



JESUS' BURIAL AND RESURRECTION

Part 98 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 23:50-56, 24:1-12 | November 13, 2011

Luke 23:50-56; 24:1-12

⁵⁰ Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, ⁵¹ who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. ⁵² This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. ⁵⁴ It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. ⁵⁵ The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.

On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

^{24:1} But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." ⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, ¹¹ but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

WHERE WAS JESUS BURIED?

Howdy. Pastor Mark here at the Garden Tomb. Just behind me, you will see a small entry point that is an ancient tomb. This entire area has been built around it. Some quarter million people a year arrive at this place to remember and to celebrate and investigate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The truth is we don't know exactly where Jesus was buried. Why? Because he's not there. That's the big idea. We do know, however, that it was either this place or a place much like it, for ten reasons.

Number one, we read in the gospel accounts that Jesus was led outside of the city walls. This place qualifies.

Number two, the place where Jesus was buried was outside of a gate—we're told that in Hebrews—and this fits that requirement, as well.

Number three, we are told that it was along a busy thoroughfare. And as you enter in, you experience that to this day.

Number four, it was a public place of execution where Jesus was ultimately put to death.

Number five, we are told that he was laid in a stone tomb, and that is most assuredly the case here.

Number six, in fulfillment of the prophecy at the second half of Isaiah 52 through Isaiah 53—that chunk on the resurrection of Jesus given five-hundred-plus years in advance—we were told that he would be buried with the rich in his death, though he was a poor, homeless man. Following his death, he was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy, affluent follower and disciple who gifted Jesus' tomb post-mortem. And so all of this would fit those prophetic requirements.

Number seven, we are told that it is in Golgotha, the place of the skull, and this fits that requirement as well.

Number eight, we are told in the gospels that the burial chamber would have been to the right of the entrance, and this also fits that requirement.

Number nine, we are told in the gospel accounts that upon entering, after the resurrection of Jesus, that the disciples had to stoop. The entryway here has been enlarged over the years and it would've been even shorter in the days of Jesus, and so it meets that requirement.

And number ten, the main requirement for the potentiality of the resurrection tomb of Jesus is that there would be no body in it, and that is the case here.

Subsequently, it is believed by some that this is the place of Jesus' burial and resurrection. If not this place, it gives us insight into the kind of place where Jesus' body laid temporarily.

THE DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

That being said, we'll read the account as it is recorded in Luke 23, beginning in verse 50. "Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus." This is after his crucifixion.

"Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment."

Chapter 24 of Luke, "But on the first day of the week," Sunday, "at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them," perhaps angels, "in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but he has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.' And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

"Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened."

Let me explain this to you. Jesus Christ was crucified. He very much died. I'll give you six points that, together, culminate to tell the story of the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus.

It begins hundreds of years in advance, where the prophets in the Old Testament foreshadowed and predicted that Jesus would live, that he would die, that he would rise, conquering our enemies of Satan, sin, and death as our Lord, Savior, God, Christ, and Messiah. You see this at the end of Isaiah 52 through Isaiah 53, that he would come from humble circumstances, that he would live a simple life, that he would be put to death, not for his sin, but the sins of others, that he would be numbered with the transgressors, that he would be buried in a rich man's tomb. And after the suffering of his soul, he would see the light of life and be satisfied.

And as the sun shines on us, it is to help us to remember that Jesus is not lying in a dark, cold, empty tomb. He rose. He did see the light of life. He was and is satisfied. And in the new heavens, the new earth, the New Jerusalem, we are told that it is his glory that will illuminate all of the new creation, that there will be no night and there will be no sun, that it will be his glory that overtakes all.

Number two, we know as well that Jesus, himself, repeatedly, emphatically, clearly said that he would die by crucifixion, that he would be buried, and that on the third day he would rise again. This was a repeated claim of Jesus.

Number three, we know as well that he, in fact, did die. He went through the most horrendous treatment. There was, in fact, a word created, *excruciating*, that literally means "from the cross," to explain the horror of crucifixion. It was perfected by the Romans in the days of Jesus. It was reserved for those guilty of the worst of crimes. It was not generally practiced on those who were, in fact, Jewish.

