

Essential Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus

Here's an approach to discussing the resurrection using essential evidence that even most skeptical historians agree is true. Use this chart to present the case for the resurrection of Christ to anyone willing to engage with facts.*

For more resources for defending Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, visit www.summit.org/explore/resurrection

*This approach was developed by Gary Habermas of Liberty University, and is often called the **Minimal Facts Approach**. While some skeptics may argue against these points, serious New Testament scholars will not.



CRUCIFIXION

Jesus died by Roman crucifixion.

Crucifixion was a common form of execution used by the Romans at this time. All four gospel accounts claim Jesus died by crucifixion. Paul and the rest of the New Testament writers affirm it. Non-Christian sources include Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, Mara Bar-Serapion, and the Talmud. Examinations of the medical evidence described in the accounts of Jesus' death have led experts to conclude that surviving the crucifixion would not have been possible. Even the highly critical scholar, John Dominic Crossan, writes, "That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be."



APPEARANCES

After his death, his disciples had experiences that they believed were appearances of the risen Jesus.

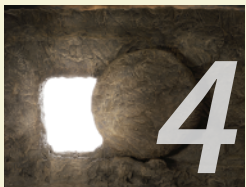
Paul, the oral tradition of the early church, and the written works of early church leaders all attest that the disciples believed that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to them. In I Cor. 15:3-5, Paul quotes what scholars consider a creed from less than 5 years after Jesus' death, which claims that Jesus appeared to the disciples. This was also asserted unanimously in the gospels, written within 20-50 years after the crucifixion, and by extra-biblical sources Josephus, Tacitus, Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr.



TRANSFORMATION

The disciples were transformed from fearful panic to boldly preaching his resurrection, and were willing to die for their beliefs.

The entire New Testament and earliest chapters of church history testify to the transformation of the apostles from a group of cowards who scattered, hid, and denied Christ to bold proclaimers of his resurrection. Clement, Tacitus, Josephus, Mara Bar-Serapion, Pliny, Hegesippus, and Eusebius attest to the martyrdom of the disciples and that they did not recant their faith. While men will die for things they believe to be true that are actually false, they will not die for something they know is a lie.



EARLY PROCLAMATION

The proclamation of his resurrection was a central message of the Church, starting in Jerusalem very early, not decades later.

Contrary to popular theories claiming Christians invented Jesus' deity and resurrection as legends hundreds of years later, evidence shows that the disciples proclaimed his resurrection immediately, in Jerusalem where he was killed (and where claims could be easily disputed). While many facts from antiquity rest on just one ancient source, and 2 or 3 sources generally render the fact unimpeachable, the early proclamation of Jesus' resurrection appears in over 10 independent sources, dating within 5 to 50 years after Jesus' death.



JAMES' CONVERSION

Jesus' unbelieving brother, James, was converted by what he believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus.

Multiple sources report that James was cynical regarding Jesus' public ministry, even seeking to remove him from the public eye—believing him insane. They also record that a few years after Jesus' death, James had become the leader of the early church at Jerusalem. The I Cor. 15 creed reported that prior to this transformation, the risen Jesus appeared to James, a claim he was willing to die for. His martyrdom is attested by Hegesippus, Josephus, Eusebius, and Clement.



PAUL'S CONVERSION

Paul, former persecutor of Christians, was converted by what he believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus.

In his letters to the churches in Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi (all accepted by critical scholars), Paul writes of his conversion from persecutor of Christians to proclaimer of Jesus' resurrection, willing to suffer continuously for the gospel, to the point of death. These facts were also documented by Luke, Clement, Polycarp, Tertullian, Dionysius, and Origen.

REQUIREMENTS for MINIMAL FACTS

- 1) Each fact must be confirmed by multiple independent sources.
- 2) There must be consensus among even critical scholars accepting the historical evidence.

The Importance of I Corinthians 15:3-8

Scholars see this creed, received by Paul 5 years after Jesus' death, as an important early source attesting to facts about Jesus' resurrection.

The Empty Tomb

The fact that the private tomb where Jesus had been buried was found empty after his resurrection is backed by significant historical evidence.

It is not usually included in the Minimal Facts argument because it not as universally accepted by skeptics (about 75% support it).

Even so, it remains an important part of any defense of Jesus' resurrection.

When even skeptical experts accept these essential historical facts, they are compelled to address the evidence. Popular theories like the Swoon Theory, the Stolen Body Theory, the Hallucination Theory, and Legend Theory, etc., all fall short of these requirements. The resurrection is the most reasonable explanation. And if Jesus *was* raised from the dead — there are significant implications for our lives!

For more resources for defending the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, visit Summit.org/explore/resurrection

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