

MYSTERIES OF THE MESSIAH

Mini-Vol. 12: Units 17 & 18

William H. Heinrich

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***“It is good to be highly educated; it is better to be educated from on high;
but it is best to be both.”***

- Author Unknown

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18.03.01.V After 18 years and thousands of hours of study, Dr. Bill Heinrich discusses some personal thoughts of this study with a little help by some very special scholars.

Unit 17

The Crucifixion And Burial Of Jesus

Chapter 01

Miraculous Events That Occurred At His Death



17.01.00.A. THE DEAD APPEAR IN THE TEMPLE by **James Tossit. 1879.** There were so many unusual events at the time of the crucifixion that people realized divine judgment was at hand for the death of Jesus.

17.01.01 Introduction

A number of strange and fascinating events occurred the moment Jesus breathed His last breath. Some of these are described in the gospels while other events were recorded elsewhere. Centuries later, Jewish writers avoided the connection of these events with the crucifixion of Jesus, so they said that certain mysteries occurred “about” four decades prior to the destruction of the temple.

In rabbinic writings, the reference to “four decades” supports the calculation that Jesus was crucified in the year A.D. 30. Furthermore, during the previous fifteen centuries since Moses presented God’s commands to observe His feasts (Lev. 23:2), the Jews were never attacked by an enemy during any of the festivals. It would have been to the advantage of any invading army, such as the Assyrians, the Babylonians, or any other adversary to attack when the Israelite men were not armed because they were celebrating. For fifteen centuries God protected His people during festivals until the year A.D. 70.

17.01.01.Q1 What were the strange and miraculous events that occurred when Jesus died that are not recorded in the Bible?

Just as the ministry life of Jesus was full of wonder, so was His death – an event that everyone quickly discovered – was orchestrated by God. The Jewish leaders refused to acknowledge that these events could have been related to Jesus, but an explanation had to be given. Therefore, Jewish legends say that these occurred after Simeon the Just died.¹

Phenomena 1: The Temple Doors Open

When Jesus died, the temple doors opened on their own accord and sacrifices ended exactly forty years later. These doors were huge – seventy cubits high and twenty wide – and obviously quite heavy.² According to Josephus, no less than twenty men (Levites) were needed to open and close each one.³ No wonder that Jewish writers noted the unusual event in the Talmud:

Forty years before the destruction of the temple, its doors opened of their own accord. Jochanan, son of Saccai, rebuked them, saying, O temple, why did you open of your own accord? Ah! I perceive that your end is at hand; for it is written: “Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour

1. For further study, see Plummer, “Something Awry in the Temple?” 301-16.

2. Seventy by 20 cubits is about 105 feet high by 30 feet wide. The doors were heavy due to their size and gold covering.

3. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.11 (119).

your cedars.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Zechariah* 11:1

The mystery of the doors opening by themselves and the fire that followed was also recorded elsewhere in the Babylonian Talmud. Furthermore, the account was related to two prophetic passages, Isaiah 10:34 and Zechariah 11:1, by a first century rabbi. These two verses do not mention the word “temple,” but the name “Lebanon” which was synonymous with the word “temple” for more than a thousand years. The reason for the connection was that the interior of Solomon’s temple was paneled with Lebanon cedars. But there’s more: The phrase “O Lebanon” is actually a Hebrew word play. The phrase had become a cryptic name for the temple, since its root letters formed the Hebrew word “whiten” and it was at the “white temple” where the sins of the people were “whitened.” The interior of the temple was paneled with cedar wood from Lebanon and the exterior was a bright white limestone.

This mysterious event of the temple doors opening did not escape the pen of Josephus. He said that the doors were so massive that normally twenty men had to struggle to close them, but now they opened on its own accord, giving the ominous warning that enemies would soon enter. Note the incredible account,

Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple which was of brass and vastly heavy, and had been, with difficulty, shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor which was made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. Now those that kept watch in the temple came to the captain of the temple and told him of it; who then came up [to see] and, without great difficulty was able to shut the gate again.... But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy place was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies.

Josephus, *Wars* 6.5.3 (293-295)⁴

With the fearful thought of a coming destruction, another rabbi made this amazing comment,

“Because of the sins of Israel, the Torah (God’s Word) would be taken from Israel and given to the Gentiles.”

4. Bracketed insert by Whiston, ed.

Babylonian Talmud, *Hagigah* 5b⁵

His observation was obviously correct – God’s Word (Torah) was taken to the Gentiles. The prediction by the rabbi is amazing. Yet at no time did Jesus ever imply that the Old Testament covenant was broken or discarded because the Jewish leadership rejected Him.

The term *legend* is often defined as a mythical event that is based upon a historical event.⁶ As the actual details are transmitted from one person to another, these become enhanced and a *legend* is born. This historical account, as reported by the Roman historian Tacitus is a classic example.

These doors, opening by themselves must have had a profound effect upon the observers as even Tacitus attempted to describe it. He was not an observer in Jerusalem so therefore, his words reflect the proverbial rumor mill gossips as well as his Greco-Roman religious faith. Nonetheless, he clearly described the opening of the doors and the fear that came with the event. He must have reflected the opinion of many others as well.

Contending hosts were seen meeting in the skies, arms flashed, and suddenly the temple was illumined with fire from the clouds. Of a sudden the doors of the shrine opened and a superhuman voice cried: “The gods are departing”: at the same moment the mighty stir of their going was heard. Few interpreted these omens as fearful; the majority firmly believed that their ancient priestly writings contained the prophecy that this was the very time when the East should grow strong and that men starting from Judea should possess the world.”

Tacitus, *Histories* 5:13

The final comment is not only profound for what it says, but by whom it was said. A friend of Nicodemus (the same who met Jesus at night) by the name of Johanan Ben Zakkai⁷ said:

5. Santala, *The Messiah in the New Testament*. 43.

6. Cited by Gurtner, Daniel M. “The Veil of the Temple in History and Legend.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 49:1 (March, 2006). 107-08.

7. Rabbi Zakkai was the last disciple of the famous Rabbi Hillel. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Talmud*. 38-39.

“Oh temple, temple... I know that you shall be destroyed.”⁸

Ben Zakkai was one of the leading rabbis who opposed the corruption of the leading Pharisees and Sadducees. His prediction is amazing...the temple was about to be destroyed and he was right!

Phenomena 2: The Missing Sacrificial Scape-goat

As part of the sacrificial system, every year two identical goats, preferably twins, were chosen. One was sacrificed in the temple and its blood soaked linen was hung on the temple door. In Leviticus 16:20-22, Moses commanded Aaron to place the sins of the people on the head of a goat. That goat became known as the “scapegoat” and was then led into the desert wilderness. There it was taken to the Cliff of Azazel,⁹ pushed over the edge, and presumably devoured by wild predators after dying on the rocks below. The words of Moses in Leviticus are presented, followed by the events in the temple, as recorded in the Mishnah.

²⁰ “When he has finished purifying the most holy place, the tent of meeting, and the altar, he is to present the live male goat. ²¹ Aaron will lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the Israelites’ wrongdoings and rebellious acts — all their sins. He is to put them on the goat’s head and send it away into the wilderness by the man appointed for the task. ²² The goat will carry on it all their wrongdoings into a desolate land, and he will release it there.

Leviticus 16:20-22

However, after the crucifixion when the scapegoat was pushed over the edge of the cliff, it ran off into the desert where it was eventually captured and killed by the Saracens.¹⁰ Another tradition says that one time the scapegoat returned to Jerusalem. Clearly things did not go very well for the priests as planned. Whatever the situation of the scapegoat, this sacrifice was connected with the next phenomena – the scarlet wool that failed to turn white.

8. Rabbi Zakkai was the last disciple of the famous Rabbi Hillel. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Talmud*. 39.

9. The meaning of *Azazel* is uncertain, but it was probably a desert demon. See Mishnah, *Yoma* 1.5; 6.4; Lev. 16:6-10 and Barclay, *Jesus*. 314.

10. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:77.

Phenomena 3: The Mystery of the Scarlet Wool

When the goats were presented in the temple, the blood-soaked woolen thread of the sacrificed goat was tied to the temple door. This tradition was based on a passage in the book of Isaiah.

Come, let us discuss this,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they will be like wool.

Isaiah 1:18

In the meantime the scapegoat was led out of the temple, over the Mount of Olives, and into the Judean Desert where it was pushed over the Cliff of Azazel as previously mentioned. As the scapegoat was being led away, all eyes in the temple were focused on the wool thread that was tied to the temple door. When the scapegoat – the one which carried the sins of the all the people – died, the strap of crimson wool miraculously became white, obviously indicating that the sins of the people were forgiven. Jewish writings preserved two accounts of this unusual event.

Rabbi Ishmael says: “Didn’t they have another sign also? A thread of crimson wool was tied to the door of the sanctuary and when the he-goat reached the wilderness the thread turned white; for it is written, ‘Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow’” (Isa. 1:18).

Mishnah, *Yoma* 6.8

However, after the national rejection of Jesus, (“about” 40 years prior to the destruction of the temple) the crimson thread on the temple door never turned white again.

Our rabbis taught that throughout the forty years that Shim’on the *Tzaddik* served, ... the scarlet cloth would become white. From then on it would sometimes become white and sometimes not.... Throughout the last forty years before the temple was destroyed... the scarlet cloth never turned white.

Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 39a-39b

Great caution was taken to avoid any association of these phenomena and the death of Jesus in Jewish writings. Prior to the death of Jesus, all the sins of the people were atoned by the Old Covenant’s sacrificial system. Upon His death and resurrection, however, their sins were no longer removed by sacrifices, even though the sacrificial system

continued.

While some scholars apply this passage to the temple destruction of 586 B.C., Jewish commentaries also apply it to the destruction of A.D. 70. This interpretation originated with Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai,¹¹ the last survivor of the Great Sanhedrin and who boldly escaped the Roman siege as the temple burned and thousands were massacred.¹² A friend of the Sanhedrin teacher Nicodemus (the same who met Jesus) by the name of Johanan Ben Zakkai said:

Our rabbis taught: during the last forty years before the destruction of the temple the lot [for the Lord] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-colored strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine; and the doors of the *Hekal* would open by themselves, until Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai rebuked them, saying *Hekal, Hekal*, why wilt thou be the alarmer thyself? I know about thee that thou wilt be destroyed, for Zechariah ben Ido has already prophesied concerning thee: *Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.*

Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 39b¹³

This brief narrative in the Talmud is not the only one with in such observations. Similar omens of judgment (that God had forsaken His temple) are found also in 2 *Baruch* 6:7 and in the *Testament of Levi* 10:3. This miracle occurred annually at *Yom Kippur* in the temple until the year Jesus died. The death and resurrection of Jesus rendered the temple obsolete. Its destruction was a sure event on a divine timetable.

Phenomena 4: Difficulties with the Servant Lamp

Once, when Jesus was in the temple area at the Feast of Lights, He said that He was the light of the world. Scholars believe this conversation occurred by the menorah called the “Servant Lamp.” Amazingly, after His death there was great difficulty in lighting the

11. Rabbi Zakkai was the last disciple of the famous Rabbi Hillel. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Talmud*, 38-39.

12.
http://books.google.com/books?id=57E3AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA238&lpg=PA238&dq=Jerusalem+Talmud,+Yoma+43:3&source=bl&ots=vOyuShzS_k&sig=tgDCi3Z-1bZEp6sU_dfdI_C5umg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=jAqyUPzgAayM0QH3hoCwCA&sqi=2&ved=0CD4Q6AEwAw. Retrieved November 25, 2012.

13. Emphasis by Talmudic editors.

Servant Lamp, and once it was lit, it did not always remain lit.¹⁴ Fresh olive oil and new wicks did not help. Rabbis began to write that God was demonstrating His anger with Israel while foreshadowing the destruction of the temple, but they were careful not to mention the name “Jesus.”

Forty years before the destruction of the temple, the Servant Lamp refused to light.

Jerusalem Talmud, *Yoma* 43:3

The Jewish leaders had difficulty explaining why the Servant Lamp no longer shone in the temple area. No one dared to connect it with the crucifixion of Jesus, so the reason was placed upon the death of Simeon the Just/Righteous.¹⁵ In the Talmud is the following statement:

All the time that Simeon the Righteous was alive, the western lamp would burn well. When Simeon the Righteous died, sometimes it would flicker out, and sometimes it would burn.

Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 6.3¹⁶

But there is a serious problem with Jewish reckoning: Simeon the Righteous, a/k/a Simon the Just, is said to be the high priest Simon II who lived around the year 200 B.C., and was succeeded by Onias III.¹⁷ However, there are another half dozen religious leaders who could have had the honorary title of “the Righteous” or “the Just,” and knowing who the Talmudic writers meant is unclear – and maybe it was intended to be that way.

Later, when the Romans came in A.D. 70, the first century historian described how they removed the menorah. It was eventually taken to Rome where, it is believed, it remains today in the Vatican.

14. According to tradition, when the Roman General Titus plundered the temple, he took the Servant’s lamp and other treasures and moved them to Rome where he paraded them through the streets. A stone relief of that parade, along with the menorah, was carved into the Arch of Titus that stands along the Apian Way. Today these relics are believed to be in a vault four stories below under the Vatican.

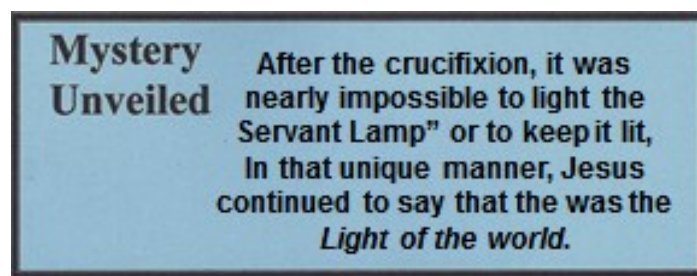
15. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, 2:77.

16. Cited by Plummer, “Something Awry in the Temple?” 308.

17. Plummer, “Something Awry in the Temple?” 308 n28. The name Simon, like Jesus, was a popular name. There was a significant “Simon the Just” who lived around 300 B.C., another in the second century B.C. (*1 Macc.* 14:41), and a third during the time of Jesus; Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.2.5; Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*, 1:101, 360; Multiple persons with the same name can present challenges in biblical and extra-biblical research.

But for those that were taken in the temple of Jerusalem, they made the greatest figure of them all; that is, the golden table, of the weight of many talents; the candlestick also, that was made of gold, though its construction were now changed from that which we made use of; for its middle shaft was fixed upon a basis, and the small branches were produced out of it to a great length, having the likeness of a trident in their position, and had every one a socket made of brass for a lamp at the tops of them. These lamps were in number seven, and represented the dignity of the number seven among the Jews.

Josephus, *Wars* 7.5.5 (149)¹⁸



Amazingly, two ancient Jewish scholars concluded the temple would be destroyed. Likewise was the comment by the rabbi, who said that God's plan is to bring salvation (he said "Torah") to the Gentiles. Shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jewish writer of the Fourth Book of Ezra commented,

For you see how our sanctuary has been laid waste, our altar thrown down, our temple destroyed; our harp has been laid low, our song has been silenced, and our rejoicing has ended; the light of our lampstand has been put out, the ark of our covenant has been plundered, our holy things have been polluted, and the name by which we are called has been almost profaned; our children [or: free men] have suffered abuse, our priests have been burned to death, our Levites have gone into [captivity], our virgins have been defiled, and our wives have been ravished; our righteous men [or our seers] have been carried off, our little ones have been cast out, our young men have been enslaved and our strong men made powerless. And, worst of all, the seal of Zion has been depraved of its glory and given over into the hands of those that hate us.

4 Ezra 10:21-24¹⁹

18. <http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/JOSEPHUS.HTM>. Retrieved November 25, 2012.

Why did the Servant Lamp not retain its flame? It was because Jesus functioned both as the Servant and the Light of the world, which national Israel rejected.

Phenomena 5: The fire wood that would not burn

For more than five centuries, ever since the second temple was built, when the fire upon the altar was lit in the morning, two logs were sufficient to keep it burning all day long. However, after the crucifixion of Jesus, the fire would at times go out, even with additional firewood.²⁰

Phenomena 6: The Shewbread that “failed.”

The rituals of the second temple were well established. Just as the altar fires were kept burning for centuries, so likewise every morning a blessing was placed over the temple showbread that was divided among the priests and eaten until they were all filled. However, after the crucifixion of Jesus, the priests remained hungry.²¹

These six strange events were not connected with the death and resurrection of Jesus, but with the death of Simeon the Just. The religious leaders refused to acknowledge what they knew beyond any shadow of doubt – that Jesus was their Messiah.

Summary statement: Finally, a summary statement of four of these events is found in the Babylonian Talmud. It says,

It has been taught: Forty years before the destruction of the temple the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open. Said [to the temple] Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, “O temple, why do you frighten us? We know that you will end up destroyed. For it has been said, “Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars!” (Zech. 11:1).

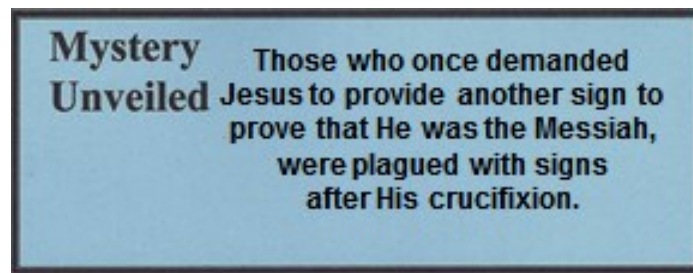
Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 6.3²²

19. Scholars debate on the classification of *3rd Ezra* (a/k/a *1 Esdras*) and *4th Ezra* (a/k/a *2nd Esdras*). Sometimes these are listed in the Apocrypha (see 02.02.03) and other times they are listed in the Pseudepigrapha (see 02.02.24). The reader is reminded that quotations from non-biblical sources are not to be understood as being of equal authority with the biblical narratives. See 01.02.04.

20. Cited by Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:77.

21. Cited by Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:77.

22. Cited by Plummer, “Something Awry in the Temple?” 306.



17.01.02 Mt. 27:51 (See also Mk. 15:38; Lk. 23:45b)

MIRACULOUS EVENTS

⁵¹ Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was split in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked and the rocks were split.

“The curtain of the sanctuary was split in two from top to bottom.” The huge curtain of fine Babylonian tapestry²³ was the point of separation between the most sacred place in the temple, known as the Holy of Holies, and the holy place where common people came to worship God. It was about sixty feet high and thirty feet wide by four inches thick. The curtain was woven of seventy-two twisted plaits, with each plait consisting of twenty-four threads. It was so massive and heavy that it was said that it required three hundred priests to manipulate it, since every years two plaits were replaced.²⁴

The fact that it was torn from the top indicates that it was God who tore the curtain, thereby permitting all humanity to enter into His presence. In ancient times, it was from behind this curtain that God would reveal Himself to the ministering priest. There are three reasons why the gospel writer mentioned the torn curtain, which is also referred to as a veil.

1. It has a theological significance, meaning that anyone who desired to come to God could now do so. His sanctuary had been behind the veil in the Holy of Holies, while the people were in front of the veil and out of its sight. The torn curtain symbolizes that all who place their faith in Jesus have direct access to God the Father, as described in Hebrews 9:1-15 and 10:19-22.

23. Josephus, *Wars* 5.5.4 (211).

24. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:145.

2. The temple and related ritual sacrifices were no longer needed. The Old Covenant was fulfilled by Jesus. It was not replaced by the New Covenant.
3. The curtain was such a massive piece of fabric that it was totally impossible for any human to have torn it. Only God Himself could have torn it. The Mishnah describes it with mazing detail:

The veil was one handbreadth thick and was woven on (a loom having)²⁵ seventy-two rods, and over each rod were twenty-four threads. Its length was forty cubits²⁶ and its breadth twenty cubits; it was made by eighty-two young girls, and they used to make two in every year; and three hundred priests immersed it.

Mishnah, *Shekalim* 8.5

Cyril of Jerusalem added these noteworthy comments:

The sun was darkened, because of the Son of righteousness. Rocks were rent, because of the spiritual Rock. Tombs were opened, and the dead arose, because of Him who was free among the dead ... If they were cast out of paradise because of the tree and the eating thereof, shall not believers now enter more easily into paradise because of the tree of Jesus?

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*²⁷

Finally, the miracles and teachings of Jesus, the illegal trials, the incredible incidents that occurred when Jesus died, most certainly made some priests and Levites realized that maybe Jesus really was who He said and demonstrated to be – the Son of God. These were the proverbial stepping stones that led many of those priests and Levites to become followers of Jesus in Acts. 6:1.

25. Parenthesis by Danby, ed., *Mishnah*.

26. One short cubit equals about 17.49 or 17.71 inches. Therefore, the curtain length (or height) was 60 feet and width was 30 feet.

27. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 69.

17.01.02.Q1 What became of the Sanhedrin after the crucifixion of Jesus?

After the death of Jesus, the Sanhedrin was exiled from its regular meeting place in the Chamber of Hewn Stone within the temple. The reason why it was relocated is shrouded in mystery, but interestingly, the Babylonian Talmud states that it was relocated to a hilltop known as *Hanuth* (see 17.01.02.A).

Forty years before the temple was destroyed did the Sanhedrin abandon (the Temple) and held its sittings in Hanuth.

Babylonian Talmud, *Zarah* 8b



17.01.02.A. THE HILL OF EVIL COUNSEL. After the crucifixion of Jesus, the Sanhedrin relocated its court to a nearby hill that became known as the Hill of Evil Counsel. It is where the Sanhedrin met during forty years prior to the destruction of the Temple. Today it is the site of the United Nations complex. Photograph by the author.

The location of the “Hanuth” appears to be a subject of debate. While some believe it was another location on the Temple Mount, the majority opinion is that the High Court met on a hill south of the temple. Ironically, that hill became known as the Hill of Evil Counsel and today is the home of the United Nations headquarters in Israel.

After the crucifixion of Jesus, the Sanhedrin continued to function until the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. Caiaphas and the Sadducees were all mercilessly slaughtered. Unfortunately, their corruption and arrogance continued to be a hallmark of this body. New members were brought into the Sanhedrin to replace those killed in the revolt. The high court was then relocated to Tiberias and eventually disbanded.²⁸

17.01.02.Q2 Are there other examples of merciless actions by this Court prior to A.D. 70?

Yes. It can be assumed that if the Sadducee-controlled high court was so powerfully wicked as to stage the execution of Jesus, then may have been other cases where this same abuse of power was demonstrated. As previously mentioned,²⁹ Josephus recorded the account of Honi, the “Circle Drawer.”³⁰ Jewish writers also preserved two accounts, but first, the summary account of Honi:

In the year 63 B.C., the religious leaders were challenged by Honi, who had become a popular folk hero. People said that when he prayed, God answered. He is best remembered for the time when there was a severe drought. He drew a circle in the dust, sat inside the circle, and prayed until it rained. Soon it did. The leading Pharisees and Sadducees were greatly angered that he could perform such a miracle, especially since he had not graduated from one of their established seminaries in Jerusalem. Since they could not excommunicate him because the people loved him, they secretly had him killed.³¹

There are also several examples recorded in Jewish writings of which the following two are of interest and a third that is obviously a legend. At one time a priest who was assumed impure was clubbed to death without a trial, as recorded in the Mishnah.

A priest served [at the altar] in a state of uncleanness [and] his brethren the priests did not bring him to the court, but the young men among the priests took him outside the temple Court and split open his brain with clubs.

Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 9:6

28. See “Sanhedrin” in Appendix 26.

29. See 03.05.14 63 B.C. “Honi, the Jewish Miracle Worker killed.”

30. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.2.1 (22-24)

31. Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 300.

In another case, the daughter of a priest was burned for being suspected of adultery and, again, there was no evidence of a trial. The Roman law against capital punishment was ignored.

It happened once that a priest's daughter committed adultery and they encompassed her with bundles of branches and burnt her.

Mishnah, Sanhedrin 7:2

However, the most common account that survived the centuries is the legend of Rabbi Eliezer. The court of Caiaphas was so famously wicked that a mythical story about it was recorded in the third or fourth century. This and other accounts illustrate that Jesus was not the only one who had conflicts with the Sanhedrin. With the Sadducees annihilated in A.D. 70, the court was in the hands of the Pharisee elitists. Unfortunately, they too were corrupt and ignored jurisprudence,³² when convenient.

According to the legend, a certain Rabbi Eliezer was a righteous man who criticized the Sanhedrin for its evil ways. To prove that he was truly a man of God, he performed three miracles.

1. He mystically relocated a carob tree,
2. He made water in a stream flow backwards, and finally,
3. He made a wall lean to a side without falling over – an inclining wall (original writing is unclear of the purpose of this wall).

These three miracles were performed to prove to the Sanhedrin that God's divine authority and power was with him. However, even when the voice of the Lord came forth, the response of the high court was negative.

On that day, Rabbi Eliezer brought forward every imaginable argument, but they would not accept them. Said he to them: "If the Halachah (Scripture)³³ agrees with me, let this carob tree prove it!" Thereupon the carob tree was

32. "Jurisprudence" is the study and philosophy of law, and in this case, the course of legal procedure according to law.

33. Clarification mine.

torn a hundred cubits out of its place - others affirmed four hundred cubits.³⁴ No proof can be brought from the carob tree, they retorted.

Again, he said to them: “If the Halachah agrees with me, let the stream of water prove it!” Whereupon the stream of water flowed backwards.³⁵ No proof can be brought from a stream of water, they rejoined.

Again, he urged: “If the Halachah agrees with me, let the walls of the schoolhouse³⁶ prove it.” Whereupon the walls inclined to fall. But Rabbi Joshua rebuked them saying: “When scholars are engaged in a Halachic dispute, what have you to interfere?” Hence, they did not fall in honor of Rabbi Joshua, nor did they resume the upright in honor of Rabbi Eliezer, and they are still standing thus inclined. Again, he said to them: “If the Halachah agrees with me, let it be proven from heaven!” Whereupon a Heavenly Voice cried out: “Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer, seeing that in all matters the Halachah agrees with him!” But Rabbi Joshua arose and exclaimed: “This is not heaven” (Deut. 30:12). “What did he mean by this?” Said Rabbi Jeremiah: “That the Torah had already been given at Mount Sinai; we pay no attention to a Heavenly Voice; ‘After the majority must one incline’” (Ex. 23:2).

Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Mezia* 59a-b³⁷

While this is an old passage, obviously it has been translated for the benefit of modern readers. Hence, problems with it include the term “schoolhouse,” as synagogues in ancient times also served as local schools. Another problematic phrase is “inclined,” which, in this context, means the Sanhedrin was favorably disposed to its own decision.

34. Sources disagree on the distance. http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/352329/jewish/The-Walls-of-the-Study-Hall.htm. Retrieved September 28, 2015.

35. In an aqueduct http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/352329/jewish/The-Walls-of-the-Study-Hall.htm. Retrieved September 28, 2015.

36. A “House of Study” http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/352329/jewish/The-Walls-of-the-Study-Hall.htm. Retrieved September 28, 2015.

37. http://www.come-and-hear.com/babamezia/babamezia_59.html#59b_5 Retrieved December 10, 2011.

Video Insert >

17.01.02.V *The Legend of Rabbi Eliezer and the Sanhedrin*. Mr. Avinoam Boyer discusses the Legend of Rabbi Eliezer and his confrontation with the Sanhedrin. Introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich. Click here if Internet connection is available.

This account clearly indicates that first century Sanhedrin used its power for its own purposes. It is a remarkable record of dependence upon human reasoning that is supposedly said to be based upon biblical regulation (i.e. Deut. 30:12; Ex. 23:2), while ironically, rejecting the voice of God Who gave the biblical regulations. It is not surprising to see that these Scriptures were taken out of context to support the argument against Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus.

The Sanhedrin had degraded to the point that it no longer followed its own code of conduct. It not only failed miserably concerning the three so-called trials of Jesus, but also with His half-brother James. Evidently the number of followers of Jesus was growing exponentially, to the point that the Sadducees were desperate to do anything to stop the movement. According to Josephus, they eventually,

Assembled the 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].

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1 (200b)

James and those “others,” mentioned by Josephus, against whom accusations were made by the Sadducees, were stoned to death. The historian said that Ananus was the high priest responsible for the death of James. When King Agrippa heard of the gross injustice, he removed Ananus from the high priesthood position where he had served in that capacity for only three months.³⁸

17.01.03 Mt. 27:52-54; Mk. 15:40-41; Lk. 23:48-49

38. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1.

PEOPLE STRUCK WITH AWE

Mt. ⁵² The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. ⁵³ And they came out of the tombs after His resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ When the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, “This man really was God’s Son!”

Mk. ⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ When He was in Galilee, they would follow Him and help Him. Many other women had come up with Him to Jerusalem.

Lk. ⁴⁸ All the crowds that had gathered for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, went home, striking their chests. ⁴⁹ But all who knew Him, including the women who had followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Just as there was a mysterious sign (star) in the above the earth when Jesus was born, now there was a mysterious sign (earthquake) when He died. And the best was yet to come.

“Many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.” Literally, many holy people who had died were raised from death to life. Jesus said He came to give life and to give it more abundantly (Jn. 10:10). There was so much life in Him that when He died the Earth could not stand still. It shook violently and those who died previously were suddenly resurrected with new life. This resurrection of saints was both a fulfillment and a prelude to a future fulfillment of the prophetic verse of Daniel 12:2. They came forth from their tombs of death and walked around the holy city. This was one crucifixion that would not soon be forgotten and the best was yet to come. Note that they were raised from tombs, not graves, meaning they had only recently died.

