.

The importance of this is obvious. It shows that the narrative in St. John 19 could never have been invented; that the facts recorded must have been seen by an eyewitness and that the eyewitness was so astonished that he apparently thought the phenomenon miraculous.”

Even after Jesus' death, when they pierced His side, what flowed first and what came second was a phenomenon, according to the medical establishment. He was testified dead. I mean Roman soldiers took their own lives in their hands if they misdiagnosed the situation and pronounced someone who was alive as dead. It would have meant their death for the misinformation. So, they would be sure that someone was dead. Even though Jesus looked dead hanging there on the cross and the fact that there was no need to break his bones [which fulfills a prophecy given about Jesus (Ex. 12:24, Num. 9:12, Ps. 34:20) that He would never receive a broken bone in his body, even during the crucifixion] they verified He was dead by piercing him with a sword.

If you think about it, God is in control. They could have broken his bones, and if he was still alive but unconscious, he could have reacted to those bones being broken. So, what they did, even though they thought he was dead, is make sure that if he wasn't dead, he was going to be dead — God controlling history once again — and they pierced his side, reaching all the way to a place in his heart; that caused the blood and water to flow in a certain way that even the writer of the gospel record of this event saw as unusual. (Remember, we just looked at the five reasons why and what could have happened once that piercing took place.)

These soldiers were experts in murdering people. They didn't send lightweights up there from the Roman divisions of soldiers. They sent the experts who knew how to kill people. So when they said someone was dead, they were dead. They pierced his side with a spear all the way to his heart to be sure he was dead. He was not just unconscious to be resuscitated at a later time. That would have killed him on the spot.

I don't have time to read from other authors on this subject matter from within the medical field who declare Jesus could in no way have survived that type of piercing, especially after being beaten near to death to start with before he ever got to the cross.

Now what happened afterward? As we continue reading in John 19:38 it states, *“And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.”* That is a lot of weight, my friend. *“Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.”*

So Joseph of Arimathaea went to Pilate and begged for His body. Pilate released Jesus' body to Joseph, and they started the process of burying Him. Let's back it up to those nails and how He was hanging there on the cross and look at what they did to His body.

Archeologists in 1968 discovered in Jerusalem the remains of 36 individuals, all Jews, who had died c. 70 AD (approx. 30 years after Jesus' crucifixion) during, supposedly, the rebellion and uprising against Rome.

One of the individuals crucified was named Yehohanan. They found (as part of the record) a seven-inch spike that was still in this crucified person and they found the spike in his foot. They also found small slivers of olive wood from his cross that were also attached to the back of his body.

Yehohanan - nailed by the Romans

Model and actual ankle at the left – cast at the right

Think about that. Imagine being pierced with those nails, those 5-to-7 inch nails, not on the top of your feet but going through the sides of your feet. How could have Jesus have walked away from that? But for some reason, some believe that he survived the flogging (between 39-55 lashes), severely beaten, with his body ripped apart, exposing His spine, muscle tissue ripped apart, leaving him so weak he would hardly carry the crossbeam of the cross. He gets to the cross, they nail him; he is hanging there, pierced, and then fakes his death and revives in the tomb.

He could have been nailed the way it is depicted in the photo, or it could have been the other way. I am not going to get that picky about how Jesus was nailed to the cross. All I know is he was nailed to the cross. His feet could have still been on blocks if he were nailed through the sides of the feet. The block would have been more on the side where his feet were hanging. I've mentioned some evidence of that. Were they using this method in Jesus' time? No one knows for sure, but my guess is it was. In either case, it could not have been possible that Jesus somehow walked away from that tomb.

According to the medical establishment, the way those liquids flowed from His side and the sequence in which they flowed proves only one thing - that Jesus was dead. Now if he was not dead, the flow of what came out first would have been reversed. But since he was dead, what flowed after that piercing only confirms that he was dead first.

THEN to add insult to injury, add trying to convince us that he had the strength to roll

away a heavy stone that sealed his own tomb and past the soldiers guarding it without ever being detected. Sounds impossible, doesn't it? That person wouldn't even have been able to move, my friend.



One more thing and then I will conclude.

The goal of a crucifixion was to inflict the maximum agony for the longest possible time. Victims were typically left hanging, or their bodies were taken down and left on the ground near the cross until the animals were finished with them.

That is why Joseph of Arimathaea went to Pontus Pilate to beg for Jesus' body - so he could give Him a proper burial. The aforementioned is another thing most people don't know. See, the Romans were trying to use this as a crime deterrent. They wanted to make the most impact with each crucifixion to prevent uprisings so people would not come against the Roman Empire.

After taking an individual down from the cross, they would leave them there and then the night animals looking for their next meal would come and tear their bodies apart. I know this all sounds horrible and it really is.

Some of the bodies were placed on trash heaps and the bones may have been simply scattered after the animals were done with them unless loved ones claimed them.

Victims could hang on the cross for days before they finally died. Depending on what was convenient for the Romans, the victims arms could be nailed to the cross at the wrists, which were considered part of the hands; or the arms could be tied to the cross with ropes. The feet seem always to have been nailed to the cross.

It is common to imagine the crucified Jesus at a considerable height off the ground, but it is now believed most crosses were no more than nine feet tall. Allowing room at the top of the cross for the sign that was affixed detailing the victim's crime, it is likely that the feet of the victim were at most three feet off the ground. Jesus hung on the cross just two to three feet above his mother, the disciple John, the soldiers, and those who hurled insults at him. He could look into their eyes and they could look into His. They were much closer than most imagine, something you can visualize by standing atop a chair beside someone standing at ground level. This was the proximity of Jesus to the people at the foot of the cross.

Just imagine that. Stand there and have someone stand on a chair about 3-5 feet away. That is the distance Jesus was from the people and the Roman soldiers.

I think I have given you enough horrible descriptions of how people were crucified. Now intensify that by what Jesus went through. He just didn't experience a crucifixion as someone experienced it. I firmly believe he could see things that others couldn't see. I believe when he was hanging on that cross, he not only saw his mother, John, mockers, Pharisees, Roman soldiers, and all the physical elements we can relate to. I believe he also saw the unseen, probably laughing and mocking him, thinking that he was

defeated, even though they knew better. They knew all the prophecies, but they were going to rejoice in the moment.

The unseen spiritual enemies that we face, that are unseen to us, were seen to Jesus as he hung there on that cross to take the blow, to take the scourging, to take the whipping, to take the nails, to take everything that we deserved. He took it for us. Well, the physical element we relate to and the unseen element that we can't see didn't have the last laugh. Jesus died, but he came back to life. He rose from the dead. He did not survive a resuscitation; he was revived by a resurrection. A dead Jesus came back to life with a new body and the same message: I died so you can live.

Now if Jesus was a fraud, if he was a liar, if he was a madman, why would He put himself through any of this? At the first five minutes of scourging, why not breakdown and confess, "I just made it up. I was lying. I am not the Messiah. I am not your savior." He could have easily broken and if not then, definitely on the way to the cross, but He didn't. He knew what His mission was. He knew what His purpose was. He knew what pleased the Father. How can you say it pleased the Father to see His only begotten son suffer? Because He knew that would give us life and He knew the outcome. Jesus would have victory. He would get a new body, a resurrected body, to give us hope that someday when this one wears out, we will get a new one, too - one that will go with us throughout eternity - that won't experience any more pain or suffering of any type that we experience in the physical flesh now. Jesus wasn't a fraud. He was the Savior, the Messiah. And NO, he could not have survived the cross.

There is a lot of information you can look up for yourselves, concerning all the medical explanations of how it was impossible. There is plenty out there. I just wanted to introduce this to those who don't know: what some of the experiences Jesus went through before He even got to the cross were and what happened when He got to the cross. This will show how it is physically impossible to survive anything like that.

According to the historical records we have now, most people didn't even survive getting to the cross. Those mass crucifixions of 500 didn't go through everything Jesus or some of the more serious crucifixions did. In those mass crucifixions, they made crosses and put people up on the cross without even being scourged and they would hang on their cross for days on end and eventually die through exhaustion, heat, and the elements. Eventually, if you were Jews and the Sabbath was coming around, the Roman soldiers would break your legs and you would die of asphyxiation because you just couldn't carry your own weight any longer and your lungs would collapse on themselves. Then when they took you down from the cross, they'd just lay you there and let the animals eat you, tearing the rest of your flesh apart. If there were loved ones to collect bones that they thought were yours, they would bury whatever was left of you.

But prophecy came true. Jesus' legs would not be broken, just as prophesied in the Old Testament. He died on that cross before the Romans even pierced His side with a spear. The proof of that is what flowed out of Him first and what came out of Him second.

John was right, the Gospel record is true, and we should have confidence in it. As John testifies, it was written and laid down for the record to give us confidence in God's Word. It was a horrible event. It was one that saved us.

This was tough to get through because I left so much out I wanted to get to, but I think you get the point. It is never something I look forward to when studying it, reading it, or even preaching how Jesus died because it was so horrific. I thank Him for what He did daily. That is what going to the Table of the Lord is all about - remembering Him and what He did for us. But it is tough to research it out, it's tough to preach it, and it's tough to teach it. It's tough period to see what He had to go through for our benefit. Thank God that he did, or we would be most miserable knowing there would be no future with him. Satan thought he had the last laugh. No, he did not. Victory came to Jesus. He won the battle and he wins the war. It was all for our benefit.

That was just His death. That was just half of the story. He had to rise again for His mission to be complete. That is what we will look at next time.

Did Someone Remove the Body?

Open your bible to Matthew 27.

In previous teaching we covered the following:

- 1) Was Jesus a liar, lunatic, or Messiah (Savior of the World)?
- 2) The claims Jesus made about himself to be equal with God.
- 3) How he allowed himself to be worshipped.
- 4) His indirect claims to being God.
- 5) Liar, Lunatic, the Christ — the reasons why he wasn't the first two.
- 6) The evidence of the Old Testament - the fingerprint of God
- 7) Did Jesus deliberately try to fulfill the Messianic prophecies?
- 8) Jesus gave advanced notice about the resurrection.
- 9) Could Jesus survive the crucifixion?

