

APOLOGETICS

*IN DEFENSE OF THE
RESURRECTION*

name

phone / email

PREFACE

*The formation of this course, **In Defense of the Resurrection**, started with a single teaching session required for graduate level work at Talbot Seminary in the fall of 2020. Eventually the course was expanded over the following years into multiple teaching sessions requiring numerous edits and additions. Many thanks to the students, friends, and theologians that provided valuable feedback and to shape the course content. A few include special recognitions—Wade Palmer and Mark Burris. Wade has been relentless in his encouragement to make this course interactive for students and to expand the number of sessions. Mark provided deep and thoughtful oversight, edits, and methods to optimize course engagement. The work of numerous Biblical scholars, including Gary Habermas, Michael Licona, Clay Jones, and Sean McDowell, have been extensively cited. Their related publications in the bibliography are highly recommended to the interested student.*

*The value of this course, **In Defense of the Resurrection**, is to offer historical evidence to the greatest miracle of all time—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This evidence is understood to be in addition to the powerful inspired words that God has given to us in His Scripture. May God richly bless you in your studies on this topic.*

Ted Lennard
The Training Center
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RESOURCES

All resources, including teaching audio, curriculum, and small group questions, can be found at:

fellowshipnwa.org/resurrection

INTRODUCTION

I. SUMMARY

In Defense of the Resurrection is a six-week interactive apologetics class that explores the historical evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus. At the conclusion of the course, you will discover there is convincing historical evidence, in addition to the inspired Biblical accounts, that support a very high level of confidence in the greatest world-changing miracle that has ever occurred – Jesus’ Resurrection.

II. COURSE OVERVIEW

SESSION ONE | Why the Resurrection Matters

A response to this statement is simple. The Resurrection is the essential component of Christianity and forms the foundation of our faith. This session will discuss the historical reliability of the Resurrection by evaluating reliable sources, early dating, and the credibility of eyewitnesses to this event. These historical factors and key writings of Paul are documented and positioned on a first century time-line. The importance of 1 Corinthians 15:3 is highlighted as the earliest recorded account of the Resurrection. The subject of this passage – the “Received Text” – is traced from its origin at the Resurrection to its writing in 1 Corinthians and discussed relative to the actual resurrection event.

SESSION TWO | The Empty Tomb Accounts

The story of the empty tomb, as told in the Gospel accounts, will be evaluated in light of sources, eyewitnesses, dates, and unique details. Each of these stories in the four Gospels contains interesting details. Similarities and differences of these accounts will be reviewed and contrasted. The main arguments for favoring the empty tomb are discussed. A few of these include the role of women in discovering the empty tomb, the idea that Jerusalem was the birthplace of early Christian teaching when an occupied tomb could easily be discovered, and that the empty tomb accounts are multiply attested.

SESSION THREE | Post-Resurrection Testimony

This session discusses the post-resurrection life and writings of the Apostles. How did they live their lives after the resurrection? Were they really all martyred? The evidence will be presented and discussed. In addition, select writings regarding the Resurrection by the apostolic fathers are reviewed (i.e. Clement I of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna) and their importance discussed.

SESSION FOUR | Common Objections to the Resurrection

This session explores the major historical objections to the Resurrection of Jesus. Each objection is defined and examined along with a reasoned response. Topics include the swoon theory, substitution theory, hallucination theory, wrong tomb theory, theories suggesting Jesus' body was stolen, and other related conspiracy claims.

SESSION FIVE | Minimal Facts Approach

This session discusses the data agreed upon by the majority of historians and scholars that one could use to make a case for the Resurrection. Six minimal facts are discussed which include Jesus' death by crucifixion, Jesus' followers had real experiences that they thought were actual appearances of the risen Jesus, the life transformation of the apostles, including Paul and Jesus' brother James, and that the Resurrection was taught very early, soon after the crucifixion. Various objections to the Resurrection are also discussed.

SESSION SIX | Everyday Resurrection Conversations

This session guides the student in the practical application of the course content in common everyday conversations. This lively interactive time allows for the formation of a five-minute Resurrection argument, one-on-one discussions, role-playing, and case studies. Biblical principles from Colossians 4:6 and 1 Peter 3:15 will be applied in each of the arguments. This session will merge the academic study of the Resurrection to practical conversations.

◆ *INSIGHT*

The image chosen for the cover symbolizes Jesus' victory over death, a theme reflected in the course content. The light piercing through the darkness represents Jesus' ability to cover our sins and grant us eternal life. Additionally, the mountain's shape evokes the image of the empty tomb, with light pouring out, signifying hope and resurrection.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

SESSION ONE

- Identify historically verifiable facts within the Biblical accounts of the Resurrection and explain how these facts relate to recent Resurrection research and analysis.
- Draw a first-century timeline that contains key events and writings as reflected in New Testament verses and historical sources about the Resurrection.
- Explain how 1 Corinthians 15 provides the earliest evidence for the events of the Resurrection.

SESSION TWO

- Explain the sources, eyewitnesses, and dates of the four Gospels that contain the empty tomb stories.
- Compare and contrast the empty tomb accounts contained in the four Gospels.
- Identify the main arguments used to prove the tomb was empty following Jesus' crucifixion.

SESSION THREE

- Explain the differences between an Apostle and disciple. Why is it important to understand the role of the Apostles in Resurrection belief?
- Explain the role that martyrdom of the Apostles plays in the Resurrection defense. Which Apostles were martyred?
- List the apostolic fathers who play an important role in the Resurrection transmission.

SESSION FOUR

- List the ten most common objections to the Resurrection.
- Explain the essence of each objection to the Resurrection. Which one is more credible? How can you refute each objection?
- Which objection do you believe contemporary skeptics would be most likely to use? Why?

SESSION FIVE

- Explain the concept of minimal facts approach.
- Present Habermas' six minimal facts argument. Compare these six facts with those presented by Licona and Wright.
- How do each of these scholars rank the empty tomb accounts in their minimal facts arguments?

SESSION SIX

- Explain the historical defense for the Resurrection
- Present your personalized five-minute argument for the Resurrection.
- How do 1 Peter 3:15 and Colossians 4:6 shape the tone of your response?

SESSION ONE

*WHY THE
RESURRECTION
MATTERS*

WHY THE RESURRECTION MATTERS

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/.

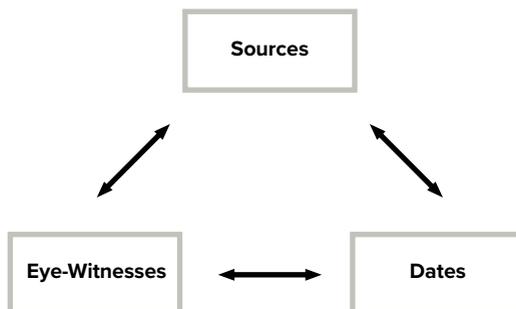
5. **Lifeway, 2020**⁹ 66% of Americans believe in the Resurrection; 20% disagree; 14% unsure; 59% age 18-34 disagree.
6. **Lifeway-Ligonier, 2022**¹⁰ 23% of American Christians deny Jesus' physical resurrection; 11% unsure; 66% of American Christians affirm physical resurrection.

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://ehrmanblog.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.

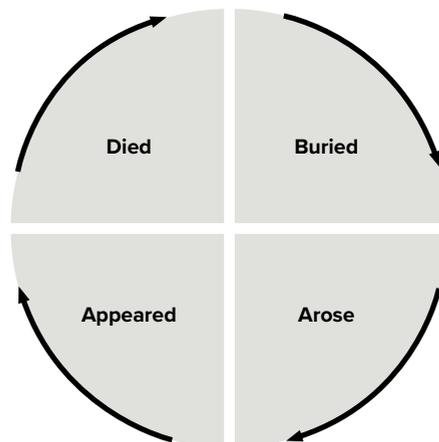
Then he appeared to **James**,

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



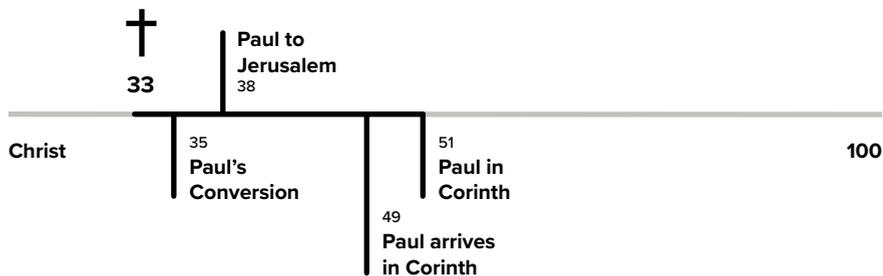
D. Paul is in Corinth (51 AD)

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/.

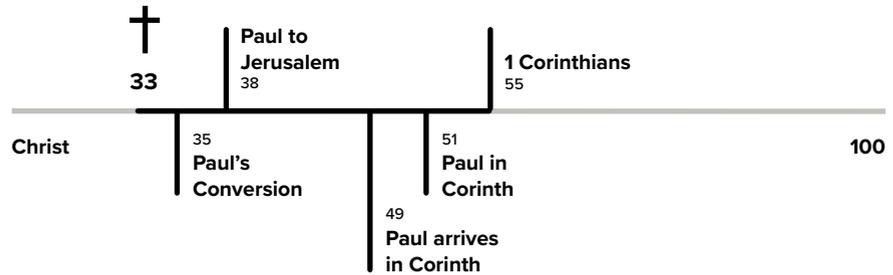
E. Paul writes 1 Corinthians (55 AD)

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

INSIGHT

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

The "Received Text" recorded in 1 Corinthians



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.

SESSION TWO

*THE EMPTY
TOMB ACCOUNTS*

SESSION TWO

THE EMPTY TOMB ACCOUNTS

I. THE GOSPELS' ACCOUNT OF THE EMPTY TOMB STORY

A. Historical Reliability of the Gospels

1. Sources

- a. Who wrote the Gospel accounts?
- b. Are the writers trustworthy?
- c. How early were they written?

2. Dates

- a. How close were the Gospels written in relation to each other?
- b. Can the dates be identified with a historical context?
- c. How close are the dates to the Resurrection?

3. Eye witnesses to the empty tomb¹²

- a. Are they trustworthy, honest, and accurate?
- b. Were the eyewitnesses present at the empty tomb?
- c. Do they have hidden ulterior motives?
- d. Can their stories be corroborated with other evidence?