Divine Judgment - Divine Promise

This miracle points toward both judgment as well as eternal life. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, the earth fell under the bondage and curse of sin. From that time on the entire earth is waiting to be delivered from that bondage (Rom. 8:21). The blood of fallen Adam flows in the veins of every Jew and Gentile and only the shed blood of Jesus can raise a lost soul to the fullness of life now (Jn. 10:10) and promise eternal life to

come (Jn. 3:16). Our life flows with the life of Jesus. The death of Jesus broke that bondage and curse of sin in such a powerful manner that the earth shook. The earthquake and torn temple veil of fine Babylonian tapestry were symbolic of the omen of pending judgment.³⁹ His death was the redemption for all of creation, but obviously did not restore the earth to the age of the Garden of Eden. Since this new freedom of sin brings eternal life, the new life in Jesus was symbolized by tombs opening and holy saints, who had previously died, were now walking the streets. This must have created panic in the hearts of the Sanhedrin and Pilate. The bodies of many holy people of past times walking around Jerusalem were symbolic of the new age of grace and life in Christ that had been ushered in.

“People were terrified.” Suddenly, those who were mocking Him realized that there was a dynamic power to His death. The ground shook violently as darkness covered the land. The faithful followers of Jesus wept bitterly, believing that all their hopes and dreams were gone. In their opinion, no longer would there be miracles, signs, and wonders. There had never been a man like Jesus and their leaders executed Him.

The centurion, who guarded Jesus from prison to the execution site, pondered if this man really could have been the Son of God? Could he have concluded that, **“This man really was God’s Son!”** It is easy to read that into the Scripture. However, if He was not a follower of Jesus, then in all probability, he probably thought of Jesus as a son of God, a hero, or a demigod.⁴⁰ In Mark’s version of what the centurion said of Jesus, Mark used the Greek word that could be translated as either *righteous* or *innocent*.⁴¹

It was the centurion’s primary responsibility to serve as executioner and insure that all those sentenced to death were, in fact, dead. He was trained in the art of killing and had previously crucified many. He recognized death whenever it came to any man. Therefore, it is significant that he said that Jesus *was* ... past tense, meaning death was achieved ... the Son of God. Like Caiaphas and so many others, little did he know then that the Son of God would rise from the grave only three days later.

The words of the centurion were profound for another reason as well. As a Gentile, he was familiar with the Roman and Greek gods and their personalities and characteristics. He had taken an oath of allegiance to his emperor, who was considered by all, except the

39. For a survey of the opinions of early Christians concerning the temple veil, see de Junge. “Matthew 27:51 in Early Christian Exegesis.” 67-79.

40. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:232.

41. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 392.

Jews, as god. Therefore, the son of any emperor was always known as the “son of god,” and was expected to eventually take his position as the head of government. As all who claimed divinity, there were fables of miracles and mysterious happenings associated with the emperor, which were quickly consumed by a superstitious populace. The centurion had, no doubt, known several young men who claimed to have such a divine nature. This certainly did not mean these young men were holy and pure in the Judeo-Christian sense of understanding, because pagan gods promoted all the vices and sins common to man. It does, however, mean that the centurion probably knew several so-called “sons of god,” such as the emperors, and they had made no impression upon his life. However, when Jesus died he was absolutely awestruck, as he finally realized who the real Son of God was. Hence, his incredible observation “Surely He was the Son of God.”

An interesting point is this: many Roman soldiers were devoted to the Persian god Mithra. Mithraism was a men-only religion that emphasized manliness for soldiers, and one of its emphases was the endurance of pain. The centurion most certainly did not regard Jesus as a blasphemer, but if he was a Mithra devotee, he was clearly impressed with His death.⁴² Luke said, of this account that the centurion said Jesus was *dikaïos*, a term that means both *righteous* and *innocent*.⁴³

“Went home, striking their chests.” Striking one’s chest in mourning symbolized the ultimate sorrow and grief. Who were these people and why were they so sorrowful? Jesus remained popular among the common people of Israel. Clearly not *all* the Jewish people wanted to see Him crucified, but only a small clique of evil leaders planned and executed the conspiracy. There is not a single recorded event that indicates otherwise. These mournful people were beating their breasts because they realized there had never been a sage or prophet like Jesus. Now, another innocent Jew had been condemned to a Roman cross. Their mourning, however, would soon turn to joy.

17.01.04 Jn. 19:31-37

JESUS IS PIERCED

³¹ Since it was the preparation day, the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a special day). They requested that Pilate have the men’s legs broken and that their bodies be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and

42. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 402-03.

43. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 404.

of the other one who had been crucified with Him.³³ When they came to Jesus, they did not break His legs since they saw that He was already dead.³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.³⁵ He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth.³⁶ For these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: Not one of His bones will be broken (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12; Ps. 34:20).³⁷ Also, another Scripture says: They will look at the One they pierced (Zech. 12:10).

“Preparation day.” Literally, the “Day of Preparation”⁴⁴ or Preparation Day was the day prior to special holy days such as Passover; a day when work would end and the people prepared themselves for the special event or a special Sabbath.⁴⁵ It was rooted in Leviticus 23:5-7.⁴⁶ This was a technical term that confirms that Jesus died on Friday.⁴⁷ It was the day before the Passover Sabbath and sometimes referred to as a “Second Sabbath Day,”⁴⁸ or “High Sabbath” because it occurred during a feast.⁴⁹ In the year A.D. 30, the Passover began on sundown Thursday and lasted until sundown Friday; then began the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Hence the term, “the next day was to be a special Sabbath.” The term “Sabbath” was the seventh day of the week, when work was set aside and everyone’s attention was focused on the celebration of our Lord of Israel. This phrase, however, was also applied to other holy days when there was prohibition against work activities. In this case, John said it was a “special Sabbath,” meaning Passover that occurred on Friday and not Saturday.⁵⁰ The early church in Jerusalem and elsewhere clearly understood that Jesus was crucified on Friday, the Preparation Day of the Passover.

The imagery of Jesus dying as the Passover Lamb of God is profoundly significant.

44. 2 Kgs. 11:5; 1 Chron. 9:25; 24:19; Josephus, *Antiquities* 7.14.7; See also Simmons, “The Origin of Christmas and the Date of Christ’s Birth.” 321-22.

45. Mt. 27:62; Mk. 15:42; Lk. 23:54; Jn. 19:14, 31, 42.

46. See also Num. 11:18; Jos. 7:13. The first and last days of the Passover festival were days of “Holy Convention,” and became known as “Second Sabbaths.” Six times the word “preparation” is used to identify the day of the festival and three of those with the Sabbath Day (Mk. 15:42; Lk. 23:54; Jn. 19:31). Twice the term is used without an identification (Mt. 27:62; Jn. 19:42) and once it is referred to as the “preparation of the Passover in John 19:14.

47. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 25, page 18.

48. Christian scholars historically have failed to recognize this day as a holy day for the Jewish people.

49. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 25, page 18.

50. Saldarini, *Jesus and the Passover*. 56.

Likewise was the proper sacrifice of a Passover lamb in the temple. No bones could be broken. The rabbis were incredibly strict in the procedure, with severe punishment for violators. For example, the Mishnah recorded, “If a man breaks a bone of a clean Passover-offering he incurs the forty stripes.”⁵¹ As the lamb died without broken bones, so did Jesus. For centuries, the sacrificial lamb had projected the image of the future Lamb of God, Jesus.

This day is to be a memorial for you, and you must celebrate it as a festival to the LORD. You are to celebrate it throughout your generations as a permanent statute.

Exodus 12:14

“Men’s legs broken.” The dying process was so horrific, that out of mercy the Romans would break the legs of the crucified men. This *crurifragium*, or *leg breaking*, hastened death and thereby shorten the time of suffering.⁵² This was *not* done to Jesus because He died quickly, most likely because of the severe scourging He received earlier.

“One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear.” How interesting that this was committed by a soldier who was under the command of Pilate. The name “Pilate” is derived from the Latin word “pilatus,” meaning “javelin.” It was a spear or javelin that pierced the side of Jesus.⁵³ This act was in the plan of God for the salvation of humanity. In the Garden of Eden, God took a rib from Adam’s side and made a bride for him. Jesus had His side pierced by which He redeemed for Himself a bride. This soldier, as some other individuals of the Bible, did not have his name recorded in the Scriptures. According to the pseudepigraphal book, the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, his name was Longinus and his spear became known as the “Holy Lance.”⁵⁴

As the Roman soldiers surrounded Jesus, the event became a fulfillment of prophecy:

Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.

Psalms 22:16

51. Mishnah, *Pesahim* 7.11.

52. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:286.

53. Kennedy, “Christ’s Trial and Ours.” 9; Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:274.

54. Jordan, *Who’s Who in the Bible*. 240.

Critics have stated that this passage in Psalm was not in the original text, but is a later Christian interpretation. The basis for their opinion is that the Septuagint translation reads, “Like a lion are my hands and feet.” However, a Dead Sea Scroll fragment puts the critics to rest, it reads precisely as any Bible has it, and the Essenes were certainly not interested in Christianity.⁵⁵

“At once blood and water came out.” When a person dies, there is a separation of the blood into two liquids that appear as blood and water. This is the first proof that Jesus died a physical death, which followed the spiritual death when He cried out, “My God, my God, Why have you forsaken Me?” Everyone realized that His Spirit had departed, but it appears that the flow of water and blood was unexpected, and may have had a symbolic meaning to the gospel writer, because later, in his first epistle he said,

⁶ Jesus Christ — He is the One who came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and by blood. And the Spirit is the One who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and these three are in agreement.

1 John 5:6-8

Finally, Jesus identified with the common people by dying on the cross, not only for theological reasons, but there was also a connection that paralleled His baptism. More than anyone else, He understood the sufferings of His people, but unlike His people, He also understood the dilemma in which they lived. It was for this “dilemma” that He came, lived, died, and rose again.

55. Miller, “The War of the Scrolls.” 42-43.

Unit 17

The Burial Of Jesus

Chapter 02

Jesus Is Laid To Rest



17.02.00.A. CHRIST IN THE SEPULCHRE GUARDED BY ANGELS by William Blake 1805.

17.02.01 Mk. 15:42-43a Lk. 23:51a; Mk. 15:43b-45 (See also Mt. 27:57-58; Jn. 19:38a)
Garden near Golgotha

JOSEPH ASKS FOR BODY

Mk. ⁴² When it was already evening, because it was preparation day (that is, the day before the Sabbath), ^{43a} Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin who was himself looking forward to the kingdom of God,

Lk. ⁵¹ who had not agreed with their plan and action,

Mk. ^{43b} came and boldly went in to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised that He was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him whether He had already died. ⁴⁵ When he found out from the centurion, he gave the corpse to Joseph.

“When it was already evening.” The Jewish people reckoned “evening” in two ways, the earlier and the later.⁵⁶

1. The earlier evening was in the middle of the afternoon, or about 3:00 p.m.
2. The later evening began at sunset, or around 6:00 p.m.

The reference to “evening” in this crucifixion narrative is to the earlier evening that spans from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm.

Proper burial was a sacred honor.⁵⁷ Even common peasant Jewish people honored strangers with a proper burial. In this case, Jesus, who was a healer and miracle worker, received the most honorable burial. Consequently, Joseph requested the body of Jesus because,

1. He wanted to honor Jesus – it was a disgrace not to have a proper burial.

56. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:146.

57. In a similar manner, centuries later the Muslims build the Dome of the Rock over the temple site and converted St. Mary's Church, located on the Temple Mount, into a mosque. They never touched Gordon's Garden Tomb.

2. It would have been a disgrace to leave a body on the cross over a religious holy day.

It is for the second reason that scholars believe that the other two crucified men were also removed from their crosses and buried. Pilate, who was anxious not to have a riot on his hands surrendered to the demands of the Jewish leadership. Yet as far as the Romans were concerned, they could not have cared less if a Jew rotted on a cross.

A crucified person suffered not only the pain of dying, but also the pain of insects, birds, and dogs eating his flesh while he was still living. The smell of sweat, blood, urine, and feces, along with the dying groans of those crucified, attracted a number of parasites and predators. To add insult to unspeakable injury, those who begged for a proper burial afterwards were at times told that they would “feed the crows.” An example was written in 20 B.C, by the Roman historian Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65-8 B.C.), otherwise known as Horace who said,

If a slave should say to me, “I have not committed a robbery, nor run away:” “You have your reward; you are not galled with the lash,” I reply. “I have not killed any man:” “You shall not [therefore] feed the carrion crows on the cross.”

Horace, *First Epistle* 16:46-48⁵⁸

Another example of disregard of the deceased occurred about four decades before Jesus was born. There was a power play in Rome and, Octavius (later known as Emperor Augustus) had defeated Julius Caesar’s murderers at Philippi in October of 42 B.C. The wrath of Octavius was preserved later by the historian Suetonius, who wrote,

He did not use his victory with moderation, but after sending Brutus’ head to Rome, to be cast at the feet of Caesar’s statue, he vented his spleen upon the most distinguished of his captives, not even sparing them insulting the Law. For instance, to one man who begged humbly for burial, he is said to have replied: “The [carrion] birds⁵⁹ will soon settle that question.”

Suetonius, *The Deified Augustus* 13:1-2

In the second century (B.C.) a certain man named Amyzon in Caria had a slave who killed him. The people of the community crucified the slave and left the following inscription:

58. <http://www.authorama.com/works-of-horace-8.html>. Retrieved October 8, 2012; Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* 161.

59. The term “carrion birds” or “birds” is a reference to crows.

But the one who did such things to me my fellow citizens hung alive for the wild beasts and birds.

Caria Inscription⁶⁰

Truly, his death was the most agonizing of crucifixions. As previously stated, to have a proper burial was a highly esteemed virtue; failure to have one was worse than the ultimate insult – it was the ultimate annihilation in both the Roman and Jewish world. The difference is that in the Jewish world, death upon a tree or cross was also believed to carry with it a divine condemnation. Therefore, it is not surprising that when the Romans were destroying Jerusalem and the temple, two former high priests of the Caiaphas dynasty, Ananus II and Jesus, in 62 and 64 respectively, were hated so much that they were killed and their bodies were not buried. It was as if the rioting executioners initiated a divine curse on them. Josephus reported this account:

They actually went so far in their impiety as to cast out the corpses without burial, although the Jews are so careful about funeral rites that even malefactors who have been sentenced to crucifixion are taken down and buried before sunset.

Josephus, *Wars* 4.5.2 (317)

By the time the First Revolt erupted, the common Jewish people had as much hatred for the temple establishment as they did for the Romans. They were not about to give the Sadducean priesthood any dignity, rather, they were determined to give them the ultimate insult and ultimate annihilation – death without a burial.

Finally, if Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both distinguished members of the Sanhedrin, truly believed that Jesus was a criminal, they would never have violated Deuteronomy 21:22-23, that states a criminal who blasphemes against God should be stoned to death. Rather these righteous Pharisees recognized Jesus as One sent by God, although at this point they may not have recognized Him as the Messiah. To honor Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea donated his tomb that was not in a cemetery, but in a private garden outside the city.⁶¹ In their deepest sorrow they mourned their huge loss, but absolutely no one was expecting the resurrection that was about to come.

60. Quotation cited by Cook, "Crucifixion and Burial." 204; Liewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published 1984-1985*. 8:1-3.

61. Many Jerusalemites had gardens on the northern side of the city and these gardens were enclosed in the early 40s by King Agrippa when he constructed a new city wall.

17.02.01.Q1 Does Luke 23:1 conflict with 23:51?

The first verse of Chapter 23 indicates that the entire court voted against Jesus whereas verse 51 states that Joseph of Arimathea⁶² did not consent to their decision. This is not a matter of conflict, but indicates that he was not present during the trial. The Sanhedrin was composed of seventy members, plus the high priest who was also the president. For a capital crime, only twenty-three members plus the president had to serve as judges. In this case the court judges were hand selected by Caiaphas to agree with his decision. Joseph of Arimathea was among those absent.

17.02.02 Jn. 19:38b-40; Mt. 27:59-60a; Jn. 19:42; Mt. 27:60b Lk. 23:55-56 Calvary

JESUS IS BURIED

Jn. ^{38b} Pilate gave him permission, so he came and took His body away. ³⁹ Nicodemus (who had previously come to Him at night) also came, bringing a mixture of about 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes. ⁴⁰ Then they took Jesus' body and wrapped it in linen cloths with the aromatic spices, according to the burial custom of the Jews.

Mt. ⁵⁹ So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean, fine linen, ^{60a} and placed it in his new tomb, which he had cut into the rock.

Jn. ⁴² They placed Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation and since the tomb was nearby.

Mt. ^{60b} He left after rolling a great stone against the entrance of the tomb.

Lk. ⁵⁵ The women who had come with Him from Galilee followed along and observed the tomb and how His body was placed. ⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

Stoning was both the form of Jewish execution *and* a method of burying a criminal. But on the other hand, Gentile criminals were often not buried. Their bodies remained on the crosses until natural processes and wild animals devoured all flesh, and only a few bones remained on the ground.

62. Arimathea was a small village about twenty miles west of Jerusalem in the hill country of Ephraim.

“Nicodemus... (and) Joseph took the body.” This action caused them to become ceremonially impure. Therefore, they could not participate in the Passover celebration (Num. 19:11). The placement of the body in the tomb and the burial process clearly demonstrated that their love for Jesus was greater than their love for the law, their social reputation, or personal safety. They removed the body of Jesus because,

1. They performed this last act of kindness for a dear friend, as they grieved in great sorrow.
2. It would have been a disgrace to leave a body on the cross overnight, especially on the eve of a holy day.
3. Furthermore, since the disciples and the family of Jesus were all from the Galilee area and, therefore, would not have possessed a family tomb in the Jerusalem area. This may have been an additional reason as to why Joseph of Arimathea donated his tomb to Jesus.

“About 75 pounds.” This huge amount of spices was generally reserved for royalty, as recorded when King Asa died. His body was also “covered with spices and various blends of perfumes” (2 Ch. 16:14).⁶³ The treatment of the body of Jesus was the cultural norm for anyone of wealth, but quite unusual in light of His peasant lifestyle. In this case, both men and women, who dearly loved Him, placed spices upon His body.

The care given to the body is another sign that He had died. Any sign of life would have immediately brought forth those who would have nursed Him back to health. However, this was not the case. The fact that the body of Jesus was placed in a new tomb of Joseph of Aramathea, fulfills a prophecy of Isaiah who said,

**⁹ They made His grave with the wicked,
and with a rich man at His death,
Although He had done no violence,
and had not spoken deceitfully.**

**¹⁰ Yet the LORD was pleased to crush Him severely,
when You make Him a restitution offering,
He will see His seed, He will prolong His days,
and by His hand, the LORD’s pleasure will be accomplished.**

Isaiah 53:9-10

63. See *New International Version Study Bible* footnote on John 19:39.

17.02.02.Q1 How was the burial of Jesus similar to the Exodus?

The burial of Jesus was similar to the hasty exodus by the children of Israel as they left Egypt, when they barely had time to gather their belongings and leave. Jesus was crucified at 9:00 a.m. and was dead by 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon. There was very little time left before the Sabbath would begin about three hours later. So the body had to be taken down in haste, properly prepared for burial, and buried before three stars appeared in the sky (the sign of the end of the day and the beginning of the day of Passover). Jews did not practice any type of embalming, but washed the body and wrapped it in spices and linens.⁶⁴ The burial process included pronouncing a blessing over the spices.⁶⁵ The burial rituals for Jesus were hastily performed as the sun was setting. Just as the Israelites had walked through the Red Sea into a new life and new freedom, Jesus walked through the gates of hell and arose to give humanity a new life and new freedom.

There are two significant issues here.

1. The importance of a proper burial and
2. The law of unrelated identities.⁶⁶

At this time, a tomb was a cave-like chamber carved out of the rock with a shelf or bench to one side, where the body would be placed. After the flesh was completely decayed, the bones would be collected and placed in a clay, wooden, or stone box known as an ossuary. Wealthy families acquired stone ossuaries, while common peasants acquired ones made from wood or clay. The name of the deceased was placed on the box and, at times, his occupation was mentioned as well.⁶⁷ Tombs were used repeatedly by the same family. It was said that the deceased was “gathered to his kin” (Gen 25:8) or was “sleeping with his fathers” (1 Kg. 11:23).

64. Mishnah, *Shabbath* 23.5.

65. Babylonian Talmud, *Seder Zera'im Berakoth* 53a.

66. The law of unrelated identities includes principles of kosher foods, not being unequally yoked, not mixing different materials to make fabrics, etc. See Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 26, page 14.

67. Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 237-39.

17.02.02.Q2 Why was Jesus buried in a new tomb?

Jesus was buried in a new tomb, because failure to do so would have broken the law of unrelated identities. This law originated with Moses and was, therefore, deemed highly important. The Jews believed, for example, that mules and donkeys could not be yoked together for any type of agricultural activity, nor could Jews marry non-Jews. Likewise, New Testament teaches that believers and unbelievers were not to be married. Rules of such unrelated identities were extended to include burial tombs and stated that only family members could be buried in family tombs.

Since Jesus was the Son of God and not the son of two earthly parents, He was buried in a new tomb that never had been used by anyone's family. Even after His death, Jesus honored the Mosaic Law of unrelated identities. To have buried Him in a family tomb would have identified Him with that particular family. Jesus was both Son of Man and Son of God and, hence, He was in need of a new tomb.

The Babylonian Talmud, on the other hand, indicates that executed criminals were not buried in the family tomb, but in one of two cemeteries as determined by the mode of death. The Talmud reads:

And they did not bury him (the executed person) in his ancestral tomb, but two burial places were prepared by the beth din, one for those who were decapitated or strangled, and the other for those who were stoned or burned.

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 46 a-b

Although this regulation was not always observed, it was a way to disconnect the shame of the criminal from his family. Nonetheless, innocent victims who were crucified were buried in family tombs. The possible separation of burial apart from former family members served to discourage those who entertained thoughts of committing a crime.

17.02.02.Q3 Where was Jesus buried?

For centuries the burial tomb of Jesus was accepted as being in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. However, for more than a century, Protestants have followed the opinion of a General Gordon who said Jesus was buried in the Garden Tomb. A third site has emerged and, all three are listed below, followed by a brief discussion of each.

1. The Mount of Olives

2. The Garden tomb

3. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

1. The Mount of Olives

In the spring of 1988, a book titled *Secrets of Golgotha*⁶⁸ challenged the prevailing opinions of scholars with the argument that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives. While the fact that Jesus died when the Passover lamb was sacrificed is undeniable, the author also connects the burning of the red heifer⁶⁹ symbolically to Jesus.⁷⁰

The Jewish records state that the altar for the red heifer sacrifice was located *east* of the temple.⁷¹ To accommodate the priests, Herod the Great had built a double-tiered arched bridge that connected the Eastern Gate to the Mount of Olives. That bridge was known as the Bridge of the Red Heifer and, in fact, appears to have been constructed solely for that purpose and to lead the scapegoat out of the temple and into the desert.⁷² The bridge did not connect to any highways and there were no major communities east of the Mount of Olives; only a village known for its lepers, a huge olive grove, and an altar that has been lost in history. It would have been most unusual to build a huge bridge for merely a small village and olive grove. Therefore, its purpose had to be connected to sacrificial observances. While the sacrifice of the Passover lamb is well established in Christendom, the meaning of the sacrifice of the red heifer and how it relates specifically to Jesus is seldom discussed. In fact, it appears to have been forgotten in history. The author of *Secrets* essentially states that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives as a sin offering just as the red heifer was previously burned as a sin offering. An interesting statement in the Mishnah says that the eastern wall of the temple was lower than the other walls so the high priest, when burning the red heifer, could look directly into the temple.

All the walls there were high, save only the eastern wall, because the [high]

68. Martin, Ernest L. *Secrets of Golgotha: The Forgotten History of Christ's Crucifixion*. Associates for Scriptural Knowledge: Alhambra, CA. 1988. See also Ritmeyer, "A Response to Dr. Ernest Martin." 117-121.

69. The red heifer was a necessary component for the purification of a person who came in contact with a dead body. There was a special ritual entailing the sprinkling of its ashes. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Talmud*. 115.

70. See a book review by W. H. C. Frend (1989) of Ernest L. Martin's "Secrets of Golgotha. The Forgotten History of Christ's Crucifixion." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*. 40, 449-449.

71. Mishnah, *Middoth* 1:3; 2:4; Mishnah, *Yoma* 7:2; Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 68a; Babylonian Talmud, *Zebhim* 105b.

72. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:83-84.

priest that burns the [red] heifer and stands on the top of the Mount of Olives should be able to look directly into the entrance of the Sanctuary when the blood is sprinkled.

Mishnah, *Middoth* 2.4⁷³

An essential question he proposes is this: Why have so few theologians, archaeologists, and historians been interested in finding the site of the red heifer altar on the Mount of Olives?⁷⁴ Maybe in the future this question will be answered, but until then, Martin's thesis is set aside and additional attention is given the two other sites.⁷⁵

Concerning the two most popular sites, there are two views as to determine which site is authentic. Many Protestants believe it is the Garden Tomb, while Roman Catholics, Armenians, and Greek Orthodox Christians believe it is the tomb within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. These differences may be anchored more by theological biases than by scientific research, especially since the 1990s have revealed the identity with overwhelming evidence. There are those, however, who continue to insist that the Garden Tomb is authentic, in spite of its shaky history.

2. The Garden Tomb

When evangelical Christians think of the burial place of their Lord, they generally think affectionately of the Garden Tomb. It is certainly a beautiful garden with its winding walkways, shrubbery, and trees — a peaceful and quiet setting in a modern city that never sleeps except on high holy days. But is it really the place where Jesus was buried?

17.02.02.Q4 What are the arguments *for* Gordon's Garden Tomb?

The Garden Tomb as being the tomb of Christ was the site suggested by Otto Thenius in 1842. It was investigated again in 1883 by British General Charles George Gordon, and his name has been associated with the tomb ever since. The decisions by Thenius and Gordon were based upon three observations, but apparently without any review of the first century history of Jerusalem.

73. Inserts by Danby, ed., *Mishnah*.

74. The whole matter involving the red heifer sacrifice is one this writer believes is in need of further study. See Appendices 6, 26, and 33.

75. A summary of *Secrets of Golgotha* can be found at, Ernest L. Martin, "The Crucifixion Site of Jesus." *Archaeology and Biblical Research* 5:4 (Autumn, 1992). 113-121.

1. Their location was along the road leading to Damascus. It was one of seven main roads that went to and from the city.⁷⁶
2. They observed two holes in the side of a small rounded cliff and imagined it to be the “place of the skull,” because it also contained an old tomb.
3. They realized the small cliff was outside the Old City wall, and were convinced they discovered the authentic site where Jesus was buried.⁷⁷ The fact that the wall they saw did not exist at the time of Christ was obviously unknown to them. The northern city wall that they observed and based their decision on was reconstructed by Suleiman the Magnificent in the 1530s (17.02.02.Z2). It did not exist in the first century.



17.02.02.A. THE TOMB AT GORDON’S CALVARY. Also known as the Garden Tomb, Gordon’s Calvary has unquestionably been identified as a late Iron Age (8-7th Cent. B.C.) tomb, and hence, not the tomb of Jesus. However, while it is not the authentic tomb, it has become the symbol of the resurrected Christ. Photograph by the author.

76. Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 22-23.

77. See also Zondervan’s *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (2005, ed.). 1615.

In 1885 the Gordon popularized the site in an article published in the Palestine Exploration Fund's *Quarterly Statement*.⁷⁸ His theory was quickly accepted as fact by Protestants, who at that time were forbidden entry into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. To aid their argument, an inscription on a stone found nearby was incorrectly translated and published on November 7, 1889 in the *Northern Christian Advocate* (Syracuse, New York).⁷⁹ The science of archaeology was still in its infancy and whatever "archaeological proof" that would have been uncovered at that time would have been challenged and probably revised within a century. This was one of many articles that attempted to prove the identification of the tomb of Christ, although there was no archaeological evidence to support the theory. Furthermore, this tomb is significantly different from first century tombs.⁸⁰ As a result, many Christians visiting the Holy Land today are incorrectly convinced of the authenticity of the site.

In the first century, residents of Jerusalem had their gardens and orchards around the entire city, and the level area on the north side of the city was especially ideal for gardening. In order to protect this valuable area, in the years A.D. 41 to 44 Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, built the Third Wall that enclosed the gardens as well as the tomb of Christ (see 17.02.02.Z1).⁸¹ However, since the Holy City was the scene of many wars and suffered many destructions, this wall was eventually destroyed and its exact location is unknown today. The northern city wall seen today was constructed by Suleiman the Magnificent in the 1536-1538 (see 17.02.02.Z2).⁸² This led to an incorrect identification of the Garden Tomb in the 1800s by General Gordon because he believed that the Old City wall standing today was the same as at the time of Christ.

