

BODY
of
PROOF

A Study on the
Resurrection of Jesus

JEREMIAH J. JOHNSTON

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About the Author

Jeremiah J. Johnston, PhD, is a New Testament scholar, pastor, author, Bible teacher, and apologist, and he ministers internationally as president of Christian Thinkers Society (ChristianThinkers.com). Jeremiah loves the local church and serves as pastor of apologetics and cultural engagement at Prestonwood Baptist Church as well as dean of spiritual development at Prestonwood Christian Academy. Jeremiah is also the Senior Fellow for Christian Origins at the Institute for Global Leadership at Dallas Baptist University. His passion is working with churches, pastors, and students in equipping Christians to give intellectually informed reasons for what they believe.

Jeremiah has distinguished himself speaking in churches of all denominations and has authored articles in both popular magazines and scholarly books, journals, and media programs. As a theologian who has the unique ability to connect with people of all ages, and as a culture expert, he has been interviewed numerous times and has reviewed and contributed articles across a spectrum of national shows and podcasts

As a New Testament scholar, Johnston has published with Oxford University Press, E. J. Brill, Bloomsbury T & T Clark, Macmillan, and Mohr Siebeck. He completed his doctoral residency in Oxford in collaboration with Oxford Centre for Missions Studies and received his PhD from Middlesex University (UK). He has also earned advanced degrees in theology from Acadia University and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Jeremiah is married to Audrey, and they are parents to five children—Lily Faith, Justin, and triplets: Abel, Ryder, and Jaxson.

How to Use this Study

Body of Proof: A Study on the Resurrection of Jesus provides four lessons that can be used for group or personal Bible study. Each session includes a group study along with five days of personal study to use throughout the week. In order to have the best experience, allow forty-five to sixty minutes for the group sessions.

Group Study

Each week of study begins with a group study experience featuring videos filmed on location in Israel. Each experience contains four elements: “Start,” “Watch,” “Discuss,” and “About the Location.” The group study gives real, immediately practical teaching to help participants connect the truth and hope of the resurrection to their lives.

START. Each study begins with an introduction to the lesson to come. This section is designed to introduce the week’s topic and get the conversation going. Read this section and answer the introductory questions together if you’re in a group.

WATCH. This space provides Jeremiah’s teaching outline as well as blank space to take notes as you watch the video teaching. Codes to access the teaching videos are included with your purchase of this book and can be found on the insert located at the back of this book. You may watch these videos together as a group of prior to the group meeting.

ABOUT THIS LOCATION. This section gives additional details and resources about the wonderful locations where this study was filmed. Each includes a photo, key biblical text that took place there, brief information, and a QR code that will take participants to a short video with more information from Jeremiah.

DISCUSS. This section is the primary group experience each week. Leaders should spend the majority of the group session teaching while using the verses and questions provided in this section. These sections have three subsections: Read, Apply, and Close.

Personal Study

Each week of the study the personal study examines four reason that we can trust in the truth of the resurrection and place our hope in Jesus.

Week 1

Jesus Predicted His Death and Resurrection

Week 2

Jesus Demonstrated Resurrection Power

Week 3

The Resurrection Makes Sense of our Suffering

Week 4

The Resurrection is the Foundation of our Hope

After attending the group session, members should complete the five days of personal study at home before the next group session. Through this personal study, group members will explore biblical content and application that support the concepts introduced in the video teaching.

Additional Resources

Also available at lifeway.com/bodyofproof you will find a church campaign kit to assist you in making this study a church wide initiative leading into or out of the Easter season. Here you will find: leader's guides for each session, kids and student lessons, family activities, promotional assets, and a church planning guide.

Tips for Leading a Small Group

Follow these guidelines to prepare for each session.

Prayerfully Prepare

Review. Review the personal studies and group questions ahead of time.

Pray. Be intentional about praying for each person in the group. Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God's Word.

Minimize Distractions

Create a comfortable environment. If group members are uncomfortable, they'll be distracted and therefore not engaged in the group experience. Plan ahead by considering these details:

Seating	Temperature	Lighting
Food or Drink	Surrounding Noise	General Cleanliness

At best, thoughtfulness and hospitality show guests and group members they're welcome and valued in whatever environment you choose to gather. At worst, people may never notice your effort, but they're also not distracted. Do everything in your ability to help people focus on what's most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with one another.