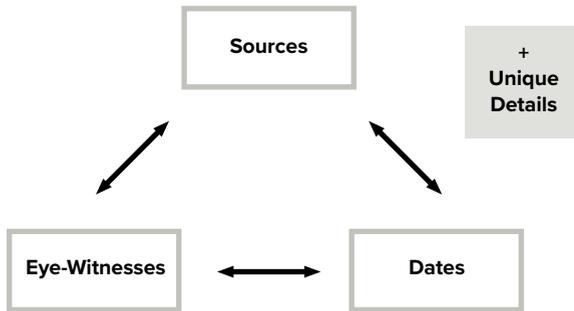
4. Unique Details

- a. Do unique details given by each Gospel writer contradict or corroborate other aspects of the story?
- b. Do differences found among the empty tomb stories discredit the story itself?
- c. What is the importance of women in this story?

¹ 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.

² 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

What makes the Gospels historically true?



B. Sources for the Gospel Accounts³

1. Gospel of Mark⁴
 - a. Internal evidence – records Peter’s teaching^{5 6}
 - b. External evidence

2. Gospel of Matthew⁷
 - a. The influence of Mark’s Gospel appears present
 - b. *Hypothetical Q*⁸
 - c. Eye-witness of Matthew

3. Gospel of Luke⁹
 - a. The influence of Mark’s Gospel appears present
 - b. *Hypothetical Q*
 - c. Paul, himself

4. Gospel of John¹⁰
 - a. Eye-witness of John

³ D.A. Carson & Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2005), 77-133; 140-156; 172-177; 186-187; 201-211; 229-254.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 172-177; 186-187.

⁵ Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels*, 184.

⁶ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 173.

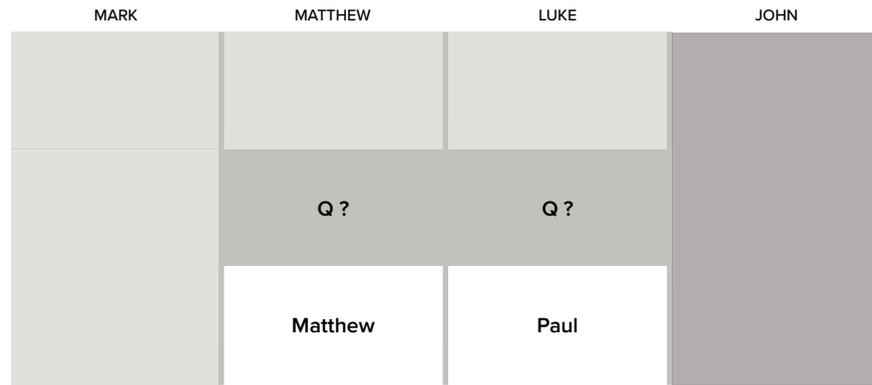
⁷ *Ibid.*, 140-156.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 98-101.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 201-211.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 229-254

Sources for the Gospel Accounts

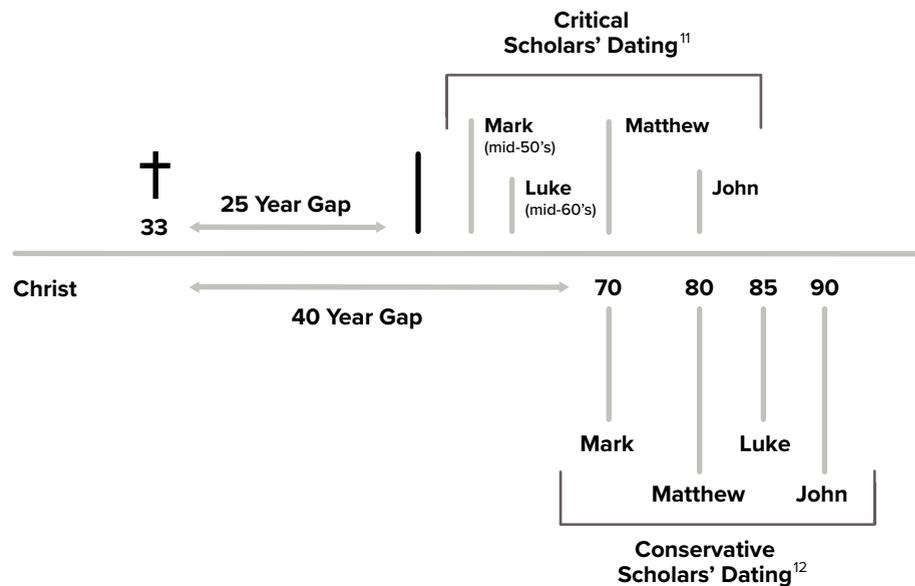


C. Dates for the Gospels Compared to the Resurrection

1. Conservative scholars dating of the Gospels
2. Skeptical scholars or liberal dating of the Gospels
3. Time interval between the Resurrection and the empty tomb story recorded in Mark

INSIGHT

Historically, a 40-year gap of time between Christ's Resurrection and the writing of Mark is remarkably short compared to all other surviving ancient documents.



¹¹ If one elects to use this late dating of the Gospels as determined by some critical scholars you would be taking the "minimal facts" approach for the sake of argument and then defeating their skepticism despite these late dates. These late dates place only a 40-year time gap between the Resurrection and the writing of Mark which is an extremely short period of time by historical standards.

¹² Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 156, 182, 210, 267.

4. Comparison of the time interval gap to other historical timelines
 - a. Alexander the Great
 - b. Tiberius Caesar

II. OBSERVATIONS AT THE TOMB RECORDED BY THE GOSPEL WRITERS

A. Approach to the Tomb

1. Mark 16:1-3
2. Matthew 28:1
3. Luke 24:1
4. John 20:1-4

Approach To The Tomb			
MARK 16:1-3	MATTHEW 28:1	LUKE 24:1	JOHN 20:1-4
After Sabbath very early, 1st day of the week	After Sabbath dawn, 1st day of the week	Very early, 1st day of the week	Early, 1st day of the week
Mary Magdalene Mary (Mother of James) Salome	Mary Magdalene Other Mary	Women	Mary Magdalene
Bought spices		Took spices	
Concerned about the stone			Saw that the stone had been removed Ran to Peter and the other disciple (John) Peter and other disciple (John) ran to the tomb

B. Arrival at the Tomb

1. Mark 16:4-7
2. Matthew 28:2-7
3. Luke 24:2-8
4. John 20:5-17

Arrival at the Tomb			
MARK 16:4-7	MATTHEW 28:2-7	LUKE 24:2-8	JOHN 20:5-17
Stone rolled away	Stone rolled away (Angel, earthquake)	Stone rolled away	“Other” disciple looked in tomb
Entered tomb		Entered tomb; no body	Peter entered tomb
Young man in white robe sitting	Male angel’s appearance (like lightening) sitting on stone	Two men in clothes (like lightening)	Saw linen strips and cloth from Jesus’ head Cloth separate from the linen Other disciple entered, saw, and believed.
Alarmed “Don’t be alarmed” He has risen! Go tell his disciples and Peter. He is going to Galilee	Guards shook and “became like dead men” “Do not be afraid” He has risen. See where he laid. “Go quickly and tell his disciples.” He is going to Galilee	Women bowed down. He is risen! Recall His words. Son of man must be delivered.	Mary wept outside tomb Two angels in white seated in tomb “Why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord” Turned and saw Jesus, but didn’t recognize him, “Rabboni!” Go and tell my brothers

C. Departure from the Empty Tomb

1. Mark 16:8
2. Matthew 28:8-10
3. Luke 24:9-12
4. John 20:10; 18

BURIAL PRACTICES

First-century burial practices are consistent with many of the events described in the empty tomb stories.

(See Session Two, Appendix C, p. 83-84)

Departure from the Tomb

MARK 16:8	MATTHEW 28:8-10	LUKE 24:9-12	JOHN 20:10;18
“Trembling and bewildered”	Afraid, but filled with joy	They told all things to the eleven (and others).	Disciples left
The women fled. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.	Run to tell the disciples Jesus met them, “Greetings”	Women listed (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, & others)	After Mary’s encounter with Jesus... She left to see the disciples: “I have seen the Lord.”
	Women worshipped him	Did not believe the women (nonsense)	
	Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee	Peter runs to the tomb; sees strips of linen	

III. TEXTUAL SIMILARITIES OF THE EMPTY TOMB STORY

- A. All four agree that the events took place early in the morning on the first day of the week on the third day after Jesus’ execution.
- B. All four agree that Mary Magdalene was at the tomb.
- C. Matthew, Mark, Luke agree that another woman was there too.
- D. Mark and Luke add a third woman.
- E. All four agree that an unusual stranger met and spoke to the women.
- F. All four end with an empty tomb.
- G. Synoptics agree on the words of the angel, “He is not here, he is risen.”
- H. All agree that the stone presented an apparent problem that was solved.
- I. All except Mark describe Jesus appearing alive to His followers.
- J. Matthew and John agree that Mary Magdalene met Jesus.
- K. All except Mark agree that Mary goes to tell the male disciples.

INSIGHT

The four Gospels provide a complementary, not a contradictory account of the empty tomb.

IV. TEXTUAL DIFFERENCES IN THE EMPTY TOMB STORY¹³

- A. Only Matthew mentions an earthquake.
- B. Only Luke records the disbelief of the disciples when the women inform them.
- C. Only Luke records Peter running to the tomb.
- D. Mark's version abruptly ends at 16:8.
- E. Only Mark mentions Salome approaching the tomb.
- F. Only John describes the grave clothes.
- G. Only Matthew mentions the guards.

V. UNIQUENESS OF THE EMPTY TOMB STORY

- A. **Women play a prominent role**
 - 1. Impossible to imagine women were artificially inserted in the stories; adds credibility to the story.
 - 2. Women were not accepted as legal witnesses.

Who Were the Women in the Story?

Mary Magdalene	Mary	Mary	Mary	Joanna	Salome
from Magdala: Jesus delivered her from seven demons	Mother of Jesus	Mother of James the Younger/ Lessor	Wife of Clopas and Jesus' aunt	Wife of Chuza and Financier	Mother of James and John, sons of Zebedee

B. About the Resurrection

- 1. Gospels do not say much about the Resurrection.
- 2. Jesus did not say much about the Resurrection.
- 3. The Resurrection account does not grow as the Gospels are written or between each Gospel.

¹³ When evaluating textual differences, scholars use highly restrictive research standards. By contrast, others simply ask, "What really happened?" For example, J. Warner Wallace, in his book, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels*, (2023), 201-210, reports that because of these differences the eyewitness accounts are credible. The differences between the stories actually fill in the detail omitted by one or more of the Gospels and provide "unintentional support" in their accuracy.

◆ THE PRINCIPLE OF EMBARRASSMENT

A criterion that looks at ancient writings to see if there are hard, embarrassing, or unfavorable details about the author(s) or with the story's purpose. If such details exist, positive conclusions can be made about the integrity of the author(s).