In this message, we will address this question:

Did someone remove Jesus' body from the tomb?

Matthew 27:57-59 reads ***“When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth...”***

We know this tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathaea. By all records, Joseph of Arimathaea was a wealthy individual who also came to be a disciple of Jesus Christ who owned a tomb nearby the crucifixion. He decided to bury Jesus in his tomb.

Now the disciples didn't expect Jesus' resurrection — even though Jesus made it very clear to them a resurrection was coming. If they really believed in his resurrection, they would have made sure that His burial site (where his tomb was) was not left unattended for one minute, at least for three days and three nights. If you had a family member or a very close friend, someone that you could actually call your disciple, and over and over you told this person, “I am dying, but you watch and see, in three days and three nights I am out of this place. You will bury me, but I will be out of there in 3 days and 3 nights.” If for some reason out of fear (or whatever) you decided it was too risky the first day and night, wouldn't you think by the third day and third night you would have had lookouts? At least a vigil going of at least one person to see if it was possible (even if it seemed improbable after three days and three nights)? They had enough people that each person could have taken a half hour shift to verify what Jesus taught would happen. Think about it: even though the disciples saw Lazarus come back from the dead, they were still blinded to the truth. Even after spending all that time with Jesus before His death they were still

blinded to the truth. And, it wasn't just the inner circle themselves, but the outer circle as well.

Now the Jews did want to be sure and have verification. We are guaranteed of that. During Jesus' time there was an extraordinary interest in Jewish martyrs, Jewish religious figures, Jewish holy men, and their grave sites were cared for and honored. I mention this because some people say the disciples went to the wrong tomb, and that is why it was empty. They claim the grave site became lost or they didn't know where the grave was. No such luck. It doesn't add up because, like I said, martyrs, holy men, religious figures were honored; wherever they would place them, their custom was to make sure the site was protected and cared for, at least in the initial stages following death. They definitely would have been there after the Sabbath. I believe one of the reasons why we don't see any disciples there is because everybody was running scared. But the Jews, they wanted to be sure that no one disturbed his grave – and not because they honored Jesus, but because they listened to what He had to say. They didn't believe it, but they listened. Therefore, the tomb would not be lost so soon after Jesus was buried in it. It would have been known to Jews and Christians alike (even though they weren't called Christians back then). There would be no resurrection faith, there would be no faith in Jesus Christ, and there would be no Christianity today if a resurrection didn't take place because the resurrection faith would not have survived. There is no way it could have survived in the face of an unemptied tomb, a tomb with a corpse in it. The apostles wouldn't have risked their lives and died preaching a resurrection message that never occurred. There is no way.

Let's take a more in depth look at his burial.

John 19:39-40 - ***“And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.”***

Now granted, most Christians would not look up how Jews were buried in the time of Jesus. Why would you? How does it pertain to the story? You already believe Christ came out of that tomb and you are trusting in Jesus, so for you, you really don't need this part of the story. But I don't think it is by accident that this is put in the story. Think about it; Why would we need to know about a mixture of myrrh and aloes about 100 pounds' weight? (Some think it was only 70-75 lbs.) No matter what, that is still a lot of myrrh and aloes, plus anything else in that mixture. Normally you wouldn't even use that much. Why so much? Why is that significant?

First, let's not forget, this was not an ordinary Jewish burial that took place. Jesus didn't have just a pierced heart and lung and possibly a broken rib. Jesus was beaten brutally by the scouring. He had a crown of thorns on his head. In that linen cloth, up and down his body you could see all the marks of someone that was beaten savagely. [pg.43] Most would have died. His hands were pierced. His feet, or at least the ankles, were pierced. Then the spear. This was a body brutally beaten and tortured from head to toe and then

crucified. Ten pounds of myrrh and aloes would not have been sufficient to keep the body from stinking — including stinking in a more rapid fashion the way it would have due to the damage inflicted upon it. They came with everything they had to cover this dead man from head to toe with this mixture before they even wrapped him up. Now they probably did it very quickly because they're fighting time and had to get it done before the Sabbath started. That was a Jewish tradition, and it was going to be kept. So, they had to get that done quickly and whatever they did, they still didn't think it was sufficient because they came back and wanted, if possible, to add to the ointments, the myrrh, and the aloes that were already applied after the three days and three nights had come and gone, to protect and preserve in a dignified way a decaying body as much as they could.

John 19:39-40 - *“And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.”*

I want you to have some understanding of what was happening here because this will get to a point where you will ask yourself, “How did Jesus resuscitate, heal fast enough (if that was even possible), and escape from the wrapping?” That would not have easily been done.

“What do you mean ‘not easily done’? Just unwrap it.”

No, not so fast. That is not how it works, my friend. That is why we have the account of the details in the story. This is why we are told what took place during Jesus' burial.

Myrrh is a gummy resin-type spice that adhered to the body. The oil produced from it was thick and very sticky, with the consistency of honey. They didn't just spread it a little bit here and a little bit there. They had enough of this mixture to *really* cover Jesus' body heavily with this thick substance. It was like the superglue of burial practices. They would spread it on his body and then put the wrapping on top of that. That wrapping would stick to the glue and the glue would stick to the body.

I don't think it was by accident either, even though it was common, that myrrh was used as one of the mixture ingredients. Remember, when the wise men brought gifts to the baby Jesus (who was probably around 2 years old at the time)? They brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. To make a long story short: gold was to honor a king; frankincense was used when you would anoint a king (and worship the king, but mostly anointing the king); myrrh was used when you would bury a king. The significance of those items and their uses remained even at the time of his death. He was to be honored as a king, he was to be the anointed king, and he would die and be buried, covered in myrrh and aloes. That was part of the mixture.

Myrrh would adhere to the body, so if you were to remove the grave clothes, you would have to remove them with patience and go through some great difficulty in separating the linen cloth from the body because of that gummy glue-type superglue used in their burial

practices. How do I know that? Just read the story of Lazarus. Things are not in Scripture by accident.

John 11:44 - ***“And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”***

Lazarus came back to life, and he was still bound in his grave clothes and with a napkin. What did Jesus say to the individuals watching this taking place? He said, ***“Loose him, and let him go.”*** Listen, if I was dead and I came back to life, the first thing I would be doing is taking that napkin binding off of my face. Incidentally, a napkin was also used when Jesus was buried. Think about it, after Lazarus rose from the dead, he came forth wrapped; he was bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. So basically, what Jesus was saying was take off the grave clothes and let him go. What I want you to note here is that Lazarus’ grave clothes had to be removed from his body by someone else because it would have been difficult for him to do it by himself. They would be wrapped tightly (not quite like a mummy), and it would be tight fitting because of the myrrh mixture holding it all together. So, if Jesus somehow revived himself, seems the same situation would be present. And if Jesus somehow revived himself, what a miraculous type of reviving that would be if you think about it, considering the way he was beaten and tortured, the way he was crucified, and the way the Roman soldiers responsible for his death verified he was dead before anyone could take him away. There are the little things in the Scripture that we can read right by, but they are there for a meaning and a purpose, to fill in more details about what took place 2000 years ago.

Matthew 27:59-60 - ***“And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.”***

Now based on available archeological evidence that goes back almost to the beginning, nearer to when this event happened in recorded history, some have speculated about how much this stone might have weighed, and they calculated that the average is about a ton, about 2000 pounds. It was more than likely circular in structure, and so it was easier to move than just picking up a 2000-pound stone. Nevertheless, it was heavy, requiring several men with men’s strength to move that stone. Therefore Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, was concerned and preoccupied with this dilemma of who would roll the stone away from the tomb, so they could gain entrance and continue to anoint Jesus’ body with the mixture. They certainly could not have done it by themselves; it was too big and too heavy.

Mark 16:1-3 - ***“And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”***

They were preoccupied with this dilemma. They obviously didn't feel they had enough strength to do it. So, who was going to do it? Furthermore, who was going to convince the guards (if they knew about the guards, and that is a big 'if') that they needed access to anoint Jesus body? Once they got there and saw the guards, if they were sleeping like some have claimed, the rolling of this approximately 2000-pound stone would have made some noise. It would have been heard. It was not something that you wouldn't have noticed and woken up, even if you were in a deep sleep.

Now as we follow the story in Matthew we read as follows:

Matthew 27:62-64 - ***“Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate...”*** Once again, we see the religious leaders. Why? Because they knew - they had heard what Jesus said. So the chief priests and the Pharisees came, ***“Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver [referring to Jesus] said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day [in other words, guard it], lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.”***

“While he was yet alive...” Here is another clue that Jesus was dead before they took him down from the cross. The Pharisees would have made sure of it also. They were convinced. They didn't believe Jesus would come out of the grave with resurrection power, but they were fearful that the disciples, in an effort to keep perpetuating the lie of the “deceiver” (in the Pharisee mindset), would steal the body and keep preaching a message about Jesus; but not just a Jesus that walked the earth for 3 ½ years preaching the good news that was about to happen, his death, resurrection, and eventually his succession, but now, his actual resurrection and ascension that gave us peace, grace, and mercy, and removed our sin. No, they couldn't have that happen. They didn't want that to happen, so they said, “You know Pilate, those disciples are tricky conniving characters.” I don't even know where they would get that from. We don't see that anywhere in the scriptures, even when Jesus was being tried first by the religious leaders and then by the Romans. Where are his disciples? Nowhere to be found except maybe Peter in the distance. Think about it. “...just in case they want to perpetuate the story and the lie, you better protect this tomb, so no one steals Jesus' body from it.” So, what did Pilate do? He said, basically, “Okay, take a guard” — and not just one guard by the way, a guard meant something else in the Roman military structure — “and go make that tomb secure.” And they went and made the tomb secure, put a guard there, and also put a seal on the stone to make sure the body remained in that tomb.