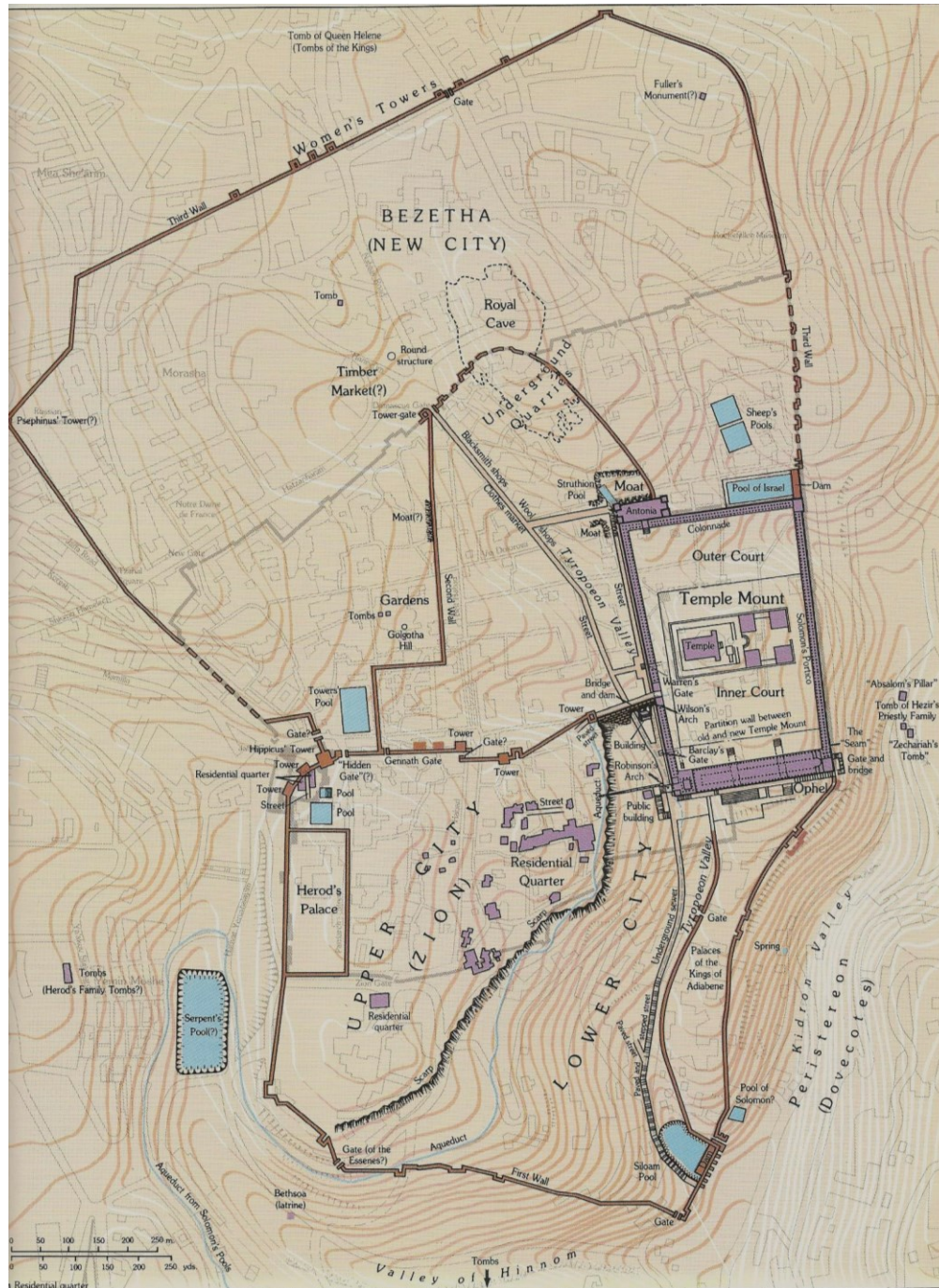
78. Alden, "Golgotha." 2:772; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It*. 146.

79. Murphy-O'Connor, "The Garden Tomb." 12.

80. Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ*. 56-58.

81. Map courtesy of Dan Bahat. *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*. 35.

82. Map courtesy of Dan Bahat. *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*. 59.



17.02.02.Z1. MAP OF JERUSALEM WITH VEGETABLE GARDENS AND HEROD AGRIPPA'S THIRD WALL.

In the years A.D. 41 to 44 Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, built the Third Wall with Women's Towers that enclosed the gardens on the north side of Jerusalem as well as the tomb of Christ. This wall was later destroyed and its precise location is unknown today. Map courtesy of Dan

Bahat.⁸³

17.02.02.Q5 What are the arguments *against* Gordon's Garden Tomb?

What Gordon did not realize was that within fifteen years after Jesus, Herod Agrippa (reigned 41-44), constructed a new city wall that Josephus referred to as "The Third Wall."⁸⁴ In the centuries that followed there were many conflicts and destructions of the Holy City. As a result, the Third Wall was destroyed and its precise location is still unknown today. However, in the years 1538 to 1541, the great Muslim ruler Suleiman the Magnificent employed two architects to determine where the ancient wall once stood. Based upon their findings, the Old City Walls seen today were constructed.⁸⁵ However, after the reconstructed wall was finished, Suleiman discovered the architects made an error and had them decapitated.

As to General Gordon, there are five significant points that he never considered.⁸⁶

1. He failed to consider the historical background of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
2. The Middle East is subject to frequent earthquakes. While the hill he identified does look like a skull, he never considered the fact that it probably did not look like a skull in the first century.
3. A century after Jesus Emperor Hadrian declared victory over Christianity by building a pagan shrine over the burial site of Jesus.⁸⁷ He never touched Gordon's Garden Tomb.
4. The site Gordon identified is known in the Bible as "the place of the skull." In Western thinking, this is generally interpreted as being an area that has the

83. Bahat, *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*. 35.

84. Bahat, "Does the Holy Sepulcher." 37.

85. Shanks, *Jerusalem, An Archaeological Biography*. 241.

86. See Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. Note: Amos Kloner is considered by scholars to have completed the most comprehensive study of hundreds of tombs (First and Second Temple Periods) in the Jerusalem area.

87. In a similar manner, centuries later the Muslims build the Dome of the Rock over the temple site and converted St. Mary's Church, located on the Temple Mount, into a mosque. They never touched Gordon's Garden Tomb.

appearance of a human skull. However, in Eastern thinking – as in first century Jewish thinking – it was the place of death, not the physical appearance of a hill. The place was probably where the Romans had crucified many other Jews and hence the name, “the place of the skull.”⁸⁸

5. Finally, the tomb of Jesus has always been a challenge for some people. Like visitors of today, Gordon realized that it does not look like a tomb – and that is because in the 11th century a demented caliph entered the church and destroyed as much of the tomb as he could that was not previously destroyed by Hadrian.⁸⁹

If General Gordon were alive today, he would be discouraged to learn that archaeologists clearly identified his Garden Tomb to be a Late Iron Age tomb (8th or 7th century B.C.).⁹⁰

Video Insert >

17.02.02.V1 *The Garden Tomb*. Archaeologist Dr. Bryant Wood discusses the date of the Garden Tomb as an Iron Age II tomb, meaning it was used in the 8th to 7th century B.C. Click here if Internet connection is available.

17.02.02.Q6 What descriptive biblical parameters aided archaeologists in identifying the kind of tomb in which Jesus was laid?

The descriptive parameters are as follows:

1. It was the tomb of a wealthy individual named Joseph of Arimathea (Mt. 27:59-60)
2. It was a new tomb, never used previously (Mt. 27:60)
3. On Sunday morning, John came to the tomb and saw the burial clothes neatly folded, lying on a bench, and the body missing (Jn. 20:3-8). This suggests a single chamber tomb as the body would probably not have been visible in the dark

88. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 4, Session 1.

89. Nelesen, *Yeshua; the Promise, the Land, the Messiah*. (Video Tape 2).

90. Price, *The Stones Cry Out*. 313.

second chamber of a double chamber tomb. However, the light from the rising sun or a lit oil lamp could have made a body or burial cloth visible from the outside.

4. Mary came to the tomb and had to stoop down to look inside and saw the linen clothes lying on the bench (Jn. 20:5). She saw angels seated at both the head and foot of where Jesus had lain (Jn. 20:11-12). This affirms the single chamber tomb, possibly like the type Caiaphas was buried in.⁹¹

5. On Sunday morning, Mary spoke to a gardener (Jn. 20:15). This points to a large area on the northern side of the city where many people had vegetable gardens. This area was enclosed in the early 40s by King Agrippa.

6. The stone was “rolled” to the side. This often is interpreted that the stone was round, like a large disc. However, square stones were also rolled, although that is more difficult to do. The fact remains, however, that only four large disc stones have been found of the time of Jesus, while there have been more than a hundred square blocking type stones found that were commonly used to cover tomb entrances.⁹² It took several men to move such a heavy and clumsy stone, which is why entrances were small – the larger the opening; the larger the sealing stone would be needed.

17.02.02.Q7 What were the typical first century tombs like?

In the first century, the tombs in the Jerusalem area were of two distinct styles, uniquely different from each other and from prior centuries.

1. One style, known as the “shaft tomb,”⁹³ consisted of a large room with a number of finger-like shafts (or niches) carved into the cretaceous limestone hillside (see photo 17.02.02.B and illustration of plan 17.02.02.C).

91. Kloner, “Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus’ Tomb?” 29.

92. Kloner, “Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus’ Tomb?” 28. Kloner also indicates that the Hebrew word for both round (or rolling) and square blocking stones is *golal* or *golel* (plural: *golalim*). See also Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 54-56. Note: Amos Kloner is considered by scholars to have completed the most comprehensive study of tombs in the Jerusalem area.

93. For an exhaustive study on burial practices and tombs during the era of Jesus, see Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*. Boston: Brill, 2005.

Each shaft or niche, called a *kokhim* in Hebrew, was approximately six or seven feet long and one and one-half or two feet wide, large enough to lay a body (see photo 17.02.02.B). That matches the rabbinic directives that stated that a niche had to be four cubits long and seven handbreadths high and six handbreadths wide.⁹⁴ After a year, when the flesh had decayed, the bones were collected and placed in a small ossuary made of wood or soft limestone. This was the most common and typical first century tomb.



17.02.02.B. TWO SHAFT TOMBS IN THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE. In one of the small rooms within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are these shaft tombs which were used by common Jewish peasants of the first century. The arcosolium tomb of Jesus was destroyed by Emperor Hadrian in A.D. 135. Photograph by the author.

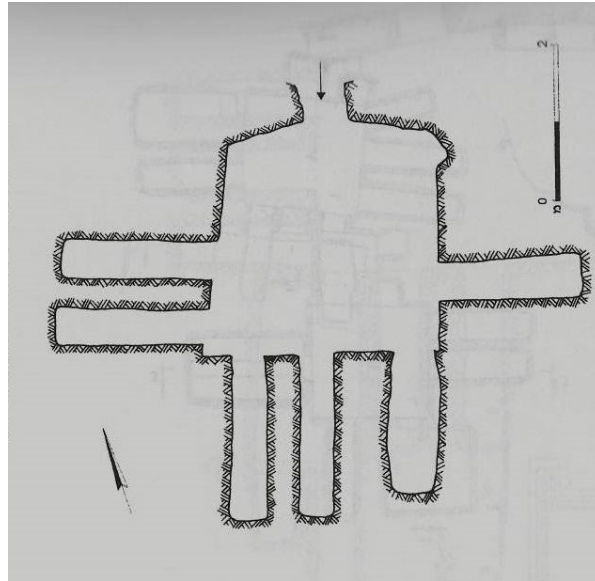
The origin of the shaft tomb is unknown. Some scholars believe it originated in Egypt, others believe it came from Phoenicia and was popularized by Alexander the Great.⁹⁵ The wealthy *arcosolium* tomb is believed to have originated in the late Inter-Testamental Period, replacing bench tombs such as the Garden Tomb of the Iron Age as was typical in the First Temple Era.⁹⁶

94. Mishnah, *Baba Bathra* 6.8.

95. Kloner and Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 77.

96. Kloner and Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 85.

2. The second style was for the first century's rich and famous. This tomb had an indented shelf or bench, known as an *arcosolia*, cut into the chamber wall, large enough to lay a body.⁹⁷ Again, after a year when the flesh had decayed, the bones were collected and placed in a small ossuary made of limestone. The *arcosolia* was the preferred tomb of the first century and was the only tomb style that would have permitted an angel to sit at either end of the body of Jesus (Jn. 20:12). It would have been impossible for an angel to sit at either end of the body of Christ in a shaft tomb or in a Late Iron Age tomb.



17.02.02.C A FLOOR PLAN ILLUSTRATING A COMMON SHAFT TOMB. This plan depicts six shafts or “niches,” where the bodies of common people were laid to decompose. The entrance on the right opens into the main chamber that is about three meters square. After the bones were collected and placed in ossuaries, the ossuaries were placed anywhere within the tomb. Illustration by Amos Kloner.⁹⁸

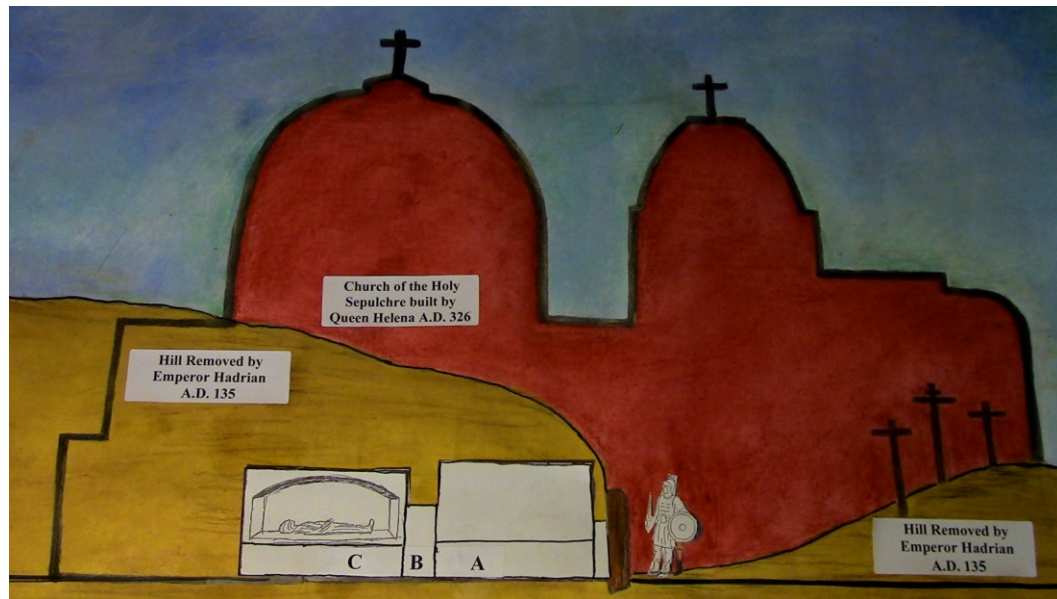
Scholars believe it was an *arcosolium* tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid (see 17.02.02.D below) as this was an expensive style that only the wealthy could afford.⁹⁹ The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is shown in 17.02.02.D because the

97. For an exhaustive study on burial practices and tombs during the era of Jesus, see Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*. Boston: Brill, 2005.

98. Kloner and Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 688.

99. Illustration modified from Bahat, *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*. 57.

hillside in which the tomb was located was destroyed by Hadrian who quarried the stone and built the shrine over the tomb to honor the Roman goddess Venus.



17.02.02.D AN ILLUSTRATION OF A DOUBLE CHAMBER ARCOSOLIUM TOMB WITH SHADOW OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPLUCHRE. This illustration depicts a possible reconstruction of the tomb of Aramathea. Mourners visiting this tomb would have sat on a bench in chamber “A,” then moved through a small opening “B” to the second chamber “C” where the body was laid on a bench under an arched ceiling. The hillside was eventually destroyed. Illustration by Diana Clegg.

3. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Determining the identity of Christ’s tomb was a great challenge since the Church of the Holy Sepulchre claimed to be both the authentic crucifixion and burial sites, the two being merely some fifty or sixty feet apart. The following is a brief overview of the historical events that reveal the identity of the authentic tomb of Jesus.

After the Romans destroyed the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the city was rebuilt. But six decades later, the Jews revolted again which resulted in yet another destruction in the year 135. In both wars, the Romans spent three years besieging the Holy City. Since there were thirteen rebellions between 63 B.C., when the Romans came, and A.D.70, by the time they defeated the Jews again in A.D. 135, Emperor Hadrian and the rest of Rome had enough of them and decided to permanently eliminate them. Like Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Egyptian Pharaoh of previous centuries, he wanted to remove any trace of these aggravating people.

Video Insert >

17.02.02.V2 *The Two Types of First Century Tombs.* Professor Gordon Franz discusses the differences between the two types of first century tombs. His emphasis is on the distinctive features of the Garden Tomb and those of the Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. [Click here if Internet connection is available.](#)



17.02.02.D. AN EXPOSED TOMB. An exposed tomb, the top removed, shows an arcosolium (plural: arcosolia) tomb on the left, three conventional tombs, and a bench in front of them. Bodies of the deceased were laid in these tombs until the flesh was decayed, then the bones were collected about a year later and placed in an ossuary. Photo by Jeff Herot.

Likewise, Hadrian had no great love for the new religious sect known as “Christians,” since, like the Jews, they also refused to participate in emperor worship.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, if he was going to get rid of the Jews, why not the Christians also? He determined to destroy whatever people, symbols, shrines, and buildings that existed in the Jerusalem area, although he was more sympathetic to those living in the countryside villages.

100. Bahat, “Does the Holy Sepulcher.” 32.

He found the site where local Christians said Jesus was crucified and buried. To celebrate his victory over them, he built a shrine to the goddess Venus over the site of the tomb. He took Herodian ashlar (large rectangular stones cut by Herod the Great) from the ruined temple and reused them to build rectangular retaining walls for the shrine.¹⁰¹ Upon these walls, he built a platform for his shrine to (*Latin*) Venus (also known as Aphrodite to the Greeks), the goddess of love. His goal was to forever obliterate the tomb of Jesus, as well as the nearby rock of Golgotha. He never touched Skull Hill or Gordon's Garden Tomb and, therefore, it remained undisturbed for centuries, until 1883.¹⁰²

Hadrian was determined to eradicate anything Jewish – and Jesus and His disciples at this time were still considered part of Judaism. However, with the construction of the shrine, he permanently identified the site, because, when Emperor Constantine sent his mother Queen Helena to the Holy Land in 325-326 to locate the sacred sites, she quickly found the remains of the sacred cave and ruins of the shrine. Some fifty feet nearby was another Roman shrine which had been built over the crucifixion site.¹⁰³ Helena employed skilled workers to tear down the shrine and construct the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. When Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea Maritima, heard of her plans, he voiced support for the adornment of the building as follows:

It is my wish, then, that you should be especially convinced of this, which I suppose is clear to everyone, that of all things it is my chief concern how we may splendidly adorn with buildings that sacred place which, under divine direction, I freed...Not only shall this basilica be the finest in the world, but that the details also shall be such that all the most beautiful structures in every city may be surpassed by it....As for the columns and marbles, have a care to tell us in writing, after you have inspected the plan, whatever you judge to be most precious and serviceable so that those materials, of whatever sort and in whatever quantity, may be procured from every quarter.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3.29-32

Because of this unusual history, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is, without question,

101. Price, *The Stones Cry Out*. 314.

102. Maier, *The First Easter*. 84.

103. Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 248-49.

one of the most accurately identified biblical sites.¹⁰⁴ It was so significant that it later appeared on the sixth century mosaic Madaba Map on the floor of a Byzantine church in Madaba, Jordan.¹⁰⁵ Extensive research conducted in the 1990s firmly identified the church as to where both the crucifixion and burial sites are located. Ironically, little did Hadrian know that by destroying the holy site, he was in fact, preserving it. Eusebius described the construction work of Hadrian's slaves and soldiers, they...

... Brought a quantity of earth from a distance with much labor, and covered the entire spot; then, having raised this to a moderate height, they paved it with stone concealing the holy cave (tomb) beneath this massive mound. Then, as though their purpose had been effectually accomplished they prepared on this foundation a truly dreadful Sepulchre of souls, by building a gloomy shrine to the lifeless idols to the impure spirit whom they call Venus.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:26¹⁰⁶

From the time of Hadrian until Constantine, nothing changed. Then, in 326, Queen Helena identified the crucifixion and burial sites by finding the ruins of the shrine of Venus.¹⁰⁷ She immediately removed all traces of pagan worship and again Eusebius preserved the account.

He (Constantine) gave orders that the materials of what was destroyed, both stone and timber, should be removed and thrown as far from the spot as possible....he directed that the ground itself should be dug up to a considerable depth, and the soil which had been polluted by the foul impurities of demon worship transported to a far distance place.

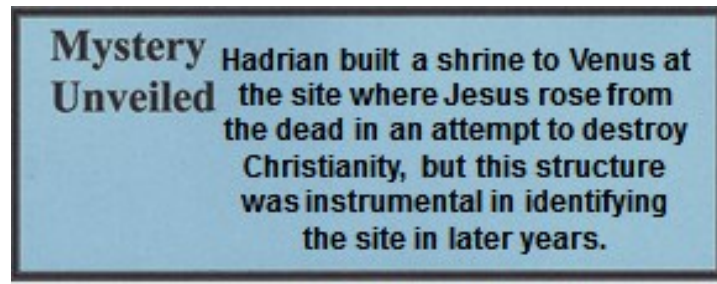
Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:26

104. Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ*. 56-57; Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 5; Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*. 146-47 quoting Egeria's Travels.

105. See "Madaba Map" in Appendix 26; See also 14.02.03.D and 05.02.03.Z.

106. Parenthesis mine.

107. Thiede and d'Ancona. *The Quest for the True Cross*. 62.



The site identification in the early fourth century was relatively easy. The destruction of Jerusalem and the work of Hadrian were still common knowledge. Queen Helena's accuracy cannot be disputed and when the clearing work was completed and a new church built, Constantine said this:

...I have disencumbered as it were of the heavy weight of foul idol worship; a spot which has been accounted holy from the beginning in God's judgment, but which now appears holier still, since it has brought to light a clear assurance of our Savior's passion.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:30

Eusebius wrote of Constantine's desire to build "a house of prayer" upon the site where Jesus was buried:

He judged it incumbent on him to render the blessed locality of our Savior's resurrection an object of attraction and veneration to all. He issued immediate injunctions, therefore, for the erection in that spot of a house of prayer.

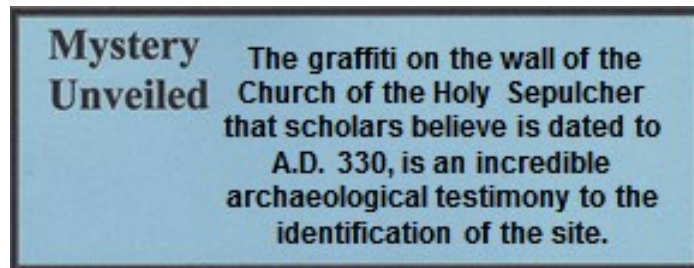
Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:25

Were it not for Constantine and his mother Helena, many sacred sites would have been lost in history. The new church was called the Church of the Martyrion, a portion of which remains. The word "Martyrion" (Gk. *witness*) meant the site was the witness of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁸ Years later the name was changed to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the second half of the last century, a number of repairs were made to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which exposed a number of stones that scholars believe were part of the

108. Pixner, "Church of the Apostles Found." 24, 60 n20.

original Constantine structure.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, in 1975 construction workers found, near St. Helena's chapel (part of the Holy Sepulchre) a red and black picture of a Roman sailing ship with the Latin phrase *Domine iuimus*, meaning *Lord, we went* (cf. Ps. 122:1). Historians believe this graffiti was placed on the wall in 330, only a few years after the completion of the church.¹¹⁰



Video Insert >

17.02.02.V3 *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the former Shrine of Venus.* Dr. Petra Heldt discusses the reconstruction of Jerusalem by Emperor Hadrian in A.D. 135, and how his work is believed to have preserved the identity of the tomb of Jesus. Dr. Paul Wright discusses some stones in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that may have been used previously in Hadrian's shrine to the Roman goddess Venus. Introduction and comments by Dr. Bill Heinrich. Click here if Internet connection is available.

109. Wiseman and Yamauchi, *Archaeology and the Bible*. 84-86.

110. McDowell, "The Historical Reliability of the New Testament." 48.



17.02.02.E. HADRIAN'S WALL AT THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

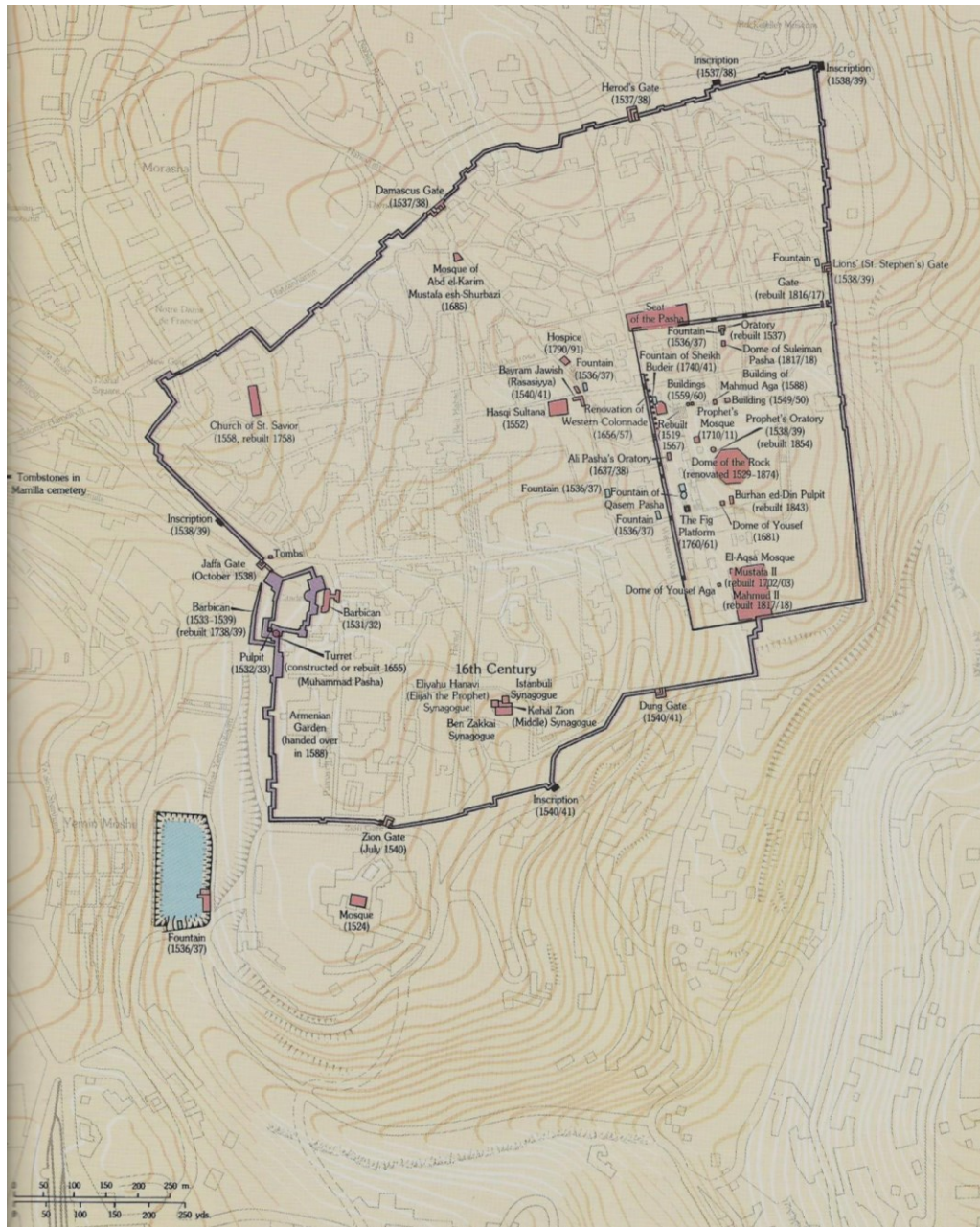
Some rooms of the church have an unusual mix of stones. Some scholars believe the smooth stones are “second use stones” that were originally part of Hadrian’s shrine of Venus.¹¹¹ This opinion is based on the logical idea that when Queen Helena built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, she used stones from the shrine that were already cut and smooth. Photo by the author.

Many ancient sites have been easy for archaeologists to identify since Queen Helena built churches over them with a foundation of a unique architectural style. Fellowship churches were constructed in the form of a cross, whereas memorial churches were built in the shape of an octagon.¹¹² The Church of the Holy Sepulchre has been partially destroyed and rebuilt several times, but it has maintained a continuous history. The queen, just like General Gordon centuries later, was faced with “the wall dilemma,” because she, too, had to contemplate the tomb location in light of the city walls. The local residents told her of King Agrippa’s third city wall and, hence, she rendered a better decision. Christianity will always remember her work because it preserved the site of the tomb of Jesus.¹¹³

111. Bahat, “Does the Holy Sepulcher.” 33.

112. Bahat, “Does the Holy Sepulcher.” 34-35.

113. Shanks, “After Hadrian’s Banishment: Jews in Christian Jerusalem.” 33.



17.02.02.Z2. MAP OF JERUSALEM'S OLD CITY WALLS AS SEEN TODAY.

In the years 1536 – 1538 Suleiman the Magnificent of the Ottoman Empire employed two architects to determine where the original city walls were located. The walls were repaired, and some sections rebuilt, according to their recommendations. However, it was later discovered that they made some errors and consequently, were decapitated. In the 1800s General Gordon mistakenly believed that the walls he saw were the walls standing at the time of Jesus, and therefore, he concluded the tomb was outside Suleiman's walls. Map by Dan Bahat.

17.02.02.Q8 Is the burial cloth of Jesus, known as the Shroud of Turin, authentic (Mt. 27:59)?

There has been a great controversy concerning a burial cloth that was hidden in a small northern town of Turin, Italy for many centuries. Known as the Shroud of Turin, the ancient burial cloth is said to have been the shroud that was wrapped around the body of Jesus as He lay in the tomb.¹¹⁴

The Mishnah and Code of Jewish Law,¹¹⁵ both provide some interesting insight into this question. John 11:44 states that Lazarus came out of the tomb with his face wrapped in a cloth. In other words, his chin was bound up **“that it may not sink,”** as described in the Mishnah below. Later, John said in 20:7, in reference to where the body of Jesus was laid, that the wrapping that had been on His head was not lying with the linen cloths, but was folded and placed elsewhere. Twice John mentioned the head wrapping, a cultural custom mentioned in the Mishnah, and is also noticeable on the Shroud of Turin.

They may make ready [on the Sabbath] all that is needful for the dead, and anoint it and wash it, provided that they do not remove any member of it. They may draw the mattress away from beneath it and let it lie on sand that it may by the longer preserved; they may bind up the chin, not in order to raise it, but that it may not sink lower. So, too, if a rafter is broken they may support it with a bench or with the side-pieces of a bed that the break may grow no greater, but not in order to prop it up.¹¹⁶ They may not close a corpse’s eyes on the Sabbath; nor may they do soon a weekday at the moment when the soul is departing; and if he closes the eyes [of a dying man] at the moment when the soul is departing, such a one is a shedder of blood.