Include Others

Your goal is to foster a community in which people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually. Always be aware of opportunities to include any people who visit the group and to invite new people to join your group. An inexpensive way to make first-time guests feel welcome or to invite someone to get involved is to give them their own copies of this Bible study book.

Encourage Discussion

A good small group experience has the following characteristics:

Everyone Participates. Encourage everyone to ask questions, share responses, or read aloud.

No One Dominates—Not Even the Leader. Be sure that your time speaking as a leader takes up less than half of your time together as a group. Politely guide discussion if anyone dominates.

Nobody Is Rushed Through Questions. Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People often need time to think about their responses or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.

Input Is Affirmed and Followed Up. Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking how other people have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. People are less likely to speak up if they fear that you don't actually want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer.

God and His Word Are Central. Opinions and experiences can be helpful, but God has given us the truth. Trust God's Word to be the authority and God's Spirit to work in people's lives. You can't change anyone, but God can. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

Keep Connecting

Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Participation during the group session is always improved when members spend time connecting with one another outside the group sessions. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending.

When possible, build deeper friendships by planning or spontaneously inviting group members to join you outside your regularly scheduled group time for activities, meals, group hangouts, or projects around your home, church, or community.

Why Study the Resurrection?

Jesus's resurrection is a central focus of our New Testament Scripture with over three hundred verses referencing this truth. When we study what the Bible teaches about the resurrection of Jesus, we are struck by the power this singular historical event had on the early followers of Jesus. We can also recognize the explosive growth of the church as they spread the gospel, or “good news” of Jesus's resurrection, throughout the world. When we open the Scriptures, we see that belief in bodily resurrection empowered the early church to “[turn] the world upside down” (Acts 17:6); that resurrection faith was the key to their ethics (1 Corinthians 15:58–16:1); that resurrection faith brought hope in moments of worldly despair (2 Corinthians 1); and that resurrection faith caused the earliest followers of Jesus to become the greatest force for God on earth (Galatians 3:28).

The overpowering truth of Jesus's resurrection is the promise of a glorified resurrected body, so make the most of each day, because everything we do today matters for the kingdom of God. In fact, deathlessness is the main descriptor of our future resurrection bodies—they cannot die. They will be physical bodies, not spirit-ghosts or apparitions. We know this because Paul told the church at Philippi that Christ would “transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). Christ was raised in a physical body, and Scripture tells us our resurrection bodies will be patterned after His body. Jesus also told His disciples, “Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have” (Luke 24:39).

Despite this, many of today's churches rarely preach series on Jesus's resurrection. Outside of a funeral or Easter service, believers may go weeks or even months without learning about or considering His resurrection. Yet this event is unquestionably at the very center of the New Testament proclamation. Paul stated that, apart from this event, the very faith of his hearers was vain

and they were still trapped in sin (1 Corinthians 15:17). How often do believers today hear challenging words such as these?

The gospel teaching and the apologetic significance of Jesus's resurrection are probably the most common applications regarding Jesus's resurrection. However, few of the current books cover the idea that the resurrection of Jesus is also connected to nearly every major theological doctrine as well as many practical areas of Christian living. So, having a weak understanding of the implications of Jesus's resurrection keeps Christians from living fully in Spirit-filled power. First Peter 1:3 serves as a much-needed reminder and promise for every believer today, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

The first-generation Christians became unstoppable witnesses for Christ, because they saw Jesus physically alive after a heinous Roman execution. This in depth Bible study will equip you with practical applications and transformational truths to help you live in light of the reality of Jesus's resurrection today. Our study also anticipates modern critics, who are very similar to Jesus's critics. Jesus's critics then demanded evidence. They essentially—and rightly—said, "Well, if you're this person you claim to be, show us a sign." And Jesus responded, "I will give you one sign: my resurrection from the dead" (see Matthew 12:38–42).