Some believe a Roman guard consisted of ten to thirty people. If that is true, it is hard to imagine any ten people would be dead asleep to the point where the disciples or anyone else could steal the body of Jesus; moving that 2000-pound stone, which would have made noise — not to mention the sneaking around. I am sure the number of people that would be required to move that stone couldn't have been all that quiet, plus they had to keep the stone from making any noise as it was being moved. If there were up to 30 Romans, the probability of that is even more ridiculous. But let's be realistic because in

my research a Roman guard — even though some people like to say a guard was ten to thirty people — most of the time consisted of a minimum of four people — which history has borne out to be true. So, at the minimum, there were four Roman individuals guarding that post. More than likely, there was a centurion who was assigned to it that took the duty of guarding his post (this tomb) very seriously. It was his reputation. This was not a low-key trial case that just took place. The Pharisees were not making it low-key. That is why they went to Pilate to request a Roman guard be posted at the tomb site. They took the job very seriously and performed their duties to guard the tomb after the crucifixion very seriously.

Matthew 27:65-66 - *“Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”*

The seal would be affixed by the Romans to the stone somehow and was placed there as a preventative measure so that no one could steal Jesus' body. Now if someone attempted to move that stone, that seal would have been broken, and the one that broke that seal would have faced the death penalty under Roman law.

Who in their right mind would take that risk? Surely not his cowardly (at the time) disciples, ones that were running and hiding in fear. Do you think they would have paid that hefty penalty when they all (save maybe one) had deserted him after he was taken before the Jewish religious leaders? Then subsequently in front of Pilate? The disciples hadn't shown any courage up to this point. What would make them muster up all this courage now to go against Roman law, risking the death penalty, and steal Jesus' body or to remove Jesus' body from the tomb? Hence, they could preach a resurrected body? A resurrected Jesus - even though he wasn't resurrected? Who would risk that?

I personally believe they made sure Jesus was in the tomb before they put that seal on the stone and started guarding it because it would have been foolish not to. So, the Jewish leaders sought out Pilate to request the tomb of Jesus be protected and a Roman guard to be stationed around it. We read that in the story.

Now if you really think about the history of the Roman seal, when a Roman seal was placed on anything (e.g., Jesus' tomb), it meant something, the honor and respectability of the Roman Empire. It had to be protected. If you were a soldier you would protect that ancient practice with your life if necessary. So, to believe that somehow you had a bunch of lazy sleeping slumbering Roman soldiers all falling asleep at once and staying asleep through whatever happened when Jesus left that tomb is impossible to believe. So once again, people like to come up with all this reasoning without the research in how all of



this would have taken place in those days.

It is like the Sentinel at the Unknown Soldiers Tomb or, better yet, as we saw when former President Reagan passed away and was lying in repose. There was a continuing watch over his body in the coffin, regardless of location, by military personnel who were guarding and posted around his coffin. Can you imagine all of them (and possibly up to 30) all falling asleep together? Then all of a sudden, they allow visitors to come in and they are all walking around the coffin, yet the soldiers are still asleep and nothing could arouse them?

I'm being silly in a way to make the point. The soldiers that guarded Reagan took their job seriously. The Romans, who had the same guard practice, whether it was out of honor or because of their training, or whether out of the Roman military institutional belief systems or the governmental belief systems that they were so fully engaged in with their lives...whatever the reasons, they just wouldn't have fallen asleep. They took their jobs seriously. Think about it; if there were four, they could have taken turns and if there were more than four...? There is no way these Roman soldiers would jeopardize their Roman necks by sleeping on their post, or being bribed, or somehow sympathizing with the disciples' cause — which is another theory out there, that the Roman soldiers were hoodwinked by the disciples into allowing them to take the body. Maybe one by themselves, I guess that is always a possibility, but all four... or more? No way. These Roman soldiers, when they arrived at Jesus' tomb, sealed it and they weren't about to jeopardize their necks.

So how can you explain an empty tomb with soldiers guarding it?

Now some believe maybe the guards were Jewish and not Romans, but they were somehow Jewish Temple guards. If that were true, and we already read it, why would the Jewish religious leaders go see Pilate and ask Pilate for Roman guards to guard the tomb? Therefore, that doesn't make any sense. Furthermore, only a Roman delegate could seal a tomb under Roman authority. Period. Others say, "Well, you have Mathew 28, that kind of throws a kink into the story."

Matthew 28:11 reads ***"Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done."*** And the argument is that they went directly to the Jewish chief priests and not to Pilate. And of course, you have to read all the verses, not just verse 11, so continue to verse 12, ***"And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you [or protect you]. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."***

So, if they were Jewish temple guards, why would they be in trouble by Pilate? Pilate was just a Roman governor. So, these had to be Roman soldiers. If they were Jewish temple

guards and not Roman guards, Pilate wouldn't care what happened to Jesus' tomb, especially regarding people who are not directly under his authority. Now the chief priests assured protection to the guards if they would spread a lie. If you think about it, imagine these guards waking up, seeing the seal broken and the stone moved out of the way, going inside the tomb and finding nobody. Do you think they would have been that eager to run back to Pilate and tell him what happened? Think about it. They knew that their lives were on the line, my friends, so their second best option was (probably knowing that the Jewish leaders were in fear of Jesus' body going missing) to go to the Jewish leaders and see what they would have to say – concoct a story, and in this case, though they probably would not have expected it, also get some money for the lie they were going to be spreading *if asked* what happened to Jesus' body. First option: go back to Pilate = Death sentence. That is not a very good option, especially if you're confused, you're not sure what happened, you cannot put the pieces together, *and* Pilate is not going to believe your story. Maybe if you can con the Jewish leaders to come up with a different story - one that would protect their rear ends against a resurrected Jesus story that would give fresh new blood and energy to the people that did believe and possibly the people that didn't believe that Jesus was truly the son of God.

Now even if you were a Jewish temple guard, the consequences of sleeping on the job were not that much more pleasant. In the Mishnah, we see examples of what would happen to a temple guard if they were found sleeping. A Jewish leader with a staff in his hand and other temple guards with him would go around, and if you fell asleep, he would beat you with his staff and your raiment would be burned. That means you would go naked. There are some accounts that were very detailed in describing these events in the Mishnah when someone was caught sleeping at their post. They were beaten with a stick and then stripped of their clothing; it was burned, and they would walk naked in shame. When we look at Revelation 16:15, we see a possible insight into the language that was used at that time that correlates to what I just told you. ***“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame [lit. or deformity].”*** So, there was this concept, if you were stripped of your clothing, you'd be walking in shame.

If you were a Roman guard, the outcome and the consequence you would pay for falling asleep on the job was the death penalty. There is one story from approximately 200 BC of a Roman soldier who fell asleep at his post. The tribune decided they were going to punish this Roman soldier and one took a stick into his hand and gently touched the Roman soldier, now considered a criminal at this point; and immediately after touching him with the stick, all the soldiers of that legion that were gathered around to see this would attack him with sticks and stones resulting in him being beaten to death and being destroyed. There are a lot of illustrations and history behind what was to be expected if you fell asleep on the job. You were punished, and most of the time, it was a punishment by death.

Do you think if there were only four Roman soldiers, they would risk that outcome for some zzzz's? I doubt it. It just doesn't add up. So probably what happened is each soldier took a turn catching some zzzz's or maybe relaxing or resting or whatever, but not all four

(or up to thirty of them). Jesus' tomb therefore would not be found empty. So, all the precautions would be taken, my friend, for that never to happen.

Now could have the disciples stolen Jesus' body?

The question is, where in the heck did they even find the courage to do so? Like I said before, they all fled when Jesus was arrested, every single one of them as far as we know. Why? Because they feared being arrested. They didn't want to be tortured for just being a disciple of Jesus Christ. How do I know that? Go back to Matthew. I will give you the Scripture, so if someone ever asks you, you can tell them. They were cowards at this point. They eventually became true hearers of faith, trusting and believing in Jesus no matter what, but these were cowards at this point. Turn to Matthew 26:56 and read, ***"But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."*** They forsook him and then fled. Go to Mark 14:50 - ***"And they all forsook him, and fled."***

What about Peter? He seemed to have the most courage of the bunch. He went as far as the courtyard to see the outcome of Jesus' trial, but he was no courageous individual. At that point he might have been a curious individual if it didn't cost him anything, but he was far from being courageous. When he was recognized by some of the individuals, he denied Jesus not once, not twice, but three times as was prophesied by Jesus, and he ran and wept bitterly. Why? Because he forsook and also ran in fear. Peter denied Jesus before them all. All could hear his denial.

Matthew 26:69-75 - ***"Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, 'You too were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it before them all, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.' When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' And again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.' Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!' And immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, 'Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly."***

"I don't know who you are talking about. Who is Jesus?" In a sense, that is what Peter's response was. Then he went out of the gateway area where another girl saw him, and he denied Jesus again. Now you may say, "Well, that was before Jesus' death. What about after His death, while He was in the tomb? Weren't the disciples bolder after Jesus died than before he died?" If they were, it was not until much later, but it wasn't immediately after the crucifixion and burial of Jesus Christ. They weren't. Even after Jesus was resurrected, they had locked themselves behind closed doors 'for fear of the Jews'.

John 20:19 - ***"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came***

[the resurrected] ***Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.***”

Well there you go, my friends. They were behind closed doors, assembled together in fear of the Jews. Do you think after Jesus was resurrected that they were more courageous or just the same - running, fleeing and hiding? This group of people would never risk breaking that seal on the stone to remove Jesus' body. They just wouldn't. Where were these individuals when Jesus was on trial? Nowhere to be found. We know that John possibly was at the crucifixion, but then we all know they were hiding and fleeing from the Jews, locked behind closed doors, hoping that no one would find out where they were located. There is no way these disciples would have found the courage to face Roman soldiers, soldiers who were trained to kill. There is no way they found the courage to break the Roman seal. There was probably way too much trembling going on to even move the stone. However, if they did, once they got in there, they would have had to unwrap Jesus — and that wouldn't take a minute or two to accomplish. Remember what He was wrapped in. That is why I mentioned the myrrh and the aloes. Under Jesus' wrappings was a sticky glue substance making it impossible for him to just walk out to start with (if he had revived) and made it impossible unless they carried the body of Jesus out of the tomb without even unwrapping him. But we know that is not possible because we know the wrappings were left in the tomb after Jesus was resurrected, including the face napkin. The consequences of being caught doing all this were too dangerous, much riskier than the consequences were for standing at Jesus' side when he was arrested. Think about it.

