



THE STORY

See the Big Picture of the Bible's Story and Message

A Self-study Booklet

Name: _____

Introducing the Story

Day after day books and articles promise answers to life's problems. The research is always top-notch. The best doctors and psychologists have discovered the key to longer, more fulfilling lives. But day after day the answers change. Today's research always seems to nullify yesterday's conclusions. While people swear by their ever-changing solutions, the Bible has not ceased to change lives for thousands of years by consistently pointing to one problem and one solution. Death is our problem. Jesus is our solution.

Unfortunately, many fail to find the life offered in God's word because they do not embrace the whole message. Many know some stories and details in the Bible, but most struggle to truly know God, the Bible, or how those stories and details fit into the Bible's story and message. More importantly, few are able to see how the Bible relates to life today. Who is God? Why did God create people? Why does God give commandments? How do we start a relationship with God? Why should we care about any of this? Our goal is to answer these questions by considering a big picture view of the Bible in five movements.

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Many see the Bible as incomprehensible, but God's words are meant to be understood by common people (Ephesians 3:3-5). You can see the overall Bible story portrayed on the cover. God blessed mankind with the opportunity to live with him *in the garden*, but mankind's sinfulness did not allow eternal life and fellowship with God to continue. Though people normally believe they can save themselves, God gave *the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai* to show us all that we are sinful and deserving of death. But God showed his love for us when he sent Jesus, the sinless one, to die *on the cross* so our sins could be forgiven. From beginning to end, the Bible displays God's glory by telling the story of how he made it possible for undeserving people to have eternal life and joy with him.

The Bible is a compilation of 66 books written by approximately forty different authors who wrote over the course of 1500 years. Individually, these books contain their own important and beautiful messages for mankind. But, like a mosaic, when these 66 books are seen together, they form a larger, unified story of a glorious God who loves his people and judges his enemies. These books are united, powerful, and relevant because their words were spoken by our Creator. The Holy Spirit put God's words in the minds of authors (inspiration) who wrote exactly what God told them (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Scribes made so many copies of these books in their original languages that we have thousands of manuscripts today. Human error has caused some differences to exist between these manuscripts, but almost all of these differences are considered to be minor (i.e., spelling, articles, order of words, etc.). Modern Bibles are translated from the original languages by large committees of experts in ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The enormous amount of manuscript evidence helps these translators identify scribal errors so that we can trust the Bible is God word. The Bible truly leads us to victory over sin - the only problem that matters.

#1: Sin Brings Separation and Death (Genesis 3)

Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Many wonder why God created such a beautiful universe. **Psalm 19:1-4** tells us creation declares the glory of God throughout the earth. Every massive star, beautiful sunrise, and tiny atom was created to testify to God's greatness. After God created the heavens, earth, vegetation, celestial beings, and animals, **Genesis 1:26-28** says God made males and females in his own image and told them to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. We could also ask why God created mankind in his image. **Isaiah 43:7** tells us God created mankind for his glory. As a picture of an owl "images" an owl, we were created in God's likeness to "image" God's holiness. We are meant to fill the world with God's likeness in holy living for his glory.

Our study begins with the first man, Adam. God created a garden in Eden and placed Adam there to work in it. God saw it was not right for man to be alone; so, God made a suitable and equal helper for Adam - Woman. She became his wife and Adam named her "Eve." Since Adam and Eve were pure, they were naked and not ashamed. Eden was perfect - both God and the tree of life were there. **Genesis 2:16-17** says God withheld only one thing from Adam and Eve. They could eat of every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the day they ate of this tree, they would die. **1 John 3:4** says sin is breaking God's law. **Genesis 3:1-6** tells us how God's enemy, Satan, came as a serpent to deceive Eve into breaking God's law. Let's notice how Satan deceives so we are aware of his schemes.

Sin Is Tempting (Genesis 3:1-6)

We learn in Revelation 12:9 that this serpent is Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. Since this is first time Satan deceived a human, we should notice how he works. Notice three ways Satan fooled Eve.

