

## Who is Jesus

### Syllabus

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## Part 1: Course Information

### Course Description

This course will cover the historical and theological teachings of the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. The purpose of this course will be two folds: to properly identify Christ Jesus for who He truly was and to enable students to confidently provide reasons for their faith in Christianity.

### Prerequisite

- In order to answer the question who is Jesus:
  - One will need to believe in God
    - Basic understanding of “Halewete Igzabher” (the reasons we can give for believing in God)
  - Basic understanding of the Old and New Testament
    - i.e. the three Patriarchs of the Old Testament (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob), the twelve disciples, Saint Paul ...exc
  - Be familiar of the Person of Jesus of Nazareth (His actions and teachings)
  - Understand the basic history behind the bible (i.e. who wrote it, why was it written, when was written)
    - (PLS note: although this subject will be covered in the course, due to time constraints, a full discussion of the bible will **not** be provided).
  - It is highly recommended that students *at least* read the four Gospels prior to the start of the class(i.e. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

### Textbook & Course Materials

#### Required Text

- Bible

## Course Requirements

- Notebooks!!!

**Important Note:** This syllabus are subject to change. It is the student's responsibility to check with the class and the instructors for corrections or updates to the syllabus.

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#### Part 2: Course Objectives

By the end of this course students have some understanding on:

- The difference between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
- Christians view on the Person of Jesus of Nazareth
- The validity of the Bible's historical account of the Person of Jesus of Nazareth
- The events that took place before, during and after the crucifixion of the Person of Jesus of Nazareth
- Jesus Christ's own teachings about who He was
- Teachings, other than that of Jesus', about who He was
- Who Jesus Christ really was.

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#### Part 3: Topic Outline/Schedule

**Important Note:** The subject being discussed in a particular week will be explained in detail within each week's corresponding learning module. If you have any questions, please contact your instructor.

- **Week 01: Introduction**
  - Review course outline
- **Week 02: The three Abrahamic Religions**
  - Why is the question: "Who is Jesus important?"
    - Who do the Jews think that Jesus is?
    - Who do the Muslims think that Jesus is?
    - Who do we say that Jesus is?

- **Week 03: The validity of the Bible**
  - Why should we trust the bible's account of the historical Person of Jesus of Nazareth?
    - Do we have early testimony?
    - Do we have eyewitness testimony?
    - Do we have testimony from multiple, independent, eyewitness sources?
    - Are the eyewitnesses trustworthy?
    - Do we have corroborating evidence from archaeology or other writers?
    - Do we have enemy attestation?
    - Does the testimony contain events or details that are embarrassing to the authors?
    - Fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament.
- **Week 04: Who did Jesus claim to Be (Messiah)**
  - What did Jesus Christ say?
  - What did Jesus Christ do?
- **Week 05: Who did Jesus claim to Be (Son of God)**
  - What did Jesus Christ say?
  - What did Jesus Christ do?
- **Week 06: The life of Jesus Christ**
  - The style of His teaching
  - Jesus' explicit claims of authority
  - The miracles of Jesus
- **Week 07: The Empty Tomb**
  - The historical events of the empty tomb
  - The discovery of the empty tomb
- **Week 08: Post- Mortem Appearances**
  - Independent, multiple claims of appearance
- **Week 09: The Origin of the Christian Faith**

- The historical understanding of a Messiah
- Jewish traditions and beliefs towards “Resurrection”
- **Week 10: Reviewing the Theories**
  - Conspiracy theory
  - Apparent death theory
  - Displaced body theory
  - Hallucination theory
- **Week 11: Christians view of the Person of Jesus**
  - The Son of God
  - The One who gave us Salvation
  - Christ’s expectation of me
- **Week 12: Review**
  - Review what we have learned from week 2-week 10
- **Week 13: Exam**
  - Exam will be opened Bible

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#### Part 4: Course Policies

##### Participation

Each class period will comprise two sections: class lecture and class discussion. The class lecture will be conducted by the person assigned for the particular class period. The lecture will cover the respective subject that is to be reviewed.

Upon completing the class lecture a class discussion will follow. It is imperative that each person participates in the class discussion in order to gain understanding of the discussed topics. The discussions will be a venue that will be used for students to ask questions or discuss about the RELATED topic for that particular week.

## Build Rapport

If you find that you have any trouble keeping up with the course make sure you let your instructor know as early as possible. As you will find, building rapport and effective relationships are key to becoming an effective professional. Make sure that you are proactive in informing your instructor when difficulties arise during the course so that we can help you find a solution.

## Commit to Integrity

As a student in this course you are expected to maintain high degrees of professionalism, commitment to active learning and participation in this class and also integrity in your behavior in and out of the classroom.

***“But who do you say that I am.” Matthew 16:15***

## Week 01: Introduction

### Depiction of Christianity

- How is Christianity being portrayed in the world (especially in America?)
  - The media has depicted Christians to be uneducated, ignorant and foolish
- Many people thought (and still think) that we have no way to respond to such speculation and attack
  - Reason: people generally have **“properly basic beliefs”**.
    - They simply believe in what they believe in
    - Some even find asking questions about our faith to be wrong or sinful
      - How do we know God exists?
      - How do we know Christianity is true?
      - How do we trust the bible to be credible?
  - **But the bible encourages us to provide reasons for our faith:**
    - **“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” 1 Peter 3:15**

- **“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled[a] among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.” Luke 1:1-4**
  - Luke was told by **Theophilus to investigate the events related with Christ Jesus; the Gospel was his report on his research.**
  - the Gospel was his report on his research.

### What reasons can we provide for our faith?

- More importantly, what is our faith?
  - **Our Christian Creed Recites:**
    - “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible. And we believe in one **Lord Jesus Christ** the only begotten son of the Father who was with him before the creation of the World”.
  - **Who is Jesus?**
    - Christians = followers of Christ
      - Without knowing Christ **I cannot follow Him.**
  - **This question was also important to Christ:**

“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter,[b] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades[c] will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be[d] bound in heaven, and whatever you

loose on earth will be[e] loosed in heaven.” 20 Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. **Matthew 16:13-20**

- The purpose of this course will be two folds: to properly identify Christ Jesus for who He truly was and to enable students to confidently provide reasons for their faith in Christianity.

## Week 02: The Three Abrahamic Religions

### Topics to be covered:

- Why is the question: "Who is Jesus important?"
  - Who do we say that Jesus is?
  - Who do the Jews think that Jesus is?
  - Who do the Muslims think that Jesus is?

### Why is the question: "Who is Jesus important?"

#### 1. This question was also important to Christ:

"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

#### **Matthew 16:13-18 (NIV)**

2. We cannot be a true Christian without knowing who Christ is.

"I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to Himself through the loving mercy of Christ.[c] You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News 7 but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ. Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you.9 I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed." **Galatians 1:6-8**

- There is ONE CORRECT ANSWER (at least according to the bible)
  - We should not be pressured by "**Religion pluralism**"
    - Religion Pluralism (or forms of it) relates to the idea that each religion is subjective. In other words, everyone is right.
    - Direct opposition with "**Religion Exclusivism**"
      - The irony ... Religion pluralism **excludes** the views of **Religion exclusivist**; hence this view is in its self a self-contradictory statement!