- C. **Rise in Christianity**
 - 1. Striking mutation within Jewish Resurrection belief rules out possibility it was spontaneously generated from a Jewish context.
 - 2. Empty tomb stories and appearances are both required to explain the rise in Christian belief.
- D. **We see John's transformation at the tomb (John 20:8).**
- E. **Empty tomb plus Jesus' appearances substantially advances Resurrection belief.**

VI. MAIN ARGUMENTS FAVORING THE EMPTY TOMB¹⁴

A. Women were the first witnesses to discover the empty tomb

- 1. Strongest argument favoring the empty tomb¹⁵
- 2. All four Gospels record women discovering the empty tomb.
- 3. Low view of female testimony in ancient Mediterranean society strengthens empty tomb argument by authenticating the story.¹⁶
- 4. Ehrman argues woman may have fabricated reports about the empty tomb.¹⁷ If Ehrman is correct, how would anyone (including the disciples) believe the women since they were not known to be credible witnesses?

B. Jerusalem Effect — Jerusalem was the site of early Christian teaching. An occupied tomb could have been easily discovered.

- 1. Jerusalem would have been the least likely location for initial teaching of the empty tomb story as the tomb could be easily checked.¹⁸
- 2. Proclamation of the empty tomb story in Jerusalem would not have lasted a single day; some believe this to be the strongest argument for the empty tomb.^{19 20}
- 3. If any corpse had been discovered in Jesus' tomb, the empty tomb claim of Jesus would have been falsified.²¹

¹⁴ Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, (Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2024), 597-624.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 607.

¹⁶ Carolyn Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb: What Are They Doing There?" *HTS Theological Studies / Theological Studies* [Online], Vol 53, No 1/2 (13 December 1997, 103-118.

¹⁷ Ehrman, Bart D., *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, (United Kingdom: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014), 166-168.

¹⁸ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 610.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 127-128.

²¹ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 612.

C. The empty tomb accounts are multiply attested.

1. Affirmed up to four times in the independent Gospel sources (Mark, Matthew, John, and Luke)²²
2. Two or more sources in agreement during ancient times render a fact indisputable.²³

D. The early pre-Pauline creedal tradition or “Received Text” in 1 Corinthians 15:3 implies the empty tomb.

1. Four-fold sequence: dead, buried, raised, appeared – early conviction Jesus’ burial place was not occupied.²⁴
2. Verbs occur in context of “standing up, rising” (*anastasis* in Greek) suggesting bodily events which would result in an empty tomb.^{25 26}
3. Resurrection language that Paul uses (Romans 6:3-4; 8:11) assumed an empty tomb.^{27 28}

E. Peter and Paul’s early sermons (Acts 2:29-32 and Acts 13:28-37) mention the empty tomb.

1. Peter’s early sermon in Acts 2:29-32 implies Jesus’ body was placed in a tomb from which he was raised.
2. Paul’s early sermon in Acts 13:28-32 helps answer the question about Paul’s belief in the empty tomb.

F. An early pre-Markan passion narrative appears to have existed that included the empty tomb story.

1. Habermas states the majority of contemporary scholars agree, but others state this view is indeterminate.^{29 30}
2. Mark 16:1-8 appears to derive from this early narrative

G. Jews and pagans interpreted Paul’s teaching of the Resurrection as a body raising to a new life and leaving an empty tomb behind.

1. Predominant position of second temple Judaism was a personal embodied hereafter.³¹

²² Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 614.

²³ Paul L. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1991), 197, as quoted in Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 614.

²⁴ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 616.

²⁵ Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, 186.

²⁶ Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 83-84.

²⁷ John Granger Cook, *Empty Tomb, Resurrection, Apotheosis*, (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 1-53.

²⁸ John Granger Cook, “Resurrection in Paganism and the Question of an Empty Tomb in 1 Corinthians 15”, *New Testament Studies*, 63; 2017, 56-75.

²⁹ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 620

³⁰ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus, A New Historiographical Approach*, (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 215-216.

³¹ Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus, A New Historiographical Approach*, 621

2. When Paul speaks of Resurrection he refers to a body being raised leaving an empty tomb behind.³²

H. First century Jewish leaders could not disprove that Jesus' tomb was empty.

1. Their explanation that Jesus' disciples stole the body actually admitted the tomb was empty (Matthew 28:11-15).
2. Many scholars reject the story of the guards at the tomb.³³
3. Jewish tradition does not mention that Jesus' body was left on the cross to rot or to be buried in a common grave.

I. Additional arguments for the empty tomb

(See Session Two, Appendix D, p.83)

VII. CONCLUSIONS

- A. The truth of the empty tomb story rests on the historical reliability of the Gospel accounts. Sources, dates, eyewitnesses, and unique details of each book can be historically verified and assist in our understanding of the empty tomb.
- B. Differences in the textual accounts of the empty tomb do not mean errors. Imperfect corroboration among Gospel writers adds credibility and authenticity to the accounts. No collusion occurred. Four Gospels give us a complementary, not a contradictory account. Many of these differences reflect a writer's textual emphasis and viewpoint.
- C. Strong and credible arguments for the empty tomb exist. Two of these include the role that women played in the discovery of the empty tomb and the fact that the earliest sermons about Christ took place in Jerusalem, near where the empty tomb could have been falsified, but wasn't.

VIII. STUDY QUESTIONS

- A. Identify the individual sources that describe the empty tomb. Why is multiple attestation (multiple sources) important for historical verification?

³² Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 31, 82-83, 273.

³³ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 623.

B. How would you demonstrate that these individual resources are early compared to other ancient sources?

C. Who were the eyewitnesses to the empty tomb? What evidence do you have that they are credible witnesses or that their reports are accurate?

D. What are the similarities in the various empty tomb reports? What are the differences? How do the similarities and the differences support one another as a credible historical report?

E. Why is the empty tomb so important to establish the reports of Jesus' Resurrection?

F. How would you describe the main arguments for the empty tomb to a person who has not considered the evidence before?

SESSION THREE

*POST-RESURRECTION
TESTIMONY*

POST-RESURRECTION TESTIMONY

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE APOSTLES AFTER THE RESURRECTION

A. What is an Apostle? (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 6:1)

1. Qualifications of an Apostle
 - a. Greek for “one who is sent”
 - b. Given authority by the one who sent him
 - c. First-hand knowledge of the Savior
 - d. All apostles were also disciples
2. Qualifications of a Disciple
 - a. Every person who believes in Jesus¹
3. Differences between Apostles and Disciples

B. Who were the Apostles? (Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:14, Acts 26:14-18)

1. Simon (Peter)
2. Andrew (brother of Peter)
3. James (son of Zebedee)
4. John (brother of James; son of Zebedee)
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Thomas
8. Matthew (tax collector)
9. James (son of Alphaeus)
10. Thaddaeus (Jude)
11. Simon the Zealot

12. Judas Iscariot* (betrayer)
13. Matthias (replaced Judas)
14. James (brother of Jesus)
15. Paul

Who is James?

Son of Zebedee (Brother of John)	Son of Alphaeas	Brother of Jesus	Father of Jude the Apostle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sons of thunder” • Jesus’ “inner circle” • “The Great” (older or taller) likely to distinguish “the Lesser” • Martyred 42 AD by sword (Acts 12:2) • 21 ref in NT • Fisherman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 references in NT • “The lesser” (maybe shorter or younger?) • Little known 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not believe during Jesus’ earthly ministry • “The Just” (extreme strictness to the law) • Writer of the book of James • Became one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little known

C. Why study the Apostles?

1. Their actions reveal important clues about their beliefs.
2. Their influence extends to the apostolic fathers.

D. Traditional Assumptions about the Apostles

1. Questions about traditional assumptions
 - a. Do the apostles’ willingness to suffer and die confirm the *truth of the Resurrection*?
 - b. Do the apostle’s willingness to suffer and die confirm the *depth of their sincerity*?
2. Answers to these questions are important but are only one piece of a larger Resurrection argument.

II. THE FATE OF THE APOSTLES AFTER THE RESURRECTION^{1,2}

A. Martyrdom and the Apostles

1. Definition of a Martyr³
 - a. Testimony results in death
 - b. Death is voluntary
 - c. Refuses to recant their belief
2. Critics claim many die for their belief
 - a. Modern martyrs
 - b. Examples of modern martyrs: Muslim radicals, Buddhist monks.
3. Differences between apostles and modern martyrs

How are the Apostles Different?

Apostles	Other (Muslim radicals and Buddhist monks)
eye witnesses	NOT eye witnesses
NOT received second-hand	received second-hand

4. Critics claim apostles were not given the opportunity to recant
 - a. Don't miss the obvious: The apostles knew the danger when they proclaimed Jesus
 - b. Evidence of the apostles' resurrection faith
 - (1) Paul (1 Corinthians 15:3)
 - (2) Peter (Acts 2:22-24, 37-38)
 - c. There was a consistent resurrection message
 - (1) Earliest creed
 - (2) New Testament writings
 - (3) Apostolic preaching

¹ John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Updated Through the 21st Century*, Harold J Chadwick (ed), Newberry, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2001, 1-8.

² Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.

³ Everett Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, Second Edition, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2013, 81-84.

B. Highest Possible (probability of martyrdom⁴)

1. Peter⁵
 - a. Strong evidence Peter went to Rome
 - b. High probability that Peter was crucified in Rome during the reign of Nero⁶
 - c. Ten sources through the 2nd century about his martyrdom
 - d. Three 1st century sources (John 21:18-19, 2 Peter 1:12-15, 1 Clement 5:1-4)
 - e. Solid historical evidence that Peter was martyred

2. Paul⁷
 - a. Strong evidence that Paul went to Rome
 - b. Eight sources through the 2nd century about his martyrdom
 - c. 2 Timothy 4:6-7, 1 Clement 5:5-7
 - d. Solid historical evidence that Paul was martyred and likely beheaded

3. James (son of Zebedee)⁸
 - a. First apostolic martyr
 - b. Martyred with the sword (Acts 12:2)
 - c. Solid historical evidence that James was martyred

C. Very Probable (probability of martyrdom)

1. James (brother of Jesus)⁹
 - a. Josephus source (Antiquities 93/94)
 - b. Martyred by stoning

D. More Probable than Not (probability of martyrdom)

1. Thomas¹⁰

⁴ Levels of "Probability of Martyrdom" as differentiated in Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.

⁵ McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 55-92.

⁶ Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 4-5.

