

The Historical Case for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

SUMMARY

October 2025

The Challenge We Face

Why is this so critically important?

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:17-20)

When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore **go and make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them** to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Romans 10:14-15

How then will they call on the one **they have not believed** in? And how can they believe in the one they have not heard about? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach if they are not sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who **bring good news!**'

2 Timothy 2:2 (Teaching Others)

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses **entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.**

1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. 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...

The % of Young Adults that identify as Christians that will leave the faith when they go to college (or enter their 20's)....

70%

*Sources in Slide notes - Barna Research & Lifeway Research

Many of them do not have a firm foundation to defend what they believe – At the first challenge to their faith, they are lost

Our Challenge / Opportunity is 2-Fold

- 1) **Arm our Young Adults already in the faith**, with the knowledge they need **to defend their faith and NOT STRAY**
 - 2) Opportunity to **convert the skeptics that need hard “data”**
-

Common Beliefs of Today's Skeptics

- Jesus never existed
- Supernatural claims about Jesus (such as miracles, virgin birth, and resurrection) are false
- The Gospels are unreliable historical sources
- Jesus was not God incarnate
- Christianity is a copy of other older religions

We will NOT bring these people in by exclusively using a Faith or Bible-driven approach

We must arm Young Adults & Skeptics with key data for the *Bodily Resurrection!*

The Approach:

- 1) Use Cold Hard Facts**
- 2) Focus on Data Outside of the Bible where possible**
- 3) Keep It SIMPLE & focused on the Resurrection**
- 4) Point to (virtually) Universally-accepted Facts**

What are the “Minimal Facts” for the resurrection of Jesus?

What is the Minimal Facts approach to the historical resurrection?

- ❖ Developed and written about at length by Dr. Gary Habermas:
 - Leading New Testament scholar (Liberty University) with focus on the resurrection
 - Has been studying this topic for over 60 years
 - His work is a lot of the source material for *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel
- ❖ The “Minimal Facts Approach” considers only data that meet two criteria:
 1. The data are strongly evidenced
 2. The data are granted by virtually all scholars on the subject, even the skeptical ones

APPROACHABLE TO EVERYDAY SKEPTICS

Get their ‘wheels turning’ with facts that are universally agreed upon

What are the 5 Minimal Facts for Jesus's Resurrection?

- 1) **Jesus Existed & Died by Crucifixion**
- 2) **The Empty Tomb**
- 3) **The Disciples**
 - a) Jesus' disciples **CLAIMED** that he rose and appeared to them
 - b) Jesus' disciples **BELIEVED** that he rose and appeared to them, to the point of being willing to suffer and die for that belief
- 4) **Paul** (Saul of Tarsus) was suddenly converted into a believer & martyrdom
- 5) **James** (brother of Jesus) was suddenly converted into a believer & martyrdom

Brief Summary of Each of the Minimal Facts for the Resurrection

Minimal Fact #1: Jesus Existed & Died by Crucifixion

- All 4 Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)
- There are no less than 4 sources non-Christian *outside of the Bible* that attest to Jesus' death by crucifixion:
 - 1) **Josephus** (Jewish Historian; *Antiquities of the Jews* A.D. 95)
 - 2) **Tacitus** (non-Christian Roman Historian; *The Annals of Imperial Rome* A.D. 115)
 - 3) **Lucian of Samosata** (Greek writer; *The Death of Peregrine* A.D. 120-180)
 - 4) **The Jewish Talmud** (Central text in Rabbinic Judaism; *Sanhedrin* A.D. 500)

Minimal Fact #2: The Empty Tomb

Remember the Acronym **J.E.T.**

1) **Jerusalem Factor**

- Jesus was publicly executed in Jerusalem, where Christianity began
- Roman/Jewish authorities did not produce a body (any body would have been powerful in destroying the movement)

