

**HOW IS JESUS UNIQUE?**  
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**Faith and Reason: Believe Your Beliefs, Doubt Your Doubts**  
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Howdy ya'll. It is a real pleasure to come to a church that has a name that a Texan understands - Saddleback. I need to know what I'm dealing with here. So I want to know first of all how many of you - a really important question - support UCLA? And how many of you support USC? Ok. I'm in trouble. I went to the University of Texas at Austin.

Anyway, it is really a pleasure to be here with you, to kick off what I understand is going to be a series of lectures, not just this weekend, but over the next several years you're going to dedicate a weekend to this topic of Apologetics. That is absolutely marvelous. The church needs people who are ready to stand up and be counted for Jesus Christ and understand what he's all about and how to talk about that with people who don't quite share the same point of view.

So what I want to do in the time that I have with you is to take you through and talk about the Gospels. I want to talk about the Gospels in the way that they're structured. I want to talk about the Gospels from the earth up, in contrast to the Gospels from heaven down.

The basic way to think about this is to think of the Gospels as basically as two groupings. On the one hand we have the synoptic. Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These tell the story of Jesus from the earth up. They start with categories that we're used to. Matthew starts with a birth, Luke starts with a birth, Mark starts with John the Baptist. We understand what it is for a baby to come into the world, although there's a little surprise. The virgin birth tells you something a little different is going on here. But none the less we start off in categories that we're used to.

Then we have the gospel of John. John tells the story from heaven down. *"In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God."* This is CNN!

So you begin to see how Jesus is elevated really from the first verse.

Christians really love the gospel of John. They love the gospel of John because the gospel of John does all the heavy lifting. All the heavy lifting for Christians. So we run to the gospel of John whenever we can. If we're in the synoptics we run to the gospel of John as soon as we can. In fact, I'm from Texas, so I do it this way - we ride to the gospel of John as quick as we can for the help that the gospel of John will give. Because the gospel of John does everything all in one fell swoop.

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Why is it important to understand the difference between the way the synoptics do it and the way John does it? Perhaps more importantly why is it important to appreciate the way the synoptics do it?

The reason is because most of us did not come to Jesus this way. We were born, the doctor gave us the swat of life, and the next thing that was said was, "Jesus the second person of the trinity!" Most people do not come to Jesus this way. They do not come to Jesus with an inherent understanding of who he is. Someone has got to walk them through the story of the uniqueness of Jesus. That means they often start having to understand Jesus from the earth up.

I think it's no accident that in our cannon, in our Bible, we have three Gospels that tell the story from the earth up and only one that tells it from heaven down. Yet we as members of the church tend to gravitate towards John and we struggle with Matthew, Mark and Luke because they don't do all the heavy lifting. They gradually reveal who Jesus is. And sometimes in the process of having become Christians and understanding what the bottom line is and what the finish line is we forget how he got there. Yet when you go to talk about Jesus Christ with friends and neighbors who may not know who he is, may not have a clue or may have heard all kinds of other stuff about him - you know there is a lot of static out there about Jesus – they might not understand and appreciate who he is. So being able to tell the story from the earth up is very, very important.

That's the difference that it makes. The difference of being able to tell why the story is the way that it is. That when we understand what the difference is, we understand and begin to think how people need to think who are in the process of coming to Jesus.

So what I want to try and do with you in the thirty-six minutes and seventeen seconds I now have left is to walk you through how the Gospels, how the synoptic Gospels tell the story of Jesus from the earth up and they do it gradually, a brick at a time. Each brick gives another story of how Jesus exercises authority in a given area.

I'm just going to look at a selected few of them, some of my favorites, to kind of set the table for the conference and kind of discuss how we can talk about Jesus from the earth up.

I want to start off with the story of the paralytic. These are bricks in the wall pointing to the authority. We're going to talk about the healing of the paralytic. One day I want to do an audio visual Bible. We're in Mark 2, if you brought your Bibles with you. But I'm told we put the text up here on the screen for you so you won't have a problem. Nonetheless, I want to have an audio-visual Bible. In the passage the sound that you would hear is this. In this passage Jesus is speaking. It says *"Some men came bringing a paralytic carried by four men. Since they could not get into Jesus because of the crowd they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and after*

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*digging through the roof, they lowered the mat the paralyzed man was on. So they dropped the paralytic in front of Jesus and Jesus said to him, 'Your sins are forgiven.'*"

This is not in the text but I want you to think with me for a second. What do you think the paralytic thought when Jesus said to him, "Your sins are forgiven." Gee, thanks. That's not why I crashed this party.