Was Jesus removed? If so, by whom? Was it his enemies? Was it his friends? If it was his friends, how did he get past the guards? If it were his enemies, why would they even remove the body from the tomb? It would just validate what Jesus said to his followers, that he would rise from the dead. It would have made the stories way too easy to believe - if Jesus' body was no longer in the tomb he must have risen from the dead. So, the wisest decision to the Jewish leaders was to just guard the tomb. Pilate went along with it. If anybody was going to make a claim that he rose from the dead, they could say, “No, not true. Let me break the seal, roll away the stone, and show you his body. You are lying. You are just perpetuating the deceiver's story that he preached about himself of what would happen but didn't because here lies his body.” It sure wasn't his disciples or his followers who removed the body. I don't think they had the power or the courage to do so. They fled and they ran. They forsook as soon as they saw him taken into custody. Peter trembled at the voice of a servant girl that identified him as being one of Jesus' followers. These men would not have risked their lives at this point. There is no way. They never would have mustered the courage to overcome soldiers — and even if they did, I doubt they could have. They were living in the mindset of trying to figure out how Jesus could have died? They didn't listen to what He said as closely as the Jewish leaders obviously listened to Him about His death and resurrection. They didn't have it in their mindset. If anything, they are probably going amongst each other, questioning their belief systems at that time, asking themselves why they put so much trust in a man who would eventually die, especially the way He died. “After all, he was supposed to be our messiah.” Why would they risk their lives for an imposter? Don't you think that circulated in their

minds? Do you think it is possible that they maybe thought they were defrauded? And now they are just laying low hoping enough time goes by and they can slip out of town? Furthermore, why are none of Jesus' disciples ever arrested for stealing the body? You can't find a record of that anywhere because they weren't. All the Roman guards had to do was testify that they stole the body. Of course, then they would have to explain why they were overtaken by these peasant Jews. How could they have possibly overtaken them in the first place when they were not trained in military ways of the Roman army? None of them were arrested, and none of them were even interrogated by any account in history, neither in Scripture nor outside of scripture.

The chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan; they gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them what to say: his disciples came at night and stole the body away while they were asleep. I don't even think Pilate knew what was going on. It was hush money to keep the Roman guards silent and to get them to say, "the disciples stole the body" if anyone asked.

The disciples never understood what Jesus was preaching and teaching when he was prophesying about his own resurrection. When you look at the scriptures, even Mary Magdalene comes back and announces to them that Jesus is not in the tomb, so he must have risen from the dead (because she was told that by an angel), yet they still didn't believe her! They were still scared of the Jews and hiding. If they were to go around announcing that Jesus was alive, and that he was truly the risen Savior, don't you think that would cause them tremendous hardships in Jerusalem and eventually cost them their own lives in the very near future?

Eventually they became courageous men. They became a living testimony of the power of Jesus in their lives. All of them save one died horrible deaths, a martyr's death. Would they die for a lie? Would they die if they thought someone defrauded them? What did they have to gain from it? It certainly wasn't anything monetarily advantageous. There is no record of that either.

There is just too much evidence in my opinion. You might call it circumstantial evidence, but it is still evidence. You really must think outside of the box. In fact, Jesus is not the lunatic when you put all the evidence together. The ones in the box fabricating all these possibilities are the real lunatics, not Jesus. The grave clothes that were left behind were a testimony that no theft occurred. Why would thieves go through all the trouble to take the linen clothes off Jesus' body, with all that honey glue-like substance? That would take a long time to do and give greater opportunity to be caught...if they were to be caught. Why would they go through all that and take those kinds of risks?

John 20:3-7 - "Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."

Why would the disciples, if they stole the body, go through all that trouble of unwrapping Jesus and leaving those clothes behind? Now if they wanted to perpetuate the story that he rose from the dead and he came out of his clothing, that is one thing, but they really didn't perpetuate that kind of a story. They perpetuated a risen Christ, the resurrection which Jesus prophesied, and which came to pass. Except for the record here, what happened to the linen clothing? That linen clothing is a testimony that no theft occurred. Thieves would not go through all that trouble of removing the gooey linen cloth just to leave it behind. I believe the radiating power of the resurrection melted most of that gooey substance, if not all of it, or maybe just left some traces of it. Too bad those linens cannot be examined a little closer to see exactly the potential amount that was possibly used in the burial. That would just solidify the story, but...that is neither here nor there.

In addition, as far as the disciples going to the wrong tomb...it's nonsense. They knew exactly where He was buried. We find that story in Luke 23:55-56 - ***“And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.”***

How could so many people misplace the tomb?

Matt 27:61 - ***“And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.”***

They knew where the tomb was. They didn't go to the wrong tomb. Plus, if you really apply some common sense to the whole matter, it was hard not to find the tomb guarded by Roman guards. How many tombs do you think there were being guarded by the Roman guards at the time? I bet you not even one other. So how can you miscalculate that? There are just too many 'what if's' when you add it all up. Everything just compounds. Remember the probabilities of statistics that I've used so often? If you start adding all this up, the probability of it all being a lie is not feasible. Mathematically it doesn't add up when you try to disprove it. Don't you think some of the Jewish priests were designated to go to that tomb every day. In fact, that is probably how they gained a more confident relationship with them in perpetuating this story about the disciples stealing the body. I bet you those Jewish leaders themselves were at the tomb checking in with those guards, making sure everything was in its proper order. Don't you think those Jewish leaders would probably quiz those guards saying, "Has anyone come here? Have you seen his disciples or followers?" Think about it. The truth of the matter is everyone was running scared, and they were locked behind closed doors.

Finally, a great earthquake came. It shook so hard it rolled that stone out of the way. Jesus came out of that tomb. The Roman guards didn't see it. Nevertheless, it happened. In addition, if you can believe a resurrected Jesus came out of that tomb, then you don't have any problem with Him going right by those Roman guards without them taking notice. Remember how earlier in the gospel record Jesus would slip out when the mob was coming after him to get their hands on him with the intention to kill him? Somehow magically he just disappeared? And that was while He was still alive in a flesh and blood

body. Imagine what Jesus can do in the flesh and bone body he has now, a resurrected body. My friends, he came out of that tomb. As for number ten on our list, did someone remove the body? No. Jesus removed Himself.

Who Were the Witnesses?

Open your bible to Matthew 28.

We know that the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection were women, not men. We know who they were because they are mentioned in Matthew 28.

Matthew 28:5-10 - *“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly [don't hesitate], and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail.”* So, they are on their way from the tomb to meet the disciples and they see Jesus. ***“And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”***

The women quickly went from the tomb, probably not quite sure what they had just experienced, which is why there was some fear or certain degree of awe and self-questioning, “What in the heck happened just now?” But at the same time, they were filled with all kinds of joy and did what the angel instructed; “go, run, and tell my disciples, go quickly.” But along the way, Jesus meets them. The King James version says, “All hail,” but basically it was just a greeting; and they fell and started to worship him. And Jesus said, “do not fear, do not be afraid, go to my disciples and tell them that you saw me. “

To put this in perspective, you need to know the history about what it was like to be a woman 2000 years ago. The woman's role in the first century in Israel was far from being ideal considering what it is like today. There are some rabbinical sayings such as, “let the Law be burned if it had to be delivered by a woman”, and, “blessed if you would have a child and he was male, and woe to him that had children and they were all female.” That was the kind of mindset in the first century. So, if you were a woman and you had something to share or a testimony, it would be regarded as worthless, having no value. Furthermore, a woman could not be a witness in the Jewish court of law.

If you read all the gospel records, all four of them report that the women were the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. If you think about it, since a woman's testimony was worthless in that first century, why didn't Jesus go out of His way to make sure the first witnesses were men? It would have had more street credibility. Why weren't they men? Why weren't they men that were part of the eleven disciples? Furthermore, why not the men that were part of Jesus' inner circle (such as Peter or John) to be the first witnesses with a testimony of what just happened? No, they were women.

If you really think about it, these first century disciples should be given credit because they did not change the story and kept it true to the facts well aware that if they were

going to report the story as it unfolds, there would probably be some repercussions and people would doubt it because the first witnesses were women. After all, how can you even value what these women were saying? They're women! They can't testify in a Jewish court of law. Their testimony - whether inside a Jewish court of law or outside a Jewish court of law - was worthless with no street credibility. Yet, these Gospel writers were faithful to accurately report the facts as they unfolded. There is nowhere that we see them trying to hide the fact that these women were the first witnesses to an empty tomb and a resurrected Jesus, not to mention, the angel that gave them the news that Jesus is not here any longer.

Go to Mark 16:11 - ***“And they, when they had heard [what the woman reported] that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.”***

They believed not. They fell back into their Jewish roots. First, I don't believe they thought Jesus would resurrect. Secondly, they probably thought the silly women must have hallucinated or were making this up; they must have lost their minds or they are just flat out lying. They didn't believe the women when they heard the news. It seemed like a bunch of nonsense to them. It's amazing. That is what it says here in the Scripture. They didn't believe it. After all, maybe the story changed somewhere from the journey from the tomb to wherever the disciples were.

Some of you who follow this ministry are former or even current police officers. Have you ever had to write a report on a traffic accident or a crime of some sort that included witnesses? I've been involved in a few traffic accidents where I happened to be (as they say) *at the right place at the right time* to see what went down in the accident. Usually the police officers separate multiple witnesses, so the witnesses don't corroborate their stories and thereby alter their account of the events. This provides the officers with a more accurate picture of what occurred according to the testimonies of each witness. It is amazing to me how sometimes the individual witnesses' accounts of the same event can vary so widely even though each claims his account to be factual. The testimonies just don't match up. That doesn't mean the accident never happened! It means people see things differently.