1. What is so deceitful about Satan's question in **verse 1**? How does Satan use the same deceit today?
2. How does Satan deceive Eve in **verse 4**? How does Satan use the same deceit today?
3. How does Satan continue his deception in **verse 5**? How does Satan use the same deceit today?

Sin Is Shaming (Genesis 3:7-13)

Satan's promises were lies. Sin always seems wonderful in theory and always leaves us empty in reality. Notice two ways Adam and Eve display their shame after sin.

4. How do Adam and Eve display their shame in **verses 7-10**? How do we do this today?
5. How do Adam and Eve show their shame in **verses 11-13**? How do we do the same thing today?

Sin Is Painful (Genesis 3:16-24)

Sin's consequences are painful. Because God gives males and females different roles and spheres of work, their consequences for sin are also different.

6. Notice **verse 16**. What do the woman's consequences for sin center around? How do these consequences continue to play out today?

7. Notice **verses 17-19**. What do the man's consequences for sin center around? How do these consequences continue to play out today?

8. What do Adam and Eve lose in **verses 22-24**? Why is this important?

Corruption grew outside of Eden so that sin and death increased. **Genesis 6:5-7** says people's thoughts were on wickedness continually so that God regretted creating people and decided to destroy them in a flood. God saved on Noah's family of eight in an ark, but no one else repented and God destroyed everyone. God is serious about judgment! Sadly, people still rebelled after the flood and congregated to make a name for themselves instead of magnifying God's name. God confused their language at Babel and dispersed them across the earth. People were enemies with God and with each other. The rest of the Bible glorifies God's grace to work his plan to let mankind return to God's presence and the tree of life. Unexpectedly, this hope is first prophesied in the serpent's curse in **Genesis 3:14-15**.

Hope for the Woman's Offspring (Genesis 3:14-15, 12:1-3)

Genesis 3:15 (NET), "And I will put hostility between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring; her offspring will attack your head, and you will attack her offspring's heel."

9. What consequences does Satan face for his deception in **Genesis 3:14-15**? How does this give the righteous offspring of the woman hope today?

10. Though Abraham's wife was barren, what promises does God make to Abraham in **Genesis 12:1-3**? How do these promises play out and give us hope today?

In the next lesson we will turn to Exodus 20 to see how God created a physical nation from Abraham's descendants and we will learn about the purpose of the law God gave them.

#2: The Law of Moses Exposes Sin (Exodus 20, etc.)

Though God created mankind to glorify him by imaging his righteous character, Satan deceived people into pursuing sinful pleasures. Eternal life and fellowship with God was lost, but God promised to make childless Abraham into a great nation and bless the whole world in him and his offspring. Abraham put all his faith in God's promise and faithfully followed God's direction in all things. Despite Abraham's imperfections, God counted him as righteous through his faith in **Genesis 15:6**. Even after Abraham died, God proved himself faithful when he grew Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, into 2-3 million people in 400 years. Egypt enslaved the Israelites as God had warned in **Genesis 15:13-16**, but God sent ten plagues against Egypt and parted the Red Sea by Moses' hand to redeem Israel from slavery.

Before God led Israel into Canaan, he made a covenant with them at Mt. Sinai. God makes it clear what he desired to do with Israel in **Exodus 19:4-6**. *"4 You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."* God set Israel free as a downpayment and sign of how he would bless Israel if they would keep his covenant. This covenant is also referred to as the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses (cf. Exodus 34:28 and Joshua 8:31). If Israel would keep the Law, they would be a kingdom of priests imaging and proclaiming righteousness to the world. To more fully understand the Law's purpose, notice a portion of it in **Exodus 20:1-11**.

The Law of Moses is Given (Exodus 20:1-17)

1. Read **Exodus 20:1-11**. Which relationship do these first four commandments focus on? How would you summarize these first four commands (see Matthew 22:36-38)?

2. Read **Exodus 20:12-17**. Which relationships do these final six commands focus on? Which commands stand out to you? How would you summarize these last six commands (see Matthew 22:39-40)?

