

**Is Jesus Real?
Is He God?
What About the Resurrection?
What is the evidence?**

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Ground Rules

- Questions? Please write them down.
- You can give them to us before you leave or
- Email them to kenb@calvarychurchfl.com or
- Depending on the question, I will either send you an answer, send an answer to everyone, or talk about it next week.
- This class is not fully comprehensive.

Our Road Map

Week 1 – What is truth and how can we know that the Bible really is God's word?

Week 2 – God – How do we know He exists and that our God is THE God?

Week 3 – Jesus Christ – Who is He, is He God and did He really rise from the dead?

Week 4 – Why am I here, how should I live and where am I going...ultimately?

Doctrinal Statement About Jesus

Let's level set about Jesus. What do we believe about who He is?

We believe in the person of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings, his substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people and personal, visible return to earth. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, in Him all the fullness of Deity

dwells in bodily form. (Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:23; Mark 16:19; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:1-2, 8:58 and 11:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 1:2; Revelation 1:8; Colossians 1:15-18, 2:9).

Jesus is God and Jesus is a man.

Jesus Christ is unique in history; he is fully God and fully man. His deity is from all eternity because he is the Son of God. But he also chose to leave heaven and come to earth as a man to save us and establish God's promised kingdom on earth. Jesus partook of human nature in his earthly ministry as the "Son of Man." This was Jesus's favorite title for himself during his ministry. At his birth, his incarnation, Jesus became flesh and blood, fully identifying with humanity, without relinquishing his divine attributes. (Evans 2019, 1567)

With the coming of Jesus the restoration of the kingdom is inaugurated. It was formalized at Jesus' baptism, the beginning of his public ministry, and made irreversible at the crucifixion and resurrection. The divine son and servant succeeded—and will succeed—where Israel, God's human and corporate son and servant, failed. Yahweh's rule on earth is progressing and advancing against unseen powers of darkness and humanity enslaved to those powers. The kingdom has a clear goal: the reclamation of the nations and restoration of Eden on a global scale. (Heiser 2015, 353)

Textual Authority

Assuming that Jesus was executed ca. 32 AD and that the earliest New Testament documents were composed ca. 50 AD, a gap of only about eighteen years separates the historical events from the composition of the historical records. (Welty 2014, Kindle Location 360)

As we have already examined earlier, that alone is amazing.

Let's talk about Jesus...how confident am I that He was born of a virgin, lived on planet earth, died just as the scriptures say and then rose from the dead?

Based on the evidence, I am more confident of His existence than I am of my own.

First let's look of the historicity of Jesus.

I am a historian by training. Historians look for source documents, external evidence, eyewitness accounts and archaeological evidence. Basically, anything to corroborate the source documents.

The God who is worshiped in the Christian faith is not the product of that faith nor the creation of theologians or philosophers. He is not a God who has been invented or discovered by human beings. He is the God who has taken the initiative in speaking to them, in revealing himself in a series of redemptive events reaching back to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and beyond. God did not make himself known through a system of teaching nor a theology nor a book, but through a series of events recorded in the Bible. (Ladd 1993, 354)

As we discovered when we looked at the Bible, prophetic fulfillment regarding the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, is used as a primary proof for the historicity, inerrancy and viability of the Bible.

That same prophetic evidence that we looked at becomes an additional point of proof when talking about Jesus.

Everything predicted in Isaiah 52:12 – 53:13 was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

We know that the Bible is authoritative history. But that statement, all though a simple fact for us as believers, would not be acceptable for one who is a skeptic. They may accept the historicity of the text but minus anything supernatural, like the virgin birth or the resurrection.

Christians are often accused of being “biased” simply because of our belief in the supernatural. “This accusation has power in our current pluralistic culture. Biased people are often seen as prejudicial and unfair, arrogant and overly confident of their position. Nobody wants to be identified as someone who is biased or opinionated.

2 Timothy 1:8–12

“So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don’t be ashamed of me, either, even though I’m in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News. For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News. That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.” (NLT)

Most of us agree with Paul. As it pertains to Jesus, we are seriously biased and seriously opinionated. We know what the truth is and want others to experience the freedom it provides

At heart, if you follow Jesus, you are a true revolutionary as it pertains to the god of this world. “The religion of Jesus Christ aims at nothing less than the utter overthrow of all other systems of religion in the world; denouncing them as inadequate to the wants of man, false in their foundations, and dangerous in their tendency.” (Greenleaf 2011, Kindle Location 484)

The war began in Genesis 3 and victory was achieved on the cross. Satan has been defeated, but he is still trying to enforce his view.

