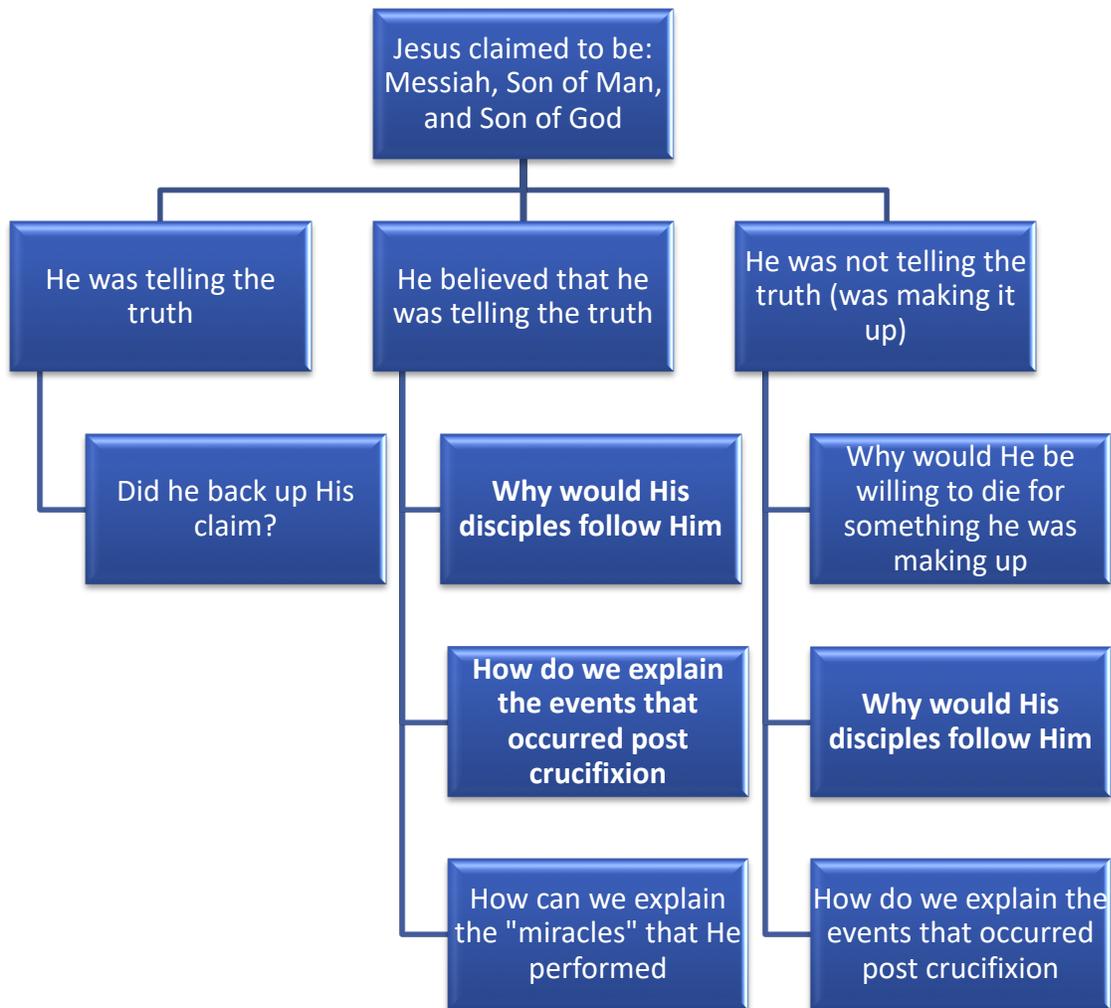

WEEK 06: THE EMPTY TOMB

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.
- Paul 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. ⁴He 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!
 - If Christ resurrected, **Christ’s claim to be the Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God is validated.**
 - Three historical facts to consider:
 - Empty tomb
 - Post-mortem appearance
 - Origin of Christian faith
 - Then we will ask, what is the best explanation for all these events.

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
 - 1. in the case of Matthew and John, eyewitness 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.” **Gerd 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
 - وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ... لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا
 - *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, ...there is no knowledge for them except the following assumption: And they did not kill him for certain."* **Sura (Al Nisa) 4:157**
- 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,⁴³ the day before the Sabbath. As evening approached, ⁴³ 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.) ⁴⁴ Pilate couldn't believe that Jesus was already dead, so he called for the Roman officer and asked if he had died yet. ⁴⁵ The officer confirmed that Jesus was dead, so Pilate told Joseph he could have the body. ⁴⁶ 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. ⁴⁷ **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 eyewitness 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.* ¹² *A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe.* ¹³ *They told the soldiers, “You must say, ‘Jesus’ disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.’* ¹⁴ *If the governor hears about it, we’ll stand up for you so you won’t get in trouble.”* ¹⁵ *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 stolen body means ... **AN EMPTY TOMB!**

- Some Muslim scholars argue the corpse was stolen.
 - But we still have 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
 - *Very early on Sunday morning,^[a] just at sunrise, they went to the tomb.³ On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"⁴ 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" (Apocryphal):
 - *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 hea[v]ens 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***
 - Stories develop over time

- 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?