If the whole Law depends on loving God and people, the Law is meant to be kept from the heart, not only externally. God is not okay with us trusting money as long as we do not bow to it. God is not okay with lust as long as we do not commit adultery. True obedience is internal and external.

The Law of Moses Is Broken (Daniel 9:11, James 2:10-11, etc.)

3. **Daniel 9:11**, *"All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him."* How does Daniel assess Israel's keeping of the Law of Moses?

4. James 2:10–11, “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.” Why do we fail to keep the Law?

5. Deuteronomy 6:25, “And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.” **Deuteronomy 27:26**, “Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.” What warning did Moses give about the Law?

6. Romans 3:9–12 (HCSB), “⁹ What then? Are we any better? Not at all! For we have previously charged that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one. ¹¹ There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away; all alike have become useless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.” **Romans 3:23**, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” According to these passages, who is righteous?

7. Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death.” What are the wages of sin? What does this mean? What did God tell Adam that was similar to this statement?

God told Israel to offer animal sacrifices so their sins could be forgiven, but as Hebrews 10:1–4 shows that animal blood cannot permanently purify the conscience of sin. Therefore, spiritual death reigned under the Law. God knew the Law would not bring life. In the Law itself God promised a new prophet and covenant would come (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15–19 and 30:1–10). The Law of Moses was always meant to be temporary. However, if God knew he would one day bring a new prophet, law, and covenant, why was Law of Moses given? Galatians 3 and Romans 3 answer this perfectly.

The Law of Moses Exposes Sin (Galatians 3:19–22, Romans 3:19–20)

8. Galatians 3:19–22, “Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions... For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” Why does Paul say the Law was added? What does Paul say the Scripture accomplished?

9. Romans 3:19–20, “Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” What all does Paul say the law accomplishes here? What does the law not accomplish?

Since we often think we are good people, we often do not think we deserve death and separation from God. The Law shows us our sin so we will stop trusting ourselves and start trusting Jesus for salvation. In the next lesson we will study prophecies of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 and Isaiah 53.

#3: A New Covenant Promises Hope (Jeremiah 31, etc.)

Sin brought a curse upon mankind, but God made a covenant to bless the world in Abraham. Though God sought to dwell with and bless Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, but the Law of Moses proved Israel to be guilty of sin. God allowed animals to be sacrificed to take away Israel's sins, but the animal sacrifices could not permanently cleanse Israel of their sins. Worshipers under the Law had to continually and regularly offer animal sacrifices. This regular reminder of past sins did not lend to confidence before God. We are like Israel. The Law shows us that we all have disobeyed God and that we all deserve death and separation from God. This is important for us to remember since God's solution and promise of hope will mean nothing to us if we do not know we have a problem. Therefore, it is right for us to fear and to lose confidence in ourselves when we read the Law.

But how could God be faithful to his promises to Abraham when mankind is so sinful? What hope could God give to the nations? The writings of the prophets tell of this hope. Though prophets were sent to other nations, the prophets mostly prophesied to Israel and Judah before, during, and after God's punishments against them. God not only used the prophets to testify against Israel and Judah for their sins, God also used the prophets to tell Israel and Judah of a future day of salvation. One day, there would be good news. God would return to save and reign over Israel, Judah, and the world. **Jeremiah 31:31-34** is a great place to start because it prophesies of the hope God promised in a new, future covenant with his people. Jeremiah wrote about 600 years before God began fulfilling this prophecy.

The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

1. Notice **verses 33-34**. What is the first way this new covenant would be different? Consider the contrast in **Zechariah 7:12**, *"They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law..."*

2. Notice the second half of **verse 34**. What is the second way this covenant would be different? How could people with "diamond-hard" hearts come to know God and internalize his law?

How could a just and holy God permanently pardon our many sins? Let's notice a key prophecy of God's future salvation through his chosen servant (i.e. Messiah, Christ) in **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**.

The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

3. Notice **Isaiah 52:12-15**. How is God's chosen servant is described in these verses? Who will he sprinkle (picture of cleansing) and cause to see and understand?

