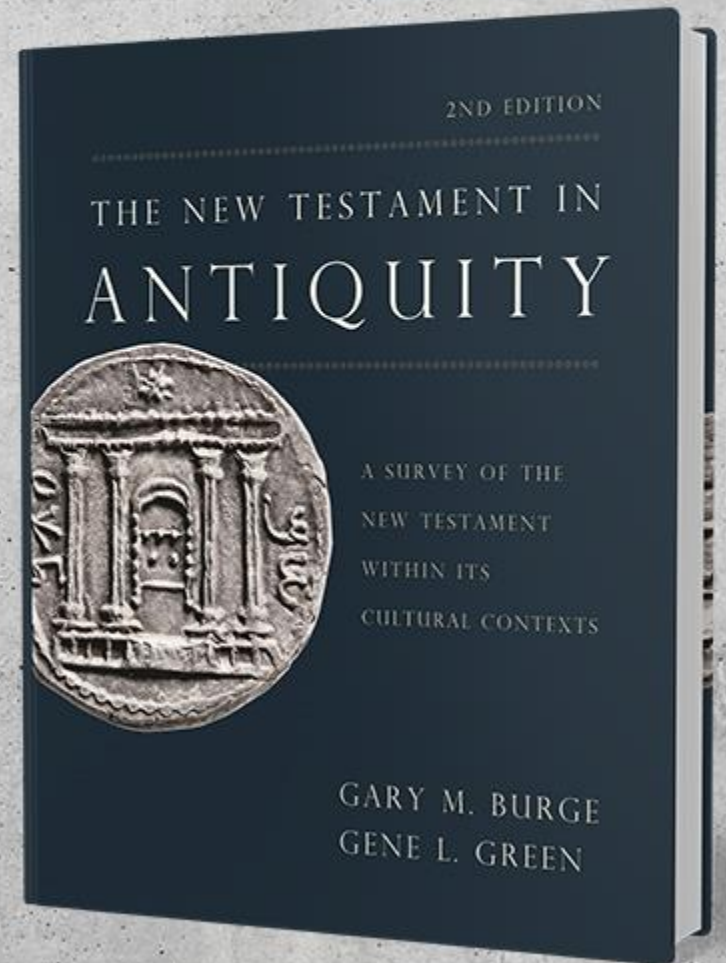


# Chapter 6

## The Story of Jesus



# CHRONOLOGY

- Most calendars in antiquity had the founding of Rome as year 1 (754 BC).
- The Christian calendar began with the birth of Christ.
  - Proposed by the monk Dionysius Exiguus of Scythia
  - Dionysius neglected the death of Herod (4 BC) while determining his chronology.
- Christ's birth corresponds to the time between 5 and 7 BC.
- The crucifixion likely occurred in the spring of AD 30 or later.
  - Each evangelist agrees it took place on a Friday afternoon during Passover.

# BIRTH AND EARLIEST YEARS

- Matthew and Luke tell the story of Jesus's birth and early life during Augustus's reign (43 BC–AD 14).
- The angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah and Mary to announce the birth of Jesus.
  - Called “the Son of the Most High God” (Lk 1:32)
  - Mary said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).
  - An angel of the Lord appears to Joseph and assures him Mary's virginal pregnancy is a miracle (Mt 1:20).

- Following their marriage, Mary and Joseph move south to Bethlehem.
  - A Roman census required each family to register in its ancestral land.
  - The census was an instrument of occupation designed to control and tax the people under Roman rule.
- This scene with Mary and Joseph evokes images of terror and displacement from political oppression.
  - The omnipotent God is born into poverty.



