PART XIII: THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST

SECTION 252: REPORT OF THE TWO DISCIPLES TO THE REST (1 COR. 15:5A) —
LUKE 24:33-35

SECTION 253: APPEARANCE TO THE TEN ASSEMBLED DISCIPLES — [MARK 16:14];
LUKE 24:36-43; JOHN 20:19-25

SECTION 254: APPEARANCE TO THE ELEVEN ASSEMBLED DISCIPLES (1 COR. 15:5B)
— JOHN 20:26-31

SECTION 255: APPEARANCE TO THE SEVEN DISCIPLES WHILE FISHING —
JOHN 21:1-25

SECTION 256: APPEARANCE TO THE ELEVEN IN GALILEE (1 COR. 15:6) —
MATTHEW 28:16-20; [MARK 16:15-18]

SECTION 257: APPEARANCE TO JAMES, HIS BROTHER — 1 COR. 15:7

SECTION 258: APPEARANCE TO THE DISCIPLES IN JERUSALEM (ACTS 1:3-8) —
LUKE 24:44-49

SECTION 259: CHRIST’S PARTING BLESSING AND DEPARTURE (ACTS 1:9-12) —
[MARK 16:19-20]; LUKE 24:50-53

SEQUEL

REVIEW
SECTION 252: REPORT OF THE TWO DISCIPLES TO THE REST
(1 COR. 15:5A)—LUKE 24:33-35

Among the 11 Peter is first to see the resurrected Messiah
Purpose: to comfort Peter in light of his three denials
Yeshua is reestablishing his faith
Yeshua appeared to Peter alone, privately consoling his grief

LUKE 24:33-35

When the two disciples get back to Jerusalem they affirm the resurrection
They were so excited they hike back seven miles, uphill.
Round trip of 14 miles that day
At this point they are believed because of Peter’s witness

SECTION 253: APPEARANCE TO THE TEN ASSEMBLED DISCIPLES—
[MARK 16:14]; LUKE 24:36-43; JOHN 20:19-25


THE APPEARANCE
It is at this point that eight more Apostles come to faith
Three messages—“Go to Galilee”
Because of one who did not believe the resurrection reports, they stay in Jerusalem
Therefore, Jesus must make His appearance to them in Jerusalem

REBUKE OF UNBELIEF
1. Failure to depart to Galilee as commanded three times
2. They think He is a ghost (He disproves this by eating the fish)
COMMISSION #1

1. Gives them an authoritative ministry

This is also the basis for our authority today to go to any country, culture, or people with the Gospel message

2. Endowment of the Holy Spirit

However, not in the New Testament sense, that will occur in Acts 2

Reason: they are receiving an Old Testament empowering by the Holy Spirit in order that they can comprehend 40 days of post resurrection ministry

They must now learn much in the next 40 days

3. Peter’s apostolic authority extended to all the Apostles

Based on the authority of Scripture we can announce that a Believer has received God’s forgiveness from sin

Conversely, we can also authoritatively announce that the Unbeliever has not received forgiveness.

Human beings cannot forgive sin, only God can, but we can announce that fact.

THOMAS ABSENT

Thomas is our guarantee against gullibility

To be gullible means to be easily deceived or duped

Thomas refused to be easily persuaded, he refuses to be duped

On the negative side, Thomas is rejecting the testimony of 10 credible witnesses

In Biblical thinking a matter is established with 2 or 3 witnesses—Deuteronomy 19:15

He has lived and ministered with these men for 3½ years

He knows them very well

Thomas has gone too far in his desire to be protected from deception

Good lesson for us

1. Do not be gullible

2. Do not become a hardened skeptic
### THE MESSIANIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feast</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Messianic Significance</th>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PASOSSER</strong> (Pesach) 14 Nisan</td>
<td>To remember Israel’s redemption from slavery in Egypt</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Messiah’s substitutionary, sacrificial death</td>
<td>*1 Cor. 5:6-7</td>
<td>Messiah Yeshua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNLEAVENED BREAD</strong> (Hag Hamatzot) 15-21 Nisan</td>
<td>To remember the haste with which the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Messiah’s sinless life</td>
<td>*1 Cor. 5:8, Luke 22:19, 1 Peter 1:18-19, 2 Cor. 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 3:5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIRST FRUITS</strong> (Yom Habikkerurim) First day of the week during Unleavened Bread</td>
<td>To thank the LORD for the first produce of the barley harvest to come</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Messiah’s resurrection</td>
<td>*1 Cor. 15:20-23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Fifty Day/Seven Week Interval

