

STUDY FOUR

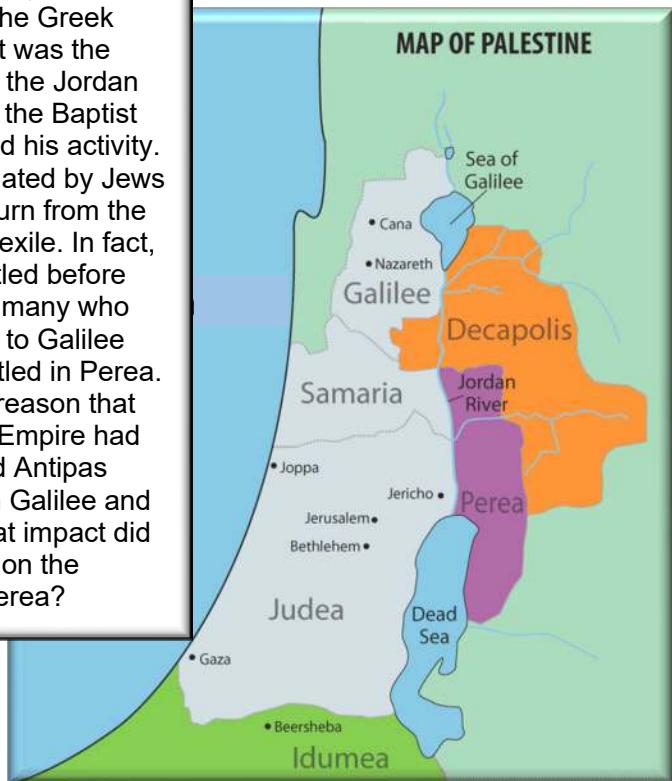
Jewish Writings Support the Resurrection of Jesus



This chapter in the book centers on two facts. First, Jewish writings support the New Testament account of the events of Jesus' ministry, his arrest, his trial, and his execution. Second, in an odd sort of way, they also bear testimony that something unexplainable happened to the body of Jesus. This study walks through the New Testament's telling of the Jewish leaders' actions related to both of those facts.

1. The book of John recounts the attitude and actions of the spiritual leaders in Jerusalem toward Jesus. Note their actions in the following verses:
 - A. John 8:58-59 (This happened in October of the year before Jesus was arrested.)
 - B. John 10:31-32 & 39 (This happened in December of the year before Jesus was arrested.)
2. What was the result of these two occasions recorded in John 10:40-42? (See the top of the next page for information on Perea.)
3. It is from Perea that Jesus came to raise Lazarus from the dead. Aware of the danger, note what Thomas says in John 11:16. After Lazarus is raised, there was a meeting of the ruling council of the Jews in Jerusalem (called the "Sanhedrin"). What was the result of that meeting according to John 11:53-57?

“Perea” literally means “across” in the Greek language. It was the area across the Jordan where John the Baptist had centered his activity. It was populated by Jews after the return from the Babylonian exile. In fact, it was resettled before Galilee and many who later moved to Galilee had first settled in Perea. It is for this reason that the Roman Empire had made Herod Antipas ruler of both Galilee and Perea. What impact did Jesus have on the people of Perea?



On page 24 of *The Linchpin* it quotes the Talmud's reference to the arrest warrant of Jesus. Read it, then note the summary of six pieces of information on pages 24-26.

4. The warrant notes that the method of execution changed from stoning to “hanging”, a reference to being hung on a cross which was a Roman method of execution. Read Mark 14:1-2. What indication is given as to why the Jewish leaders might have wanted the Romans to do the execution rather than them?

Discussion: In light of the tense situation described in Jerusalem, how does this affect your understanding of the Palm Sunday event?

5. We now turn to what the New Testament has to say about the Jewish explanation for the missing body of Jesus after his resurrection. Read Matthew 28:1-15.
 - A. What is the explanation that is given for the tomb being empty?
 - B. How long did that explanation get circulated?
 - C. Why did they need to have an explanation?
6. Read the rather odd story from *Toledoth Jesu* on pages 29-30 of *The Linchpin*. What do you see in that story that overlaps with aspects of the New Testament's telling of the resurrection of Jesus?
7. Read Acts 4:24-30.
 - A. What did the early believers in Jesus begin to understand in verses 27-28?
 - B. How does it affect you to know what they were learning?

Discussion:

- In what way does the Jewish writings bear witness to the reality of Jesus' execution and resurrection?
- What value is there in seeing the relationship between the Jewish writings and the New Testament account?
- In what way do you see the decisions of man being used by God? What comfort might this give us?

Prayer suggestions:

- Ask God to soften the heart of someone who seems strongly opposed to Jesus.
- Ask God to open your eyes to see his hand at work even in tension-filled situations.