Mishnah, *Shabbath* 23:5¹¹⁷

114. For further study, see two articles by John Long: “The Shroud’s Earlier History. Part 1: To Edessa.” *Bible and Spade*. 20:2 (Spring, 2007). 46-52 and “The Shroud’s Earlier History. Part 2: To the Great City.” *Bible and Spade*. 20:4 (Fall, 2007). 120-128.

115. The Code of Jewish Law, a/k/a the Shulchan Aruch, is the Jewish code of law written by Rabbi Yosef Kara about 500 years ago. It summarizes and lists the halachic decisions of the Talmud as well as the author's own view based on halachic opinions and discussions of the commentaries after the Talmud. Topics discussed are divided into chapters. It is mentioned here because it refers to second temple period traditions, but it is not quoted as it is not an ancient source. See *Code of Jewish Law*, “Laws of Mourning.” Chapters 351-354, 362-64; <http://www.shulchanaruch.com/>

116. This sentence that pertains to a broken roof rafter is a comparative statement. It suggests that just as a bench or the side piece of a bed is used to prevent a rafter from bending or breaking any further, so too, the chin of a corpse is tied to keep the jaw from “sinking,” or opening, any further.

117. Bracketed inserts by Danby, ed.

The most unusual feature of the shroud is that it contains an X-ray type image of a man with all of the wounds and bruises that are normally associated with a crucifixion execution,¹¹⁸ that also match all related biblical passages.¹¹⁹ The image is on the surface of the fabric and not through the fibers of the fabric. In 1978 a team of 32 scientists examined it for five days with the most sophisticated scientific testing equipment and, as of this writing, there has not been a definitive decision rendered as to its authenticity.¹²⁰

Note the following signs of human injury on the shroud compared to the injuries suffered by Jesus:¹²¹

1. The burial cloth shows marks throughout the scalp from sharp objects.
2. A swollen face, evidently from repeated blows.
3. Large bruises to the forehead and cheeks.
4. A twisted nose
5. An eye swollen shut
6. An upper lip cut
7. An estimated 120 scourging wounds on nearly every part of the body with the exception of the face, feet, and forearms.
8. Large rub marks on the part of the shroud that once covered the shoulders.

In addition, there are five major wounds associated with death by crucifixion.

1. Puncture wounds through both wrists (the wrist was considered as part of the

118. Wild, "The Shroud of Turin: Probably the Work of a 14th Century Artist or Forger." 31-32.

119. Hands and feet were nailed to the cross: Lk. 24:40; Jn. 20:20,25,27; Col. 2:14; Scourging wounds: Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15; Lk. 23:16, 22; Jn. 19:1; Thorn impressions on the head Mt. 27:29; Mk. 15:17; Jn. 19:2; Bruise marks to the shoulders (from carrying the cross?) Jn. 19:17; Bruise and blow marks to the face Mt. 26:28; 27:30; Mk. 14:65; 15:19; Lk. 22:63-64; Jn. 18:22; 19:3.

120. Nelesen, *Yeshua; the Promise, the Land, the Messiah*. (Video Tape 2).

121. Habermas, "The Shroud of Turin and its Significance for Biblical Studies." 51.

hand in ancient times).

2. Puncture wounds in both feet

3. Puncture wound in the right side of chest.

In light of these details, it is also noteworthy that it was common practice for the Romans to break the legs of crucified criminals to hasten death and, thereby, reduce their suffering. There is no sign of leg fracture in the shroud. While this is an argument from silence, in light of the fact that the shroud shows such vivid details, if the person who was crucified had his legs broken, there surely would be signs revealing these.

While several other so-called antiquities have been identified as fakes that certainly does not prove the shroud is also a forgery. Yet, there is no longer any blood on the shroud.¹²² Furthermore, could such a medieval artist have the skills to outwit today's sophisticated scientists and technology? It appears impossible since today's scientists cannot even reproduce it.¹²³ The blood stains, indicating the flow of blood from the wounds and other injuries, are too incredibly accurate to have been the work of a medieval artist. Furthermore, there has never existed an art form of painting burial shrouds, so how could such a highly skilled artisan have originated a masterpiece and not have any other similar works of art?¹²⁴

In addition, the discovery of 28 different pollens in the fabric that existed only in Jerusalem in the first century intensifies the scholarly arguments.¹²⁵ A review of published scientific literature seems to indicate the scientific conclusion on the authenticity appears to reflect the theological position of the individual scientist performing the research.¹²⁶

122. McCrone, "The Shroud Painting Explained." 29.

123. McCrone, "The Shroud Painting Explained." 29-30.

124. Vikan, "Debunking the Shroud." 28.

125. For more information, see Vaughn M. Bryant Jr. "Does Pollen Prove the Shroud Authentic?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26:6 (Nov/Dec, 2009). 36-44. See also Alan D. Whanger, Uri Baruch, and Mary Whanger. *Flora of the Shroud of Turin*. St. Louis, MO: Missouri Botanical Garden Press, 1999.

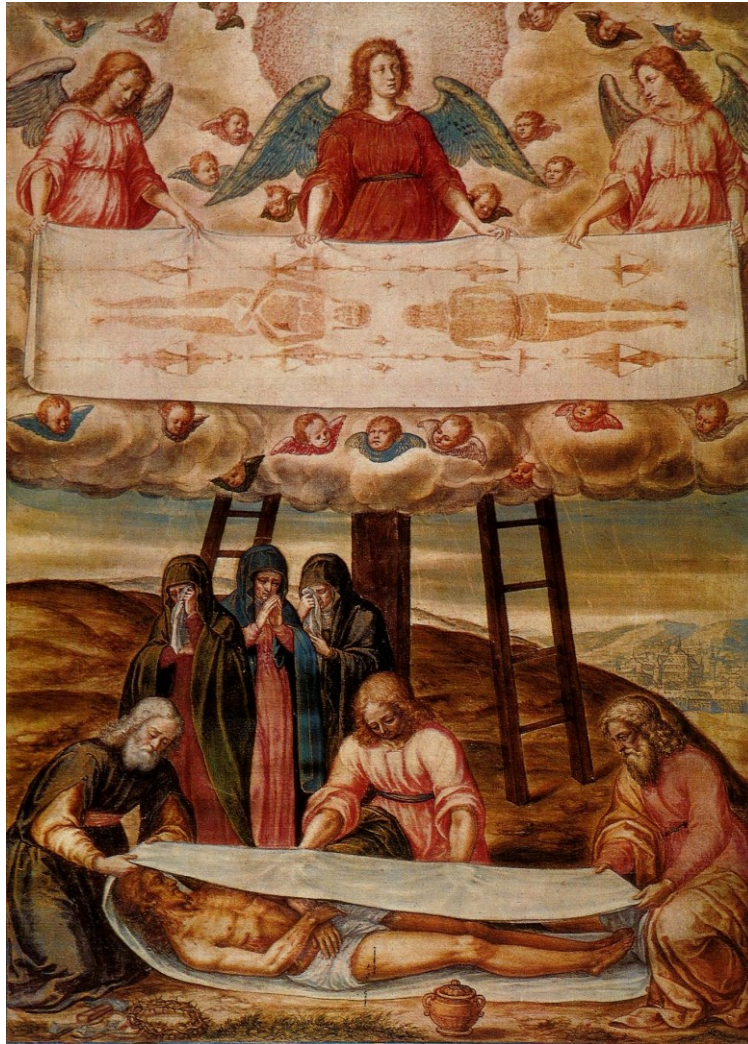
126. See also Long, "Closing in on the Shroud's Early History. 20-22.



17.02.02.G. THE SHROUD OF TURIN WITH ITS IMAGE OF JESUS. Many believe the image of a man's face on the Shroud of Turin is the image of Christ that was transferred when His body was placed in the tomb.

Video Insert >

17.02.02.V4 *The Shroud of Turin*. Michael Keating, a research and development engineer discusses the amazing discoveries concerning the Shroud of Turin that some say was the burial cloth of Jesus. Introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich. [Click here](#) if Internet connection is available.



17.02.02.H. THE SHROUD OF TURIN ILLUSTRATED. The Shroud is believed by many to be the prayer shawl that is shown being neatly placed under and over the body of Jesus. The custom was for a man's prayer shawl to be placed over him in burial. The shrouding (Giulio Clovio, 16th century aquatint composed in honor of the Holy Shroud of Turin), has scenes from the life of Christ set in medallions.



17.02.02.I. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE. Recent extensive research has determined that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is, in fact, the actual site of both the crucifixion and burial.¹²⁷ Photograph by the author.

17.02.03 Mt. 27:62-66 Thursday night or early Friday morning.

SOLDIERS GUARD TOMB

⁶² The next day, which followed the preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³ and said, “Sir, we remember that while this deceiver was still alive He said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ ⁶⁴ Therefore give orders that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, His disciples may come, steal Him, and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead.’ Then the last deception will be worse than the first.”

⁶⁵ “You have a guard of soldiers,” Pilate told them. “Go and make it as secure as you know how.” ⁶⁶ Then they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting the guard.

127. Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ*. 56-58; Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 5.

“The chief priests and the Pharisees.” While the Sadducees were before Pilate demanding the death of Jesus, the leading Pharisees disappeared and were not involved in the demand of His death. They believed they would be innocent of His death if they would not be actively involved in the eviction and execution. However, now that Jesus was dead, they emerged and joined the Sadducees (chief priests) before Pilate with a concern that He might rise on the third day.

“Deceiver.” In the Jewish tradition, whenever someone was scorned, his name would not be repeated. Rather, degrading words were used to refer to Him and, in this case, the Sadducees used the term “deceiver” to refer to Jesus. It was and continues to be the cultural way to blot out His name forever.

The gospel writers said that the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of leading the people astray (Jn. 7:12, 47), that He used the power of Beelzebul (Mk. 3:22), and that He had a demon (Jn. 10:19-21). Centuries later, when the Babylonian Talmud was written, the same accusations continued. The Jews never question whether He performed miracles, only the source of His power to do them. In *Sanhedrin* 43a, the Jewish writer first created a historical account to “prove” a legitimate court trial, which is followed by the reason of the trial – the accusation of sorcery and apostasy.

It was taught: On the eve of the Passover, Yeshu [ms. M: the Nazarene] 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. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a

In the following account, the Talmudic writer not only describes Jesus as an idol worshipper, (i.e. the brick) but then also accuses Him of magic – an admission that Jesus had incredible powers.

One day he [Rabbi Joshua] was reciting the Shema when Jesus came before him. He intended to receive him and made a sign to him. He [Jesus] thinking it was to repel him, put up a brick and worshipped it.

“Repent,” said he [rabbi Joshua] to him. He replied, “I have thus learned from you: He who sins and causes others to sin is not afforded the means of repentance.” And a Master [another major rabbi] has said, Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led Israel astray.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 107b¹²⁸

On an interesting side note: the irony is that in today's post-modern world, there are a number of critics who claim that Jesus never existed. If there is any group of people who wished that were true, it is the Jews who have been struggling against Jesus for two thousand years. Their admission that Jesus existed flies in the face of modern critics.

“Three days.” For an explanation on the term “three days and three nights,” see 09.01.05.Q2.

“Made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting the guard.” A stone was always rolled in front of the tomb to keep dogs and other animals from desecrating the body. However, in this case a seal was placed on the stone to keep the disciples out. To place a seal, the guards placed a rope, known as a *golal*, across the front of the stone.¹²⁹ At the ends, they placed a wax seal with a Roman impression. If the seal was broken, the culprit and the guards were executed.¹³⁰ Obviously, they were faithful to their superior commander, especially in the case of guarding the tomb of a popular dead Jew. This explains the extraordinary measures taken by the Pharisees and Roman officials to insure that Jesus would not rise from the tomb.¹³¹ Yet history records that the resurrected Jesus became a matter of great concern, even for the Romans.

In 1878 an ordinance issued by Emperor Claudius was discovered in Nazareth and brought to Paris. The “decree of Caesar,” written in *Koine* (common) Greek, was inscribed on a 15 by 24 inch marble tablet in A.D. 50. It sets forth a most unusual proclamation, in that those who violate a grave would receive capital punishment.¹³² However, the discovery was not made public until 1925, when there was public and academic response to it. Its authenticity has rarely been questioned and its similarity to Matthew 28:11-15 is stunning. The significance of the ordinance is that it would be

128. See also Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 47a and Jerusalem Talmud, *Hagiga* 2.2.

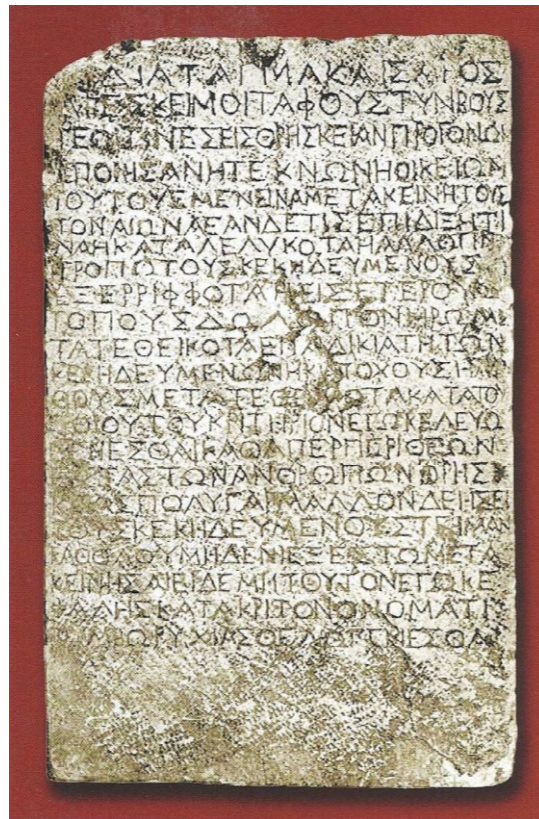
129. Because the stone was “rolled,” it has always been assumed that it was round. However, archaeologists have uncovered only four round disc-shaped tomb blocking stones, but more than a hundred square ones which were also rolled due to their size and weight. See Kloner, “Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus’ Tomb?” 28.

130. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 454-55; Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 25, page 20.

131. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 457.

132. Avi-Yonah and Kraeling, *Our Living Bible*. 299-300.

highly improbable that the body of Jesus was stolen by His disciples.¹³³



17.02.03.A. THE NAZARETH INSCRIPTION, also known as the ORDINANCE OF CAESAR. The Imperial inscription, bearing the title *Diatagma Kaisaros* found near Nazareth is dated to A.D. 50. Amazingly, the marble stone declares that it is illegal to steal a body from a tomb. The Jewish leaders were highly angered at the spread of the new faith in Jesus as the Messiah. It is strongly believed this ordinance was enacted to squelch the rumors of a resurrected Christ.

The decree reads as follows:

1. **EDICT OF CAESAR**
2. **It is my decision [concerning] graves and tombs – whoever has made**
3. **them for the religious observances of parents, or children, or**
household
4. **members – that these remain undisturbed forever. But if anyone**

133. Smith, "Nazareth Decree." 3:501.

- legally
5. charges that another person has destroyed, or has in any manner extracted
 6. those who have been buried, or has moved with wicked intent those who
 7. have been buried to other places, committing a crime against them, or has
 8. moved Sepulchre-sealing stones, against such a person I order that a
 9. judicial tribunal be created, just as [is done] concerning the gods in
 10. human religious observances, even more so will it be obligatory to treat
 11. with honor those who have been entombed. You are absolutely not to
 12. allow anyone to move [those who have been entombed]. But if
 13. [someone does], I wish that [violator] to suffer capital punishment under
 14. The title of tomb-breaker.

Edict (Ordinance) of Caesar¹³⁴

Amazingly, to pronounce a death sentence upon someone who “violated” a tomb was an extremely harsh sentence, even in Roman days. This edict is a testimony that news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus had spread throughout the Roman Empire, even to the highest levels of Rome itself, within two decades. The inscription is one of the most powerful pieces of extra-biblical evidence that the resurrection of Jesus was taught and influential in the first century, the beginning of Christianity.¹³⁵ Furthermore, the lives and martyrdoms of the apostles is clear evidence of a risen Christ.¹³⁶

17.02.03.Q1 What significant extra-biblical comments on the life and death of Jesus survived the centuries?

One of the most notable was Flavius Josephus. He gave this brief observation concerning Jesus:

134. Translation by Clyde E. Billington; Billington, “The Nazareth Inscription.” 17; Tenney, ed., “Nazareth Decree.” 11:1355.

135. Compton. “Is the Resurrection Historically Reliable?” 106; Billington. “The Nazareth Inscription: Proof of the Resurrection of Christ?” 17.

136. See Appendix 27 concerning the lives of the apostles.

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, *Antiquities* 18.3.3 (63-64)

Critics have said that this paragraph is not original, but claim it is a Christian interpolation of a later edition. They stated a loyal Jew would not have made such a statement. However, two significant church fathers, Jerome and Ambrosius¹³⁷ accepted it as original. Eusebius not only quoted Josephus, but then said the following,

When such testimony as this was transmitted to us by an historian who sprung from the Hebrews themselves, both respecting John the Baptist and our Savior, what subterfuge can be left to prevent those from being convicted destitute of all shame, who have forged the acts against them? This, however, may suffice on this subject.

Eusebius, *Church History* 1.11.9

Those scholars who considered it an original work point to an early Arabic translation, because it included the same comment.¹³⁸ On the other hand, the Jewish account of the death of Jesus in the Babylonian Talmud is one of the travesties of historical records. Jewish historians are known for their accuracy and reliability, but in dealing with Jesus, their credibility fails miserably. This reflects how problematic Jesus was and continued to be for them. In the fourth century, the following account was prepared to give some resemblance of correct legal procedure in the trial and execution of Jesus. There is no mention of the house of Annas that is elsewhere described with contempt, nor is there any mention of the Romans, who performed the execution. Consequently, the Jews justified His death based on Deuteronomy 13.

137. St. Jerome (c. 347-420) was the son of church father and historian Eusebius and Ambrosius (c. 340-397), a/k/a St. Ambrose (Aurelianus Ambrosius) was the bishop of Milan.

138. Santala, *The Messiah in the New Testament*. 28-29.

On the eve of the Passover, they hanged Yeshu (Jesus). For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried: Yeshu of Nazareth is going forth to be stoned, in that he practiced sorcery and led Israel astray. Let anyone knowing anything in his defense come and plead for him. But they found nothing in his defense, and hanged him on the eve of the Passover.

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a

In the same section of the Babylonian Talmud is this comment.

Rabbi Ulla said, “Would you believe that any defense would have been so zealously sought for him? He was a deceiver, and the All-merciful says: ‘You shall not spare him, neither shall you conceal him.’ It was different with Jesus for he was near to the kingship.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a

Those who were against Jesus before the crucifixion were also against Him afterwards. As previously stated, they accused Him of being a magician, a deceiver, and an artist of magic art. In the second century, before the Babylonian Talmud was written, Justin Martyr made a statement that affirms the accusations of the later Talmud authors. Martyr said,

They said it was a display of magic art, for they even dared to say that he was a magician and a deceiver of the people.

Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 97:7¹³⁹

Jesus was not the only one privileged to be accused of doing magical works of demons. The Roman satirist Juvenal, in the century after Jesus, said that everywhere throughout the Roman Empire, Jewish magicians, dream expounders, and fortune tellers were found.¹⁴⁰ Evidently, His disciples were given the same honors by disgruntled Jews, as recorded by Origen in the second century. Their concern was not that the miracles were performed, but their debate was focused on His source of power:

139. See also *First Apology* 30 and *Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew* 108.

140. Juvenal, *Satire* 6:543-548. See http://archive.org/stream/juvenalpersiuswi00juveuoft/juvenalpersiuswi00juveuoft_djvu.txt. Retrieved June 11, 2014.

Since these men do these wonders, ought we to think them sons of God? Or ought we to say that they are the practices of wicked men possessed by an evil demon?

Origen, *Against Celsus* 1:68

Amazingly, while the Pharisees accused Jesus of performing exorcisms by using demonic powers, they also believed that the ability to perform exorcisms was a gift of God – a direct violation of their accusations against Jesus. The accusations that began during the life of Christ continued for centuries.

The phrase “**near to the kingship,**” in the Babylonian Talmud’s *Sanhedrin* 43a is a reference to the messianic prophecy that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David,¹⁴¹ which makes this a rather interesting comment. A third comment about Jesus in the same section of the Talmud is this:

The rabbis taught: “Jesus had five disciples: Matthias, Naquin, Never, Buna, and Torah.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a

Obviously, this passage is of no historical value other than it adds insight to how negatively Jesus was seen by Jewish leaders centuries later. This rabbinic writing does, however, give evidence for the life of Jesus, which they so desperately tried to destroy. The commentary of *Sanhedrin* 43a reveals the following,

1. It recognizes Jesus as an extremely influential person, or there would have been no mention of Him five centuries after His life.
2. Since Jesus performed many miracles, this activity was attributed to Him as sorcery.
3. He is associated with the Passover at the time of His death, which was by hanging, a derogatory and condemning word with reference to the crucifixion.
4. Jesus was accused of apostasy since many Jews decided to leave the corrupt Jewish system and follow the teachings of Christ.

141. House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*. 77.

Possibly the most interesting aspect is that this paragraph makes no mention of Roman trials or execution. It does, however, explain that Jesus was put to death by the Jews themselves. This is clearly a confession that national Israel was responsible for the death of Jesus, an awesome statement from a non-biblical text.

The life of Jesus was also confirmed by pagans, although in a negative manner. The fact that pagan authors were uncharacteristically strong in their comments suggests the influence Jesus had. As dynamic as Jesus was throughout His life, the concept that He permitted Himself to be crucified and the idea that He could be God was beyond comprehension for many. For many Jews it was a difficult challenge to accept, given their preconceived ideas of who the Messiah would be. Yet for the Greeks and Romans the idea was even more difficult to accept. Christians soon became persecuted targets throughout the Roman Empire. While many accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, others despised Him and said that Jews and Christians worshiped a god in the form of a donkey. The donkey, being rather docile and low in intelligence, became a symbol of Jews and Christians for those who hated them and were quick to spit out their vulgar blasphemies.

While the New Testament writers recorded antagonism between Jews and the apostles, the Jewish-inspired violence appears to have dissipated by the second century. Jewish writings, nevertheless, defended the accusatory positions of the leading rabbis, as is found in two accounts of the Babylonian Talmud.

One day he [Rabbi Joshua] was reciting the Shema when Jesus came before him. He intended to receive him and made a sign to him. He [Jesus] thinking it was to repel him, put up a brick and worshipped it.

“Repent,” said he [rabbi Joshua] to him. He replied, “I have thus learned from you: He who sins and causes others to sin is not afforded the means of repentance.” And a Master [another major rabbi] has said, Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led Israel astray.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 107b¹⁴²

It was taught: On the eve of the Passover, Yeshu [ms. M: the Nazarene] 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. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let

142. See also Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 47a and Jerusalem Talmud, *Hagiga* 2.2.

him come forward and plead on his behalf.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a

Obviously, there are numerous conflicts with the passage above and the biblical account. But the question the rabbis and other critics cannot answer is, if Jesus did worship a brick, if he practiced sorcery, if he was a fraud, then why were all of his disciples willing to die a martyr's death? They must respond to the concept that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or the Son of God. If a dozen men, living with Him every day for more than three years determined that He was neither a liar nor a lunatic, there is then only one other option. If Jesus was the Son of God, then did He fulfill the Old Testament requirements and prophecies? Did He perform miracles? Did hundreds of people speak to Him after His death and resurrection?¹⁴³ If so, then, obviously, He was/is the Son of God.

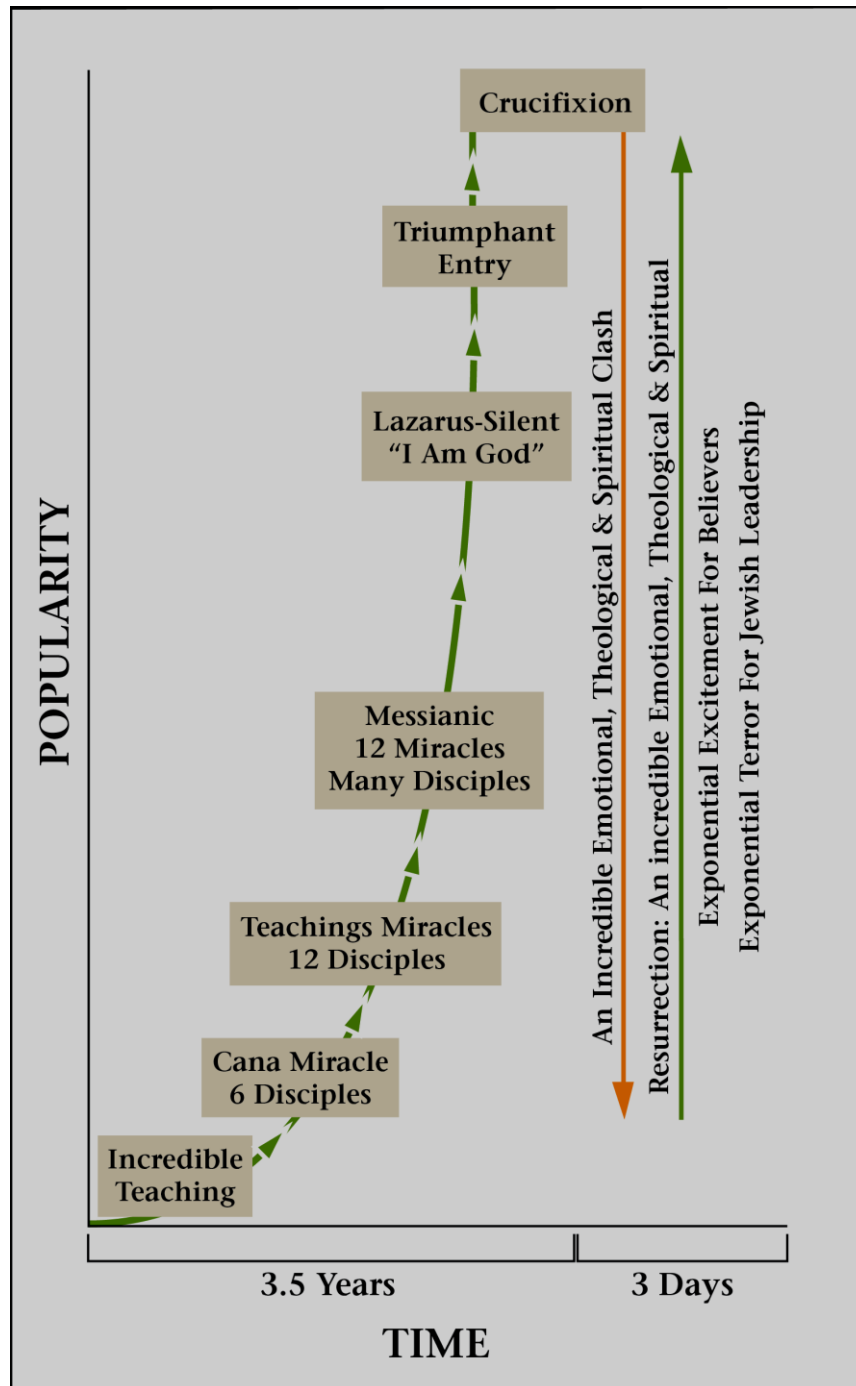
Rabbinic literature says little of Jesus, and when it does, the commentary is negative. A notable exception is a comment in the Babylonian Talmud (Gittin 56b-57a) that is dated to the early second century. It implies a degree of harmony between the traditional Jewish people and Nazarene believers. While a number of false doctrines of prevalent heresies are mentioned, there is *no specific accusation* against Christianized Jewish people or a denial of the miracles performed by Jesus.

However, the Gittin comment is the exception rather than the rule. It is interesting that the Jews never denied that He performed miracles, but they attributed His power to demonic sources. Hence, rabbinic literature describes Jesus as One who led souls into apostasy and accused Him of being a sorcerer (cf. Mt. 12:24).¹⁴⁴ While negative in nature, there was no doubt among Jews that Jesus performed miracles.

In the meantime, the disciples and thousands of followers of Jesus had their world shattered at the unexpected crucifixion. How could anyone who performed so many incredible miracles allow Himself to be crucified? And why? Their depression and sadness must have been as dark as the sky in the afternoon of Passover. But that was about to change.

143. For further study on the significance of the physical resurrection of Jesus, see Geisler, Norman L. "The Significance of Christ's Physical Resurrection." *Bibliotheca Sacra*. 146:582 (Apr-June, 1989) 148-70.

144. Fluessner, "The Jewish-Christian Schism" (Part II). 30-31.



17.02.03.B THE POPULARITY – TIME CHART OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS. The ministry of Jesus grew slowly at first, but quickly gained popularity and then to exponential growth. The enormous excitement was crushed by His crucifixion, but that emotional crash was replaced with the explosive excitement of His resurrection. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.

Unit 18

Resurrection And Appearances

Chapter 01

Risen From The Grave



18.01.00.A. JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF TO MARY MAGDALENE.
Artwork by William Hole of the Royal Scottish Academy of Art, 1876.
After His resurrection, Jesus presented Himself only to those who had previously placed their faith in Him. See John 20:11-18.

18.01.01 Introduction

Early on Sunday morning Caiaphas woke up believing that he was relieved of his biggest fear: Jesus was dead and His ministry was destroyed. But he was about to receive the surprise of his life. He put on his priestly robes, went to the temple, and performed the wave offering before the altar of the Lord, just as Moses commanded:

¹⁰ “Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you enter the land I am giving you and reap its harvest, you are to bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest. ¹¹ He will waive the sheaf before the LORD so that you may be accepted; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath.