So, if you really think about it, knowing that people can interpret the same event differently, it can make one want to question the four gospels. Yet, they all claim the same story. Read Matthew, read Mark, read Luke, and then read John. There are some subtle differences, but the core message doesn't change. It is the same message. It is true no matter which gospel record you investigate; they all reported that Jesus did rise. Not even Jesus' enemies or opponents ever doubted the tomb was empty. Do your research. Dig into history concerning this event from people who are not necessarily believers, and believers. Try to find anywhere anyone who can find any type of evidence that someone actually claimed that they had Jesus' body, the dead body. We already investigated that neither His disciples nor the Jews or Romans would have been able to steal the body without some serious consequences, meaning that they would have lost their lives. That leaves us the alternative answer that He did rise from the dead and that tomb is empty neither by His disciples' doing nor by the Jews nor the Romans.

Another thing to look at when investigating this early history is that Jesus' tomb never became a place of object of worship. That came many centuries later. Nevertheless, those early New Testament Christians never worshipped the tomb. Why? We seem as people to worship just about anything running loose. Why not worship the place where Jesus' dead body was supposedly buried? Everybody knew where he had been buried in that day and age. Well, there is a good reason why they did not - because true believers in that day were not following a dead Jesus. They were following a risen Jesus who was alive and well. And eventually, they were willing to die for that profession.

Now we read that John, in his gospel, was convinced beyond doubt that Jesus rose from the dead after he looked into that tomb. John 20:3-8 reads

“Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed [pisteuo; he had trust and confidence instantly that Jesus was alive and well].”

What convinced him? The strips of linen and the linen burial cloth, lying separately, that had been around Jesus' head. To John, it seemed like Jesus' body had simply withdrawn itself from its burial clothing. As I said before, the linen burial clothing was not scattered around the tomb, as if someone was struggling to be released from what he was wrapped in. By the way, if the body was stolen, that is probably what would have happened. Thieves wouldn't be so cautious about doing everything so neatly. They would have been in a hurry to try to get it done in case the Roman guards caught them, in case they all didn't fall asleep and stay asleep. This is a physical impossibility in my opinion because they would have heard the seal being broken and the stone being rolled away. We already covered that. To Peter it may have seemed like an impossibility, because as I had covered, he knew about the myrrh and aloes mixture and that gooey substance and those burial linens would not have been so easily undone. I think whatever that radiating power or energy was that lifted Christ from that clothing probably dissolved a lot of that glue and melted it away into thin air. Maybe not all of it, but most of it. But whatever happened, what John saw convinced him that Jesus was alive and well and that he did arise from the grave.

The seal on the tomb was broken and the price for whoever broke the seal would have been death. But we know, and I have looked both inside and outside the scriptures, no one was ever arrested, imprisoned, or put to death because of it. It is like the whole thing was shoved under the carpet; don't ask, don't tell, it never happened. Some believe that was because of the fear of embarrassment or the fact that the guards would have faced execution, but still, not a shred of evidence can be found. Now eventually, we read, Jewish priests would assure the guards' protection if anyone asked — but I am not even too sure anyone did ask — and they were to accuse Jesus' disciples of stealing His body. Even if

they used that excuse and somehow the rumors didn't get reported back to Pilate — which I believe would be kind of hard for that not to happen; I mean Jerusalem was not that big — you know what would have probably happened. Those Roman soldiers probably rolled back the stone that enclosed that tomb and, I wouldn't doubt, attached an artificial seal to try to convince people that Jesus was still in the tomb. Now that is just hearsay because if we take that just one step further, if there were still some people that were doubting that Jesus rose from the dead, they could have gone to the tomb. But, do they dare break that seal? We don't know exactly what went down after Jesus rose from the dead in that regard; however, these Roman soldiers were not convincing because the Christian Church did not die. It thrived. It did not die out. It was just beginning to take off.

Go to Acts 9:31 - ***“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”***

It doesn't say died off, it says multiplied. So much for communicating a lie that didn't work.

Now back to the witnesses. Witnesses are important in this story because they verify in fact that Jesus did rise from the grave. Consider a fact that is true today in a court of law, without witnesses, the case could be argued, but in this case there was not just one or two witnesses. There were hundreds of witnesses that Jesus did rise from the grave.

Acts 2:32 - ***“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”***

Acts 3:15 (where Peter addresses the people) - ***“And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.”***

Acts 5:30-32 (Peter and others addressing the high priest) - ***“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance [bad translation; to provide a change of mind about Him] to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.”***

Acts 10:39-40 - ***“And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly”***

Acts 13:30-31 - ***“But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.”***

How many witnesses does it generally take to need to show proof?

II Corinthians 13:1 - ***“This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.”***

Well my friend, more than two or three witnesses saw what took place and knew that Jesus was alive and well. Not just one or two, but hundreds. He appeared to more than 500 people at one time.

Consider what Paul says in I Corinthians 15:3-8 - ***“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”***

Is there any question why the Christian Church grew? There were witnesses to the fact that Jesus was alive and well.

Below is a list of Jesus' direct appearances mentioned in the New Testament. Who did Jesus appear to besides the five hundred, besides James or Paul? Mary Magdalene, for one.

Mark 16:9 - ***“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.”***

John 20:10-18 - ***“Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.”***

Then merely stated as ‘several other women’:

Matthew 28:8-10 - ***“And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”***

Peter:

Luke 24:34 - ***“Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.”***

Cleopas, another disciple on the road to Emmaus:

Luke 24:13-32 - ***“And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.***

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”

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Then eleven disciples and others:

Luke 24:33-49 - **"And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.**

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their

understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

Another apostles and others, while Thomas was not there at the time:

Luke 24:36-43 - “And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.”

Then eventually he is also seen of Thomas and some other disciples:

John 20:26-30 - “And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:”

Then another seven apostles:

John 21:1-14 - “After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord,

he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead."

And then ten disciples.

Matthew 28:16-20 - "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

In the New Testament, there are not just a few witnesses. There are many references to Jesus' appearances. Are we expecting to believe that all these people risked their lives to keep telling a false story that they knew was not true? Friends, you cannot dismiss these witnesses. These witnesses were both men and women. There is nowhere in history that we can find these witnesses were dirt bags or unethical people. In fact, they were just the opposite.

Now there are some people who believe what these people experienced was nothing but hallucinations. They believe that hundreds and hundreds of people were hallucinating. Let's not forget, at the beginning of this event that took place after the resurrection, the disciples still doubted that Jesus was alive. They doubted the resurrection. They sure doubted what the women were saying to them. They did not believe in their testimony one bit.

Mark 16:11 - "And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not."

We see that these women were trying to communicate that Jesus was alive and well, but they did not believe them. One of them even refused to believe it unless he could put his fingers in Jesus' crucifixion wounds.

John 20:20-25 - ***“And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.***

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

Thomas is saying, “I will not have trust and confidence that what you are telling me is true. You can’t even persuade me. You cannot even get me to Faith 101, *pistis*. Forget trust and confidence about what you are saying.” But Jesus did appear to Thomas, and he also became a believer.

John 20:26-28 - ***“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”***

I already referred to it, but consider again I Corinthians 15:3-8, where Jesus appeared to over 500 witnesses. Don’t tell me there were no witnesses. This didn’t happen all in just one day. Jesus appeared over a period of time, numerous times over a 40-day stretch, where he taught and even ate, and where people were even allowed to touch Him.

Go back to the idea of hallucinations. If you investigate the study of hallucinations from a psychological view point, when someone has a strong desire, someone who recently lost a loved one, they can start irrationally thinking and therefore think they see their loved one. Psychologists refer to a certain kind of hallucination that has taken place. But here is the problem with that- this was not the case with the disciples at first. They doubted the story. So, they didn’t hallucinate that Jesus was alive at first. I guess eventually they all convinced themselves that the story was true, and they started to believe because of their hallucinations. That is what the skeptics would say because they had such a desire to see Jesus.

You do the research if you don’t believe me. Try to find anywhere that a mass hallucination takes place for over five hundred people. You can’t find one hundred people, you can’t find fifty people...you cannot find those types of numbers. You just can’t find it. Psychologically you can explain that away because psychologists have done the work for us. Their definition of how this is impossible just verifies the real story to be true and not some hallucination that has taken place. Psychologists proclaim’ they teach that hallucinations are an individual occurrence.

What about people being brainwashed in groups? That is different. That isn't hallucinating; that is brainwashing, and that is a whole other situation.

According to psychologists, if you want to take their word for it, only one person can have a hallucination at a time - not over five hundred and not something that could be seen by a group of people if they were all hallucinating at once. Furthermore, they proclaimed that even though you might be experiencing an individual occurrence or a hallucination, there is no way that you could induce that hallucination on another. They claim it is a physical impossibility. Additionally, these people would have had to hallucinate over a forty-day period - hundreds and hundreds of them. It is insanity to even go there, my friend.

Jesus was a real person, the Son of God. He did die, and He did rise from the grave. He did walk and talk and show Himself. They could even feel and touch Him. He did show himself to hundreds and hundreds of witnesses.

So I started with this question: who were the witnesses? Scripture gives you the list. It was not just a few, not just the women at the tomb, but also his disciples, his apostles, hundreds and hundreds of people including His half-brother James who doubted him and doubted that he was the Christ, and eventually, one who persecuted the Church, Paul.

These people were not willing to die because of a hallucination they were experiencing. These people saw the resurrected Christ.

Bold Witnesses

Open your bible to Mark 14.

Jesus' disciples turned from being fearful witnesses to bold witnesses. How do you explain the change in their lives? We are not talking about just one or two individuals. We are talking of the eleven and of other disciples or followers of Jesus Christ. Most people just concentrate on the eleven and forget there were others, most of which had a transformation happen in their lives. They went from running for their lives, hiding in fear, and hiding from the public to courageous people proclaiming boldly that Jesus was alive and that Jesus rose from the grave.