- Matthew and Luke bring out different aspects of the story while agreeing on essential elements.
  - Matthew records Joseph, the star, the visit of the Magi, the attack of Herod's soldiers, and the flight to Egypt.
  - Luke includes the family and birth of John the Baptist, the visit of the shepherds, the purification of Mary, the naming of Jesus, and the hymns of Mary (1:46–55), Zechariah (1:68–79), and Simeon (2:29–32).
- Matthew's emphasis is to parallel the early life of Jesus with intrigue and oppression in the early life of Moses.
- Luke's emphasis is to show how God unexpectedly visits the poor and lowly in bringing salvation to all.
- Jesus, Mary, and Joseph probably remained in Egypt until the death of Herod in 4 BC before settling in Galilee (Mt 2:22–23).

- Jesus grew up in the Galilean village of Nazareth.
  - In the mountains of “lower” Galilee, but near the expanding city of Sepphoris and its busy trade routes
  - Jesus attended the local synagogue each morning and worked his father’s trade in the afternoon.
  - Joseph was a *tektōn* (“carpenter” Mk 6:3) who worked in wood, metal, or stone.
  - Jesus knew hard labor and probably worked with Joseph in Sepphoris.



- From six to ten he became literate in Hebrew as he studied Torah and memorized Scripture.
- From ten to twelve he learned the oral laws from the *hazzan*, the synagogue's teacher and custodian.
  - Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem for Passover and lost the twelve-year-old Jesus for three days, only to find him in the Temple discussing with the teachers who marveled at his understanding (Lk 2:41–52).
- From thirteen until thirty (beginning his public ministry), Jesus worked his father's trade while discussing and debating with others in the synagogue.
  - By adulthood, he was a skilled craftsman, literate, knowledgeable in the traditions and history of his people, and adept at public debate.

- As a faithful Jew, he likely traveled to Jerusalem yearly to celebrate Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.
- The front door to his home had a *mezuzah* nailed to the upper post (likely holding Deu 6:4–9; 11:12–21).
- He dressed with a long cloak with double tassels on each of its four corners. One thread at each corner was blue, which identified him as a Jew.
- Twice daily he recited the *Shema* (Deu 6:4-9).
- He kept a kosher diet, wore his hair and beard long, and observed many of the Sabbath rules.





# BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION

- John the Baptist took the role of prophet, traveling the deserts along the Jordan, and calling Judeans to repentance (Mt 3:5–10; Lk 3:7–9).
- Jesus’s first public appearance is with John at the Jordan.
  - The Spirit descended in the form of a dove on him and God’s voice confirmed, “You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22).
  - John’s gospel also has the Baptist announce Jesus to the crowds, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (Jn 1:29).

- Jesus then entered the wilderness alone.
- He was tested for forty days by Satan (Mt 4:1–11).
- The forty days recall the forty years of Israel wandering in the wilderness to the Promised Land
- Satan had three temptations, each of which Jesus refuted by Scripture.



# THE BEGINNING OF THE GALILEE MINISTRY

- Jesus and John worked side-by-side in the Jordan Valley.
- Many of John's followers followed Jesus (Jn 1:35–42).
- The imprisonment of John the Baptist
  - John condemned the illicit marriage of Herod Antipas to Herodias (his brother's wife, Mk 6:17–18, Josephus *Ant.* 18.5.1–2 [109-119]).
  - Herod's first wife fled to her father, King Aretas of Nabatea, who was naturally furious at Antipas.

- The fury of Aretas and the preaching of John were too much for Antipas.
  - Antipas killed John on the Nabatean border at his fortress of Machaerus to silence his critic.
  - Aretas attacked Antipas in AD 36 and destroyed his army.
  - Most Jews saw this as God's judgment on Antipas for killing John (*Ant.* 18.5.2 [116-119]).



- With John's arrest, Jesus moved north to escape political dangers (Mk 1:14).
  - Jesus moved throughout Galilee, healing, teaching, and exorcising demons. Herod was not pleased. Some rumored he was John returned to life (Mk 6:16).
- While called a Nazarene, Jesus never returned there, and Capernaum became his new home (Mk 2:1).
  - Fishing village on a highway connecting central Galilee with the Golan Heights and even Damascus
  - Philip's territory and tax station for commerce
  - Could escape Antipas by boat if needed (Mk 6:45)

# GROWING POPULARITY

- Large crowds of people followed Jesus (Mk 3:7).
- Sometimes he would speak to them from boats offshore (Mk 4; Lk 5).
- Sometimes in the hills, eg. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7).
- They were stunned by his teaching authority.



