

# Hope U: The Bible's Authority

## Week 3

### Recapping last week

There are both early and accurate manuscripts regarding the life of Jesus.

- Early
  - Most if not all of the books of the New Testament were written within 40 years of the crucifixion.
  - Paul's letters are dated to perhaps only a few months within the crucifixion.
- Accurate
  - 27 different documents that were written on 27 different scrolls by nine different writers over a 20 to 50-year period.
  - It is not just one source, but a collection of sources.
  - At last count, there are nearly 5,800 handwritten Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.
  - In addition, there are some 20,000 manuscripts in other languages (e.g., Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic).
- The earliness and accuracy are abundantly supported by archeology.

**This week, we are focusing on Jesus, and whether the events depicted in the New Testament actually happened. The key: eyewitnesses!**

### Do we have eyewitness testimony about Jesus?

- Matthew, also known as Levi, the tax collector, and one of the twelve disciples was the author of the first gospel of the New Testament.
- John Mark, the companion of Peter, was the author of the gospel we call Mark.
- Luke, known as Paul's 'beloved physician,' wrote both the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.
- John, probably the "beloved disciple" of Jesus mentioned several times in the gospel of John, was a family friend and the author of the gospel we call John.

### **Is it possible someone could have lied by claiming these people wrote the gospels, when they likely didn't?**

- These were unlikely characters
  - Mark and Luke were not even among the twelve disciples (though Mark could have been the “young naked boy” in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested in Mark 14:51-52.
  - Matthew was a former hated tax collector and would have been the most infamous character next to Judas Iscariot.
- Compare this against the fanciful apocryphal gospels where people chose the name of more well-known and exemplary figures to be the fictitious authors - Philip, Peter, Mary, Mary Magdalene, and James.
- There wouldn't have been any reason to attribute authorship to these less respected people unless a false author was trying to give credence to his work.

### **More proof**

- **Papias in AD 125**
  - The oldest and most significant testimony comes from Papias, who in about AD 125, specifically affirmed that Mark had carefully and accurately recorded Peter's eyewitness observations.
  - He said Mark 'made no mistake' and did not include 'any false statement.'
  - He said Matthew had preserved the teachings of Jesus as well.
  - He was a friend of John's and could have been disciplined by him.
- **Irenaeus in AD 180**
  - Matthew published his own Gospel among the Hebrews in their own tongue when Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching.
  - Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the Gospel preached by his teacher. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on his breast, himself produced his Gospel while he was living at Ephesus in Asia.

### **The Apostle Paul (Recapping Week 2)**

- As certain as we are about Luke's records, there is no doubt from anyone - including the most liberal scholars - that Paul wrote his first letter to the church at Corinth between 55 and 56
- In his letter, Paul speaks about moral problems in the church, and then proceeds to discuss controversies over tongues, prophecies, and the Lord's Supper.
- This demonstrates that the church in Corinth was experiencing some kind of miraculous activity and was already observing the Lord's supper within 25 years of the Resurrection.

- The most significant aspect of his letter is that it contains the earliest and most authenticated testimony of the Resurrection itself.
- Paul writes down the testimony he received from others and the testimony that was authenticated when Christ appeared to him:
- 1 Cor. 15:3-8
  - Paul's first meeting with the apostles in Jerusalem would have been around AD 35.
  - At some point along Paul's encounters with disciples and early Christians, this green would have been given to him - **which means that it had already been formulated and was being used in the early church.**
  - A good case can be made for saying that Christian belief in the resurrection, though not yet written down, can be dated to within two years of that very event.

### **Flavius Josephus (ca. 37 - ca.100) (Recapping Week 2)**

- Became one of the greatest Jewish historians of his time.
- Josephus began his historical writings in Rome while serving as a historian for the Roman emperor Domitian.
- His works are considered to be undeniably accurate
- One of his major works is his now famous Antiquities of the Jews, which he finished in about A.D. 93.
  - *“At this time [the time of Pilate] there was a wise man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good and (he) was known to be virtuous and many people among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.*
  - *Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he 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]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned]*

### **Tacitus in AD 115**

- “He explicitly states that Nero persecuted the Christians as scapegoats to divert suspicion away from himself for the great fire that had devastated Rome in AD 64.