The man's there on the mat. *"When Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' Now, some teachers of the law were sitting there thinking to themselves, 'why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?'"*

You know what's interesting? Sometimes in the Gospels the smartest theologians in the text are Jesus' opponents. They're exactly right here. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" That's a great question. They're thinking this to themselves. It says *"Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit this was what they were thinking in their hearts."*

I want to give you a point about the synoptic Gospels. Whenever anyone does thinking in front of Jesus it's bad for the person doing the thinking. It really is. Jesus knows what they're thinking so he asks them a question.

I'm a professor. I love to ask questions. I love to ask questions that separate the men from the boys, the ladies from the girls. The way I like to do it, I like to dream up a question that will really sort it out. This is one of those questions. He says, *"Why are you thinking these things? Which is it easier to say? Your sins are forgiven. Or to say Get up, take your mat and walk."*

This is a trick question. It's a trick question! Because on the one hand it's really easy to say, "Your sins are forgiven." I can look at you people. I know you're from California. That means there are some sinners out there. Just a few! We have sinners in Texas too. But I like you. You have a smile on your face. I can say "Your sins are forgiven!" Don't you feel better? Wasn't that great?

How can you see forgiveness of sins? You can't see it. So he asks about something they can see - that paralytic sitting in front of them who can't walk. He says to that paralytic, "Get up and walk." When he says, "Take up that mat and walk," he tells them before he does it what it means.

That's the next part of our passage. *"That you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins, [he says to the paralytic] I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."* And when that paralytic got up with his mat and walked, his walk *talked*. It said, The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins... The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins... The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins... It's a brick in the wall.

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No one has authority to forgive sins but God. But wait a minute! The Son of man has been given authority to forgive sins. And he is very closely connected to the living God. You better pay attention to what this Son of man says!

I wish I had time to develop for you the significance of that name "the Son of man." I don't. So we'll just have to do it some other time.

But in the meantime what I want you to see out of this first event is Jesus has the authority to forgive sins. And Jesus took something you cannot see - you cannot see forgiveness of sin, and tied it to something unusual that you can see - making a paralytic get up and walk so that when he walked you could see the truth of something you can't see by something you could see. He marks his authority to forgive sins.

That's just the beginning. The next passage we look at is actually a cluster of texts. This cluster of texts appears in the middle of Mark's gospel and it also appears in the middle of Luke's gospel. There are four miracles that come right in a row. In Mark 5 and in Luke 8. I'm actually not going to look at any of them in particular. But I do want to show you this picture.

I took some wonderful pictures of Israel when I was there. This is the Sea of Galilee. The miracle cluster begins at the Sea of Galilee when Jesus calmed the storm. You look at the picture and go, "That doesn't look like it could be very stormy at all." It's a beautiful picture. Look at how blue the sky is and how wonderful it is. But that cup that you see of hills around the Sea of Galilee can collect moisture and turbulence and some things can come up just like that, and produce a very disturbing storm!

So there's a series of miracles. First Jesus calms the sea. He shows his authority over creation. Then he exercises a demon from the Gaderene demoniac showing his authority over demons. Then he heals a woman who has a bleeding hemorrhage problem which renders her unclean in the Jewish context. Then a fourth miracle, the last, the topper if you will, is he raises Jairus' daughter from the dead.

So we get creation, demons, disease and death. Jesus shows his authority across a wide variety of activities. In fact, the Bible says that only God can control the weather. And who has control of life and death but God?

What we're doing is we're telling the story of Jesus from the earth up. We're working with categories where God is at work in a powerful way. He's the only God who is at work. So we can see who Jesus Christ is and we're telling the story a step at a time.

On the screen you're going to see a citation from Josephus. Why is this important? Because the role of miracles is a stumbling stone for people today. Most people struggle with the idea of

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miracles. Many people do. What's interesting is we have testimony coming from people who are not Christians about Jesus and his work. At least the reputation of his work.

So this citation from Josephus reads as follows: "There was about this time a wise man..." in the brackets are things we know that Josephus didn't write. Because Josephus was a Jew. But the copies that we have of Josephus come to us through Christians who passed them on in monasteries and other kinds of locations. So they added a few things. It's easy to spot. That's why they're in brackets. Because it says "If it be lawful to call him a man," would suggest that he's far more. Josephus was a Jewish person. He was a Jewish general who fought on behalf of Israel against Rome in 67 A.D. He was defeated. He began to write to explain Judaism to the Romans - slightly after the time of Jesus. "If it be lawful to call him a man," Josephus didn't write that. That's a bit that most historians say doesn't go back to Josephus. But the other part does.