- Our salvation depends on it:
  - Some have tried to compare our faith in Christ to a little kids faith in: Santa Clause, Tooth Fairy, Unicorn, superheroes ...exc
    - The logic is that after we grow up we stop believing in all the other legendary characters; hence, we should just extrapolate this logic to God
    - Others say there is no absolute way to validate anything that we do not see (i.e. a Tooth Fairy)
    - Most importantly, they feel as though we don't need to believe in a Tooth Fairy to successfully live in this world
- **However, the belief in Christ will impact your life (compare the faith of God with the faith of Tooth Fairy)**
  - If Christianity is true, that means those who adhere to teachings of the bible will have eternal happiness when we inherit the Kingdom of Heaven
  - If the other "religions" are true, we will probably suffer the punishment described by the "correct religion"
  - If none of the "religions" are true, life does not matter. Everything in this world becomes **relative and this world will have no meaning and purpose**
    - **Richard Dawkins:**
      - "there is at bottom no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pointless indifference... we are machines for propagating DNA"
- Instead of trying to "proof" the validity of Christianity, we can attempt to come to **a reasonable conclusion**
  - **Example: Debate regarding Fine Tuning Argument**

### 3. Three Abrahamic religions:

#### a. Christianity's view:

- i. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and as a result lost their respected place in the Garden of Eden. Afterwards, Man and God were **separated from each other**; although man repeatedly tried to reunite himself with God, he was unsuccessful. Hence, mankind needed **a Savior that would reunite mankind with God** -Jesus Christ. As the bible says:

A. "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." **Hebrew 9:22**

For this reason, Christ Jesus died for all; and He also:

B. "entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption." **Hebrew 9:12**

But the death of Christ does not complete the story without the story of the resurrection of Christ. And hence, an equally important view of Christ is that Christ resurrected

"and he was shown to be[a] the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. **He is Jesus Christ our Lord.** Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, **so that they will believe and obey him**, bringing glory to his name.

**Romans 1:4-5**

It is for this reason that Christians believe in Christ, that is believe that Jesus was dead and that He resurrected to live once again. Christians believe that **this belief in Christ will enable them to partake in the death and resurrection of Jesus:**

"Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was ... So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus." **Romans 8: 5-11**

So essentially Christians believe that:

"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth ... and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross." **Colossians 1:15-20.**

**b. Judaism's view:**

- i. "An old New England primer put it simply: 'In Adam's fall/We sinned all'. This was humanity's original sin [the fall of Adam], a fatal flow, from which it could be redeemed only after Jesus came into the world as the Christ. Without faith in him as the redemptive savior, people would live and die in their original sin ... The mainstream of Judaism refused to make the tale of Eden an important part of its

world-view and maintained that **the only road to salvation was through godly deeds (mitzvot), rather than through belief in a savior...**" *The Torah, A Modern Commentary (Revised Edition), W. Gunther Plaut, Page 37.*

- ii. "Abraham's religion not only rejects the sacrifice of a son by a father but rejects, as well, its use as a theological theme. This is in stark contrast to Eastern religions and to Christianity [40], in which a father's sacrificial gift of his son plays an important role." *The Torah, A Modern Commentary (Revised Edition), W. Gunther Plaut, Page 141.*

**c. Islam's view:**

- i. "In blasphemy indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ the Son of Mary." **Sura (Al Maidah) 5:17**
- ii. "That they said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah' - But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them,..." **Sura (Al Nisa) 4:157**

## Week 03: The Validity of the Bible

### Topic to be covered:

- Why should we trust the bible's account?
  - Do we have early testimony?
  - Do we have eyewitness testimony?
  - Do we have testimony from multiple, independent, eyewitness sources?
  - Are the eyewitnesses trustworthy?
  - Do we have corroborating evidence from archaeology or other writers?
  - Do we have enemy attestation?
  - Does the testimony contain events or details that are embarrassing to the authors?
  - Fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

### Who has the correct view?

- Christians ... because the bible says so!

### The Validity of the Bible

- Historians generally employ the following criteria<sup>1</sup> for determining the validity of **any** document:
  1. Early Testimony
  2. Eyewitness Testimony
  3. Credible Testimony
  4. Testimony includes embarrassing details about author

### Early Testimony:

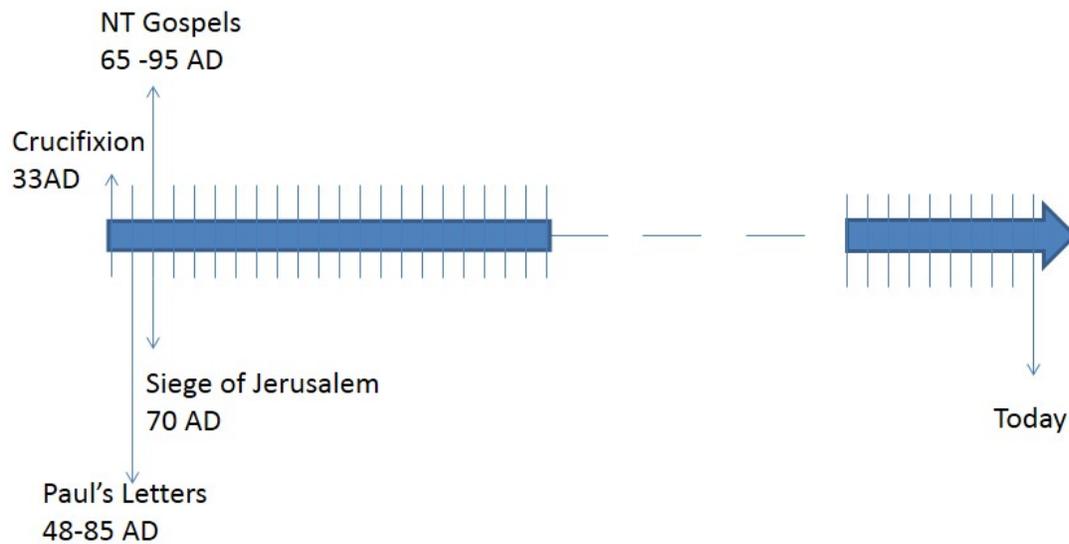
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<sup>1</sup> "I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist" by Normal L. Geisler (pages 230-231) for details.

Also, for further (objective) discussion in this subject see:

"Qualitative Research, An Introduction to **Methods and Designs**" by Stephen D. Lapan and Marylynn T. Quartaroli.

"After the Fact, The Act of Historical Detection", Sixth Edition, by James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle.



**Figure 1: Timeline of New Testament Documents**

- Most of the books in the New Testament were written before A.D. 70.
  - We know this because there is no mention of the **Jewish temple being destroyed**
- Oral Tradition
  - Israelites had a unique ability to memorize since **the art of writing was a phenomenon that was newly emerging**
    - Hence, even if the bible was written a few years after the ascension of Christ, they would have most likely memorized the teachings that was give xxduring His ministry

### **Eyewitness Testimony**

- In most cases, the authors of the **New Testament were eyewitnesses of Jesus or at the very least close associates and contemporaries of the eyewitnesses:**
  - Peter (author of two epistles):
 

“For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes <sup>17</sup> when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.” **2 Peter 1: 16-19**
  - John (author of a Gospel, three epistles, and Revelation)

“We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning,<sup>[a]</sup> whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. <sup>2</sup>This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us.<sup>3</sup>We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.” **1 John 1:1-4**

- Paul (author of 14 epistles)

“I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. <sup>4</sup>He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.<sup>5</sup>He was seen by Peter<sup>[c]</sup> and then by the Twelve. <sup>6</sup>After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers<sup>[d]</sup> at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. <sup>7</sup>Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. <sup>8</sup>Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him.” **1 Corinthians 15:3-8**

- **They challenged their readers to check the evidence:**

"After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers<sup>[d]</sup> at one time, **most of whom are still alive**"

**1 Corinthians 15:6**

- **We also know that they were eye witnesses because their description of history is accurate.**

- They properly identified historical:

- People: (i.e. Agrippa I and II, Ananias, Cesar Augustus, Caiaphas, Claudius, Herod Antipas, Herod the Great, Herodias, Pontius Pilate )
- Places: (cities, lakes, ports, mountains, etc)
- Understood the culture
  - Description of clothing, politics, economic status

- **They had no reason to lie**

- All of the New Testament writers (except for John) were martyred because they continued to talk about Christ
  - No political, social or economic benefit
    - They encouraged their followers to follow the same government that was persecuting them