Jesus was subjected to a series of trials. There were false witnesses who did not agree. Nonetheless, they sentenced him to death under the cover of darkness at night. This was not a trial. This was a murder. The Bible says they took him and had him flogged. His arms would've been placed above his head. An executioner, perhaps even two, would've held in their hand a cat o' nine tails, a handle from which would proceed lengthy straps of leather, at the end of which would have been rock, stone, or metal balls that would have tenderized the flesh of the victim. At the end, there would've been hooks out of metal or bone that would have sunk into a man's flesh, and the executioners would give it a tug to ensure that the man's exposed neck and back and buttocks and legs were absolutely captured by the hooks, and they would literally rip the flesh off of the man's body. It was not uncommon for a rib to actually leave a man's body. This would go down to the deep tissue. This would create massive heart trauma. This, in and of itself, killed many men. That's why we're told in Isaiah that his form was marred beyond human likeness, that you couldn't have even recognized Jesus in that horrid state. He was a young, healthy man.

He was then given his cross to bear, to literally carry to his place of execution. He was so beaten and so tired and so bloodied and so traumatized that the cross that was on his shoulders—weighing perhaps one hundred pounds, recycled timber that had the tears and the sweat and the blood of previous victims upon it—he fell, and it would've crushed his chest cavity, likely giving him deep, deep contusion in the heart.

You're now seeing the body work very hard to pump blood from the heart out to the extremities. He is in shock, dehydrated, and in trauma. Now his heart is traumatized. The medical examiners tell us that the falling and the crossbar would've been the equivalent of a high-speed crash with no airbag into a steering wheel. You need to go to the hospital. Jesus didn't go to the hospital. He continued, with assistance, to his place of crucifixion.

There, the carpenter had the equivalent of small railroad spikes driven through the most sensitive nerve centers of the body: the hands and the feet. He was stripped. He was mocked. His beard had been plucked out in disrespect. A crown of thorns was laid upon his head. He was mocked as King of the Jews. They lifted him up on a cross. He is near death at this point.

And they did something that is most shameful to Jesus. I didn't learn it until I was recently in Ephesus and Turkey at an archaeological dig. There was an open area with some forty-plus toilets. It was one of the first ancient public restrooms. There were no stalls. Everyone sat out in the open on these marble slabs: toilets. The aqueducts would deliver the water underneath. They didn't use toilet paper, and so there would be a trough of water that would proceed in front of the person who was using the toilet, and they would use it to clean themselves.

What happened then is that some of the peasants and the poorer slaves realized that there was potential income here, so they got one of the many sea sponges, put it on a long stick. They would slop it in the water and they would use it to clean the person who was using the public restroom. These sponges could be used for hundreds of people in a day. And the Bible tells us that when Jesus was hanging on a cross, they offered him what? A sponge. It was that sponge. It was that sponge.

Jesus speaks from the cross words of love. "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." "John, look after my mother, Mary." To the man who was crucified next to him, "Today, you'll be with me in Paradise." The Bible says that Jesus, in a loud, triumphant voice, shouted, "It is finished!" And in doing so, it is likely that that was his last breath.

Generally speaking, men died from asphyxiation through crucifixion. Their bodies would slouch. Their lungs could not fill with air. I believe, in the case of Jesus, because he was able to proclaim with great boldness, that he did not die by asphyxiation, but rather he had a heart contusion from the crossbar that crushed his chest cavity. And as the body was working and laboring to pump blood to his extremities in his traumatized body, he ultimately died literally and figuratively of a broken heart.

The Bible says that Jesus breathed his last. "Father, into your hands," he said, "I commit my spirit." And that was the atoning of the sin of the world. To ensure his death, an executioner took a spear, ran it underneath the rib cage of Jesus into his heart sac, so that water and blood proceeded forth. That shows that he did have, likely, a considerable amount of blood in his heart cavity, showing that he had a chest contusion and died of a heart attack.

Number four, Jesus was then wrapped in upwards of one hundred pounds of burial linens and spices.