| WEEPS (Pentecost) (Shavuot) 50 days/7 weeks after Firstfruits | To thank the LORD for the first produce of the wheat harvest to come | Spring | Birth of the Messiah’s body (Beginning of the age)                                  | Acts 2:1-4, Eph. 3:6, 5:23 Col. 1:18, 24                                     | Messiah’s Assembly (The Church)           |
| Four month interval | A time of working in the fields | Summer | Current age                                                                           | John 4:35-38, Matt. 28:18-20 Romans 1:16                                      |                                           |
| **TRUMPETS** (Rosh Hashanah) 1 Tishrei | A sacred assembly during which the shofar is sounded | Fall | Rapture of the Messiah’s body (End of the age)                                        | *1 Cor. 15:50-52, 1 Thess. 4:16-17                                           |                                           |
| **YOM KIPUR** (Day of Atonement) 10 Tishrei | National cleansing of Israel’s sins                                   | Fall | The Day of the LORD (Great Tribulation) and Israel’s national regeneration          | Isaiah 13:6-9, Zech. 12:10 Matt. 23:37-39 Rom. 11:25-27 Zech. 13:8-9         | Israel: Messiah’s Nation                  |
| **SUUKOT** (Tabernacles) (Booths) 15-21 Tishrei | Remember the wilderness wanderings, God living among men, thanksgiving for the fall harvest. | Fall | God (Messiah Yeshua) living among men and reigning over the world from Jerusalem | Zech. 14:16-19                                                              | Messianic Kingdom: Messiah’s Reign        |
MESSIANIC SIGNIFICANCE

1 Co 15:20-23
But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming,

IS THE MESSIAH’S RESURRECTION PREDICTED IN SCRIPTURE?—YES!

Is 53:8
By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

Is 53:10
But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

Is 53:12
Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

Ps 16:10-11
For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fulness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

DO THE RABBI’S ACKNOWLEDGE THIS—YES!

Wikipedia: Menachem Mendel Schneerson
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menachem_Mendel_Schneerson

During these appearances his followers would chant the traditional salutation of a Rebbe and, generating some controversy, append to it the title of Moshiach: “Yechi Adonenu Moreinu v’Rabbeinu Melech Hamoshiach l’olam voed!” – “Long live our Master, our Teacher, and our Rabbi, King Messiah forever and ever!“

(Rabbi Schneerson died in 1994)

Chabad Hasidim believe that there is no successor to Schneerson, and that he is in that sense still their leader. Many believe that he will return as the Messiah; …
In his work entitled, "Yeshuas Meshicho," Torah giant Rav Don Isaac Abarbanel writes as follows:

"Do not be amazed by the fact that that Moshiach can be one of those who will rise in Techiya (resurrection), because this possibility was already considered by our sages in Gemara Sanhedrin." (Iyun Sheni, Perek Alef)

Moshiach Facts (www.moshiachfacts.com)

Can Moshiach be Resurrected?

Rav states:
"If Moshiach will come from the living, it will be Rabeinu HaKadosh (i.e. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi), if he comes from the dead, it will be Daniel (the Prophet)..." Sanhedrin 98:B

Rashi restates Rav's position as follows:

“This means, that if Moshiach were to come from those who are living now, it will be Rabeinu HaKadosh...but if (Moshiach) is to come from those who have died already, it will be ‘Daniel …' Rashi-“Ee Min Chaya, Hu Kegon-Rabainu HaKadosh" 98:B

While the concept of 'Moshiach from the dead' may be foreign in the eyes of a great deal of today's Jewry, it is not so in the eyes of the Torah. And for a Jew, the Torah view is the only one that need be consulted. We must place our trust in the Torah, not emotional qualms, to guide us on this topic, just as we do with every other aspect of our lives. The fact that Christianity has espoused the concept of a resurrected Messiah bears absolutely no relevance to how we, as Jews, decide a Torah matter. ... And the fact remains, that our Torah substantiates the notion of a 'Resurrected Redeemer'. Once this has been established, no other factors need be considered.

Messiah Watch International www.rabbiyess.com

Laughing at the Orthodox Jewish “Nay” Sayers

“… 13 sacred Jewish sources foretell of a resurrected Messiah for Judaism …”

Pinchas Lapide, The Resurrection of Jesus

Page 13: I accept the resurrection of Easter Sunday not as an invention of the community of disciples, but as a historical event

Pinchas Lapide (1922 — 1997) was a Jewish theologian. He was an Israeli diplomat from 1951 to 1969, among other positions acting as Israeli counsel to Milan, and was instrumental in gaining recognition for the young state of Israel. He wrote more than 35 books during his lifetime.—wikipedia
**IS THERE AN EXTRA-BIBLICAL EVIDENCE OF THE RESURRECTION—YES!**

**Josephus: Antiquities, 18, 3, 3**

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

**IN SPITE OF THE PREVIOUS EVIDENCE THE MODERN RABBINICAL POSITION REMAINS UNCHANGED.**

**Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America (1996—Rabbi David Berger)**

“There is not and never has been a place in Judaism for the belief that the Messiah son of David, will begin his Messianic career only to experience death, burial, and resurrection before completing it.”