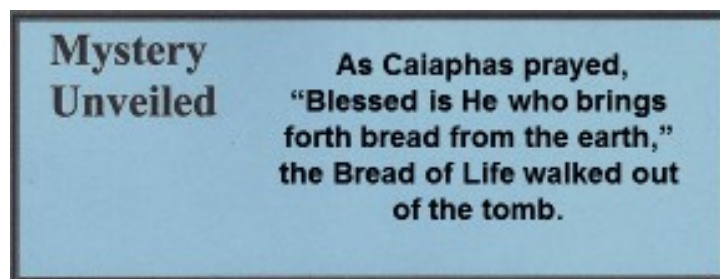
Leviticus 23:10-11

In compliance with the Law, Caiaphas went in all manner of pomp and circumstance, was given a sheaf of freshly harvested barley, because the harvest always ended just prior to Passover. Precisely at sunrise he was in the temple and stood before the altar of the Lord, waved the sheaf offering and prayed,

Blessed is He who brings forth bread from the earth.

Priestly Temple Blessing¹⁴⁵

When he recited the blessed prayer there was an incredible earthquake, the stone was rolled away from the tomb, and the Bread of Life walked out of the grave. Life eternal had come to humanity while the biggest nightmare of Caiaphas had just begun.



145. According to Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*, 215-17, 241, about the time that the Jerusalem Talmud was written (300 — 400 A.D.), the blessing was changed to what is commonly used in synagogues today: **“Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.”**

Upon coming out of the tomb, Jesus then began to minister to those who placed their faith in Him; who accepted Him as the true Messiah. He then appeared to many as follows.¹⁴⁶

1. To Mary Magdalene (Jn. 20:11-17)
2. To the other Mary and Salome (Mt. 28:9-10)
3. To Peter (Lk. 24:34)
4. To the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-32)
5. To the 10 apostles (Lk. 24:33-49)
6. To Thomas and the other 10 apostles (Jn. 20:26-30)
7. To the 7 apostles (Jn. 21:1-25)
8. To all the apostles in Galilee (Mt. 28:16-20)
9. To 500 brethren (1 Cor. 15:6)
10. To James (1 Cor. 15:7)
11. To the 11 apostles before His ascension (Acts 1:4-9)
12. To the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:8)

18.01.01.Q1 What is the significance of His resurrection?

The significance is so dynamic, that the brief description below clearly does not provide justice. However, this theological question is briefly answered in outline form to focus on the main points.

1. It means the forgiveness of the believer's sins and eternal life for him (1 Cor 15:7).
2. It guarantees the judgment of all unbelievers (Acts 10:40-42; 17:30-31).

146. Adapted from Geisler. "The Significance of Christ's Physical Resurrection." 157 n33.

3. It assures the resurrection of all men, both believers and unbelievers (1 Cor. 15:20-23)¹⁴⁷
4. It proves our justification (Rom. 4:24-25)
5. It guarantees power for believer's service (Ephesians 1:17-20)
6. It designates Jesus as the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:20-22)
7. It means that Jesus has the keys of death as far as believers are concerned (Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Thess. 4:13-15).
8. The sin-nature of the believer is rendered inoperative. It is not removed when one believes, but it is judged and condemned (Rom. 6:1-10).
9. It means that there is now a sympathetic High Priest in Heaven (Heb. 4:14-16)

These nine points, and there could be more, point to the fact that the Kingdom of God is within the believer. These underscore the close relationship Jesus desires with every believer and the incredible price He paid for that to occur.

18.01.02 Mt. 28:2-4 Sunday morning

STONE WAS ROLLED AWAY

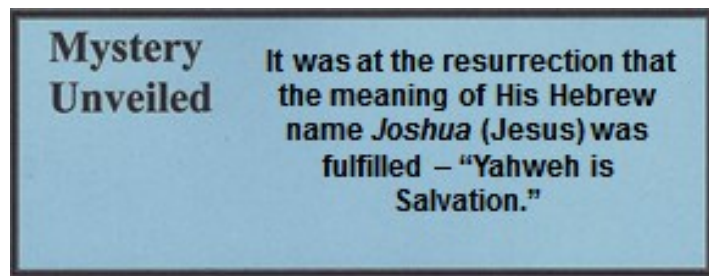
² Suddenly there was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his robe was as white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so shaken from fear of him that they became like dead men.

Just as the world was recovering from the physical and social earthquake of the crucifixion, on Sunday, the 16th of Nisan, A.D. 30, there was another earthquake – a supernatural one that rolled the stone from the tomb entrance. Everyone had some kind of response to the events of the Day of Preparation, but what happened on Sunday morning surpassed all that.

The reason the stone was rolled away was not to permit Jesus out of the grave, but to permit His disciples to enter and see that He had risen and was gone. Without the

147. For believers, it guarantees individual resurrection (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14).

resurrection, the life and death of Jesus would have been absolutely meaningless (Rom. 4:25). Man's only hope is in the resurrection of Christ. Because He arose, people have eternal life promised to them. Furthermore, believers can look forward to the time they will be with Him. This blessed hope in Christ has been a doctrine of the church since His resurrection, and was underscored at Pentecost.¹⁴⁸ The name of Jesus, which originally was *Joshua*, had fulfilled its meaning, "Yahweh (God) is salvation."¹⁴⁹



An important feature that makes the work of Jesus significant is that He provided what the saints of the Hebrew Bible yearned for: victory over sin. This was a radical departure from the Sadducean and Pharisaic ritual laws. Note these choice words said about Jesus:

O mystic wonder! The Lord was laid low, and man rose up!

Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*¹⁵⁰

The same one is Priest and Sacrifice, the same one is God and Temple: the Priest, *thorough whom* we are reconciled; the Sacrifice, *by which* we are reconciled; the Temple, *in which* we are reconciled; and God, *to whom* we are reconciled.

Fulgence of Ruspe, *The Rule of Faith*¹⁵¹

For those who question if Jesus died and rose from the grave, below are two thoughts to consider:

148. For other references that pertain to the blessed hope and when Christ will return for His church, see 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Heb. 9:28; 2 Thess. 2:1; 1 Jn. 3:2.

149. Grant, "Jesus Christ." 2:869

150. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 42.

151. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 43.

If Christ died and did not rise, how is it that those (his disciples) in the account who fled from impending danger while He was yet alive, surrounded themselves with a thousand dangers for His sake when He was dead?

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Beginning of the Acts of the Apostles*¹⁵²

It is unbelievable that the world should have believed so unbelievable a thing.

Augustine, *City of God*¹⁵³

18.01.03 Mk. 16:1-4 (See also Mt. 28:1; Lk. 24:1-3; Jn. 20:1) **At the Tomb**

WOMEN CAME TO THE TOMB

¹ When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so they could go and anoint Him. ² Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise. ³ They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?” ⁴ Looking up, they observed that the stone — which was very large — had been rolled away.

18.01.03.Q1 Is there an explanation concerning the conflicting accounts of who was at the tomb on Sunday morning (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:10; Jn. 20:1-2)?

Critics have had a field day with the gospel accounts concerning the names of the women who were at the tomb. Obviously the number of Marys adds to the confusion, but that does not mean error.

1. Matthew said in 28:1 that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (mother of Jesus?) were there.
2. Mark said in 16:1 that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices to the tomb.

152. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 228; Parenthesis mine.

153. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 233.

3. Luke said in 24:10 that Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several “others” were there, and then told the disciples of the resurrection.
4. John said in 20:1 that Mary Magdalene was present, and whoever was included in the “we” statement of 20:2.

Granted, this is somewhat perplexing, but as previously stated, that does not mean the event was untrue. Most importantly, is the fact that all four gospel writers said that women were the first to discover the missing body – and concluded that Jesus had indeed been raised. This is significant, because women were not deemed to be legal witnesses. Men’s opinions of women were not always very good. For example, the two historians Josephus and Nicholas (Nicholas) of Damascus seldom mention the names of any women.¹⁵⁴ If the gospels were fabricated stories, then the writers made two huge errors.

1. They should have written that men discovered that the tomb was empty, because only a man’s testimony was considered valid in *Jewish law*. This was clarified by Josephus:

Let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.15 (219b)

2. They should have written or edited all four gospels to agree perfectly with each other as to who was there and who was not.

To believe that the gospel accounts were fabricated is a greater leap of faith than to believe that Jesus arose from the grave. Therefore, to account for the variations of names, the following must be considered.

1. No gospel writer refutes another.
2. While some of the names are different, both Luke and John mention unnamed individuals. There is no reason to believe that those individuals were women only.

154. For further study on the various opinions concerning the status and influence of women in the Second Temple Period, see the excellent work by Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple History*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999. Take note of Chapter 3 on the discussions of two first century historians, Josephus and Nicholas of Damascus, and their comments about women. See also Stemberger. *Jewish Contemporaries of Jesus: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes*. 15.

3. Not a single gospel writer claimed to have written all the names of the attending group.

So why are there variations? It is because each writer simply mentioned some of the women he thought were important to his audience. However, even though the testimony of women was not considered valid, each account is of two or more witness – a requirement for validation according to *God's law* in Deuteronomy 17:6. This code of law became a defining rule for all situations, even counting the stars to determine when the Sabbath began.

The one condemned to die is to be executed on the testimony of two or three witnesses. No one is to be executed on the testimony of a single witness.

Deuteronomy 17:6

Finally, since the crucifixion and burial occurred so quickly, there was no time for the formalities of mourners and flute players.¹⁵⁵ The Jewish custom was for women to visit the tomb up to seven days after the burial.¹⁵⁶ Obviously, in this case, a lot changed within that time period.¹⁵⁷

“At sunrise.” The first day of the week Jesus arose from death and the women found the tomb empty. It is for this reason that the first Christians, who were nearly all Jews, gathered for worship on Sunday instead of the traditional Sabbath.

18.01.03.Q2 How could the Jews, who honored the Sabbath Day (i.e., Ex. 16:23-30) move it to the first day (Acts 20:7)?

The Sabbath

The day of rest on the first day of the week is an interesting study. It should be noted that in the Jewish calendar the days of the week did not have names, but were numbered. Today, the names of both the days of the week and the months of the modern calendar are based on the Roman calendar system. “To rest” on the seventh day is what one did in

155. Mishnah, *Ketuboth* 4.4; Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 168.

156. Osborne. “Jesus’ Empty Tomb and His Appearance in Jerusalem.” 786.

157. Some critics have looked to the *Gospel of Peter* as evidence that refutes the biblical narratives. However, that account records people eating a meal and sleeping overnight in the cemetery, both of which reflect the writer’s ignorance of Jewish customs, and this is evidence that the *Gospel of Peter* is a fabricated story of little historical value.

ancient times and, hence, the seventh day became known as the “day of rest,” or “Shabbat” because it was a sacred designation. The word “Sabbath” is a noun, but it was originally a verb meaning “to cease, to abstain,” or “to put an end to.” A secondary similar meaning is “to be inactive, to rest.”¹⁵⁸ To the Jews, who followed Jesus, they felt that God told them “to rest,” and what better way to honor God than “to rest” on the day when He arose from the tomb. Since they were still “resting,” they felt they were in complete compliance with the Mosaic Law.¹⁵⁹ Jesus “rested” on the seventh day, meaning that He did no creative work. However, Jesus sustained His Creation on the seventh day and every day of rest since the Creation. “Working” is defined not only in terms of holding the universe together and doing good works, but also protecting it from the evil one.

Jewish Christians observed the evening of the seventh day of the week as their day of worship. Sunday worship is also reflected in 1 Corinthians 16:2, where believers collected funds for God’s people on the first day of the week, which was their day of worship. Some scholars believe that when the early church met on the first day, it was not on a Sunday morning, but rather, on a Saturday evening. Sunset was considered the beginning of a new day, and meeting in the evening would not conflict with normal work activities of the first day.

In Colossians 2:16 Paul told the church in Colosse not to let any one judge them. Why? It was because they did not worship on the traditional Sabbath, but on the first day. The Epistle of Barnabas referred to worship on the first day of the week as the “eighth day.”

This, by the way, is the reason why we joyfully celebrate the eighth day – the same day on which Jesus rose from the dead; after which He manifested Himself and went up to heaven.

The Epistle of Barnabas 15:9

Ignatius in his work *Magnesians* (Ch. 8-10) agreed with the early church fathers who said in their own instructional book that the,

Assembling on every Sunday of the Lord, break bread and give thanks, confessing your faults beforehand, so that your sacrifice may be pure.

158. Ex. 21:19; Lev. 26:34-35; 2 Chr. 36:21.

159. Funderburk, “Calendar.” 3:322-24.

Didache 14:1¹⁶⁰

The believers moved their day of rest from the last day of the week to the first day because it was on the first day of Creation that God created light (Gen.1:3-5). It was also on the first day of the week that Jesus, the Light of the World, arose from death and brought light and resurrected life to humanity.¹⁶¹ Evidently, Jewish believers, who remained faithful to their Mosaic Law, had no problem worshiping on a day that honored the resurrection of Jesus. They did not discard their Jewishness. Justin Martyr and Pliny the Younger, the nephew and adopted son of Pliny the Elder, (c. 112) made these comments concerning worship on the first day of the week.

The Day of the Sun is the day on which we gather in a common meeting, because it is the first day, the day on which God, changing darkness and matter, created the world; and it is the day on which Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead... and the memoirs or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits.

Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67¹⁶²

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed, but to abstain from all fraud, theft and adultery, never to break their word, or deny a trust when called upon to honor it; after which it was their custom to separate and then to meet again to partake of food, but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.

Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.96-97¹⁶³

“Before it was light.” Historians believe early Christians went to the synagogue Saturday morning, and met again for church after sunset the same day, which was the beginning of Sunday.

160. The *Didache* is a book on church order that was written within a century of the life of Jesus. For more information, see 02.02.08.

161. *The Epistle of Barnabas* 13:9-10.

162. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 266.

163. Pliny the Younger was a Roman governor and friend of Tacitus. Pliny said that Christians recognized the deity of Christ.

Justin Martyr wrote in chapter 47 of his *Dialog against Trypho*,¹⁶⁴ that Jewish believers should be considered as “brethren” provided that they do not require Gentile Christians to be circumcised, observe the Sabbath, or other Jewish ceremonies. However, Martyr also said that not all church fathers agree with him. It should be noted that the change from observing the Sabbath to the Day of Resurrection has nothing to do with Constantine (early 4th century) or the Hellenism of the Church.

Another witness to the change of Sabbath to Sunday was Ignatius Theophorus (A.D. 35 or 50-98 to 117) a/k/a Ignatius. He was a disciple of the Apostle John, became the third bishop of Antioch, and said this:¹⁶⁵

If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing Sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also rose through Him and through His death which some men deny – a mystery whereby we attained unto belief, and for this cause we endure patiently, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher.

Ignatius, *Letter to the Magnesians* 9:1

Pliny (c. 112) wrote his comments which are significant for several reasons.

1. It demonstrates, from a secular source, how quickly the Christian faith spread throughout the Roman Empire.
2. He preserved a segment of their worship service and reverence for Jesus.
3. He mentioned their “solemn oath” was their steadfast refusal to worship another god.
4. Their refusal to be a part of any crime was unbelievable to Pliny, who later described it as part of their “superstition.”
5. This writing by the Roman governor and historian is the oldest record of the agape meal or communion, outside of Scripture.

Finally, it is believed by some that the modern name “Saturday” came from the Hebrew

164. Cited by Flusser. “Who is it that Struck You?” 47.

165. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius_of_Antioch. Retrieved September 6, 2014.

“Shabbat”. Such a conclusion is understandable, because both names sound similar. The name “Saturday” honors the Roman god Saturnius, for which the heavenly light “Saturn” was also named. The Romans had their greatest seven-day pagan holiday, “Saturnalia,” in mid-December to honor their god.¹⁶⁶

The Romans, however, had a passionate hatred for the Jews, and they certainly did not respect Jewish customs, traditions, or laws. After many revolts between the years 63 B.C. and A.D. 70, two major revolts (A.D. 70 and 135), thousands of Jews were either massacred, sold as slaves, or driven from their homes and land.¹⁶⁷ The Jewish people were the proverbial “thorn in the flesh” for the Romans. The Jews no longer had any rights to life, much less to their ancient religion. Obviously the Romans would never honor them by assigning a Hebrew name to any day of the week.

One of the major difficulties emperors had with Jews and Christians was their insistence not to work one day in every week. For nearly three centuries the believers gathered to worship our Lord on a day when they were expected to be active in employment. Hence, it would have been much easier for them to *not* gather on the first day of the week and not violate any laws or be stigmatized as being lazy. For this reason, in the early fourth century, Emperor Constantine declared the first day a holiday, which relieved the social pressure on fellow believers. Many today believe that Sunday worship originated with Emperor Constantine. It didn’t, but he did make it a legal holiday (meaning holy day) for a practice that was already well established.

18.01.04 Mk. 16:5-7 (See also Mt. 28:5-7)

RESURRECTION ANNOUNCED

⁵ When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; they were amazed and alarmed.

⁶ “Don’t be alarmed,” he told them. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has been resurrected! He is not here! See the place where they put Him. ⁷ But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see Him there just as He told you.’”

166. Lloyd, “Saturn.” 19:1088; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 45-47.

167. See Appendix 25 for a listing of false prophets who had messianic expectations and for a partial listing of revolts and social disturbances from 63 B.C. to A.D. 70.

“A young man dressed in a long white robe.” Angels sang praises to God when Jesus was born and now another angel announced His resurrection. Then the heavenly messenger gave instructions to the women to tell the good news to the disciples. It is interesting that our Lord chose women to be the ones to have this honor. There was an escalation of dynamics – a display of supernatural power during His life. As if His miraculous birth was not enough to stun everyone, when He came of age for the ministry He captured everyone’s attention.

1. Jesus impressed everyone with His insightful teaching. His kind words of love impressed thousands who lived in the constant tension of political and economic strife.
2. Then He began to perform miracles. First, at Cana where He turned water into wine, and later He healed people everywhere as He continued to teach the principles of the Kingdom of God.
3. From “ordinary” miracles He moved on to perform the three messianic miracles – those miracles that for centuries the rabbis said that only the messiah would be able to perform, whenever He comes.
4. As if raising someone from death to life wasn’t profound enough, Jesus raised Lazarus to life on the fourth day of death – the day when everyone believed that his soul had already departed. They believed that this was a miracle that only God could perform.
5. No one could believe that a person who could do all these things, would so quietly permit others to mock, accuse, and then crucify him. Yet this was precisely what Jesus did. Thousands were stunned; not only at His death, but also at the earthquake and darkness that transpired! Yet only a short time later on Sunday morning, Jesus would walk out of the tomb – the greatest miracle of all! The world would never be the same again.

Scholars universally agree that within two to five years of His ascension, the four-line formula found in 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 was popular in the early church. Years later the Apostle Paul included it in his letter to the Corinthian church.

^{3a} For I passed on to you as most important what I also received:

**^{3b} That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
⁴ that He was buried,**

**that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
⁵ And that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.**

1 Corinthians 15:3-5

18.01.04.Q1 How does the name “Easter” relate to the resurrection of Jesus?

It doesn't. Courtesy of Emperor Constantine, the resurrection day of Jesus was renamed “Easter” in honor of the goddess Ishtar of Babylon. Yet this name is one that the Church continues to use without a thought given as to how it might insult the holy name of Jesus. The Church needs to return to its pre-Constantine days and honor our Lord by praising Him for His Resurrection Day and call it that. Does anyone seriously think that, when Christ returns and reigns during the millennium, He and His Church will celebrate “Easter?” Would it not be better to call it “Resurrection Day.”

18.01.04.Q2 When did the Church Age begin?

Before addressing this question, these thoughts are presented:

1. The sacrificial death of Jesus on Passover (Good Friday), was the culmination of the Old Testament and, therefore, is the beginning of the Church Age.
2. Resurrection Morning was the *evidence* that the Church Age had begun, a New Covenant was now in effect.
3. The Day of Pentecost was the empowerment of the true believers for the life and calling that is upon them.

Now for some additional details: The answer is somewhat theological, but ever since the days of the apostles there has been anticipation as to when the Church Age will close by the return of Jesus. It appears that seldom has anyone seriously considered the *beginning* of this Age; the accepted traditional beginning seems never to have been seriously questioned. Therefore, some basic facts will be examined that may lead the reader to reconsider the Day of Pentecost as the first day of this period. Let's look at some basic facts regarding the beginning of the Church Age.¹⁶⁸

168. One of the incredible features of the Bible, that elevates it far above other books deemed to be holy, is the number of prophecies that have been literally fulfilled and so verified by extra-biblical sources.

1. It has been commonly said that the Church Age began on the Day of Pentecost in the crucifixion year thought to be either 30 or 33.
2. The modern calendar is linked to the birth of Jesus, not to Pentecost. However, the birth of Jesus was inaccurately calculated. It is well known that Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. To be true to the calendar would mean Jesus was born between the years 7 and 5 B.C. This is probably the most accurate conclusion.¹⁶⁹
3. Some say He will return at the end of the two-thousand year period, which began at the time of Christ's death and resurrection. Considering an adjusted calendar, that would place it anywhere between the years 2029 and 2030, depending on the crucifixion date. The beginning of the Christian era, known as the "Church Age," or "New Covenant Period,"¹⁷⁰ is generally believed to have begun on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1).¹⁷¹ A majority of scholars from varied theological positions, Pentecostal, evangelical, or liberal, argue that this is the beginning day of a new dispensational period.¹⁷² This author does not hold to that view, but rather, that the New Covenant Period was birthed the moment Jesus walked out of the tomb. Anything else equates the sacrifice of Jesus equal with the sacrifice of lambs, oxen, etc., of the Old Testament Period.

The essence of the New Covenant was predicted when the prophet Jeremiah spoke of a time when God would make a New Covenant (31:31-34). Also, the writer of Hebrews stated (10:15-17) that the death and resurrection of Jesus is that New Covenant. The essence of the gospel has always been that one must confess Jesus as Lord and Savior, confess their sins, and believe that Jesus was raised from death to life (Rom. 10:9). The work of salvation was completed when Jesus walked out of the tomb.¹⁷³ The moment Jesus died, all heaven understood the significance of His death, but humanity would not understand it until He arose. Fifty days later the Holy Spirit came to the believers to teach them the truths of the gospel of Jesus (Jn. 14:25-26), not to complete it or to enhance it. Nowhere did Paul state that one had to receive the Holy Spirit or speak in other tongues to be saved. Romans 10:9 is the central thrust of the apostolic teaching in Acts 2:31-32; 3:15; 4:10; and 10:40. The apostles believed that Jesus not only lived in

169. See [04.03.10.Q2](#), "When was Jesus born (Lk. 2:1-7)."

170. The term appears 33 times in the New Testament, half of them in the book of Hebrews. The noun is translated as "covenant" twenty times and "Testament" thirteen times. Payne, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. 1:995.

171. Rylaarsdam, "Pentecost." 4:727.

172. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. 51; Dusing, "The New Testament Church." 528.

173. 1 Cor. 15:3-4, 17, 20-34; Heb. 7:27.

eternity past, but that He also was still alive and will continue to live through eternity future – as will His believers. These are key points on which the foundation is built to argue that the Resurrection Day was the beginning of the New Covenant Period.

If salvation was available from the moment Jesus walked out of the tomb, then what is the significance of Pentecost? It was the beginning of a new relationship between the Holy Spirit and humanity. Just as Jesus received the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove after His baptism to enable Him in His ministry, so the church received that same Holy Spirit to be empowered to ministry, as per Acts 1:8. That Spirit came first upon His inner circle of disciples in Jn. 20:22. By this time Matthias had been selected to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:23-26), indicating that the 120 had indeed functioned as a corporate body to continue the work of Jesus before the Pentecost experience of Acts 2. This shows that some type of religious governmental structure was already in place.¹⁷⁴ Thereafter, the Holy Spirit continued to fall upon others, as well. Pentecost was an empowerment and confirmation of what God was doing among His believers. The church had been coming to birth in the previous years during the ministry of Jesus.¹⁷⁵

The Greek phrase *anōthen* means *born again*¹⁷⁶ or *born from above* as the new birth is described in terms of its origin, God¹⁷⁷ (Jn. 3:6) and of the water and the Spirit (Jn. 3:5).¹⁷⁸ In Ephesians 3:17-19 and 4:17-24 is the doctrine that new life or regeneration is found in Christ whereas darkened understanding and ignorance of the natural man leads to the corruption of deceitful desires and eventually death (Rom. 3:9-20).¹⁷⁹ This concept was not so far from Jewish thinking – when a person came out of the waters of the *mikvah*, which was considered to be “the womb of the world” (as an unborn child is in the waters of his mother’s womb), he was considered born again and rendered a new creation.¹⁸⁰

174. Fowler, *The History and Literature of the New Testament*. 50-51; Kostlin, “The Christian Church.” 3:78.

175. Clemens, “Pentecost.” 2:160-64.

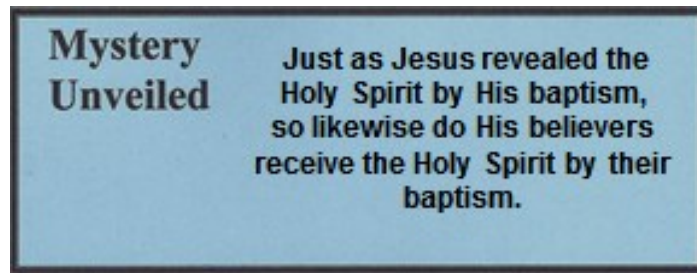
176. See also Jn. 3:31; 19:11, 23.

177. Jn. 1:13; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:18.

178. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 203-04.

179. Bromiley, “Regeneration.” 4:69.

180. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 127.



The church is seen as the beginning of a new creation; a new humanity as the result of the work of Christ.¹⁸¹ Jesus died for the sake of all who became subject to Adam's sin, and thus, have been condemned to die (Rom. 5:6-11). Because of His resurrection and life-giving Spirit, humanity now has the opportunity to receive eternal life and freedom from the curse of sin (1 Cor.15:20, 45). Clearly, the hope of life given to mankind exists because Jesus walked out of the grave. Some theologians will correctly go to great lengths and proclaim the work of Jesus, yet at the same time proclaim the church "did not begin until Pentecost (Acts 2)."¹⁸²

A minority of scholars consider the Church Age as beginning on the evening of His resurrection, when Jesus appeared to some of His disciples and breathed upon them (Jn. 20:22).¹⁸³ However, if Romans 10:9 is the "born again" test for the New Covenant, then John 20:22 could not be the beginning of this new era, any more than is the Day of Pentecost.

Other scholars state the event of John 20:22 was only a "down payment" or "deposit"¹⁸⁴ for the event that occurred about fifty days later. However, there is no suggestion of this in the Greek text. Clearly, the disciples received the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:22) in a significant manner and did so again on the Day of Pentecost.

John connected the life of Creation with the renewed life of mankind (Jn. 1:1). This was the first of many events in which the Holy Spirit moved in a manner to fulfill the prophecies of Joel and Jesus. The breathing of the Spirit in John 20:22 is related to the breathing in the prolog in which John referred to breathing life into man in the Creation narrative (Gen 2:7). There was a new birth on the day of creation and there was a new birth (in the New Testament sense of the word) the day Jesus arose from the grave. By their faith in the risen Lord they became born again; by divine breathing they became the

181. Minear, "Church, Idea of." 1:615.

182. The opinion of Lewis, "Feasts." 860. Also, C.L. Feinberg mentions near universal agreement of theologians on this matter. "Pentecost." 4:694.

183. Ervin, *Conversion Initiation and the Baptism*. 133-37.

184. Kay, *Pentecost: Its Significance in the Life of the Church*. 31.

empowered church.

The resurrection was the day of the birth of the church, but Pentecost was the day of Holy Spirit baptism and confirmation of the church and New Covenant era. For the purpose of this discussion, it is limited to the application of Romans 10:9 to one's life as the covenant to be drawn close to God.¹⁸⁵

There is an interesting cultural-religious implication for the Jews. Passover was marked by the barley harvest and the Festival of Weeks ended with the wheat harvest at the Feast of Weeks and the beginning of the offering of first fruits.¹⁸⁶ To the first believers who were Jewish, the significance of the second feast, known as Pentecost, is that on that date the law was written on tablets of stone and was an incomplete and partial revelation of God.¹⁸⁷ However, on Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to write the perfect law of liberty on men's hearts, which is the law of the Spirit of Life.¹⁸⁸ The significance of the imagery is found in Romans 8:53, where Paul referred to the Pentecostal gift as the "First Fruits of the Spirit." To fully understand the full significance of this passage, one must note that Paul's reference to the "first fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23) contains a direct reference to the Jewish festival of Pentecost – the festival of the "first fruits" of the summer harvest.

During the times of the Old Covenant the Holy Spirit came upon a chosen few prophets as a transitory visitation. That has changed. In the New Testament the Spirit comes upon all believers. Formerly the Spirit stayed for a season and then departed, but in the New Covenant Period the Spirit remains in the believer to transform him into the image of God. The promise of Jesus is a permanent, inward, and abiding Spirit.¹⁸⁹

It has been suggested that the New Covenant began at the Last Supper. The wording would certainly suggest this. However, this was only anticipatory, as it could not have had any effect upon anyone unless Jesus died and arose from the grave. Jesus said "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out" (Jn. 26:28). Obviously His blood was not poured out then, but it would be when He died on the cross.¹⁹⁰

185. Scott, C. "What Happened at Pentecost?" 129.

186. Ex. 34:22; Num. 28:17; Deut. 16:10; 2 Ch.. 8:13; Feinberg, "Pentecost." 4:692.

187. Scott, E. *The Spirit in the New Testament*. 96.

188. Kay, *Pentecost: Its Significance in the Life of the Church*. 28.

189. Kay, *Pentecost: Its Significance in the Life of the Church*. 63-64.

190. Mendenhall, "Covenant." 1:722.

There are several arguments for the Resurrection Day vs. Pentecost as being the beginning of the New Covenant Period / Church Age / New Testament Period. The disciples were born again one by one as they witnessed the incredible event of the resurrection. Most certainly Mary Magdalene was “born again” the moment she realized the gardener she was talking to was Jesus, even though she may never have learned that He was also the Gardener of Eden. Peter and John most certainly believed when they came to the empty tomb (Jn. 20:3) and discovered Jesus was not in it. However, if there was any doubt, it was clearly removed that same evening when all gathered in the Upper Room and Jesus appeared before them. If the New Covenant Period or Church Age really did begin on the Day of Pentecost, there are some difficult questions that need to be addressed.