4. Read **Isaiah 53:1-6**. How is God's chosen servant is described in these verses? What would people believe caused his suffering? What was the real purpose of his suffering?

5. Read **Isaiah 53:7-12**. How is God's chosen servant is described in these verses? What attitude would he have in his death? Though he would be innocent, whose will is this?

6. Despite the death of this servant (53:12), where do you see in **Isaiah 53** references to his resurrection?

7. Who is this suffering servant?

This prophesy is an amazing testimony to the Bible's inspiration. There are existing manuscripts of Isaiah dating to the 2nd to 4th centuries BC - well before Jesus lived and died. Yet, this text speaks in great detail of Jesus' life and death. Even Jesus' resurrection is foretold in verse 10. "... he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days..." Other prophecies say Jesus would have God's Spirit upon him (Isaiah 11:2, 42:1, 48:16, 59:21, 61:1). Let's read one of the prophecies about God's promise to also put his Spirit in his people to transform them and give them life. Notice **Isaiah 36:25-27**.

My Spirit in You (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

8. What did God promise he would do to his people in the future in **Ezekiel 36:25-27**?

It is prophesied in Joel 2:28-32 that Israel could know when the Spirit had been poured out by the miraculous signs that would accompany this event. We will look at this fulfillment more closely in lesson 5, but in the next lesson we will turn to the Gospel of Matthew to become familiar with Jesus - the one through whom the whole world can receive salvation.

#4: Jesus Conquers Sin and Death (Matthew 1, 4, 9, 27-28)

Israel and Judah rebelliously broke their covenant with God, so God deserted them. But God promised to make a new, different covenant with his people in the future. Though his people had hearts hardened by sin, God promised to forgive past sins and write his law on their new, fleshy hearts. **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** prophesied that this forgiveness would come through the death of God's chosen, Spirit-anointed servant. In this lesson we will read from Matthew. Matthew records the good news about Jesus Christ - God's chosen servant to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. Notice **Matthew 1:17-25**.

Jesus Is the Son of God (Matthew 1:17-25)

1. What do you learn about Jesus from this passage regarding his birth and where he is from?
2. What is the significance of Jesus being from the Holy Spirit?
3. What is the significance of the name "Immanuel?"

Jesus Is Perfect against Temptation (Matthew 4:1-11)

4. What do you learn about this Jesus from this passage regarding his fight against sin?
5. How is Jesus' battle against temptation different than Adam and Eve's battle in the Garden of Eden? How is Jesus' fight against temptation different than Israel's fight for 40 years in the wilderness?
6. How was Jesus able to defeat Satan's temptations? How can this help us defeat temptation?

Jesus Shows Mercy to Sinners (Matthew 9:9-13)

7. Who is unhappy with Jesus and why? What is Jesus' response to his critics?
8. Why is Jesus' goal to call sinners and not the righteous significant for us to understand today?

The Jewish religious leaders were afraid Jesus would cause them to lose their influence, so they did not believe in Jesus and began seeking an opportunity to kill him (John 11:45-57). Jesus began warning his disciples that he would be killed and that he would rise from the dead after three days, but they did not understand. Jesus was betrayed by Judas (an apostle), arrested by the Jews, deserted by his disciples, maliciously accused by the religious leaders, and sent to Pilate the governor to be questioned and killed.

Jesus Is Crucified to Conquer Sin (Matthew 27:11-56)

9. Write your notes on **Matthew 27:11-56** in the space provided.

10. Considering what we have learned in our studies so far, why did Jesus need to die?

11. How does Jesus' willingness to become a sacrifice for our sins impact you?

Jesus Rose to Conquer Death (Matthew 27:57-28:15)

12. Write your notes on **Matthew 27:57-28:15** in the space provided.

13. Why did Jesus need to raise from the dead? What does Jesus' resurrection mean for us?

14. How did the Jews try to coverup Jesus' resurrection? Nearly all the apostles were later killed because they boldly testified of Jesus' resurrection. Does the Jewish coverup make sense? Why or why not?