- Those in his wider public following were “disciples.”

- Disciple in Greek (*mathētēs*) means “learner.”

- There were also “The Twelve” apostles who could speak and act in the name of Christ.

- In Greek *apostolos* means “one who is sent.”

- They preached and cast out demons throughout the villages of Galilee and beyond.

- They moved in twos (Lk 9:1-6), and this strategy was so effective Jesus appointed seventy-two people to do the same (Lk 10:1-20).



- Jesus performed miracles.
  - In western Galilee he fed over 5,000 and did another feeding miracle near Bethsaida (Mk 8:1–10).
- Jesus eagerly crossed social boundaries in ministry.
  - The Gentiles of the Decapolis (Mk 7:31) and the Roman centurion whose daughter was ill (Mt 8:5)
  - Women often associated with his ministry such as Mary Magdalene, the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:3), and the financially supportive Susannah (Lk 8:3).
  - The marginalized: tax collectors, lepers, “sinners”



# GROWING OPPOSITION

- Jesus was criticized by other Jewish leaders (Sadducees, Pharisees, scribes) for many different reasons.
- Jesus was known as someone who “broke the Sabbath” and did work on the day of rest.
  - He said, “The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27).
- Jesus seemed too relaxed about purity laws.
  - Not as concerned with washing (Mk 7:1-4), declared all foods “clean” (Mk 7:15, 19)

- In each offense, Jesus expressed himself as having authority greater than human traditions and rules.
  - He quoted and reinterpreted the Torah with the phrase, “You have heard it said...but I say unto you” (cf. The Sermon on the Mount, Mt 5–7).
- Jesus claimed that obedience to his words affected a person’s relationship with God (Mt 7:21-27; Jn 5:23).
  - He explained that his efforts and words represented the works of God in the world.
  - Rabbinic understanding was that God *alone* could work on the Sabbath (Jn 5:16-18).
  - Jesus was likening himself to God.

# JESUS “SETS HIS FACE” TOWARD JERUSALEM

- A turning point came at Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus asked his followers to identify him.
  - Many echoed the public’s incorrect views of him, but Peter gave the correct answer: “You are the Messiah” (Mk 8:29), “the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16).
- Then Jesus “set his face” toward Jerusalem (Lk 9:51).
  - He made three increasingly specific predictions of his betrayal and death along the way at Caesarea Philippi, Capernaum, and Jericho.

# THE FINAL WEEK

- It was spring and pilgrims from all over came to Jerusalem for Passover.
- Outside the city, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11:1-45) at the house of Mary and Martha.
- He was greeted by the crowds as a messianic figure.
  - They waved palm branches and shouted with joy that he was “blessed,” he came “in the name of the Lord,” and that David’s kingdom was coming.
  - He rode a donkey as Zechariah had promised (9:9).

- A common Old Testament theme is that God's prophets first bring judgment to his house, the temple.
  - Crossing the Kidron Valley, Jesus cursed a fig tree because it bore no edible fruit (Mk 11:12–14).
  - This was symbolic because the fig was a symbol for Israel itself (Jer 8:13, 29:17; Hos 2:12; Lk 13:6–9).
- Jesus entered the courts and was outraged at the commercial activities.
  - He overturned tables, drove out moneychangers with a whip, and interrupted sacrifices (Mk 11; Mt 21; Lk 19–20; Jn 2).



- Jesus' relationship with the authorities in Jerusalem was increasingly intense.
  - The rest of the week he debated and critiqued the leadership in the temple courtyards (Mt 23; Mk 12).
  - From the Mount of Olives he prophesied the demise of Jerusalem and its temple (Mt 24; Mk 13; Lk 21).
  - The high priest Caiaphas remarked, "You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (Jn 11:50).