The reason I want us to start in Mark 14 is because they were cowards at first. We see this in Mark 14:50 - ***“And they all forsook him, and fled.”*** In the Greek, forsook means to give up, to let go. Once Jesus was arrested (facing eventual death though they didn't know that) and their dreams of a messiah to rescue them from the Roman Empire seemed like something that was not going to happen, they were in fear for their lives instead of pressing in close. What did they do? They gave up on Jesus. They let go.

Matthew 26:56 - ***“But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.”***

Every single one of them was fearful and running for their lives, behind closed doors, hoping nobody would know where they were located. The same Greek word for forsook is also used in this verse. They let go and gave up on Jesus. When Jesus rose from the dead, they were still hiding for fear of the Jews. Every single one of them.

John 20:19 - ***“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”***

They are still hiding and fearful of the Jews. The same individuals who gave up on Jesus and let him go were approached when Jesus comes on the scene and says ***Peace be unto you***. Disciples who are trying to preserve their lives – cowards - somehow somehow would become transformed individuals that would go throughout the known world at that time and would proclaim the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. From fearful cowards to bold, fearless, courageous proclaimers of the good news. We see that in Acts 4:31.

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

At the most, several months after Jesus' death and resurrection, they are speaking the Word of God with boldness.

Acts 4:32-33 - ***“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common. And with great power [dynamic power] gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus”***—that is why they were transformed— ***“and great grace was upon them all.”***

They were not afraid any longer nor fearful for their lives. They were courageous and proclaiming the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they didn't care that they risked imprisonment. They didn't care that they were going to be persecuted for it. They went out testifying and boldly proclaiming that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and that He was what was prophesied - the Messiah, the Savior that they all had been expecting.

If we look at the lives of the formerly fearful, hiding, scared for their lives eleven disciples (who had let go of Jesus but were now boldly proclaiming that Jesus was alive and well and did what he said he was going to do and became the savior of this world), we will find the disciple Andrew was eventually crucified. The same happened for Bartholomew and James the son of Alphaeus. James the son of Zebedee was murdered with a sword. Some say John died naturally; some say he died a martyr. We can see he boldly proclaimed. We have his gospel record and his epistles. Matthew was killed with a sword. Peter was crucified upside down. Philip and Simon were also crucified. Thomas died from a spear being thrust through his body. Thaddeus was killed with arrows. Now all of these were killed, with the possibility that John died of natural causes, because they were boldly proclaiming that Jesus was the Messiah. Even James the brother of Jesus (though not of the eleven) was stoned; some actually say he was thrown off a rooftop. Whatever the manner, he also died a martyr.

If they were lying, who in their right mind would die for a lie? They didn't die all together in a group. One died as far away as India. They were scattered across the then known world. They died separately from the other disciples who eventually became apostles. It is probably easier to die for a lie when you are in a group. You are dying for that cause, whatever the cause was that you brainwashed yourself with by dying for. But if you have all these individuals by themselves, surely somebody would have to break. There is no way you can convince me or anyone that they all would keep true to a lie. Now if it was just one person or a couple of people dying in separate areas of the world for a lie, you could possibly write them off as just being a bunch of lunatics. But how do you explain away a group of people scattered to different parts of the world who are committed to carrying out this lie including if it means death? Doesn't that sound like an impossibility? So, what drove and compelled these individuals to keep preaching the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to keep preaching that the Savior rose from the dead? There is only one conclusion to be drawn and which we read of in the record. They saw with their own eyes the risen Savior. They touched the risen Savior. They knew indeed that Jesus rose from the grave just like he said he would. That changed their lives and provided one heck of a solid testimony in their life, the testimony that they proclaimed: Jesus is alive.

II Peter 1:16 - ***“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”***

They are saying they have not devised a scheme, fables, or myths. They were proclaiming what was real, what actually happened. It's true; it is not a lie. They were eyewitnesses. Peter was an eyewitness.

I John 1:1-4 - ***“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. “Again, they have seen and touched. Verse 2, “(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”***

They are saying, “maybe you haven't seen Jesus, but you can still have fellowship with him as we are having.” They were proclaiming what they have seen and what they have heard and what they have touched.

Now Luke was not a direct eyewitness of the risen Jesus but he, like a detective, investigated the claims of not only the disciples, but also any Christian that was probably there when they last saw Jesus; he wound up writing a gospel record and the Book of Acts. He had no doubts from his investigation that Jesus indeed was alive and well and did rise from the grave.

Luke 1:1-4 - ***“ Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding”—after investigating all that he heard, he had perfect understanding—“of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”***

Acts 1:1-5 - ***“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ”***

By many infallible proofs, Jesus showed himself to these men according to Luke, according to his understanding, according to his investigation. Jesus gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. These apostles and disciples were eventually persecuted. They were mocked for their testimony. They went willingly to their death because they had firsthand knowledge that Jesus rose from the grave. Now they weren't always courageous. They weren't always bold witnesses. In fact, go to Matthew 26:69-75 where we read of Peter's life.

Peter had a dramatic transformation of life. He was quite the character when Jesus was imprisoned and put on trial before his death.

Matthew 26:69-75 - *“Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”*

He denied Jesus three times. He first denies Jesus sitting in a court yard and a servant girl came up to him. He said, “I don't know what you are talking about. I don't know Jesus.” He denied his Lord at that point. Then he went to another location where another girl saw and recognized him and proclaimed that he was one of these guys that were hanging out with Jesus of Nazareth. Once again, he denied him, “I don't know Jesus.” After a little while, he finds himself with several people standing by him and they recognize him. He denies Jesus again. “I don't know the man, what are you talking about.” Now it had not been long before that that he said to Jesus, “I will not abandon you.” We see that in Matthew 26. It proves he wasn't that brave. He broke his vow. Three days later, when the women came back and announced to the people and the other disciples that Jesus had been risen from the dead, Peter didn't jump up and say, “Hallelujah, he's alive!” Just the opposite. He did not believe a single word that they said. In fact, when you look in the Luke record in chapter 24, what the women were saying was complete nonsense to them. Forty days later though, we read in Acts 2:14, 22-25,

Verse 14 - *“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words”*; Verse 22-25, *“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should*

be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:"

He lifted his voice. He started boldly proclaiming just forty days after Jesus' resurrection. Something changed. Peter changed from someone who was running and hiding in fear, from a coward, to somehow being transformed to be a bold proclaimer and believer of the Lord Jesus' resurrection. Why? Paul makes the explanation short and simple.

I Corinthians 15:4-5 - "And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve."

Peter continued with his bold testimony all the way up to his upside-down crucifixion and death. He was a transformed individual not because he believed a lie but because he saw it, he heard it, and he touched the living Jesus, not a dead Jesus. The radical transformation cannot be explained if he was not a witness of the resurrection and the Savior. That is the only explanation.

Now let's look at Thomas, "doubting" Thomas as he is often called. I don't know how he got that title because they all doubted. I guess they just wanted to pick on Thomas, but they all doubted. None of them believed. They all thought that what the women were saying was just a bunch of nonsense. But Thomas also took off, let go, gave up on Jesus when He was arrested. When the other disciples testified to Thomas about the resurrection of Jesus, he didn't believe them either. If there is anyone that was a hardcore skeptic, it was Thomas. He needed to see the proof that Jesus was alive.

John 20:24-25 - "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe [pisteuo]."

He would not have any trust and confidence that what they were seeking to persuade him of was true.

Verses 26-28 - "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."

From that moment on, he also was a transformed individual, and his life was turned upside down. He became a bold proclaimer of Jesus' resurrection. He also died as a martyr. What changed Thomas? The only explanation over and over is that these were eyewitnesses. They saw, they heard, and they touched Jesus. They were not willing to die for a lie. They were all skeptics. They were all nonbelievers after Jesus' death. And if

you separate these men from their tight little group, there is no way every single one of them would die for a lie.

Now let's look outside that group to James, Jesus' brother. He didn't believe Jesus when Jesus was alive. He didn't believe Jesus was the Son of God. His own brother? The Son of God? C'mon! That is a hard sell. Do you remember Joseph? He was just dreaming visions about what was going to happen to him, and you really can't compare it to what Jesus said or what happened to Jesus. And what did Joseph's brothers do? They wanted to kill him. They eventually threw him in a pit and sold him into slavery because Joseph elevated himself above his brothers in proclaiming the dreams that he dreamt to be a fact given to him by God. His brothers didn't believe it. No way. And they hated Joseph for it. Now place yourself in James' shoes. Jesus is going around making outrageous claims about himself being the Son of God. Isn't this the guy that grew up in the same household as me? Didn't we play together? Didn't we eat together? Now you are saying you are the son of God? Think about it. How would you feel if your brother went around claiming to be the Son of God? How would you feel if your brother went around saying, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to the Father except through me?" In today's age, you'd probably commit him to some mental institution for observation. In John 7, they didn't believe what Jesus was saying. John 7:5 - ***"For neither did his brethren believe [pisteuo] in him."*** Now James was not part of the original 12 apostles. He didn't believe his own brother but later, he was recognized as an apostle of Jesus. Paul writes,

Galatians 1:19 - ***"But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother."***

What happened to James? There is no evidence that James believed his brother was the only begotten son of God while Jesus was alive. And there is no reason to believe that he believed that after the crucifixion and death of Jesus. What was the reason for his transformation? There was no money in it. You couldn't sell that story to a book publisher. No one believed it in the first place. The reason why comes back to the same explanation; James witnessed Jesus' resurrection.

I Corinthians 15:7 - ***"After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles."***

For some reason, Jesus chose to also appear to James, and James eventually became an apostle who boldly proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah. He became the leader of the Jerusalem church. He wrote the letter of James that we see in the Scripture. In fact, it says in James 1:1, ***"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"***.

Josephus states in his historical record that James, the brother of Jesus, was stoned to death because he followed and believed in Jesus.

Antiq. of the Jews 20.9.1, "He [Ananus] assembled a Sanhedrin of judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and

some others [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned."