**How can you explain the spread of a religion based on the worship of a man who had suffered the most ignominious death possible?**

## What was written?

Consider the way the gospels were written - in a sober and responsible fashion, with accurate identical details, with obvious care and exactitude. You don't find the outlandish flourishes and blatant mythologizing that you see in a lot of other ancient writings. In other words, **it seems quite apparent that the goal of the gospel writers was to attempt to record what actually happened.**

## Do we have eyewitness testimony about Jesus?

### Who are the eyewitnesses?

#### Eyewitness Evidence in Luke:

- The general consensus of both liberal and conservative scholars is that Luke is a very accurate historian and as a physician was exacting in detail (Luke 1:1-3).
- Example - suppose someone wrote a book in the 1990s about Charlotte.
- Politicians, laws, industry, weather patterns, slang, roads and geography, local houses of worship, hotels, statues and sculptures, the depth of the water in the town harbor, and numerous other unique details about your town that year.
- If the author claimed he had visited your town that year, or said he had gotten good information from people who have been there, would you think he was telling the truth?
- Of course, because he provides details that only an eyewitness could provide. That's the type of testimony we have throughout much of the New Testament.
- Classical scholar and historian Colin Hemer chronicles Luke's accuracy in the book of Acts verse by verse. With painstaking detail, Hemer identifies 84 facts in the last 16 chapters of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research.
- The natural crossing between correctly named ports.
- The correct language spoken in Lystra – Lycaonian.
- The proper description of Philippi as a Roman colony.
- The use of the correct Athenian slang word for Paul (spermologos) as well as for the court (Areios pagos).
- The local people and superstitions of the day.

*"I began with a mind unfavorable to it (Acts). It did not lie then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself often brought into contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed miraculous truth."*

- Classical scholar and archaeologist William M. Ramsey

Luke also reports a total of 35 miracles in the same book in which he records all 84 of these historically confirmed details. For example, Luke records that Paul:

- Temporarily blinded a sorcerer
- Cured a man who was crippled from birth
- Exorcized an evil spirit from a possessed girl
- Performed many miracles that convinced many people in the city of Ephesians to turn from sorcery to Jesus
- Raised a man from the dead who had died after falling out of a window during Paul's long-winded lecture
- His very clothes healed people

Why would Luke be so accurate with trivial details like wind directions, water depths, and peculiar town names, but not be accurate when it comes to important events like miracles?

**Since Luke is telling the truth, then so are Mark and Matthew because their gospels tell the same basic story. This is devastating to skeptics, but the logic is inescapable. You need a lot of faith to ignore it.**

### **Eyewitness Evidence: John**

Like Colin Hemer did on Acts, Craig Blomberg has done a detailed study of the Gospel of John in *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*.

Since John describes events confined to the Holy Land, his gospel doesn't contain quite as many geographical, topographical, and political items as does Acts. Nevertheless, quite an impressive number of historically confirmed or historically probable details are contained in John's Gospels. Here are a few of the 59 listed:

- Archaeology confirms the use of stone water jars and New Testament times.
- Archaeology confirms the proper place of Jacob's Well.
- Josephus confirms there was significant hostility between the Jews and Samaritans during Jesus's time.
- Christ's command to eat his flesh and drink his blood would likely not be made up.
- Fifteen stadia is precisely the distance from Bethany to Jerusalem.
- Josephus confirms that crucifixion was an execution technique employed by the Romans. Moreover, a nail-spiked ankle bone of a crucified man was found in Jerusalem in 1968.
- The crucifixion of Jesus is attested to by non-Christian sources such as Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, and the Jewish Talmud.
- After the spear was thrust into Jesus's side, out came what appeared to be blood and water. Today we know that a crucified person might have a watery fluid gather in the sac around the heart called the pericardium. John would not have known of this medical condition, and could not have recorded this phenomenon unless he was an eyewitness or had access to eyewitness testimony.

## Historical Crosshairs

All in all, there are at least 30 characters in the New Testament who would have been confirmed as historical by archaeology or non-Christian sources.

- Matthew mentions independently confirmed historical figures including Herod the Great and his three sons: Herod Archelaus, Herod Philip, and Herod Antipas.
- Luke extends the biblical citations of the Herodian bloodline by mentioning Herod the Great's grandson, Agrippa I, the king who killed James.
- Pilate.
- Matthew, Luke, and John specifically name another leader who figured prominently in Jesus' death - Caiaphas.

