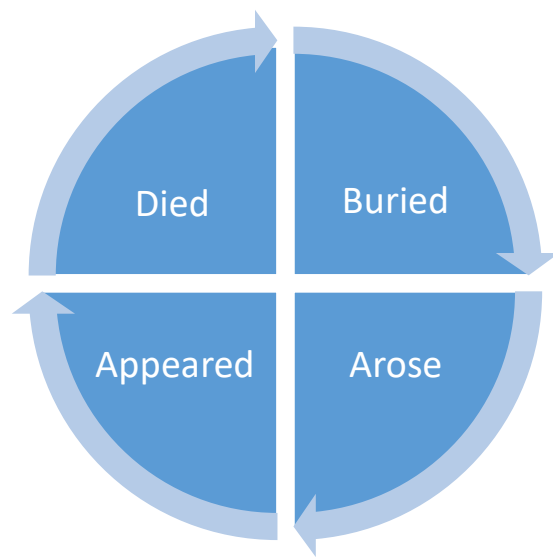


In Defense of the Resurrection



FELLOWSHIP

Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas

In Defense of the Resurrection

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Course Summary

In Defense of the Resurrection is a four 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.

Course Overview

Session 1

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 1st 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 1st Corinthians and discussed relative to the actual resurrection event.

Session 2

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 contain 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 3

After the Resurrection. This session discusses the post-resurrection life and writings of the apostles. How did they live their life 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 4

Minimal Facts Approach. This final 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.

Course Objectives

- 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 1st Corinthians 15 provides the earliest evidence for the events of the resurrection.
- 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.
- 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.
- Present Habermas' minimal facts argument.
- List the ten most common objections to the resurrection.
- Explain the essence of each objection to the resurrection. Which one is more credible? Can you refute each objection?

Session 1

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 “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.”

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 15:32)
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

Key Insight

The Resurrection is *the essential component* of Christianity

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

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."
5. **Lifeway, 2020⁹** 66% of Americans believe in the resurrection; 20% disagree; 14% unsure; 59% age 18-34 disagree.
6. **Lifeway-Ligonier, 2022¹⁰** 23% of American Christians deny Jesus' physical resurrection; 11% unsure; 66% of American Christians affirm physical resurrection.

² Rasmussen Reports, *77% Believe Jesus Rose From the Dead*, April 7, 2012, https://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, https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/lifestyle/holidays/march_2013/64_believe_jesus_christ_rose_from_the_dead.

⁴ Taylor, Humphrey, *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, <https://www.newsmax.com/us/harris-poll-religion-god/2013/12/23/id/543450/>.

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

⁷ BBC News, *Resurrection did not happen, say quarter of Christians*, April 9, 2017, <https://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, <https://www.barna.com/research/most-americans-consider-easter-a-religious-holiday-but-fewer-correctly-identify-its-meaning/>.

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

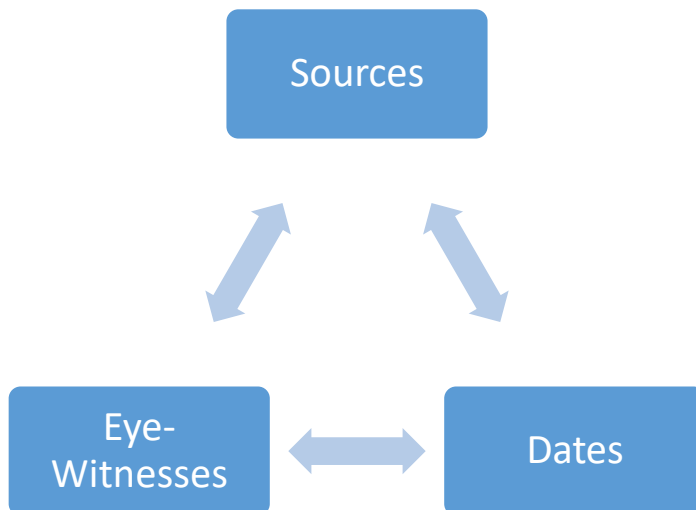
¹⁰ Ligonier Ministry – LifeWay Research, State of Theology, 2022, <https://thestateoftheology.com/data-explorer/2022/5?AGE=30&MF=14®ION=30&DENSITY=62&EDUCATION=62&INCOME=254&MARITAL=126ÐNICITY=62&RELTRAD=62&EVB=6&ATTENDANCE=254>.

II. Historical Reliability and Truthfulness of a Story

A. Everyday stories and events

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

What makes a story *historically* true?



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, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EB-t4FsxS8s>.

B. The Story of Jesus' Resurrection

1. Sources accepted by all scholars^{13 14}
 - a. Paul
 - b. Seven books of the New Testament^{15 16}
 1. Romans
 2. 1st Corinthians
 3. 2nd Corinthians
 4. Galatians
 5. Philippians
 6. 1st Thessalonians
 7. Philemon
2. Dates relative to the resurrection¹⁷
 - a. 1st 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

Key Insight

The majority of critical scholars accept *seven* of Paul's letters as historically reliable.

¹³ Gary Habermas, *What seven New Testament books do most skeptical scholars accept, and why?* John Ankerberg Show, <https://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.

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

III. Importance of the ‘Received’ Text to the Resurrection

A. Corinthian Culture (See Session One, Appendix A)

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)

1. Variability of Jewish beliefs.¹⁸
2. Greco-Roman views rarely included bodily resurrection.

C. “Received” text defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8¹⁹

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

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (NIV)

”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* [emphasis added] I passed on to you as of first importance:

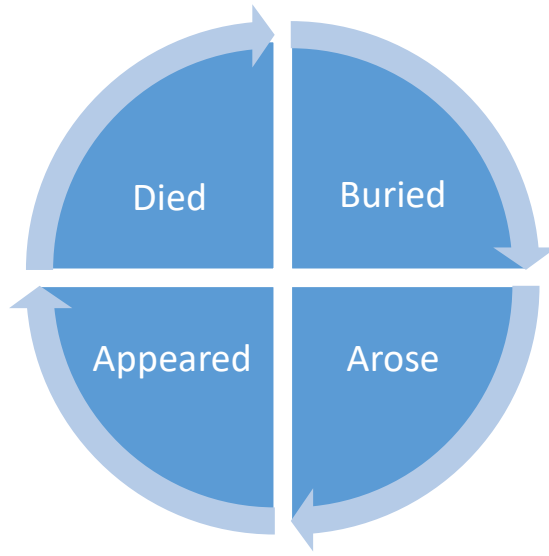
that *Christ died for our sins* according to the Scriptures,
that *he was buried*,
that *he was raised on the third day* according to the Scriptures,
and that *he appeared* to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

After that, [emphasis added] 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.”

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.

The Received Text



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

Key Insight

The ‘Received Text’ may be described as Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, and appearances

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 Paul.
3. Different than Paul’s normal writing style.
4. Phrase “after that” ends the parallelism and return 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 sermon (Acts 2:14-36) within 40 days of the resurrection. Scholars regard this message to be the oldest formulation of the tradition.

F. Jesus’ bodily resurrection anchors 1st Corinthians

1. Rejection of the resurrection equates to the rejection of the Gospel. (i.e. “Whether then it was I [preach the resurrection] or they [preach the resurrection], so we [Paul and the Jerusalem church leaders teaching only one Gospel] preach and so you believed.”²⁰ (1 Corinthians 15:11, ESV)
2. “Received” text central to 1st 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 in (Acts 8:1-3)
3. Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-22; and 26:1-23)

B. Paul’s initial response after his conversion.

“My immediate response was to not consult any human being. I did not go up to

²⁰ Brackets added for emphasis and clarification.