1. Since Pentecost is fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, does this interpretation not place His entire ministry, death, and resurrection into the Old Covenant Period? If the Old Covenant was still in effect until Pentecost, then the blood of Jesus was equal to the blood of bulls, lambs, and goats of the Old Covenant sacrificial system. Is Jesus not the defining personality of the New Covenant? Then how could Jesus possibly have come to fulfill the Old Covenant promises and remain totally within that era? His resurrection of life is the resurrection into the New Covenant/New Testament Period/Church Age.
2. If the Old Covenant ended with the death and resurrection of Jesus, then, under what covenant did the people of God live during those fifty days until the Day of Pentecost? It should be noted that there is no way to God without a covenant. There was no “transitional covenant” between the Old and New Testament Periods and, therefore, there was no transitional period.¹⁹¹
3. If Pentecost was the date the church was to be birthed, then Luke, John, and Paul are strangely silent on the subject, while focusing their attention only on the Holy Spirit. No mention is made until Acts 5:11, where the “church” appears as an existing institution in connection with the story of the dishonesty and death of Ananias and of Sapphira. Thereafter, the church is not mentioned until the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1) and the persecution of the church that followed.
4. If Romans 10:9 would be ignored so that Pentecost could be considered the beginning of the New Covenant, then all that would be needed to receive salvation would be the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues. The point is that the resurrection is the essence of the New Covenant and

191. Kay, *Pentecost: Its Significance in the Life of the Church*. 31.

without the work of the Holy Spirit, there is no renewal or regeneration. Many early theologians, such as St. Athanasius (296-298) and St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), argued that the center of the Christian faith was His death and resurrection and the justification of humanity by the blood of Christ.¹⁹²

5. If the ten disciples (Thomas and Judas were excluded, of course) were born again on the day of resurrection, when Jesus breathed the Holy spirit upon them (Jn. 20:22) and if the Day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Church Age, then were they born again on Pentecost? Or were they simply born again on the Day of Resurrection and filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost? Furthermore, if the position is held that this was a one-time event, unique to the disciples, then the question must be asked as to what the biblical basis is for this and what other biblical blessings have been so limited.

6. After the ascension there was a meeting during which the saints prayed to our Lord (1:14). Could they have prayed to God without a covenant? Hardly! Again, one can only come to God if there is a covenant. Were these praying saints Jews or Christians, or were they disciples waiting for the promise of the Comforter spoken of by Jesus?

7. If it is assumed that the Old Covenant ceased to be effective on Good Friday, and the New Covenant did not begin until the Day of Pentecost, then there is a short time period between the Covenants when God had no Covenant with His people. That is hardly acceptable in any theological interpretation.

8. Every evangelist who has ever given an invitation to a sinner to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior, has done so because Jesus died and arose from the grave, not because the Holy Spirit fell on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus is the essence of the New Covenant, not the Holy Spirit.

The real significance of Pentecost is that the disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit for the task of evangelizing the world, as instructed in Acts 1:8.¹⁹³ As if seeing Jesus alive was not already exhilarating, now they were ready to conquer the world with transformed bold conviction.¹⁹⁴ The indwelling Holy Spirit was the new essence of Jesus embodied in every believer. Furthermore, the promise of Joel 2:28-29 was not limited to

192. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*. 93, 143; See Appendix 20.

193. Andrews, "The Acts of the Apostles." 46.

194. Foakes-Jackson, "The Acts of the Apostles." 9.

Pentecost, as it was given to ten disciples previously in John 20:22 and later to many others. Pentecost was a defining moment; however, the once cowardly Peter was now preaching with boldness before the Spirit fell on that day. This is a tribute to the “breath” of God he received (Jn 20:22) on the first coming of the Spirit on the evening of Resurrection Day. The disciples had an experience parallel to that of the baptism of Jesus.¹⁹⁵ Clearly, the intent of Jesus was to bring Himself into the lives of His believers prior to them going to fulfill the Great Commission.

Therefore, the New Covenant Period sets forth a new relationship with God that is possible only because Jesus sacrificed Himself and rose from the grave. The Holy Spirit functions as the purifying agent that also empowers and comforts the believer in his quest to be conformed into the image of God, as Adam was before the fall.¹⁹⁶

Why is the Day of Pentecost not the first day of the New Covenant? The primary reason is that nowhere is there an indication that the work of the Holy Spirit would be the New Covenant. Regeneration is possible because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is followed by the work of the Holy Spirit to empower the saints. In chronological history, the work of Jesus came first and, hence, the date of the Church Age needs to be adjusted to its proper setting, the morning of Resurrection day.

The dispensation of the Spirit could not begin until the work of Jesus, as Redeemer, was finished. There could not have been a Pentecost until there was a Calvary. Only after Jesus was exalted in heaven did the Spirit celebrate the coronation. Only after the Rock (Jesus) was smitten could the rivers of water (Holy Spirit) flow. The extent to which the Holy Spirit flows is dependent to a large extent on how much the Church desires the living water of God and believes in the glorified Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “If any man thirst” (Jn. 7:37), and Jesus continued to speak of the Holy Spirit. Nothing could stop Resurrection Day and nothing could stop Pentecost that would be the living water of Jesus.

Just as a sinner’s reaction to Jesus is a test of his faith in God, so a saint’s reaction to the control of the Spirit is a test of his love and devotion to Jesus. The New Covenant / Church Age / New Testament Period began when Jesus walked out of the tomb. The promised Holy Spirit appeared afterwards, most significantly on the Day of Pentecost, to empower and energize the believers to do the work of the Great Commission and build the Kingdom of God.¹⁹⁷

195. Decker, *The First Christian Pentecost*. 62.

196. Erickson, *Christian Theology*. 943.

197. For further study, see John F. Walvoord. *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come*. Chicago: Moody, 1974.

18.01.05 Lk. 24:4-8

WOMEN REMINDED OF PROPHECY

⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes. ⁵ So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground.

“Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” asked the men. ⁶ “He is not here, but He has been resurrected! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying, ‘The Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and rise on the third day?’” ⁸ And they remembered His words.

Concerning the events that occurred at this time,¹⁹⁸ these were recorded by the gospel writers:

1. They recorded that the resurrection occurred on or about the dawn of the day. Whether there was sunshine is hardly the point of argument since this is obviously an opinion of the writer, especially if there were springtime clouds in the sky.
2. Mary, from the village of Magdala, was one of several persons who discovered that the body of Jesus was missing. She was His close friend and an important witness, obviously more important than the other women to the gospel writers.

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

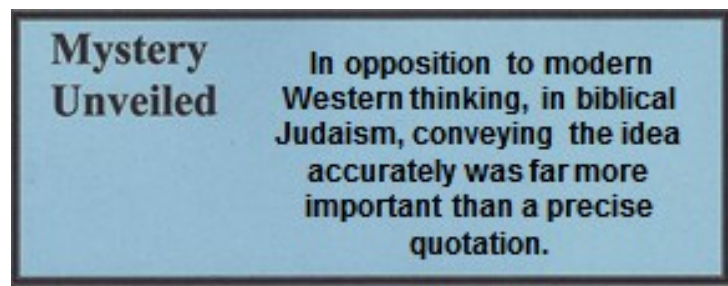
18.01.05.X An Idea vs. A Quotation

In modern thinking, nothing can be more accurate than a precise quotation. However, first century Jewish people did not always think that way. Sometimes the idea was of over-riding significance. Usually the issue is that one writer indicated that there were either two angels, two demoniacs, or two of something else, and another writer referred only to one of those two beings. Obviously this creates a sense of error to modern readers. However, the ancients did not think that the important issue was the number of beings present, but *what* happened. The case of how many angels were at the tomb is this – an essential difference between western and Eastern Oriental (Jewish) thinking.

198. Mt. 28:1-8; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-10; Jn. 20:1-8.

18.01.05.Q1 How many angels were at the tomb of Jesus: one or two (Lk. 24:4; Jn. 20:12 vs. Mt. 28:2; Mk. 16:4)?

Luke mentioned two angels, while the other writers made reference to only one. Furthermore, the words spoken by the angels differ in the narratives. Considering the gospels were written some thirty years after these events occurred, it should not be surprising that only the *idea* of what happened was recorded, rather than actual *quotations*. In Jewish thinking, conveying the idea was far more important than actual quotations. Even in modern courts today, an exact quotation from memory is not expected thirty years after the event. If precision is claimed, the witness becomes suspect. Likewise, all of the gospel writers present the same idea, even though the words are somewhat different.¹⁹⁹ It is a classic example of *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox* that was previously described.²⁰⁰ Another example is the Roman *titulus*, the sign on the cross that identified Jesus, where each of the four gospel writers wrote the same theme but used different wording.



Critics argue that this clearly indicates that Scripture has error, yet they fail to admit that the Holy Writ is far superior to all other historical documents.²⁰¹ For example, the earliest sources that detail the burning of Rome have far greater discrepancies concerning the cause of the fire and how it spread. Some writers said the entire city was burned, while others claim only three districts were destroyed. No one questions the historicity of the fire and the related details, yet the same critics will question the entire gospel narrative on a minor issue.²⁰² In a similar case, Apion, a Greek intellectual who wrote the *History of Egypt*, an anti-Semitic work that circulated in the first century (A.D.) Roman world. In response to this antagonist, Josephus defended his faith and the inspiration of Jewish Scripture, which included the following:

199. Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. 506.

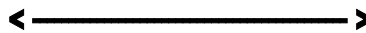
200. See 08.03.04.Q4, “What is the significance of verbal statements, “*Ipsissima Verba*” and “*Ipsissima Vox*?” ”

201. Barclay, *Jesus*. 243.

202. Maier, *The First Easter*. 94.

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books,²⁰³ which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death.

Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.8 (38-39a)



18.01.06 Mk. 16:8; Jn. 20:2-10

WOMEN LEAVE IN FEAR WHILE PETER AND JOHN VISIT THE TOMB

Mk. ⁸ So they went out and started running from the tomb, because trembling and astonishment overwhelmed them. And they said nothing to anyone, since they were afraid.

Jn. ² So she (Mary, of Magdala) ran to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put Him!”

³ At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. ⁵ Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, yet he did not go in. ⁶ Then, following him, Simon Peter came also. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. ⁷ The wrapping that had been on His head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself. ⁸ The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then entered the tomb, saw, and believed. ⁹ For they still did not understand the Scripture that He must rise from the dead.

¹⁰ Then the disciples went home again.

203. Some Books in the Hebrew Bible, such as First and Second Kings, are a single text. Josephus later mentioned the minor prophets.

18.01.06.Q1 Why did John hesitate when he came to the tomb?

John, the disciple, was a kinsman of the high priest Caiaphas (Acts 4:6). Many scholars have said that to enter a tomb that contained a body would have defiled him because he was an orthodox Jew. Some have argued that the John of Acts 4:6 may not have been this disciple, but the fact that he did not enter the tomb until he realized it was empty, strongly suggests that he was a member of the priesthood family, which was required to observe the laws of defilement. But the question remains as to whether entering any tomb would have defiled him, even if did not have a body.

Amazingly, the burial cloth “**was folded up in a separate place by itself.**” Bodies were generally wrapped in two burial cloths. There was the shroud that was tightly wrapped around the body and a smaller cloth, known in Greek as a *soudarion* (4676), that covered the head (see Jn. 11:44).²⁰⁴ The cloth, meaning the large shroud, was neatly and miraculously folded. This statement was placed in the gospel record for a reason, as this action clearly states that the body was not stolen. No one would have stolen a naked body; no thief would have taken the time to fold a worthless grave cloth while trying to avoid detection by Roman soldiers.²⁰⁵ Jesus died, but His body did not decay.

Commentators throughout the history of the church reflect upon Psalm 16:10 as a Messianic prophecy that pointed to the resurrection. It reads:

**For You will not abandon me to Sheol;
You will not allow Your Faithful One to see decay.**

Psalm 16:10

There can be no doubt that the understanding of this psalm was not clear until after Jesus arose. Jewish scholars of the first century naturally read this to mean the Messiah would never see physical death. Such an interpretation is easy to understand. Hence, it is evident again that the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the Messiah was far different than anyone would have ever expected.

204. The small cloth that covered the head is sometimes referred to as a “napkin” and was used to uphold the jaw so the mouth remained closed. See Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 360; Vine, “Handkerchief.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:289 and “Napkin.” 2:426.

205. One of the mythical legends concerning the resurrection of Jesus pertains to the folded burial cloth, which it incorrectly calls a “napkin.” The legends states that the fact that it was found folded, is symbolic of His return. There is nothing in Jewish literature that suggests this symbolism. The life of Jesus was so dynamic that any fabricated story merely detracts from the historical reality.

The resurrection appearances of Jesus were limited to those friends with whom He had established a rapport and fellowship. His critics did not have the privilege of seeing Him in His resurrected body. So it will be someday for all of humanity, only those who know Him will see Him. Hence, Jesus said, “I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (Jn. 20:17).

18.01.07 Mk. 16:9; Jn. 20:11-17

JESUS WITH MARY MAGDALENE

Mk. ⁹ Early on the first day of the week, after He had risen, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had driven seven demons.

Jn. ¹¹ But Mary stood outside facing the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² She saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet, where Jesus’ body had been lying. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“Because they’ve taken away my Lord,” she told them, “and I don’t know where they’ve put Him.” ¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not know it was Jesus.

¹⁵ “Woman,” Jesus said to her, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Supposing He was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you’ve removed Him, tell me where you’ve put Him, and I will take Him away.”

¹⁶ Jesus said, “Mary.”

Turning around, she said to Him in Hebrew, “*Rabbouni!*” — which means “Teacher.”²⁰⁶

¹⁷ “Don’t cling to Me,” Jesus told her, “for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and tell them that I am ascending

**to My Father
and your Father —
to My God
and your God.”**

206. “Rabbouni” is an affectionate and endearing term also found in Mark 10:51.

In the closing comments of this narrative Jesus told Mary to *go* and *tell* the disciples what she had just witnessed. As previously stated, women were not considered viable witnesses and their ideas were generally considered meaningless. So by this action, Jesus underscored the importance of women and, thereby, their status was elevated.

“Supposing He was the gardener.” Mary had mistakenly believed that Jesus was the gardener. However, theologically, He was precisely that. In the book of Genesis Adam lived in the Garden of Eden and now Jesus was the “Second Adam,” and hence, “The Gardener.”

The phrase **“Don’t cling to Me,”** emphasizes “clinging” onto Jesus, as opposed to Thomas, who touched Jesus to feel His wounds. Some translations read, “Don’t touch me.”

18.01.07.Q1 Is Mark 16:9-20 authentic?

Some modern translations have a notation stating, “These verses do not appear in the most trusted manuscripts of the New Testament.” The implication is that these were added by scribes and were not part of the original gospel. This notice is based upon the fact that these verses do not appear in the *Codex Vaticanus* or the *Codex Sinaiticus*. However, what these scholars do not reveal is that these manuscripts agree with each other slightly more than 3,000 times.²⁰⁷ No other ancient records have such a high consistency of accuracy in transmission. Therefore, the notice is unwarranted as it can be assured the passage in question was in the original text.

Only later manuscripts have Mark 16:9-20 and these are considered inferior to the older ones. Textual critics say that the style of Greek is so dramatically different that the latter portion could not have been written by the author of the first portion. However, that does not mean that the gospel was intended to end at Mark 16:8. Furthermore, Mark could have had a different scribe write that portion of Scripture. The reason for the change is unknown and the answer lies only with God.

18.01.08 Mt. 28:8-10

JESUS APPEARS TO THE WOMEN

207. Burgon, *The Causes of Corruption in the Traditional Text*. 251-52, 259.

⁸ So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell His disciples the news. ⁹ Just then Jesus met them and said, “Good morning!” They came up, took hold of His feet, and worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus told them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see Me there.”

Again Scripture elevates the status of women.²⁰⁸ And Jesus again demonstrated that He had no respect for the religious traditions of men and silently underscored the social and legal value of women. They would be the first witnesses to testify to the resurrection – a sharp contrast to the prevailing opinions of their testimony as noted in the following two documents:

But let not the testimony of women be admitted on account of the levity and boldness of their sex, nor let servants be admitted to give testimony on account of the ignobility of their soul; since it is probable that they may not speak truth, either out of hope of gain, or fear of punishment.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.15

Any evidence which a woman gives is not valid (to offer) ... This is equivalent to saying that one who is Rabbinically accounted a robber is qualified to give the same evidence as a woman.

Babylonian Talmud, *Rosh Hashannah* 1.8²⁰⁹

Critics have long said that the resurrection account was a creation of the disciples or early church fathers. If that were true, they certainly would not have recorded women as witnesses, but would have chosen honorable and respected disciples, such as Peter, James or John. No self-respecting Jew would have fabricated a story of this nature. Furthermore, among Gentiles the status of women was even lower, so therefore, no Gentile church leader would have created this account either.

18.01.09 Mt. 28:11-15

CHIEF PRIESTS TRY TO EXPLAIN THE MISSING BODY

208. For example, their testimony was excluded from legal court proceedings. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 3.9

209. Quoted in Gary Habermas and Mike Licona. *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*. 72.

¹¹ As they were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² After the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money ¹³ and told them, “Say this, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole Him while we were sleeping.’” ¹⁴ If this reaches the governor’s ears, we will deal with him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been spread among Jewish people to this day.

The unanswered question of this account is – if the guards were asleep, how would they have known if the disciples had stolen the body? Origen, an early enemy of the faith who later converted, wrote an interesting account in his apologetic writing titled *Against Celsus* concerning the soldiers who guarded the tomb of Christ.

But after our Lord’s coming, those who busied themselves with overthrowing the belief that the place of His birth had been the subject of prophecy from the beginning, withheld such teaching from the people; acting in a similar manner to those individuals who won over those soldiers of the guard stationed around the tomb who had seen him arise from the dead, and [those same guards] who instructed these eye-witnesses to report as follows: “His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.”

Origen, *Against Celsus* 1:51²¹⁰

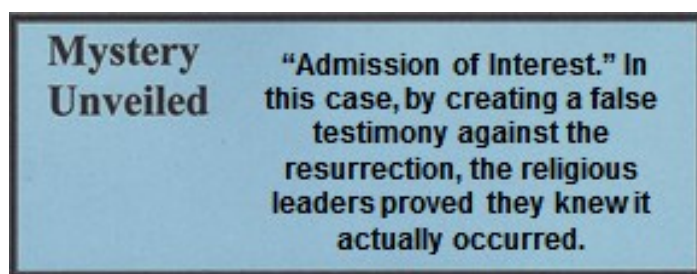
The emperor had some simple rules for his soldiers: If they lost a prisoner, they were sentenced to death. If they lost a military battle, they became slaves. Obviously they were not prone to take their assignments lightly. They guarded the tomb with the utmost diligence to insure no one would steal the body or they would lose their lives. The last thing they expected was for the stone to roll aside and Jesus to walk out. Evidently the experience of guarding a deceased body that suddenly came to life had a chilling effect on them.

18.01.09.Q1 What is an “Admission of Interest?”

In a court of law, there is an interesting phrase called an, “Admission of interest” but it is better understood as an “Admission against interest.” It essentially states that false testimonies against a certain person or event indirectly proves the point or position of the

210. Bracketed notation by author for clarification. See also Justin Martyr, *Dialog with Trypho*. 1:253.

accused and, in reality, is a testimony against the accuser. In other words, the accusations that Jesus did not rise from the grave is a good argument for, but not “proof” that, He did rise from the grave.²¹¹



The false accounts concerning the resurrection began with the chief priests and have continued to this day. Members of the Sanhedrin could hardly believe what they were hearing. They had enough problems with the earthquake and the darkness, both of which were understood to be symbolic of God’s wrath. Furthermore, people who had recently died walked around Jerusalem, symbolic of a coming divine resurrection and God’s love. If the disciples were astonished at these events, those who condemned Him must have been panic-stricken!

Yet the major problem continued to be how a messiah could have been cursed on a Roman cross. How could a man, who had healed the sick and raised the dead, die the worst kind of death? How could Roman soldiers kill God’s appointed messiah? This event made no sense whatsoever. The full meaning of the divinity of Jesus was not comprehended until after His resurrection. Generations later, the descendants of the Pharisees made several references to Jesus.²¹² But of interest here is the observation made by the historian Josephus.

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 as men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was 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

211. <http://dictionary.law.com/Default.aspx?selected=2341>. Retrieved October 2, 2013.

212. Jewish writers later made three references to Jesus in the two Talmuds: (1) He had immoral parents, namely his mother: Jerusalem Talmud, *Tebamot* 4:13, Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 104b, and Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 106a; (2) He was a magician and idolater: Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 107b; and (3) Jesus was a heretic and blasphemer: Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 103a and Babylonian Talmud, *Taanit* 65a. Another reference written later and, therefore, not a part of the Talmuds known as the *Toidat Yeshu*, is considerably friendlier to Jesus.

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, *Antiquities* 18.3.3 (63-64)

Recent critics have claimed that this statement is not original with Josephus, but is a later addition by Christian editors. They present a good point in saying that such complimentary words would hardly have come from non-Christian Jews. Furthermore, if Josephus praised Jesus, why did he not do likewise for James, the brother of Jesus, when James was being stoned to death by Jewish rioters?²¹³

While they present valid arguments, history however, appears to support the authenticity of the comment. The writings of Josephus were quickly translated into Arabic and Slavonic [Russian], before the original manuscript reached the Christian community, and his comments on Jesus appear in those translations as stated in English. At some point in history the *Antiquities of the Jews* was translated into Arabic with the same comment.²¹⁴ Another witness of this original work was Eusebius who mentioned it in his *Ecclesiastical History* (1.1.7-8) and in *Demonstration of the Gospel* (3.5.105-06), but then added the following:

When such testimony as this was transmitted to us by an historian who sprung from the Hebrews themselves, both respecting John the Baptist and our Savior, what subterfuge can be left to prevent those from being convicted destitute of all shame, who have forged the acts against them? This, however, may suffice on this subject.

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.11.9

The obvious difficulty for critics is how to explain how an editor could have added these comments after the original manuscript had been translated and distributed widely throughout the Roman Empire. There are four notable reasons as to why this statement (*Antiquities* 18.3.3) is considered to be original with Josephus and not a later insert by a copyist or editor.

213. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1

214. Santala, *The Messiah in the New Testament*. 28-29.

1. There are obvious Christian words missing. These are sometimes referred to as “Christian-eze;” those words commonly used by believers, even early believers, to express their thoughts and ideas, and these are missing.
2. There four obvious expressions that were *not* used by the early church fathers, not anyone else who was a follower of Jesus. These expressions were Jesus as a
 - a. “A wise man”
 - b. “Doer of wonderful works”
 - c. “Receive the truth with pleasure” and,
 - d. “The tribe of Christians”
3. Josephus also made a reference to James, the brother of Jesus, in *Antiquities* 20. This is important because Josephus made reference to James, based upon his previous description of Jesus in *Antiquities* 18. Therefore, the latter reference confirms the authenticity of the former.²¹⁵
4. Not a single copy of Josephus has been uncovered that does *not* have this comment about Jesus. In other words, what *ancient* copy is there that supports the claims of the critics? None!

Of particular note is the fact that followers of Jesus spoke often of His “miracles,” not His “works.” In addition, the word “tribe” would have some derogatory connotations to it. No Christian would have used it. Josephus, who was a well-respected Pharisee (like the Apostle Paul), but not a believer, carefully used words that in his Jewish thinking best described Jesus, without showing any loyalty to Him. Since he enjoyed a lavish retirement, granted by the emperor, he had to choose his words wisely.

“If this reaches the governor’s ears, we will deal with him and keep you out of trouble.” The lives of the guards were now in the hands of the Jews. It was common knowledge that Roman soldiers who failed to perform their duties were severely punished – usually by death. So this was an extremely important matter, one that would even make the emperor question as to what really happened.

An example of a soldier who failed to perform his duty as required was recorded by

215. For further study on this, see Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, Chapter 4 “Jesus, the Nag Hammadi Codices, and Josephus.” (New York: Doubleday 1988). 77-102.

Gaius Petronius Arbiter (A.D. 27 – 66). He was a courtier for Emperor Nero and is credited with writing the satirical novel *Satyricon*. One of his characters is a true-life individual named Eumolpus, who reflected upon one of his life experiences – that of an Ephesian woman who was in the tomb of her husband where she mourned continuously of her loss. As the story goes, it was fortunate for the Roman soldier as his life was spared with the help of this grieving widow. As she mourns, some thieves were crucified nearby and Petronius continues the story –

Now at that moment the governor of the province gave orders that some robbers should be crucified near the small structure in which the lady was lamenting her loss. So, the next day, the soldier was on guard by the crosses to stop anyone from taking down the body for burial. He noticed a light glimmering quite distinctly among the tombs and heard the moans of a mourner.

At this point the soldier leaves his post and comforts the mourning widow, eventually seducing her. He returns to her night after night but his actions being noticed by the family of the crucified robber. Petronius continues –

So the parents of one of the crucified men, noting how careless the guard was, took the body down one night and performed the last rites over it. In his absence from duty the soldier was thus circumvented; and next day, finding one of the crosses without its corpse, he was scared at the prospect of punishment. He contemplated suicide, but the widow said, “I’d rather see a dead man crucified than a living man dead. She then asked him to remove her husband’s corpse from its coffin and secure it up on the empty cross ... and the people wondered next day by what means the dead man had ascended the cross.

Petronius, *Satyricon* 111-112²¹⁶

Without question, at times elements of humor enter life’s most horrific events. But the point is that guards who failed to perform their assigned duties often chose suicide rather than punishment. Therefore, the missing body of Jesus was truly a matter of life and death for the guards, who depended upon the wicked priests to save them.

“His disciples came during the night and stole Him.” This statement has been repeated by critics for centuries. The only problem is that the disciples clearly did not expect

216. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* 161-62; <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/5/2/2/5225/5225-h/5225-h.htm>. Retrieved October 8, 2012.

Jesus to rise from the grave. This has its own value, as it clears them of any suspicion of creating a report of a resurrection.

18.01.10 Lk. 24:9-11 (See also Mk. 16:10-11; Jn. 20:18)

WOMEN TELL OF SEEING JESUS

⁹ Returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the Eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them were telling the apostles these things. ¹¹ But these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women.

As stated elsewhere, possibly the most important point of this narrative pertains to the women reporting “**these things**” to the disciples. This affirms the historical accuracy of the event because, ironically, women were not permitted to be witnesses according to Jewish law. Anyone who would have fabricated the resurrection story would never have identified women as witnesses – especially if he wanted to persuade a Jewish audience. However, the fact that women were the first to see Jesus and report of His resurrection emphasizes two unique features:

1. The importance of women in the plan of God. It underscores the point that in Christ there is neither male nor female, slave nor free, Greek nor Jew as stated in Galatians 3:28.
2. Only a report of a true historical event would have included women as witnesses.

18.01.10.Q1 If the body of Jesus was stolen, who would have taken it?

There are two possible answers:

1. His enemies and critics might have stolen it. If they had the body, they would have produced it when confronting the apostles in the Book of Acts. There were numerous confrontations between the Jewish leaders and the apostles, but no one had the body.
2. His friends might have stolen it. If they, in fact, had the body they would not have suffered painful martyrdoms for a fairytale. Of the eleven disciples, ten were martyred. They often had the opportunity to recant their story, but they

constantly refused. Why? They knew the body was neither in the tomb nor stolen. It was transformed and had ascended.

18.01.11 Lk. 24:13-27 (See also Mk. 16:12) The Road to Emmaus

JESUS APPEARED TO CLEOPAS

¹³ Now that same day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ Together they were discussing everything that had taken place. ¹⁵ And while they were discussing and arguing, Jesus Himself came near and began to walk along with them. ¹⁶ But they were prevented from recognizing Him. ¹⁷ Then He asked them, “What is this dispute that you’re having with each other as you are walking?” And they stopped walking and looked discouraged.

¹⁸ The one named Cleopas answered Him, “Are You the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that happened there in these days?”

¹⁹ “What things?” He asked them.

So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a Prophet powerful in action and speech before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that He was the One who was about to redeem Israel. Besides all this, it’s the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women from our group astounded us. They arrived early at the tomb, ²³ and when they didn’t find His body, they came and reported that they had seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they didn’t see Him.”

²⁵ He said to them, “How unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Didn’t the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into His glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Jesus walked on the road to Emmaus with two disciples. While the identity of one remains unknown, church history reports the other was Cleopas. He became a leading

figure after the martyrdom of James, the half-brother of Jesus. Cleopas also organized the mass evacuation of Messianic believers out of Jerusalem in the early days of the Roman siege in A.D. 66.²¹⁷

Within a few years the primitive church adopted this liturgy in Hebraic poetic style:

**Christ died for our sins
according to the Scripture
He was buried
He was raised on the third day
according to Scripture
He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.**

Early Church Confession²¹⁸

“Are You the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that happened there in these days?” What an interesting statement, because Jesus was the *only* one who really understood what happened on that day. This conversation also shows that Jesus appears to have had a dry sense of humor.