The bottom line is this: If Jesus did not rise from the dead, that makes Him a false prophet unworthy of our allegiance, and no rational person should follow Him. But if Jesus did rise from the dead, it seems that He did so in confirmation of His personal and radical claims. And the implications of that truth, that Jesus is alive forevermore, makes us stop and consider, wrap ourselves in the truth of Jesus's resurrection. That is exactly what happened to the first Christians, and we pray this will also be your experience through the truths you learn and apply through this study.

GROUP
STUDY

1

Replacing My
“If Onlys”
with
“If Jesus”

Start

Welcome to Session 1 of Body of Proof.

Use this section to get the conversation started.

What is a belief that you hold with certainty? What gives you certainty?

How does certainty in something give you hope?

The Gospel writer, Luke, opens his book telling his audience why he wrote it: “so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed” (Luke 1:4). The goal of this study provide you certainty in the hope of the resurrection.

Christianity is true, and you can confirm the truth of Christianity by appealing to what actually happened in history. As we learn in our study together, the power of the truth of the resurrection results in a fusion of facts and faith. The result is certainty and confidence to live with hope in Christ today.

This study will journey to different resurrection sites throughout Israel and help us think through the hope the resurrection brings to our daily lives. We will begin in Bethany, where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Because He raised Lazarus, we can trust that He has the power to raise us physically as well as spiritually.

Pray together before watching this week’s video teaching.

Watch

Use this section to take notes and follow the video teaching.

Central Truth

- A. I must replace all my “if onlys” with “if Jesus.”
- B. I will live by “if Jesus,” not “if only.”





The Tomb of Lazarus in Bethany

Key Texts: John 11:1-55; Mark 14:3-9;
Luke 10:3-42; 24:50-53

Lazarus's tomb is located in a first century cemetery and could be the actual tomb. The tomb has been recognized as such since the early fourth century. Given the continuity of village memory, we can be certain that this is the actual tomb or at least the right spot.



*For more on
Bethany view
the video at
this QR Code.*



Discuss

Use this section to discuss the video teaching.

READ

Resurrection is not an abstract belief or just another fact of history but a person—Jesus Christ. After the death of her brother Lazarus, Jesus stood in front of Martha, urging her to make the leap of faith and place her hope in Him. He challenged her to trust in His resurrection power and exchange her “if only” for an “if Jesus.”

Read John 11:1-44 together.

What does it mean that Jesus is the resurrection and the life?

Why did Jesus take the time to ask Martha the question, “do you believe this” (v. 26)?

Why is it important for each of us to answer this question for ourselves?

Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead demonstrates that His claims about being resurrection is life. In this encounter, Jesus interrupted the physical death of Lazarus and showed that He has interrupted spiritual death for all who place their hope in Him—for those who turn their if onlys to if Jesus. From this story we see several immediate applications to our faith.

APPLY

1. Even the closest friends of Jesus experience pain and adversity (vv. 1-5)

How does this encounter confirm that pain is not the end of our story?

2. Jesus is resourceful because He is the source (v. 3).

What are some ways provides for us that build our faith and trust in Him?

3. Instead of being stuck in the past, Jesus wants us to look to the future (vv. 9-10).

What do you have to look forward to because of the certainty of resurrection with Jesus?

4. The Christian lives and dies in hope; death is now no more than sleep, and there is nothing to fear (v. 11).

Why should Jesus's power in this encounter free us from fear?
How are sadness and hurt different than fear?

How does Jesus meet those needs as well?

5. Faith trusts God through uncertainty (v. 16).

Why is uncertainty so destabilizing? When our life feels destabilized, why is it essential to have certainty in Jesus?

6. Faith is not what I feel; faith is what I believe (v. 25).

How can our feelings deceive us?

Where are you trusting your belief in Jesus beyond your feelings?

CLOSE

Which of your *if onlys* do you need to replace with an *if Jesus*?

Faith is taking God at His Word and acting accordingly. Our relationship with Jesus Christ is not based on feelings but on faith, which is based on the facts of Scripture. Each week, our personal study will be devoted to investigating one reason we can have certainty in Jesus. This week we'll investigate the truth that "Jesus called it." In other words, Jesus kept His mission front and center with His disciples and early followers—constantly reminding them that He would die and rise on the third day.

Close in prayer and remind the group to complete the five days of personal study.