**On Eagles Wings: Hershel Brand**
Endorsement by Rabbi Aharon Feldman Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivas Ner Israel

“... Belief in the Moshiach is one of the cardinal principles of Judaism, ... The concept of Moshiach has in recent years been perverted by irresponsible elements of Jewry by the introduction of foreign concepts; for example, that the Moshiach will be resurrected from the dead or, alternatively, that he is an embodiment of the Divine. ... these concepts have no basis in Jewish mesorah (tradition).”
SECTION 254: APPEARANCE TO THE ELEVEN ASSEMBLED DISCIPLES
(1 COR. 15:5B)—JOHN 20:26-31

READ John 20:26

After 8 days, they are still in Jerusalem

Thomas is holding them all back

Therefore, Jesus makes His sixth appearance

Primarily for Thomas

READ John 20:27

He offers Thomas exactly what he wanted as undisputable physical proof

At this point, Thomas replies “My Lord and MY God”

READ John 20:28

Not only is Thomas our guardian against gullibility, Thomas is also our hedge against the “Group Hallucination Theory” of the resurrection

Skeptical, cynical Thomas insisted on physical evidence

Thomas affirms the Deity of the Messiah

Jesus then indicates that the greater blessing is not seeing and believing but in believing and not having seen

READ John 20:29

This is always an encouraging verse to me because you and I all fall into the category of greater blessing

We have believed and yet have never seen the resurrected Messiah

John’s theme was “the Messiah the son of God” and he emphasized the deity of the Messiah

Thomas’ confession of “my Lord and my God” reaches the conclusion of John’s Gospel

If Thomas believed with his hard, skeptical, cynical heart, then the reader should believe as well

That is the whole point he has been presenting o us

Therefore, John draws his conclusion
READ John 20:30-31

John only mentioned seven signs in his account.

Those 7 signs had a definite purpose: to cause us to believe, that we might have true life.

What Thomas has stated, John wants all of us to state too!

The high point of the book has been reached and John’s Gospel is finished.

Our next section, the 7th appearance, is really an epilogue to the Gospel of John.

John’s key point was made in Thomas’ statement “my Lord and my God” and in his personal application of that statement of faith to the reader’s life.
SECTION 255: Appearance to the Seven Disciples While Fishing—John 21:1-25

The Seventh Appearance: Galilee

Seven disciples are present: Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, 2 sons of Zebedee, James and John, and 2 others not mentioned by name.

The disciples do not understand the nature of their work now to follow. Death of Jesus had shaken them.

Not what they had anticipated. They anticipated that the Millennial Kingdom would be set up.

Yeshua will teach them about the true nature of their work to come, “catching men.”

Disciples now return to their occupation of fishing.

Expert fishermen, but they catch nothing.

As they return to shore, a figure on shore asks a question.

Recall

The recall of these apostles to discipleship is very similar to their first calling.

They caught nothing, but Jesus says put nets down again.

When they catch a multitude of fish, they recognize the authority of Christ over nature.

Here, slightly different and yet similar:

Caught nothing with net on left side of boat.

Jesus says put net on right side.

Often that would hardly make any difference.

This command by Jesus causes John the Apostle and writer of this book to recognize who it is that is speaking.

John’s remark to Peter galvanizes Peter into action.

The rest make it to shore without losing the catch of fish.

They catch a total of 153 fish.
The mention of the exact number attests to the fact that John was an eye witness.

When they come out to the shore, it suddenly becomes obvious that the fish they have caught are not needed.

Jesus has fish ready for them, cooked.

The point that he is getting across to them is that he will continue to provide.

They do not need to return to their occupation of fishing.

He is calling them to different ministry, “catching men”.

Beginning in John 21:15 - Peter’s threefold denial is counterbalanced by a threefold affirmation of love.

**QUESTIONING**

1. **AGAPAO**
   
   Greater love of the will - superior love

2. **PHILAO**
   
   Love of the emotions – inferior love – brotherly love

**QUESTION #1**

The word “love” there is *Agapao*

Jesus is asking: Peter, do you really *Agapao* me more that the other disciples?

In the upper room, that is the kind of love that Peter claimed to have for Christ.

He claimed to have more *Agapao* love than the other disciples did.

Simon has learned his lesson.

He answers, Lord I only *Phileo* you.

“I have a warm friendship and affection for you.”

I cannot say *Agapao* now.

This is an honest, truthful answer.

To this first affirmation Jesus says - “Tend my lambs”.

Lambs have to do with the baby believer.
Jesus is stating, “I am entrusting my young ones into your care.”

To tend them means to feed them with the milk of the word.

In I Peter he is writing to Jewish Christians

He tells them to desire the sincere milk of the word because they are new believers

**QUESTION #2**

This time he asks Peter if he *agapes* him at all

Already admitted he doesn’t *agape* Jesus more than the other disciples in the first question

So now do you *agape* me at all?”—at any level

Peter responds: “Lord you know I only *Phileo* you.”

“I cannot affirm any kind of *agape* for you at this point, but I am your friend.”

Then Jesus gives him another commission: - “Shepherd my sheep”

“Shepherd” means to exercise authority and supervision.

As an Apostle, he must do this over believers.