### **Credible Testimony:**

- Multiple independent testimonies (eight authors of the New Testament)
  - **Bible Similarities:**
    - "At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. <sup>46</sup>At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, <sup>[j]</sup> lema sabachthani?' which means 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?'" **Matthew 27: 45-46**
    - "At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. <sup>34</sup>Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?'" **Mark 15:33-34**
  - Dr. Richard Carrier (an atheist) has made a career out of accusing the authors of plagiarism because they contain too much facts that are alike
    - But we know their accuracy is most likely accredited to Oral Tradition and not plagiarism
  - On the other side of the spectrum, people like Dr. Bart D. Ehrman made a career out of accusing the bible of **contradicting one another (not enough facts that are alike)**
- Consider the following:

"Now it was<sup>[l]</sup> about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. <sup>45</sup> Then the sun was darkened,<sup>[m]</sup> and the veil of the temple was torn in two. <sup>46</sup> And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'"<sup>[n]</sup> Having said this, He breathed His last." **Luke 23:44-46**

"After this, Jesus, knowing<sup>[e]</sup> that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" <sup>29</sup> Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it* to His mouth. <sup>30</sup> So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit." **John 19:28-30**

- Back ground information:
  - Luke composed his gospel after speaking with the crowd that saw the crucifixion
    - Friday was a day that most people would go to the market to shop in public
      - The romans would crucify most of their criminals on this day
  - John, along with the Virgin Mary, were right below his feet.
    - All of His other disciples had abandoned Him at that point
  - Luke explicitly says: "Jesus had cried out **with a loud voice ...**"
  - On the contrary, John says: "It is finished!" **And bowing His head**, He gave up His spirit"

### Embarrassing details:

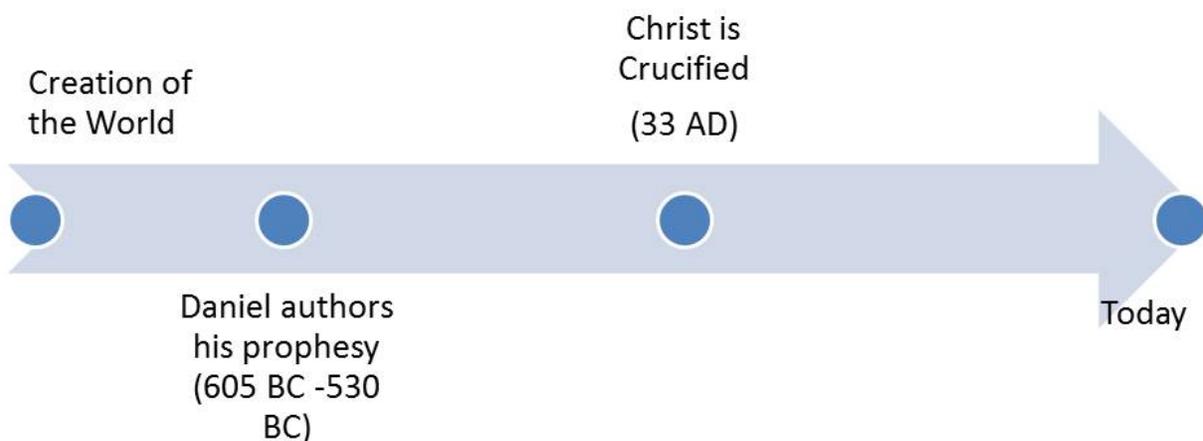
- The disciples deny Christ:
 

"Then he began to curse and swear, *saying*, "I do not know the Man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. <sup>75</sup> And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly" **Matthew 26: 74-75**
- But (perhaps) the most embracing event is **the discovery of the empty tomb.**
  - The resurrection of Christ is the center of our belief. Without the resurrection - there is no Christianity!
    - Especially the four gospels are dedicated to give an account of the events directed related with Christ
  - Each respective gospel builds us up in suspense getting us ready for the climax

- After the crucifixion of Christ, His body was buried in a tomb prepared by Joseph of Arimathea
  - On Sunday morning the tomb of Christ was found empty ... and this discovery was made by ... **women?!!\$\$#@\$**

### Fulfilment of Prophecies:

- The Old Testament is the **New Testament Hidden.**
- The New Testament is the **Old Testament revealed.**



**Figure 2: Timeline of Daniel's Prophecy**

- The book of Daniel was written about 500-600 years before Christ's crucifixion!
  - The book contains the following prophesy:

### Background History:

- Nation Israel were known for the temple that they built.
  - 588BC King Nabuchandenzor destroyed there temple
    - Daniel, and his three friends: Shadrach (Hananiah), Meshach (Misha'el) and Abednego (Azariah), are held captive and taken to Babylon
    - Daniel starts to pray and ask God when the temple would be rebuilt
      - The Angel Gabriel came and gave him this prophesy about the temple.
  - **In essence, the temple is a HUGE deal to the nation of Israel**

24 **"A period of seventy sets of seven[c]** has been decreed for your people and your holy city to finish their rebellion, to put an end to their sin, to atone for their guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to confirm the prophetic vision, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.[d] 25 Now listen and understand! **Seven sets of seven plus sixty-two sets of seven[e] will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until a ruler—the Anointed One[f]—comes.** Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defenses,[g] despite the perilous times.

26 **"After this period of sixty-two sets of seven,[h] the Anointed One will be killed,** appearing to have accomplished nothing, **and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple.** The end will come with a flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end. 27 **The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven,[i]** but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds,[j] he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration,[k] until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him." **Daniel 9:24-27**

- The time frames of each period are measured in "week" years, i.e. seven-year spans. The Hebrew word for "week" is "shavua" and literally means "seven." Seven is a holy number, symbolically meaning fullness, completeness.
  - for the Judaic nation and for the holy city are determined 70 "weeks" (70x7= 490 years)
- **Explaining the prophesy:**
  - from the moment the decree is given for the restoration of Jerusalem up until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will be 7weeks and 62 weeks (7 weeks+ 62 weeks = 69 weeks).
    - The people shall return and streets and walls shall be rebuilt in difficult times.
  - **The order for the new construction of Jerusalem** and the temple will serve as the **beginning of these weeks**
  - **the destruction of temple will serve as the end the week cycles**
    - During the first seven "weeks" (7 X 7 = 49 years) Jerusalem and the Temple will be rebuilt.
    - Toward the end of the 62 weeks (7 X 62= 434 years) **the Anointed One** [Christ will com] but He will suffer and will be put to death.
    - In the course of the last "week" there will be abomination of desolation in the sanctuary. Then will come a people, guided by a leader, who will **destroy the holy city and the Temple.**
- **Actual events that took place:**

- The decree for the restoration of Jerusalem was issued by the Persian king Artaxerxes (ahr-tuh-zurk-seez ) in 453 BC (the count down begins!)
- restoration of the walls and Temple was protracted for a about 40 or 50 years
  - 453 BC - 49years = 404BC
- the Messiah was to suffer for the cleansing of human sins in the period between 69 and 70 weeks (483 years- 490 years)
  - 7 years X 7 = 49 years
  - 7 years X 62 = 434 years
  - 434years + 49 = 483 years.
  - 453BC - 483years = 30AD
    - Christ was crucified in 33AD
    - Notice the prophesy says "**between**" 69 and 70 weeks!
  - 453BC - 490years = 37AD
- **Jerusalem was destroyed a second time in the 70<sup>th</sup> year** of this era by the Roman military leader Titus.
- The rabbi of Gemar even subjected those Hebrews, who would calculate the year of the coming of the Messiah, to the following curse: "May the bones shake of those, who calculate the times... Perish all those who calculate the end, for men will say, since the predicted end is here and the Messiah has not come, he will never come!" (Sanhedrin 97b)

## Week 04: Who did Jesus Claim to Be (Messiah and the Son of Man)

### Topic to be covered:

- What did Jesus Christ say?
- What did Jesus Christ do?