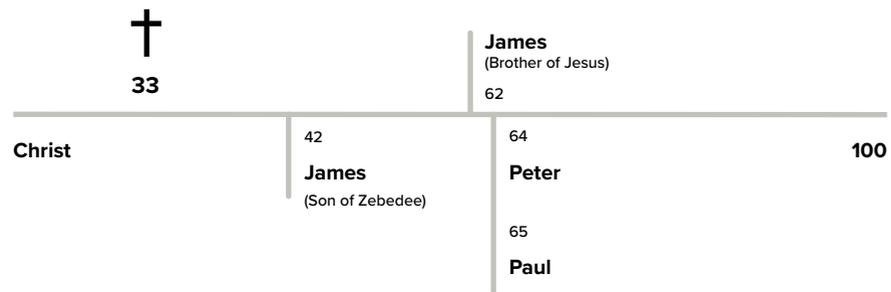
⁷ McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 93-114.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 187-192.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 115-134.

¹⁰ McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 157-173.

Martyrdom of the Apostles



E. More plausible than not (probability of martyrdom)

1. Andrew¹¹

F. As plausible as not (probability of martyrdom)¹²

1. Philip
2. Bartholomew
3. Matthew
4. James, son of Alphaeus
5. Thaddeus
6. Simon the Zealot
7. Matthias

G. Improbable (probability of martyrdom)

1. John¹³

III. LIFE AND MARTYRDOM OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

A. Characteristics of the Apostolic Fathers¹⁴

1. Highly influenced by the apostles
2. Important link between the apostles and future church
3. Gives important historical insights into the early Christian movement

¹¹ McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 175-185.

¹² *Ibid.*, 193-257.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 135-156.

¹⁴ Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, 49-57.

B. Clement of Rome

1. Disciple of Peter and Paul
2. Letter to the Corinthians (1 Clement)¹⁵
3. Martyred when thrown into the sea with an anchor around his neck

C. Ignatius of Antioch

1. Disciple of John
2. One of the prominent Christians of the time
3. Wrote seven letters on his way to Roman imprisonment and martyrdom¹⁶
4. Examples of Ignatius' writing

Ignatius of Antioch, AD 117

"I write to all the Churches, and impress on them all, that I shall willingly die for God, unless ye hinder me. I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God. Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my tomb, and may leave nothing of my body; so that when I have fallen asleep [in death], I may not be found troublesome to any one. Then shall I be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not see so much as my body."¹⁷

"Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts; let tearings, breakings, and dislocations of bones; let cutting off of members; let shatterings of the whole body; and let all the dreadful torments of the devil come upon me: only let me attain to Jesus Christ."¹⁸

D. Polycarp of Smyrna

1. Disciple of John
2. Leading second-century Christian
3. Martyred when burned at the stake and stabbed.¹⁹

¹⁵ Hubertus R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2007, 47-49.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁷ Ignatius of Antioch, "Allow Me to Fall a Prey to the Wild Beasts," Chapter IV, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*, Accessed on 7/14/24, www.newadvent.org/fathers/0107.htm.

¹⁸ Ignatius of Antioch, "I Desire to Die," Chapter V, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*, Accessed on 7/14/24, www.newadvent.org/fathers/0107.htm.

¹⁹ Martyrdom of Polycarp, 9.3. Accessed on 7/14/24, www.newadvent.org/fathers/0102.htm.

Proconsul: “Swear, and I will set you at liberty, reproach Christ”.

Polycarp, (155 AD): “Eighty-six years I have served him, and he never once wronged me. How then shall I blaspheme my King who has saved me?”^{20 21 22}

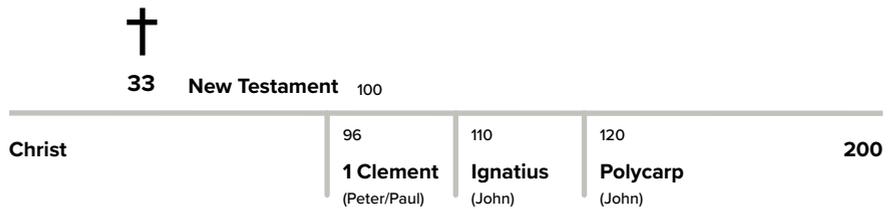
Proconsul: “I will cause you to be consumed by fire, seeing you despise the wild beasts, if you will not repent.”

Polycarp: “You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why do you tarry? Bring forth what you will.”²³

“The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.”

—TERTULLIAN ^{24 25}

Apostolic Fathers



IV. DISCUSSION POINTS REGARDING THE APOSTLES

- A. Christian movement was a resurrection movement from its inception.
- B. The Apostles were the first witnesses to the Resurrection and launched missionary movement from Jerusalem.
- C. Christians were persecuted in the early church.
- D. Although there is minimal early evidence that each of the Apostles died as martyrs, some general claims make their deaths more likely than not.
- E. The Apostles were willing to suffer and die for their faith.
- F. There are no accounts that any of the Apostles recanted their faith.

²⁰ Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 13-14.

²¹ Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church*, 53.

²² Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, 79.

²³ Martyrdom of Polycarp, 11. Accessed on 7/14/24, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0102.htm>.

²⁴ Tertulian, *Apology*, 50. Accessed on 7/10/24, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0301.htm>.

²⁵ Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, 126.

V. **SUMMARY**

- A. An Apostle is one that is “sent out” and has first-hand knowledge of the Savior. Their actions and behaviors following the Resurrection give us important clues to their beliefs. Their willingness to suffer and die confirm the depth of their sincerity.
- B. Martyrdom of the Apostles demonstrates the depth of their sincerity in the Resurrection of Christ. The highest probability of martyrdom was achieved by Peter, Paul, and James (son of Zebedee), and very probably James (brother of Jesus).
- C. The writings and martyrdom of the apostolic fathers reflect the beliefs of the early church. A few of these fathers who died as martyrs include Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp.

SESSION FOUR

COMMON OBJECTIONS
TO THE *RESURRECTION*

SESSION FOUR

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO THE RESURRECTION

EXPLANATION AND REBUTTAL^{1 2 3 4}

I. THE SWOON THEORY

A. Explanation

1. Swoon – faint with extreme emotion
2. Jesus didn't actually die, but only appeared dead
3. Jesus was simply unconscious until cool temperatures and spices revived him.

B. Rebuttal

1. Jesus unable to survive Roman torture
2. Roman soldiers were good at killing
3. Modern medical knowledge concludes His death
4. Not in Jesus' character to pretend He was raised
5. Pilate double-checked Jesus' death (Mark 15:44)
6. A "Jesus" who "suffered" only, would not have inspired martyrdom
7. Three groups were satisfied of Jesus death (Roman guards, Pilate, Sanhedrin) (Matt 27:62-66, Mark 15:42-45)

II. THEISTIC SWOON THEORY

A. Explanation

1. Muslim response to the Resurrection
2. God miraculously preserved Jesus' life on the cross. He did not die.
3. This circumvents the inevitability of Jesus' death. No matter how brutal the cross, God's ability to preserve Jesus is greater.
4. "If God can perform the grand miracle of raising Jesus from the dead, why can he not perform a lesser miracle of preserving him from death in the first place?"⁵

¹ Clay Jones, *Prepared Defense Software*, www.clayjones.net.

² Robert Cupp, "Theories of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," in *We Believe: A Survey of Theology*, Fellowship Bible Church, NWA, 174, 176, 178.

³ Matt Slick, *Objections to Jesus' physical resurrection answered, Christians Apologetics and Research Ministry*, Nov. 24, 2008, accessed on 6/15/2024, <https://carm.org/doctrine-and-theology/objections-to-jesus-physical-resurrection-answered/>.

⁴ Ted Lennard, Compilation of notes and discussion from the class, *In Defense of the Resurrection*, Sean McDowell, Talbot Seminary, Biola University, 2020.

⁵ Nabeel Qureshi, *No God But One: Allah or Jesus?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2016), 171.

5. Originates from the Qur'an 4.157 that states, "That they said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah,' but *they killed him not, nor crucified him*, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not." [emphasis added].

B. Rebuttal

1. This gives no account of the inception of the Christian church.
2. Jesus unable to survive Roman torture
3. Modern medical knowledge concludes His death.
4. Not in Jesus' character to pretend He was raised
5. Pilate double-checked Jesus' death (Mark 15:44).

III. SUBSTITUTION THEORY

A. Explanation

1. Jesus visage was placed on another person who was crucified in His place. (Jesus' face was placed on someone else.)
2. Many state Simon of Cyrene (who literally switched places with Jesus as he was carrying the cross) or Judas Iscariot (who justly deserved the punishment for betrayal) were the substitutes for Jesus on the cross.
3. Common position among Muslims
4. Originates from the Qur'an 4.157 that states, "That they said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah,' but *they killed him not, nor crucified him*, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not." [emphasis added].

B. Rebuttal

1. This position cannot be easily defended.
2. "No one had ever survived a full Roman crucifixion, and had Jesus done so, that would have been a much more appealing message for the early church to proclaim than was the stumbling block of a crucified Savior."⁶

⁶ Qureshi, *No God But One: Allah or Jesus?* 182.

IV. HALLUCINATION THEORY (THE EYE WITNESSES EXPERIENCED HALLUCINATIONS)

A. Explanation

1. Hallucinations explain the sightings of Jesus.
2. Strauss described these sightings as “supposed supernatural mental revelations” that restored the disciple’s wavering faith with “the power of imagination and nervous excitement.”⁷
3. Gerd Ludemann in 20th century, described sightings as “shared hallucinatory fantasy.”⁸
4. The disciples and followers of Jesus were so emotionally involved with Jesus’ Messianic expectation that their minds projected hallucinations of the risen Lord.

B. Rebuttal

1. Hallucinations aren’t contagious; they are individual experiences (subjective and cannot be shared).
2. No documented cases of group hallucinations
3. Too many witnesses in very different moods
4. Cross-examination would have proved the delusion false (hostile witnesses would have used that against them).
5. Hallucinations rarely transform lives.
6. Does not explain the empty tomb or missing corpse
7. Hallucinations seldom last long; not forty days.
8. Jews could have pointed to the occupied tomb to prove them false.
9. Typical causal factors not present (drugs, hysteria, or deprivation of food, water, or sleep)

V. JESUS’ BODY WAS STOLEN FROM THE TOMB

A. Explanation

1. The disciples stole the body while the guards were sleeping.

B. Rebuttal

1. The enemies of Christ had no motive.
2. The disciples had no ability.

⁷ David Strauss, *A New Life of Jesus*, Vol 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1865), 418.

⁸ Gerd Ludemann, *The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry*, (Amherst: Prometheus, 2004), 175-76, as quoted in John W. Bergeron and Gary R. Habermas, “The Resurrection of Jesus: A Clinical Review of Psychiatric Hypotheses for the Biblical Story of Easter,” *Iris Theological Quarterly* 80, no. 2 (2015): 157-172.