**QUESTION #3**

In third question, Jesus switches the words. “Do you at least *Phileo* me?”

Notice the progression down

1. *Agape* me more than these – No
2. *Agape* me at all – No
3. Do you *Phileo* me

This time Peter is a bit troubled because of the change of words

This is a challenge to Peter to think before he speaks

Peter answers, “This much I can affirm. I do at least Phileo you”

Jesus gives third commission: “Tend my Sheep”

Sheep represent the mature believers
Feed with the meat of the word.

That's what Peter does in the Second Epistle of Peter

**THREE COMMISSIONS TO PETER**

1. Feed **MEAT** of the Word – the basics – to **BABY BELIEVERS** Teach
2. Exercise **AUTHORITY AND OVERSIGHT** over believers Oversee
3. Feed **MEAT** of the Word to the **MATURE BELIEVER** Disciple

This threefold commission to Peter is, likewise, a threefold commission to us.

This is what we should be doing as well

The purpose of the Church is to develop mature Believers

Back in the upper room, Peter claimed to have *agape* love and that he would be willing to die for Yeshua

But in this conversation, Peter could not affirm *agape* love anymore

The best he could do was *Phileo* love

Now Jesus says, “There is a day coming when Peter will have *agape* love for Me”

**John 21:18-19**

He will die for Christ—a martyr’s death

According to early Christian tradition, Peter went to Rome, where he died.

Little is known of Peter’s activities in Rome

Papias, writing about A.D. 125, stated that Peter’s preaching inspired the writing of the first gospel, drafted by Mark, who was Peter’s interpreter in Rome. ¹

According to the early writers, he suffered martyrdom at or about the same time with Paul, and in the Neronian persecution, A.D. 67, 68.

All agree that he was crucified.

Origen says that Peter felt himself to be unworthy to be put to death in the same manner as his Master, and was therefore, at his own request, crucified with his head downward. ²

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John 21:20-21

Then Peter looks over to John and says: “What about that guy?”

“What’s going to happen to him?”

John 21:22

To paraphrase, “Peter do not be concerned about what my will is for John.”

“Be concerned for fulfilling your own responsibilities.”

That is a good application for us too

John 21:23

John corrects an early rumor

A rumor goes out and it goes out wrong

READ John 21:24

John affirms he has been the eyewitness of the things he has written

READ John 21:25

Again, this statement points out that the gospel writers were all selective as to what they wrote

They could not write about everything.

Yeshua lived a total of some 36 years.

If you read through the gospels and count the number of days recorded, we only know of about 75-80 days of his life—less than ½ of one percent

Barely 3 months out of 36 years are in record

Yet the record of those 3 months has turned the world upside down
COMMISSION #2: GREAT COMMISSION

1. All authority is given to the resurrected Jewish Messiah

2. Command to make disciples
   A. Go and preach the Gospel to the whole world
   B. Baptize the new Believers in the name of the Triune God
      This is not a liturgical formula
      We are to be identified, baptized, with the very nature and character of God
      Matthew gives us a clear statement of the complex, indivisible unity of God
   C. Teach all things that Messiah commanded

3. Those who believe and follow will be saved but those who do not will be lost

4. (MARK ACCOUNT) Within the Body of Believers certain evidences will be present
   A. Demons will be cast out (e.g. Acts 16:16-18)
   B. Other languages will be spoken as a witness to Israel (1 Cor. 14:21-22)
   C. There will be healing from poisonous serpent bites (e.g. Acts 28:3-5)
   D. Healing from poison drink
   E. Healing of illnesses (e.g. Acts 9:36-42)

   He is not saying these three things will be true of every individual, but rather will be true within a body of believers.

   Some teach that this verse teaches that every believer should speak in tongues – but Jesus does not say “Him that believes” – singular

   If Jesus had said that then it would be a statement concerning every individual but He says upon “them” – plural – meaning the Church as a whole

   If this passage teaches that every believer should speak in tongues then it also teaches that every believer is immune to snake bites
I don’t see people en masse testing out that portion of the verse

These will be signs evident in the body of believers but it does not mean each individual will manifest these signs

5. Messiah will be present with them to the end of the age in the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

SECTION 257: APPEARANCE TO JAMES, HIS BROTHER—1 COR. 15:7

This is not James the Disciple and Apostle, but James the ½ brother of Jesus

He is listed as #4 in the article on the next page

He is the only one of the four half brothers to see the resurrected Christ

This appearance leads to his salvation

Perhaps his testimony lead to the salvation of the other three half brothers and half sisters

He becomes the first head of the Jerusalem church as well as an Apostle
JAMES

JAMES (Gk. Ἰακώβος, Heb. יֶעָשׂqōb, ‘heel-catcher’, ‘supplanter’).