PERSONAL
STUDY

1

I Can Trust the
Resurrection Because:

Jesus Called It

DAY 1

Jesus Defies Expectation

KEY SCRIPTURE

Mark 8:29-33

Any parent, grandparent, aunt, or uncle, can probably relate with having to repeat exciting announcements to children. They usually say something like, “Wait, what?” or “Seriously?” Whether because of disbelief or unfamiliarity, they need to be told more than once. Or if you have coached a team, maybe you’ve said something like, “It’ll be worth it in the end,” to encourage the players to trust you and the process. Athletes must be reminded of where they are and the goal and then adjust their expectations. Jesus’s disciples were no different. They suffered from a brand of disbelieving faith and wrong expectations, and they misunderstood what the real Messiah and true Messianic mission looked like. So, Jesus had to speak very pointedly—and they did not like it.

Have you been in a training or coaching situation where you didn’t get it and needed help? What did you learn from that experience?

We read about the disciples misunderstanding in the Gospel of Mark 8:29 when Jesus asked them, “Who do you say that I am?” (v. 29).

And in response, Peter made a remarkable confession, boldly proclaiming Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. Yet, what kind of Messiah would Jesus be? Jesus had been hinting at all His messianic mission would entail, but the disciples still didn’t understand. They expected a conqueror, not a sufferer. Jesus didn’t wait to explain; He took the teaching opportunity.

Then he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke openly about this. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning around and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking about God’s concerns but human concerns.”

MARK 8:31-33

At first, Peter got it right. But Peter went from proclaiming Jesus the Messiah to being called “Satan” and being told to get back in line just a few minutes later. Can you relate? We can get things right in our faith, and then have the rug pulled out from us when we misapply what we get right. This is why context is so helpful when we study Scripture. When I open the Bible I always use the CIA method: Context + Interpretation = Application.

Did you know the Gospels record less than one month of Jesus’s life? In fact, we only have snippets, or parts, of around twenty-four to twenty-six days of the earthly life of Jesus. In God’s plan, we didn’t need more than a month of Jesus’s life recorded for the power of the gospel to be unleashed and mankind to be rescued. As we open our Bible study this week, the most important aspect of the Gospels is the intentional focus on the final eight days of Jesus’s earthly ministry. This final week or so of Jesus’s life is referred to by many as “The Passion of the Christ.”

Hearing this descriptor may be confusing to some. Why do so many people refer to Jesus’s suffering, death, and resurrection as “the passion”? The term “passion” is connected to the Latin word *passiō*, which means suffering. Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus resetting the disciples’ (and our) expectations about what kind of Messiah He would be. These predictions were meant to lead the first disciples and disciples today to realize Jesus is who He claimed to be. Because Jesus is who He claimed to be we can look to Him with confidence and hope.

Read the following passages and as you close today’s study, ask the Lord to reveal to you why Jesus had to suffer first and not conquer. Summarize what you learn.

Acts 1:3; 3:18

Luke 17:25; 22:15

Hebrews 13:12

1 Peter 1:21; 3:18; 4:1

Philippians 1:29

DAY 2

Messianic Prophecy and Passion Predictions Are Linked!

KEY SCRIPTURE

Daniel 7:13-14

At the core of Jesus's passion predictions lie three main components:

- In Jerusalem Jesus would suffer and die.
- Jesus would be comprehensively rejected.
- He would be resurrected victoriously “after three days” (Matthew 27:63; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34) or “on the third day” (Matthew 17:23; 20:19; Luke 18:33; 24:7).

Where have you identified these components in your own Bible reading?

Jesus's passion predictions are the climactic tipping point of the Gospels. But the passion was not just predicted in the Gospels, the predictions began in the Old Testament. To quote a great twentieth-century scholar, “Jesus found himself in the Old Testament.”¹ The whole canon of Scripture predicts and proclaims the resurrection.

To what extent have you relied on the Old Testament for information about Jesus's suffering, death and resurrection?

Why is the Old Testament important for understanding the New Testament?