## Portrait of Jesus - His claims to deity.

1. Jesus' use of the word 'Abba' - Jesus is saying that only through having a relationship with him does this kind of prayer language work - this kind of 'Abba' relationship with God becomes possible through Jesus.
2. Jesus' use of Son of Man - Daniel 7:13-14.
  - The Son of Man was a divine figure in the Old Testament who would come at the end of the world to judge mankind and rule forever.
  - Jesus claimed to be the Son of God (Matthew 27:43), as did the demons (Matthew 8:29). Jesus's opponents understood what this meant, for they picked up stones to kill him for blasphemy.
3. John 1:1-3, 14
4. Matthew 16:15-17
5. Mark 10:45
6. The seven "I AM" statements in John
7. Forgiving sins (Mark 2:5)
8. Saying he's Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28)
9. His disciples were taught to pray in his name and to expect answered prayers accordingly.
10. He claimed equality with God (John 10:30)
11. He will be the Judge over everyone who has ever lived (John 5:25)
12. John called him the Creator of all (John 1:3)
13. Thomas worshiped him and Jesus received it (John 20:28)
14. He claimed that all humans' eternal destiny depend on him (Mark 8:34-38)
15. He claimed a heavenly preexistence (John 6:62)
16. He exercised authority of the demonic world (Mark 3:11)
17. He exercised authority over diseases and death (Mark 1:29-31 and John 11)
18. He exercised authority over the natural world (Luke 8:22-25)
19. He claimed ownership of the angels (Matthew 13:41) and they will do his bidding when he returns to divide the sheep and goats (Matthew 25) and the wheat and tares (Matthew 13)
20. He claimed ownership of God's kingdom (Matthew 13:41)

There is a substantial amount of evidence that within twenty years of the crucifixion, there was a full-blown Christology proclaiming Jesus as God incarnate. The oldest Christian sermon, the oldest account of a Christian martyr, the oldest pagan report of the church, and the oldest liturgical prayer (1 Cor. 16:22) all refer to Jesus as Lord and God. Clearly, it was the message of what the church believed and taught that 'God' was an appropriate name for Jesus Christ.

*"Here is a man who thought of himself as the Son of God and Son of Man in a unique sense, who claimed to act and speak with divine authority, who held himself to be a worker of miracles, and who believed that people's eternity destiny hinged on whether or not they believed in him."*

**What do you do with these claims?**

1. Liar
2. Lunatic
3. Legend
4. The Truth

**Then you add:**

## **The Resurrection**

### **Death**

#### **The torture before the cross**

Roman floggings were known to be terribly brutal. They usually consisted of thirty-nine lashes but frequently were a lot more. The soldier would use a whip of braided leather thongs with metal balls woven into them. When the whip would strike the flesh, the balls would cause deep bruises or contusions, which would break open with further blows. And the whip had pieces of sharp bone as well, which would cut the flesh severely.

The back would be so shredded that part of the spine was sometimes exposed by the deep, deep cuts. The whipping would have gone all the way from the shoulders to the back, the buttocks, and the back of the legs.

As the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce a quivering ribbon of bleeding flesh. The sufferer's veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews, and bowels of the victim were open to exposure.

At the very least, the victim would experience tremendous pain and go into hypovolemic shock.

Hypo means 'low', vol refers to volume, and emic means 'blood', so hypovolemic shock means the person is suffering the effects of losing a large amount of blood. This does four things. First, the heart races to try to pump blood that isn't there. Second, the blood pressure drops, causing fainting or collapse. Third, the kidneys stop producing urine to maintain what volume is left. Fourth, the person becomes very thirsty as the body craves fluids to replace the lost blood volume.

### **The agony of the cross**

He would have been laid down, and his hands would have been nailed in the outstretched position to the horizontal beam. This crossbar was called the patibulum, and at this stage it was separate from the vertical beam, which was permanently set in the ground.

The Romans used spikes that were five to seven inches long and tapered to a sharp point. They were driven through the wrists.

The patibulum was absolutely unbearable. In fact, it was literally beyond words to describe; excruciating. Literally, excruciating means 'out of the cross'.

At this point, Jesus was hoisted as the crossbar was attached at the vertical state, and then nails were driven through Jesus' feet. The nerves in his feet would have been crushed.

His arms would have immediately been stretched, probably about six inches in length, and both shoulders would have become dislocated - fulfilling the prophecy in Psalm 22.

### **The cause of death**

Once a person is hanging in the vertical position, crucifixion is essentially an agonizingly slow death by asphyxiation.

The stresses on the muscle and diaphragm put the chest into the inhaled position; basically, in order to exhale, the individual must push up on his feet so the tension on the muscles would be eased for a moment. In doing so, the nail would tear through the foot, eventually locking up against the tarsal bones.