²¹ Habermas, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGOTj1RmpX8>.

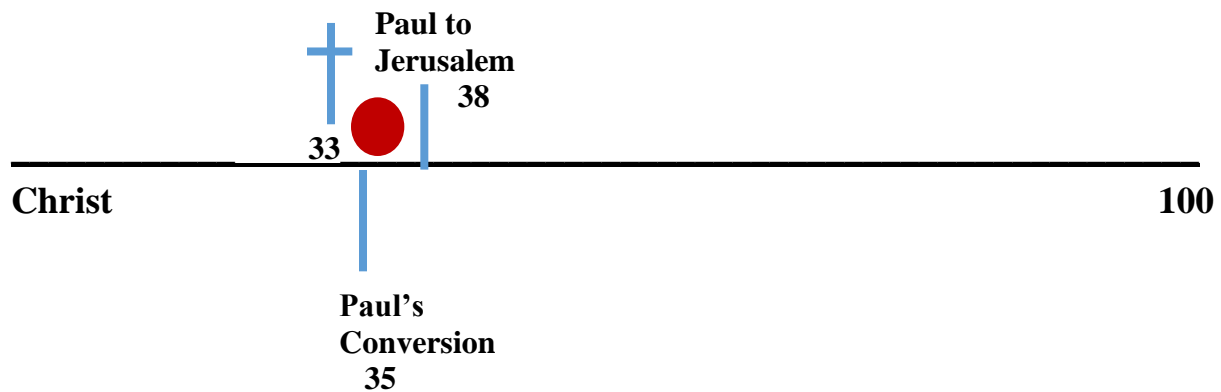
²² G. R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*. (Collegedale, TN: College Press, 1996), 152-157.

Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.” (Galatians 1:16-17, NIV)

C. Paul goes to Jerusalem and was given the ‘received’ text (38 AD or within five years of the resurrection).

“*Then after three years*, [emphasis added] I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him *fifteen days* [emphasis added]. 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.” (Galatians 1:18-20; NIV)

The Origin of the “Received” text



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

“*Then after fourteen years* [emphasis added], 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* [emphasis added] among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.” (Galatians 2:1-2; NIV)

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

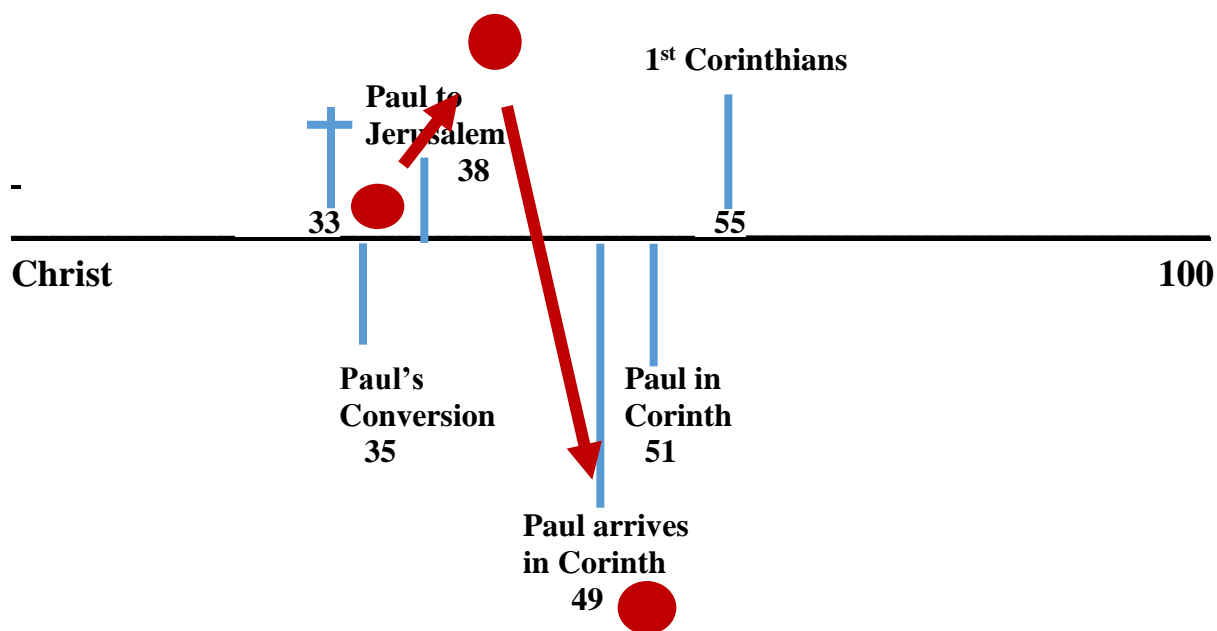
“Those I say who seemed influential, *added nothing* [emphasis added] to my message.” (Galatians 2:6; NIV)

F. Paul arrived in Corinth in 49 AD

1. Paul stayed in Corinth a year and half.

“So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.”
(Acts 18:11; NIV)

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



G. Paul is in Corinth (51 AD)

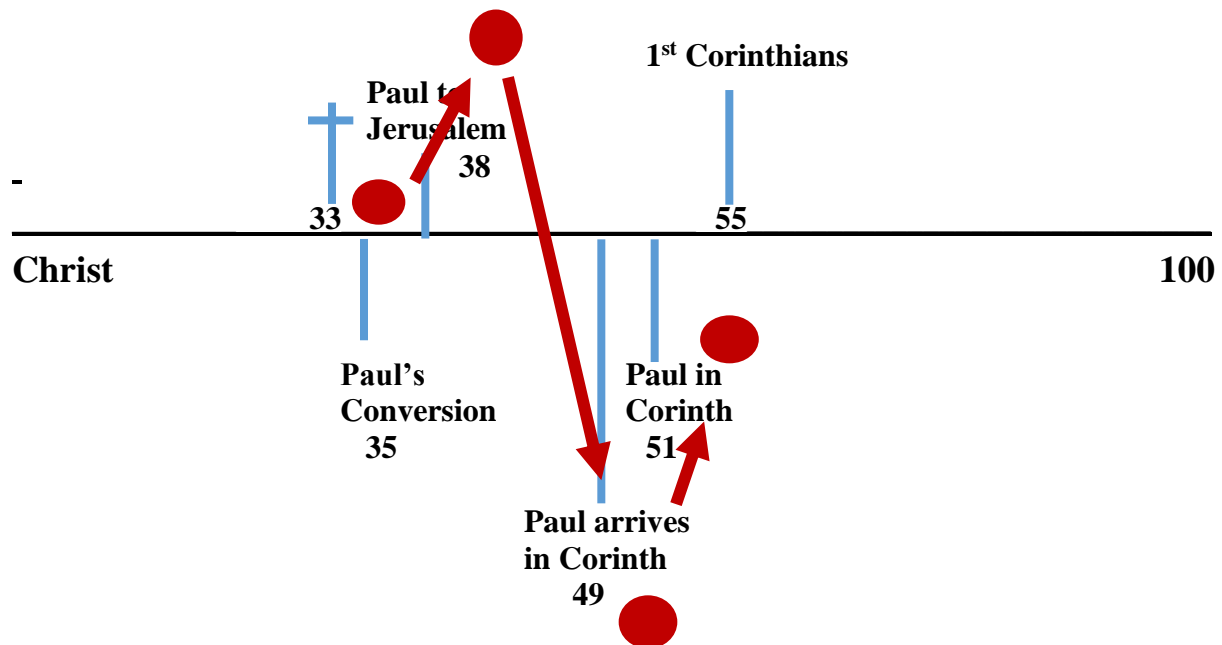
1. Date is confirmed in Acts 18:12-13 through archeological findings.²³
2. Gallio was proconsul of Achaia.
3. Proconsuls served one year terms.
4. Inscription found with Gallio's name and date. (51-52 AD)²⁴

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, <https://apologeticspress.org/gallio-the-proconsul-of-achaia-5595/>.