3. If the disciples stole the body, why would they die for what they knew was a lie?
4. The theft story admits that the tomb was empty.
5. Jesus taught that lying was of the devil (John 8:44).
6. If the guards were awake, there would have been a fight.
7. If the guards were asleep, how would they know what happened?
8. Matthew 28:11-15

VI. THE WOMEN WENT TO THE WRONG TOMB

A. Explanation

1. When the women went to the tomb Sunday morning, they went to the wrong one.⁹ They mistakenly identified the man as an angel and fled.

B. Rebuttal

1. The women did not come looking for an open tomb, but for a sealed one. They would certainly bypass an open tomb if they were uncertain of its location.
2. The man at the tomb responded, “He is risen.”
3. The women noted the tomb’s location 72 hours earlier. This commits the fallacy of special pleading (double standard) because it treats the evidence selectively.
4. Does not explain the appearances of the risen Christ
5. The Jews, Romans, and Joseph of Arimathea knew the location of the tomb and could easily have identified it as proof against any resurrection.

VII. OTHERS HAVE BEEN RESURRECTED

A. Explanation

1. Jesus’ Resurrection is not that special because other divinities have been resurrected.¹⁰

B. Rebuttal

1. There are other Biblical resurrections but only Jesus didn’t die again.
2. Jesus’ Resurrection was more than the resurrection of a corpse.
3. Jesus is dissimilar to the gods of mythology.

⁹ Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1907), 250–253.

¹⁰ John Granger Cook, *Empty Tomb, Resurrection, Apotheosis*, (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 56-62.

VIII. CONTRADICTORY GOSPEL ACCOUNTS

A. Explanation

1. The various Gospel accounts contradict one another; therefore the entire story must be regarded as untrue.

B. Rebuttal

1. All Resurrection accounts agree on the main points.
2. Even if there were contradictions on minor points, that doesn't nullify the main points.
3. The so-called discrepancies testify to a lack of collusion.

IX. THE DISCIPLES CONSPIRED THE RESURRECTION

A. Explanation

1. The disciples conspired to lie to the world that they had seen Jesus risen from the dead.

B. Rebuttal

1. Who dies for what they know is a lie?
2. Why would the Apostles suffer torture and death?
3. After fleeing following the execution of their leader, are we to think the disciples regrouped and plotted to lie to their nation?
4. The tomb was empty (the disciples could not have lied about the Resurrection for one day unless the tomb was empty).
5. Others living could have refuted their claims.
6. Successful perjury is hard work.
7. Morally implausible runs contrary to all we know of them.

X. THE RESURRECTION IS SIMPLY A MYTH OR LEGEND

A. Explanation

1. The resurrection was a fabrication that evolved over a lengthy period to vindicate a leader long since dead.

B. Rebuttal

1. Not enough time to develop a myth¹¹

¹¹ Cook, *Empty Tomb, Resurrection, Apotheosis*, 62-63.

2. The writers say it is not a myth so that would mean they lied.
3. In myths, no party takes responsibility for the story.¹²
4. There is strong external testimony that it is not a myth.

XI. HISTORY CAN'T BE TRUSTED

A. Explanation

1. How can history be trusted? We can never know.

B. Rebuttal

1. Like historians, even scientists must rely on the testimony of others. Scientists often lack direct access to the things they study.
2. Historians reconstruct historical events. They may lack direct access to the past, but things from the past are directly accessible.
3. Testimony made by people of noble character
4. Testimony is made by eyewitnesses.
5. Testimony is made by people who willingly suffered for their testimony.
6. Paper evidence suffices for most of what humans believe.

XII. THE RESURRECTION WAS NOT CONFIRMED BY JEWS OR PAGANS

A. Explanation

1. There is absence of non-Christian testimony to the Resurrection of Christ.

B. Rebuttal

1. We would hardly expect someone to confirm the Resurrection of Christ and not be a Christian.
2. Former enemies of Christianity became Christians after the Resurrection of Christ.
3. There is significant non-Christian testimony to the life and death of Jesus Christ.
4. Jews contended the body was stolen admitting the tomb was empty after Jesus crucifixion.

¹² W. Burkert, *Mythisches Denken: Versuch einer Definition an Hand des griechischen Befundes*, in: idem, *Kleine Schriften*, 8 vols., Göttingen 2001-2011, 4, 42-65 as discussed in Cook, *Empty Tomb, Resurrection, Apotheosis*, 63.

XIII. OTHER OBJECTIONS TO THE RESURRECTION

- A. Hyper-suggestibility
- B. Miracles can't happen.
- C. No absolute certainty
- D. Non-Christians also die for their beliefs.
- E. Only faith matters.
- F. Requires unusual evidence
- G. There was a twin brother of Jesus.
- H. Jesus actually appeared only in a vision.
- I. Jesus appeared to believers only – those expecting a resurrection.
- J. The real story was suppressed.
- K. The gardener removed the body (The Lettuce Theory).

SESSION FIVE

*MINIMAL FACTS
APPROACH*

SESSION FIVE

MINIMAL FACTS APPROACH

I. **MINIMAL FACTS APPROACH IN DEFENSE OF THE RESURRECTION**¹²

A. Minimal Facts Approach Defined

1. The Minimal Facts Approach makes the case for the Resurrection using only data agreed upon by the majority of historians and scholars who specialize in Christ and His Resurrection. The approach uses the Bible as a historical document rather than the inspired Word of God. No appeal to the inspiration of the Scripture is required.
2. Lowest common denominator of the facts and effective when responding to skeptics
3. These minimal facts can be used to answer most of the common objections to the resurrection (See Session Four, Appendix E, p.84)

B. Methodology

1. There is a significant body of data that scholars of almost every religious and philosophical persuasion recognize as being historical.
2. Scholars = degreed, authors of peer-reviewed publications; specialists in this area
3. Two major prerequisites for an occurrence to be designated as a minimal fact:
 - a. Each event had to be established by more than adequate scholarly evidence, and usually by several critically-ascertained, independent lines of argumentation (most important).
 - b. The vast majority of contemporary scholars in relevant fields had to acknowledge the historicity of the occurrence.
4. Numbers of minimal facts may vary among scholars due to these prerequisites.

¹ Gary Habermas, www.GaryHabermas.com.

² Gary Habermas, "The Minimal Facts Approach to the Resurrection of Jesus: The Role of Methodology as a Crucial Component in Establishing Historicity," (2012) Faculty Publications and Presentations. 14. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/sod_fac_pubs/14.

II. HABERMAS' SIX MINIMAL FACTS

- A. Jesus died by Roman crucifixion
 - 1. Unanimous scholarly agreement
 - 2. Recorded by all four Gospels and Josephus³

- B. Jesus' followers had real experiences that they thought were actual appearances of the risen Jesus
 - 1. Unanimous scholarly agreement

- C. The Apostles' lives were transformed as a result, even to the point of being willing to die specifically for their faith in the Resurrection message (doubters to bold proclaimers).

- D. The Resurrection was taught very early, soon after the Crucifixion and very early in church history.

- E. James, Jesus' unbelieving brother, became a Christian due to his own experience that he thought was the resurrected Christ.

- F. The Christian persecutor Paul (formerly Saul of Tarsus) also became a believer after a similar experience.

III. HABERMAS' ADDITIONAL SIX FACTS⁴

- A. The empty tomb⁵

- B. Jesus was buried, most likely in a private tomb.

- C. Soon after the Resurrection, the disciples were discouraged, bereaved, and despondent, having lost hope.

◆ *INSIGHT*

A common objection to the claim that people saw the risen Jesus was they were simply hallucinating (Hallucination Theory). However, modern-day science teaches that the most common causes of hallucinations are neurodegenerative diseases (i.e. Parkinson's, Alzheimer's), migraines, schizophrenia, brain tumors, epilepsy, sleep deprivation, high fever, drugs, and alcohol.

³ Flavius Josephus, *Josephus, The Complete Works*, William Whiston (transl), Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988, 978.

⁴ Eric Chabot, *Revisiting Gary Habermas' 12 Facts about the Resurrection of Jesus*, ThinkApologetics.com, Jan 20, 2016, accessed on 7/7/2024, <https://chab123.wordpress.com/2016/01/20/revisiting-gary-habermas-12-facts-about-the-resurrection-of-jesus/>.

⁵ Many scholars place the empty tomb in the top five minimal facts supported by the many reasons discussed in Session #2.

- D. The disciples' public testimony and preaching of the resurrection took place in the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus had been crucified and buried shortly before.

- E. The Gospel message centered on the death and resurrection of Jesus (Resurrection was the central message).

- F. Orthodox Jews who believed in Christ made Sunday their primary day of worship.

IV. **MICHAEL LICONA'S HISTORICAL BEDROCK⁶**

A. **Historical Bedrock**

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. The disciples' experiences what they believed to be appearances of the risen Jesus.
3. Paul's experience that convinced him similarly

B. **Second Order Facts**

1. The conversion of James, the brother of Jesus, which was probably due to an experience that he also considered as a Resurrection appearance of Jesus
2. The empty tomb⁷ (75% of scholars agree)
3. Jesus' predictions of his violent, imminent death as well as His Resurrection afterwards
4. The earliest apostles held that Jesus appeared in a bodily form.

V. **NT WRIGHT'S MINIMAL FACTS⁸**

- A. The "belief" among the early Christians that Jesus rose from the dead

- B. The empty tomb

⁶ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*, Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 462.

⁸ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 685-696.

C. The appearances to the disciples and Paul

VI. OTHER FACTS USED TO DEFEND THE RESURRECTION

A. As Gospel writing timeline advances, stories remain stable. They don't grow in legend. The early church was not so quick to invent sayings about Jesus.

B. Matthew, John, and Paul were eyewitnesses.

C. Christians mutated from Jewish resurrection thought.

D. The rapid growth of the Christian church⁹

E. The Apostles were willing to identify Jesus as deity equal to YHWH and, in so doing, risk eternal damnation. Breaking the Shema (affirmation of Judaism and declaration of faith in one God) could only make sense if they were convinced that the Resurrection occurred. Then, subsequent redevelopment of the Shema to include Jesus in the Godhead is further early proof that this high Christology developed prior to the writing of the Gospels^{10 11} (See Session Four, Appendix E, p. 84-86).

VII. SUMMARY

A. Minimal-facts approach uses only data agreed upon by the majority of scholars and historians to make the case for the Resurrection. The approach uses the Bible as a historical document rather than the inspired Word of God. No appeal to the inspiration of the Scripture is required.

B. Habermas' minimal-facts approach uses the following: Jesus died by crucifixion. Jesus' followers had real experiences that they thought were actual appearances of the risen Jesus. The Apostles' lives were transformed as a result, even to the point of being willing to die specifically for their faith in the Resurrection message. The Resurrection was taught very early, soon after the Resurrection itself. Both James (brother of Jesus) and Paul each became believers in Christ after encountering the risen Jesus.