Number five, he was buried in a rich man's tomb: cold, dark, hewn out of rock, no food, water, or medical attention. Those who would say he merely swooned on the cross and did not die, as some of the Muslims do, they could not be more wrong. This man died.

We then find that, three days later, number six, he was alive. He was alive. He appeared to crowds upwards of five hundred. He appeared to enemies. He appeared to friends. He appeared to family. He appeared to strangers. He appeared over the course of forty days in multiple locations. People held him. People ate with him. People conversed with him. He was very much alive.

And this fact is the bedrock of the Christian faith. At the center of Christianity is not a place, not a wailing wall, not a temple, not a mosque, not a holy mount, not a holy place, not a dome of some rock, but a man who walked away, himself moving a rock, into his own triumphant victory. And without the resurrection of Jesus, Christianity does not exist. Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 15:17, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."

If Jesus is dead, we are dead spiritually, we will die physically, and we will do nothing but gnaw on the stench of death forever. And if Jesus is alive, we are alive. And if Jesus rose from death, we'll rise from death. He is our firstfruits. He goes before us. And so everything comes down to this fact.

WHAT RESURRECTION IS AND IS NOT

Christianity is not a philosophical system. It is a historical fact. It is not based on a place; it is based on a person. It is not about an ideology; it is about an event: the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. So let me explain this to you, what resurrection is and is not.

Number one, it is not revivification, where someone dies, comes back to life, and dies again. That happened to Lazarus. He died. Jesus went to visit him, said, "Lazarus come forth." Lazarus came out. The King James Bible says, "He stinketh." He was very dead. He lived for a while and then died again. That's not what happened to Jesus.

Number two, it's not reincarnation. You die and then your soul migrates into another state of being through endless cycles of karmic progress or regress, until at one point you become nothing and at one with the divine. It's not reincarnation.

Number three, it is not annihilation, where you die and cease to exist.

Number four, it is not universalism, where everyone dies and goes to be with God. Jesus died. He went into a place to pronounce his victory and then led with him the captives who belonged to God, Ephesians says, the children of God who were, by faith, awaiting the resurrection of the Son of God. But resurrection does not mean that everyone resurrects. Only those who are in Christ. We died in Christ, we rise in Christ, we rise like Christ, we rise through Christ, we rise for Christ. And if you're not in Christ, there is no resurrection to eternal life. There is resurrection to eternal death.

Daniel says this in Daniel 12:2, in that day, the day of our resurrection, all the "multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will arise: some to everlasting life, others to everlasting shame and contempt." Shame on any teacher of the Scriptures who would say that once you die, we all go to a better place, we all go to be with God, we all live happily ever after. Only those who are in Christ.

Also, resurrection literally means life, afterlife, after death. You die. Paul says, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," that the soul, the spirit, the immaterial aspect of our being goes to be with the Father, and our body goes into the grave. And one day, the day that Jesus has

appointed, and we all yearn for, the soul rejoins the body and we rise in a glorified, perfected, completely saved state to be with Jesus forever.

As we're here in Jerusalem, what's interesting is it says that he will return, in Zechariah 14—you saw it this morning—to where? The Mount of Olives. His feet will stand upon it, and he will split the mountain from east to west. You saw the Dome of the Rock, that hideous idol lined up right over the Mount of Olives. He will split the Mount of Olives right along the Dome of the Rock, and he will create a large valley; that all of this will be laid waste and that the new heaven, the new earth, the New Jerusalem, Revelation says, will come down out of heaven.

It will not be the restoration of this Jerusalem; it'll be a New Jerusalem built by God because in heaven there's nothing made by man. It is all by God, for God, to God, gifted to us to enjoy. There's not one portion that we will chisel or create, so that we might contribute to the glorious inhabitation of the people of God in the presence of Jesus. God, Jesus, makes heaven. He makes the kingdom. He makes the great city of the New Jerusalem, and he will lay waste to this whole area, and down the New Jerusalem will come and the children of God who rise from their graves will be with him in that glorious place forever.