“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.” (Acts 18:12-13; NIV)

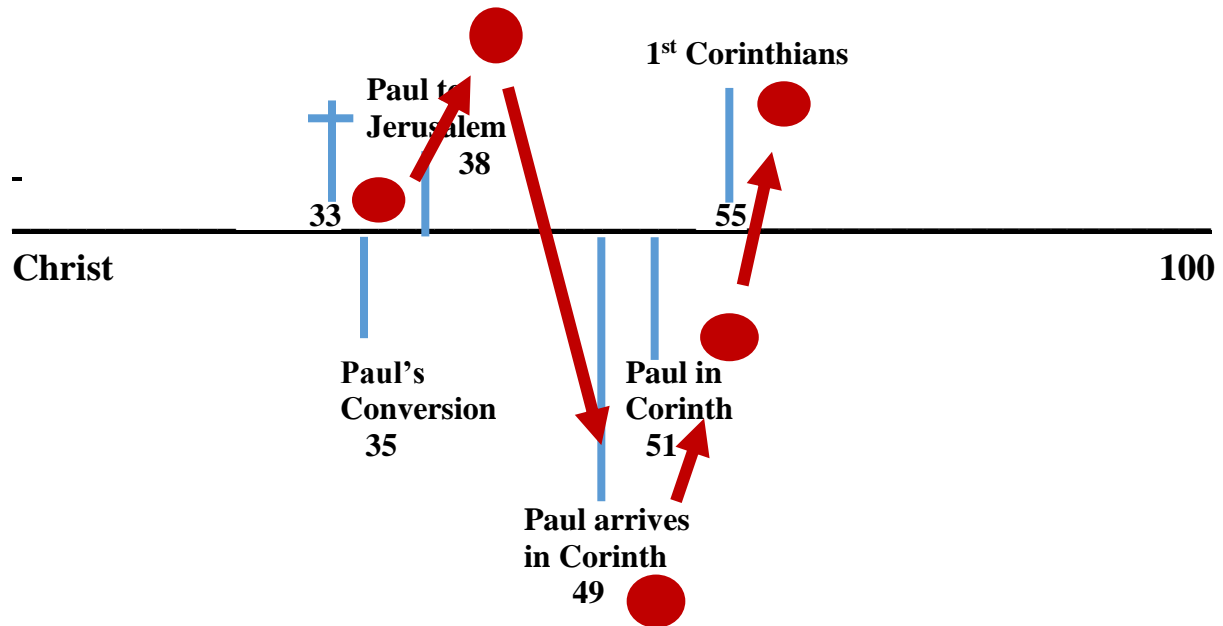
The Spread of the “Received” text in Corinth



H. Paul writes 1st Corinthians (55 AD)

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

The “Received” text recorded in 1st Corinthians



Key Insight

The ‘Received Text’ was described in First Corinthians within 22 years of the actual resurrection

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.**

VI. Study Questions

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

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Appendix A
Fellowship Institute

Who were the Corinthians?²⁵

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

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

²⁵ Provided by Garland Autry.



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 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 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 god 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 1 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.

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 with 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 those 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 Christian 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

² McNeel, “Feeding with Milk,” 570.

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

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.

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 Messiah and the Messiah crucified (and resurrected!). In a world where idols still had power and the idol 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.

Paul’s FOUR Letters to the Corinthians?

1) **‘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.

2) **1 Corinthians:** the letter preserved in our modern Bibles 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 Corinthians 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”

3) **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.)

4) **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.

Appendix B

First Century Resurrection Belief

A. Jews who believed in a general bodily resurrection

1. Pharisees
2. Essenes
3. Zealots
4. Scripture Supporting a General Resurrection
 - a. Isaiah 26:19
 - b. Daniel 12:2-3
 - c. John 11:24-25

B. Jews who deny all forms of resurrection

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

C. Pagans' views on the resurrection

1. No concept of the Messiah
2. Any form of a Resurrection was foreign to them
3. Widespread range of afterlife beliefs²⁶
4. 'Memento mori' (Remember you must die)

²⁶ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 31.

Session 2

The Empty Tomb Accounts

I. The Gospel's Account of the Empty Tomb Story

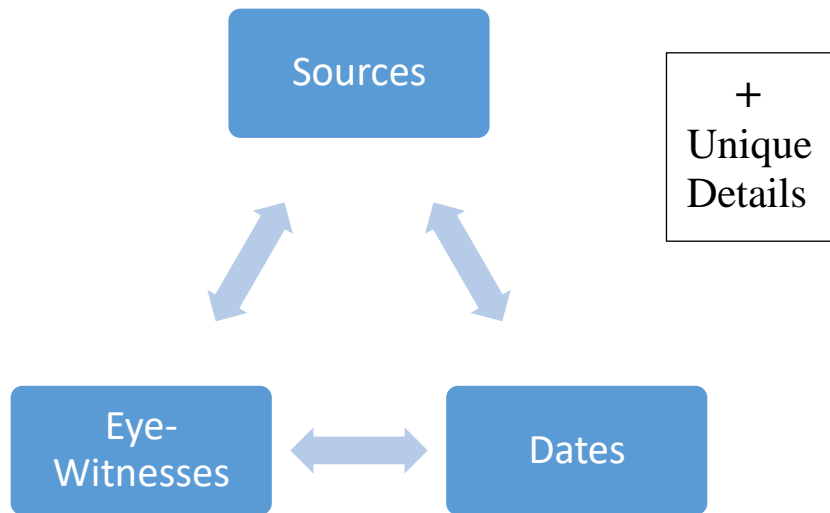
A. Historical Reliability of the Gospels

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?
4. Eye-witnesses to the empty tomb^{27 28}
 - 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 story be corroborated with other evidence?
3. Unique Details
 - a. Do unique details given by each Gospel writer contradict or corroborate other aspects of the story?
 - b. Do differences found between the empty tomb stories discredit the story itself?
 - c. What is the importance of women in this story?

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ Lee Strobel, *Good Reasons to Trust the Gospels As Eyewitness Accounts*, J Warner Wallace Interview, 9/1/2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EB-t4FsxS8s>.

What makes the Gospels *historically* true?



B. Sources for the Gospel Accounts²⁹

1. Gospel of Mark³⁰
 - a. Internal evidence – records Peter’s teaching^{31 32}
 - b. External evidence
2. Gospel of Matthew³³
 - a. The influence of Mark’s Gospel appears present
 - b. *Hypothetical Q*³⁴
 - c. Eye-witness of Matthew
3. Gospel of Luke³⁵
 - a. The influence of Mark’s Gospel appears present
 - b. *Hypothetical Q*

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 172-177; 186-187.