“Our chief priests and leaders handed Him over to be sentenced to death.” This is the earliest and most explicit statement which places the responsibility for the execution of Jesus directly upon the Jewish leadership. The Apostle Paul later said that the Jews were responsible for His death (1 Thess. 2:14-15), but did not identify which group of Jews.²¹⁹

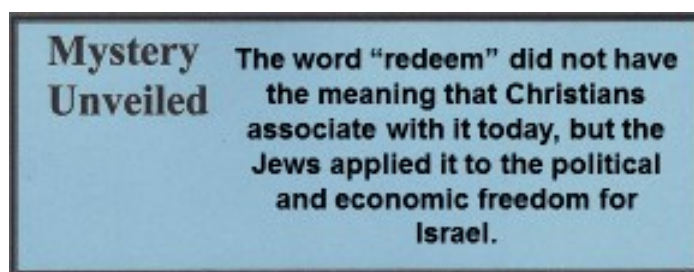
“But we were hoping that He was the One who was about to redeem Israel.” Their dream that Jesus would be the one who would redeem Israel from Roman tyranny died with His crucifixion. The focus and vision of the Jewish people for such a military-messiah were so strong that, when Jesus was among them, everything they saw Him do and heard Him say was filtered through their image of a military-messiah. The word “redeem” did not have the meaning that Christians associate with it today; rather, it referred to political freedom for Israel and the Jewish people. The crucifixion of Jesus was the crucifixion of that dream. Only in His resurrection did these disciples begin to

217. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 26, page 14.

218. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 59 quoting from E. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums III*. Berlin, 1923. 210.

219. Please note that the Pharisees are no longer mentioned in the biblical narrative after this point. As stated previously, since they were not permitted to vote on capital cases, they were not among the voting members of the Sanhedrin or before Pilate.

realize who Jesus really was, as He explained to them all that was written in the Scriptures concerning Himself.



To meet Jesus in Galilee

Three times Jesus told His disciples to meet Him in Galilee and three times they failed to understand and comply with His instructions. Therefore, He came to meet them in Jerusalem.



18.01.11.A. JEWISH COIN OF THE FIRST REVOLT. This is the first silver Jewish coin minted in A.D. 67-68. LEFT: Chalice/Omer cup with pearled rim. Paleo-Hebrew legends read "Shekel of Israel" and "Year Two." RIGHT: Stem with three pomegranates. Legend reads "Jerusalem the Holy."

Source: http://www.mefacts.com/cached.asp?x_id=10080

18.01.11.Q1 Where is the biblical Emmaus?

Modern tourists, like those of the Crusader days, visit the so-called Emmaus, located in the Shoreck Valley near the Arab village of Kiriath-Yearim (modern Abu Ghosh). Since traveling during the Crusader era was extremely difficult, they created “historical sites” such as Emmaus and Mount Tabor, the so-called Mount of Transfiguration. These created sites were placed along main travel routes for the convenience of pilgrims. Therefore, the pursuit of truth requires a fresh look at Scripture and the facts.

The most important clue of the location of Emmaus is the definition of the name. It was originally named *Amwas* (pronounced *A-mouse*), meaning *warm waters* or *warm wells*.²²⁰ In Hebrew, the word *hamat* or *chammat* means *hot springs* or *warm water springs*.²²¹ However, the Greeks and Romans could not pronounce it so they changed the name to *Emmaus*. They added the typical *aus* on the end of the name as was done with many place names.²²²

Of the four villages that today claim that biblical heritage, the only one that ever had hot springs is located about eighteen miles west of Jerusalem. It is the site of the Maccabean battleground as recorded in *1 Maccabees* 3:40, 57 and 4:3. Early pilgrims such as Bordeaux Pilgrim (ca. 333) and the Holy Paula (ca. 386), accepted this site as authentic. Possibly most important, however, is that a Byzantine Church was built there to commemorate the narrative of Luke 24:13.²²³

Critics claimed that this Emmaus (shown below) could not possibly be the biblical site because its distance of 160 Roman stadia, or 18.4 miles, which supposedly is more than a day’s walk. In response, some scholars claim that the ancients were accustomed to walking at a much faster pace than their modern counterparts. Evidently, Josephus would agree with the latter group, for he recorded the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem could be walked in three days, definitely a strenuous walk for anyone today. Whether he made reference from the province of Galilee, approximately sixty miles away, or the Sea of Galilee, some eighty miles away, is unclear. But, clearly, Josephus provided enough data to conclude that the Emmaus of the hot springs is the authentic site. When he was speaking to the five hundred men under his command as the captain of the Galilee army (about A.D. 65), he said,

220. Clark, “Emmaus,” 2:98.

221. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:94.

222. Interview with Arie bar David, tour guide and lecturer. August 1999.

223. Clark, “Emmaus,” 2:97-98.

I wrote to my friends in Samaria to take care that they might safely pass through their country, for Samaria was already under the Romans and it was absolutely necessary for those that go quickly (to Jerusalem)²²⁴ to pass through that country; for on that road you may, in three days' time go from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Josephus, *Life* 52 (269)

Obviously, the eighteen or twenty-mile walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus was not considered impossible by the historian. People in ancient times walked briskly, as did the disciples, who hastily walked the road from Emmaus in their excitement of the news of Jesus.²²⁵



18.01.11.B. ROMAN BATH HOUSE RUINS IN EMMAUS. This bathhouse ruins is the only evidence visible of the hot water that once came forth at this spring. This was a vibrant community and after the Muslims conquered Jerusalem in 638, they wanted to make Emmaus their capital because of the warm waters. However, as a result of a devastating plague in the year 669, thousands died and the community was abandoned. Photograph by the author.

224. Parenthesis by Whiston, ed.

225. Zondervan's *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (2005 ed.). 1716.

18.01.12 Lk. 24:28-32 Emmaus, Sunday morning

JESUS IS REVEALED

²⁸ They came near the village where they were going, and He gave the impression that He was going farther. ²⁹ But they urged Him: “Stay with us, because it’s almost evening, and now the day is almost over.” So He went in to stay with them.

³⁰ It was as He reclined at the table with them that He took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him, but He disappeared from their sight. ³² So they said to each other, “Weren’t our hearts ablaze within us while He was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?”

Once the disciples had seen Jesus open the eyes of the blind; now He opened the eyes of their understanding. They had spent several years traveling with Him, listening to His teaching, and observing His many miracles. The crucifixion had destroyed their hopes, their dreams, and was a monumental disappointment which left a heavy cloud of depression over them. Now, suddenly, they saw that He truly was alive! Their depression exploded into overwhelming joy and excitement. The unbelievable became reality. Jesus is alive!

“He gave the impression that He was going farther.” Jesus did not imply or pretend anything false, as this obviously does not reflect upon His proven character. Rather, Jesus was walking on, and would have continued if it had not been for their intervention.

18.01.13 Lk. 24:22a; Jn. 20:19a; Lk. 24:33b-35

CLEOPAS TELLS OF APPEARANCE OF JESUS

Lk. ^{33a} That very hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem.

Jn. ^{19a} In the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because of their fear of the Jews.

Lk. ^{33b} They found the Eleven and those with them gathered together, ³⁴ who said, “The Lord has certainly been raised, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵

Then they began to describe what had happened on the road and how He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

18.01.14 Mk. 16:14; Lk. 24:36-43; Jn. 20:20; Lk. 24:44 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:7) Sunday night

JESUS APPEARS TO DISCIPLES

Mk. ¹⁴ Later, He appeared to the Eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table. He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who saw Him after He had been resurrected.

Lk. ³⁶ And as they were saying these things, He Himself stood among them. He said to them, “Peace to you!” ³⁷ But they were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ “Why are you troubled?” He asked them. “And why do doubts arise in your hearts?” ³⁹ Look at My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself! Touch Me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” ⁴⁰ Having said this, He showed them His hands and feet. ⁴¹ But while they still were amazed and unbelieving because of their joy, He asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴² So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, ⁴³ and He took it and ate in their presence.

Jn. ²⁰ Having said this, He showed them His hands and His side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Lk. ⁴⁴ Then He told them, “These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you — that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

In Mark 16:14 Jesus scolded the disciples for three reasons.

1. They failed to go to Galilee as previously directed.
2. They failed to believe the witnesses and
3. They believed they were looking at a ghost, not at Jesus.

The reason Jesus ate with them was to demonstrate that He was not a ghost or spirit, but real flesh and blood. He also affirmed the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible (“Law of

Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms”).

Where they gathered is unknown. Some have said they returned to the Upper Room to reminisce about the holy hour they had at Passover. They were speaking of bygone times and conversations, when mysteriously Jesus stepped into the room! He entered without opening a door, yet stood before them in a body of living flesh. In a moment, in less than the twinkling of an eye, their deep sorrow had turned into overwhelming joy. To say that **“the disciples rejoiced”** is without question a phenomenal understatement. The vivid Hebrew imagery is lost in translation. Literally, they were ecstatic, jubilant and extremely overjoyed. They were overjoyed beyond the ability of English to capture the intense emotion. The early church father Jerome wrote commentary concerning this gathering in his book of Hebrews, which he called a gospel,

The gospel that is called “According to the Hebrews” and which I recently translated into Greek and Latin....

...When the lord had handed over the linen cloth to the priest’s servants, he went to James and appeared to him. For James had made an oath to eat no bread after he had drunk the cup of the Lord until he saw him risen from those who sleep.

Shortly thereafter the Lord spoke to him: bring a table here with bread.... He took the bread, spoke the blessing and gave it to James the just and said to him “My brother, eat your bread, for the Son of Man is risen from those who are asleep.”

Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 23

Most certainly, the gospels give us only a glimpse of the conversation that followed. Perhaps this moment was too precious and personal to be shared in writing. Regardless, Jesus then proceeded to send them to go out and tell others of the good news of the Kingdom of God.

18.01.14.Q1 Does Luke 24:41 oppose John 20:19?

In Luke’s narrative the disciples *would not* believe whereas in John’s narrative they *could not* believe for the joy they had. Luke 24:36 and John 20:19 both agreed that the disciples were talking when Jesus suddenly stood among them. Furthermore, in Luke 24:37-39 and John 20:19-21 Jesus revealed Himself to his disciples. Luke 24:41 is not

unbelief of faith or doctrine, but the disciples were awestruck at what had happened and they had difficulty perceiving the reality of the moment: the resurrection of Jesus. The gospel writer used the same terminology as would be common today, if an event would seem unbelievable. The two passages agree.

18.01.15 Jn. 20:21-23

APOSTLES RECEIVE AUTHORITY

²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” ²² After saying this, He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

²³ If you forgive the sins of any,

they are forgiven them;

If you retain the sins of any,

they are retained.”

“Receive the Holy Spirit.” Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon His disciples, just as He had breathed life into the first Adam in the Garden of Eden. This was the promised Holy Spirit, which would come in a more dynamic manner on the Day of Pentecost. Some scholars have suggested that this Johanine Pentecost was just a “deposit” of a greater outpouring of the Spirit that was to come fifty days later.

To understand the breathing of Jesus in John 20, it is important to refer to the breathing in John 1 where the gospel writer referred to the creation narrative (Gen 2:7). There was a new birth of man on the day of Creation and now there was a new birth for all men (in the New Testament sense of the word) the day Jesus arose from the grave. No longer would they be limited to the old way of understanding the work of the Holy Spirit. It was believed the Spirit had two primary functions.²²⁶

1. To reveal divine truth to men, and
2. To enable men to recognize and accept that truth.

²²⁶. Barclay, “Mark.” 79-81.

Now their understanding increased dramatically, and would be enhanced even more on the Day of Pentecost.

There is no access to God in either the Old or New Testament except in a covenant relationship. The covenant is the relationship in which God welcomes those created in His image. The Old Covenant ceased to be in effect when the thousands of lambs of sacrifice were replaced with the Lamb of God and His shedding of His blood. In essence, the Old Covenant ceased to be in effect when the earthly ministry of Jesus was complete and He spoke those final and famous words on the cross “It is finished.”

Just as John indicated that life was conferred in the first creation, likewise it was conferred in the “re-creation” in Christ Jesus. Just as Jesus breathed into a clay body in Genesis, He willingly gave up His own breath as He died of asphyxiation upon the cross.²²⁷ When He willingly gave up His last breath, He willingly closed out the Old Covenant and ushered in the New.

Believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit, not with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the medium, not the agent. Was the day of Pentecost the day the disciples were “born again?” The disciples who had witnessed the profound miracles of Jesus, heard His teachings, and lived with Him anywhere from three and one-half years to possibly five or six, still did not believe He was the Messiah until after the resurrection, and especially when they gathered in the Upper Room.

Wind, the symbol of God’s presence

Wind is often symbolic of Divine presence. Words such as “breath,” and “wind” found in John 20:22; Acts 2:2; 2 Samuel 5:24 and Josephus²²⁸ attest to this interpretation. In Genesis 2:7 God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath (or wind) of life. In Job 33:4 God gave His faithful servant the breath of life and in Ezekiel (37:5, 10, 14) God breathed life into old bones. Now Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon His closest disciples. Yet it is interesting that after this “Pentecost” experience, they did not show any of the profound signs, such as speaking in tongues, as occurred on the evening of Pentecost.

18.01.16 Jn. 20:24-29

THE DOUBTING THOMAS

227. Mellowes and Cran, Producers. *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians*. (DVD). Part 1.

228. Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.5.2

²⁴ But one of the Twelve, Thomas (called “Twin”), was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples kept telling him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “If I don’t see the mark of the nails in His hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe!”

²⁶ After eight days His disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “Peace to you!”

²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and observe My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Don’t be an unbeliever, but a believer.”

²⁸ Thomas responded to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹ Jesus said,

“Because you have seen Me,

you have believed.

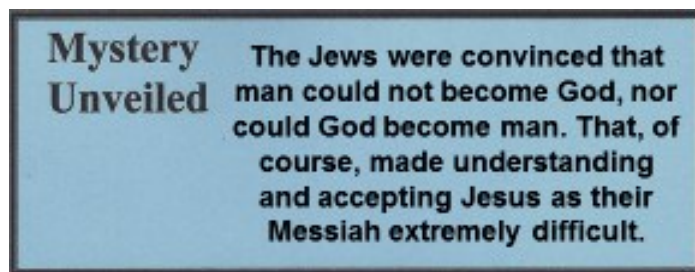
Those who believe without seeing

are blessed.”

“**The doors were locked.**” The question that is often missed is, “Why was the door locked?” From the time the Romans arrived in 63 B.C. until the so-called “First Revolt” in which the temple was destroyed there were thirteen revolts and many riots. Whenever a messianic pretender was captured by the Romans, he and his men were all crucified. While the disciples knew they did not belong to any revolutionary group, they also knew that since Jesus was just martyred, they could be next. Little wonder then, that in this entire discourse, Jesus mentioned three times “**peace to you.**”

“**My Lord and my God!**” This was a most profound statement for any Jew to make, since Jews had always been taught that God could not be a man, nor could a man be a god. To Jews this did, and continues, to violate the first two commandments concerning idols and gods (Ex. 20:3-4). However, Thomas realized Deity had truly come to earth. This phrase has been memorialized by the “doubting Thomas,” but in fact, all the

disciples were having serious second thoughts at this time. Throughout the centuries, he has been criticized for his lack of faith. However, since he did lack faith but was bold enough to request evidence, we benefit from that discourse. While he is seldom complimented for his expressed honesty, he may not have been the skeptic or doubter that has been his label, but rather, one with an inquisitive mind, an analytical thinker, one who today might be considered a careful critic who became a dynamic apostle.²²⁹



Jesus appeared to many people, other than those recorded in the gospels. The Apostle Paul reveals that Jesus met with more than five hundred people, and again with the twelve disciples.

^{5b} He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. ⁶ Then He appeared to over 500 brothers at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one abnormally born, He also appeared to me.

1 Corinthians 15:5b-8

18.01.17 Jn. 21:1-14 Later at the Sea of Galilee

JESUS APPEARS TO DISCIPLES

¹ After this, Jesus revealed Himself again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed Himself in this way:

² Simon Peter, Thomas (called “Twin”), Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, Zebedee’s sons, and two others of His disciples were together.

³ “I’m going fishing,” Simon Peter said to them.

“We’re coming with you,” they told him. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

229. A brief description of the lives of the apostles is found in Appendix 27.

⁴ When daybreak came, Jesus stood on the shore. However, the disciples did not know it was Jesus.

⁵ “Men,” Jesus called to them, “you don’t have any fish, do you?”

“No,” they answered.

⁶ “Cast the net on the right side of the boat,” He told them, “and you’ll find some.” So they did, and they were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish.

⁷ Therefore the disciple, the one Jesus loved, said to Peter, “It is the Lord!”

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tied his outer garment around him (for he was stripped) and plunged into the sea. ⁸ But since they were not far from land (about 100 yards away), the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish. ⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread.

¹⁰ “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus told them. ¹¹ So Simon Peter got up and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish—153 of them. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.

¹² “Come and have breakfast,” Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?” because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish.

¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after He was raised from the dead.

It appears that at this point there are only seven disciples in the boat. The location of the others is unknown although they could have been nearby. They had no idea what their future would hold; no idea that Jesus had dynamic plans for every one of them. So they naturally returned to their former professions. Here they were fishing just as they were doing when Jesus first met them.

“On the right side of the boat.” The fact that Jesus told Simon Peter to cast his net on the right side of the boat is significant. By stating the right side, Jesus implied that those fish would be good because the “right side,” in Scripture frequently refers to that which is good whereas the left side acquires those things that will be cast away. For example, In Matthew 25:33-34 Jesus said that His sheep will be on His right side while the goats will

be on His left. The sheep will inherit eternal life with Him while those on His left side will be cast into outer darkness.

“He tied his outer garment around him.” The *outer garment* is literally *the fisher’s coat*.²³⁰ This term is found nowhere else in the New Testament. The original Greek text also reads that Peter was naked. Modern readers would interpret this phrase to mean that Peter was fishing completely nude, which was not the case. He only threw off his outer garment.²³¹ The Jewish culture was a very modest one and constantly opposed to the immodesty of the Greeks, yet fishing with daily clothing was quite cumbersome. In fact, the term “nude” was also used to denote the lack of socially acceptable dress. Even though fishing was done at night, modesty was still a high social value.²³² An explanation of the word “nude” is found in this rabbinic writing concerning the capital punishment of stoning:

When he (the condemned man)²³³ was four cubits from the place of stoning, they stripped off his clothes. A man is kept covered in the front and a woman both in front and behind....The sages say: “A man is stoned naked but a woman is not stoned naked.”

Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 6.3-4

In essence, when the Jews exercised capital punishment, they stripped a person of his or her outer garments leaving only essential undergarments on. As such, the condemned was said to be “naked.” This practice was significantly different from a Roman crucifixion that deprived the condemned criminal of any modesty to add shame to punishment. Hence, when Jesus was on the cross, He was not given a “modesty cloth,” but was completely nude, which was the shame He bore for the sins of humanity.

“They saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it.” When the disciples came to the shore, Jesus had an ordinary breakfast waiting for them. But was it really ordinary? Where did the hot coals, the fish and the bread come from? Was this another miracle? Mysteries, such as these, remain hidden with the Savior. Furthermore, these were not

230. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:297.

231. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:297.

232. Gilbrant, “John.” 549.

233. Parenthesis mine.

ordinary fish, but freshwater sardenes – among the smallest fish in the Sea of Galilee.²³⁴ And why charcoal? The only other place charcoal is mentioned in the New Testament is when Peter warmed himself by a charcoal fire during the trials at which time he denied knowing Jesus (Jn. 18:18). This time the odor of the charcoal fire most certainly reminded him of his shameful experience. There can be no question that when Peter saw the charcoal fire on the shore, he immediately thought of the charcoal fire by the palace of Caiaphas. He must have pondered who was there.

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

“Simon Peter got up and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish — 153 of them.” In the preceding paragraph a number of fishermen attempted to haul in a net full of fish but failed in the task. It was only after Simon Peter became involved that he, as a leader, accomplished what had been an impossible task. He did not do this single-handedly, for he certainly was not a first-century Samson. Here he is shown to be a leader of fishermen, who did the impossible, and later he would be a fisher of men in the Roman Empire, who would do the impossible.

The number “153” has been the subject of numerous discussions. Since the meaning of numbers has played a significant role in the gospels, it is only natural that church fathers have attempted to discover the meaning of the 153 fish. All attempts at discovery involved mathematics, which was not needed in other Hebraic interpretations. Several examples are as follows:

1. It was suggested by some early church leaders that 153 represents the number of nations who would receive the gospel. However, the Greek word for nations is *ethnos*, from which the English word *ethnic* is derived. Since there are more than 6,000 ethnic people groups today, this interpretation is hardly accurate. Furthermore, since this was written to a Jewish audience, they believed there were 70 nations or ethnic groups.²³⁵ If the fish represented nations, the number caught should have been 70, not 153.²³⁶

234. Fresh water sardines are found only in the Sea of Galilee. See video by Gordon Franz concerning the fish identification.

235. The myth of 70 nations may have originated from the account of the 70 souls who went into Egypt with Jacob, that they might restore the 70 families dispersed by the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel. It was believed that the number of souls was equal to the number of families of the whole world. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:59.

236. In Jewish literature, 70 nations are equal to 70 languages, as in the Babylonian Talmud, *Sabbath* 88b, where there is a comment that God divided humanity into 70 languages. A similar statement is found in the Midrash *Tebelim* 92:3 by another rabbi. Other Jewish references are found in the Jerusalem Talmud, *Shekalim* 5:1; 48d and the Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 17a and *Menahoth* 65a. For further study, see Weinfeld. “Pentecost as Festival of the Giving of the Law.” 8-18.

2. Origen thought the number might represent the Trinity (for example: $3 \times 50 + 3 = 153$).
3. Another church father said it was the number of the disciples squared (144) plus the trinity squared (9).
4. Jerome, however, was not about to be caught in such foolishness; he said the number represented the various kinds of fish in the sea. Maybe he would have been better at mathematics.²³⁷
5. The number of people who were healed or touched in some way in the gospels is 153. However, this opinion seems highly improbable since the gospels clearly imply that those to whom Jesus ministered were in the thousands.

The true meaning of the number 153 is hidden in the Hebraic and numeral system. As has been stated previously, letters were assigned numerical values in a manner similar to Roman numerals (i.e. V=5, X=10, etc.). All mathematical calculations, census registrations, and business accounting was done with letters by the Greeks, Romans, Jews, and numerous other cultures. The Hebrew term for this alpha-numeric system is “gemetria.”²³⁸ The number 153 could only have been written with Hebrew letters which form the phrase *b’nai haElohim*, meaning “sons of God.”²³⁹ Below is the phrase written in English, below that it is written twice in Hebrew, below that are the corresponding numeric values, followed by the names of the letters.²⁴⁰

“Sons of God”

b’nai haElohim

בני האלהים

40 + 10 + 5 + 30 + 1 + 5 + (space) 10 + 50 + 2 = 153

Mem + yodh + heh + lah-med + ah-leph + heh + (space) yod + nun + beth = 153

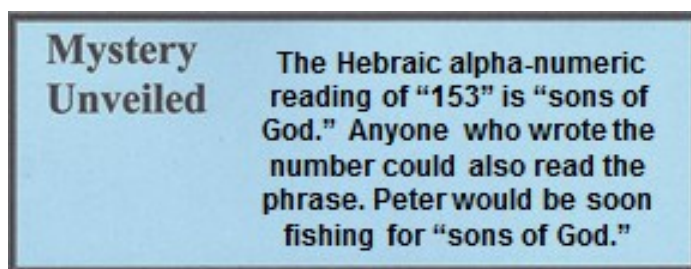
18.01.17.A ILLUSTRATION OF THE INTERPRETATION OF NUMBER 153

237. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 944.

238. See Appendix 14 for more information.

239. Jeffrey. *Unveiling Mysteries of the Bible*. 207-16.

240. This writer is grateful for the messianic friends who assisted in solving various biblical riddles such as this one. One of the suggestions presented was that the number 153 is based upon the phrase “For I am the LORD your God” found in Isaiah 43:3a. However, when numeric values were applied to the Hebrew letters, the total was only 148. This obviously discounted the interpretation. To make the interpretation more challenging, since any letter combination can total to 153, it is impossible to work backwards to arrive at the correct phrase.



Equally important is that previously Jesus told Peter in Luke 5:10b, "From now on you will be catching people." Since the time Jesus made that statement, Peter denied Him three times and three times Jesus reinstated Peter. The miraculous catching of 153 fish was a confirmation of the calling in Luke 5:10b. Not only would be Peter catching "good fish," but those fish/people, would become "sons of God." This is a powerful message of encouragement for those whom God has called, who for some reason, strayed from their faith, but was restored. Jesus said that His calling remains.

It is nearly impossible to find this interpretation in any Gentile-Christian commentary. This demonstrates that some of today's biblical interpretations are clearly based on Christian tradition and assumptions and not on a study of Jewish roots and culture. This alpha-numeric style was also used by the Apostle John in Revelation 13:17-18, where he revealed the "number" that identified the coming beast, a/k/a the Antichrist. That number in the Greek alphabet is 666. However, various letter combinations can be used to compose the number.

Finally and most important, this passage reveals the incredible love and willingness God has for His children who made wrong decisions or committed a sin that resulted in horrific consequences. This narrative was, no doubt, placed in the Bible for people like this author, and others, who have questioned if God could really forgive and restore them. On the other hand, *not* to accept God's forgiveness is to declare that God's forgiveness is not sufficient, and therefore, the individual places himself above God.

18.01.18 Jn. 21:15-19

PETER REINSTATED AND HIS DEATH FORETOLD

¹⁵ When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said to Him, "You know that I love You."

“Feed My lambs,” He told him.

¹⁶ A second time He asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said to Him, “You know that I love You.”

“Shepherd My sheep,” He told him.

¹⁷ He asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”

Peter was grieved that He asked him the third time, “Do you love Me?” He said, “Lord, You know everything! You know that I love You.”

“Feed My sheep,” Jesus said. ¹⁸ “I assure you: When you were young, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don’t want to go.” ¹⁹ He said this to signify by what kind of death he would glorify God. After saying this, He told him, “Follow Me!”

In a private meeting with Peter, Jesus reassured him of his forgiveness. The three-fold denial was cancelled by the three-fold affirmation. At the end of his ministry, Peter’s martyrdom demonstrated his agape love for Jesus.

“Feed my lambs.” Three times Jesus gave Peter instruction to be a shepherd. At first when Jesus specifically told Peter to feed “my lambs,” He used a word in verse 15 to mean *little lambs*.²⁴¹ This was because when Peter denied Jesus three times, the first was to a young girl. Peter was to feed the young believers. When Jesus asked Peter a second time, Jesus used the word in verse 16 to mean *young sheep*.²⁴² Jesus always had a special place in His heart for children and youth. The third time Jesus referred to adult sheep. Peter now confirmed his love for Jesus three times.

For more than three years that Peter traveled with Jesus, he was always one who seemed to speak first and think last. He was eager to help and not always in tune with what God had planned for him to do. Yet, after experiencing the Passion Week and Pentecost, his life was radically changed. By the time John wrote this gospel, Peter had already died the martyr’s death. The third century father Tertullian said Peter died in Rome. Origen recorded that Peter did not consider himself worthy to be crucified in the same manner as

241. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:300.

242. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:300.

was Jesus. Therefore, at his request, he was crucified upside down to have the kind of death that would glorify God (Jn 21:19). This passage implies the gospel writer was aware of his death.

18.01.19 Jn. 21:20-24

JOHN'S DEATH QUESTIONED

²⁰ So Peter turned around and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them. That disciple was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and asked, “Lord, who is the one that’s going to betray You?” ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord — what about him?”

²² “If I want him to remain until I come,” Jesus answered, “what is that to you? As for you, follow Me.”

²³ So this report spread to the brothers that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not tell him that he would not die, but, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?”

²⁴ This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

“**Until I come.**” One of the greatest promises of Jesus is that He will return for His Church (Acts 3:20ff; 10:42; 27:31). Even though the specific date of His return is unknown, many speculators have made foolish predictions.

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, presented the second conclusion to his gospel. He stated that he was the witness of these events that he described, and attests to the truthfulness of them. He then said there were so many more miracles that Jesus performed, that there are not enough books to record them all. These comments were made to underscore his basic theme: “that you might believe and have eternal life.”

“**The disciple Jesus loved.**” John used the phrase, “the disciple He loved” four times when referring to Himself as the disciple of Jesus.²⁴³ It was an indirect way of identifying himself. In the Middle Eastern culture one does not directly speak of himself. Bragging is clearly out of order.

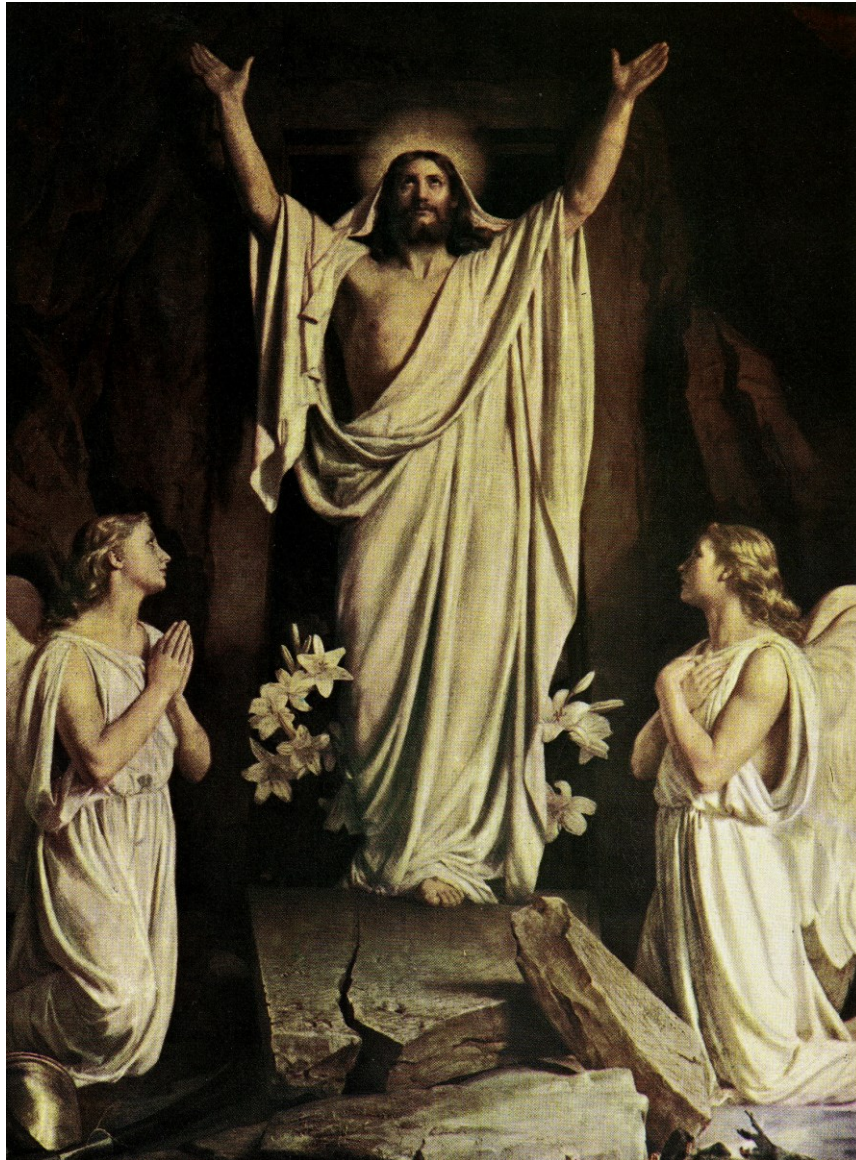
243. Jn. 13:23-25; 19:25-27; 20:2; and 21:20.

