

Leader's Guide

THE WEEK THAT CHANGED THE WORLD with Dr. Paul L. Maier

6 week study

about the Easter story from a historical perspective

Based on the book

***In the Fullness of Time* by Paul L. Maier**

and the film

The Week that Changed the World

WEEK 1: Discovering this story is His-story

Encourage everyone to get the book *In the Fullness of Time*, by Paul L. Maier.

Introduction

Did you ever wonder why the authorities needed Judas to identify Jesus? Or, how could the people who cheered Jesus on Palm Sunday call for his death just a few days later? Or, why was Pontius Pilate trying so hard to avoid sending Jesus to his death? And is there evidence--outside the Bible--that these events actually happened?

While the basic outline of Holy Week is known to nearly all Christians, there is a level of detail and texture that is often missed. By better understanding the details of this historical week, we can better appreciate God's plan as history, but also as our story, our history; and we will have more confidence to talk to others about Jesus - the true and historical Jesus.

All of Christianity hinges on what happened during seven days in history. The Week that Changed the World provides a deeper understanding of the most important week in history.

Grounding in History

St. Paul's hope in the Gospel was based on historical fact.

Read Galatians 4:4-7:

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Q) What term does Paul use to refer to the historical time of when Jesus became incarnate?
The "set time" or the "fullness of time."

Q) What do you think Paul meant by the phrase "set time" (or "fullness of time.")?
He was pointing to the historical reality of Jesus' incarnation into human flesh; that it happened in the real world at just the right time - in the "fullness of time."

Q) Any time could be seen as the right time for Jesus. But what do you know about the era when Jesus lived? Why would this be the "right time."

There was one common language; a highway system to unite the world; the "Peace of Rome" - while Rome ruled the world. There was little war; for those who obeyed the Roman government there was a sense of safety from outside nations. Furthermore, God's people were hungry, spiritually speaking. The existing spiritual leadership was

corrupt, and the last prophet, Malachi, spoke some 400 years earlier. (For more detail see "In the Fullness of Time," p.24-5)

WATCH THE FULL VIDEO (33 minutes)

Concluding questions for discussion:

Q) Why is it important to know that the story of Jesus actually happened in history?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

-If it didn't happen, our faith is in vain, we are a bunch of liars, and our loved ones are gone forever! On the contrary, knowing it is historically true means our faith is also real. We speak the truth, our loved ones are really alive, and we have the power of a historical, real Jesus that compels us to talk to others about Jesus with confidence.

Q) What fact in the film did you find the most interesting?

Q) What would you like to know more about?

Q) Who would you want to show this movie to and why?

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read Chapter 4: An Undatable Date

Read Chapter 8: Herod the King

WEEK 2 - Discovering The Historical Context Of Holy Week:

Explain to the class:

We're going to watch the first few minutes of the video we saw last week, and then dig a bit deeper.

WATCH SCENE SELECTION ONE (about 3 minutes)

Specific dates - Birth of Jesus

The video begins with text stating that the Holy week story begins in March of 33 AD. The Bible does not give specific dates for any event, but scholars can extrapolate with some accuracy. Let's first look at the example of determining the date of Jesus birth.

From Chapter 4 - An Undatable Date

Q) Do we know if Jesus was actually born on December 25th?

He most likely was not. That date was picked because it aligned with the existing celebrations.

Q) Question: How to we know Jesus was born *before* 4 BC?

Herod the Great died in 4 BC, and we know Herod was alive when Jesus was born.

Read Luke 2:1-2

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

Read Luke 3:1-2

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

Q) In the readings above, what do you think Luke is trying to accomplish by referring to lists of rulers who are known to history, even outside of the Bible?

He is demonstrating that these events really happened in history. We can cross-examine Luke based on non-biblical accounts and find out that Luke's gospel matches the non-biblical record of history. By connecting historical figures with dates—such as "in the fifteenth year of..." – Luke is giving his readers solid evidence that can be verified.

Q) When did John's baptizing of Jesus take place, according to Luke 3:1-2?

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

29 A.D. because Tiberius began to reign in 14 A.D. and this was the “fifteenth year of his reign.”

Discovering the importance of geography:

Q) When the Bible speaks of places like Galilee (the region where most of Jesus’ ministry takes place), do you picture where that might be? Do you have a sense of where Galilee is compared to Jerusalem?

About 80 miles to the north. Separated by non-Jewish Samaria.

Read Matthew 26: 69-73 (Peter denies knowing Jesus)

71 Then he [Peter] went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.” 72 He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!” 73 After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.” 74 Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!”