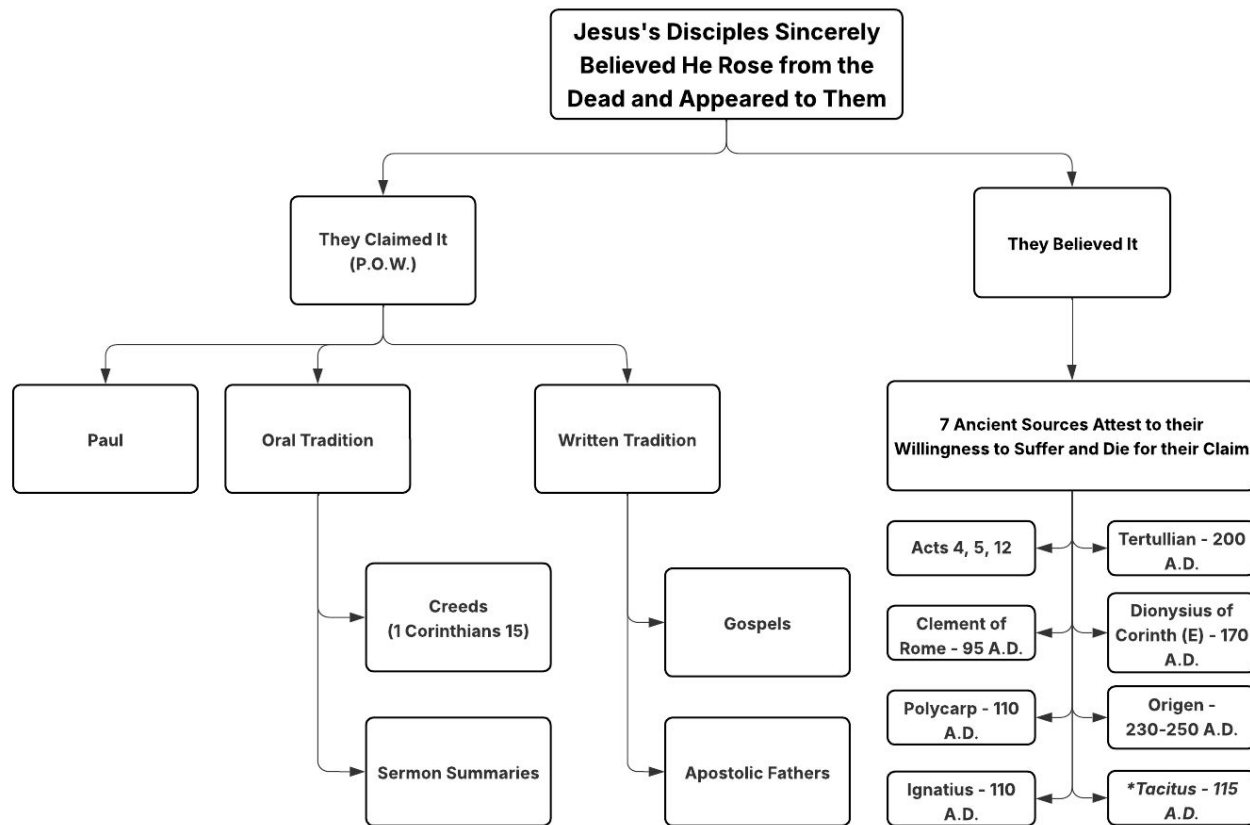
2) **Enemy Attested**

- Early critics accused Jesus' disciples of stealing the body (Justin Martyr, *Trypho* 108, A.D. 155; Tertullian *De Spectaculis* 30, A.D. 200; Matthew 28:12-13)
- Implicitly admits the tomb was empty

3) **Testimony of Women**

- Jewish and Roman cultures of the time, women's testimony was considered questionable or less credible (sources such as Jewish Talmud; Josephus *Antiquities*)
- **Principle of Embarrassment:** The women being the first in the Gospels to witness the Empty Tomb lends more credibility to the story.

Minimal Fact #3: The disciples **CLAIMED** & **BELIEVED** that Jesus rose and appeared to them



Minimal Fact #4: Paul's sudden conversion into a believer & martyrdom (Enemy Attestation)

→ Conversion

- 1) **Paul** (1 Corinthians 15:9-10, Galatians 1:12-16 & 22-23, Philippians 3:6-7)
- 2) **Acts** (Acts 7:58, 8:1-3, 9:1-19, 22:3-16, 26:9-23)
- 3) **Known by Early Christians in Judea** (Galatians 1:22-23)

→ Suffering & Martyrdom

- 1) **Paul** (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)
- 2) **Luke** (Acts 14:19, 16:19-24, 17:5, 18:12-13, 21:27-36, 23:12-35)
- 1) **Clement of Rome** (*1st Letter of Clement to the Corinthians* 5; A.D. 95)
- 2) **Polycarp** (*Letter to the Philippians* 9; A.D. 110)
- 3) **Tertullian** (*Scorpiace* 15; A.D. 200)
- 4) **Dionysus of Corinth (E)** (*Epistle to the Romans*; A.D. 170; quote in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* A.D. 325)
- 5) **Origen (E)** (*Commentary on Genesis* 3; A.D. 230-250; quote in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* A.D. 325))