³¹ Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels*, 184.

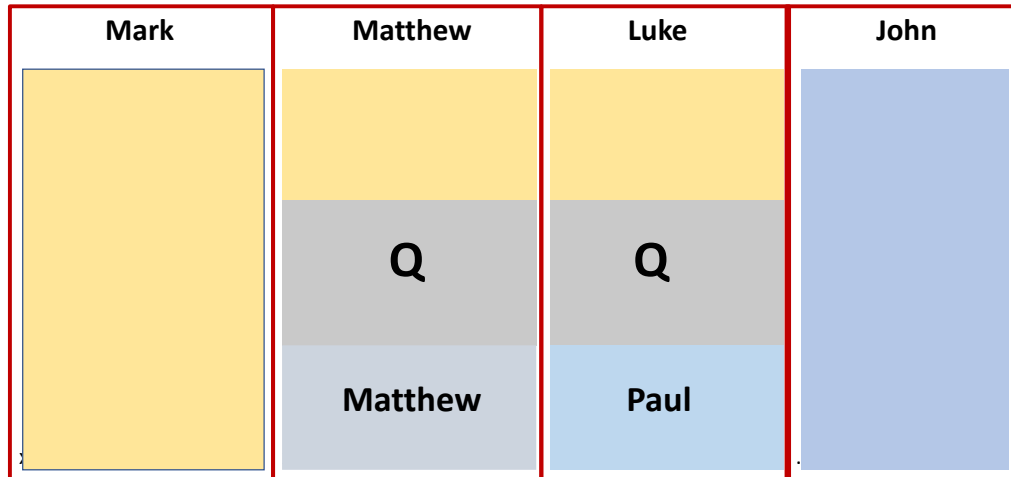
³² Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 173.

³³ *Ibid.*, 140-156.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 98-101.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 201-211.

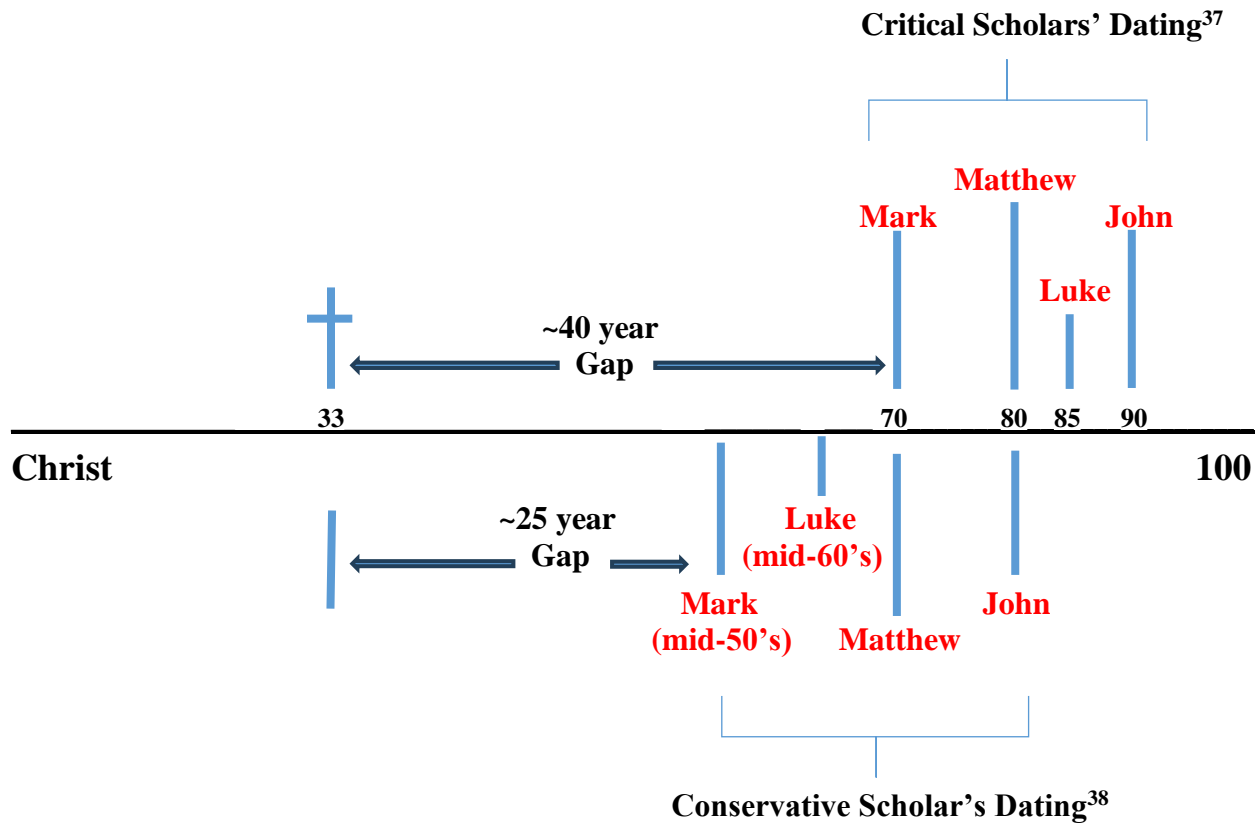
- c. Paul, himself
- 4. Gospel of John³⁶
 - a. Eye-witness of John



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

³⁶ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 229-254.



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

Key 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.

³⁷ 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.

³⁸ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 156, 182, 210, 267.

II. Observations at the Tomb Recorded by the Gospel Writers³⁹

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

<u>Mark 16:1-3</u>	<u>Matthew 28:1</u>	<u>Luke 24:1</u>	<u>John 20:1-4</u>
After Sabbath Very early, 1 st day of wk	After Sabbath Dawn, 1 st day of week	Very early, 1 st day of week	Early 1 st day of week
Mary Magdalene Mary (Mtr of James) Salome	Mary Magdalene Other Mary	Women	Mary Magdalene
Bought spices		Took spices	Saw that the stone had been removed Ran to Peter and other disciple (John) Peter and other disciple (John) ran to tomb
Concerned about the stone			

³⁹ All passages from NIV.

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

<u>Mark 16:4-7</u>	<u>Matthew 28:2-7</u>	<u>Luke 24:2-8</u>	<u>John 20:5-17</u>
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 Guards shook and "became like dead men"	Two men in clothes (like lightening)	Saw linen strips and cloth from Jesus' head Cloth separate from linens 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	"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 Then, she recognized him, "Rabboni!" Go and tell my brothers

Burial Practices

First century burial practices are consistent with many of the events described in the empty tomb stories
(See Session Two, Appendix A)

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

DEPARTURE FROM THE TOMB

<u>Mark 16:8</u>	<u>Matthew 28:8-10</u>	<u>Luke 24:9-12</u>	<u>John 20:10; 18</u>
“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	Ran to tell the disciples Jesus met them, “Greetings”	Woman listed (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and 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 3rd 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 then met Jesus
- K. All except Mark agree that Mary goes off to tell the male disciples

IV. Textual Differences in the Empty Tomb Story⁴⁰

- 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 mention the guards

Key Insight

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

V. Uniqueness of the Empty Tomb Story

A. Women play a prominent role

⁴⁰ 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.