He'd have to push himself up to exhale, scraping his bloodied back against the coarse wood of the cross. This would go on and on until complete exhaustion would take over, and the person wouldn't be able to push up and breathe anymore.

As the person slows down his breathing, he goes into what is called respiratory acidosis - the carbon dioxide in the blood is dissolved as carbonic acid, causing the acidity of the blood to increase. This eventually leads to an irregular heartbeat. With his heart beating erratically, Jesus would have known that he was at the moment of death, which is when he was able to say, 'Lord, into your hands I commit my spirit.' He then died of cardiac arrest.



The hypovolemic shock would have caused a sustained rapid heart rate that would have contributed to heart failure, resulting in the collection of fluid in the membrane around the heart, called a pericardial effusion, as well as around the lungs, which is called a pleural effusion.

The Roman soldier came around and being fairly certain that Jesus was dead, confirmed it by thrusting a spear into his right side. The spear apparently went through the right lung and into the heart, so when the spear was pulled out, some fluid - the pericardial effusion and the pleural effusion - came out. This would have the appearance of a clear fluid, like water, followed by a large volume of blood, as the eyewitnesses John described in his gospel.

**There was absolutely no doubt that Jesus was dead.**

**Do we have eyewitness testimony about Jesus?**

*“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” - Simon Peter*

- Acts 2:32
- 1 Peter 5:1
- John 19:33-35
- 1 John 1:1-2

**In short:**

- Matthew, Peter, Paul, and John all claim to be eyewitnesses
- New Testament writers name others who saw the Resurrection
- Paul specifically names 14 people whose names are eyewitnesses of the Resurrection (12 apostles, James, and himself)
- Claims that there were more than 500 others
- Matthew and Luke confirm the appearances of the apostles
- All four Gospels mention women as key and the first witnesses, with Mark identifying them as Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome (women’s testimonies were not acceptable in the law courts then, thus making the fact that they are listed here as giving more credence to their accounts)
- Luke adds Joanna
- Acts 1 also reveals that Joseph called Barsabbas was an eyewitness

**The top reasons we know the New Testament writers told the truth:**

1. The New Testament writers included embarrassing details about themselves:
  - a. The principle of embarrassment
  - b. They are dim-witted – numerous times they failed to understand what Jesus is saying
  - c. They are uncaring - they fall asleep on Jesus twice

- d. They are rebuked - Peter is called Satan Jesu
  - e. They are cowards - all the disciples but one hide when Jesus goes to the Cross
  - f. They are doubtful
  - g. If you were making up a story, would you include embarrassing details?
2. The New Testament writers included embarrassing details and difficult sayings of Jesus:
- a. Is considered out of his mind by his mother and brothers who come to see him in order to take him home
  - b. Is not believed by his own brother
  - c. Is thought to be a deceiver
  - d. Is deserted by many of his followers
  - e. Offends Jews who had followed him to the point that they wanted to stone him
  - f. Is called a drunkard
  - g. Has his feet wiped with the hair of a prostitute (an event that had the potential to be perceived as a sexual advance)
  - h. Other difficult phrases - Communion
3. The New Testament writers always included demanding sayings:
- a. *But I tell you (a phrase where Jesus claims to supersede the Law of Moses) that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:28).*
  - b. *But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Matthew 5:32).*
  - c. *But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek also. **40** And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. **41** If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. **42** Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you (Matthew 5:39-42).*
4. The New Testament writers carefully distinguished Jesus' words from their own:
- a. Even though quotation marks did not exist in first-century Greek, the New Testament writers distinguished Jesus's words very clearly. Most red-letter editions of The Bible are identical, illustrating how easy the New Testament writers made it to see what Jesus said and what he didn't say.
  - b. It would have been very easy for the New Testament writers to solve first-century theological disputes by putting words into Jesus's mouth.
  - c. Think how convenient it would have been for them to end all debate on controversial issues such as circumcision, obeying the law of Moses, speaking in tongues, women in the church, and so forth by merely making up quotes from Jesus.
5. The New Testament writers include events related to the resurrection that they would not have invented:
- a. The Burial of Jesus - buried by Joseph Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin which was the Jewish ruling council that sentenced Jesus to die for blasphemy.