When we read the Old Testament, the Messiah is not a side-bar issue but the focal point. Jesus relied on the Old Testament to clarify His mission and ministry. Because of this we know the cross was not an accident or triumph of evil; it was the preordained will of God, and it was foretold in the Old Testament. Jesus saw Himself as fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. Jesus quoted or alluded to Deuteronomy around fifteen or sixteen times, Isaiah around forty times, and the Psalms around thirteen times.

Jesus's favorite way of referring to himself was the phrase "Son of Man," and this self-designation appears over eighty times in the Gospels. This title also appears in Daniel 7:13–14:

*I continued watching in the night visions,
and suddenly one like a son of man
was coming with the clouds of heaven.
He approached the Ancient of Days
and was escorted before him.
He was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
so that those of every people,
nation, and language
should serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that will not pass away,
and his kingdom is one
that will not be destroyed.*

DANIEL 7:13-14

What does this Old Testament passage teach us about Jesus?

How should it build our faith to know that Jesus's life, death, and resurrection were predicted before His earthly ministry began?

DAY 3

The Importance of Jesus's Passion and Resurrection Promises

KEY SCRIPTURES

Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; Luke 24

This week we've been looking into predictions about Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. Why are these predictions so important to the fulfillment of the gospel?

Jesus often predicted His violent death. Read the following passage and make note of the repeated ideas and phrases.

Then he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days.

MARK 8:31

For he was teaching his disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after he is killed, he will rise three days later."

MARK 9:31

"See, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death. Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles, and they will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him, and he will rise after three days."

MARK 10:33-34

What repeated themes did you notice?

If the early church had a hashtag or slogan, it would have been #onthethirdday. These words were critical for the earliest witnesses of the resurrection (Acts 10:40; 1 Corinthians 15:4). In the eighth century BC, the Israelite prophet Hosea had used those words to console a defeated Northern Kingdom with the promise that God would restore the nation. Then anticipating the eventual restoration of sinful Israel, he uttered a startling prediction: “He will revive us after two days, and on the third day he will raise us up so we can live in his presence” (Hosea 6:2).

This is one of the most important Bible texts for understanding the interpretation and self-understanding of Jesus because it lies behind His passion predictions. As I’ve written:

We hear [Hosea’s] prophecy echoed in Jesus’ predictions of suffering: “The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise” (Mark 9:31; compare Mark 8:31; 10:33–34). Indeed, the resurrected Jesus himself alludes to Hosea’s prophecy: “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead” (Luke 24:46).²

Matthew, Mark, and Luke significantly emphasize Jesus’s passion predictions using “on the third day” or “after three days” again and again. Jesus took Hosea 6:1–3 and applied these passages to Himself. The risen Jesus taught more than once from Hosea in discussion with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–27) and during another appearance (Luke 24:44–49, specifically verse 46). Without a doubt, this is why Paul calls the gospel the “most important” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4) thing he received.

Why does it matter that Jesus predicted that He would rise from the dead?

Why does it matter that the whole biblical storyline points to and explains the importance of Jesus’s resurrection?

DAY 4

A Proclamation of Jesus's Continuing Ministry

KEY SCRIPTURES

Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:14–20

Predictions are fascinating, and when they come true, they're compelling. History remembers well the guarantees of Babe Ruth, Joe Namath, and Muhammad Ali. Skeptics wonder if Jesus really knew what He was doing. And the truth is, yes, Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. He predicted His victory too.

As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take and eat it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and said, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. But I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

MATTHEW 26:26–29

What predictions do notice in this passage?

How does it point forward to Jesus's victory?

When Christians partake in the Lord's Supper to remember and proclaim Jesus's death until He comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26), they also reflect on His resurrection and proclaim the fact that He lives.

Few of Jesus's words are as familiar as those He spoke at the Last Supper. According to the apostle Paul, Jesus then added, "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24–25). Here, Jesus took the two Old Testament covenants from Sinai and Jeremiah and merged them together in His death and resurrection. Take a look.

“This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you concerning all these words.”