"Now there was at this time Jesus, a wise man if it be lawful to call him man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such that perceived the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ. [That's another addition because Josephus wasn't a believer. He wasn't the first messianic.] Then it says "When Pilate at the suggestion of principle men amongst us had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him first, at the first did not forsake him for he appeared to them alive again on the third day..." Then the quote goes on "as the prophets had foretold. These and thousands of other wonderful things [that's not Josephus. He's a Jewish person writing] concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named for him are not extinct to this day."

This citation out of a book called The Antiquities, book 18, unit 63 and 64, is a non Christian Jewish testimony to Jesus. If we take out the bits that historians think don't belong there, and rightly so, what we end up with is this... I'm going to go back through it and purge out the added bits and then I'm going to talk about it. Remember that it starts off by mentioning "At this time there was a wise man, Jesus, who was a doer of wonderful works [don't move past that. That's the Greek word *paradoxon* we get our English word "paradox" from. In Greek it often means unusual things. Amazing things.

What Josephus is telling us is that Jesus was known for the kinds of surprising works that he did. This testimony is not coming from a Christian.

What we also know from Jewish tradition is that the Jewish tradition called Jesus a magician and a sorcerer. That's not a denial that he did unusual works. This is a debate about where his power comes from. The one option that's not on the table in our ancient sources about Jesus which is a popular option today is that we don't know if Jesus did miracles or not. No. On the ancient table what was seen is Jesus did something and the question is whether it comes from above or

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whether it comes from below. Those are the options on the table that the ancient people writing about Jesus at the time tell us about him.

So this is an important text. These miracles left an imprint. Some people said I believe they're from God. Other people said no, I don't believe they're from God. But there was one thing both sides couldn't debate. Jesus was doing unusual stuff.

The third event that I want to talk about is the Last Supper. Here we see Jesus' authority with sacred calendar and with liturgy. Why do I say that? Take a look at the passage with me. At the Last Supper in the ancient world, you don't sit at a table; you recline. Last summer I had the privilege of doing some filming with Mike Wilkins and Bob Webb. Mike teaches at Biola and Bob teaches up in Canada. We're doing a book on Jesus, the historical Jesus. So we talked about the Last Supper. In doing the filming we reclined like they did at the Last Supper. I can tell you it is very uncomfortable. They must have all been thin. You eat quickly because your elbows are killing you.

Anyway, we're at the Last Supper with Jesus. The Last Supper was a Passover meal. The Passover meal was commanded in Scripture by God for Israel to observe. The Passover doesn't commemorate what you think it would. It doesn't commemorate the forgiveness of sin. That's atonement. It commemorates the salvation of Israel. Remember that the Passover is associated with the tenth plague before Israel is freed. The Israelis would paint the doorposts with a sacrifice and the plague would pass them by of the death of the first born. Out of that Pharaoh finally said, I've had enough; I'm letting God's people go.

It was a picture of salvation. Jesus takes this Passover meal from the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread where it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb. Jesus' disciples asked him, 'Where do you want us to go to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?' He tells them how to do it and that becomes the Last Supper. And the Last Supper becomes the Lord's Table. Because the passage goes on later in Mark 14 and it says this *"While they were eating Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, 'Take it. This is my body.' He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them and they all drank from it. 'This is the blood of the covenant which is poured out for many,' he said to them,"*

What Jesus does is he takes a meal that has set liturgy associated with it, it's about the Passover, and he totally morphs it into a completely different meal with a completely different meaning and he is the center of that story. Because he's talking about the new act of salvation that God has brought. It's like the act of Passover, only it was what Passover and the atonement and everything else was always looking to. That's why he associates it with the new covenant.

What we see is another brick in the wall. That brick that goes in the wall is a brick that says Jesus has authority over the sacred calendar and over the liturgy. Yes, people can come around

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and they can tweak the way we worship and think about the way we worship to bring out an event in a more elevated kind of way. But what Jesus does is he doesn't do that. He takes it and he completely redefines it in relationship to himself and he says here is salvation.