Jesus Tells Disciples to Make Disciples (Matthew 28:16-20)

15. What did Jesus command his disciples to do in **Matthew 28:16-20**?

Jesus died so we could die to sin. Jesus rose so we could be raised from death to life. We can be saved from sin and become Jesus' disciples if we will turn from our sins, trust Jesus as the Son of God, be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and follow Jesus' commands. God had promised to pour out his Spirit so his life-giving presence could dwell among and sanctify his people again. John the Baptizer pointed both to this restoration and to a coming judgment when he said Jesus would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11). In the next lesson we will turn to Acts 2 to see salvation offered as prophecies of the Spirit and of fiery judgment come back into play.

#5: The Spirit Brings Restoration and Life (Acts 2, etc.)

Sin causes us to be unholy so that God cannot dwell among and bless us, but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, put on flesh and died on the cross to take away our sins. Through Jesus' sacrifice, all can be permanently cleansed of sins so that a restored relationship with God is possible. But how can we access this forgiveness and restored relationship? The Jews committed a terrible crime by killing the Son of God. How could they be set free from this sin? Turn to **Acts 2** to see how Peter answered this question when God's Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost - fifty days after Jesus died.

The Apostles Speak in Different Languages (Acts 2:1-13)

1. What did the apostles do when they were filled with the Holy Spirit?
2. How did the crowd respond when they heard the apostles miraculously speaking their languages?

Languages Signify the Arrival of the Spirit and Judgment (Acts 2:14-21)

3. Who prophesied that miracles like this would happen?
4. Considering **Joel 2:28-32**, what two key events does this miracle signify?

Judgment was coming upon the Jews for killing Jesus (Joel 2:32; Matthew 21:33-46). Despite this coming judgment, the Spirit was being poured out and all who called on the Lord's name would be saved. The old covenant, law, temple, priests, and sacrifices would be gone - finding completion in a better covenant, law, temple, priest, and sacrifice. But now Peter will continue by boldly claiming that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah from David's lineage whom God resurrected to reign as Lord and Christ at God's right hand. As you read this **Acts 2:22-36**, note what evidences Peter gives for his claim.

Jesus Is Lord and Christ (Acts 2:22-36)

5. Consider the Scriptures below. What evidences does Peter present for his claim that Jesus is the Christ and is now reigning as Lord at God's right hand in heaven?
 - a) **Acts 2:22** —
 - b) **Acts 2:25-31** —
 - c) **Acts 2:32** —
 - d) **Acts 2:33** —

Peter's case is clear. "The miracles, the prophecies, our witness, and the language-speaking you hear all agree: Jesus is Lord and Christ and he is sitting at the LORD's right hand (34-36)." John the Baptizer said Jesus would baptize with the Spirit and fire. Jerusalem would be trampled for murdering God's prophets and God's Son (fire), but restoration and life was being offered (Spirit). How would the Jews respond?

What Shall We Do? (Acts 2:37-41)

6. What did Peter tell the crowd to do when they were convicted of their sin?

7. What does it practically mean to repent?

8. What does it mean to be baptized? What two blessings are connected to baptism here?

A key prophesied blessing of the new covenant is the gift of the Holy Spirit. God promised to send his Spirit to dwell with us and give us life (Ezek. 36:26-27, 37:1-14). Receiving the promised Spirit is now possible for us. This is not something we feel *physically*; rather, the Spirit is gifted to believers at baptism so **spiritual** transformation and life result inside us (Jn. 7:37-39). The Spirit also sets Christians apart since he builds us together as a dwelling place for God (Ezek. 37:26-28; 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1; Eph. 2:22).

9. How did the crowd respond in **Acts 2:41** when they received Peter's message?

The Fellowship of Believers (Acts 2:42-47)

10. How did these Christians devote themselves to the fellowship as examples to us in **Acts 2:42-47**?

Persecution arose against the Christians in Jerusalem, but the Christians scattered and preached Jesus wherever they went (Acts 8:1-4). Even the Gentiles began repenting. In **Acts 10:44-48**, the Holy Spirit enabled a group of believing Gentiles to speak different languages to signify that God grants the same life to Jews and Gentiles alike. All Christ-followers are part of the same body (Eph. 1:9-10, 2:11-3:13).

