Did Jesus Die?

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[0:00] Amen. Did Jesus die? Did Jesus die? No serious historian disputes the historical existence of a man called Jesus Christ who lived in the first century Israel.

! This extends even to evangelical atheists. But many dispute that this man, Jesus Christ died on a cross.!
In the first century, many Christian heretics denied that Jesus died. They suggested either that someone else had died in his place or that Jesus didn't have a physical body, so he merely appeared to die.
Since its beginning, the Islamic faith has denied that Jesus died on the cross. Many others have suggested that Jesus fell into a coma-like swoon on the cross, only to be revived by the cool air of the tomb in which he was buried. Still others maintain that Jesus' followers took him down from the cross before he was dead and faked his burial.
People will go to any lengths to deny Jesus' death and resurrection because they understand something that we often don't. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the central foundation upon which Christianity stands or falls.
[1:29] If Jesus did die, and if he did rise again on the third day, then Christianity is not merely true, it is the only truth. If Jesus did die, and every other religion is false.

Everything we believe is a cruel lie, and we might as well give up and go home. But if Jesus did die, everything we've staked our lives upon is the truth.
Our sins are forgiven. We have eternal life, and our lives are forgiven. See how important it is that we hold firmly to the physical death of Jesus on the cross.
It is the difference between life and death. This morning I want to present you with four lines of unbreakable evidence which individually and together form an uncontradictable foundation for our faith in the physical death of Jesus.
Scripture, science, secular, and salvation. I want to start with Scripture. Scripture. The Christian Bible is the truth.
[3:09] As Christians, we stake our lives upon it, and we have never found it to fail us. It tells us the truth about God. It tells us the truth about the world, and it tells us the truth about ourselves.

The Bible itself claims to be true. For the Christian, their basis for knowledge, their epistemology, is summed up with the words, the Bible says it, that settles it.
Of course, we need to be sure that we know what the Bible really is saying and that we're not misinterpreting. But for us as Christians, the Word of God gives life and light. It tells us the truth about Jesus and the Word of salvation through Him.
So, the Bible is the first place we must go if we are to defend the death of Christ as a historical event. We do so on two levels. First, the Bible teaches the death of Christ.
And second, Jesus predicted His own death. The Bible teaches the death of Christ. The Bible unmistakably, unmissably, and unequivocally teaches and declares the physical death of Christ.
[4:20] The four Gospels teach us that Christ died. In John 19.30, we read, When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, It is finished.

And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. In Matthew 27.50, we read, Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. Mark puts it like this in chapter 15.37, Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last.
In Luke 23.46, we read, Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit. And having said this, He breathed His last.
The Apostle Paul reinforces the message of the four Gospels. In Romans 5.8, the verse to which we shall return, he says, God shows His love for us in this.

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While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Again, in one of the earliest confessions of faith, in 1 Corinthians 15.3, Paul writes, I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.
[5:32] The Apostle John, in Revelation 1.18, hears the words of the living Christ, who says to Him, I am the first and the last. I am the living one. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore.

We're barely scratching the surface of Old and New Testament teaching on the death of Christ. The Bible teaches it. Now, if the Bible is wrong about the death of Christ, what else is it wrong about? In fact, let's rephrase the question. If the Bible is wrong about the death of Christ, is there anything about which the Bible is right? The Bible, if the Bible is lying about Christ's death, it cannot be trusted.
It's no more than a work of fiction. To dismiss the death of Christ, to dismiss the whole Bible, very few are willing to go that far. Because to call the death of Christ into question is to call the whole Bible into question.
But the second way in which Scripture undergirds our faith in the death of Christ is that Jesus Himself predicted it. He was fully aware of His impending death.
[6:45] Sticking with Mark's gospel, on three occasions, Jesus explicitly predicts His death. Mark 8.31, He began to teach them, the Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and scribes, and be killed.

Mark 9.31, He was teaching His disciples, saying, the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. Mark 10.34, Jesus says of His treatment by the Gentiles, they will mock Him, and spit on Him, and flog Him, and kill Him.
Now, if Jesus was lying about His own death, what else was He lying about? The denial of Jesus' physical death calls into question everything Jesus said, and everything Jesus did.
We may even begin to doubt the integrity, sincerity, and truthfulness of Jesus Himself. Because if He can't be trusted to tell the truth, who can? If He can't be trusted to tell the truth about His own death, can He be trusted to tell the truth about God?
Can He be trusted about anything at all? But then someone might say, well, Jesus didn't say these things. Afterwards, His disciples changed His words, and invented these predictions.
[8:09] Think about it. The disciples all suffered and died because of their insistence upon the death of Jesus. Would you have suffered so much, and died so cruelly for something you knew was a lie?

Especially given there were 12 of them, which means it must have been a conspiracy of deceit. That objection simply does not stand the test of any form of logic. The Bible unashamedly, unequivocally, and unmistakably teaches the physical death of Jesus.
If someone wants to dispute that, they are most certainly reading a different Bible from the one the rest of us are reading. For the Christian, the Bible says it, that settles it.
But maybe some want more evidence. And that's fine, because there's far more evidence than we might at first think. Let's move on. Science.
[9:13] Science. I like science. Science. Crucifixion was a singularly nasty way of killing someone. The Romans were experts at inflicting pain, but crucifixion was one of their more inventive.