### Back ground history:

- In order to correctly identify the identity of Christ we have to study what He said and what He did
- The nation of Israel had been waiting on a "Messiah" that would come and be their savior  
 "The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup> Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote— Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" **John 1:43**
  - Their understanding was that the Messiah would be descendant of King of David and become king over Israel and all nations.
    - The Greek word for Messiah is "Christos"

### Criterion for the Messiah:

- The Messiah, **who is to be born in Bethlehem**, would be the ruler of Israel:

**"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans<sup>[a]</sup> of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Micah 5:2**

- A messenger would precede the Messiah and **"prepare the way"**.

#### A voice of one calling:

**"In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD<sup>[a]</sup>; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.<sup>[b]</sup>**

**<sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.**

**<sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” Isaiah 40:3-5**

- The Messiah is an important figure!

### Who did Christ claim to be?

- When Christ is talking to the Samaritan women he declares that He indeed is the Messiah.  
The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he. **John 4:25-26**

### Who did Christ claim to be? (The Messiah)

- John asks Jesus if He is the Messiah:

“When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples <sup>3</sup> to ask him, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’

<sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, ‘Go back and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy<sup>[b]</sup> are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.<sup>6</sup> Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.’” **Matthew 11:2-6**

- Jesus reveals his identity to the Samaritan woman.

“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” <sup>25</sup> The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” <sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” **John 4:21-26**

### The actions of Christ:

- Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem:
  - Jesus orders two of His disciples to go to a village and bring Him a colt (donkey) that was tied up
  - When the disciples brought the colt to Jesus, He sat on it and He entered Jerusalem.
  - As Christ Jesus entered Jerusalem the crowd greeted Him shouting "Hosanna Hosanna!" (Mark 11:1-11).
- The significance of this event can easily be seen when one realizes of the long awaiting prophecy found in the book of Zechariah:

"Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!  
 Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!  
 See, your king comes to you,  
 righteous and victorious,  
 lowly and riding on a donkey,  
 on a colt, the foal of a donkey." **Zechariah 9:9**

### Meets the Criterion for the Messiah:

- Born **in Bethlehem:**

"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea ..." **Matthew 2:1**

- A messenger would precede the Messiah:

"He [John] went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>4</sup>As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

'A voice of one calling in the wilderness,

'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
 make straight paths for him.

<sup>5</sup>Every valley shall be filled in,  
 every mountain and hill made low.

The crooked roads shall become straight,  
 the rough ways smooth.

“And all people will see God’s salvation.”<sup>[a]</sup>

### **Luke 3:3-9**

#### **Who did Christ claim to be? (The Son of Man)**

- Daniel’s vision:
  - “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man,<sup>[a]</sup> coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup> He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” **Daniel 7:13-14**
- The bible is replete with statements made by Christ Jesus referring Himself as the Son of Man:

“And he said, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.’ **Luke 9:22**

- Notice the article “the” being used instead of “a”
  - “the” is signifying and referencing an expected “son of Man”

#### **What does this all mean?**

- Christ *at least believed* to be the Messiah
  - He was letting the nation of the Israel know that He was the expected Messiah
- **The title “Son of Man” affirms His Humanity**
  - “Son of God” affirms His Divinity
- Things to consider:
  - If He was not the Messiah, why would He be willing to be crucified?
  - How do we explain the events that occurred post crucifixion?
  - “Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.” **Luke 9:44**

## Week 05: Who did Jesus Claim to Be (Son of God)

### Topic to be covered:

- What did Jesus Christ say?
- What did Jesus Christ do?

### The Parables of the Tenants

- In this parable we can clearly see that Christ saw Himself as the Son of God

“He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’” **Mark 12:1-9**

#### o The symbolic meanings are as follows:

- The vineyard = Israel
- Owner = God
- Tenants = Jewish religious leaders
- Servants = prophets (prophets from the OT)
- Beloved son = \_\_\_\_\_

### Son of God VS God’s sons

- We are all the God’s sons but Christ is His Unique Son:

Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. **John 8:54**

- Christ acknowledges the “Father” as God
- Notice: Christ says “My Father” but then responds by saying “your God”

“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again”. John 10:17

- Continues to use the phrase “my Father” as opposed to “our father”

### Christ affirming his divinity:

- Christ demanded that people follow/ serve Him:

Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. **My Father** will honor the one who serves me. **John 12:26**

- He equates seeing the Father with seeing the Son:

Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? **10** Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. **11** Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. **John 14:8-11**

### Frequently asked questions:

- If Christ is con-substantial with God the Father, meaning He is equally divine as the Father, why did he say:
  - I am going away and coming *back* to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said,<sup>[e]</sup> 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. **John 14:28**
    - When He says "greater," he indicates that his divinity can be equaled to that of the Father, **since he is of the same substance with him**, but the Father is greater because the Son accepted a body
    - Let us acknowledge the twofold substance of Christ, namely, the divine, in which he is equal with the Father, and the human, in respect to which the Father is greater. And yet at the same time both are not two, for Christ is one.<sup>2</sup>
  - "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself.<sup>[k]</sup> Only the Father knows. **Matthew 24:36**
    - He is also showing His humanity by declaring that the Son does not know.
    - Christ was putting an end of the desire of man kind from asking Him when judgment day will be

## Week 06: The life of Jesus Christ

### Topics to be covered:

- Jesus' preaching
  - The authority that Jesus spoke with
  - His claims to forgive sins
- Jesus's Miracles
  - Christ performed miracles under His own name

### Jesus' preaching

- Traditionally, a Jewish rabbi would quote from other learned teachers
  - In the case of the Jesus, He did the opposite!
    - The "Sermon on the Mount" is a clear indication of this:

**"You have heard that our ancestors were told**, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.'<sup>[d]</sup> **22 But I say**, if you are even angry with someone,<sup>[e]</sup> you are subject to judgment! **Matthew 5:21-22**

**"You have heard the commandment** that says, 'You must not commit adultery.'<sup>[k]</sup> **28 But I say**, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. **Matthew 5:27-28**

**"You have heard the law that says**, 'A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.'<sup>[n]</sup> **32 But I say** that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery."

**Matthew 5:31-32**

- As we can see, **Christ is speaking under His own authority, which nobody has done before**

- Compare it with prophets in the Old Testament, when they spoke, they would say God is telling you to do...

"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." **13** So rend your heart, and not your garments; **Joel 2:12**

- Now Christ is saying --I am telling you -
- Clearly, Christ is equating Himself with the authority of God the Father

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, <sup>29</sup> for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law. **Matthew 7:28-29**

## Forgiving of Sins

- As we read the bible, we noticed that the only one who has the authority to forgive sins is **God**.
  - No prophets, teachers of the church, or priests have ever forgiven the sins of anyone under their own authority.

Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “My child, your sins are forgiven.” But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, <sup>7</sup> “What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!” Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk’? <sup>10</sup> So I will prove to you that the Son of Man[a] has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, <sup>11</sup> “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!” And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, “We’ve never seen anything like this before!” **Mark 2:1-12**

