



## **DON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT! - One Way**

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Mount Paran North

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

John 14:6 NLT

There will come a time in your life when your faith is put to the test.

- God doesn't answer your prayer the way you wanted
- God isn't speaking loudly and clearly to you
- You face a professor or teacher who claim that your beliefs are inferior to their facts of science
- Your friend or family member wants to challenge your faith

As followers of Jesus, we turn to Scripture as the answer, because we believe that God's Word contains the truth, we need to face every circumstance.

Why would we consider the Resurrection of Jesus?

Because if the Resurrection isn't true, then everything else is useless.

But if the Resurrection is true, then everything changes!

- Sin is defeated
- Satan is defeated
- Hell is defeated
- Death is defeated
- Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords

What does the Bible say about the Resurrection?

<sup>1</sup> But very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup> They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. <sup>3</sup> So they went in, but they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes. <sup>5</sup> The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. Then the men asked, "Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? <sup>6</sup> He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day."

Luke 24:1-7 NLT

For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 NLT

What do you do when your faith is put to the test, and you need to reach outside of Scripture to strengthen your faith?

### **MINIMAL FACTS APPROACH**

This approach was established by Dr. Gary Habernas and Dr. Michael Licona.

Under this approach, we only consider facts that meet two criteria.

- There must be very strong historical evidence supporting them.
- The evidence must be so strong that the vast majority of today's scholars on the subject – including skeptical ones – accept these as historical facts."

## **Five Facts About the Resurrection**

### **Fact #1 - Jesus was killed by execution.**

According to Licona:

- “Even an extreme liberal like [John Dominic] Crossan says: ‘That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical ever can be.’
- Skeptic James Tabor says, ‘I think we need have no doubt that given Jesus’ execution by Roman crucifixion he was truly dead.’
- Both Gerd Lüdemann, who’s an atheistic New Testament critic, and Bart Ehrman, who’s an agnostic, call the crucifixion an indisputable fact.

### **Conspiracy Theories**

- Stolen Body
- Swoon Theory

### **Proof that Jesus Died**

- All 4 Gospels testify that Jesus rose from the dead
- Sources Outside of the Bible
  - Roman historian, Tacitus records that Jesus ‘suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius.’
  - Jewish historian, Josephus, records about Jesus that ‘Pilate condemned him to death.’
  - Lucian, a Greek satirist, mentions the crucifixion.
  - Mara Bar-Serapion, who was a pagan, confirms Jesus was executed.
  - Jewish Talmud records that Jesus was killed.

### **Fact #2 - The conversion of Paul, the church persecutor.**

- We have six ancient sources in addition to Paul – such as Luke, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Tertullian, Dionysius of Corinth, and Origen – reporting that Paul was willing to suffer continuously and even die for his beliefs.
- Liars make poor martyrs.
- So, we can be confident that Paul not only claimed the risen Jesus appeared to him, but that he really believed it.

**Fact #3** – The conversion of James, the skeptic and half-brother of Jesus.

- We have good evidence that James was not a follower of Jesus during Jesus' lifetime. Mark and John both report that none of Jesus' brothers believed in him.
- As a result of his encounter with the risen Jesus, James didn't just become a Christian, but he later became leader of the Jerusalem church.
- James was so thoroughly convinced of Jesus' messiahship because of the resurrection that he died as a martyr, as both Christian and non-Christian sources attest.
- So here we have another example of a skeptic who was converted because of a personal encounter with the resurrected Lord and was willing to die for his convictions.

**Fact #4 – Jesus' tomb was empty.**

### **Jerusalem Factor**

- Jesus was publicly executed and buried in Jerusalem and then his resurrection was proclaimed in the very same city.
- In fact, several weeks after the crucifixion, Peter declared to a crowd in Jerusalem: 'God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.'
- It would have been impossible for Christianity to get off the ground in Jerusalem if Jesus' body were still in the tomb.
- The Roman or Jewish authorities could have simply gone over to his tomb, viewed his corpse, and the misunderstanding would have been over.

### **Enemy Confirmation**

- What we do hear is enemy confirmation to the empty tomb.
- In other words, what were the skeptics saying? That the disciples stole the body.
- This is reported not only by Matthew, but also by Justin Martyr and Tertullian.
- Here's the thing: Why would you say someone stole the body if it were still in the tomb? This is an implicit admission that the tomb was empty.

## **Testimony of Women**

- In both first-century Jewish and Roman cultures, women were lowly esteemed, and their testimony was considered very questionable.
- If you were going to concoct a story in an effort to fool others, you would never in that day have hurt your own credibility by saying that women discovered the empty tomb.
- It would be extremely unlikely that the Gospel writers would invent testimony like this because they wouldn't get any mileage out of it.
- In fact, it could hurt them.
- If they had felt the freedom simply to make things up, surely, they'd claim that men – maybe Peter or John – were the first to find the tomb empty.
- The best theory for why the Gospel writers would include such an embarrassing detail is because that's what actually happened and they were committed to recording it accurately, regardless of the credibility problem it created.

## **Fact #5 - Jesus disciples believed that He rose from the dead and appeared to them.**

- **Paul's testimony about the disciples' belief**
  - Paul knew the disciples and wrote of personal interactions with James, John, and Paul.
  - Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:11, "whether it was I or they, this is what we preach," referring to the Resurrection.
  - Paul knew the apostles and reports that they claimed—just as he did – that Jesus had returned from the dead.

- **Oral traditions that passed down thru the early church**

Then we have oral tradition. Obviously, people in those days didn't have tape recorders and few people could read, so they relied on verbal transmission for passing along what happened until it was later written down.

- Oral traditions are found in Creeds, Hymns, and Sermons in the New Testament
- These had to be before the NT was written to in order to be included.
- One of the earliest Creeds was recorded by Paul to the Corinthian Church, *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 Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers 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...*
- Most scholars believe Paul received this Creed from Peter and James 3 years after his conversion, which would be within 5 years of the Resurrection.
- Not only was this very early, but it was also given by eyewitnesses to the death and Resurrection of Jesus.
- Early Sermons
- Paul preaches in Acts 13 something very similar to what Peter said in Acts 2, *'For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.'*
- That's a bold statement. David died and his body decayed. Jesus died but his body did not see decay because of the Resurrection.

- **Written works of the early church**

- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the Gospel testimony accounts of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection.
- Almost universally accepted that they were written in the First Century—at the very latest 70 years afterwards.
- 2 Best Sources for Alexander the Great were written over 400 years after he lived and died, and we accept those as accurate because of how closely they were written to the event.
- The early church fathers, Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, Tertullian, and Origen, all testify that Jesus had risen from the dead.
- The Apostles, who wrote the Scriptures, were willing to die for their faith. That in and of itself is not convincing, but it is not the same as a modern-day terrorist who dies for their beliefs.
- They may believe something to be true, but they cannot know for sure.
- The Apostles knew for sure whether Jesus has Risen from the Dead, and they still gave their lives for Him.

**If the Resurrection is true, then it's worth giving our lives for.**

**If the Resurrection is true, nothing is beyond the power of Jesus**

- My sickness is not beyond God's power, because Jesus is alive.
- My sorrow is not beyond God's power, because Jesus is alive.
- My suffering is not beyond God's power, because Jesus is alive.
- My hope is not in vain, because Jesus is alive.
- My joy is sustained even in difficult times, because Jesus is alive.