1. **The son of Zebedee**, a Galilean fisherman who was called with his brother John to be one of the twelve apostles (Mt. 4:21). These two along with Peter formed the inner core of three among the twelve, being present at the raising of Jairus’ daughter (Mk. 5:37), the transfiguration (Mk. 9:2), and the agony in Gethsemane (Mk. 14:33) to the exclusion of the others. James and John, whom Jesus nicknamed ‘Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder’ (Mk. 3:17), were rebuked by Jesus when they suggested that they should ‘bid fire come down from heaven’ to destroy a Samaritan village which had refused to receive the Jerusalem-bound Jesus (Lk. 9:54). The pair also caused envy among the disciples by requesting a place of honour in Christ’s kingdom; while not promised this advantage, they were told they would drink the cup their Master was to drink (Mk. 10:39), a prophecy which was fulfilled for James when he was ‘killed … with the sword’ by Herod Agrippa I, c. AD 44 (Acts 12:2).

2. **The son of Alphaeus**, another of the twelve apostles (Mt. 10:3; Acts 1:13). He is usually identified with ‘James the younger’, the son of Mary (Mk. 15:40). The description ‘the younger’ (Gk. ὁ μικρός, ‘the little’) distinguishes him from the sons of Zebedee as either younger or smaller in stature.

3. An otherwise unknown James who was the father of the apostle Judas (not Iscariot) in the Lucan writings (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13; the other Gospels have Thaddaeus instead of Judas).

4. **The brother of Jesus** who, along with his brothers Joses, Simon and Judas (Mt. 13:55), apparently did not accept the authority of Jesus before the resurrection (see Mk. 3:21 and Jn. 7:5). After the risen Jesus had appeared to him (1 Cor. 15:7), he became a leader of the Jewish-Christian church at Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19; 2:9; Acts 12:17). Tradition stated that he was appointed first bishop of Jerusalem by the Lord himself (Eusebius, *EH* 7. 19). He presided at the first Council of Jerusalem, which considered the terms of admission of Gentiles into the church, formulated the decree which was promulgated to the churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:19–23), and remained as sole leader of the Jerusalem church, working to maintain its unity with Paul and his mission when Paul visited Jerusalem for the last time (Acts 21:18ff.). A few years later James suffered martyrdom by stoning at the instigation of the high priest Ananus during the interregnum after the death of the procurator Festus in AD 61 (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9). Hegesippus’ largely legendary tradition claims that James was known as ‘the Just’ because of his (Jewish) piety (Eusebius, *EH* 2. 23). Jerome (*De viris illustribus*) records a fragment from the lost apocryphal Gospel according to the Hebrews (*NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA*) containing a brief and probably unhistorical account of the appearance of the risen Jesus to James. James is the traditional author of the canonical Epistle of James, where he describes himself as ‘a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Jas. 1:1).


SECTION 258: Appearance to the Disciples in Jerusalem
(ACTS 1:3-8)—LUKE 24:44-49

TEACHING

1. Main content of teaching was the exposition of Messianic Prophecy
   Notice he gives three divisions of the Old Testament:
   The Law, The Prophets, and the Psalms or writings
   This is the 3-fold division of the Jewish order of the Old Testament to this day

2. The Messianic Kingdom

3. Why they would need a new manifestation of the Holy Spirit

COMMISSION #3

1. Remain in Jerusalem until the coming of the Holy Spirit

2. After receiving the Spirit, preach the Gospel

THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT

1. The Promise of the Father

2. The Baptism of the Spirit

3. The Baptizing ministry of the Spirit is still future

4. The Power from on High

PREACHING THE GOSPEL

1. City of Jerusalem

2. Territory of Judea

3. Samaritan territory

4. The ends of the Earth
Making Sense of the Unlikely Easter Story

Without a doubt, Christianity was an evangelistic religion from the outset. Matthew 28 tells us that the risen Jesus commissioned his followers to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20).

When you know the context of the New Testament texts – the world and cultures in and to which these stories were written – you quickly realize that sometimes the incongruities and unusual aspects in the story testify to their historical veracity and authenticity.

Evangelism in the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds required apologetics of various sorts to explain what made a certain group’s claims unique and superior to others. This was especially necessary if you were claiming that a Jewish manual laborer who had been crucified by a Roman governor named Pilate had nonetheless risen from the dead, appeared to various persons, and was starting a new community of followers because his previous ones had all but abandoned hope. The real sticking point for Jesus’ followers is that the culture of the Middle East at that time (and still today) was an honor and shame culture, and crucifixion was the most shameful way to die in that world. It was not seen as a noble martyrdom of any sort. People in that world believed that the manner of your death most revealed your character. On that basis, Jesus was a scoundrel, a man who committed treason against the state, a man who deserved the punishment used for slave revolts. The Romans called it “the extreme punishment,” and no Roman citizen would be subjected to it.

It wouldn’t make sense to create a story about a crucified and risen man being the savior of the world – unless you really believe it is historically true – because the instinctive reaction to such a message is exactly what Paul, the earliest New Testament writer, said it would be: It was a stumbling block or scandal to the Jews, and sheer nonsense to Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23). If you have seen the famous graffito from the pagan catacombs in Rome, the drawing of a donkey hanging a cross, with a Roman kneeling below it was a sarcastic remark about “a man worshiping his god,” you realize how such a message must have come across, at least initially, to those being evangelized in the Roman world.