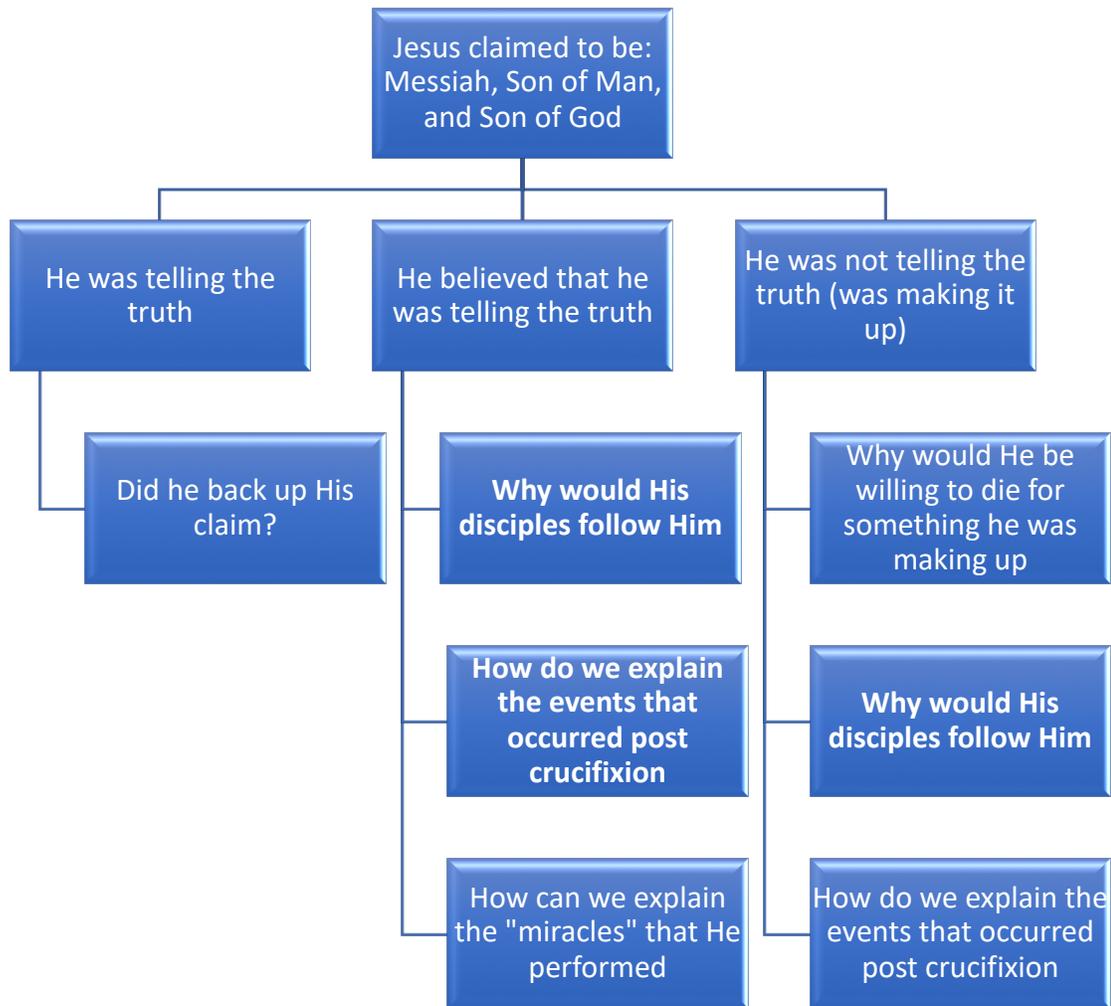
- Christ Jesus **first** forgave his sins
  - He then confirmed his authority by performing the miracle.

## Jesus’ claim to judge the world

- Another role of the divine Father is **the ability to judge the world**.
- Old Testament prophets would warn the people of God’s wrath and judgment.
  - In the case of Christ, He speaks in place of the ultimate judge.

“I tell you the truth, everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, the Son of Man<sup>[e]</sup> will also acknowledge in the presence of God’s angels. <sup>9</sup> But anyone who denies me here on earth will be denied before God’s angels. **Luke 12:8-9**

## Possible Conclusions we can arrive at



## Week 07: The Empty Tomb

### Topic to be covered:

- Christians' belief in a resurrected Christ
- Jesus Christ's proper burial
- The discovery of the empty tomb

### Christians' belief in a resurrected Christ

- The Christian faith is founded on the belief that **Christ Jesus resurrected from the dead.**

- Note: the faith in Christ did not emerge until AFTER the resurrection.
- When Peter and the apostles were arrested for teaching about Christ a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, said this in a council meeting:

"Men of Israel, take care what you are planning to do to these men! <sup>36</sup> Some time ago there was that fellow Theudas, who pretended to be someone great. About 400 others joined him, but he was killed, and all his followers went their various ways. The whole movement came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After him, at the time of the census, there was Judas of Galilee. He got people to follow him, but he was killed, too, and all his followers were scattered. "So my advice is, leave these men alone. Let them go. If they are planning and doing these things merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown. <sup>39</sup> But if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You may even find yourselves fighting against God!" **Acts 5:33-39**

- Paul also explicitly mentions the resurrection in an epistle which is believed to be written within the first five years after the crucifixion of Christ.

I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. <sup>4</sup> He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said." **1 Corinthians 15:3-4**

- Without a resurrection ... there is no Christianity!
  - Also, if Christ resurrected **Christ's claim to be the Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God is validated.**

### Jesus Christ's proper burial

- Before we can talk about Christ's resurrection, we have to survey the events that were leading up to it.
  - Christ's crucifixion
    - a. All four gospels give a detailed account of His crucifixion.

- i. Notice, four independent sources signifies that the criterion for multiple testimonies (and in the case of Matthew and John, eye witness testimony) is established.
- ii. Nearly all the scholars agree that Christ was crucified on the cross by the hands of Romans.

“Jesus’ death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable.”

**Gert Lüdemann**

Jesus’ death by crucifixion is “historically certain”. **Pinchas Lapide**

“The single most solid fact about Jesus’ life is his death: he was executed by the Roman prefect Pilate, on or around Passover, in the manner Rome reserved particularly for political insurrectionists, namely, crucifixion.” **Paula Fredriksen**

“One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate.” **Bart**

**Ehrman**

- Note the account of the crucifixion disclosed in the Quran

- Christ’s burial

- In the Jewish culture, the family members and those who were close to the deceased will have the responsibility of giving an honorary burial.
  - Being in charge of the burial of the deceased was seen as **an honorary position.**
- In the case of Christ Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea was the one who gave Him an honorary burial!

This all happened on Friday, the day of preparation,<sup>[1]</sup> the day before the Sabbath. As evening approached, <sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. (Joseph was an honored member of the high council, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come.) <sup>44</sup> Pilate couldn’t believe that Jesus was already dead, so he called for the Roman officer and asked if he had died yet. <sup>45</sup> The officer confirmed that Jesus was dead, so Pilate told Joseph he could have the body. <sup>46</sup> Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth. Then he took Jesus’ body down from the cross, wrapped it in the cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance. <sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus’ body was laid. **Mark 15:42-47.**

- Joseph was a member of **the Sanhedrin (the council that tried Jesus).**
  - This meets the “embarrassing criterion”

- If this part of the gospel was phony, Mark would have made Peter or John be the one to give Christ the honorary burial.
- But instead of being embarrassed, the Church acknowledges this historical fact.
  - “Halleluia, Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped Jesus with linen cloths. He rose from the dead in wondrous fashion.” **Kidase**
- This also meets the multiple eye witness testimony.

### The Discovery of the Empty Tomb

- From the multiple independent sources (all four gospels record this discovery), we read that the tomb was found empty.
  - Even in the case of Paul’s testimony, he states that “He was buried, **and he was raised from the dead** on the third day”; which implies that the tomb was not being occupied by Christ (hence, it was empty).
- Matthew’s account includes the response made by the Sanhedrin of the discovery of the empty tomb.

As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened. <sup>12</sup>A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. <sup>13</sup>They told the soldiers, “You must say, ‘Jesus’ disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.’ <sup>14</sup>If the governor hears about it, we’ll stand up for you so you won’t get in trouble.” <sup>15</sup>So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say.

**Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today. Matthew 28:11-15**

- Matthew statement of “**they still tell it today**” signifies that **the Sanhedrin’s response was “Jesus’ disciples came during the night while were sleeping, and they stole his body”.**
  - A stole body means ... **AN EMPTY TOMB!**
  - Notice they don’t refute the empty tomb. They could have easily shown the body of Christ if they still had it.
- Furthermore, notice the simplicity of Mark’s account of the empty tomb

<sup>2</sup>Very early on Sunday morning, <sup>[a]</sup> just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>On the way they were asking each other, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to

the tomb?" <sup>4</sup> But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. **Mark 16:1-4**

- Meets the "embarrassing criterion" due to women being the ones to discover the empty tomb

- Compare this account with the gospel of "Peter":

When the Sabbath morning dawned, a crowd came from Jerusalem and the surrounding area that they might see that the tomb had been sealed. (35) But during the night in which the Lord's day dawned, while the soldiers were stationed in pairs to keep watch, a great voice came from heaven. (36) And they saw the heavens open and two men descend from there, having a great radiance and approaching the tomb. (37) Then, the same stone which had been put in the entrance rolled away from it and gave way partially. And the tomb was opened and both young men went in. (38) Then, seeing this, these soldiers woke up the centurions and elders, for they themselves were all there to keep watch. (39) And while they were describing what they had seen, again they saw three men coming out from the tomb, two supporting the other and a cross following them. (40) The heads of the two reached up to the heavens and the head of the one they were leading by the hand went beyond the heavens. (41) And they heard a voice from heaven saying, "Did you preach to those who sleep?" (42) Obediently, there was heard from the cross, "Yes." **Peter 9:1-10:5**

## Conclusion

- Christ died on the cross, was buried on Friday night and His Tomb was found empty on Sunday Morning.
  - What happened to the body of Christ?
- If Christ resurrected, as disclosed in the gospels, that means that Christ's claim to be the Messiah, Son of God, and Son of Man is validated.
- Note: We are NOT asking --can a dead corpse rise from the dead? -- Instead, we are asking- - Can an omnipotent God rise from the dead? - -

## Week 08: Post- Mortem Appearances

### Topics to be covered:

- Post mortem appearances to both believers and non-believers
- Post mortem appearances to individuals, small groups of believers, and large group of believers
- Difference between a “most mortem experience” and a “vision”

### Paul’s Account of the Appearances:

- The writings of Saint Paul is perhaps one of the earliest writings we have from the New Testament.

**1. Especially the message recorded in 1 Corinthians 15 is believed to be an oral tradition that was passed down from one person to the next.**

- The original message is believed to have emerged in the Christian community between 34-39 AD!

“I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. 4 He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.5 He was seen by Peter[c] and then by the Twelve. 6 After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers[d] at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. 7 Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. 9 For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I’m not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God’s church.”

### 1 Corinthians 15:3-9.

- Paul’s message discloses that Christ, **after His crucifixion**, was seen by:

**1. Peter:**

There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, <sup>34</sup> who said, “The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter.<sup>[e]</sup>” **Luke 24:33-34**

- Luke conveys to his readers the claim being made by the eleven disciples (which includes Peter.)
  - However, Luke found it necessary to give special attention to Peter.
  - This complements Paul’s oral tradition message

**2. the Twelve**

- the post mortem appearances occurred **BEFORE Matthias replaced Judas**
  - “the Twelve” is/was a name given to the group of the original disciples of Christ

“One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin),<sup>[e]</sup> was not with the others when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.” <sup>26</sup> Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!” “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.” **John 20:24-29**

### 3. more than 500 of his followers

- After mentioning more than 500 of His follower saw Christ after crucifixion, Paul mentions **most of whom are still alive, though some have died.**

### 4. James

- Not to be confused with: James, son of Zebedee nor James, the son of Alphaeus
- Was not part of the twelve original desicpiles!
- He better known as **James, the brother of the Lord**
  - James is the son of Joseph; hence is labeled as the “brother”

In fact, James, Peter,<sup>[e]</sup> and John, **who were known as pillars of the church**, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. **Galatians 2:9**

### 5. all the apostles

- Appeared to the women disciples
- Appeared to the “Twelve”
- Appeared to the 72

### 6. Paul

“Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord’s followers.<sup>[a]</sup> So he went to the high priest. <sup>2</sup> He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. <sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?” “Who are you, lord?” Saul asked. And the voice replied, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! <sup>6</sup> Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone’s voice but saw no one! <sup>8</sup> Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. <sup>9</sup> He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.” **Acts 9: 1-9**

- Saul was a man who was from **the line of Benjamin and a member of the Sanhedrin.**
- He was present during the stoning of Saint Stephen. (see Acts 7:57-59 for details).
  - This shows that Saul was a man who did NOT believe in Christ.
- Nevertheless, on the road to Damascus we are told that Christ appeared to Saul.
  - This event caused Saul to renounce his name and adopt the new name assigned to him ... Paul.
- Paul ends up writing 14 of the 21 epistles that we find in the New Testament.
  - As a result of his new conversion, he was not only persecuted and jailed numerous times, but was also executed.

### Appearance or Vision?

- Saint Stephen had a **vision before he was stoned.**

“The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen’s accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage.<sup>[m]</sup> <sup>55</sup> But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s

right hand. <sup>56</sup> And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!" Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him <sup>58</sup> and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup> He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died." **Acts 7:54-58**

- When Saint Stephen had a VISION, nobody else was able to see his vision.
- During the stoning, notice, Saint Stephen **prayed!**
  - He did not converse with Christ, but **PRAYED TO CHRIST!**
  - Although we believe as Christians that Christ is with us at all times, we do not believe that he is physically present with us.
- In the case of the post-mortem appearances, we find a physical presence of Christ.
  - Doubting Thomas had a chance to **PHYSICALLY touch Christ Jesus.**
  - All the people present were able to see Christ.
    - i.e. he appeared to groups of believers
  - In Luke's account of the appearance to His disciples, **Jesus Christ shares a meal with them!**

"Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why are your hearts filled with doubt?" <sup>39</sup> Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do." <sup>40</sup> As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet. Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he ate it as they watched. **Luke 24:38-43**

## Week 09: The Origin of the Christian Faith

### Topics to be covered:

- Origin of Christian Faith
- Comparative legendary tales
- The Virgin Birth

### Origin of Christian Faith

• History tells us that Christianity emerged in the community in the first century. "Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? <sup>4</sup>For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was." **Romans 6:4**

- What caused the disciples to believe this?
  - The only monotheistic faith that existed at the time was Judaism.
  - Their faith in the Messiah was:

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor,<sup>[a]</sup> Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!" **Isiah 9:6-7**

- The Messiah was to be someone **who would come from the lion of Judah.**
- The "father" of this tribe is one of the children of Jacob.
- Jacob prophesied the destiny of each tribe. For the tribe of Judah, he said:

"Judah, your brothers will praise you. You will grasp your enemies by the neck. All your relatives will bow before you. Judah, my son, is a young lion that has finished eating its prey. Like a lion he crouches and lies down; like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honor." **Genesis 49:8-10.**

- Since this prophecy was given, the rulers of Israel emerged from the tribe of Judah.

- After the reign of King Solomon, 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel split and they established their own kingdom under the leadership of Jeroboam.
- The tribe of Judah and Benjamin continued their kingdom in the southern region under the leadership of Rehoboam.
- The southern kingdom of Judea continued to be ruled under the leadership of a king who emerged from that tribe until **they were conquered by the Roman Empire in 63BCE.**
- For the first time the tribe of Judah was being ruled by “an outsider”. Much worst ... **A NONE JEW!**
- The Jewish community was now depending on the Messiah to come!
  - Surely, they thought, the Messiah will come anytime to restore our Kingdome.

“Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” **Acts 1:6**

- When Christ was crucified, their dreams was shattered.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup>The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup>**but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.**” **Luke 24:19-21**

- If their expectation of a Messiah was not fulfilled... why did they continue to believe in Christ AFTER the crucifixion?

### Comparative legendary stories

- On that Sunday morning when the tomb was found empty, the disciples declared **Jesus has risen from the dead.**
- Where did they get this idea from?
  - The Jewish community believed in a resurrection that:
    - would take place **at judgment day**
    - was universal
  - Christ resurrection not only preceded judgment day, but was a singular event.
  - In addition, Christ raised Himself from the dead.
- Not to be confused with the miracle of restoring someone’s life
  - Miracle of Elijah (1 Kings 17:8-22)
  - Miracle of Elsa (2 Kings 4:1-37)

- Miracle of Jesus, the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44).
- Christ's life was NOT restored, He came back to life by defeating death.
  - In the case of the miracles stated above, all the people ended up dying when their time arrived.
- Not to be confused with "legendary tales"
  - In the case of Osiris:
    - He was killed by his brother, who was also a god
    - Osiris body was dismantled
    - His sister used a spell to "restore" Osiris body so she could have a child from him.
    - As a result of her action, she conceived a child.
- Even if this story was EXACTLY like the resurrection story of Christ, history shows that the Jewish community in Judah would have had no knowledge of it.

