

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?