That brings us to the fourth event. This is my favorite. I spent one year researching this one passage. And I'm going to tell you about it in five minutes. This is going to kill me. There is so much I'm leaving out. But this is Jesus before the Jewish leadership, the Sanhedrin. Listen to the passage. This reply by Jesus is what got him crucified historically. *"But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. [He's before Caiaphas and the leaders of Judaism, before he's sent to Pilate, right after his arrest.] And again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the blessed one?'"*

I need to tell you a little bit about this question. "The Son of the blessed one" is a roundabout way of saying Son of God. In Judaism when you really wanted to communicate something important you showed respect for the idea and the concept of God, so you kind of talked around it. Jews still do this today. When they write the name "God" today they'll write "G-d" when they write it in English. That's out of respect for the one true God.

So this high priest Caiaphas asked Jesus "Are you the Son of the blessed one?" Are you the Christ? Are you the promised one? And Jesus answered this way *"I am," said Jesus. 'and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the mighty one coming on the clouds of heaven.'" That reply got Jesus crucified. It had been set up long before by a whole lot of other things he had done that the Jewish leaders were very nervous about. But that's the reply that did it. After this reply it says, "Caiaphas tore his clothes and he said, 'What need do we have of any more witnesses?'"*

They had been struggling to bring a charge that they could take politically to Pilate because Pilate had the right, the only one who could crucify Jesus. He's the only one who could do it as the Roman prefect. So they've got to find a political charge. They eventually take the charge he claims to be a king without Rome selecting him as king.

There's something you need to know about Rome. Rome doesn't like people who claim to be king that Rome didn't select. That's a principle of classical history. So he ended up being crucified in part for sedition even though this is religious violation in front of the Jewish leadership. They can't take a religious charge to Pilate. Pilate won't care about a religious charge. But they can take a political charge to Pilate and that's what they do off of this.

Let's go back and think about this. Look at this saying again. He says *"I am and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the mighty one coming on the clouds of the heavens."* Here's the question. Who is able to sit with God in heaven? You've got to be Jewish to think your way through this. Put on your yarmulkes and kippahs. Think with me for a second.

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How many gods are there for Israel? One. Who shares God's glory for a Jew? No one. No one! How do the Ten Commandments begin? It begins with "*I am the Lord your God. You shall have only one God.*" That is a pretty key remark. Who can sit in heaven with God?

That year that I told you about - this is what I studied. I worked through all the Jewish material starting from the Old Testament to the fifth century A.D. and simply wanted the answer to one question: could Jews possibly contemplate the possibility that someone would sit next to God in heaven? Could they do that?

The answer is: it was debated. Four texts. Four texts total. Two for and two against. It's like health care.

On the one side (I won't tell you which political party is which) on the one side we had those who contemplated the possibility that there might be someone significant who under certain very special occasions might get to share the throne with God. There's a work Ezekiel, the Tragedian. In this work Moses has a dream and in this dream God invites him to sit on the thrones of heaven. He's so disturbed by this dream he asks someone to interpret it. The interpreter tells him "This is the betrayal of your authority in effect during the exodus."

In fact most Jewish scholars think that this text is an interpretation of what we call the *Midrash* on Exodus 7:1 which reads, God says to Moses, "*I will make you God to Pharaoh.*" Our translations soften this a little bit. That's a little too strong. Translations often make it read "*I will make you like God to Pharaoh.*" The point of the text is when Moses was speaking in bringing the plagues he was speaking with such strength and such a direct connection to God it was as good as God speaking. So this is picture, symbolically, as Moses being invited to the thrones of God.

That plural *thrones* is important. That comes out of Daniel 7. Daniel 7 is a part of the Old Testament where the Son of man rides the clouds to meet the ancient of days to receive judgment authority. I told you "Son of man" was important.

That's the first text. The second text is a text called First Enoch, written probably right before Jesus ministered. We think by the latest research that it may well have been written in the very region where Jesus ministered in Galilee. In a section of this work, chapters 37-71, there's a description of a figure known as the Son of man. Sound familiar? He sits next to God in heaven, he takes place in the judgment and he's pre-existent. He's this very exalted figure who gets to sit on the throne with God. Those are the yeas.

But I told you this is like health care. On the other side there are the nays'. A book called Third Enoch. In Third Enoch, Metatron, an angel gives Enoch a tour of heaven while he's showing him the future. In the midst of the tour he refers to himself as Little Yahweh, Yahweh junior. I



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didn't know there was a Roman numeral 2 next to someone's name in relationship to God. Later on in the book, Yahweh calls Metatron in for a talk.

When I was a kid my parents used to have talks with me. I learned one thing about talks when I was called in to talk to my father. They weren't talks at all. They were *hearings*. I was supposed to listen. And my dad talked.