### The Virgin Birth

- The prophets were unequivocally clear about a Virgin Birth:
 

"All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin<sup>[1]</sup> will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us'). " **Isiah 7:14**

"And the LORD said to me, "This gate must remain closed; it will never again be opened. No one will ever open it and pass through, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered here. Therefore, it must always remain shut." **Ezekiel 44:2**
- None of ancient documents say Saint Mary was "pregnant", instead it says conceived a child.
- The Hebrew word used for the word Virginity was "almah".
  - This word:
    - Is never applied to a young married woman
    - refers to a girl who is presumed to be a virgin
    - 'almah formally and directly means girl or young woman and indirectly it always carries with it virginity
  - Although the actual word for "virgin" in Hebrew is Betzlah, the latter word does not include "motherhood" (i.e once a child is born, no longer a virgin).
  - Instead, 'almah includes the concept of youth directly, and indirectly, that of virginity, and does not exclude maternity.

### Possible Explanations:

- Conspiracy theory

- The disciples lied about everything
- Apparent death theory
  - Christ survived the crucifixion
- Displaced body theory
  - They lost the body of Christ
- Hallucination theory
  - The resurrection was all in their head.
- The resurrection story
  - Christ actually rose from the dead.

## Week 10: Reviewing the Theories

### Topic to be covered:

- Conspiracy theory
- Apparent death theory
- Displaced body theory
- Hallucination theory

### What is the Best Explanation?

- We have seen that:
  - Christ was crucified on the cross on Friday and buried in the tomb that evening
  - Sunday morning the tomb that Christ was buried in was found empty
  - After the “crucifixion of Christ”, many claimed to have seen Christ.
  - The Christian faith emerged in the community, even though Christ had been “crucified”
    - What is the best explanation to these **historical events that took place?**
- The proposed explanation should be:
  - related (to all the events)
  - realistic
  - plausible

### Conspiracy theory

- Summary: Disciples stole the body of Jesus and His lied about the Post-Mortem appearance. Not satisfied with the first deception, they ended up engineering the “fallacious” religion that would be known to the world as Christianity.
  - This **successfully** explains all the events:
    - If they stole the body **the tomb will be empty**
    - If they lied about His appearance, then we should NOT believe what they wrote about.
  - Before talking about plausibility, let us see if this theory is realistic
    - There are virtually no known historical documents or findings that confirms this theory
    - In a “fabricated” document such as the bible, why would they have women discover the tomb?
      - Especially when this is the central theme of the story
    - They would have been caught walking around with the body of Christ.

- What benefit would the disciples get from this fictional story?
- Why do we not have **ANY STORY OF THE ACUTALL RESSURECTION TAKING PLACE!**
- The main problem with this theory is that it is improbable.
  - As we saw last week, the story that we find in the bible is sooo unique that they could not have fabricated a story like that of Christianity
    - If they were going to come together to fabricate this story they would have been confined by the culture and religion of which they adhered to.
      - We cannot address the **historical events in hindsight of the resurrection story.**

### Apparent Death Hypothesis

- Summary: Christ survived the crucifixion! **Later, He appeared to His disciples which lead them to believe in Christianity.**
  - This theory also successfully explains all the historical events.
    - If Christ survived the crucifixion, He is able to escape from the tomb; thereby leading the women to find an unoccupied tomb.
  - This theory, however, fails since it is unrealistic.
    - There are virtually no known historical documents or findings that confirms this theory
    - **If Christ had survived the crucifixion, He would have been greatly wounded.**
      - If a "beaten-up" Christ crawls towards the disciples with His last breath, the disciples (at best) would pity Him.
      - Since Christ would appear to be weak, they would never follow Him and claim He is God
  - But the biggest problem with this theory is that it is HIGHLY improbable.
    - **As we have studied earlier, the romans were experts at crucifixion.**
      - There is no way that He could have survived.
        - There is only one known record of a person who has survived the crucifixion.

"I saw many captives crucified, and remembered three of them as my former acquaintance. I was very sorry at this in my mind, and went with tears

in my eyes to Titus, and told him of them; so he immediately commanded them to be taken down, and to have the greatest care taken of them, in order to their recovery; yet two of them died under the physician's hands, while the third recovered." By **Josephus of Aremthea** (not to be confused by Joseph of Aremthea)

- Assuming Christ survived, how would a "beaten-up" Christ been able to roll away the huge rock that was placed in-front of the tomb.

### Displaced Body Theory

- Summary: Joseph of Arimathea placed the body of Christ **temporarily** in the tomb. He later would end up moving the body to the criminals' common graveyard. Since the disciples were not aware of the new location of the body of Christ, they found the tomb to be empty and declared to the world... "Christ Has Risen!"
  - Although this theory explains the events related with the empty tomb, it is silent regarding the Post-Mortem Appearances and the origin for the Christian faith (ie. a resurrected Christ)
    - Not finding the body of Christ would NOT lead them to come up with the theology of Christianity
  - The second problem with this theory, their claims were never corrected.

"A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. <sup>13</sup>They told the soldiers, "You must say, 'Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.' <sup>14</sup>If the governor hears about it, we'll stand up for you so you won't get in trouble." <sup>15</sup>So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today." **Matthew 27:12-15**

- If the body had been misplaced:
  - Why would they say the disciples stole the body?
  - Why did they not simply show the community the body of Christ?
- This theory is also not plausible since the criminals' grave yard was **50-600 yards away**.
  - Once a body has been buried in the Jewish culture, they were NOT allowed to move the body (unless it was towards a family tomb)

## Hallucination Hypothesis

- The disciples were miserable after the death of Jesus so much that they began to enter a state of psychosis making them believe that they saw Christ.
  - This theory only attempts to address the Post-Mortem appearances but offers no explanation for both the empty tomb and the emergence of the Christian Faith.
  - The diversity of these Post-Mortem appearances make this theory unrealistic.
    - How can over 500 people experience the SAME hallucination?
    - Even if we allude to the deep sorrow felt by the disciples to suggest the cause for this "hallucination" there is no real basis one can make for **the appearance seen by Paul.**
  - Once again the true problem with this analysis is that it is highly improbable.
    - Hallucination is defined as:

" the experience of perceiving objects or events that **do not have an external source**, such as hearing one's name called by a voice that no one else seems to hear."

### Encyclopedia Britannica

- As we discussed before, the Jewish community had no prior knowledge of a resurrection like that of Jesus
  - If they were to experience a hallucination, they would have seen Christ in the bosom of Abraham since this is where they believed the "soul" of a dead man would go.

"So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup>And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." **Luke 16:22-23**

## Week 11: Christians view of the Person of Jesus

### Topic to be covered:

- Christians view of the Person of Jesus
- Christ's expectation of me

### What is the Best Explanation?

- We have seen that:
  - Christ was crucified on the cross on Friday and buried in the tomb that evening
  - Sunday morning the tomb that Christ was buried in was found empty
  - After the "crucifixion of Christ", many claimed to have seen Christ.
  - The Christian faith emerged in the community, even though Christ had been "crucified"
  - The proposed explanation should be: related (to all the events) , realistic, plausible

### Review of the Theories:

- Conspiracy theory: Summary: Disciples stole the body of Jesus
  - No historical documents that confirms this theory
  - women discovered the tomb
  - What benefit would the disciples get from this "fictional" story?
  - No explanation of the actual resurrection story taking place
  - The main problem with this theory is that it is improbable.
- Conspiracy theory: summary: Christ survived the crucifixion!
  - no known historical documents
  - Since Christ would appear to be weak, they would never follow Him and claim He is God
  - HIGHLY improbable to survive a crucifixion
- Displaced Body Theory: Summary: Joseph of Arimathea placed the body of Christ **temporarily** in the tomb.
  - silent regarding the Post-Mortem Appearances and the origin for the Christian faith (ie. a resurrected Christ)
  - The disciples claims (ie. Christ's resurrection) were never corrected.
  - the criminals' grave yard was 50-600 yards away.
- Hallucination theory: Summary: the disciples entered a state of psychosis making them believe that they saw Christ.