Unit 18

Resurrection And Appearances

Chapter 02

Final Instructions And Ascension



18.02.00.A. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS. Artist Unknown. The greatest event of all human history occurred when Jesus walked out of the tomb.

18.02.01 Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:16-18**JESUS COMMISSIONS APOSTLES**

Mt. ¹⁶ The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted.

¹⁸ Then Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Mk. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes; if they should drink anything deadly, it will never harm them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will get well.”

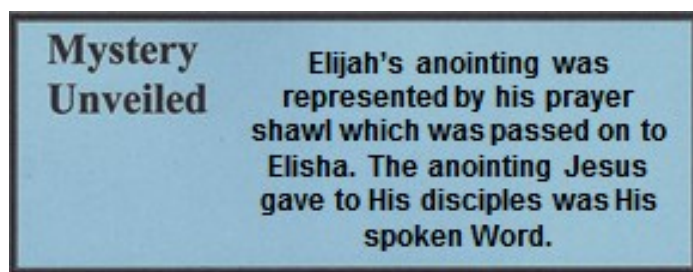
At this point Jesus announced His Great Commission to the disciples. They were told to spread the good news of the Kingdom of God and make disciples throughout the world.²⁴⁴ While the church is called to baptize and make disciples, the true goal is to make disciples who will also become apostles. Throughout the Hebrew Bible there are numerous references (i.e. Ps. 117:1) to all the nations praising God. This Commission again proves the New Testament is a fulfillment or continuation of the Old Testament.

In a momentous event centuries earlier, when Elijah was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind (much to the disappointment of his disciple, Elisha; see 2 Kg. 2:11-12), his mantle, a/k/a prayer shawl,²⁴⁵ fell to the ground. Elisha picked it up, walked to the Jordan River, and used it to strike the water and thereby imitated the miracle of Moses parting the Red Sea. Immediately the Jordan River waters parted to the right and left and he crossed over into the land promised to Abraham (2 Kg. 2:13-14). The prayer shawl was symbolic of God’s anointing upon Elijah which was now passed on to his disciple. Only

244. See Appendix 27 concerning the lives of the apostles.

245. W. E. Vine is typical of many scholars who have made minimal reference to the Jewish characteristics of Scripture. For example, every Jew knows that the “mantle” was a prayer shawl, but it is not mentioned (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:105-06). Another example is the Hebrew term “Torah” which is translated as “law.” Yet every Jew knows that it also means “instruction,” a definition that is missing from *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:354-56.

when he received God's anointing did he preach the Word of God and perform miracles.



As Elijah passed his anointing to Elisha, so now it was time for Jesus to pass His anointing to His disciples. However, rather than giving each of them a prayer shawl, He told them that divine authority would be upon them to perform signs and wonders and they were to preach and make disciples throughout the whole world.

“They worshiped [Him]” The Greek *proskyneō* means to worship, to *fall on knees in front of* or to prostrate one's self. After being with Jesus for more than three years, this was the first time the disciples worshiped Him in this manner, and even then some had their doubts.

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Amazingly, the word “baptizing” is singular and in the three-part name. This was probably to distinguish it from other baptisms that were commonly used in Judaism. The early Church did precisely as Jesus commanded. Three well-known baptismal interrogations have been preserved by the church fathers: Justin Martyr (100-165), Irenaeus (130-200), and Hippolytus of Rome (c. 215). The latter recorded the baptismal procedure as being a three-fold immersion with a three-fold confession of faith. The questions and answers between the new convert and the Church elder were as follows:

Pastor: Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?

Convert: I believe.

Pastor: Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, Who was crucified in the days of Pontius Pilate, and died, and rose the third day from the dead and ascended into the heavens, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?

Convert: I believe.

Pastor: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Church, and the resurrection of the flesh?

Convert: I believe.

- A Common Baptismal Interrogation²⁴⁶

Jesus specifically made reference to the Trinity, which is also found in other passages.²⁴⁷ For the Jews, who for centuries believed in only a singular concept of God, the idea of a Trinity was most challenging. While it took centuries for the church to develop a doctrine of the Trinity, the Jerusalem church quickly developed this concept into the following hymn, which was sung in many synagogue-churches (the first “churches” were converted synagogues).

**Glory to the Father
Glory to the Son
And to you blessed Spirit
While all ages run.**

Early Church Hymn²⁴⁸

Concerning the Great Commission, the church has often criticized the Jews for failing to proclaim the Word of God to the nations, but after nearly two thousand years, not a single nation has been discipled in the ways of our Lord. Unfortunately, the church has failed as miserably as did the Jewish leadership.

“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Heaven is a real place that God has prepared for all those who accept His Son and lives according to His word. Likewise, there is a real hell for those who refuse the offer. The devil and his angels, the beast, the false prophet, and all those persons whose names are not written in heaven’s Book of Life will be confined to everlasting punishment in the lake of fire and brimstone. This is the second death. Based upon various Scriptures, the Church has maintained this doctrine that after physical death

246. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 61.

247. 1 Cor. 6:11; 12:4 ff.; 2 Cor. 1:21ff; 13:14; Gal. 3:11-14; 4:4ff; 1 Peter 1:2; Heb. 10:29.

248. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 65.

the soul continues to live in one of these two places.²⁴⁹ It is the choice of each individual to determine where he/she will spend eternity. The entire purpose of Jesus Christ's coming to earth was to teach the Kingdom of God, offer salvation to all people and bring those who accepted the offer into heaven. The Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) is therefore the fulfillment of the promise in Genesis 12:1-3, where God promised to bless all the people through Jesus.

Now, the disciples would no longer be disciples, but apostles. As disciples they were under the tutelage of Jesus, but as apostles,

1. They were rabbis who established their own network of disciples, and
2. They were sent out to tell others of the good news of Jesus and His Kingdom of God.

The word *apostles* was used by Herodotus to mean a *personal envoy*,²⁵⁰ which is precisely what the apostles of Jesus Christ were, His personal envoys to spread the gospel.²⁵¹

18.02.02 Lk. 24:45-49; Acts 1:3-4a

PARTING INSTRUCTIONS

Lk. ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He also said to them, "This is what is written: The Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And look, I am sending you what My Father promised. As for you, stay in the city until you are empowered from on high."

Acts. ³ After He had suffered, He also presented Himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ^{4a} While He was together with them, He

249. For other references that pertain to heaven and hell, see Rev. 19:20, 20:10-15, 21:1-3; Mk. 16:16; Jn. 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 2:9.

250. Polybius, *The Histories of Polybius* 1.21; 5.38

251. Shepherd, "Apostle." 1:171.

commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise.

“Wait for the Father’s promise.” It is interesting that Jesus did not tell them when the “promise” would arrive. So they went to Jerusalem, and after ten days of prayer, the promised gift of the Holy Spirit came upon them during the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost). The eight day Festival of Passover²⁵² was at the beginning of the harvest season when barley was harvested. The Feast of Weeks ended the harvest season with the gathering of the wheat. At the Feast of Weeks the First-Fruits were offered to our Lord and it was at that time when the Holy Spirit came upon 120 disciples who were in the Upper Room, in an event that to be known as Pentecost. The Festival of Weeks commemorated the time when the Mosaic Law was written on tablets of stone. The Mosaic Law was, by divine purpose, an incomplete and partial revelation of God. It was the plan of God that in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4) His divine purpose would become fully understood. That was through the words and work of Jesus. Then, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to write the perfect law of liberty and life in the hearts of men.



18.02.02.A. MEDALLION COMMEMORATES THE DAY OF PENTECOST. The only medallion known to honor the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Papal Bull of Our Lady of Zion). The medallion was

252. The term refers to the Festivals of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruit. See also “Levitical Feasts as Prophetic Reflections of Jesus” in Appendix 5.

minted by a small mediaeval monastic order in the 12th century. Photo: J. Boudet.



18.02.02.B. THE DAY OF PENTECOST AS DEPICTED IN THE RABULA CODEX OF 586. One of the earliest surviving representations of the Day of Pentecost is from the Rabula Codex of 586. The Virgin Mary is in the center with the apostles around her. A dove above her, representing the Holy Spirit, descends and “cloven tongues like as of fire” are above everyone.

18.02.03 Acts 1:6-11

JESUS ASCENDS

Acts. ⁶ So when they had come together, they asked Him, “Lord, are You restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?”

⁷ He said to them, **“It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority.”** ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After He had said this, He was taken up as they were watching, and **a cloud took Him out of their sight.** ¹⁰ While He was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. ¹¹ They said, **“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen Him going into heaven.”**

Jesus and His disciples went to a high point on the Mount of Olives, where they had a brief discussion. His most important thoughts pertained to their future ministry, the coming Holy Spirit in a dynamic form, their faithfulness during persecutions, etc. He then lifted His hands and blessed them. They had seen this blessing many times before in the temple, when the high priest would come out, stretch forth his hands, and bless the people. Soon Jesus, the Ultimate High Priest, would do likewise and then ascend to His Father in heaven.

“Lord, are You restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?” This may be one of the most stunning questions in the Bible. After all they had experienced, they still “didn’t quite get it” – they still misunderstood the purpose of His coming and sacrifice. They still believed Jesus would destroy the Roman Empire and establish a kingdom of international power and significance. That was obviously not the goal of Jesus at this time, but it will occur when He returns for a thousand-year reign.

Within three decades of the crucifixion, the gospel of Jesus and His Kingdom of God was preached in every major city in the Roman Empire. By the time the temple was destroyed, the message of salvation had gone to all nations within the empire. Persecution could not quench the movement but rather, it only fanned the flames of Christianity. No Roman or demon could stop it.

“It is not for you to know times or periods.” Acts 1:6-7 and Luke 17:22ff both agree that anticipation of the future is not to be the focus of life. Rather, believers are to do the will of God. In His divine wisdom and knowledge, Jesus predicted certain events that will occur, but these were stated to underscore the fact that He is very much aware of mankind’s plight and He is in control of all events. (Maybe it would be more correctly said that Jesus permits certain events to occur, because to say that He is in control suggests that He deliberately orchestrates harmful events.) Equally important is that Jesus

did not deny the restoration of kingdom to Israel; that prophecy is waiting to be fulfilled.

“A cloud took Him out of their sight.” This was most certainly not an ordinary rain cloud, but the Shekinah glory of God.²⁵³ The word *Shekinah* or *Shechinah* means *that which dwells*.²⁵⁴ It was the same cloud of divine glory that led the Israelites as they wandered through the desert, appearing as a cloud during the day and as a pillar of fire at night. It was the same cloud that appeared to the shepherds, and later at the Transfiguration. It was God the Father to whom Jesus ascended. It also confirmed that the Father was greatly pleased with the work and ministry of Jesus, hiding Him in His love.

At this point the ministry of Jesus changes radically. All too often it is assumed that the ministry of Jesus was completed, but not so. Since the day of Ascension, the life of Jesus is one of continued ministry for His saints. He stands before the throne of God, interceding for His believers who have been accused of various sins by the evil one. Because He functions in this role, as well as through His words and work on earth, believers have a direct link with God the Father, which is available only through Jesus (2 Tim. 2:5-6). For nearly two thousand years this has been in His ministry. He also has been preparing a place for His saints to live with Him in heaven. He is also waiting for His Father to tell Him to return to earth, where He will meet His saints in the air. From there He will take the saints to a great messianic banquet. This will be followed by His return and His thousand year reign on the earth in which believers will participate with him. At the end of this reign, the devil, his angels, and all those who rejected the call of Christ will be thrown into eternal hell (literally, the *hell of fire*)²⁵⁵ forever. Those who believed in Jesus and have kept their faith in Him, will live forever in heavenly glory with the One who is the Creator. The essence of the Gospel is Jesus; His birth, life, and death and victory over death, His ministry, His teaching, His miracles, Jesus is the divine act, the fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose, the incarnation of the Kingdom of God. This is the greatest love story ever told.

Closing thoughts by the second century Church father, Justin Martyr:

What sober-minded man, then, will not acknowledge that we are not atheists, worshipping as we do the Maker of this universe, and declaring, as we have been taught, that He has no need of streams of blood and libations and

253. The Shekinah Glory appeared four times in the life of Jesus: 1) to the shepherds (Lk. 2:8-9), 2) at His baptism (Mt. 3:16), 3) at the transfiguration (Mt. 17:5) and, 4) at His ascension (Acts 1:9).

254. Barclay, “John.” 1:69.

255. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:40.

incense; whom we praise to the utmost of our power by the exercise of prayer and thanksgiving for all things wherewith we are supplied, as we have been taught that the only honor that is worthy of Him is not to consume by fire what He has brought into being for our sustenance, but to use it for ourselves and those who need, and with gratitude to Him to offer thanks by invocations and hymns for our creation and for all the means of health, and for the various qualities of the different kinds of things, and for the changes of the seasons; and to present before Him petitions of our existing again in incorruption through faith in Him. Our teacher of these things is Jesus Christ, who also was born for this purpose, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the times of Tiberius Caesar; and that we may reasonably worship Him, having learned that He is the Son of the true God Himself, and holding Him in the second place, and the prophetic Spirit in the third, we will prove. For they proclaim our madness to consist in this, that we give to a crucified man a place second to the unchangeable and eternal God, the Creator of all; for they do not discern the mystery that is herein, to which, as we make it plain to you, we pray you to give heed.

Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 13²⁵⁶

“This Jesus ... will come in the same way that you have seen Him going into heaven. “Jesus lived His life as an orthodox Jew, something modern Christians can hardly imagine. He ministered as a Jewish rabbi, was crucified, arose, and continued to minister as a Jewish rabbi for forty days until His ascension. When He returns, He will do so in dynamic power and glory, and as a Jewish rabbi.

This promise of His return led the first century Church to pray a short prayer in the Aramaic: *Maranatha* meaning *Our Lord come*. It was included in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (16:22) and a similar prayer was used by John when he closed his book with “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).²⁵⁷

There are two documents from the early Church fathers that reflect upon the place from which Jesus ascended. Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea in the year 312 said this.

256. Elwell and Yarbrough, *Readings from the First-Century World*. 126. The title of Pontius Pilate was always thought to be procurator because some early church fathers referred to him with that title.. However, an inscription was discovered in Caesarea that has his title as “Prefectus Judaea.” See 16.01.06.B.

257. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 32.

The feet of the Lord stood on the Mount of Olives at the cave shown there. There he prayed and revealed to his disciples the secrets of the end of the world and ascended there to heaven from the top of the Mount of Olives.

Eusebius, *Demonstrations of the Gospel* 6:18

A few years later, Emperor Constantine gave instructions for the Eleona Church, also known as the Church of the Disciples, to be constructed over a cave on the Mount of Olives where Jesus and the disciples met. It was one of three basilicas, the other two being the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of the Nativity. Construction began in 326 and was finished in 333. Concerning the Eleona Church, the bishop and historian wrote,

The emperor's mother ordered a holy church to be built on the top of the entire hill, and there a prayer house in honor of the Redeemer, who stayed there and where, as it is handed down by a credible report, he, in that same grotto, let his disciples into the unfathomable secrets.

Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3:43

The Pilgrim of Bordeaux (A.D. 333) and Dame Egeria (384) both celebrated liturgy there.²⁵⁸ It has been destroyed and rebuilt several times, and today it is known as the Convent of Carmelite Nuns. However, another site claims to hold the rock from which Jesus ascended. It is but a small prayer house that was converted into a mosque (see below).²⁵⁹

258. Pixner, *With Jesus in Jerusalem*. 60, 69.

259. Avi-Yonah and Kraeling, *Our Living Bible*. 303.



18.02.03.A. THE MOSQUE OF THE ASCENSION. The traditional place from which Jesus ascended was once a church, but is now a mosque. The small building was constructed in 187 by Pomenia and reconstructed by Constantine in the year 326. It was transformed into a mosque in 1187 by Salah Ed Din because Muslims consider Jesus to be one of their prophets. Foot impressions on the stone inside are said to be the footprints of Christ.²⁶⁰ Photograph by the author.

18.02.04 Acts 1:12-14 Jerusalem

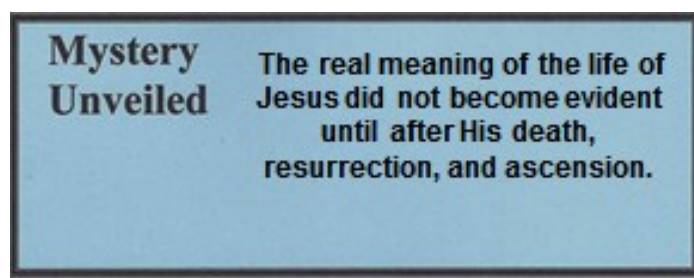
DISCIPLES RETURN JOYFULLY

Acts. ¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem — a Sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³ When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying:

260. Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 30; Tsafrir, Yoram. “Ancient Churches in the Holy Land.” 19:5, 39.

Peter, John,
James, Andrew,
Philip, Thomas,
Bartholomew, Matthew,
James the son of Alphaeus,
Simon the Zealot,
and Judas the son of James.

¹⁴ All these were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.



18.02.05 Acts 1:15-26

MATTHIAS CHOSEN AS JUDAS' REPLACEMENT

¹⁵ During these days Peter stood up among the brothers—the number of people who were together was about 120 — and said: ¹⁶ “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David spoke in advance about Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ For he was one of our number and was allotted a share in this ministry.” ¹⁸ Now this man acquired a field with his unrighteous wages. He fell headfirst and burst open in the middle, and all his insides spilled out. ¹⁹ This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that in their own the Law that field is called *Hakeldama* (that is, Field of Blood). ²⁰ “For it is written in the Book of Psalms:

Let his dwelling become desolate;
let no one live in it (Ps. 69:25);
and
Let someone else take his position (Ps.109:8).

²¹ “Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us — ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day He was taken up from us — from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

²³ So they proposed two: Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, “You, Lord, know the hearts of all; show which of these two You have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this apostolic service that Judas left to go to his own place.” ²⁶ Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias. So he was numbered with the 11 apostles.

According to Church tradition, Matthias was selected because he was one who had followed the entire ministry of Jesus and, therefore, was familiar with all His teachings. He was also one of the original 72 missionaries sent out by Jesus.

18.02.06 Mk. 16:20; Jn. 20:30-31; 21:24-25

THE DISCIPLES PREACHED AND PERFORMED MIRACLES

Mk. ²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the accompanying signs.

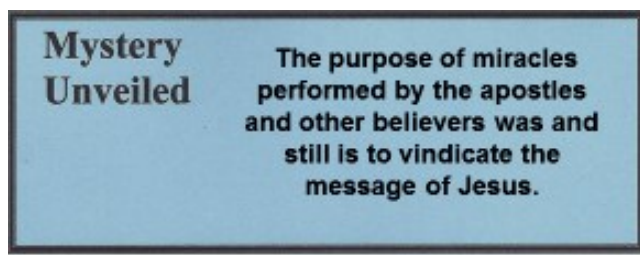
Jn. ³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name.

²⁴ This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which, if they were written one by one, I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written.

“His testimony is true.” When the New Testament writers used terms such as “testimony” or “bore witness” or “I have seen and testify,” these are statements of legal terminology. These were common in Roman, Greek, and Jewish cultures whereby the author placed himself under oath concerning the truthfulness of the statement made.²⁶¹

261. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 5.

The purpose of the miracles that Jesus performed was to vindicate His message and ministry (Jn. 3:2; Acts 2:22).



“I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written.”

The ministry of Jesus was so profound, that it was impossible to record all of the events. Scholars have estimated that all the events written in the gospels comprise less than 100 days of His life. Therefore, it is not surprising that references to Jesus, or what He said and did, may not be found elsewhere in the New Testament. For example, a summation of a teaching of Jesus in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 begins with “According to the Lord’s own word....” Yet no reference to this quotation is found anywhere in Scripture. In another example, a rare quotation of Jesus is found in Acts 20:35 and 1 Clement 46:7 where He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Yet within a few decades after Jesus, a number of teachers attempted to change the true gospel. Jesus and the apostles had warned that false teachers would come and deceive many (Mt. 24:4; Acts 20:29). Likewise, modern students of the word should not be deceived by so-called ancient writings. One of the challenges of this study has been to continually discern truth from elaborations and embellishments by various individuals throughout history.

The gospel writers wrote primarily of historic events, while the Apostle Paul wrote of historic events along with their implications and the many infallible proofs of the resurrected Christ Jesus. Note the following from one of his letters:

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, “There is no resurrection of the dead”? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is without foundation, and so is your faith. ¹⁵ In addition, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified about God that He raised up Christ —whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Therefore, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. ¹⁹ If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we

should be pitied more than anyone.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

A final Judgment Day is coming for every person; no one can escape it. Those who accepted Christ will enter heaven's eternal gates and those who denied Him will have eternal death.

The message of Jesus Christ spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire to both the Gentiles and Jews. While the Oral Tradition was an accurate transmission within Judaism, it was not so for Gentiles who did not have an oral cultural tradition. The gospels were written and within two or three decades the message of Jesus was spread accurately by first and second generation Jewish apostles. Note the similarities in 1 Corinthians, written by the Apostle Paul and Acts, written by Luke.

(Paul) 1 Cor. 15:1-4

(Luke) Acts 2:23-33

Death of Jesus (v. 3)

Crucifixion (v. 23)

Burial of Jesus (v. 4)

(v. 31)

Resurrection (v. 4)

(v. 32)

Eyewitnesses (v. 5 ff.)

(v. 33)

Jewish congregations that believed in Jesus as their Messiah continued to read the Torah and the Prophets during Jewish worship services. The Jerusalem believers met daily in their homes as well as at the Church of the Apostles, for communion and the words of Jesus were studied, as were the Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible. The church leadership consisted entirely of Jews, under the direction of James, the half-brother of Jesus.

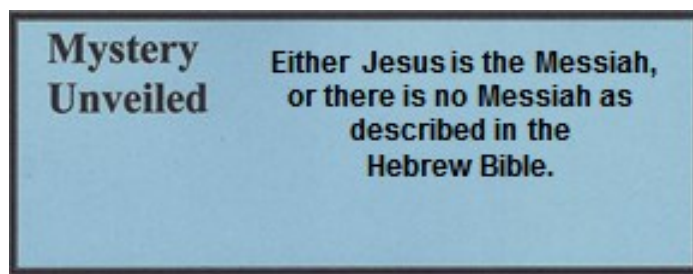
It is believed that these leaders continued to meet in the traditional Upper Room, where the disciples had their last supper with Jesus. Supposedly, the Upper Room survived both the destructions in A.D. 70 and the Second Revolt in A.D. 132-135, although not all ancient sources agree on this point. Note these interesting words by the 4th century church father Epiphanius, who wrote of a small church that survived Hadrian's destruction of Jerusalem.

Hadrian found the city completely leveled to the ground and God's temple treaded down, except for a few houses and the church of God, which was quite small. To it the disciples returned after the Savior's ascension from the Mount of Olives. They went up to the Upper Room, for it had been built there - that is, in the part of the city called Zion, which part was exempted

from destruction, as also were some of the dwellings around Zion and seven synagogues, the only ones which existed in Zion, like monks' cells. One of these survived until the time of Bishop Maximos and King Constantine. It was like a tent in a vineyard, to quote the Scripture.

Epiphanius, *De Mensurie et Ponderibus* 14²⁶²

By the mid-second century, Justin Martyr recorded that the Scripture was read along with the "Memoirs of the Apostles." Those "memoirs" collected and became known as the New Testament.²⁶³



Finally, a story is presented that has often been called mythical in the West. But some congregations in the Middle East believe it is absolutely true. It is the story of King Abgarus and a letter that he wrote to Jesus. To many it is not worth reciting, but to others it is a mystery; an enigma.

262. Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 143, 259-60; Baldi, *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum*. 733, 478.

263. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 69; Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67 Internet Archive.

Unit 18

Resurrection And Appearances

Chapter 03

Closing Comments



18.03.00.A. SUMMARY OF THE BIBLE by Hans Holbin. This picture shows the themes such as Creation and Moses of the Old Testament on the left, and the plan of salvation and the sacrifice of Jesus on the right. The tree in the center has dead branches on the left depicting the Old Testament era, whereas the right side of the New Testament era is healthy and strong. This reflects typical theology of the 16th century Europe.

18.03.00 Closing Comments

Jesus never intended to be the founder of a new religious faith. He came to redeem His people from the curse of sin that always leads to death. The authenticity of His life was realized by the fulfillment of hundreds of Old Testament prophecies. The hope of the Jewish people was now reality (Acts 2:16; 3:18, 24; 10:43). He became exalted as Lord, not by His death, but by His resurrection from death (Acts 2:33-36; 3:13; 4:11). He was aware, however, because of the Jewish rejection of the fulfillment of the Old Testament, a new faith would be developed. To those who placed their faith and hope in Him, Jesus gave the Holy Spirit as a Comforter and His Presence (Acts 2:17-22, 32, 44). He shall return as reigning judge and Savior (Acts 3:20 ff.; 10:42; 17:31), but in the meantime there is a daily appeal to lost souls to come to repentance and to live godly lives, filled with His Presence in the form of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 10:43).

Unfortunately, church history is riddled with countless accounts of those who failed to follow the divine directives of Jesus and His apostles. Yet, buried between these pages of history, is occasional evidence of believers who lived holy lives that gave testimony of being true Christians in their villages and communities. For example, in the ancient city of Hebron Jews and Christians were buried in the same cemetery until the 6th century. This indicates, clearly, that the Jews did not consider the Christians outside of the Jewish faith, as in other parts of the world. The believers of Hebron saw Jesus as a fulfillment of the Hebrew Bible, not a replacement of it.

Jesus always spoke with compassion to those who came to Him to hear, to learn, or to be healed. He spoke of Scripture as revelation that was self-authenticating, rather than a legal code to be feared or used as a weapon. His words to his opponents were frequently sarcastic and condemning. He never overloaded His audience with philosophy, theology, or excessive words. In fact, He trusted His followers, such as the Apostle Paul, to put together His ideas, theology, ethics and guidelines for the believer and the church.

The word pictures and the compassion Jesus had, speak volumes. His longest sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, can be delivered in about fifteen minutes. His longest monolog (Lk. 15) can be dramatically delivered in ten minutes. His sermons crossed all social lines of his world. He conveyed the Kingdom of God through pictures of daily life. In some manner, all of His listeners understood they had missed the mark and that the Grace of God was available for them. This is especially noteworthy in Luke 15.

One of the problems encountered with this study was where to delineate the limits of research. The teaching techniques are different from the figures of speech, which were eventually written in various literary forms. This delineation is hardly distinctive and, is

therefore, subjective for every student.

The primary objective of Jesus was to bring the Kingdom of God to humanity. He underscored the words of the Old Testament prophets. He brought salvation and healing to an oppressed people and taught them to live in covenant with God. As such, he used the objects of daily life to convey the deep and merciful truths of God.



18.03.00.B. COIN WITH THE IMAGE OF “CHRISTOS.” A rare, sixth century lead seal depicting Jesus, was recently discovered in excavations by the Antiquities Authority in the Old City of Tiberius. The other side of the seal has a cross with an abbreviation of the name “Christos.”²⁶⁴

According to the report in *Ynet News*, this is the first time a seal with the image of Jesus has been discovered in excavations in Tiberius, the only site in Israel where coins have been found. A number of similar seals have been found in Caesarea, the ancient capital of the province.

Professor Yizhar Hirschfeld of the Hebrew University, who was in charge of the dig, notes that the seal shows an important church official. “The church here was stronger than we thought. This also shows that Judaism and Christianity met here and lived together in harmony,” he says.

5093. www.breakingchristiannews.com Hachohen, David and Teresa Neumann. “Seal with Image of Jesus found in Tiberias.” Retrieved December 2, 2005.

One Solitary Life

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village, where He worked in a carpentry shop until He was thirty.

Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never had a family or owned a home. He never set foot inside a big city. He never traveled more than two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never wrote a book or held an office. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness.

While He was still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends deserted Him. He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had, His coat. When He was dead, He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure for much of the human race. All the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever sailed, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as this "One Solitary Life."

- Anonymous

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18.03.01.V *Some Concluding Thoughts*. After thousands of hours of study in more than 18 years, Dr. Bill Heinrich presents some inspiring closing thoughts with a little help by some very special young scholars. [Click here](#) if Internet connection is available.

Jesus didn't just come to save sinners, but to save them and transform them into His beautiful image. That image is His character, His personality, and all that He is. Everything else is detail.

Mystery Unveiled

This is the Mystery: that Christ died for all mankind, especially for me, that I may be transformed into His likeness. But this is not the immediate story of the gospels; the gospels tell a story and the Mystery Unveiled is the interpretation of that story.



Please note that all references to footnotes are in the “Works Cited” section located in the last *mini*-volume.