Q) What did the Jews in Jerusalem think of the Jews in Galilee?

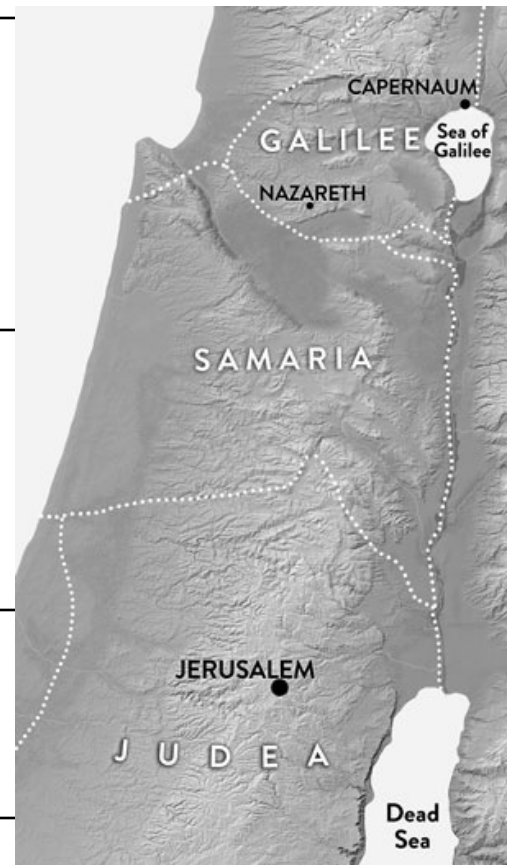
Looked down on them, partly because of their accent, and partly because they were not seen as devout and pious in their worship life.

Read John 1:45-46

45 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.” 46 “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.

Q) How did most Jews perceive of their brethren who lived in rural areas like the small town of Nazareth?

They saw them as backward country hicks, uneducated, not religiously devout.



WATCH SCENE SELECTION TWO (about 1 minute)

The historical relationship between the Romans and the Jews:

From Chapter 8 - Herod the King

Q) What was the relationship between Herod the Great and the Roman Empire?

Herod was a "client king" which means that as long as he kept the peace, paid taxes, and deferred to Rome, he could rule the Jews as he pleases.

Q) Why did the Romans let the Jews continue to practice the Jewish religion?

Keeps the peace. Holds off on insurrection talk. The Romans were not monotheists, so Yahweh could just be another god in their pantheon of gods

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read Chapter 14: Up to Jerusalem

Read Chapter 15: Intrigue and Conspiracy

WEEK 3 - The Impact of the Lazarus miracle

Explain to the class: We're going to pick up where we left off: looking the importance of understanding Biblical geography and the impact of the raising of Lazarus.

WATCH SCENE SELECTION THREE (about 2 minutes)

Bethany

Q) Where was Bethany in relation to Jerusalem?

Small "suburb" just on the other side of the Mount of Olives, 1.5 miles east of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the most important Jewish city, where thousands would gather for the celebrations of three major feasts, including Passover.

Q) Three people important to Jesus lived in Bethany. Who were they?

Mary, Martha and Lazarus (two sisters and their brother)

The repercussions of Jesus' raising of Lazarus

Read: John 11: 38-48

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation."

Q) Why was this miracle different from the many others Jesus performed?

It was close to the Jewish power base in Jerusalem (not in faraway Galilee). Plus, it was done in front of many people, including Jews who were loyal to the Pharisees and the Jewish Sanhedrin. Jewish leaders could now see the threat directly, and sought to kill Jesus because they worried he would challenge their power and status.

Q) What did the Jewish leaders fear—after Lazarus was raised from the dead.

They worried that news of this miracle would cause many to follow Jesus. With many followers, he could lead an insurrection against the Romans, which the Romans would

violently squash. It was a legitimate concern from their perspective. A few decades later, the Jews did follow charismatic leaders and revolt against the Romans. The Romans fought back, utterly destroying Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Read John 12: 9-11

Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

- Q) In addition to killing Jesus, who else did the Jewish leaders determine to kill? Why?
Lazarus. Jewish leaders determined that because Lazarus was alive again, they needed to kill him (and Jesus) so the movement would not gain momentum. So, in essence, Jewish leaders are acknowledging that a miracle took place. Because if Lazarus was still dead, there would be no need to kill him.

Read John 11: 49-50, 53

Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." ... So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

- Q) What did Caiaphas say was the solution to the "problem" of Jesus?
Kill him so the people don't revolt against the Romans.

