

SESSION ONE

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I. BACKGROUND AND REASONS TO EXPLAIN THE RESURRECTION

A. Resurrection is Foundational Doctrine

1. ROMANS 10:9

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

2. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:13-14

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

3. JOHN 11:25

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."

B. Resurrection is Essential to Christianity

1. Paul affirms its essential importance. If the Resurrection is not true Paul states, "Let us eat and drink because tomorrow we die" (1 Corinthians 15:32b).

2. C.S. Lewis summarizes the importance of the resurrection. "We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. That is the formula."¹

C. Resurrection Beliefs are Waning in Recent Opinion Polls

1. **Rasmussen, 2010² 2014³** 13% decline in Resurrection belief (77% to 64%).

2. **Harris, 2003⁴ 2009, 2013⁵** Confirms decline.

3. **BBC, 2017^{6,7}** 25% professing Christians deny the Resurrection.

4. **Barna, 2010⁸** Only 42% of Americans connected Easter's meaning to the Resurrection. Only 2% described Easter as the "most important holiday of their faith."

INSIGHT

The Resurrection is *the essential component* of Christianity

¹ CS Lewis, *The Perfect Penitent*, Mere Christianity, Book 2, Chapter 4, 56.

² Rasmussen Reports, "77% Believe Jesus Rose From the Dead," April 7, 2012, www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/lifestyle/holidays/april_2012/77_believe_Jesus_rose_from_the_dead.

³ Rasmussen Reports, "64% Believe Jesus Christ Rose from the Dead," March 29, 2013, www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/lifestyle/holidays/march_2013/64_believe_Jesus_Christ_rose_from_the_dead.

⁴ Humphrey Taylor, "The Religious and Other Beliefs of Americans 2003," The Harris Poll #11, Feb 26, 2003, <https://theeffect.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Religious-Beliefs-US-2003.pdf>.

⁵ "Harris Poll: Belief in God Falls, 12/23/13," as reported in NewsMax, www.newsmax.com/us/harris-poll-religion-god/2013/12/23/id/543450/.

⁶ ComRes, BBC Religion and Ethics Polling, 2017, 1, faithsurvey.co.uk/download/uk-religion-survey.pdf.

⁷ BBC News, "Resurrection did not happen, say quarter of Christians," April 9, 2017, www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-39153121.

⁸ Barna, "Most Americans Consider Easter a Religious Holiday, But Fewer Correctly Identify Its Meaning," Research Releases in Culture and Media, March 15, 2010, www.barna.com/research/most-americans-consider-easter-a-religious-holiday-but-fewer-correctly-identify-its-meaning/.

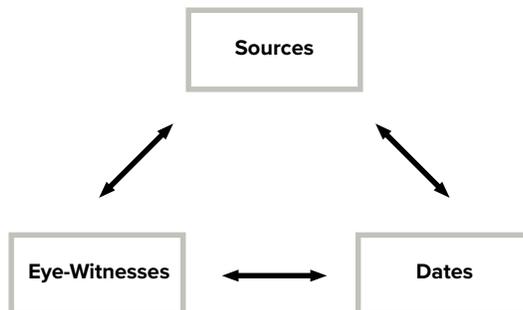
5. **Lifeway, 2020**⁹ 66% of Americans believe in the Resurrection; 20% disagree; 14% unsure; 59% age 18-34 disagree.
6. **Lifeway-Ligonier, 2022**¹⁰ 23% of American Christians deny Jesus' physical resurrection; 11% unsure; 66% of American Christians affirm physical resurrection.

II. HISTORICAL RELIABILITY AND TRUTHFULNESS OF A STORY

A. Everyday stories and events

1. Sources
 - Are they early?
 - Are they reliable?
2. Dates of the story or event
 - Does it claim to be historical?
 - Can the dates be identified with a historical context?
 - How close are the dates to the actual events?
3. Eye-witnesses^{11 12}
 - Are they trustworthy, honest, and accurate?
 - Were the eyewitnesses present at the scene?
 - Do they have hidden ulterior motives?
 - Can their stories be corroborated with other evidence?