WHY WE BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS NOT BORROWED FROM ANCIENT RELIGIONS AND PAGAN PRACTICES

Let me explain to you why we believe in the resurrection of Jesus, and we don't believe it's a borrowed ideology from ancient religions and pagan practices. Some of you may have heard this in college: "The whole concept of Jesus' resurrection was borrowed from pagan mythology." It is not true. There is zero evidence. It is unsubstantiated fallacy and myth and folly.

I'll give you a few reasons. I'll start with a quote from N.T. Wright. He's a bishop in the Anglican church. He wrote one of the most amazing modern-day tomes on the resurrection of Jesus. He says this, quote: "Christianity was born into a world where its central claim, the resurrection of Jesus, was known to be false. Many believed that the dead were nonexistent [annihilationism]. Outside Judaism, nobody believed in resurrection." The only people in the history of the world, until the coming of Jesus, who even believed in a resurrection were those who were reading the Old Testament and, by faith, awaiting the coming of Messiah Jesus.

The Greeks had no concept of a physical resurrection because they were what we would call Platonic dualists. They saw us as matter—meat, flesh, body—and spirit or soul, the material and immaterial aspects of our being. And the world of the forms, the perfect world of spirituality, the netherworld, where we leave our physical body and its constraints and restraints—that was the great goal of all of Greek mythology. So the last thing they wanted was a resurrected body.

I was in Greece. I was in Turkey. I can assure you it's all true. I visited the holy sites. I visited the temples. There's not a word of resurrection. The whole goal is to die and to discard the husk of the body and then let the soul flourish in the afterlife. There was no concept of a resurrection. We didn't borrow it from them, because they didn't even have an ideology of a physical resurrection.

How about this? Some would say, "Well, we borrowed the idea from ancient mystery religions." There were certain pagan religions. You may have heard of them. And they would say, "Well, this particular god or goddess had an ideology and mythology that there would be a resurrection." Two things I would say. No one ever believed that these gods and goddesses actually walked the earth in human flesh. These are mythology. These are superheroes. These are invented myths. And secondly, there is not a shred of historical evidence that any of the mystery religions, any of the small pagan cults and ideologies, had any concept of a physical resurrection until the second century AD. They stole the idea from Christians. We didn't steal the idea of a physical resurrection of a dead man from the pagans. They stole it from us. They stole it from us. They stole it from us.

Furthermore, the Jews did not have a concept of an individual person rising in the middle of history. Their whole ideology was that the nation would rise together on the last day at the coming of Messiah. They had no concept. There is no record anywhere that any Jewish scholar, rabbi, teacher ever said that one man would rise in the middle of history. They all taught that the nation would rise at the end of history. Again, back to Daniel 12:2. "The multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will arise." It's the nation. It's the multitudes. It's the collectives, not one man.

The point is, well, why did Jesus? Jesus is Israel. Jesus is the fulfillment of all Israel. The temple is Jesus. He's the presence of God on the earth. The priest who mediates and intercedes, well, that's Jesus, our great High Priest. The prophets who call us to repentance, well, that's Jesus who comes to call us to repentance and make our repentance possible. The shepherds all were to remind us of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. It was all about Jesus. Everything was sign and foreshadowing and symbolism about the coming of Jesus.

So when Jesus rose from death, it showed that he is the hope of Israel, that he is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, that he is the one in whom our faith is to rest. And so it was a signpost for the nation. It was a signpost for all nations that God has vindicated, the Scriptures say elsewhere, this man Jesus, through his resurrection from death. The one thing that no one has ever done is conquered our enemy, Paul says, rightly, in 1 Corinthians 15. It's our great enemy. We can't beat death, and Jesus did; and in Christ, we do as well.

And so any concept that the resurrection was a borrowed idea, that the resurrection of one man was a borrowed idea—it was a revolutionary idea. No one considered, debated, wrote, articulated the resurrection of one man until Jesus walked away from his tomb. It was the first time in the history of the world that this idea was even considered.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' RESURRECTION

I'll give you some circumstantial evidence for Jesus' resurrection. I want you all to believe this deep down in the gut and the heart! This isn't just a fact. This isn't an archeological dig. This isn't an interesting anecdote. This is everything! The resurrection of Jesus is everything, and I want you all to

believe it with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, all of your strength, for all of your days, and to serve that cause with all of your might.