⁹ Some scholars suggest this reason should be in the top 5 minimal facts.

¹⁰ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans: 2008, 1-59.

¹¹ Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord; How On Earth Did Jesus Become God?* London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark: 2015, 93-125.

- C. There are numerous historical objections to the Resurrection. A few of these include the swoon theory, stolen body theory, wrong tomb theory, hallucination theory, conspiracy theory, and simply, it's all a myth. Each of these objections can be responsibly discredited (see Session Four).

VIII. STUDY QUESTIONS

- A. How would you explain to a friend the minimal-facts approach to the Resurrection?

- B. List six of Habermas' minimal facts that he uses to argue for the Resurrection. What other facts can you name to add to this list?

- C. How many objections to the Resurrection can you name? How would you refute each objection?

- D. Muslims do not believe that Jesus died by crucifixion. The Qur'an (4:157) states, "And their saying, 'indeed we killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, messenger of Allah.' *But they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him*, but it was made to appear so to them. And those who disagree about it are in doubt about it. There is not anything of knowledge in this for them except the pursuit of conjecture. *They did not kill him, for certain*" [emphasis added]. How would you respond?

SESSION SIX

*EVERYDAY
RESURRECTION
CONVERSATIONS*

EVERYDAY RESURRECTION CONVERSATIONS

APPLYING HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE RESURRECTION IN
EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS

I. REVIEW AND INTEGRATION OF ARGUMENTS FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE RESURRECTION

- A. Review the main points from Sessions 1-5:
 - 1. The “Received Text” (1 Cor. 15)
 - 2. Empty tomb evidence
 - 3. Post-resurrection appearances and martyrdom
 - 4. Common objections and rebuttals
 - 5. The Minimal Facts approach

II. FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

- A. Conversation starters: How to initiate a discussion about the Resurrection
 - 1. Ask thoughtful questions.
 - 2. Listen sincerely to objections, questions, and doubts.
 - 3. Identify those in the conversation with other worldviews or religious positions.
 - 4. Find common ground in the conversation.

III. PRESENTATION OF THE PRIMARY ARGUMENT

- A. Articulate a clear and concise defense.

1. Write out your own “Minimal Facts Approach” that can be stated in under five minutes.

2. Explain the importance of the Resurrection theologically.

3. Explain the importance of the Resurrection historically.

4. How would your answer change between a skeptic, seeker, or believer?

IV. ROLE-PLAY AND CASE STUDIES

- A. Divide into pairs or groups:
 1. One plays a skeptic or curious friend.
 2. The other gives a defense using one or more approaches (i.e. Minimal Facts, rebutting an objection, etc.).
- B. Rotate roles to practice different responses.
- C. Provide sample case studies (i.e., “Your friend says Jesus was just a myth,” or “A teacher says hallucinations were the cause of the reported appearances”).

- D. Build your own five-minute Resurrection argument. Share your argument with the class.

V. NAVIGATING COMMON CHALLENGES AND OBJECTIONS

A. Biblical Principles

1. With truth and love as Christ demonstrates (John 6-7)¹
2. Listening with the intent to understand (not just reply)^{2 3}
3. “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6).
4. “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).
5. “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).

B. Dealing with emotional objections (e.g., hurt by religion)

C. When not to argue: discerning spiritual readiness

D. Redirecting to the Gospel

VI. CASE STUDIES

A. A Conversation with Jamie

You’re attending a dinner party at a friend’s house two weeks before Easter. The discussion turns to the Good Friday and Easter Sunday holidays. Someone mentions the meaning of Easter being the Resurrection of Jesus. Your friend, Jamie, a thoughtful and studious agnostic, says,

“I have read material on Easter, but I just don’t think there is good historical evidence to believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead. I think those who reported this event were just confused or the event itself has just become legend. People in the first century were gullible and stories became exaggerated. I’m not trying to be hostile to Christians, but it just seems like a stretch to believe this story. Maybe someone stole Jesus’ body or maybe the disciples were hallucinating.”

¹ David Keehn, “Responding to Objections with Truth and Love,” *The Good Book Blog*, August 31, 2015, accessed on 6/16/2024, www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2015/responding-to-objections-with-truth-and-love.

² The Humanitas Forum on Christianity and Culture, *The Virtue of Listening – because there are no little people*. Feb. 3, 2015, accessed on 6/16/24, www.humanitas.org/?p=3229.

³ Francis Schaeffer’s response is a good model, as quoted from *The Humanitas Forum on Christianity and Culture, The Virtue of Listening – because there are no little people*. Feb. 3, 2015, accessed on 6/16/24, www.humanitas.org/?p=3229. “If I have only an hour with someone, I will spend the first 55 minutes asking questions and finding out what is troubling their heart and mind, and then in the last 5 minutes I will share something of the truth”

Jamie turns to you and says, "Aren't you a Christian? Do you really believe the Resurrection actually happened? How could you believe this story historically?"

QUESTIONS:

Write 2-3 sentences on how you would initially respond to Jamie and set the tone of your answer?

Write a brief outline on how you would explain the historical evidence for the Resurrection to Jamie in 4-5 minutes.

How would you conclude the discussion with Jamie?

B. A Conversation with Ali

You are at your place of employment and a Muslim co-worker, Ali, wants to discuss the role of Jesus in Christianity. He is intelligent, kind, and a devout Muslim. You confidently respond with passages in the Gospels demonstrating His virgin-birth, sinless life, death on the cross, Resurrection, appearances, and ascension. Ali, respectfully disagrees with your position with Jesus as deity and challenges the whole idea of any crucifixion and resurrection. He states, "Jesus only appeared to die on the cross, but did not actually die."

QUESTIONS

What objection is Ali using to discredit Jesus' crucifixion?

How would you rebut this specific objection? What other objection to Jesus' crucifixion do Muslim's commonly use?

How would you conclude your discussion with Ali?

C. A Conversation with Steve

You are at your high school reunion weekend celebration and having breakfast with six old friends. Steve, a community college professor in philosophy, brings up religion rather loudly. He states, "I don't know how any of you could be a Christian. It's just all mythical and propaganda. How could anyone believe in that resurrection story? You can't tell me that anyone could come back from the dead." Steve knows you are a Christian and turns to you and asks, "What's the historical case for your alleged Messiah? Convince me!" His tone is harsh and confrontational. Many at the table laugh softly, but several are genuinely interested in your answer.

QUESTIONS

How do you maintain your composure with Steve? How do you think through the historical evidence clearly? Write 2-3 sentences on how you would immediately respond with respect, but confidence.

Write 4-5 sentences describing the three reasons to believe that the Resurrection is historically true. Would your response given to Steve be the same as the rest of your friends sitting around the table? Why or why not?

What personal encouragement could you give to those interested at the table in learning more about this topic? List two resources that would be helpful to them.

VII. RESOURCES AND NEXT STEPS

- A. Recommended books, websites, or podcasts for further growth
- B. Write your own “Resurrection defense” as a personal apologetic tool
- C. Engage in one meaningful conversation about the Resurrection this week



APPENDICES

SESSION ONE

APPENDIX A

WHO WERE THE CORINTHIANS?

by Garland Autry, Community Pastor, Fellowship Fayetteville, Arkansas

I. A TROUBLED CHURCH: 1 CORINTHIANS

Corinth was a city on the rise. Corinth was a very strategic and important city in that it connected the northern part of Greece (Athens) and the southern part (Sparta) through a tiny isthmus of land, where the city of Corinth was built. Thus, it was a major trade route and port city, with lots of people coming in and out. Originally a Greek city, it was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C., but resettled by Julius Caesar himself in 44 B.C. Therefore, Corinth was a Greek city with a very 'Roman' feel and culture. The city population was probably around 80-100,000 people, making it a large ancient city. (Northwest Arkansas in 2021 is around 550,000 total; Fayetteville is about 110,000 when the U of A is in session. But the ancient cities were tightly packed together, with a very high population density.) Corinth was a wealthy city, with all the blessings and curses that come with a major trade city. It was also a famous city, one that enjoyed a long history of power and prestige.

As residents of a new city that was undergoing continual rebuilding and that was increasing in fame, the people of Corinth had both growing civic pride and individual pride. All sorts of Corinthians, even slaves, are mentioned in inscriptions, often paid for and erected by and for themselves, that describe their contributions to building projects or their status in clubs (*collegia*). The number of such inscriptions is staggering. Corinth was a city where public boasting and self-promotion had become an art form.

The Corinthian people thus lived within an honor-shame cultural orientation, where public recognition was often more important than facts and where the worst thing that could happen was for one's reputation to be publicly tarnished. In such a culture a person's sense of worth is based on recognition by others of one's accomplishments, hence the self-promoting public inscriptions.¹

Corinth boasted dozens of temples dedicated to a plethora of deities. Poseidon was a fan-favorite in this city, not surprisingly as the city sat near two seas. On the acropolis of the city (Acrocorinth) sat the temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love and romance. Another popular deity (as evidenced by the archaeological evidence) was Asclepios, the god of physical and emotional healing and health.

Hera Argaea, the goddess of marriage and the sexual life, was also a favorite. Hera was associated with sacred marriage, which involved the uniting of

¹ Ben Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 8.

two divine persons or a divine and human person. The sacredness of the marriage increased the chances of fertility. Hera was also associated with childbirth. (This may be in the background of some of the issues raised in 1 Corinthians 7, and childbirth in 7:14).

Many temples in Corinth, including the one serving the gods Demeter and Kore, housed dining facilities where lavish dinner parties (*convivia*) occurred. Here, young girls were often employed at these facilities, to serve as companions and sexual amusement for the wealthy, the powerful, and the paying customers. Additionally, in rooms within the temple precincts there were rooms in which initiatory rites and ceremonies occurred and may have involved young girls as well. There is evidence that a ceremonial headdress may have been worn during these ceremonies.

These various deities and the daily rituals involved with honoring them were crucial for the city's success. Additionally, Corinth housed temples dedicated to Caesar and honored the Empire of Rome.

Corinth also hosted the second most important series of semi-annual games, second only to the Olympic games themselves. These games brought tens of thousands of visitors to the city, many of which would require temporary shelter in tent-dwellings, as they sheltered on the hillsides nearby. This brought considerable wealth to the city, enabling its tent-making guilds to thrive, especially during the years in which games were played. This also brought people from all over the Greek-then-Roman Empire to Corinth, making the city a bit of a melting pot for ideas, deities, and intrigue.