But make no mistake about it, all of us have a point of view; all of us hold opinions and ideas that color the way we see the world. Anyone who tells you that he (or she) is completely objective and devoid of presuppositions has another more important problem: that person is either astonishingly naive or a liar.” (Wallace 2013, 27-28)

The foundation of our religion is a basis of fact—the fact, of the birth, ministry, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. (Greenleaf 2011, Kindle Location 529)

Let’s examine a few of the non-Biblical sources that tell us He existed.

First the Babylonian Talmud, a Jewish source.

Fact – Jesus Existed

The Babylonian Talmud is a large collection of rabbinic literature, containing a full account of the civil and religious laws of the Jews.

On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, ‘He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.’ But since nothing was brought forward in his favor he was hanged on the eve of the Passover! (Neusner 2011, 220)

Not only do we see that Jesus existed, but we also see that He was crucified, hung, the day before Passover which aligns clearly with the text in the scripture.

John 13:1–2

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come that He would depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,” (NASB 2020)

Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian who wound up in the service of Rome at the time of the fall of Jerusalem, 70AD, wrote the following.

Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day. (Josephus 1987, 480)

Josephus, a Jew, allows for the existence of Jesus. He also recognizes Jesus as Christ and refers to the resurrection. Remember, he is a Jew.

Then there is the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (55 – 120 AD) who wrote in the 2nd century AD. In his history of Nero and the fire in Rome we learn that Nero made a political move to blame a group for his own actions.

“But neither human help, nor imperial munificence, nor all the modes of placating Heaven, could stifle scandal or dispel the belief that the fire had taken place by order. Therefore, to scotch the rumour, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue.” (Tacitus 1925-1937, 283)

Once again, Jesus is recognized as being a historical figure. Tacitus also refers to Pilate, and the “pernicious superstition,” the resurrection, as well.

There are others such as Suetonius, Lucian of Samosata, Thallus and Sextus Julius Africanus. Julius Africanus wrote in the 3rd century AD. In one of his works, a narrative of events happening in Persia on the birth of Christ, he writes of the virgin birth and events taking place with the Magi’s visit.

Out of Judah has arisen a kingdom which shall subvert all the memorials of the Jews. And the prostration of the gods upon the floor prefigured the end of their honour. For he who comes, being of more ancient dignity, shall displace all the recent. Now therefore, O king, send to Jerusalem. For you will find the Christ of the Omnipotent God borne in bodily form in the bodily arms of a woman. And the star remained above the statue of Pege, called the Celestial, until the wise men came forth, and then it went with them. (Dionysius of Alexandria 1886, 129)

I am stopping there. “But even using only such non-Christian sources, there is ample evidence to confirm the main contours of the early Christian claims: Jesus was a Jew who lived in Israel during the first third of the first century; was born out of wedlock; intersected with the life and ministry of John the Baptist; attracted great crowds, especially because of his wondrous deeds; had a group of particularly close followers called disciples (five of whom are named); ran afoul of the Jewish religious authorities because

of his controversial teachings sometimes deemed heretical or blasphemous; was crucified during the time of Pontius Pilate's governorship in Judea (A.D. 26–36), and yet was believed by many of his followers to have been the Messiah, the anticipated liberator of Israel." (Blomberg 2011, 439-440)

Jesus existed. Anyone who says otherwise is denying the historical evidence which is simply overwhelming.

Fact – The Virgin Birth

The birth of Jesus from the Virgin has always, of course, been an offence to rationalism. (Orr 1907, 4)

From the book of Isaiah, we learn that the coming Messiah would arrive on the earth via a miracle.

Isaiah 7:14

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will name Him Immanuel." (NASB 2020)

For additional notes on this verse see **King Ahaz the Lily Livered**. (Brown 2020)

A supernatural sign, virgin conception, virgin birth, and the naming of a human child as "God with us" (Immanuel) are all linked together for the first time. (Gromacki 2002, 32)

Later in Isaiah, the prophet doubles down and further reinforces what he just said to King Ahaz.

Isaiah 9:6

"For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." (NASB 2020)

The unusual circumstances and parentage surrounding the birth of Jesus were apparently well known to the Jewish leadership. In a rather heated conversation with Jesus, the same one in which He attributes their motivation to be like their father Satan; they attributed His work to the work of Satan, we see them making a jab at His parentage.