I'll give you some reasons why I want you—if you're not a Christian, right now is a really good time to give your life to Jesus, and I'll give you some circumstantial reasons for that. First of all, we'll start with this ideology of cause and effect. Anything that happens has a cause. As we look at the changes that come into the world after the resurrection of Jesus, the burden of proof is on those who would say that he is still dead. How could we explain the changes that I will share with you momentarily, apart from the resurrection of Jesus? I would say the burden of proof is on the critics, not on the believers.

Number one, we read in Luke's account that the women were the first to the empty tomb. If the resurrection of Jesus was a fabricated tale, if it was told that the women went to the empty tomb of Jesus, you can rest assured that it is, in fact, historically accurate and true, and it is not a myth, it is not a lie, it is not a fraudulently conceived myth. Why? The women couldn't testify in court. So if you're going to make up a story about a resurrected man, at least you have men be the liars so that when they go to court, they could testify. This shows Jesus' love for women and women's love for Jesus, and that the Bible is not a lie because a lie wouldn't be told like that.

Number two, additional circumstantial resurrection. Before Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were cowards. We find them in the book of Acts. There are about 120 followers of Jesus hiding, terrified. And Jesus seemingly walks through the wall, resurrected and alive in his glorified revelation, no longer constrained by matter. And all of a sudden after seeing Jesus alive, they didn't fear death anymore.

See, previously, men like Peter, they'd been total cowards. They'd been total cowards. Jesus is going to be crucified, and a young woman comes up to Peter, "Aren't you with Jesus?" "No, I never met him. I don't know him." He even cursed, "I have no idea who that man is." And after the resurrection, Peter gets crucified how? Upside down. They go to crucify him, he says, "Hang me upside down. I'm not worthy to be crucified like Jesus." How do you get a coward to be crucified upside down? The resurrection. Peter's idea was, "I know what's going to happen. I'll see you in a little bit. I'll be back. Kill me. I don't care. What are you going to do? You're just going to send me to Jesus. I'll hang out with him 'til I get a new body. No big deal."

Why did Christians start preaching and teaching and suffering? Why did they serve wholeheartedly under the reign of horrible emperors? Why did they suffer under Nero? Why did they not fear death? Why were they fine with being eaten by lions and wrapped in pitch and resin and set aflame for the party torches of Nero? Because Jesus was alive. Death no longer is fearful or final. It just changed things. It changes everything.

Number three, the followers remain loyal to Jesus. If Jesus only died, a few billion people today would not worship him. Two men were crucified with Jesus, and people aren't walking all over the holy land, millions a year, trying to figure out more about their life. We know nothing of those men. We don't even know their names. Why? They died. Jesus rose. That made him distinct and unique.

And people remain loyal to Jesus. Have you seen it? Have you seen it when a politician runs for office there's a great groundswell of support, and then he loses the election? They throw the t-shirts away. They take the bumper sticker off the truck. And they do one of two things: They give up hope for change, or they go find another messiah, another deliverer, another savior. After Jesus died, people didn't give up hope, and they didn't go follow another rabbi, they didn't go follow another religion, they didn't pursue another path. They remained loyal to Jesus.

And they became fearless, and they spread, and they scattered, and they preached, and they healed, and they taught, and they cast out demons, and they walked with the resurrection kingdom power of Jesus by the enablement of the Holy Spirit. And they went from one hundred to three thousand in a day, and they included thousands, and then it spread to the Gentiles and the nations of the earth.

How in the world do we account for this two-thousand-year legacy of loyalty to a dead man? There is no explanation for the birth of Christianity, apart from Jesus. If Jesus is dead, then the disciples scatter, the early followers mourn, and everything comes to an end. It doesn't continue for a few thousand years, causing Jesus to be the most famous person in the history of the world. More songs sung about him, more paintings painted of him, more books written regarding him than anyone who has ever lived in the history of the world. You go to the Library of Congress today, you plug in Jesus, seventeen thousand books will show up. If he's dead, none of this exists.