The plot to arrest Jesus:

Read Matthew 26: 3-5

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. "But not during the festival," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."

- Q) Why would the chief priests avoid arresting Jesus during the festival (Passover).
Because he was so popular. Remember the cheering of Palm Sunday. Passover was a time when a hundred thousand (or more) additional people were in Jerusalem, and a riot could more easily spread.

ARREST NOTICE

- Q) The arrest notice that the film explains is alluded to in Matthew 26:4 (above) and is more specifically recorded in a source outside the Bible: the Jewish Talmud. Read it (p114). It mentions stoning Jesus. Is that in conflict with the Bible's account?

No, because stoning is how the Jews would have conducted an execution if they were allowed to by the Romans. It was the Romans who practiced crucifixion. The arrest notice was written prior to the actual event. If Jews could have had their way, they would have stoned Jesus. For more on the typical Jewish practice of execution, read about the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:54-58.

Q) How does the admission by Jesus' opponents that he practiced "sorcery" actually support the claim of Jesus miracles?

Even his opponents concede that he is doing something that's extraordinary. For example, they never question the reality of Jesus' raising Lazarus. They simply conclude the source of Jesus' power must be demonic. Even Jesus' most staunch opponents don't question the veracity of His miracles.

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read Chapter 14: Up to Jerusalem (part 2; starting at p109)

Read Chapter 15: (review)

Read Chapter 16: A Last Supper

Read Chapter 17: In the Garden

Read Chapter 18: Annas and Caiaphas

WEEK 4: Discovering the details of the history of Holy Week:

Explain to the class: Last week we discussed the events leading up to Holy Week, now we are we are picking up the story starting on Palm Sunday.

WATCH SCENE SELECTION 4 (about 10 minutes)

Palm Sunday

Read John 12:9-15,17-19

Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him. The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel!” Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”... Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

Q) How was Jesus’ visit to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday different than previous visits to the city?

It was a very public entrance. The town was packed because of Passover.

(Jesus rode into Jerusalem in the same manner as Judah of the leader of the Maccabean revolt did in 164 B.C.—and as Moses commanded the Israelites to celebrate the first day of this important feast. (See Leviticus 23:39-41). Jesus is showing by His Palm Sunday entrance that He is properly fulfilling the Law of Moses in Leviticus 23; and He is showing He is going to do something greater than Judah, the Maccabite, did when he cleansed the temple of the pagan desecration.)

Q) What promoted many in the crowds to flock to see Jesus? (v18 above)

They had heard about the miracle of Lazarus raising from the dead, which happened nearby.

Q) Why did the big crowds frustrate the Pharisees in their attempt to arrest Jesus? (v19)

It’s hard to stop a popular leader. If they grabbed him in broad daylight, the people might revolt in protest—especially given the large numbers in Jerusalem for the Passover.

Moneychangers

Read Matthew 21: 12-13

Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 1 “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’”

Q) Why was Jesus upset about the sales going on in the temple?

It had turned God's house into a place of profiteering.

“Impossible” Questions

Read Luke 20: 20-26

Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. So the spies questioned him: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” He saw through their duplicity and said to them, “Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. He said to them, “Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.

Read Luke 20: 27-36

Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. “Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?” Jesus replied, “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection.

Q) What were some of the “impossible” questions the Jewish leaders tried to use to discredit Jesus. (p121)

Should you pay taxes to Caesar? If Jesus said “no” then he could be arrested by the Romans. If he said “yes” then the anti-Roman Jews would think he is a traitor. So the Pharisees thought they had Jesus between a rock and a hard place.

Similarly, the Sadducees expected Jesus to fumble the “gotcha” question about remarriage.

Q) Does this remind you of the “gotcha” politics of the modern day?

Arrest

Q) Why did the Pharisees need an insider to capture Jesus?

Several reasons, including: the arrest needed to be done at nighttime to avoid the objection of the crowds; the Pharisees did not know where Jesus was staying overnight; there were 250,000 people in greater Jerusalem; it was very dark out; many were unsure what Jesus looked like; people in the era had poor eyesight and no glasses or contact lenses to help them.

Annas and Caiaphas

Q) Was Annas the high priest? What role did he play?

He was not the high priest, although he had been previously. He was the high priest emeritus and the behind-the-scenes power broker.

Q) Can you think of a similar example from today—a person who has a lot of power, but is not officially in charge?

One example is a wealthy person who has supported a particular political candidate.

Read about the trial in Mark 14: 55-59

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.’” Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

Q) Why do you think the witnesses were so untrustworthy—and the trial so confused?

The trial was hastily prepared, there was no time for sophisticated collusion.