1. Impossible to imagine women were artificially inserted in the stories. Adds credibility to the story.
2. Women were not accepted as legal witnesses

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.

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 tomb⁴¹

E. Empty tomb plus Jesus' appearances substantially advances resurrection belief.

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).

VI. Main Arguments Favoring the Empty Tomb⁴²

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

⁴¹ John 20:8.

⁴² Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, (Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2024), 597-624.

1. Strongest argument favoring the empty tomb⁴³
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 story⁴⁴
4. Ehrman argues woman may have fabricated reports about the empty tomb.⁴⁵ If Ehrman is correct, how would anyone (including the disciples) believe the women since they were not known to be credible witnesses?

B. 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.⁴⁶
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.^{47 48}
3. If *any* corpse had been discovered in Jesus' tomb, the empty tomb claim of Jesus would have been falsified.⁴⁹

C. The empty tomb accounts are multiply attested

1. Affirmed up to four times in the independent Gospel sources (Mark, M, John, and L).⁵⁰

⁴³ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 607.

⁴⁴ Carolyn Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb: What Are They Doing There?" *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* [Online], Vol 53, No 1/2 (13 December 1997, 103-118.

⁴⁵ Ehrman, Bart D., *How Jesus Became God : The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*. (United Kingdom: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014), 166-168.

⁴⁶ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 610.

⁴⁷ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 610.

⁴⁸ Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 127-128.

⁴⁹ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 612.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 614.

2. Two or more sources in agreement during ancient times render a fact indisputable.⁵¹

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.⁵²
2. Verbs occur in context of “standing up, rising” (*anastasis* in Greek) suggesting bodily events which would result in an empty tomb.^{53 54}
3. Resurrection language that Paul uses (Romans 6:3-4; 8:11) assumed an empty tomb.^{55 56}

E. Peter and Paul’s early sermons (Acts 2:29-32 and Acts 13:28-37) mentions 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.^{57 58}
2. Mark 16:1-8 appears to derive from this early narrative

⁵¹ Paul L. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1991), 197, as quoted in Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 614.

⁵²Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 616.

⁵³Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God : The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, 186.

⁵⁴Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 83-84.

⁵⁵ John Granger Cook, *Empty Tomb, Resurrection, Apotheosis*, (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 1-53.

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

⁵⁷Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 620.

⁵⁸ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus, A New Historiographical Approach*, (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 215-216.

G. Jewish 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.⁵⁹
2. When Paul speaks of resurrection he referred to a body being raised leaving an empty tomb behind.⁶⁰

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.
2. Many scholars reject the story of the guards at the tomb.⁶¹
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 B)

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.

⁵⁹ Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus, A New Historiographical Approach*, 621.

⁶⁰ Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 31, 82-83, 273.

⁶¹ Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 623.

- 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?
- 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?

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Appendix A

Burial Practices in First Century Palestine

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

Descriptions of death and burial practices in the New Testament are corroborated by archaeological evidence.

The traditional Palestinian preference for prompt burial continued throughout the first century. In Mark 5:38, funeral preparations for Jairus's daughter begin right away, and in John 11 Lazarus is buried on his day of death. According to *Mishnah Sanhedrin 6.6*, a corpse should be kept unburied overnight only on rare occasions.

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* I.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).

Jewish funeral processions made their way from the family *home* to the family *tomb*. Members of the immediate family placed the body in the tomb while friends and relatives waited outside. Personal effects of the deceased might be placed in the tomb alongside the body: archaeologists have found an inkwell, jewelry, combs, and sandals.

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

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. Rituals of death continued for several days thereafter. Literary sources, including John 11, agree that for the first seven days, the immediate family remained at home in mourning. If mourners left the house during this time, it was presumed that they would go to the tomb. In John 11, Mary leaves the family home, and neighbors and friends assume “she was going to the tomb to weep there” (John 11:31).

After seven days, most aspects of ordinary life resumed. The death of a parent was an exception: children mourned their parents for a full year, until the time of secondary burial. At that time, in a private ceremony, family members returned to the tomb, took the bones of the deceased from their resting place on a shelf or a niche, and placed them in a niche, pit, or ossuary. The ossuary, which might be marked with the name of the deceased, was then placed either on the shelf, on the floor, or in a niche. When a loculus niche became filled with ossuaries—and some loculi have been found to contain as many as five or six—it could be sealed with a stone slab.

Archaeological evidence has been decisive in the interpretation of some New Testament texts about tombs, graves, death, and burial. In particular, the saying of Jesus in Matt 8:21-22 presupposes secondary burial: “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead” (a parallel passage occurs at Luke 9:59-60). Luke 11:47-48’s “tombs of the prophets” most likely refers to the monumental Hellenistic tombs in the Kidron Valley. And the Lazarus narrative in John 11 accurately represents typical customs of mourning, tomb construction, and grave wrappings.



Appendix B

Additional Arguments for the Empty Tomb⁶²

1. The presence of obscure eyewitnesses (Salome,⁶³ Joanna,⁶⁴ Cleopas⁶⁵) 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, there 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.

⁶² Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, 625-630.

⁶³ Mark 16:1.

⁶⁴ Luke 24:10.

⁶⁵ Luke 24:13-32.

10. No ancient writings are present to suggest Jesus' body was placed in a common grave or pit.

Session 3

After the Resurrection

I. The Importance of the Apostles After the Resurrection

A. What is an Apostle?

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 Jesus⁶⁶
3. Differences between Apostles and Disciples

B. Who were the Apostles?⁶⁷

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* (betrayers)
13. Matthias (replaced Judas)
14. James (brother of Jesus)
15. Paul

⁶⁶ Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 6:1.

⁶⁷ Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:14, Acts 26:14-18.

Who is James?

<u>James</u>	<u>James</u>	<u>James</u>	<u>James</u>
Son of Zebedee (Bro. of John) “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	Son of Alphaeas 10 references in NT “The lesser” (maybe shorter or younger?) Little known	Bro. of Jesus Did not believe during Jesus’ earthly ministry “The Just” (Extreme strictness to the law) Writer of the book of James Became one of leaders of the church in Jerusalem	Father of Jude the Apostle

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 is only one piece of a larger resurrection argument.

II. The Fate of the Apostles After the Resurrection^{68 69}

A. Martyrdom and the Apostles

1. Definition of a Martyr⁷⁰
 - 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	Others (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
 1. Don't miss the obvious: The apostles knew the danger when they proclaimed Jesus
 2. Evidence of the Apostles' resurrection faith
 - a. Paul (1 Corinthians 15:3)

⁶⁸ John Foxe, *Foxes's Book of Martyrs, Updated Through the 21st Century*, Harold J Chadwick (ed), Newberry, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2001, 1-8.

⁶⁹ Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.

⁷⁰ Everett Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, Second Edition, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2013, 81-84.

- b. Peter (Acts 2:22-24, 37-38)
- 3. There was a consistent resurrection message
 - a. Earliest creed
 - b. New Testament writings
 - c. Apostolic preaching

B. Highest Possible (Probability of Martyrdom⁷¹)

- 1. Peter⁷²
 - a. Strong evidence Peter went to Rome
 - b. High probability that Peter was crucified in Rome during the reign of Nero.⁷³
 - 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. Paul⁷⁴
 - 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)⁷⁵
 - 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)⁷⁶

⁷¹ Levels of “Probability of Martyrdom” as differentiated in Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.

⁷² McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 55-92.