To be breakers of the law. People that preach against James, that he was a law keeper, seem to forget that Josephus states just the opposite. He was accused of breaking the Law, and they fail to recognize this. James might have been a slow learner, but his life was transformed and there is only one reason - he saw Jesus. Why would he die for a brother he didn't believe in if he didn't see his brother risen from the grave? I don't think he was willing to die for a lie either. He died a martyr's death.

Now let's look at one more person - Paul of Tarsus. His father was a Roman citizen, but he was also Jewish and involved with the sect of the Pharisees. He studied under one of the greatest rabbis of his time; in the book of Acts, he proclaims he is a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. He was climbing up the ladder in Judaism. He was being recognized and was becoming a zealot for his religion. Let's read his own words.

Galatians 1:14 - "*And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation [equal in years], being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*"

He was advancing in Judaism beyond many of the Jews of his own age. He was one heck of a prodigy who studied under a great Jewish rabbi and became a zealot for his religion. He hated and opposed Christians. He despised Christians. He set his face to remove them, destroy them, kill them. We see in Acts 8 that he was one of the witnesses of the stoning of Stephen, giving his approval of his death. We also see in the record in Acts that the persecution of Christians began after the stoning of Stephen. That great day of persecution broke out against the church of Jerusalem and spread from that point on. Paul, also named Saul at that time, became a zealot and made it his life's passion to pursue the Christians. He began to destroy the church. He went from house to house dragging away people, men and women, and throwing them in prison. He only had one goal: destroy the Church, destroy Christians, persecute the Church of God and destroy it at every turn so it wouldn't spread, so it wouldn't grow, and so it would just die out.

Acts 26:9-11 - "*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange [foreign] cities.*"

On his way to Damascus, his intention was to destroy and take that church as prisoners, to eradicate the Christians. We see that story in Acts 9:1-2.

"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the

synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”

That was his mission, but he never reached that goal. Something happened to him that changed him. We see it in Acts 22:6-16.

“And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around him, blinding him. From the heavens he heard, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Now his companions saw the light but didn’t understand the voice from the heavens - Jesus who was speaking to Paul. Paul asked the Lord what to do; the Lord replied to go to Damascus and when he got there he would be told what to do. Then his companions led him to Damascus. Now Ananias (Acts 9-read the story on your own) was instructed by the Lord to go to Paul. Paul’s blindness was removed, and he was transformed, a new man no longer persecuting Christians and trying to destroy the Church. He was going to build the Church. He is the person from which we receive two-thirds of the New Testament. He would establish the Church. He would embrace the Church and the individuals and instruct them - to see them grow during some of the most horrible times during persecution. And the Church did come alive and grow and spread across Asia Minor. Why the sudden transformation? Because in a different way, in a personal way, he experienced the Lord Jesus.

In I Corinthians 9:1-2 he says, ***“Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.”***

I Corinthians 15:8 - ***“And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”***

It is recorded in Acts 9 that Paul spent several days there with the disciples at Damascus, and then he started preaching in the synagogue that Jesus is the Son of God. He was a transformed man. Acts 17:3 says that **“Jesus who I am proclaiming to you is [the Christ] the Messiah.”** People were surprised by the transformation. They were astonished.

Acts 9:20-22 - “And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.”

He changed from a Jewish zealot into someone who was going to proclaim and eventually evangelize the gentiles, to reach the lost tribes of Israel with the message of the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a radical change. It was probably the most radical of all the individuals that Jesus has seen after His resurrection.

No matter what anyone says, the transformation and the conversion of Paul marks a turning point in those days – not just for him personally, but for the Church as a whole. Outside of Pentecost, his conversion was the most fruitful event to secure the Gospel message that Jesus is alive, he is doing quite fine, and he is sitting at the right hand of the throne of the Father. He’s there for you, he saved you, he cares for you, he loves you, he is going to see you through, and he is going to come back for you. It was the point where the Church began to really grow.

Paul, according to tradition, was also murdered for his belief in the risen Jesus. Do you think Paul the zealot, growing up in the Law with all the pharisaical thinking and thought and belief systems indoctrinated into his life, would have such a transformation and be willing to die for it if it was a lie? No, it was impossible. He was a person who didn’t believe the message at first. He persecuted the message. It was not until he met Jesus face to face that he became a transformed individual. Then eventually, he was willing to die a martyr’s death. You can’t deny the facts, the history.

If you haven’t already, you need a change of mind.

I saw a sign yesterday, “If not, when?” After reading all of this, how can you put it off any longer? If not, when? You are going to have to have that change of mind to be in fellowship with Jesus Christ. You don’t need a sinner’s prayer. You don’t need to go repenting all over the place. Jesus never asked us to repent. What He did ask us was to have a change of mind about him, the reason why he came, which was for our benefit, and the reason why you should become a believer, one that has trust and confidence in what he did for you. He, too, will start living in your life and transform it day by day into the creature that he wants you to become. It is his doing and no one else’s.

These were bold witnesses because they saw a risen Jesus, and He is still alive and well today.

Victory in Christ

I believe the Resurrection of Jesus is fact, and I have been laying out some points for why it is fact and why you should believe it. I have not covered all the information that can be observed, to analyze with our own eyes and ears that Jesus did live, die, and that what was prophesied and that he said was going to happen did: he rose again from the grave. When he walked this planet and called certain individuals to follow Him, it changed their lives, but I don't think the drastic change was immediate and what they would come to experience eventually, which would turn their world upside down. That happened after the Resurrection. They became changed individuals; their complete focus changed. They were no longer concerned for themselves but concerned for what Jesus was concerned about: reaching the lost and getting the message out that there is Good News and it comes in the person, The God, the only one that can save your miserable soul and my miserable soul, and that is Jesus Christ. That is who they proclaimed.

In the first and second century, evil forces threw everything at those early New Testament Christians to destroy the movement, but the movement grew. Adversity only made them stronger, and they truly became what we now call martyrs, but in the Greek just means witnesses. They were true witnesses of the changing power of Jesus Christ and nothing could change their minds because their minds had already been changed by the message of the Good News. That is what they lived by and, if they had to, that is what they would die by.

Before we go to the Scripture, I want to share with you a few things.

What was the spirit of Jesus doing on the second day [after His death]? Did he rest on the sabbath as his body laid in the tomb; or did he, as affirmed in one version of the Apostle's Creed, descend "into hell"? This doctrine, known in medieval English as the "harrowing of hell," held that at his death Jesus descended to the place of the dead—what the Old Testament calls "Sheol"—then set free the righteous dead so they might ascend to heaven and preached the gospel to all who had never heard it. The scriptural origin of this idea may be found in 1 Peter 3:18b-20; 4:6. There we read, "He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made proclamation to the spirits in its prison, who in former times did not obey"; and "the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead." Scholars debate the meaning of these verses, but they may point us toward what Jesus was doing on that Saturday.

Now I don't think it was a Saturday because I don't think Jesus died on a Friday. But that is not a topic for this teaching.

He may have done in the realm of the dead what he sought to do in his earthly ministry: “to seek out and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). This doctrine and these verses would point to the depth of the passion Jesus Christ has for reaching people who have been alienated from God.

I Peter 3:18-20 - ***“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins,”***—he didn’t sin, he suffered for our sins, this world’s sins since Adam— ***“the just for the unjust,”***—He was the just one; He was the one right with God who suffered for the unjust, that is everyone else, including you and me— ***“that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”*** He did this that He might bring us to God, so He could reconcile us back to God. ***“By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by [or through] water.”***

There are only two points of view regarding this passage. One is that Christ was in Noah preaching a message of salvation 120 years or so prior to the actual flood, before they went into the ark and the door was closed. Only 8 people responded including Noah. So, it was not very effective if you think about it. So according to some what it is really saying here is this is not Christ upon His death going down to the depths of hell and preaching to the spirits that were in prison, whether fallen angels or fallen humans that didn’t have it right with God before their death in the Old Testament period; it is just Christ through Noah preaching a message of salvation.

I do not hold that point of view. First, I think God’s Word is very clear once you understand everything about it that you can understand, which is a continuous process of trying to peel back the layers of God’s Word. That is why there is so much nonsense being preached concerning the book of Revelation and eschatology. Well friend, there is nothing confusing here. I’ve searched the scriptures and it is very clear. Christ was the one right with God and he suffered our sins to make us right with God so he could bring to God individuals who were destined for a horrible death in the next life. If you really think about it, why would God go down to hell — verse 19 says he also preached to the spirits in prison. Why did he go down there? Did he go down there to say, “Neener neener neener; you should have listened to the preachers. You should have listened to the prophets. You should have listened to my representatives. You should have listened to Me before I died; therefore, suffer on throughout eternity?” Is that what he went to preach? Did his heart and mind change from what his purpose was in coming in the first place, to bring salvation to a lost and dying world?

I believe there were four different areas in *Hades* (in the Greek) or *Sheol* (in the Hebrew) prior to Christ. An abyss type area. Tartarus, which is for the fallen angels in Enoch’s day, which he wrote about, the Watchers that led mankind astray. Hell, which had two sections; one section where the ones that are not right with God are placed in torment and another area where the ones that were right with God were waiting, when Jesus

would die and resurrect, and they would sail into the blue with Him, into the heavens that are designated as a waiting place until all is finished.

I Peter 3:19-21 - "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism..."

Water saved them if they didn't drown in it - if they were right with God.

"... doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh...

So water baptism cannot put away the filth of the flesh.