- The followers of Jesus were preparing for his confrontation in Jerusalem.
  - Mary from Bethany (the sister of Lazarus and Martha) took an alabaster jar of pure nard and anointed Jesus for his burial (Mt 26; Mk 14; Jn 12).
  - During the Passover meal, which was preceded by the ritual slaughter of the lambs (Exo 12–13), Jesus shared bread and wine with the Twelve.
  - He called them his “body given up for you” and “the blood of the new covenant, poured out for you” (Lk 22:19–20; cf Mk 14: 22–24; Mt 26:26–28; 1 Cor 11:23–25; Jn 6).

# ARREST, TRIAL, AND CRUCIFIXION

- After the meal, Jesus was praying in an olive orchard about his dreadful suffering to come (Mk 14:32-42).
  - Priests, temple police (Lk 22:52), and Roman soldiers (Jn 18:3, 12) came to arrest him.
  - They were led to him by Judas who they paid thirty pieces of silver to betray him.
  - Judas identified Jesus for them by giving him a kiss.



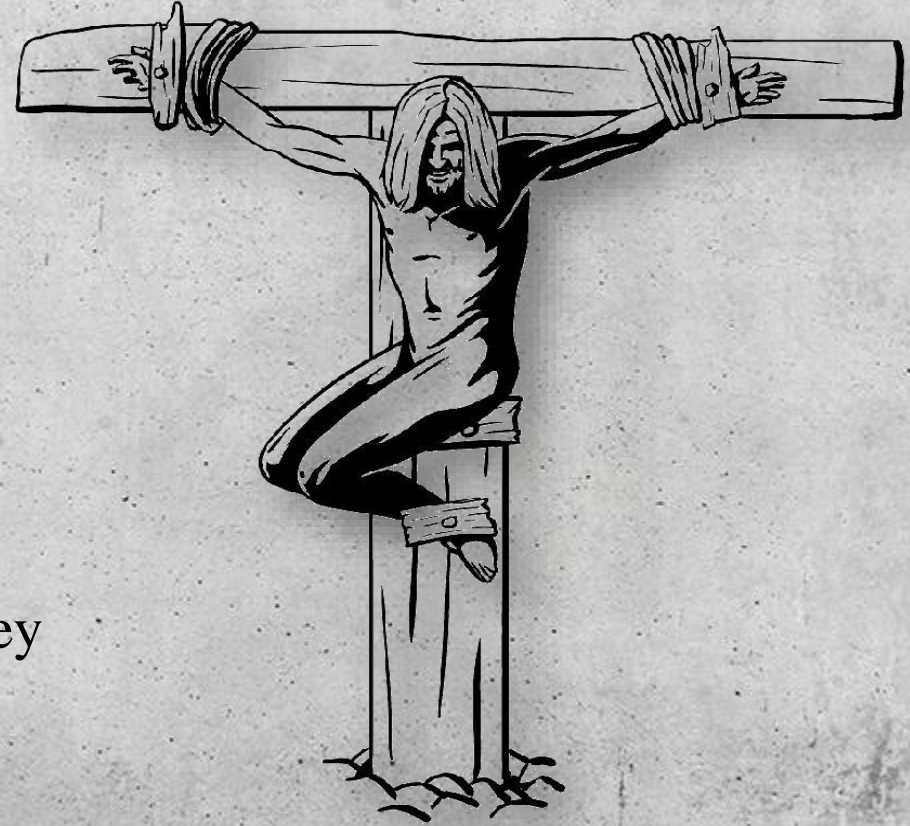
- Jesus's trial was carried out quickly, lest there be furious reaction from those from Galilee (Lk 22:2).
  - At the high priest Caiaphas's house many authorities met including the former high-priest Annas to interrogate Jesus (Jn 18:13).
  - Various witnesses made charges against him, but their charges contradicted one another (Mk 14:56).
- After no answer, Caiaphas asked Jesus if he was the Messiah, and Jesus said "I am" and claimed that he would enact God's judgment (Mk 14:60–64).
- Jesus was then handed over for his tragic suffering.