There are also some seemingly odd features of the stories about the death and Resurrection themselves. If you want to start a world religion in a highly patriarchal world, you don’t make up stories about all the male disciples abandoning Jesus (save one, the Beloved Disciple) and the women being the chief witnesses. Women are last at the cross, first at the empty tomb, first to hear the angelic message “he is risen,” first to see the risen Jesus, and first to go and testify to the male disciples hunkered down behind locked doors in Jerusalem for fear of the Jewish authorities. The witness of women was considered suspect by most in that first-century world, and indeed, Luke 24:11 says that the male disciples thought it was an old wives’ tale when the women came and breathlessly claimed the tomb was empty and Jesus was risen.

Consider the post-Resurrection appearance narratives. The lengthiest ones are to Mary Magdalene and to the heretofore-unheard-of disciples on the road to Emmaus. Not to any members of the Twelve. An Individual appearance to Peter is mentioned in passing but never otherwise related in Matthew, Mark or Luke, our earliest Gospels (Luke 24:34). And there is no story in any canonical Gospel about an appearance to James, Jesus’ brother, although Paul is emphatic that its happened, and Paul had talked with James in Jerusalem on several occasions (see 1 Corinthians 15:7).
If you are interested in myth making, or creating a saga that could be received and believed in those first-century cultures for the sake of evangelism, the early Christian approach is certainly not the way to go about it.

How is it that a band of defeated and depressed disciples, who had abandoned hope after the crucifixion of Jesus (see the telling remark in Luke 24:21 as they are leaving town: “We had hoped he would be the one to redeem Israel”), became galvanized and inspired enough to carry the good news of Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome and beyond? Martin Dibelius, the famous old German father of form criticism of the gospel, once admitted that you have to posit a historical “X” big enough to explain the rise of Christianity after the ignominious death of Jesus on a Roman cross. He was right. What happened that caused the deserters to become the martyrs, the deniers to become the confessors, the women to take a chance at being laughed out of court by the telling the men that “he is risen and has appeared to us”? For Jesus’ followers, the X that marked the spot between a crucified Jesus and a world-evangelizing group was the appearance of the risen Jesus they saw. They believed that God’s yes to life in the case of Jesus was louder than death’s no.

Ben Witherington III
Biblical Archaeology Review, March/April 2011
SECTION 259: CHRIST’S PARTING BLESSING AND DEPARTURE

1. THE ASCENSION TOOK PLACE ON THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

If you visit the Mt. of Olives on the very highest point there is a church built called the Church of the Ascension

There is a stone with footprints in it, which they say were Christ’s when he took off.

However, Luke’s account falsifies that as being the correct place because it happened over against Bethany, which is on the Eastern slopes of Mt. of Olives

2. HE WAS CARRIED INTO HEAVEN

The Greek tense is passive

3. THE ASCENSION WAS VEILED BY A CLOUD

The Greek tense is active

The cloud is the Shekinah Glory

4. ANGELS APPEAR STATING THAT HE WILL RETURN IN THE SAME MANNER (Matt. 26:64)

They do not say he will return to the same place, but in the same manner, same way

He went up in the clouds of heaven, He will return in the clouds of heaven

The place of his return is not the Mount of Olives initially but the city of Petra or Bozrah.

5. HAVING ASCENDED HE SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER

10 days later the church will be born in Acts 2, during Shavuot (Pentecost)

Psalm 110

RESPONSES TO THE ASCENSION

1. Preaching everywhere

2. Great joy

3. Worship
THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASCENSION
(Compiled by Ariel Ministries)

1. **Ascension affirmed the truth of His statement, “I go to the Father” — John 14:28**

2. **Means that Messiah is preparing a place — John 14:2**

3. **Marks His exaltation — Ephesians 1:20-23**

4. **Marks His headship over the Church — Colossians 1:18**

5. **Means there is a man sitting at the right hand of God the Father — Acts. 2:32-35**

6. **Begins His high priestly ministry in Heaven — Hebrews 4:14-16**


8. **Makes Yeshua a forerunner into Heaven — Hebrews 6:20**
   Forerunner means the first of more to come later

9. **Marks our position in heavenly places because we are in Christ — Ephesians: 20-21a**