John 8:39–41

"They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "**We were not born as a result of sexual immorality**; we have one Father: God.'" (NASB 2020)

The evidence points to a virgin birth, as prophesied by Isaiah and as told to and experienced by Mary (Luke 1:31 – 38).

If you accept the God of the Bible exists, then accepting the miracle of the virgin birth is easy to follow.

Jesus concluded His conversation with the Pharisees by stating one of the seven I AM statements that are in John.

John 8:57–59

"So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and You have seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and left the temple grounds." (NASB 2020)

How could Jesus claim to be the eternal “I am” and yet be less than fifty human years old? Where did He get this body that shows some degree of age? The answer can only lie in a normal birth procedure with one major exception: no paternal father. (Gromacki 2002, 51)

Are virgin births impossible? Hardly, “virgin births happen among reticulated pythons, bonnethead sharks, honeybees, brine shrimp, Komodo dragons, and even domesticated turkeys.” (Guillen 2021, 167)

As a physician, it would have been logical for Luke to have checked out the belief in the virgin birth, a concept that his medical education had regarded to be impossible. Since Luke included the record of the virgin birth, he must have regarded it as one “of those things which are most surely believed among us.” This establishes the fact that the virgin birth was a well-developed doctrine by the middle of the first century. (Gromacki 2002, 83)

By the way, only two gospels report the birth, and both report it as a virgin birth. Matthew is the other who report this, a tax collector.

We see the story on Matthew 1:18 – 25. Matthew was educated, and as part of doing his job, would have known shorthand. He also was someone who knew, firsthand, about fraud and lying. He dealt with it on a regular basis in his job prior to meeting Jesus. He had already established a pattern in his life of believing but then verifying what it is he had been told.

There is a reason Matthew and Doctor Luke are the ones reporting the virgin birth.

Luke 1:30–38

“And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.” But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for that reason also the holy Child will be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth herself has conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called infertile is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, the Lord’s bond-servant; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.” (NASB 2020)

Doctor Luke included this story based on his interview with the elderly Mary at the time of his writing this book. He did his research as this was part of two documents that would go forward to the Emperor to defend Paul. Luke and Acts.

Luke 1:1–4

“Since many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting to me as well, **having investigated everything carefully from the beginning**, to write it out for you in an orderly sequence, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.” (NASB 2020)

It is the result of careful inquiry and examination, made by a person of science, intelligence, and education, concerning subjects which he was perfectly competent to investigate, and as to many of which he was peculiarly skilled, they being cases of the cure of maladies; subjects, too, of which he already had the perfect knowledge of a contemporary, and perhaps an eye-witness, but beyond doubt, familiar with the parties concerned in the transactions, and belonging to the community in which the events transpired, which were in the mouths of all; and the narrative, moreover, drawn up for the especial use, and probably at the request, of a man of distinction, whom it would not be for the interest nor safety of the writer to deceive or mislead. Such a document certainly possesses all the moral attributes of an inquest of office, or of any other official investigation of facts; and as such is entitled, in firo conscientiae (In the forum of

conscience), to be adduced as original, competent, and satisfactory evidence of the matters it contains. (Greenleaf 2011, Kindle Location 793)

Fact – Jesus Is Messiah

Jesus personally identified His uniqueness more than once. He kicked off His ministry beginning in a synagogue where He identified with the mission of the suffering servant found Isaiah 61:1 – 3.

He is the Suffering Servant, He is the goel of Israel, He is our redeemer. “A day in the ministry of the incarnate Yahweh was a spiritual assault on the forces of darkness to reclaim what rightfully belonged to him, his Father the invisible Yahweh, and those human beings who were part of the divine council family.” (Heiser 2015, 271)

Mark 1:9–13

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.” (ESV)

When Mark uses the word translated “torn open”, he is using the Greek word schizo. The same word used in Exodus 14:21 talking about the water being split.

In Exodus, God was delivering His people from exile, Egypt and the false gods of Egypt. “Mark wants readers to see that a new exodus event is happening. The kingdom of God is back, and this time it will not fail because it’s being led by the visible Yahweh, now incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth.” (Heiser 2015, 274)

Fast forward past the 40 days and night in the wilderness completing successfully what the nation did not complete, and we see Jesus picking up with the mission statement of Messiah as His ministry.

Luke 4:16–21

“And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him. And He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO BRING GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.” And He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all the people in the synagogue were intently directed at Him. Now He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”” (NASB 2020)

This all drives us back to Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. Many today say that Jesus was a good teacher, but seven times in John He claimed to be God. Either He is God, or He was a lunatic and not a good man, or a liar. And then again there are the 20 prophetic utterances from Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12, all fulfilled in one man. But back to the Mission Statement. Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1 – 2a and then stops.