So Yahweh calls Metatron in for one of these talks and punishes him because he dared to suggest that he could possibly be equated to the living God. That's a nay to the people who are writing the other stuff.

The second text comes from Rabbi Akibah. He actually ministered slightly after the time of Jesus in the early second century. He believed that it might be possible that someone like David could sit next to God in heaven. The response, when Akibah taught this, of the other rabbis was "How long will you profane the *Shekinah*? How long will you dishonor God? How long will you blaspheme? They told him not to teach that. That's the second nay vote.

Here's my point. In Judaism there was a debate and contemplation that perhaps under special circumstances someone just might be able to get a place next to God at least for a time. Moses, for a time.

But there was another very strong view that there was no way this could happen. You need to remember that the group that analyze the testimony of Jesus, the Jewish leadership, the Sanhedrin, they were mostly Sadducees. They didn't like adding to the Old Testament. They would have voted with no to a suggestion by anyone that someone might be able to sit with God. In fact what Jesus was saying was actually a terrific provocative remark.

On the screen now you will see a picture of the Holy of Holies. If you know anything about the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem, (this is not the real picture; I didn't go back to the first century to recreate it.) it's a picture of a model. That supposedly what the Holy of Holies looks like. If you think about this and if you know the story of the temple you know that the Holy of Holies was so sacred that the high priest could only go in once a year. The Feast of Atonement. The tradition is - we don't know if this was true, how far back it goes - the tradition is that the high priest had a rope tied around him so that if, should something happen in the Holy of Holies - he had a heart attack or he got struck down or whatever - they would pull him out because no one else could go into the Holy of Holies and desecrate the sacred space that was the Holy of Holies. That's how sacred the Holy of Holies was.

Why is that important? It's important because what Jesus is claiming is actually worse than claiming he can go in and park and live in the temple like it's a Holiday Inn.

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I tell my students I want to teach a class on parkology, the study of where Jesus parked. Parking places are hard to find. Jesus is claiming not that he can walk into the Holy of Holies and be at the side of God. But he is claiming that God is going to vindicate him and put him at his side in the real presence of God in the heavens. Not the model, not the symbol but in the real location of heaven; and it blew the Sanhedrin's minds.

So Jesus is claiming authority to be at the side of God permanently. He issues a challenge that says to the Jewish leadership *"And you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Almighty."* And by the way in Mark he replies with the same respect that the question was asked. "At the right hand of the Almighty" is the way of saying, "The right hand of God." But again he's communicating that respect. He meets respect of God for respect of God even as he makes the claim.

"You will see him riding on the clouds." I'm going to come back. They knew what the Son of man's job was. The Son of man is going to judge.

Here's also what Jesus is saying. Not only that he's claiming that it's more than parking in the temple, he's also claiming that one day there's going to be another trial and I won't be the defendant. I will be the judge. And the Sanhedrin didn't want to hear that.

All this sets up the resurrection. So we move now to the resurrection.

I want to tell you in the remaining time that I have why the resurrection cannot be a created event as some people want to suggest. Some people want to argue that this event was created so that Jesus could be alive after his death and the movement could go on. So they created the idea of a resurrection. But this can't be a created event by the way the story is told to us.

Here's the picture of the tomb associated with Herod's family in Jerusalem. It pictures very vividly the stone idea that comes with the tomb. I want to tell you why this can't be made up.

*"When the Sabbath was over Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices so they could go in and anoint Jesus' body very early on the first day of the week just after sunrise. They were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, 'Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?' But when they looked up they saw the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side and they were alarmed. 'Don't be alarmed,' he said, 'you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He is risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him.'"*

That right there tells you the story is not created. You know why? Because the first witnesses to the declaration of the resurrection were women. That's how much God thinks of women. They

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were the first to hear about Jesus' resurrection. It's not a created event. Let me tell you why. The ancient world is not like our world. Women could not be witnesses.

Look at these texts. They come from Jewish tradition. This is from the *Mishnah*, a written collection of the oral law of Judaism. "An oath of testimony applies to men but not to women." Or "Any evidence a woman is not eligible to bring." Or from the Talmud, the official rabbinic text from the first century, much later but again incorporating the same kind of tradition. "A woman is disqualified from giving evidence."