The Judgement (Revelation 20:11-21:8)

11. What does **Revelation 20:11-21:8** say will happen one day? How should this impact our lives today?

God gave us everything, but we turned against him. We deserve to be separated from God, but God sacrificed his Son to bring us back to him. Jesus our King has conquered death and he invites all to enjoy eternal life with him. When we repent, trust Jesus as the Son of God who rose from the dead, and are baptized, our sins will be forgiven and we will be given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Those who imitate Jesus will be transformed to wear God's likeness. Through the Spirit, we can become temples for God and shine as lights in darkness. Take hold of salvation. Tell others. Give God the glory.

Appendix

Jesus Is the Only Way

John 3:18, 36 teach that condemnation and wrath remain on us unless we believe in the Son.

John 14:6 teaches that Jesus is the Way and people can only come to the Father through Jesus.

Acts 4:8-12 teaches that salvation can come through no one but Jesus.

1 Timothy 2:5 teaches that just as there is one God, there is only one mediator between God and man.

Baptism

1 Peter 3:21 teaches us that baptism saves us and is how we appeal to God for a clean conscience.

Matthew 28:18-20 shows us Jesus told his disciples to make disciples through baptism and teaching.

Acts 19:1-6 shows us that people can be re-baptized through the Ephesian disciples' example.

Acts 22:6-16 shows us that baptism truly washes away our sins through Paul's example.

Colossians 2:11-13 teaches that baptism is how we put faith in God's work, not our works.

Romans 6:1-8 teaches that our sinful body is buried when we are baptized into Christ's death.

Jesus' Resurrection

Jesus' Brothers. John makes it clear in **John 7:5** that Jesus' brothers did not believe in him. However, Luke also makes it very clear in **Acts 1:14** that this changed after the resurrection. Furthermore, Jesus' brothers, James and Jude, both wrote inspired letters in our Bibles today. James even became a leader in the church at Jerusalem. Why did they believe? **1 Corinthians 15:7** says Jesus appeared to James after his resurrection and the resurrection is the ultimate proof that Jesus is from God as he claimed.

Paul's Changed Life. Unbelieving historians fully admit Paul was a historical person who wrote many of the letters in the New Testament. Paul was trained from youth in the Law of Moses, became a Pharisee, and was responsible for both the imprisonment and death of Christians (Acts 8:1-3, 22:3-5; Philippians 3:4-6). Yet, Luke records Paul's testimony in Acts: Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus. This changed everything. Paul turned from persecuting Christians to making Christians. Paul knew what he saw, so he deserted his previous life. As Paul says in **Philippians 3:7**, *"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ."* If Jesus did not appear to Paul, why did Paul's life change so dramatically?

The Empty Tomb. The gospel of Jesus' resurrection began in Jerusalem and spread from Jerusalem, but many in Jerusalem did not believe and did not want this message to spread. If Jesus did not raise from the dead as the apostles claimed, why did these enemies in Jerusalem not retrieve Jesus' body to disprove the apostles? If Jesus' body was in the tomb, the gospel would not have spread anywhere.

Motivations of the Apostles. Many say the apostles stole Jesus' body and lied about his resurrection. This would make sense if Jesus' disciples gained something by spreading a lie - like Muhammad's followers who gained riches and power. However, Jesus' apostles were killed for preaching Jesus' resurrection. If the apostles were lying, they would have recanted once death was threatened. But they were witnesses. As Peter said, *"... we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard"* (Acts 4:20).

Resurrection or Apparition? Some will allow that the apostles thought they saw Jesus after his resurrection, but they were delusional and saw an apparition of Jesus. This would explain the apostles' willingness to die for the gospel, but this argument fails because it demands the existence of mass visionary experiences. After his resurrection, Jesus showed himself to groups small and large. Two people do not see the same apparition or vision at once, let alone 500 people. Regardless, if we claim the apostles saw an apparition, we must still answer the question, "Where is the body?"