What makes a story historically true?



⁹ "The State of American Theology Study 2020," Commissioned by Ligonier Ministries, Lifeway Research, TheStateofTheology.com, 8, 47, research.lifeway.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ligonier-State-of-Theology-2020-Report.pdf.

¹⁰ Ligonier Ministry, "LifeWay Research, State of Theology," 2022, thestateoftheology.com/data-explorer/2022/5?AGE=30&MF=14®ION=30&DENSITY=62&EDUCATION=62&INCOME=254&MARITAL=126ÐNICITY=62&RELTRAD=62&EVB=6&ATTENDANCE=254.

¹¹ J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels*, Updated and Expanded Edition. David C. Cook: 2023, 86, 91.

¹² Lee Strobel, "Good Reasons to Trust the Gospels As Eyewitness Accounts," J Warner Wallace Interview, 9/1/2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=EB-t4FsxS8s

B. The Story of Jesus' Resurrection

1. Sources accepted by all scholars^{13 14}
 - a. Paul
 - (1) Reasons for Paul's acceptance
 - a. Darling of the skeptics
 - b. Honest
 - c. Chosen to persecute the Christians
 - d. Scholar who studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)
 - e. Convert to Christianity
 - f. Wrote 13 books of the New Testament
 - b. Seven books of the New Testament^{15 16}
 - (1) Romans
 - (2) 1 Corinthians
 - (3) 2 Corinthians
 - (4) Galatians
 - (5) Philippians
 - (6) 1 Thessalonians
 - (7) Philemon
 - c. Reasons these seven books are accepted
 - (1) All are undisputed Pauline letters
 - a. "Undisputed Pauline epistles" (Bart Ehrman; Rudolph Bultmann)
 - b. "Read Romans and you will read a first rate philosopher." (Anthony Flew)
 - (2) Historical corroboration
 - (3) Writing style and vocabulary
 - (4) First-hand testimony lends to credibility
 - (5) Written early (50-60 AD)

¹³ Gary Habermas, "What seven New Testament books do most skeptical scholars accept, and why?" John Ankerberg Show, www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGOTj1RmpX8.

¹⁴ James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1998), 10-15.

¹⁵ Bart Ehrman, Pauline Forgeries: 2 Thessalonians as a Test Case, The Bart Ehrman Blog, Dec 16, 2014, <https://ehrmannblog.org/pauline-forgeries-2-thessalonians-as-a-test-case/>.

¹⁶ F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 1981), 57-79.

(6). Early use by church fathers

(7) Theological consistency

2. Dates relative to the Resurrection¹⁷

a. 1 Corinthians (55 AD)

b. Galatians (49 AD)

c. "Received Text" (35-36 AD)

3. Eyewitnesses to the Resurrection

a. Paul

b. Matthew

c. John

d. Others

III. IMPORTANCE OF THE "RECEIVED TEXT" TO THE RESURRECTION

A. **Corinthian Culture** (See Session One, Appendix A, pp. 76-79)

1. Infamous for its moral laxity and religious plurality
2. Economically flourishing and culturally diverse

B. **First Century Resurrection Belief** (See Session One, Appendix B, p. 80)

1. Variability of Jewish beliefs¹⁸
2. Greco-Roman views rarely included bodily resurrection

C. **"Received Text" defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8**¹⁹

1. Christ Died
2. Christ was Buried
3. Christ Arose
4. Christ Appeared

◆ **INSIGHT**

The "Received Text" may be described as Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearances.

¹⁷ All dates listed in this workbook are +/- 2-3 years.

¹⁸ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

¹⁹ M. R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic: 2010), 318-320.