10. **Giving of spiritual gifts (and gifted men) — Ephesians 4:7-11**

11. **Provides the manner of His return**
### Application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Are You Holding Back?</th>
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| **Biblical Application** | 1. Thomas: He deliberately held back and chose not to believe in Jesus, even though a number of people had witnessed to him. The result—not only his own lack of salvation, but he influenced others to hesitate in their obedience to the Messiah.  
2. The Eleven Apostles: Eventually, after much encouragement from the Lord, they obeyed and went to Galilee. Then they got discouraged and held back their commitment to Him by taking up their old occupation. Jesus had to teach them again the lesson that He would guide and provide for them. After that, they never held back, but went on to fulfill His commissions. |
| **Personal Application** | 1. In regards to salvation, are you deliberately holding back, choosing not to believe in Jesus just as Thomas did? If so, write that down.  
2. Do you believe in Jesus, but find yourself holding back your full commitment to Him, perhaps like the Apostles, afraid that He won’t provide and guide you or perhaps because you love the world too much? If you find yourself holding back in your commitment to Him, by not working and witnessing for Him, write that down. |
| **Plan of Action** | Write down something you can practically do to respond to your application.  
1. If you are choosing not to believe, it is my prayer that, like Thomas, you would change your mind and confess Jesus the Holy Son of God and Messiah as your Lord and your God.  
2. If you find yourself holding back, what could you do to change that?  
3. If you find yourself pressing on, what do you desire to do in the future to serve Him? |
SEQUEL

SIGNS

The principle for Israel continues to be true today

For Israel, there will be no more signs but one, the sign of Jonah, the sign of resurrection: 1 Corinthians 1:21-24

Paul points out, the Jews still seek for a sign, but because of the rejection of the Messiah of Jesus there will be no more signs but one and it is the sign of Jonah

They may seek signs but all they will get is the preaching of the cross

Israel as a nation will not be saved until the nation accepts the sign of Jonah – resurrection

Individual Jews can be saved if they respond to the message “Christ Crucified”

People today say that the way to convert Jews is to show them signs and miracles - yet the Biblical teaching is the opposite

We are to preach the message of the crucified Messiah

If God chooses to use a sign with an individual, fine, but for nation as a whole – preach

THE BOOK OF ACTS

1. The Final Rejection of the Sign of Jonah

   Acts 6 of the gospel is almost exclusively being presented to the Jews in Jerusalem.

   However, in Chapter 7 with the stoning of Stephen, there is the final rejection of the sign of Jonah

   From that point on Chapter 8 the persecution spreads, the Believers are dispersed, and the gospel now begins to move out of its Jerusalem confines

   Therefore, in Acts 7 we have the rejection of the second sign of Jonah

2. Baptism in the Book of Acts

   The preaching of Peter and others when they are preaching to Jews must be understood in light of the judgment that is hanging over that particular generation

   In the Book of Acts, there is a constant reference to Jews about repentance, meaning to change their minds about Christ before the judgment comes

   There are a couple of references about “baptism saving”
In those passages, the baptism that saves is not a spiritual salvation because that is done strictly on the basis of Faith in Christ.

What Baptism is saving them is from the physical judgment of 70AD.

The only way an individual Jew could escape the physical judgment of 70AD is by making his break from the judgment of that generation.

The way to do it is by separating himself from Rabbinic Judaism.

The means by which a Jew separates himself from Rabbinic Judaism is by means of water baptism.

To this day, this is true.

Under Israeli law, for instance, although a Jew may believe in Jesus, be a follower of Jesus, and do everything else that Jesus commands, if he has not yet been baptized, by Jewish law he is not yet a Christian.

It is the act of baptism that finally marks one under Jewish law as a Christian, and therefore separated from Rabbinic Judaism.

A believing Jew can immigrate to Israel if he hasn't been baptized

Having been baptized he has lost his ability to immigrate.

Therefore, the act of baptism separates Jewish believers from Rabbinic Judaism – that is: the whole Talmudic system.

In 70AD, baptism had the effect of rescuing Jewish believers from the judgment that came in 70 AD.

I Peter 3:21 - what is often missed is whom he is writing to in the first 2 verses of his letter

Writing specifically to Messianic Jews outside the land not to the church at large

His primary audience is Jewish Christians

He is writing to some Jewish Believers who had been saved beyond any doubt, but did not want to make the final break from Rabbinic Judaism and would not be baptized

Therefore, they were laboring under a bad conscience

In I Peter 3:21 - they are told to go through water baptism because it saves--not spiritually but from a bad conscience.
Water baptism “saved” those Jews who lived between 30 - 70 AD.

By giving them

— outside the land—a clear conscience and
— inside the land—freeing them from the judgment of 70AD

FAITH ONLY SAVED THEM SPIRITUALLY.

3. The Book of Hebrews

A. Background to Hebrews

Hebrews written to Jewish Christians undergoing tremendous persecution

Many were contemplating going back into Rabbinic Judaism and wait for the persecution wave to pass and then start their Christian life all over again.

Writer of Hebrews tells them you cannot and must not do that

If you go back into Rabbinic Judaism now, you will, fall under the judgment of 70AD and die a terrible, physical death

Judgment passages in the book of Hebrews are never spiritual judgments in the sense of loosing salvation

They are always physical judgments in the sense of losing one’s physical life under judgment of 70AD

The book of Hebrews says only way to escape judgment of 70AD is to make their break with Rabbinic Judaism final and undergo the persecution that will come

They are to go on and continue developing in spiritual maturity

Then when the time comes, they must abandon the city and go outside the gate

Of course, from Hebrews, we do not know what the response was

B. Response to the Book

1. Josephus - unsaved Jewish historian
2. Heggisipus- Jewish/Christian historian of the 2nd century
3. Eusebius - A Gentile/Christian historian of the Fourth Century

Putting their material together, we are told that the Believers who had received the letter of Hebrews obeyed its admonition
They did make a final break from Rabbinic Judaism.