Additionally, number four, worship changed. They stopped worshiping on Saturday, the Sabbath. Have you seen that while you're here? Like, "What's up with the Sabbath elevator?" "Oh, we can't push the button." Really? You're kidding me? You're going to stand before God on the day of judgment and say, "I think we're fine. I never pushed the elevator button." [Laughing] Freakin' kidding me? "And I wore a hat, so . . ." Really? Seriously? Religion is ridiculous. Religion is ridiculous.

And these people were devoutly devoted to their Sabbath. See it on sundown on Friday. The shops close. Everyone goes home. Those who are particularly devout, they won't use electricity. They will not cause any labor of any sort or kind. They're very devoted to the Sabbath. And all of a sudden, the early Christians stopped worshiping on Saturday, the day of Sabbath commanded by the Ten Commandments—I think in Exodus 20:11—six days we work, one day we Sabbath, based upon God's order of creation in Genesis 1. And all of a sudden they started worshiping on Sunday, which was a workday.

Some ancient historians—like Lucian of Samosata and Pliny the Younger, who worked for Trajan—would record that Christians would gather at sunrise to worship. I think part of the reason was it was a workday. So they would get up, worship Jesus, and then go to work. They never did that before. You would never worship on the non-Sabbath day. You would never change the Sabbath, but the Christians did. They said, "Well, the old era has come to an end. The new era has dawned. God made the world, and he has made a new world with Jesus. We worship on Sunday, the Lord's Day, John calls it in Revelation, the day of the resurrection of Jesus."

How do we account for that? How do we account for those singing to Jesus, praying to Jesus, worshiping Jesus? Devout Jews who know if they are wrong, they are violating the first two commandments: There is only one God, and you worship him alone? There is no explanation for the worship of Jesus as God on Sunday, apart from the resurrection of Jesus from death. Also, Christians started enjoying Communion—remembering the broken body, shed blood of Jesus—and baptism, the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus, and it continues two thousand years later.

Additionally, number five, Jesus' family worshiped him as God. His own mother, Mary, who was devout—we read that she took him, with Joseph, his adopted father, to the temple to be dedicated to the Lord. These are very devout people. They are peasants in Nazareth. They live in a town of fifty to a hundred. He's a carpenter. These are poor people. The cost and the time and the journey of a month or more, perhaps, for them to get to the temple, it's a big sacrifice. They're very devout.

And following the resurrection, we see Mary numbered among the disciples in the upper room, and we see her praying to her son as God. We later see his brothers, James and Jude, worship him as God, become pastors, write books of the Bible bearing their names. Before the resurrection, they thought their brother was an absolute lunatic. And following the resurrection, he went from lunatic to Lord, and they worshiped him as God. I'll give you a few more.

Number six, Jesus' enemies worshiped him. Saul of Tarsus hated Christians. He murdered them. We first meet him overseeing the execution of the early church deacon in Acts. Jesus comes down, reveals himself. Saul becomes Paul, becomes one of the great proclaimers of the resurrection of Jesus, and dies without ever repenting or recanting. There's no way you explain Paul transitioning from a devout opponent to a devoted worshiper of Jesus.

As well, number seven, as I told you, Christianity exploded.

Number eight, no body was ever produced. The first explanation by the Jewish authorities was the body was stolen. Well great, where is it? A good reward would've been offered. And you're looking at a tomb, as well. When you consider it, a large stone rolled over, the Roman seal placed upon it, soldiers there to guard it. Who stole this tomb? Why is there no record of it being taken? Where in the world did the body go? And even if the body was stolen, why is it alive? "Oh, they stole his body." Well, yeah, and then he started walking around, and eating fish, and preaching. You still have to explain that! Just that the body was stolen, that doesn't account for anything.

And number nine—and I think this is incredibly important. The tomb of Jesus was never enshrined. You could walk through the tombs, and you'll see the places of "holy" men and women, teachers, leaders, rabbis. There'll be flowers, and cards, and candles. There'll be memorials and remembrances, and nothing like that was ever found at the tomb of Jesus. James Dunn, a New Testament scholar, says, quote, "There is no evidence of any veneration at the tomb of Jesus." Crowds didn't flock there. They didn't cry. They didn't light candles. They didn't write prayers. They didn't mourn and weep. He wasn't there.