Here's my point. You're creating a story and you're trying to sell a difficult idea. The ancient world had trouble with resurrections. Certainly Greeks did. Jews believed in a bodily resurrection in the end but they didn't think someone gets resurrected in the midst of history. So you're trying to sell a new and difficult idea and you're creating a story. Remember that's the alternative. In the midst of creating a story, the people you pick out as witnesses to start the marketing are people who don't count as witnesses. Are you going to make up a story that way? Not at all.

The second reason we don't think this is made up are the burial practices. The burial practices fit first century custom. The burial practices are accurate. Again from the *Mishnah*. Sanhedrin 6:5-6 "Not this only but whoever allows the deceased to stay unburied overnight transgresses the commandment. [They've got to bury him immediately.] But if one kept a course for its own honor, for example, to bring a bier or shroud he does not transgress. They do not bury the felons in the burial ground of his ancestors." Jesus could not have his body released to someone to be buried in a family tomb. Lo and behold which tomb is Jesus buried in but Joseph of Arimathea. He's not a member of Jesus' family. It fits the burial custom.

Next reason the resurrection is not a made up story. The third day resurrection was not necessary on Jewish practices. Christians could have saved themselves a lot of trouble. They could have written a story along Jewish customs that could have gone like this: "Jesus will be raised at the end and will judge." No resurrection on the third day. Just a straightforward, Jesus will be raised at the end and he'll judge.

They didn't do that. There was a mutation in the Jewish belief, the Jewish belief that the resurrection happened at the end. What created the mutation? That empty tomb on the third day.

Or another reason why the resurrection can't be a created event. That is what is called the criterion of embarrassment. The reaction of the women by the leaders is unflattering. Remember those women come back to report on the resurrection and how does the leadership respond? "Oh, yes Jesus taught us this while we were walking with him. We should have remembered."

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No, they go, "It's been a tough few days. We think you've lost it." If you were making up a story would you make up a story that portrays your leaders as being so blind? The embarrassment must have been there because the embarrassment was there.

Last but not least, another reason why the resurrection is not a created event is if it was so easy to create these resurrection scenes then why is it we do not have a detailed scene of Jesus' appearance just to Peter or Jesus' appearance just to James?

The argument is, "They made this stuff up. It was easy." But if that's so why not the two most important leaders in the earliest period of Christianity - James who ran the church in Jerusalem and Peter who came to be regarded as the chief of the twelve. No specific story of appearances to them. We know they took place because they're listed in 1 Corinthians 15. But we don't have any detailed description of that scene showing how careful the church was to make up scenes.

Apparently they regarded... Peter and James regarded this as so serious and so sacred the only thing they reported was that it happened. The only thing the church passed on was it happened.

Here's what I say: the synoptic Gospels tell the story of Jesus from the earth up and the way they do it is they do a brick of authority, one at a time. They talk about different kinds of authority. I've shown you in the last forty minutes Jesus' authority over sin, Jesus' authority over the creation, Jesus' authority over demons, Jesus' authority over disease, Jesus' authority over death, Jesus' authority over sacred rites and sacred calendar. I haven't even mentioned his authority over the temple, his authority over the Sabbath, sacred space and something commanded in the Ten Commandments that he becomes the chief interpreter of.

But the most important thing that I want you to see is the resurrection represents God's vote in the dispute. Remember I said earlier, the ancients view was is Jesus from above or from below? The empty tomb said that option's gone. From above!

We tell the story of Jesus from the earth. Jesus is parked with God at not only his invitation but at his initiative. Sharing his glory. And the synoptic Gospels tell the story of Jesus from the earth up.

Before I pray to close I just want to thank you for taking the time to sit and listen and hear about Jesus from the earth up. I hope and pray that this has encouraged you that there is a way to tell the story by pointing out the steps of Jesus' authority one step at a time with the last step taking us to the heavenly presence of the living God.

**HOW IS JESUS UNIQUE?**  
*2009 Saddleback Apologetics Conference*

Prayer:

Father, we do thank you for your grace, for the revelation of your word. Father, sometimes as Christians we forget how we got here. We got here because you graciously revealed yourself in your Son. You showed us who you were and how much you loved us by dying not only that our sins may be forgiven but dying so that we might have life in your spirit in a life that lasts forever and ever in your presence with our Savior at your side. For those of us who have trusted in this message we rejoice in your goodness and grace. Just hearing the story of how you've lifted us up through what you've done through your Son. If there are any here who don't know you may they contemplate the authority that Jesus revealed one step at a time as he came to earth and then slowly but surely showed how he truly belongs at the side of God in heaven with his creatures acknowledging him. In Jesus' name we ask this. Amen.