Jesus didn't last long on the cross. Some victims of crucifixion lasted many days before death, but for Jesus it was a matter of just a few hours. And this has led some to suggest that Jesus wasn't really dead at all, but rather pretended to be dead.
So, let's subject this claim to cold, hard medical science, and let's test its validity. Was Jesus dead? So, the Bible tells us that having been arrested, Jesus was brought before the Jewish authorities, and he was blindfolded, and then struck on the head.
We don't know how hard they struck him. Perhaps some merely slapped him. But it's well known that a grown man can be killed with a single punch.
From there, having been sentenced to crucifixion, Jesus was stripped, and a crown of thorns was driven into his head. Now, the blood lost from the thorns would have been relatively minor.
[10:29] But then we read that the soldiers, a whole Roman battalion, so as many of them as there are of us here today, beat him, and struck him on the head with a reed.

The reed's not what we think of as being a reed, more like a cane. So, here we have Jesus suffering repeated head trauma equivalent to a severe beating.

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And then he was flogged, or as it's sometimes called, scourged. The Roman scourge was not made of mere leather, as if Jesus was being whipped, like we got the belt when we were in school. Sharp pieces of bone were tied to the end of the leather. Jesus would have been flogged repeatedly. These sharp pieces of bone would have torn his skin, penetrated his muscle, and caused both external and internal bleeding.
So, by this stage, therefore, we have a Jesus who had endured severe head trauma, followed by extensive blood loss, and in all likelihood, internal bleeding.
[11:33] By now, Jesus was too weak to carry his cross to the place of execution, so Simon of Cyrene had to carry it instead. That's why Simon carried the cross, because Jesus was too severely injured by that point to carry it himself.

He is already half dead, and had he not been crucified, he may not have survived his injuries anyway. Having reached the place of execution, Jesus was nailed wrist and ankle to the cross. Death was not by dehydration or blood loss, but by asphyxiation. The effort of pulling up one's chest to breathe became too much, and one died by drowning on one's own fluid.
This is undoubtedly what Jesus died of. When after his death, the Roman soldier pierced Jesus' side, we read that together. We read that both blood and water poured forth, the classic post-mortem sign of one drowning on one's own fluid.
No forensic pathologist from silent witness conducted an autopsy on Jesus, but if they had, they would have concluded death by massive trauma, hypovolemic shock, and asphyxia.
[12:52] Now, in John 19, 33, we read, when they, the Roman soldiers, came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

Now, these Roman executioners were experts at killing people. They knew death when they saw it, and they knew that Jesus was dead. Pilate would not have released the body of Jesus for burial had he not known that Jesus was dead.
He was not in a coma, he was not drugged, he was not pretending, he was not in a swoon. Medically speaking, it was impossible for Jesus to have survived the degree of trauma he had suffered in the hours previous.
That's why he died so quickly. Did Jesus die? No one, not even a strong young man aged 33, could have survived what Jesus endured.
The physical and mental torment was beyond our imagination. So, the Christian proclamation of the death of Jesus has medical science on its side. The central foundation of the Christian faith is backed up by the assertions and evidence of science.
[14:05] We do not merely believe in Jesus' death on the basis of faith in the Bible, but on the basis of cold, hard science. Maybe that's not enough.

Let's move on to secular history. Let's move on to secular history. Flavius Josephus, a Roman Greek Jew, was a non-Christian historian who lived in first century Israel.
His most famous work is the Jewish War, where he recounts the invasion of Judea by the Romans and the destruction of Jerusalem. However, in another of his books, Antiquities of the Jews, in chapter 18, section 3, Josephus writes these words.
I'm going to quote. About this time there lived a man called Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man, for he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly.
He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, the Pharisees, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease.
[15:25] He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of Christians so called after him has still to this day not disappeared.

Pilate had him condemned to a cross. Josephus' words have been analyzed and verified by many critical historians and they have all concluded they are original and true.
They are not part of the Bible. They were not altered by early Christians. They provide impartial, secular proof both of the existence of Jesus and of his crucifixion.
Pilate had condemned him to a cross. Well, perhaps, however, Josephus, Flavius Josephus being an ethnic Jew might in your mind color his understanding.

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Tacitus was a Roman historian who in the second decade of the second century produced a book called Annals in which he talks about the death of Jesus.
[16:33] Referring to the persecution of Christians under Nero, Tacitus writes, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations called Christians by the populace.

Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the raid of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate. The extreme penalty.
Now, Tacitus was a classical historian. He would have used Roman court records to establish the death of Jesus at the hands of Pontius Pilate. So again, Tacitus' report confirms to us both historical existence and the death of Jesus.
It is clear that Tacitus himself did not favor Christians, so for him to stress that the death that Jesus was put to death was for him just a bare fact.
Let's take one other. There are many others, but let's take one more. The Jewish Talmud, the benchmark of the Jewish religion, Judaism, reports on the death of Jesus in these words.
[17:45] On the eve of Passover, they hung Yeshua and the cry went forth 40 days beforehand declaring that Yeshua is going to be stoned for practicing witchcraft, for enticing and leading Israel astray.

Anyone who knows something to clear him should come forth to exonerate him, but no one had anything exonerating for him, and they hung him on the eve of Passover.
From the mouths of Jesus' enemies, the truth comes forth. They hung him on the eve of Passover.
There are many other hints in secular writings about the death of Jesus.
In fact, there is as much historical evidence for the death of Jesus as there is for the invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar. None are written by Christians.
None. They all come from the pens of non-Christian historians, some of whom are deeply opposed to Christianity. So, to deny the death of Jesus on the base of insufficient evidence is therefore to fly in the face not just of Scripture, not just of science, but of secular history.
[19:02] We're getting there. Last. Salvation. Salvation. At its most basic level, Christianity is not a religion.

It's not a set of rules. It's a living and growing relationship with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. But that is not to say that Christianity is not rational, logical, or systematic.
And this provides us with the fourth foundation upon which we base our assertion that Jesus died.
Without the physical death of Jesus on the cross, the entire system of Christianity breaks down.
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Christianity depends upon the death of Christ.
Without that death, Christianity becomes a self-defeating set of morals. After all, how can we insist on the morality of telling the truth when our entire system is based on a lie?
[20:05] From the first few chapters of the Bible, we learn that there are consequences attached to our disobedience to God. The first human pair, Adam and Eve, were told by God regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat of it, for the day you eat of it you shall surely die.

Death follows upon disobedience. We know that having reached out to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, humankind fell from its state of innocence and became sinners both by nature and practice.
this system of justice and righteousness, which is one we employ in our state, is summed up again in the book of Ezekiel, the soul who sins shall surely die.
Again, in Hebrews 9, verse 2, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. God's forgiveness of our disobedience and sin can only come through blood and death.
This is the just and righteous punishment the sinner deserves on account of his disobedience to God. Now, in the Old Testament, such blood and death were symbolized through the sacrifice of sheep, bulls, and goats.
[21:26] But these sacrifices didn't take anyone's sin away. They were just a shadow of the ultimate sacrifice because, as we read again in Hebrews, it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.

The Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah points to that ultimate sacrifice of God's faithful servant. Listen to these words. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteem them

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stricken by God and afflicted.
He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. With his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray.
Everyone turned to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. It's often been said, you know, that though Isaiah was writing 600 years before Jesus was crucified, it's almost as if he was standing beneath the cross watching as our Lord Jesus was bearing our griefs, being stricken by God, being pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, being wounded for our healing and the iniquity of us all being laid upon him.
The whole system of Christianity is based upon Jesus shedding his blood and dying as the bearer of our sin, what is called substitutionary atonement.
[22:53] Jesus died on the cross to bear the punishment our sins deserve. Because God loved us so much, rather than punishing us with eternal death, he sent his son to die on the cross in our place.

Jesus said, I have come not to be served but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many. Again, God demonstrates his own love for us in this.
Why were we yet sinners? Christ died for us. If Jesus did not die, our sins remain against us. We must still pay the price.
We must still endure the punishment. If there was no cross, there's no forgiveness. If Jesus did not die, there's no eternal life for us. Jesus died as our substitute.
The whole system of Christianity is rendered empty if Jesus did not die on the cross. The penalty for our sin has not been borne and we all remain lost and condemned.
[23:57] Without that death, there is no Christianity. No cross. No Christianity. Ultimately, this is why we want to insist upon the death of Jesus on the cross.

Because without it, we cannot believe in the truthfulness of the Bible. We cannot rely on the findings of science. We cannot depend upon the facts of history. But ultimately, there is no salvation for us as human beings.
Perhaps now, you can begin to see where all the denials of the death of Jesus come from. You see it's the default position of the human heart to want to earn our own salvation, to do it all ourselves, rather than rely upon God to do it for us through the sacrificial death of His Son and by faith in Him.
The death of Jesus Christ is the ultimate demonstration of the love and grace of God toward us.
Having proved, I hope, beyond reasonable doubt, that Jesus really did die on the Roman cross, what's left for us today.
As Christians, this increases your assurance that all you believe about Jesus is true. And that means you can press on in your growth as a Christian with confidence and hope.
[25:22] But if you're not yet a Christian here today, it poses a life and death question for you. Are you willing? Are you all listening now? Are you all listening?

Are you willing to go against the evidence of the Bible, of science, of secular history, and the entire Christian system of salvation?
Are you? In order to meet the pleasures of your peer group, your woke friends, or fit in with society. Are you?
Today, the living God calls us to put our faith and trust in His living Son, Jesus Christ. I'm going to close with the best-known verse in all the Bible.
God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son so that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have a everlasting life.
[26:25] Amen.

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