I'll read this to you from William Lane Craig. He's a Christian apologist, a theologian. He spent a considerable amount of time in his Ph.D. studies examining all of the first- and second-century textual evidence regarding the resurrection of Jesus. He wrote his dissertation on that, and he says this, quote: "It was customary in Judaism for the tomb of a prophet or holy man to be preserved or venerated as a shrine. This was so because the bones of the prophet lay in the tomb and imparted to the site its religious values. If the remains were not there, then the grave would lose its significance as a shrine."

No one went to Jesus' tomb. Today, when we showed up here, I asked the curator, I asked, "Is this the empty tomb of Jesus?" He says, "We have no idea. It may be. If not, it's one like it." No one is sure where Jesus was laid. Why? No one went there! It doesn't matter! Who cares? It's empty! He's alive! Death is conquered! Sin is conquered! Satan is conquered! The wrath of God is lifted! Jesus is alive! There's no need to go to the tomb! We just want to go see Jesus!

JESUS IS ALIVE

And this changes Christianity from every religion on the face of the earth. There are four major religions. You'll see them walking around. You'll see them walking around. Three of those four are very distinct. Christianity is unique. Those four religions that I'm referring to are the four religions with a founder, rather than a philosophy. Meaning, they follow a leader and not an ideology, like Hinduism does.

And do you know what happens? Each of those religions has a sacred place where their founder is buried, that they make pilgrimages, and they weep, and they cry. And if we were Muslim, or if we were Jewish, we would act very differently. If we were Buddhists, we would all be very sad. I wouldn't wear white; I'd wear black. I wouldn't be yelling; I'd be mumbling. I wouldn't be smiling and laughing and totally fired-up; I'd be very sad. Because we'd be remembering the death of someone we considered to be a great man, who gave us teaching, but no power; and gave us hope, but no life.

And so to this day, the Jews follow Abraham, and they know that he is buried in Hebron, and many make a pilgrimage there every year to remember their dead leader. Same with Buddhism. They know that Buddha is buried in India, and his followers, to this day, pilgrimage there regularly, and they mourn, and they weep, and they wish that the Buddha was alive. He's not. Jesus has already dealt with the Buddha. Those who follow Islam and its false teachings know that Muhammad is buried in Medina. They go to his burial site every year. They wail, they mourn, they weep. They remember him. They wish that he was alive, and he's dead.

Do you know who's in Abraham's tomb? Abraham. Do you know who's in Buddha's tomb? Buddha. Do you know who's in Muhammad's tomb? Muhammad. Do you know who's in Jesus' tomb? Nobody! Nobody is in Jesus' tomb. Nobody is in Jesus' tomb. *[Applauding]* Dear friends, we're not Jews, we're not Muslims, we're not Buddhists. We're Christians. We follow a man who is alive. His name is Jesus. He's God become a man to live

the life we have not lived, to die the death we should've died, to give the gift we cannot earn. He is Lord, God, Savior, King, Christ! He is living right now, ruling, reigning from a throne right now, preparing a New Jerusalem right now, willing to forgive all sinners and sins right now, willing to give the gift of eternal life right now, and preparing for us a resurrection day of our own, when we shall see him, how? Face to face. Until that day, remain. Remain and abide in him.

Father, I thank you for an opportunity to preach the Bible. I love my job! Thank you. I thank you that I get to teach the Bible! I thank you that I don't have to get up and talk about the philosophy of Buddha, or the rules of Muhammad, or the death of Abraham; that I get to talk about the resurrection of Jesus. God, this means the world to me. Lord Jesus, may we be passionate about Jesus, his death, his burial, his resurrection in our place, for our sins, as our Savior, 'til we see him face to face. And we ask, Holy Spirit, that you would empower us, as you did the first followers of Jesus. That you would give us that courage, that passion, that compassion, that boldness. What is death when you know Christ? May we live in light of the day of resurrection, for Jesus' name, for Jesus' fame. Amen.

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.