Paul made his way to Corinth after his time in Athens on his second missionary journey, and spent a year and a half in this city, preaching the gospel and teaching of the Messiah's victory over the world powers and idols. The young church in Corinth was likely a small group of house-churches, probably no bigger than 12-20 each. Paul chose this city for its strategic location in the Roman Empire, as well as the ability to be self-sufficient and live on the income generated by his trade, tentmaking. Since the city of Corinth enjoyed much wealth, the divide between the 'have's' and the 'have-nots' would have been especially striking here. Erastus, mentioned in Acts 19:22, as well as noted by Paul in Romans 16:23 and 2 Timothy 4:20, was likely one of these house-church leaders. In 1929, excavators in Corinth found an ancient inscription, dated to the mid-first century A.D., with the name Erastus on it. The inscription reads: *Erastus in return for his aedileship paved it at his own expense*. In Roman politics, the aedile was a person responsible for the upkeep of public buildings and festivals. Perhaps Erastus encountered Paul and made Jesus his King. This man of honor was now forced to reckon with a gospel message that set every single person at the same table and at the same level. Corinth, indeed, was fertile ground to demonstrate the implications of the Jesus-movement with its shocking cross-shaped honor.

II. WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CORINTH?

After Paul had planted the Church in Corinth and spent a year and a half there, he made his way back to Jerusalem, thus concluding his second missionary journey in 53 A.D. When he began his third missionary journey shortly after (later in 53 A.D.), he went to the impressive and important city of Ephesus. Upon arriving there, he hears word of issues going on in the Corinthian church and writes them a letter. This first letter did not survive history.

Evidently, the Corinthians responded with a letter of their own, as well as a personal visit from 'Chloe's people' asking Paul to clarify some things and address some issues. Paul, then, wrote them back the letter we now know as 1 Corinthians. It may be easily stated that (to our knowledge) this was Paul's most difficult and troubling church and therefore they were having plenty of issues:

1. They had fallen prey to personality-cults, emphasizing style over substance.
2. They therefore had all sorts of division within the church over these stylistic differences.
3. They were forgetting that the gospel has changed all that, thus they were forgetting the power of the gospel.
4. They were accusing Paul of not being impressive enough.
5. They didn't know how to handle an incestuous relationship.
6. They were suing each other in the courts.
7. They were totally missing the point of sex, and especially in marriage.
8. They were divided over eating meat and the issue of eating food sacrificed to idols which highlighted a problem of personal conscience and 'freedom.'
9. They were divided over money and classes as the rich were eating without the poor.
10. They were unsure what to do with women leading in the church, probably and especially those who formerly were pagan prostitutes and cult leaders.
11. They were over-emphasizing a spiritual elite group who spoke in tongues.
12. They were completely disordered in the church gathering.
13. They misunderstood the importance of the Resurrection.

14. They were accusing Paul of not being a man of his word.

Put simply, scholar Jennifer Houston McNeel exposes the sad irony of the situation: “The Corinthians' problem is not just that they are immature in faith, but that they have misunderstood their own level of maturity.”² Also helpful, Michael Bird suggests that the Corinthians' problem was not too much eschatology, but too little...They did not think they had arrived in the kingdom. They were not thinking Jewishly at all, let alone in terms of the Jewish ‘two ages.’ Rather, they were still mentally living within the pagan world by whose standards they had attained a degree of wisdom superior to—and independent of—Paul himself. This produced a ‘boasting’ which ignored the judgment that was still to come. In their boasting they were heedless of God’s future judgment. Their ‘puffed-up’ posturing came from putting together their beliefs about themselves as Christians with the ideas from pagan philosophy, not least the kind of popular-level Stoicism which taught that all who truly understood the world and themselves were kings. The words ‘rich’ and ‘reigning’ had been catchwords of Stoic philosophy since the time of the philosopher Diogenes, who settled in Corinth and who popularized the aphorism, ‘I alone am rich, I alone reign as king.’³

Key Purpose

To rebuke the worldly thinking of the Corinthians and to correct and put to right several issues that had emerged in the church, as well as teach this struggling church what it looks like to live lovingly with nothing but the message of Christ crucified (always with the victorious new day of the resurrection in mind)

Date

53-54 A.D., from Ephesus, on Paul’s 3rd Missionary Journey

The Gospel Message

Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, and ascension have changed the entire world order—the breakthrough of the new creation has happened with all its massive implications—which flips on its head how the entire world operates; thus Christ’s followers live a life of love, counter to the world’s ways.

III. WHY DID PAUL WRITE 1 CORINTHIANS?

Paul needed to ‘get ahead’ of these issues and bring some sort of theological and gospel-centered wisdom to the situation. He knew that this church was struggling, and so this letter is written very formally and carefully, as Paul tries to bring his friends and this church back in line with a life in line with the

² McNeel, “Feeding with Milk,” 570.

³ Bird, *New Testament in its World*, 480-481.

Messiah and the Messiah crucified (and resurrected!). In a world where idols still had power and the idols of sex, money, and power were still attempting to leverage their authority, the gospel had changed all of that and it needed to be brought forward in a more fervent and clear way. It is not surprising that this city had problems; it was a tough city to plant a church in to begin with, so Paul carefully works with them with grace and truth.

IV. **PAUL'S FOUR LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS**

A. 'Previous' Letter

On Paul's third missionary journey, from Ephesus, he likely encountered some leaders from the church in Corinth, and heard word of some of the issues going on there. Somewhere early in this time, he wrote them a letter that is now LOST TO HISTORY.

- Upon receiving this now-lost letter, the Corinthians likely wrote Paul a letter in response "from Chloe's house" (1 Corinthians 1:11). It is this letter Paul receives and then responds to in what we now know as 1 Corinthians.

B. 1 Corinthians

The letter preserved in our modern Bibles is responding to these issues reported to Paul while he was in Ephesus in 53-54 AD.

- Paul sends Timothy (probably carrying the letter we now know as 1 Corinthians) to Corinth to check the situation out (1 Cor. 4:17, 16:10).
- This visit apparently did not go well, and Paul made a quick and hasty trip from Ephesus in early 54 AD over to Corinth that also did not go well. We now call this trip the "Painful Visit" (2 Corinthians 2:1; 13:1). It appears the Corinthian church rejected Paul and his authority and wanted to continue living with some of the issues that Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians. They didn't like his tone, his approach, or his message, and this rejection REALLY hurt Paul! (See 2 Corinthians 1:1-7:1)
- Upon returning to Ephesus, Paul wrote a letter we now know as the "Severe Letter."

C. Severe Letter

After Paul's painful visit to Corinth, he quickly and hastily wrote this harsh letter to the Corinthian Church that is also NOW LOST TO HISTORY (2 Cor. 2:3-4). This letter was sent with Titus to Corinth, and Paul waited

to receive word of how it was taken. (Some think that 2 Corinthians 10-13 IS the severe letter.)

D. 2 Corinthians

Paul began writing his now fourth letter to Corinth, as he traveled from Ephesus back to Greece around 56 AD. He began this letter on his journey, and halfway through (2 Cor. 7:1- 2) Titus met him and reported that things were better in Corinth. This drastically changed Paul's mindset and helped him greatly.

Key Themes

1. Worldly power and wisdom vs. gospel power and wisdom
2. Personality cults based on style
3. True spirituality
4. The nature of true freedom
5. Problems!!!
6. Love as the basis for gospel community
7. The power of the Resurrection and the hope it brings

Key Verses

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-10

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. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

SESSION ONE

APPENDIX B

FIRST CENTURY RESURRECTION BELIEF

I. JEWS WHO BELIEVED IN A GENERAL BODILY RESURRECTION

- A. Pharisees
- B. Essenes
- C. Zealots
- D. Scripture Supporting a General Resurrection
 - 1. Isaiah 26:19
 - 2. Daniel 12:2-3
 - 3. John 11:24-25

II. JEWS WHO DENY ALL FORMS OF RESURRECTION

- A. Sadducees
- B. Supporting Documents
 - 1. Matthew 22:23
 - 2. Josephus (The Jewish Wars, Book 2)

III. PAGAN'S VIEWS ON THE RESURRECTION

- A. No concept of the Messiah
- B. Any form of a resurrection was foreign to them
- C. Widespread range of afterlife beliefs¹
- D. 'Memento mori' (Remember you must die)

¹ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 31.

APPENDIX C

BURIAL PRACTICES IN FIRST CENTURY PALESTINE

Ever wonder how first century Palestine buried their dead? This topic becomes important when considering the evidence for the resurrection and associated burial practices, tombs, and embalming customs during that time period. Professor of Religion at Wofford College and supervisor over numerous excavation sites in Israel, Byron R. McCane, states “burial practices in the New Testament are corroborated by archaeological evidence.”¹

Prompt burial was traditional in Palestine in the first century. In fact, an unburied corpse overnight would be uncommon.² The care of the deceased body was handled with great respect. McCane describes this process.

As soon as death was certain, the deceased’s eyes were closed; the corpse was washed, and then wrapped and bound. According to the third-century C.E. Jewish tractate *Semahot*, men could only prepare the corpse of a man, but women could prepare both men and women. Literary depictions often suggest that perfumes or ointments were used for this washing. The body was wrapped and bound in strips of cloth. John 11 has such preparations in view: Lazarus’s “hands and feet [were] bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth” (John 11:44). Thus prepared, male relatives and friends would carry the corpse in a procession toward the place of interment, accompanied by friends, neighbors, and relatives. Such processions are described in the New Testament (Luke 7:12, for example) and in Josephus, who emphasizes the splendor of Herod’s funerary cortege (War 1.671-3). Some Mishnaic texts suggest that processions occasionally halted in order to “make lamentation” for the dead (m. Meg. 4.3; m. B. Bath. 6.7, for example).³

Once the body was prepared for burial some type of memorial for the deceased usually followed. This may have involved words or prayers from family, friends, or clergy. McCane illustrates this portion of the burial process.

Some tombs include an area that appears to have been the setting for lamenting and eulogizing the deceased. Made up of either a circle of benches or a row (or rows) of seats, these “mourning enclosures” are usually situated in front of and around the entrance to the tomb. Some literary sources describe a ceremony in which

¹ Byron R. McCane, “Burial Practices in First Century Palestine,” *Bible Odyssey*, Accessed on 5/23/2024, <https://blog.bibleodyssey.org/articles/burial-practices-in-first-century-palestine/>.

² Mishnah Sanhedrin 6.6.