Minimal Fact #5: James' (brother of Jesus) sudden Conversion into a believer & Martyrdom

→ Conversion

- 1) **[Before Resurrection] Gospels report Jesus' brothers were non-believers** (Mark 3:21, 3:31, 6:3-4 ; John 7:5)
- 2) **Early Creed reports appearance of risen Jesus to James** (1 Corinthians 15 3:7)
- 3) **[After Resurrection] Paul & Acts identify James as a leader in the church** (Acts 15:12-21 ; Galatians 1:19)

→ Martyrdom

- 1) **Josephus** (Jewish Historian; *Antiquities of the Jews* A.D. 95)
- 2) **Hegesippus** (2nd Century Christian writer ; writes around A.D. 170-180; quote in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* A.D. 325)
- 3) **Clement of Alexandria** (2nd Century Christian writer ; writings around A.D. 200; quote in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* A.D. 325)

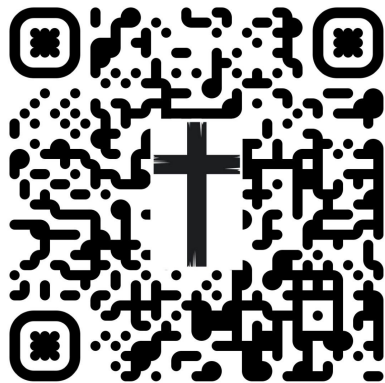
Brief Summary of Common Objections & Refutations

Common Objections & Refutations

Objection	Summary	Refutation
“Disciples Stole the Body” (Fraud Theory)	Attempts to explain the empty tomb by stating Jesus’ disciples likely stole his body.	• Disciples' willingness to suffer and die for a claim they would know to be a lie. • Does not account for the conversions of skeptics of Paul or James. • Go back to the “J.E.T.” acronym.
“Hallucination Theory”	Attempts to explain the resurrection appearances by stating that the witnesses simply hallucinated.	• Fails to account for the empty tomb • Mass group hallucinations have no historical basis – hallucinations are unique to the individual mind. • Does not account for the conversions of skeptics of Paul or James.
“Swoon Theory”	Jesus merely fainted on the cross and did not actually die.	• Both historical & modern takes on Roman crucifixion is that the likelihood of survival is essentially 0. • A gravely wounded Jesus would not have inspired the following movement. • Does not account for the conversions of skeptic Paul.
"Legend Theory" (The Resurrection Story Grew Over Time)	The resurrection accounts were not historical reports, but legends that developed over time, adding supernatural details to the original story.	• Not enough time for “Legend” to develop. Early creed in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, is dated within 5yrs of the resurrection. • The “Jerusalem” factor from “J.E.T.” acronym. • Does not account for the conversions of skeptics of Paul or James.

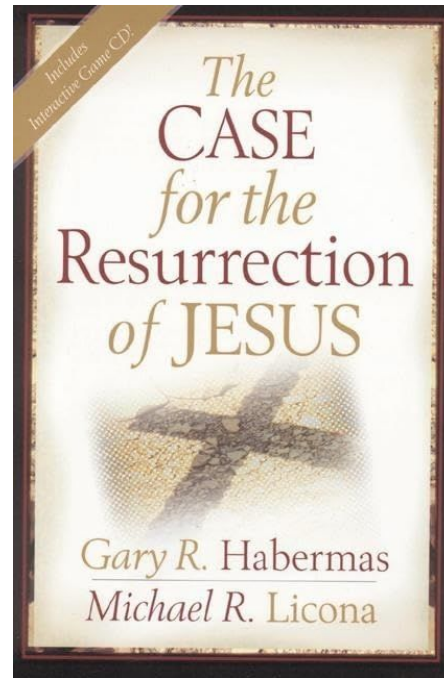
How do I go deeper on
the historical data
behind the Resurrection?

Resources to Go Deeper or Share with the Skeptics



- ResurrectionFacts.com
- Zach Created this Free Site to make the data easy to consume
 - ◆ Brief Podcast-style Summaries
 - ◆ Game-style Overview
 - ◆ Self-Quizzes of the Minimal Facts

ResurrectionFacts.com



- [Purchase on Amazon](#)
- Central Basis for much of this research

He is Risen Indeed!