INSIGHT

The phrase, “*first importance*,” indicates preeminence. This is the only time this phrase is used in the New Testament.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8 (emphasis added)

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For *what I received* I passed on to you as of *first importance*:

that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures,

that **he was buried**,

that **he was raised on the third day** according to the Scriptures,

and that **he appeared** to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

After that, he appeared to

more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

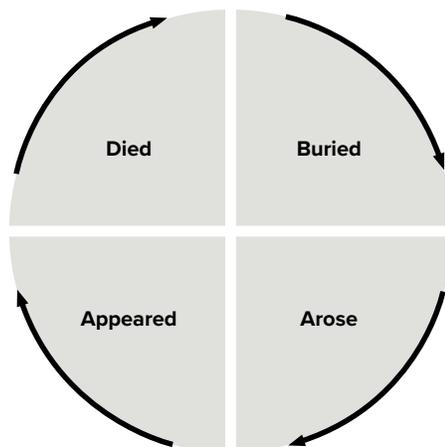
Then he appeared to **James**,

then to **all the apostles**

and last of all he appeared **to me** also, as to one abnormally born.

C. Alternative phrases to “Received Text”

1. Traditional Formula
2. Foundation Story
3. Received Truth
4. Early Creed
5. Essence of the Gospel message
6. Pre-Pauline tradition
7. Oral Creed



The “Received Text”

D. Hebrew parallelism sets phrase apart

1. Structure (i.e. “and that”) is recognizable.
2. The ‘according to the Scriptures’ structure further affirms that Paul is quoting an early Christian confession which had been handed down to him.
3. Different than Paul’s normal writing style.
4. Phrase “after that” ends the parallelism and returns the text to Paul’s words.

E. Early creed stated in sermons in the book of Acts

1. All follow this four-fold structure: death, burial, resurrection, appearances.
2. Note Peter’s use of this structure in his first sermons (Acts 2:14-36; 3:15) within 40 days of the Resurrection. Scholars regard this message to be the oldest formulation of the tradition.

F. Jesus’ bodily resurrection anchors 1 Corinthians

1. Rejection of the Resurrection equates to the rejection of the Gospel. (i.e. 1 Corinthians 15:11, ESV says, “Whether then it was I [who preach the resurrection] or they [who preach the resurrection], so we [Paul and the Jerusalem church leaders teaching only one Gospel] preach and so you believed.”²⁰)
2. “Received Text” central to 1 Corinthians.

IV. HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF HOW PAUL OBTAINED THE “RECEIVED TEXT”^{21,22}

A. Paul’s earlier life and conversion (35 AD)

1. Paul’s (Saul) participation in Stephen’s martyrdom (Acts 7:58)
2. Paul’s persecution of the church (Acts 8:1-3)
3. Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-22; and 26:1-23)
 - a. Paul’s initial response after his conversion

GALATIANS 1:16b-17

My immediate response was to not consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

²⁰ Brackets added for emphasis and clarification.

²¹ Habermas, www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGOTj1RmpX8.

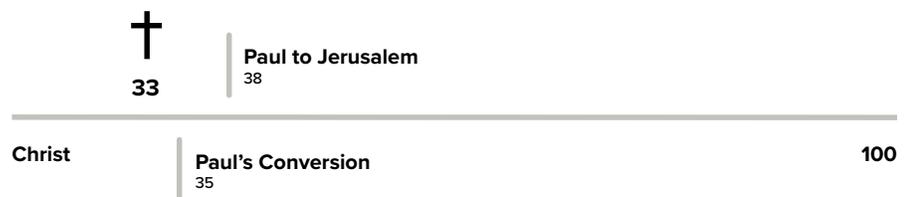
²² G. R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*. (Collegedale, TN: College Press, 1996), 152-157.

- B. Paul goes to Jerusalem and was given the “Received Text” (38 AD or within five years of the Resurrection).

GALATIANS 1:18-20 [emphasis added]

Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles – only James, the Lord’s brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing is no lie.