- Jesus moved from his Jewish trial to his Roman trial.
  - Jews did not have the right to execute a criminal (Jn 18:31), so they handed Jesus over to Pontius Pilate.
- The Sanhedrin's charges of blasphemy did not make an impact on Pilate, so Caiaphas charged Jesus with political sedition.
  - "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king" (Lk 23:2).
- Pilate asked Jesus if he was king of the Jews, and Jesus replied "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18:36).
  - Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas who was in Jerusalem, so the condemnation would come from a Jewish ruler.
  - Jesus refused to talk to Herod who had killed John the Baptist.

- Jesus’s case returned to Pilate who offered the crowd the release of one prisoner for Passover (Jn 18:38–40).
  - The crowd chose Barabbas, who was a *lēstēs*, meaning “bandit patriot” or “terrorist.”
- Pilate was troubled by their choice and had Jesus whipped in order to evoke pity (Jn 19:1–11).
  - Instead the crowd cried for Jesus’s death.
  - From the pressure of the Sanhedrin and the crowd (Jn 19:12–15), Pilate handed Jesus over to his troops to be crucified.



- Jews detested crucifixion and viewed it as a sign of Roman occupation and generally used stoning instead.
- Although various rulers in antiquity did use public crucifixion as a deterrence.
  - Joshua: “Then Joshua put the kings to death and exposed their bodies on five poles, and they were left hanging on the poles until evening” (Josh 10:26).
  - Antiochus Epiphanes against his enemies
  - The Maccabean ruler Alexander Jannaeus crucified 800 Pharisees who opposed him.
  - The Roman general Varus crucified 2,000 Jewish rebels in Judea.