- b. The First Witnesses - All four gospels say women were the first to witness the empty tomb and the first to learn of the Resurrection. One of those women was Mary Magdalene, who Luke admits had been demon-possessed - a credible witness?
  - c. This would never be inserted in a made-up story. Not only would a once demon-possessed person make a questionable witness, but, again, women in general were not considered reliable witnesses in that first-century culture.
  - d. The conversion of priests - so the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7).
  - e. The explanation of the Jews for the empty tombs: *“While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. **12** When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, **13** telling them, ‘You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ **14** If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” **15** So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day”* ( Matthew 28:11-15).
    - Makes it very clear that his readers already know about this Jewish explanation for the empty tomb.
    - If Matthew were making up the empty tomb story, why would he give his readers such an easy way to expose his lies?
    - The only plausible explanation is that the tomb must really have been empty, and the Jewish enemies of Christianity must really have been circulating that specific explanation for the empty tomb.
6. The New Testament writers include more than thirty historically confirmed people in their writings:
    - New Testament writers would have blown their credibility with their contemporary audience by implicating real people in a fictional story, especially people of great notoriety and Power. Somebody would have exposed them for falsely implicating these people and the events that never occurred.
  7. The New Testament writers include Divergent details:
    - a. In light of the numerous Divergent details in the New Testament, it's clear that the New Testament writers didn't get together to smooth out their testimonies. This means they certainly were not trying to pass off a lie as the truth.
    - b. Simon Greenleaf, the Harvard law professor who wrote The Standard study on what constitutes legal evidence, credited his own conversion to Christianity as having come from careful examination of the Gospel Witnesses. He concluded that the four Gospels “would have been received in evidence in any court of justice, without the slightest hesitation”
  8. The New Testament writers challenge their readers to check out verifiable facts, even facts about miracles:

- a. *"I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles (2 Corinthians 12:12).*
- b. New Testament writers describe Miracles like other historical events with simple, unembellished accounts

The Gospels give matter-of-fact, almost bland descriptions of the Resurrection

1. **Mark 16:4-8 4:** *But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.*
2. **6** *"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"*
3. **8** *Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

This indicates that the gospel writers were concerned about getting the history correct, not inventing some kind of theology.

- Salvation is certainly talked about in the whole of the New Testament, but it's hardly mentioned in the gospels. Why? Because the gospel writers were writing history, not mere theology

### **The circumstantial evidence of the Resurrection**

1. The New Testament writers suffered persecution and death when they could have saved themselves by recanting.
  - i. When Jesus was crucified, his followers were discouraged and depressed. They no longer had confidence that Jesus had been sent by God. They also had been taught that God would not let his Messiah suffer death. The Jesus movement was all but stopped in its tracks.
  - ii. Then, after a short period of time, we see them abandoning their occupations, regathering, and committing themselves to spreading a very specific message - that Jesus Christ was the Messiah of God who died on a cross, returning to life, and was seen by them.
  - iii. And they were willing to spend the rest of their lives proclaiming this, without any payoff from a human point of view. They often went without food, slept exposed to the elements, were ridiculed, beaten, imprisoned. **And finally, most of them were executed in torturous ways.**
  - iv. If they had made up the resurrection story, they certainly would have said so when they were about to be crucified (Peter), stoned (James) or beheaded (Paul)

- v. **And when you've got eleven credible people with no ulterior motives, with nothing to gain and a lot to lose, who all agree they observed something with their own eyes - now you've got some difficulty explaining that away.**

2. The conversion of skeptics

a. James

- i. Jesus' family, including James, were embarrassed by what he was claiming to be. In ancient Judaism, it was highly embarrassing for a rabbi's family to not accept him.
- ii. Therefore, the gospel writers would have no motive for fabricating this skepticism if it weren't true.
- iii. Josephus tells us that James, who became the leader of the Jerusalem church, was stoned to death because of his belief in his brother.
- iv. Why did James's life change? Paul tells us: the resurrected Jesus appeared to him.

b. Saul -> Paul

- i. As a Pharisee, he hated anything that disrupted the traditions of the Jewish people.
- ii. To him, this new countermovement called Christianity would have been the height of disloyalty. In fact, he worked out his frustration by executing Christians when he had the chance.
- iii. **Suddenly he doesn't just accept Christians but joins their movement! By his own pen he says he saw the risen Christ and heard Christ appoint him to be one of his followers.**
- iv. Paul writes 2 Corinthians reminding the people of the miracles he performed when he was with them earlier.

c. Peter

3. Changes to key social structures.

- a. The New Testament writers abandoned their long-held sacred beliefs and practices, adopted new ones, and did not deny their testimony under persecution or threat of death.
- b. Virtually overnight, they, along with tens of thousands of Jews, abandoned many of their long-held sacred beliefs and practices. Among the 1500 year old plus institutions they give up the following"
  - i. The animal sacrifice system – they replace it forever by the one perfect sacrifice of Christ.
  - ii. The Binding supremacy of the law of Moses, they say it's powerless because of the sinless Life of Christ.
  - iii. Strict monotheism, they now worship Jesus, the God man.
  - iv. The Sabbath – they no longer observe it even though they've always believed that breaking the Sabbath was punishable by Death.