...but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

So what baptism saves us now? After having a change of mind about what Christ did for you and starting to trust in him, He baptizes you with the Holy Spirit. Water baptism is just ritual. The real deal and what is necessary is the baptism by the Holy Spirit, which he promised and provides. All we need is a change of mind, to trust and believe in Him. That is all he asked for. Let me tell you, the Holy Spirit goes to work in your life and he'll turn your world upside down. But back to this author:

Matthew, in his account of the Crucifixion, tells the curious story what when Jesus died, some who had been dead were raised to life "and appeared to many" (Matthew 27:50-53). This too might be a scriptural anchor for the idea that Jesus set free those in the realm of Sheol who were righteous. Some go further and suggest that by entering the underworld, ruled by Satan, Jesus faced Satan himself and defeated him, not destroying him, but demonstrating his power over him. Even Martin Luther, in his Solid Declaration, suggested the devil was conquered in this descent to the dead. "We believe simply," he wrote, " that the entire person, God and human being, descended to Hell after his burial, conquered the devil, destroyed the power of Hell, and took from the devil all his power." Both of these ideas are captured in classical art showing the gates of hell broken and Jesus leading Adam and Eve and the righteous of the Old Testament out of the realm of the dead toward the gates of heaven.

What Jesus actually did in the spirit while his body lay in the tomb will remain a mystery; but for his followers left behind on Earth, the period between his death and resurrection was as dark

a time as any ever known. Holy Saturday [which I don't believe it was Saturday] ***represents despair and utter hopelessness.***

Until the third day came: the women went to the tomb and it was empty. They ran back to tell the others. They didn't believe. Some ran back to see for themselves, and it was empty. They start believing — not all of them at first; Thomas was probably the last one to believe out of the original twelve. Then followed James and Paul. But a few others in between, for instance those walking on the road to Emmaus.

Christ's resurrection is a vindication of his message, his identity, and his death on the cross. In his message, Jesus taught a way of life based upon the love of God and neighbor.

He taught a lot more than that but...

Jesus ministered to the people who were lost and broken. One of the things that upset the religious authorities was that Jesus sat down with drunkards and prostitutes. He let them be part of his ministry. He thought that God was like a father that had two sons, one of whom ran away. The father was always waiting for that son to come back home again. He never stopped loving that runaway. That was the approach Jesus embodied in his ministry. His message about what God was like was completely counter-cultural: blessed are the poor, the hungry, the meek, the lowly, the peacemakers.

I already told you what blessed means there; in the Greek it is *markarios* which means fully satisfied. Fully satisfied are the poor, the hungry, the meek, the lowly, and the peacemakers. Blessed or fully satisfied are you when you are persecuted for my name's sake.

When a Roman soldier beats you on the face, turn the other cheek and let him beat that one as well. When he demands that you carry his pack for a mile, carry it a second mile.

Now don't confused what I've just said there about turning the other cheek because it was the same Jesus who said buy a sword, which Peter did. One is about self-defense, and the other is about taking on the sufferings that come with the cause of Christ. If someone breaks into your home and they are about to do you some harm, you are not going to start preaching the gospel of the good news of Jesus Christ. You wouldn't get to the second word. That is where self-defense comes in. Jesus never said anything against self-defense. He is the one who said get a sword for a purpose. We are talking about people who will suffer for the cause of Christ, for the message of the good news of Jesus Christ. There have been plenty of those witnesses throughout the centuries.

Love not only your neighbors, but also your enemies. Pray for those that persecute you. Don't forgive them seven times, but seventy times seven.

I have said it many times. I have had to forgive people in my lifetime, and hopefully they have forgiven me. That doesn't mean I have to associate with them. That doesn't mean I have to get along with them on every single point. It means whatever was bringing my soul down, whatever was a sore in my growth spiritually, I've moved beyond that with Christ's help. That is what true forgiveness is all about according to the Scripture. Whatever was bothering me or was hurtful that I thought you did no longer concerns me. Christ has moved me beyond that point. There are lot bigger things to be concerned about than my feelings or my pride or anything else that keeps me from not being able to forgive someone and move beyond it. That is behind me now. It is behind any person, that thing that would stunt your spiritual growth. Move beyond it. Someone might have done you a wrong. To put it in simple terms, get over it. Use Christ's help and the instruction we see in the scriptures to move beyond that point. As I said, you don't need to necessarily associate with that person anymore, but whatever was bringing you down about that person is no longer a hindrance.

Pray for those that persecute you. Don't forgive them seven times, but seventy times seven. These were bizarre statements. How could anybody really live that way?

What he taught was vindicated by his resurrection. The claims Jesus made about his own identity during his ministry seemed bizarre. He said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty". "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me". He repeatedly reinterpreted the traditions and the teachings of the Jewish people, saying, "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, but I say to you...". He said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you". He claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God. It was an idea the religious authorities and those who were awaiting a military messiah clearly rejected. Yet, he stated his claim again when questioned at his trial. All his claims were vindicated with his resurrection. As Paul notes in Romans 1:4, Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:"

The resurrection also confirmed the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross: that it fulfilled a divine purpose, bringing about the forgiveness of sins. Luke captured the idea in a statement Jesus made to the disciples after his resurrection, "thus it is written, the messiah is to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed in his name to all nations."

"Beginning at Jerusalem, you are witnesses of these things."

In all three of these areas—his message, his identity, his death on the cross—Jesus' resurrection vindicated everything he said, everything he did, everything he was and is.

Ultimately, the Resurrection is the dramatic sign of God's victory over all the forces that conspired against Jesus—not just the Sanhedrin and the Romans, but all the forces of evil in the world [seen and unseen]. The Resurrection is also God's sign of victory over death. It signals that sin, evil, and death will not have the final word, though they may appear for a time to have the upper hand. The Resurrection is a shout of victory over all these things. Paul writes, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:56-57).

Christus Victor says the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus are God's response to the sin, evil, injustice, tragedy, and pain in this world. Jesus experienced all these things, and he triumphed over them. He invites all who choose to follow him to live as God's people, free from the power of sin [that is a powerful statement right there, free from the power of sin] and the fear of death.

That is our hope. In the Greek, that is our *elpis*. The hope of an eternal future because of what Christ did for us two thousand years ago, and it still applies in this day.

There have been countless martyrs (witnesses) who have been proclaiming this since Christ came out of the tomb. Hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament all were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

We looked at the disappearance of Jesus' body from the tomb, a sealed tomb with Roman guards guarding it. Jesus' body just vanishes. No one was held responsible for the broken

Roman seal. None of the Roman guards were put to death because the punishment would have been death for that broken seal, without any accountability of what happened to the body. We looked at the grave clothes and how they remained intact in that tomb, like his body was still in them but then disappeared. We saw fearful hiding disciples, cowards, wimps turn into courageous bold witnesses for Jesus, proclaiming the Good News unto the nations. We even looked at some of the hardcore skeptics such as James his brother and Thomas his disciple. They turned from being skeptics to witnesses, which would lead to martyrdom. These are men's lives changed - and not just men, but plenty of women behind the scenes who were also changed and became true disciples of Jesus Christ. No matter what would happen to them, they were determined to get the message out at any cost.

We looked at some of the evidence - and there is more - but that is all I am going to bring at this time. The evidence is overwhelming, and it is hard to explain away. It just can't be done. I am convinced, and it is clear to me that Jesus rose from the dead. And if He rose from the dead, that means He is still alive today and with us. We can't see what they saw two thousand years ago, but that doesn't change that He is alive and in us today. It doesn't change the fact that we experience Him through the Holy Spirit in our daily lives, day in and day out. That in and of itself is what makes the Gospel message so powerful: the forgiveness of sins and that He will never leave us nor forsake us. He is alive and well today in us, and we are to be the proclaimers of that truth. Only He could have provided that. There is no other substitute God or substitute religion out there that can provide salvation.

Acts 4:12 - ***“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”***

It is clear. Jesus is the only way, my friend. There is no other name under heaven that you can be saved by. Not Allah, not Buddha, not Confucius, not the hundreds if not thousands of false gods throughout the millenniums. Only Jesus the Christ, the Messiah our Savior.

There isn't too much to say after that, is there? The message is clear, and he gave us assurance as believers that we also can proclaim that message. There is so much you can go to in the New Testament concerning not only the death and resurrection of Christ but that he is alive today in us. Paul makes it clear in his preaching and teachings.

Romans 5:8 - ***“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”***

I haven't said this before, but Christ died for everyone. Not everyone will benefit from what He did for us because they refuse to believe He was Jesus the Savior.

Verse 10 - ***“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...”*** It took the death of His son to reconcile us back to the Father. ***“...much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”***

What a wonderful promise. Why would you not want to proclaim that if you are a true believer in Jesus Christ and what he did for you? That is the message of Peter's sermon in Acts 2:22.

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

He was going to come out of that tomb, and so are we.

Verse 32 - ***“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”***

They were witnesses because they walked, talked, and saw Jesus' death and resurrection. Except for not physically seeing Jesus with our own eyes, nothing has changed. We also can be witnesses of the resurrected Jesus. That goes without saying. You are either going to believe it, or you are going to reject it.

“It would have been so much easier if I were there and saw it for myself.”

Have a change of mind about Jesus and see for yourself if your thinking doesn't change. If you are truly seeking but are still on the fence, you are not reading this by accident; the Spirit is drawing you. I encourage you to have a change of mind and say, “Jesus, I do believe, and I do trust in what you said you came here to do. You were sent by God the Father as the only begotten Son to rescue me, to rescue this world, and all you require from us is to have a change of mind about our unbelief in what you did to be true, to believing what you did is fact and the only truth, and You are the only one who can save me from myself and my evil sinful ways.”

It is that simple. All it requires is a change of mind that will lead to a change of heart that will raise your life from a miserable existence of just living for the here and now to be a powerful effective witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And you too will be a powerful disciple of his, molded by him as the Holy Spirit goes to work in your life to be the disciple that he wants you to be - not what the Church wants you to be, not what your family members want you to be, not what your loved ones or friends want you to be, but what Jesus wants you to be. You are his work in progress. he will mold you and set you on a different course. he will turn your life upside down, but take it from someone whose life has been turned upside down, it is more than worth it, and there is no going back.

I'll finish by repeating what I just read to you a few moments ago.

"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:56-57).

***He invites all who choose to follow him to live as God's people,
free from the power of sin and the fear of death.***

What more hope do you need than Jesus in your life? The next step is yours and only you can make that decision.

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