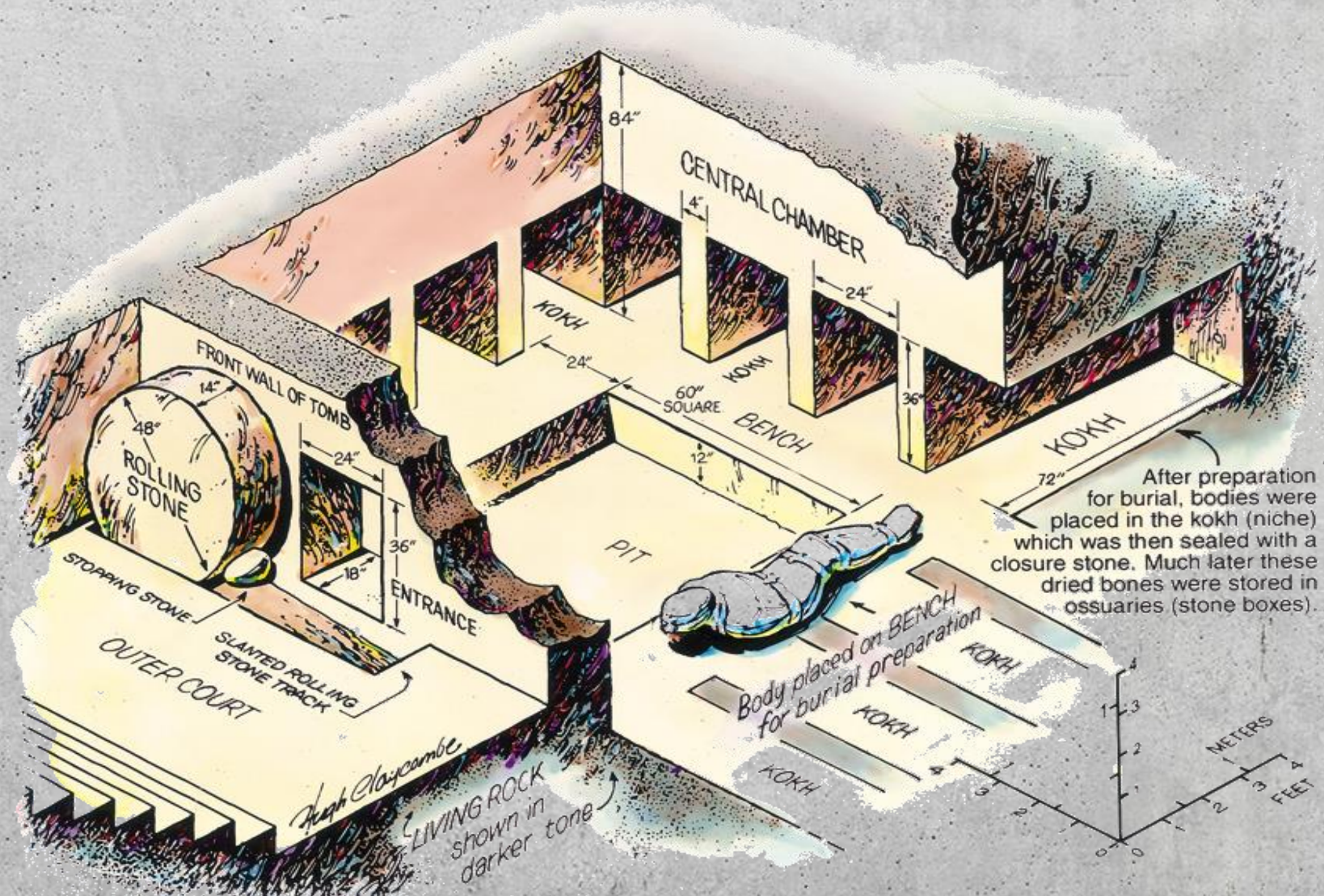


- Jesus was beaten with a whip bearing bones or metal bits to cut into the skin and promote bleeding.
- He carried his crossbeam to Golgotha, “the place of the skull” (Mk 15:22; Mt 27:33; Lk 23:33; Jn 19:17).
- He stumbled from weakness, so Simon from Cyrene was forced to help carry the cross (Mk 15:21).
- Soldiers nailed him to his cross, which was not tall, so his feet were not far from the ground.
- He was naked, increasing the dread and shame, while the soldiers gambled for his garments (Jn 19:23–24).
- He conversed with “the beloved apostle” and entrusted his mother Mary to him (Jn 19:27).

- The soldiers crushed the legs of the other men who were crucified with Jesus to make sure they were dead.
- But they pierced Jesus's side with a lance instead, though he had already "breathed his last" (Mk 15:37).
  - "He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken." (Ps 34:20; Jn 19:36)
  - "They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died." (Zech 12:10; Jn 19:37)

# BURIAL AND RESURRECTION

- Joseph of Arimathea secretly believed in Jesus and did not agree with the Sanhedrin's decision (Mt 27:57; Jn 19:3), so he and Nicodemus asked for the body of Jesus to bury him before sundown (Jn 19:31).
- They, and likely the women mourning at the cross, laid him in an unused tomb with burial clothes and Nicodemus's seventy-five pounds of myrrh (Jn 19:39).
- The tomb was carved into a limestone wall with a heavy stone rolled over the entrance.
- The priests requested a guard at the tomb to make sure no one took the body.





- Early Sunday morning, a group of women arrived at the tomb to complete Jesus's burial (Mk 16:1–2).
  - They wondered who could roll the stone away for them, but found that it was already moved.
  - Angels announced that Jesus was alive and they needed to tell the apostles and disciples.
- Jesus appeared in the garden near his tomb and told them how his promises were fulfilled.
- Jesus met his disciples that evening and showed his wounds and promised never to abandon them.
- He continued to appear to them and even to 5,000 others (1 Cor 15:6) for forty days after his resurrection.
- His resurrection was divine vindication of his life and message.