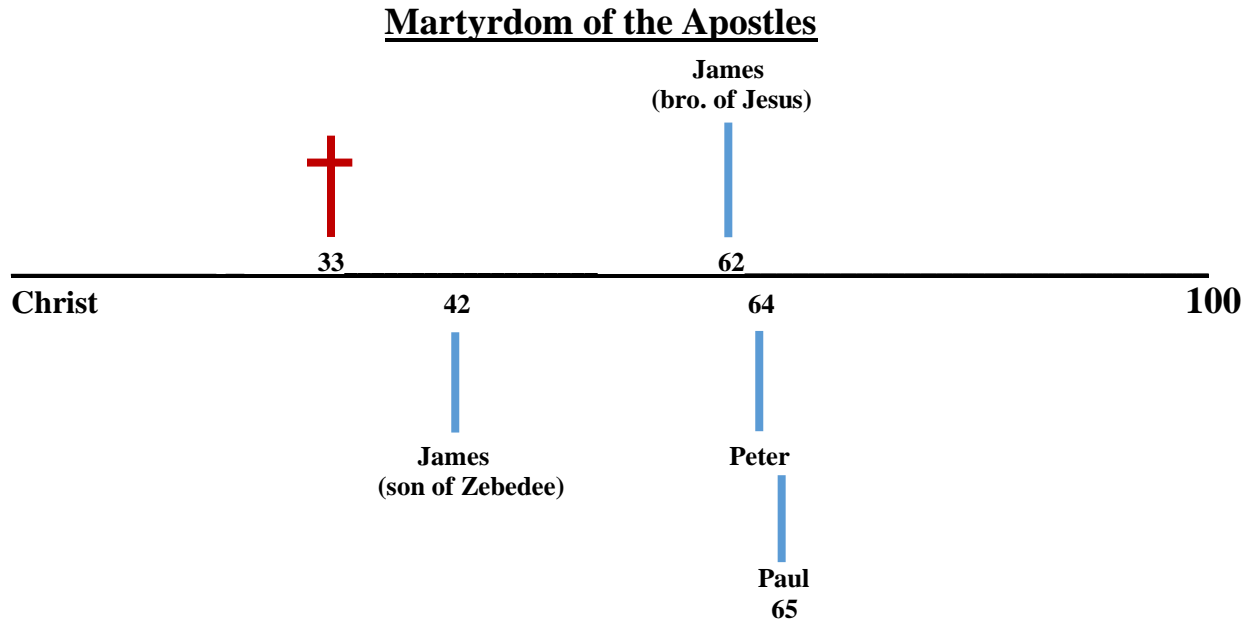
⁷³ Foxe, *Foxes’s Book of Martyrs*, 4-5.

⁷⁴ McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 93-114.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 187-192.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 115-134.

- a. Josephus source (Antiquities 93/94)
- b. Martyred by stoning



D. *More Probable than Not* (Probability of Martyrdom)

- 1. Thomas⁷⁷

E. *More Plausible than Not* (Probability of Martyrdom)

- 1. Andrew⁷⁸

F. *As Plausible as Not* (Probability of Martyrdom)⁷⁹

- 1. Philip
- 2. Bartholomew
- 3. Matthew
- 4. James, son of Alphaeus
- 5. Thaddeus

⁷⁷ McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 157-173.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 175-185.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 193-257.

6. Simon the Zealot
7. Matthias

G. *Improbable* (Probability of Martyrdom)

1. John⁸⁰

III. Life and Martyrdom of the Apostolic Fathers

A. Characteristics of the Apostolic Fathers⁸¹

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

B. Clement of Rome

1. Disciple of Peter and Paul
2. Letter to the Corinthians (1 Clement)⁸²
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 martyrdom.⁸³
4. Examples of Ignatius' writing.

"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

⁸⁰ Ibid., 135-156.

⁸¹Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, 49-57.

⁸² Hubertus R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2007, 47-49.

⁸³ Ibid., 51.

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.”⁸⁴ (Ignatius of Antioch, AD 117)

“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.”⁸⁵ (Ignatius of Antioch, AD 117)

D. Polycarp of Smyrna

1. Disciple of John
2. Leading second century Christian
3. Martyred when burned at the stake and stabbed.⁸⁶

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?”^{87 88 89}*

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.”⁹⁰*

⁸⁴Ignatius 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, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0107.htm>.

⁸⁵ Ignatius of Antioch, “I Desire to Die,” Chapter V, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*, Accessed on 7/14/24, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0107.htm>.

⁸⁶ Martyrdom of Polycarp, 9.3. Accessed on 7/14/24, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0102.htm>.

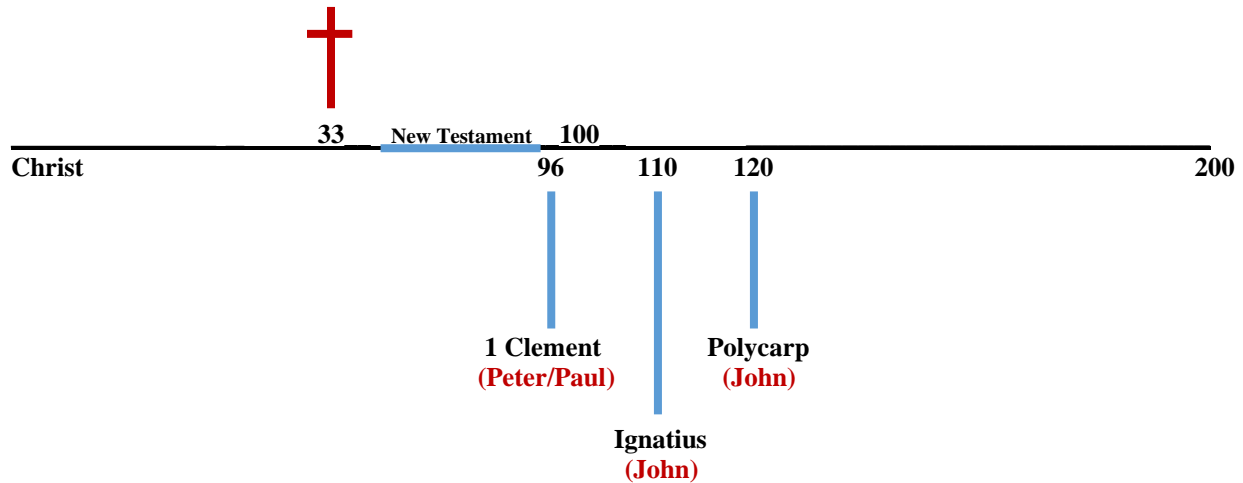
⁸⁷Foxe, *Foxes’s Book of Martyrs*, 13-14.

⁸⁸ Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church*, 53.

⁸⁹ Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, 79.

⁹⁰ Martyrdom of Polycarp, 11, Accessed on 7/14/24, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0102.htm>.

Apostolic Fathers



“The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church”^{91 92}
(Tertullian)

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 not early evidence *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.

⁹¹ Tertulian, *Apology*, 50. Accessed on 7/10/24, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0301.htm>.

⁹² 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 probable was James (bro 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.

VI. Study Questions

1. Describe the actions and behaviors of the Apostles following the resurrection of Jesus. Why is this important to resurrection belief?
2. Which apostles were martyred? Explain. How does the martyrdom of the apostles affect your resurrection belief today?
3. Explain the role of the apostolic fathers in our understanding and belief of the resurrection.