EXODUS 24:8

“Look, the days are coming”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”

JEREMIAH 31:31

This covenant would be different because Jesus would be the sacrifice. Atonement would not be through the blood of bulls and goats but through Jesus’s blood. Jesus’s words at the Last Supper laid the groundwork for His disciples when they uncovered His empty tomb. They would be able to look back and understand that Jesus’s death was not a disruption; rather, it was a message to proclaim about the kingdom of God. The words Jesus gave at the Last Supper—what we sometimes call the Words of Institution—redefined and re-empowered their mission, their proclamation, of a Messiah who in fact would save them.

Jesus’s death and resurrection defeated our ultimate enemies: sin and death. Jesus’s words provide the context for understanding the significance of the resurrection. All of Jesus’s teaching leading up to His death and resurrection prepared His disciples (and us) to fully appreciate the point and scope of His ministry. Without Jesus’s passion predictions, the disciples would have been very confused about the point of His ministry. His teaching about His death and resurrection frame those events as the consummation of God’s redeeming work for all humanity. Those words in the upper room placed the final brick on a foundation Jesus had been laying for His disciples during His three years with them. And the conclusion pointed them to a ministry that would continue on in eternity (Matthew 26:29).

The risen Jesus told His disciples to go out and make disciples of all peoples. The commission was not limited to Israel: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Jesus’s predictions were not just for those first disciples—they are a proclamation to the entire world that Jesus is the One true Savior of all. It would be a redeeming, restorative, redemptive ministry that would affect the entire planet and, in the end, reverse and cure the negative consequences of humankind’s sin and fall.

How does partaking in the Lord’s Supper offer us the opportunity to proclaim what Jesus predicted?

DAY 5

Jesus's Willingness to Endure Rejection Is the Key to Our Salvation

KEY SCRIPTURES

Psalm 118:22; Mark 8:31; 14:49; John 1:11-12

God treated Jesus as if He lived your life and mine, so He could treat you and me as if we lived the life of Jesus. That's the glorious gospel of grace. Sound too good to be true? If so, you are beginning to understand the concept of grace. Unimaginably, the price Jesus paid for our forgiveness through His victory on the cross included a life-long experience of rejection.

Consider the following Scriptures:

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

PSALM 118:22

[Jesus must] be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed.

MARK 8:31

“Every day I was among you, teaching in the temple, and you didn't arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”

MARK 14:49

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name.

JOHN 1:11-12

What comfort does Jesus's rejection give you in your struggles?

The Gospels report that no one in Jesus's family (with the exception of his mother, Mary) believed he was the long-awaited Messiah. We even learn that they were embarrassed by Him: “When his family heard this, they set out to restrain him,

because they said, ‘He’s out of his mind’” (Mark 3:21). Family and friends in his hometown of Nazareth went so far as to be “offended by him” and asked, “Isn’t this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And aren’t his sisters here with us?” (Mark 6:3). And elsewhere we’re told that “not even his brothers believed in him” (John 7:5). But it wasn’t just Jesus’s family that rejected Him, it was the religious elite who had studied the Scriptures and should’ve been most prepared to identify Jesus as the Messiah.

The religious leaders of Israel comprehensively rejected Jesus, fulfilling His predictions that He would suffer and be rejected “by the elders, chief priests, and the scribes” (Mark 8:31). (Elders were distinguished laymen and financial aristocracy; ruling priests filled the role of High Priest, like Caiaphas, and were usually from Sadducean background; and scribes were mostly Pharisees, such as Gamaliel.) A careful reading of the Gospels reveals the wording of Jesus’s prediction matches the events of the narrative exactly. Jesus’s passion predictions included His understanding that He would face the agony of death and sin alone. They cover the historical events as well as the internal thoughts and emotions of others. Only God can see inside the hearts of men with such precision.

Have you considered that Jesus endured a hopeless situation because of our hopeless condition? How does that shape your faith?

Read Romans 5:8.

But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 5:8

The death and resurrection of Jesus included rejection so that you may never be rejected. Maybe this is an excellent opportunity for you to extend unconditional love to a friend or loved one. Thanks be to God for His grace and that we serve a God of many second chances.

As we conclude, wrap yourself again in the truth of God’s love for you. Jesus knew He would endure rejection (Matthew 26:31) and even His closest friends would “fall away,” and yet John reminds us, “he loved them to the end” (John 13:1)—which is to remind us of this key truth: Jesus loves us perfectly.