³ McCane, “Burial Practices in First Century Palestine.”

friends and neighbors arranged themselves in rows in order to offer condolences to the bereaved in a kind of receiving line (m. Ber. 3.2; m. Meg. 4:3; m. Sanh. 2.1; Sem. 10.9). The ceremony of primary burial seems to have often included spoken words in appreciation for the dead and in sympathy for the bereaved. After primary burial, the procession returned to the family home, where expressions of condolence continued.⁴

The mourning process usually lasted about seven days. During this period of time most immediate family members either confined themselves to their homes or were seen visiting the burial site of their loved one. This practice is seen in John 11:31 when Mary leaves her home following the death of Jesus. The passage states, “When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.” Following the seven day period of mourning, most areas of life resumed.

⁴ McCane, “Burial Practices in First Century Palestine.”

APPENDIX D

ADDITIONAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE EMPTY TOMB¹

1. The presence of obscure eyewitnesses (Salome², Joanna³, Cleopas⁴) listed by their proper names is, indeed, consistent with eyewitness stories. Without further explanation of their role, opportunities to tell the empty tomb story from their viewpoint is lost which again, further authenticates the underlying story.
2. The Gospel accounts themselves are considered early documents and should be considered well within historical standards of reliability in regards to dating. Furthermore, each agree with the other in terms of the broad empty tomb story.
3. The empty tomb account did not grow in legend as may be expected if the story had been written at a later date.
4. There was no development of tomb veneration or a martyr cult that was common in the ancient world when the body remained in the tomb. The fact that we are not certain of where Jesus' tomb was is an indication of the lack of tomb veneration.
5. The women's perplexed state of mind after discovering the empty tomb suggests these reports were early and simple (as opposed to being written much later and over time). Few details were revealed and differing details went unresolved.
6. The tomb location was not emphasized suggesting there was little interest in the tomb itself, thus more likely empty.
7. The early church does not appear to discuss the empty tomb as an apologetic point, but rather the appearances of the risen Christ. In fact, 1 Corinthians 15 does not even mention the empty tomb.
8. Even if Matthew's account of guards at the tomb was not historically accurate, their alleged addition would indicate the tomb had been vacated, otherwise very little motivation to tell a false story existed.
9. No ancient Christian or non-Christian sources denied the empty tomb.
10. No ancient writings are present to suggest Jesus' body was placed in a common grave or pit.

¹ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 625-630.

² Mark 16:1.

³ Luke 24:10.

⁴ Luke 24:13-32.

APPENDIX E

RESURRECTION EVIDENCE: THE GREATEST RISK FOR THE APOSTLES¹

I. OBJECTION TO THE RESURRECTION AND WORSHIP OF JESUS AS THE RISEN LORD

- A. Since Wilhelm Bousset's influential book, *Kyrios Christos* (1913), critical (skeptical) New Testament scholars have held that the worship of Jesus as Lord (Kyrios) could not have begun with Palestinian (Jewish) Christians since they were strict monotheists.
- B. Instead, scholars building on Bousset's work proposed that the worship of Jesus as Lord could only have occurred as Paul's gospel entered the Greco-Roman world and was mingled with popular "Ruler (Kyrios) cults" (later, Emperor worship).
- C. Skeptical scholars state that this evolutionary process took several generations to develop. Consequently, all the gospels were written late in the first century to create stories of miracles, claims of divinity, and Resurrection appearances to justify worship of Jesus as Lord.
- D. These stories do not reflect the historical events of Jesus or the first Christians, but instead represent the needs of various communities of non-Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Greco-Roman world in subsequent generations.

II. RESPONSE: THE APOSTLES' RISK OF APOSTASY AND ETERNAL JUDGEMENT

- A. Why would the Apostles risk their eternal salvation by falsely proclaiming that Jesus was risen from the dead, unless it was in fact true?
 - 1. If God did not raise Jesus from the dead, then the Apostles would be false witnesses against God, attributing to Him an action that He did not do (1 Cor. 15:15).
 - 2. Being a false witness against God would result in eternal damnation in the Final Judgement, an even greater risk that being physically killed (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4).
 - 3. If they knew the report of Jesus' Resurrection was a lie, they knew that their eternal punishment was assured (1 Cor. 15:16-19, 32b).

¹ Special thanks to Mark Burris for compiling this Appendix

B. Why would the Apostles, who were steeped in Jewish monotheism, risk their eternal salvation by falsely claiming that Jesus was Lord (Greek “Kyrios”; Hebrew “Yahweh”) and had been exalted to the right hand of the Father, unless the Resurrection and Ascension actually happened?

1. The early preaching of the Apostles about Jesus’ resurrection included His ascension and exaltation to the right hand of God, stating that God “has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:29-36 NASB, see vv. 35-36).¹
2. To be identified as “Lord” meant that the Apostles included Jesus in the identity of God (Yahweh), not as an addition to God, which would be a clear violation of monotheism). On the contrary, Jesus is included in worship and in titles as equal to God, yet the first Christians continued to regard themselves as monotheists.^{2,3}
3. Numerous passages from the Old Testament that speak of God as Yahweh (Lord) were applied to Jesus as Lord in the New Testament. See especially Rom. 10:13; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Cor. 8:5-6; Acts: 2:29-36.⁴
4. Jesus is worshiped alongside God in hymns, prayers, doxologies, baptismal rites, the Lord’s supper, confessional practices, and “prophecy uttered as the words of the heavenly Christ.”⁵

III. WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

A. The historical investigations of Christian origins by Hurtado, Bauckham, and others have shown that contrary to Bousset and his adherents, the multigenerational sequence of development does not match the historical information we have from that period of time.

1. “Certainly the old [Bousset’s] view that the transition coincided with the movement of Christianity from a Jewish to a pagan Hellenistic environment is mistaken.”⁶
2. “The earliest Christology was already the highest Christology”⁷
3. “The highest possible Christology – the inclusion of Jesus in the unique divine identity – was central to the faith of the early church even before any of the New Testament writings were written, since it occurs in all of them.”⁸

¹ Larry, W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord; How On Earth Did Jesus Become God?* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark: 2015), 105.

² Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity*. Wm. B. Eerdmans: 2008, pp. 175f. and 184f.

³ Hurtado, *One God, One Lord; How On Earth Did Jesus Become God?* 97-130.

⁴ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity*, 182-232.

⁵ Hurtado, 105-130.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁷ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 19, 184, 235.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

B. Consequently:

1. The worship of Jesus as Lord did in fact originate with the first Christians within the context of Jewish monotheism and was not the result of the gospel being mingled with Greco-Roman “Ruler (Kyrios) cults.”
2. Late dating of New Testament documents is no longer required in order to accommodate the proposed creation of stories about Jesus.

C. Objection

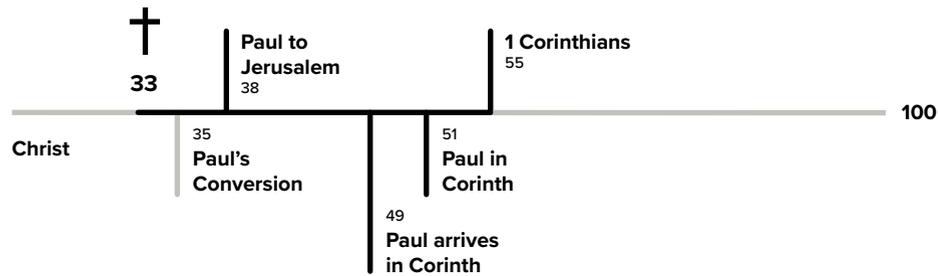
The dating and evaluation of New Testament documents can be discussed from valid historical methods rather than being guided by fallacious presuppositions.

APPENDIX F

TIMELINE REVIEW

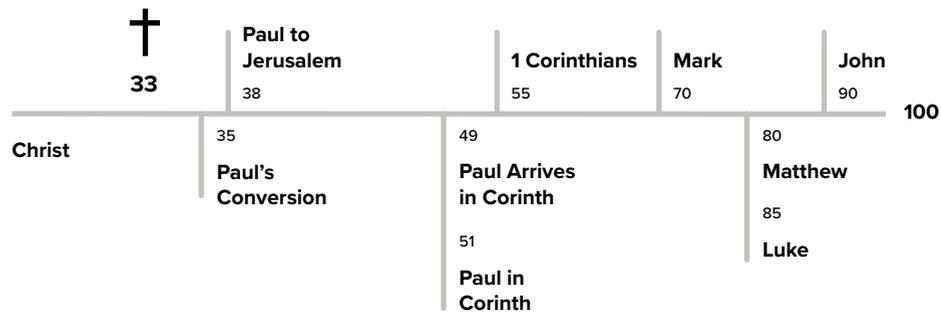
SESSION 1

The "Received" text recorded in 1 Corinthians



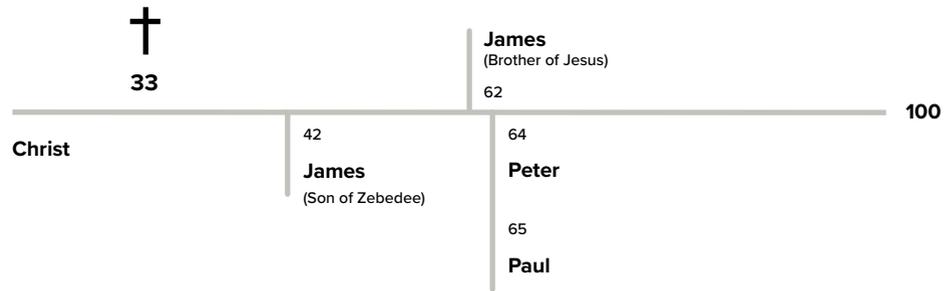
SESSION 2

Written Gospel Dates in Relationship to the Resurrection

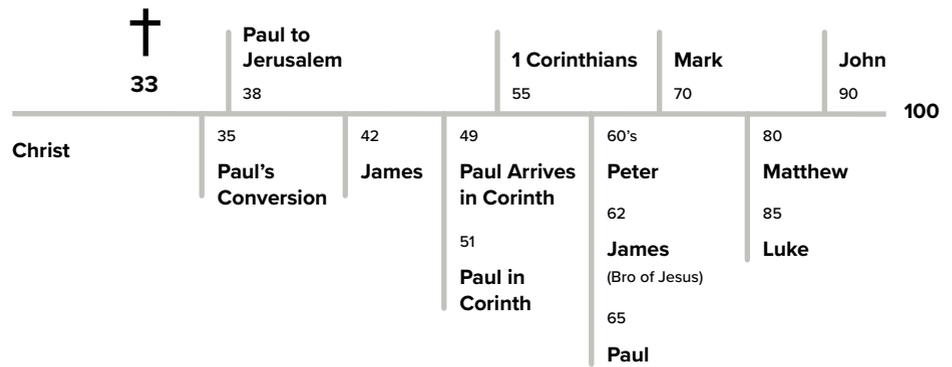


SESSION 3

Martyrdom of the Apostles



Summary of Timeline Events for the Resurrection



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