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Session 4

Minimal Facts Approach

I. Minimal Facts Approach in Defense of the Resurrection^{93 94}

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 A)

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 = degree, peer reviewed publications; specialize 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.

⁹³ Gary Habermas, www.GaryHabermas.com.

⁹⁴ 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.

- c. Numbers of minimal facts may vary among scholars due to these prerequisites.

II. Habermas' Six Minimal Facts

A. Jesus Died by Roman Crucifixion

1. Unanimous scholarly agreement.
2. Recorded by all four Gospels and Josephus.⁹⁵

B. Jesus' Followers had Real Experiences that they thought were Actual Appearances of the Risen Jesus

1. Unanimous scholar agreement

Key Insight

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.

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.

⁹⁵ Flavius Josephus, *Josephus, The Complete Works*, William Whiston (transl), Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988, 978.

- 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**

II. Habermas' Additional Six Facts⁹⁶

- A. The empty tomb⁹⁷**
- 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.**
- 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.**

⁹⁶ 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/>.

⁹⁷ Many scholars place the empty tomb in the top five minimal facts supported by the many reasons discussed in Session #2.

III. Michael Licona's *Historical Bedrock*⁹⁸

A. Historical Bedrock

1. Jesus died by crucifixion
2. The disciples' experiences that 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 tomb⁹⁹ (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.

IV. NT Wright's Minimal Facts¹⁰⁰

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

B. The empty tomb

C. The appearances to the disciples and Paul.

⁹⁸Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*, Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010.

⁹⁹Ibid., 462.

¹⁰⁰ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 685-696.

V. Other Facts used to Defend the Resurrection

- A. As Gospel writing timeline advances, stories remain stable. They don't grow in legend. 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 church¹⁰¹**
- E. The Apostles were willing to identify Jesus as deity equal to YHWY 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.^{102 103} (See Session Four, Appendix A)**

III. 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**

¹⁰¹ Some scholars suggest this reason should be in the top 5 minimal facts.

¹⁰² Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans: 2008, p.

¹⁰³ Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord; How On Earth Did Jesus Become God?* London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark: 2015, p.

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.

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, Appendix B)

IV. 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?

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Appendix A

Resurrection Evidence: The Greatest Risk for the Apostles

Objection to the resurrection and worship of Jesus as the risen Lord

1. 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.
2. 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).
3. 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.
4. 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.

Response: The Apostles' Risk of Apostasy and Eternal Judgement

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 than 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).

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).¹⁰⁴
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.^{105 106}
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: 2:29-36.¹⁰⁷
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."¹⁰⁸

Why does this matter?

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 outlined in the Objection above 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."¹⁰⁹
2. "The earliest Christology was already the highest Christology"¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Larry, W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord; How On Earth Did Jesus Become God?* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark: 2015), 105.

¹⁰⁵ 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.

¹⁰⁶ Hurtado, *One God, One Lord; How On Earth Did Jesus Become God?* 97-130.

¹⁰⁷ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*, 182-232.

¹⁰⁸ Hurtado, 105-130.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹¹⁰ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 19, 184, 235.

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.”¹¹¹

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 as stated in the

Objection

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

Response: The Apostles’ Risk of Apostasy and Eternal Judgement

Why would the Apostles, who were steeped in Jewish monotheism proclaim 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 than 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)
4. Why would the Apostles claim 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?
5. 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

¹¹¹ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 19.

both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:29-36 NASB, see esp. vv. 35-36).¹¹²

5. To be identified as “Lord” meant that the Apostles included Jesus in the identity of God (Yahweh), not as an addition to God (a clear violation of monotheism).

Jesus is included in worship and in titles as equal to God.^{113 114}

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: 2:29-36.¹¹⁵

6. 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.”¹¹⁶

Why does this matter?

“The earliest Christology was already the highest Christology”¹¹⁷

The highest Christological expression is that Jesus is Lord (Hebrew “Yaweh,” Greek “*Kurios*”), is exalted to the right hand of the Father, and has been given the name that is above every name - the divine name.

“Certainly the old view [stated in the Objection above] that the transition coincided with the movement of Christianity from a Jewish to a pagan Hellenistic environment is mistaken.”

Objection: The view that Jewish Christians were devoted to Jewish monotheism and could never have developed a high Christology within

¹¹² Larry, W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord; How On Earth Did Jesus Become God?* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark: 2015), 105.

¹¹³ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*.

¹¹⁴ Hurtado, *One God, One Lord; How On Earth Did Jesus Become God?*

¹¹⁵ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 182-232.

¹¹⁶ Hurtado, *One God, One Lord; How On Earth Did Jesus Become God?* p.105-130.

¹¹⁷ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 19, 184, 235.

Appendix B

Common Objections to the Resurrection -Explanation and Rebuttal^{118 119 120}

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 (Matt 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. 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.*"¹²¹

¹¹⁸Clay Jones, *Prepared Defense Software*, www.clayjones.net.

¹¹⁹ Robert Cupp, "Theories of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," in *We Believe: A Survey of Theology*, Fellowship Bible Church, NWA, 174, 176, 178.

¹²⁰ 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/>.

¹²¹ David Strauss, *A New Life of Jesus, Vol 1* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1865), 418.

3. Gerd Ludemann in 20th century, described sightings as “*shared hallucinatory fantasy*”¹²²
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)

III. 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
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

¹²² 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.

7. If the guards were asleep how would they know what happened?
8. Matthew 28:11-15

IV. 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.¹²³ 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.

V. Others have been Resurrected

A. Explanation

1. Jesus’ resurrection is not that special because other divinities have been resurrected¹²⁴

B. Rebuttal

¹²³ Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1907), 250–253.

¹²⁴ John Granger Cook, *Empty Tomb, Resurrection, Apotheosis*, (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 56-62.

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

VI. 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

VII. 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

VIII. 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 myth¹²⁵
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.¹²⁶
4. There is strong external testimony that it is not a myth

IX. 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

X. 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

¹²⁵Cook, *Empty Tomb, Resurrection, Apotheosis*, 62-63.

¹²⁶W. 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.

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

XI. 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)

Course Supplement

General Principles when Responding to Objections

- A. With truth and love as Christ demonstrates (John 6-7).¹²⁷
- B. Listening with the intent to understand (not just reply).^{128 129}
- C. “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Colossians 4:6: NIV)
- D. “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; NIV)
- E. “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Proverbs 15:1)