When the siege came, the entire Jewish Christian community abandoned the city, crossed the Jordan and waited the war out in the city of Pella.

While a total of 1 million, 1 hundred thousand Jews were killed in the Roman war between 66 - 70 AD, not one Jewish Christian lost his life because of obedience to the letter of Hebrews.

C. The Final Sign of Jonah

1. Resurrection of Lazarus—rejected in John 11
2. Resurrection of Yeshua—rejected in Acts 7
3. Resurrection of the recently dead Believers—rejected in Acts 7
4. The two witnesses of Revelation 11

A. Zechariah 4:1-14

Zechariah is given picture of Israel, which is saved nation

Picture is that of a menorah – a seven branched lamp stand – which represents Israel

We are told it is lit

Israel is the light of the world as a saved nation

There is a bowl over it that contains oil

There are pipes leading out of to all of the lamps

Source of oil itself comes from two olive trees on each side.

Oil is interpreted in Zechariah clearly as being the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit permeates the nation of Israel in the kingdom has its origin from these two olive trees.

At the end of Zechariah 4 when Zechariah asks, “What do these olive trees represent?” - Only answer he gets is that the olive trees represent two men that stand before the Lord of the Whole Earth.

Two men are responsible in some way for Israel’s national regeneration

Zechariah receives no more information than that.
B. **Revelation 11:3-13**

Here we are told that the two witnesses are the two olive trees of Zechariah. 4.

The two witnesses are two Jewish prophets that God will raise up in the future

Not two men who have lived in the past

They will have a ministry of preaching during the first 3½ years of the great tribulation.

No one believes their message – or at least very few do during the first 3½ years

Then in the middle of the tribulation they are going to be killed

Their bodies will lie unburied in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 days.

Then these two witnesses are resurrected from the dead in the sight of all and the living bodies ascend into heaven.

At the end of that passage, we are told that as a result of the resurrection of the two witnesses the Jews of Jerusalem come to saving faith

So the sign of Jonah, in the resurrection of the two witnesses, will be accepted.

The Jerusalem Jews will be the ones who become believers as a result of this resurrection

Later, apparently, they along with the 144,000 Jewish evangelists will reach the leaders of Israel

Then in keeping with the demands of the second coming in Matthew 23:37-39, these leaders will lead the nation to an acceptance of the Messiahship of Jesus

That national acceptance will bring about the second coming and the establishment of the Kingdom, which in the gospels has been rejected

So the fourth Sign of Jonah will be accepted. - Israel as a nation will be saved - Kingdom will be set up and Christ will rule sitting upon David’s throne.
REVIEW

Theme, Need Met, and Main Points of Each Gospel

A. Matthew

1. Theme: Mighty King

2. Need Met: Jewish Believers—Authoritative Source

   They were now scattered and could not receive authoritative teaching “orally” from the apostolic eye witnesses.

   The Apostolic eyewitnesses were going to die.

   Without an authoritative account written down the Messianic message would be lost.

   Therefore, God’s Holy Spirit led and empowered Matthew to record his authoritative eyewitness account of the life of Jesus the Messiah, the King.

3. Main Points

   A. Yeshua is King Messiah

   B. Why the Kingdom was not instituted

      1. He is King/Messiah

      2. He authenticated His Messiahship

      3. Israel rejected the offer

      4. Mystery Kingdom instituted

         The Mystery Kingdom is a kingdom in existence up to this very day in which the loyal subjects of the King - both Jews and Gentile - labor to bring others into this Kingdom while they wait for the absent King to return.

         Therefore, the Jewish concerns and needs are dealt with in Matthew.
B. Mark

1. Theme: Obedient Servant of the Lord
2. Need Met: Romans
   Practical, identified with urgent accomplishment
3. Main Points
   A. Yeshua is God’s ideal servant
   B. Yeshua is the Servant of the Lord

C. Luke

1. Theme: Ideal Son of Man
2. Need Met: Greeks—Sought ideal man, historically minded
3. Main Points
   A. Yeshua is the ideal man
   B. Chronological Account
      Luke is unique as a Gospel account in this regard.
      All the other Gospels are thematically oriented while Luke is chronologically oriented.

D. John

1. Theme: Divine Son of God
2. Need Met: Add key points the others chose to omit
3. Main Points
   A. What Yeshua said rather than did
   B. The Conflict Between Light and Dark
      Using this theme, he shows Jesus the Messiah the Divine Son of God
      meeting the forces of spiritual wickedness head on and defeating them in
      order to win the prize.
      The prize being the spiritual salvation of all who believe in Him