2 Peter 1:19

“And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.” (NASB 2020)

This statement made by Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit has hidden in it more than we know.

Consider that there are 456 prophecies in the Old Testament that speak about the coming Messiah. Professor Emeritus of Science at Westmont College, Peter Stoner, has calculated the probability of one man fulfilling some of the major prophecies made concerning the Messiah.

Professor Stoner had a group of students examine and determine, statistically, the probability of just eight prophecies being fulfilled by one man was 10^{17} . That is 10 with 17 zeros.

But, of course, there are many more than eight prophecies. In another calculation Stoner used 48 prophecies (even though he could have used 456) and arrived at the extremely conservative estimate that the probability of 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one person is 10^{157} . That is 10 with another 157 zeros behind it.

In other words, when we consider prophecy and reject Jesus, we do so at our own peril. I draw your attention back to the 20 prophecies in Isaiah 52 & 53 as exhibit 1.

And how big is 10^{157} ? In 10^{157} years, an ant could actually move all the atoms in 600,000 trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion of our universes a distance of 200,000,000,000, 000,000,000,000 miles. He could do this moving one atom at a time, moving each atom a distance of 30 billion light years, and traveling only at the speed of one inch every 15 billion years! (Ankerberg and Weldon 2011, Chapter 3)

A leading authority on probability theory, Emile Borel, says in his book *Probabilities and Life* that once that “once we go past one chance in 10^{50} , the probabilities are so small it’s impossible to think they will ever occur.” (Borel 1962, Chapters 1-3)

Jesus is “THE” example of the goel. His quoting from the mission statement of the Messiah in Isaiah 61 is exhibit 2.

Duties of the Goel

- Redeem the land – buy back the land on behalf of the real owner.
- Redeem the person – buy back the individual that had to sell themselves into slavery.
- Finally, there was also a duty that extended into criminal law, “the next of kin had laid upon him the duty of enforcing the claim for satisfaction for the blood of a murdered kinsman; in this capacity he received the special name of the gô’el had-dām, “the avenger (AV also ‘revenger’) of blood.” (Kennedy 1911-1912, 223)

Judaism could survive without Moses, Buddhism without Buddha, Islam without Mohammed; but Christianity could not survive without Christ. This is because unlike most other world religions, Christianity is belief in a person, a genuine historical individual—but at the same time a special individual, whom the Church regards as not only human, but divine. (Craig 1994, 232-233)

He did good, but his goodness went beyond the usual goodness. He was able to heal disease and perform other miracles as the occasion required. He also taught. His teachings set forth a way of life both attractive and perplexing. Who would not want to live in a world where everyone loved their enemies (Matt 5:43–48)? But what about a world in which telling somebody “you fool” would make one liable to hellfire (Matt 5:22)? Or in which people tore out their eyes to keep from lusting (Matt 5:29)? Or in which people offer the left cheek to one who slaps them on the right (Matt 5:39)? Jesus’ ethic was angular, in obvious ways impractical. But the people who heard him sensed that there was something here of the world to come. “The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt 7:28–29). (Frame 2018, 66)

Facts

So, looking at the facts, we know the following:

- Jesus is a historical figure who was here on planet earth between 3BC and 33AD.
- The facts surrounding His birth are exceptional (Brown, *Who’s Who and What’s What* 2019)

- His birth was anticipated and watched for by a group founded by Daniel, the Magi
- An attempt was made by Herod to kill Him when he was around 2 years of age
- He and His family escaped to Egypt returning years later when Herod died to live in Nazareth
- At the beginning of His ministry, He identified with the Suffering Servant
- He made many claims during His ministry to include claiming to be God (John 1:23, 4:26, 6:35, 8:12,10:10, 11:25, 14:6)
- He claimed that if He was killed, He would resurrect Himself from the dead (John 2:18 – 22)
- He claimed to be Messiah (John 4:25)
- He claimed He will invade the world to rescue His people
- He will rule the world from Jerusalem (Matthew 19:28 – 29)
- He will resurrect every one of His followers who ever lived (John 6:38 – 40)
- He claimed to be God (John 14:8 – 15)
- He claimed God’s attributes (Matthew 18:19 – 20, 28:18 – 20)
- He performed miracles attesting to the Kingdom

If Jesus is not God, what is he? The bottom line on the argument for Christ’s divinity is that:

1. Jesus was either Lord, liar, lunatic, guru or myth.
2. He could not possibly be a liar, lunatic, guru or myth.
3. Therefore “Jesus is Lord” (the earliest Christian creed). (Kreeft and Tacelli 1994, 158)

C. S. Lewis

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice.

Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (Lewis 2009, 52)

Fact – Jesus Was Executed and then Rose from the Dead

In the mid-1800s, an amazing marble slab was found. It is called the Nazareth Inscription. The Nazareth Inscription is one of the most powerful pieces of extra-biblical evidence that the resurrection of Christ was being preached right from the beginnings of Christianity. It is a Greek inscription on a marble tablet measuring approximately 24 inches by 15 inches. The exact time and place of its discovery is not known. The text records an abridged decree by Emperor Claudius, instituting the death penalty for tomb robbing, a very unusual punishment.

This fact clearly proves that the story of the resurrection of Christ was widely known almost immediately after His crucifixion. In other words, the story of the resurrection of Christ must have been a story that was circulated by his Apostles themselves, and it was not a later invention by Christians of the post-apostolic period, as some modern scholars in the past have argued. (Compton 2009, 106)

The decree was a strict prohibition against disturbing graves. “As noted by Maier, all previous Roman indictments of this nature prescribe only a fine for the offender, but this order demands capital punishment.” (Habermas 1996, 176)

Why capital punishment and why only in Judea? Claudius the Emperor as part of his investigation into riots in Rome involving Jews resulted in his having all Jews expelled from Rome. Suetonius blamed this on the friction between Jews and Christians.

Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome. (Suetonius 1914, 53)

The disturbances were over the resurrection. Jews continued to follow the lie and spin from the High Priest referenced by Matthew. While the Christians preached Christ crucified and raised from the dead.

Matthew 28:11–15

“While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. After they had assembled with the elders and formed a plan, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came at night and stole his body while we were asleep.’ If this matter is heard before the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So they took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story is told among the Jews to this day.” (NET)

We do find out that Paul had help in Corinth due to this event in Rome.

Acts 18:1–3

“After this Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, **because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to depart from Rome**. Paul approached them, and because he worked at the same trade, he stayed with them and worked with them (for they were tentmakers by trade).” (NET)

We also know that “And tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had died were raised. (They came out of the tombs after his resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.)” (Matthew 27:52–53, NET)

Only in Judea did this problem of people not staying dead become a problem and only in Judea did the Emperor decide to do something about all those pesky folks walking out of the graveyard.

Why? Because the multi-ton stone that was on the tomb of Jesus had been sealed and subsequently guarded by seasoned professional soldiers. And Jesus simply walked away. Why? Because He is God, He is Lord, He is the Creator of Everything and He is our Redeemer.

In the Holy of Holies, prior to the Babylonian exile, was the Mercy Seat. There were two cherubim, one on either side, and in the center the blood was to be applied annually on the Day of Atonement.

John 20:11–12

“But Mary was standing outside the tomb, weeping; so as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb; and **she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.**” (NASB 2020)

The blood had been applied and redemption achieved. This resurrection was the pinnacle of God’s work to redeem, to buy back man and the planet from Satan.

The enemy had no idea He would come out of the grave and they were pawns in His egging them on to have Him killed on the cross.

Jesus picks Mount Hermon to reveal to Peter, James, and John exactly who he is—the embodied glory-essence of God, the divine Name made visible by incarnation. The meaning is just as transparent: I’m putting the hostile powers of the unseen world on notice. I’ve come to earth to take back what is mine. The kingdom of God is at hand.

The account of Peter’s confession at the foot of Mount Hermon and the revelation of the transfiguration on its unholy slopes marked a key transition point in Jesus’ life, particularly as the Gospel of Mark

presents it. After he throws down the gauntlet at the transfiguration, he begins to move toward Jerusalem to his death. (Heiser 2015, 286)

Matthew 28:1–7

“Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. Then the angel spoke to the women. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you.” (NLT)

1 Corinthians 15:12–19

“Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.” (ESV)

Jesus is who He said He is. God in the flesh.

He was born of a virgin, fully man and fully God.

He began His public ministry by being baptized by His cousin John and then immediately engaged in one-on-one spiritual combat with Satan and He never lost His integrity.

He is consistently presented as a spiritual liberator of those ensnared in the formidable powers of darkness, especially through his exorcisms and his death on the cross and subsequent resurrection. (Groothuis 2011, 480)

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