Q) Caiaphas bones were discovered in 1990. What is the value of this sort of archeological information?

Helps establish historical validity of the New Testament accounts.

WATCH SCENE SELECTION 5 (Pilate/Herod Antipas, about 4 minutes)

Q) Why was Jesus turned over to Pilate?

The Romans were in charge and the Jews were not allowed to execute anyone.

Read Luke 23: 4-6

Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no basis for a charge against this man.” But they insisted, “He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.” On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. 7 When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

Q) Why did Pilate send Jesus to Herod Antipas?

He wanted to get rid of the Jesus problem. Because Jesus was from Galilee and Herod Antipas ruled Galilee, Pilate could turn the matter over Herod Antipas—which is exactly what he did.

Herod Antipas

Q) Who was Herod Antipas?

Herod the Great's son.

Q) Where did Antipas rule?

North, in the area of Galilee (and other regions). He would visit Jerusalem for the Passover and other celebrations.

Q) What land did Antipas covet?

He wanted for Pilate's territory (Judea). His plan had been to make Pilate look bad to the Roman leaders—in the hopes Pilate would be removed and Antipas could then take his place.

Read Luke 23: 6-12

When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.

Q) Why was Herod Antipas looking forward to seeing Jesus?

He wanted to see one of the miracles he had heard about.

Q) It's easy to condemn Antipas for wanting Jesus to act like a magician or superhero. But are there times when we are similarly preoccupied with Jesus' ability to do wonders, rather than his role as Savior?

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read Chapter 19: Pontius Pilate

Read Chapter 20: A Roman Trial

Read Chapter 21: Execution

Read Chapter 22: Easter Dawn

Read Chapter 23: Doubts and Skepticism

Read Chapter 24: The Empty Tomb

WEEK 5: Good Friday through Easter Sunday

Explain to the group:

Last week we discussed the events of the first days of Holy Week, now we are we are picking up the story on Good Friday.

WATCH SENE SELECTION 6, about 11 minutes.

Good Friday

Q) How can we account for the Palm Sunday crowd cheering Jesus—while the Good Friday crowd called for his crucifixion, and asked for the release of Barabbas?

It was a different crowd. The second group was likely paid or coerced by Jewish leaders.

Read Luke 23:27 (account of Jesus on his way to his crucifixion)

27 A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.

Q) What is the Biblical evidence that, even on Good Friday, many Jews did not want to see Jesus put to death?

The Luke passage above shows that many were crying for Jesus.

Q) In years past, some fringe scholars wondered if Pontius Pilate was a real individual. What discovery settled the issue?

Excavated inscription with his name.

Q) Did you learn anything new about how Jesus was nailed to the cross?

Perhaps that a plaque of wood was used to ensure his hands and feet stayed secure.

Easter Morning

Q) The Easter morning accounts are told from different points of view in the various gospels. The eyewitnesses don't report the details identically. Why does this support authenticity?

It shows the early church didn't tamper with the scriptures to make a unified account.

Resurrection

Read Luke 24: 36-43

36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They

gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.

Read John 2:19-21

19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” 20 They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

Q) The above accounts in Luke emphasize that the resurrected Jesus has a body, not just a spirit. Why is this important?

Jesus predicted a bodily resurrection in John 2 (above). Also, Jesus’ physical, bodily resurrection reinforces the truth that this was a real event in history, not a ghost-like aberration.

Read Job 19:23-27

Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Q) Some critics think bodily resurrection was a new idea “invented” by early Christians. Did Job believe in an afterlife? Did he believe the afterlife was physical or only spiritual?

Job speaks of a physical resurrection in which “after his skin has been destroyed” he will “see God” in “his flesh” with “his eyes.”

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Q) Paul grounds the resurrection of Jesus in what kind of historical evidence?

Eyewitnesses. Paul says that the risen Jesus appeared to Cephas (Peter), the "Twelve" and then more than "five hundred of the brothers and sisters, most of whom are still living." In other words, Paul suggests his readers go talk to people who saw the risen Jesus with their own eyes.

The Criterion of Embarrassment

Q) According to Dr. Maier, what is the "Criterion of Embarrassment"? Why does this reinforce the authenticity of the Bible?

It's the idea that if an account includes details that are embarrassing to the main group, then the account is more likely to be true. The main reason anyone would preserve embarrassing details is because they are committed to preserving the truth.

Read Mark 3:20-22

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

Q) How would the criterion of embarrassment apply to Mark 3:20-22?