- offers no explanation for both the empty tomb and the emergence of the Christian Faith.
- The diversity of these Post-Mortem appearances make this theory unrealistic.
- How can over 500 people experience the SAME hallucination?
- the Jewish community had no prior knowledge of a resurrection like that

### Resurrection Story:

- Summary: Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit
  - they became subject to the law of the devil
    - the devil became their new king
  - Adam and Eve, repented and asked God to forgive them
    - God gave them a **COVENANT and told them He would come and save them**
  - From that point on, through the prophets of the Old Testament, God reminded His people about the Covenant.

Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey's colt. **Zechariah 9:9**

- The people of Israel were earnestly waiting for a **Messiah to come and save them.**
- As promised Christ came to this world to save us.
- He fulfilled all the prophecies written in the Old Testament.

As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. <sup>2</sup>“Go into the village over there,” he said. “As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup>If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will immediately let you take them.” This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said, “Tell the people of Jerusalem, ‘Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey's colt.’” The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. <sup>7</sup>They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it, Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, “Praise God <sup>[d]</sup> for the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD! Praise God in highest heaven!” The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. “Who is this?” they asked. And the crowds replied, “It's Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” **Matthew 21:1-11**

- After His Triumphal entry, they arrested Christ and crucified Him on the cross.
  - He died the death that we deserved
  - Through His death he was able to defeat death
    - He took the souls of all the people who were in Hades and took them in the Garden of Eden.
  - He resurrected and showed Himself to His disciples
    - He instructed them to preach and teach about the Gospel (good news).
- This story explains:
  - The empty tomb
  - Post-Mortem appearances
  - Origin of Christian Faith
- The resurrection is realistic
  - Since the prophecies, written hundreds of years before the coming of Christ, accurately describe Christ's resurrection, it is realistic
- It is possible for an **omnipotent God to raise Himself from the dead.**

### Christ's Expectation:

- Remember the sacrifice that He has made
- Keep His teachings and lessons
- Spread the Gospel

### Remembering Passion Week:

- Holy Monday:
  - Jesus Curses the Fig Tree (**Matthew 21:18-22**)
    - Christ expects us to blossom; but if we are not found with any fruits we will be judged.
- Holy Tuesday:
  - Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids (**Matthew 25:1-13**)
    - Be wise! Be ready! Be vigilant! Christ can come anytime.
- Holy Wednesday:
  - Jesus Anointed at Bethany (**Matthew 26: 6-13**)
    - We must approach Christ in humility and commit to Him.
  - Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus (**Matthew 26: 14-16**)
    - Let us not betray Christ, and may our greetings be genuine.
- Holy Thursday:
  - Jesus washes His disciples feet (**John 13:1-17**)

- If Christ can show us how to be humble, we must follow His example.
  - Last Supper: (**Matthew 26:27-30**)
    - We have to remember to eat His flesh and drink His Blood
- Good Friday:
  - Christ was crucified (**Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 19**)
    - Christ died the death that we deserved and gave us a new beginning.

**COURSE EXAM: WHO IS JESUS?**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice (2 points each):

1) Which one of the following is NOT part of the Three Abrahamic Religions:

- a) Christianity
- b) Islam
- c) Hinduism
- d) Judaism

.

2) The philosophy that religion is subjective (all religions are correct) is the view held by:

- a) Religion exclusivist
- b) Muslims
- c) Religion pluralist
- d) A and B

.

3) The philosophy that religion is objective (only one religion is true) is the view held by:

- a) Religion exclusivist
- b) Christians
- c) Religion pluralist
- d) A and B

.

4) \_\_\_\_\_ believe that the belief in Christ will enable them to partake in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

- a) Christians
- b) Jews
- c) Muslims
- d) None of the above

5) The prophecy of Daniel (recorded in Daniel 9:24-27) is a prophecy describing:

- a) Christ's divine and human nature
- b) Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem
- c) Christ's humanity
- d) the timing of Christ coming and the temple being destroyed

6) The prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3-5) was fulfilled by whom?

- a) Jesus
- b) Luke
- c) Joseph of Arimathea
- d) John the Baptist

.

7) The Messiah was prophesized to be someone who would come from the \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) line of Judah
- b) line of Benjamin
- c) line of Dan
- d) All of the above

.

8) \_\_\_\_\_ states that Disciples stole the body of Jesus and lied about the Post-Mortem

Appearances.

- a) Apparent death theory
- b) Conspiracy theory
- c) Displaced body theory
- d) Hallucination theory

.

9) \_\_\_\_\_ states that Joseph of Arimathea placed the body of Christ temporarily in the

tomb.

- a) Hallucination theory
- b) Apparent death theory
- c) Conspiracy theory
- d) Displaced body theory

.

10) Who was the first to discover the empty tomb?

- a) Paul
- b) the 12 disciples
- c) a group of women
- d) Peter and John

.

True or False (2 points each):

11) Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin (the council that tried Jesus).

- a) True

b) False

12) The Old Testament is the New Testament revealed.

a) True

b) False

13) The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

a) True

b) False

14) The title "Son of Man" affirms His Humanity

a) True

b) False

15) Only three of the four gospels give a detailed account of His crucifixion.

a) True

b) False

16) Saul was a man who was from the line of Benjamin and a member of the Sanhedrin.

a) True

b) False

17) Paul was one of the 12 disciples.

a) True

b) False

18) The conspiracy theory successfully explains: why the tomb was empty, the post-mortem

experiences and the emergence of the Christian faith.

a) True

b) False

19) Thomas was the one who gave Jesus an honorary burial.

a) True

b) False

20) The Messiah was prophesized to be born in Samaria.

a) True

b) False

Matching (2 points each):

Match the story described in the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12:1-9) with its respective symbolism.

21) \_\_\_\_\_ Owner

22) \_\_\_\_\_ Servants

23) \_\_\_\_\_ The vineyard

24) \_\_\_\_\_ Beloved Son

25) \_\_\_\_\_ Tenants

a) Prophets

b) Jewish religious leaders

c) God

d) Israel

e) Jesus

Short Answer:

26) What is the difference between "a" Son of God and "the" Son of God? (5 points)

27) Why were the Jewish community expecting the Messiah to come around the time Christ was born? (5 points)

28) Compare and contrast the miracle of restoring someone's life with the resurrection story of Christ. (5 points)

(Choose one example)

Miracle of Elijah (1 Kings 17:8-22)

Miracle of Elisha (2 Kings 4:1-37)

Miracle of Jesus, the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

29) Explain why the theory that states that Christ survived the crucifixion is both unrealistic and improbable. (5 points)

30) Is the bible a reliable historical document? Why or why not? (5 points)

31) Compare the post-mortem appearances experienced by the first Christians with the vision of St. Stephen (see Acts 7). (5 points)

32) Summarize the teachings provided by Jews, Christians and Muslims towards the person of

Jesus of Nazareth. (10 points)

33) What does Christ Jesus expect from you? (5 points)

34) What did you learn in this class? (3 points)

35) How can this class be improved? (2 points)

Bonus:

36) Approximately how many people saw Christ AFTER the crucifixion? And who were they? Give the bible verse. (3 points)

37) What was the significance behind women discovering the empty tomb? (3 points)

38) Compare and contrast the Story of Osiris with Jesus Christ. (3 points)

39) The Jewish community believed in a resurrection that: (2 points)

40) When Christ was crucified, the Jewish followers dreams was shattered. What was this "dream"?

(3 points)