The Origin of the “Received Text”



1. Paul returns to Jerusalem again to meet with leaders.

GALATIANS 2:1-2 [emphasis added]

Then after *fourteen years*, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them *the gospel that I preach* among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.

2. Paul affirms that he was preaching the same Gospel as the early apostles. (All were in agreement.)

GALATIANS 2:6 ESV [emphasis added]

Those I say who seemed influential, *added nothing* to my message.

- C. Paul arrived in Corinth in 49 AD

1. Paul stayed in Corinth a year and half.

ACTS 18:11

So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

The Spread of the “Received Text” by Paul as he arrives in Corinth



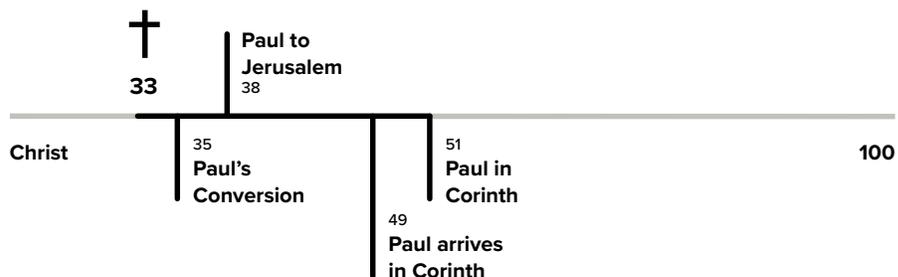
D. Paul is in Corinth (51 AD)

1. Date is confirmed in Acts 18:12-13 through archeological findings.²³
2. Gallio was proconsul of Achaia.
3. Proconsuls served one-year terms.
4. Inscription found with Gallio's name and date (51-52 AD)²⁴

ACTS 18:12-13

While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment. “This man,” they charged, “is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.”

The Spread of the “Received Text” in Corinth



²³ D. A. Carson and D. J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd Edition.(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan: 2005), 366-370; 447-448.

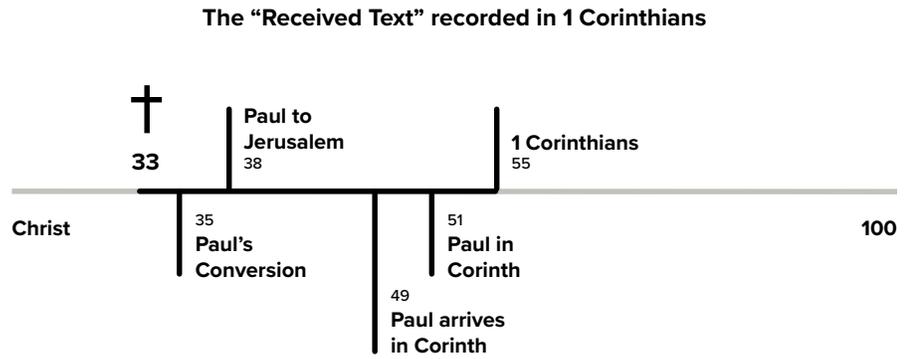
²⁴ Kyle Butt (ed), “Gallio the Proconsul of Achaia, Apologetics Press,” 8/1/18, apologeticspress.org/gallio-the-proconsul-of-achaia-5595/.

INSIGHT

The “Received Text” was described in 1 Corinthians within 22 years of the actual resurrection.

E. Paul writes 1 Corinthians (55 AD)

- 1. Written during Paul’s 3rd missionary journey in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-10)



V. CONCLUSIONS

- A. Widespread accepted sources, early dates, and eyewitness accounts add credibility to the Resurrection account.
- B. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 serves as a key text in the defense of the Resurrection because it is the earliest written record of the Resurrection (52-55 AD).
- C. The “received” text was an oral creed given to Paul within five years of the resurrection (35-38 AD).
- D. Paul affirmed in Galatians (49 AD) that the “received” text he had been teaching earlier was the same as what the early apostles were also teaching.