If you were inventing a story, you'd never add a part about how Jesus' own family thought he was out of his mind. And you'd never suggest that his power to do miracles came from the Devil.

Q) Can you think of other examples of "embarrassing" details in the New Testament?

Peter's denial is a good example. And the many times the disciples completely misunderstood Jesus. Or the fact that women were the first witnesses of the resurrection, since women were not considered to be trustworthy witnesses in the First Century.

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Teaching and Healing (pages 97-99)

WEEK 6: Non-Biblical Texts concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth:

WATCH SCENE SELECTION 7 (about 2 minutes)

Q) What is the role of extra-biblical sources?

They are not necessary for faith, of course. But they reinforce the understanding that the events of the Bible took place in history—at a real time and place.

Below are excerpts of non-biblical accounts about Jesus:

Tacitus

(c. A.D. 55 - c. A.D. 117) Tacitus was a respected historian in ancient Rome. He had contempt for Christians, but verified that Jesus was executed under Pilate:

[Annals XV, 44] Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome.

Complete Works of Tacitus. Tacitus. Alfred John Church. William Jackson Brodribb. Sara Bryant. edited for Perseus. New York. : Random House, Inc. Random House, Inc. reprinted 1942.

Suetonius

(c. A.D. 69 - c. A.D. 140) Suetonius was a Roman historian with no Christian or Jewish affiliation.

[Life of Claudius 25:4] As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, Claudius expelled them from Rome.

This is the same event mentioned in Acts 18:2

[Acts 18:2] There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome.

Lucian

Lucian (c. A.D. 120-c. A.D. 180) was a Greek who ridiculed Christians, but—in the process—confirmed the basic Christian record.

[The Death of Peregrinus 11-13] The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day- the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account.

Josephus

Josephus (A.D. 37 - c. A.D. 100) was a respected historian who was asked by the Romans to write a history of the Jewish people. His many volumes range from Adam and Eve all the way to Rome's sack of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Josephus was not a Christian but offers detail on Biblical figures that is not available elsewhere. The account below is about the stoning of Jesus' half-brother James in about A.D. 62.

[Book 20, Ch. 9, part 1]...so he assembled the sanhedrim 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...

The account below from Josephus is about Jesus himself. Unfortunately some versions of this account were altered in later years. Most scholars believe the version below, recorded in Agapius' Testimonium, is faithful to the original.

[Antiquities 18:63 (via Agapius)] At this time there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. 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 reported wonders.

Note: For more on Josephus, read Dr. Maier's book "Josephus, the Essential Works"

The Babylonian Talmud

The Babylonian Talmud is a collection of rabbinic teachings and Jewish laws. In attempting to refute Jesus as the messiah, it verifies that he was crucified ("hanged" meant crucified on a cross in this era).

"On the eve of the Passover Yeshu (Jesus) was hanged. Forty days before the execution, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favor he was hanged on the eve of the Passover."

Q) Were you previously familiar with any of these extra-biblical sources? Is there value in Christians being aware of these writings?

From these non-biblical historical sources, what can we say about the life of Jesus?

These non-biblical sources confirm that there was a historical Jesus who was crucified by a Roman governor named Pontius Pilate at the time that Tiberius was the Caesar of

Rome. He was crucified on the eve of the Jewish Passover. He had disciples who continued to preach about him and report that Jesus had risen from the dead and was alive. His followers worshipped Him and were called Christians.

The Gospels as History:

Scholars of every stripe acknowledge that Luke was a first-rate historian. One illustration of this is reflected in his desire to connect the events of Jesus' life to people and places known to his readers—and known to history. Read Luke 3:1-3

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Q) What does this tell you about Luke as a historian?

He works to connect to his account to known people and events. He is concerned about truth, accuracy and connecting Jesus' story to historical events.

Now compare how Mark and Luke refer to Herod Antipas:

Read Mark 6:14

King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

Read Luke 3:19

But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done...

Q) How do the two accounts refer differently to Herod?

Mark refers to Herod as a "king," but Luke uses the more precise label "tetrarch." Mark is not incorrect; to Herod's subjects he was a king. But Luke was always careful to be as precise as possible; and thus uses the term "tetrarch," which more narrowly defines Herod's position. All throughout Luke's two books he strives for this kind of accuracy, naming leaders, places, titles, all very precisely and accurately.

Final Thoughts:

-How has this Bible study deepened your faith in Jesus, you God and Savior?

-How can a study of archeology, ancient non-biblical documents, and the historical details, such as the geography of the biblical texts help you share your faith with others?

For more information about this study, go to TheWeekThatChangedTheWorld.com