- v. Belief in a conquering Messiah, Jesus is the opposite of the Jewish understanding of a conquering Messiah. They were expecting a general like King David to free them from Roman oppression. Jesus comes as a sacrificial lamb, conquering the evil in the human heart.
    - c. Not only do they abandon traditional practices, but virtually overnight they add new radical ones:
      - i. Sunday, a work day, as the new day of worship.
      - ii. Baptism replaces circumcision as the sign of the old covenant and the entrance into the community of faith.
      - iii. Communion as an act of remembrance of Christ's sacrifice for their sins replaces Passover
4. Communion and Baptism
- a. Communion
    - i. Early Christians didn't come together to celebrate his teachings or how wonderful he was. They came together regularly to have a celebration for one reason: to remember that Jesus had been publically slaughtered in a grotesque and humiliating way, and then resurrected. (Think about this in modern terms - John F. Kennedy, MLK Jr. etc).
    - ii. They realized that Jesus' slaying was a necessary step to a much greater victory. They celebrated his execution because they were convinced that they had seen him alive from the tomb.
  - b. Baptism
    - i. The early church adopted a form of baptism from their Jewish upbringing.
    - ii. In the New Testament, people were baptized in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit - which meant they had elevated Jesus to full status of God.
    - iii. By going under water, they were celebrating his death, and by being brought out of the water, they were celebrating the fact that Jesus was raised to the newness of life.
5. The emergence of the Church
- a. There is no question that the start of the Christian church began shortly after the death of Jesus and spread so rapidly that within a period of maybe twenty years it had reached even Caesar's palace in Rome.
  - b. Not only that, but this movement triumphed over a number of competing ideologies and eventually overwhelmed the entire Roman empire.
  - c. There is no doubt these facts are true; what's in question is how to explain them.
  - d. With these facts along with the potent proof of the empty tomb of Jesus, and the convincing testimony about his post-resurrection appearances, the case seems conclusive.

Sir Lionel Luckhoo, the brilliant and savvy attorney whose astounding 245 consecutive murder acquisitions earned him a place in The Guinness Book of World Records as the world's most successful lawyer. Kighted twice by Queen Elizabeth, this former justice and diplomat subjected the historical facts about the resurrection to his own rigorous analysis for several years before declaring:

*"I can say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt.*

**One final thought: If Jesus is God, and the resurrection primarily proves this fact, then we must have his view of the Bible. To refute critics, to correct the religious leaders, and/or to teach his disciples, he constantly quoted from the Old Testament. If Jesus is God, and he quoted from the Old Testament to support what he was saying, therefore the Old Testament must be the Word of God.**

**If Jesus is God, and he appointed the apostles to be his words to the churches of that day and this one, their words being Jesus's words, that means the writings of the New Testament, written by Jesus's chosen apostles, must be the Word of God. Apostolicity equals canonicity.**

**Last evidence (perhaps the greatest evidence of all)**

*The Church today and the ongoing encounter with the resurrected Christ that happens all over the world, in every culture, to people from all kinds of backgrounds and personalities - well educated and not, rich and poor, thinkers and feelers, men and women. They will all testify that more than any single thing in their lives, Jesus Christ has changed them. Some even share visions of Jesus appearing to them, calling them to follow him and receive forgiveness of their sins. Changed lives (represented through communion and baptism), answers to prayer, and the Church still exists over two thousand years later in almost every nation of the world!*

**Why then can we confidently say, "The Bible says so?" Because of:**

- 1. Its amazing unity**
- 2. It's one message: Jesus forgives us from our sins and we now have eternal life**
- 3. Predictive prophecies**
- 4. Archaeological evidence**
- 5. Manuscript evidence**
- 6. Jesus's claims to deity**
- 7. The resurrection**
- 8. The eyewitnesses to the resurrection**

**Next week: Bring your questions. Frank Turek will join us!**