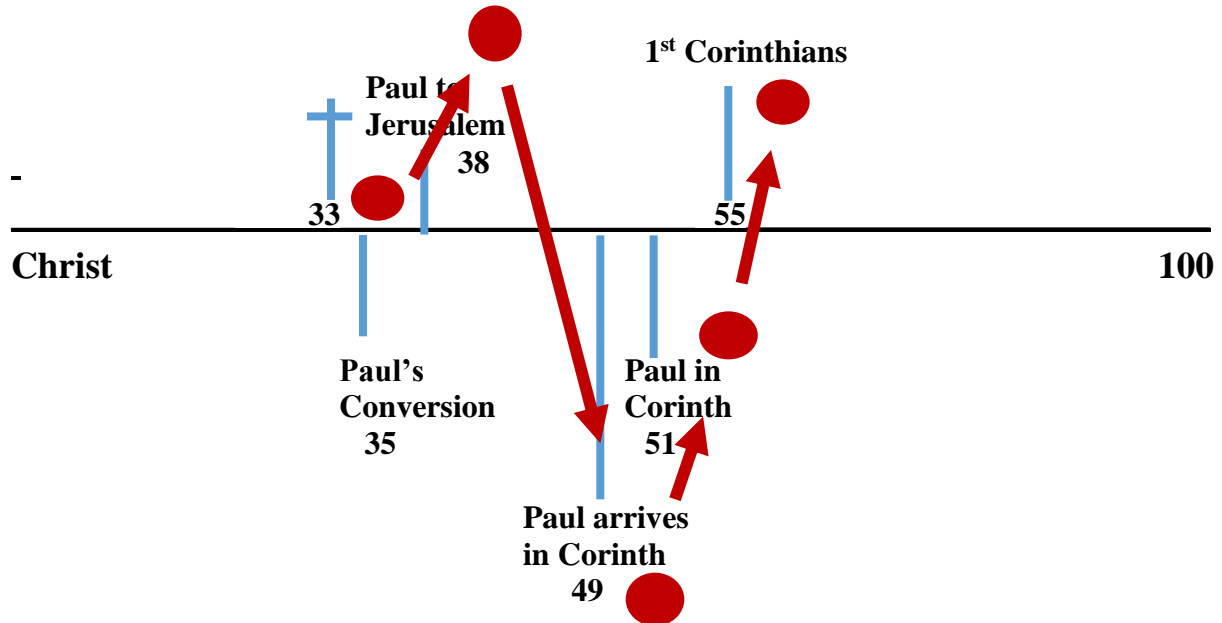
¹²⁷ David Keehn, “Responding to Objections with Truth and Love,” *The Good Book Blog*, August 31, 2015, accessed on 6/16/2024, <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2015/responding-to-objections-with-truth-and-love>.

¹²⁸ 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, <https://humanitas.org/?p=3229>.

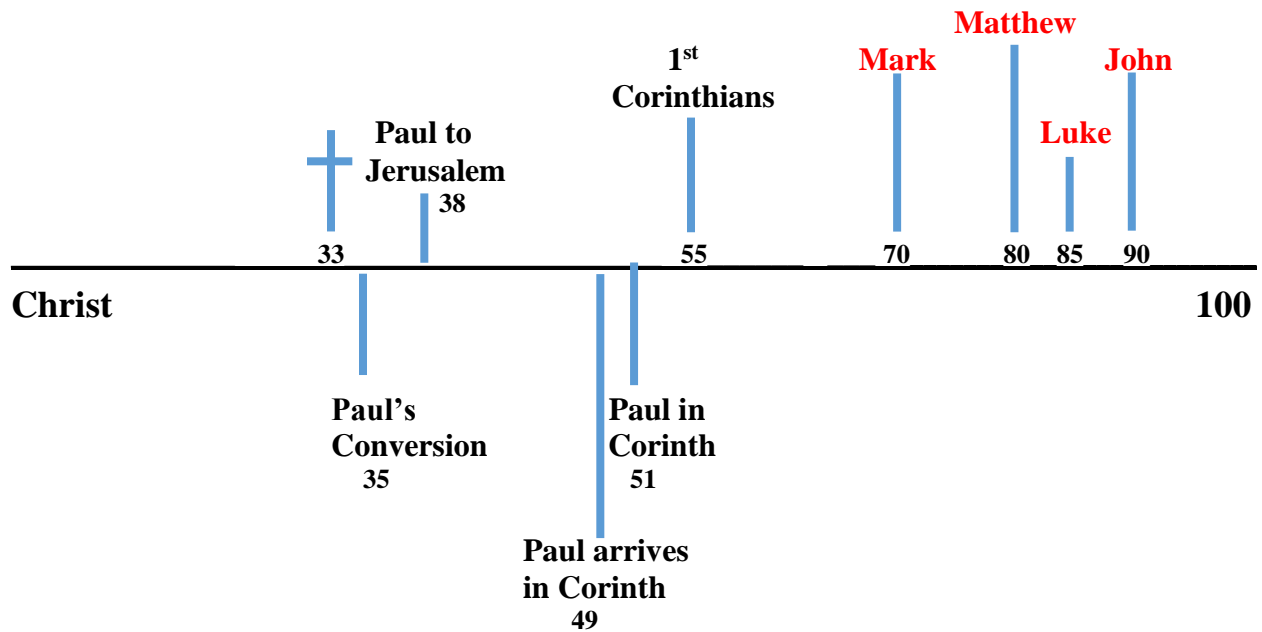
¹²⁹ Francis Schaeffer’s response is a good model, as quoted from The Humanitas Forum on Christianity and Culture, *The Virtue of Listening – because there are no little people*. Feb. 3, 2015, accessed on 6/16/24, <https://humanitas.org/?p=3229>. “If I have only an hour with someone, I will spend the 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.”

Timeline Review

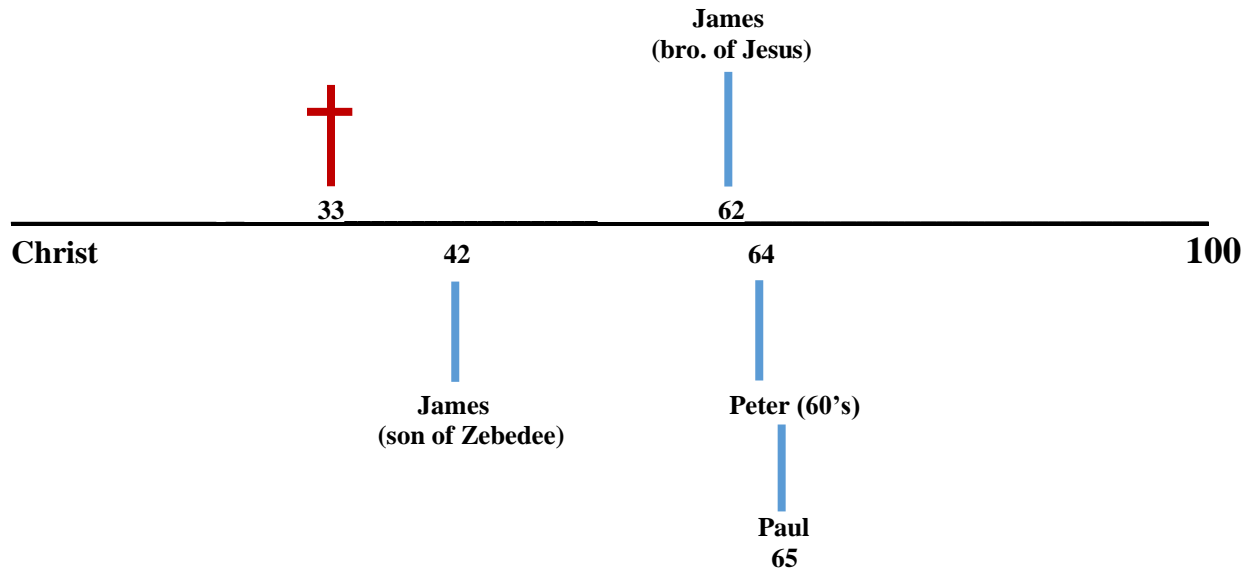
Session #1: The “Received” text recorded in 1st Corinthians



Session #2: Written Gospel Dates in Relationship to the Resurrection



Session #3: Martyrdom of the Apostles



Session #3 Summary of Time-Line Events for the Resurrection

