



# HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

You can use historical sources to build a case for or against a particular event occurring, but it is impossible to prove an event occurred beyond the shadow of a doubt.



## How can you determine which sources to trust?

*Michael Licona and Gary Habermas give 5 examples of what makes sources reliable<sup>1</sup>:*

- 1 Multiple, independent sources**
- 2 Attestation by an enemy**
- 3 Embarrassing admissions**
- 4 Eyewitness testimony**
- 5 Early testimony**

The more sources we have that are independent of one another yet affirm the same information, the more likely the sources are accurate.

When someone who is an enemy of a group or person affirms the groups claims, this adds credibility to their testimony.

When someone giving testimony includes embarrassing details about themselves, it is unlikely that their testimony is made up.

When eyewitnesses give testimony to events they witnessed, their testimony holds more weight than someone who only has secondhand information.

Sources that are close in time to the events they recorded are considered more credible than those that are many more years after the event.

The sources that historians use to determine whether or not Jesus' bodily resurrection is a true historical event fit within all 5 of the criteria for reliable testimony stated above.



# HISTORIAN AGREEMENT

According to Gary Habermas, at least 12 facts concerning Jesus' death and resurrection are considered "knowable history".<sup>2</sup>

1

Jesus died by crucifixion

2

Jesus was buried

3

Jesus' death caused His disciples to abandon all hope and hide in fear for their lives

4

Jesus' tomb was found empty a few days after His death by crucifixion

5

Jesus' disciples had experiences which they believed were real appearances from the resurrected Jesus

6

Jesus' disciples were changed from skeptics who were afraid to be associated with Jesus, to bold proclaimers of His resurrection

7

Jesus' resurrection was the central teaching of the early Church

8

Jesus' resurrection was especially taught in Jerusalem, the city where Jesus was killed and buried

9

The Church began and grew after Jesus' death

10

The Church's primary day of worship was Sunday

11

James was a skeptic of Jesus but converted to Christianity after he believed he had seen the resurrected Jesus

12

Paul was a skeptic of Jesus but converted to Christianity after he believed he had seen the resurrected Jesus as well

# JESUS DIED



## Evidence That Jesus Died By Crucifixion

### Flogging

Roman floggings were brutal and involved whipping the victim who was tied naked to a post with their arms raised above their head. The whip would be intensified by including pieces of hard objects which would tear into the skin. This made victims incredibly weak and in pain prior to crucifixion... the most painful and effective execution method of its day.

### Brutality of Crucifixion

Victims of crucifixion were tortured in ways that most cannot comprehend. They were nailed to a wood post through their wrists and feet and then forced to hang until they could no longer push themselves up for oxygen. Severe thirst, lack of oxygen, and the scraping of open wounds on the rough wood were but a few of the ways that crucifixion tormented its victims.

### Roman Guards

The Roman guards were trained killers. They were well aware of how to determine whether or not a person was dead or alive. In order to breathe on the cross, the victim must move up and down the cross. The guards would recognize a dead person if they stopped moving.

### The Spear in the Heart

In the case of Jesus, the guards were fairly certain that He was dead because He was no longer moving, however they wanted to verify this. They took a spear, stabbed Him in his side, and pierced His heart. This confirmed that Jesus was in fact dead. After His death He was buried and wrapped in burial clothes.

**Nabeel Qureshi**

“It should come as no surprise that never in recorded history has anyone survived a full Roman crucifixion.”<sup>3</sup>

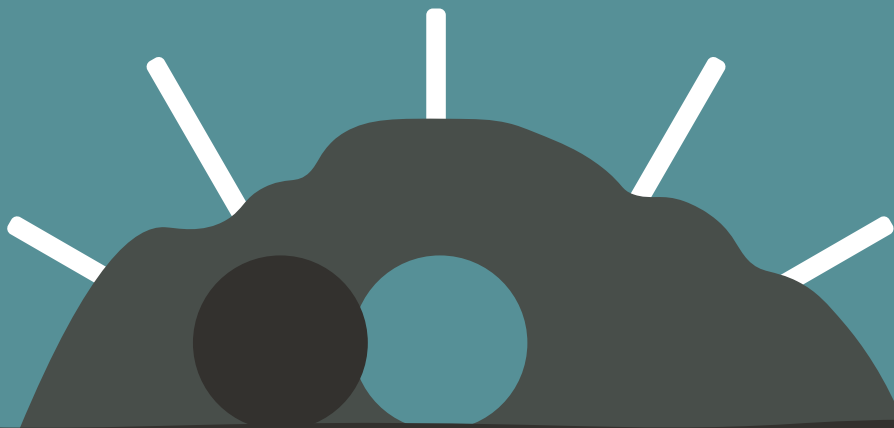
Skeptic Gerd Ludemann wrote a book titled *What Really Happened to Jesus*. In the section on Jesus' death he chose not to waste time and wrote “The fact of the death of Jesus as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable, despite hypotheses of a pseudo-death or a deception which are sometimes put forward. It need not be discussed further here.”<sup>4</sup> Nearly all historians agree that Jesus died on the cross.

# EMPTY TOMB



## Evidence that Jesus' tomb was empty:

- The Romans or Jews would have shown Jesus' body to end the Christian movement if they could. The body was missing and therefore...
- They immediately argued that the disciples stole the body. The fact that they were explaining what happened to Jesus' body verifies that the body was missing from the tomb.



**“He is not here; He has risen, just as He said.”**

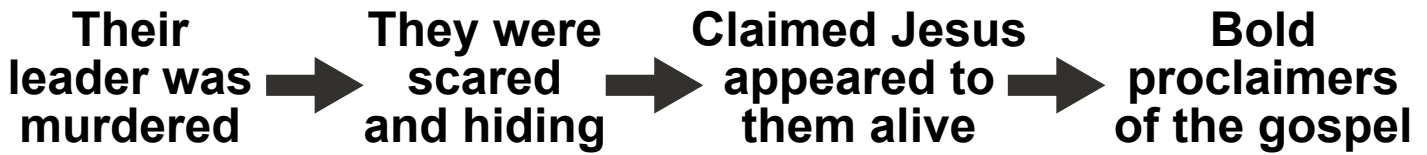
Matthew 28:6

“Paul’s letters show that Christians proclaimed Jesus’s bodily resurrection from the very beginning. That meant the tomb *must* have been empty. No one in Jerusalem would have believed the preaching for a minute if the tomb was not empty. Skeptics could have easily produced Jesus’s rotted corpse.”

*Timothy Keller<sup>5</sup>*



# THE DISCIPLES' BELIEF



Disciple	Cause of Death
<b>Peter</b>	Peter was crucified upside down in Rome. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Andrew</b>	Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross in Edessa. <sup>6</sup>
<b>James</b>	“He [King Herod] had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.” - <i>Acts 12:2</i>
<b>John</b>	John was boiled alive in a vat of oil but survived, he is the only disciple who died of old age. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Philip</b>	Philip was flogged, put in prison, and then crucified. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Bartholomew</b>	Bartholomew was flayed by a whip and then crucified while preaching the gospel in India. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Thomas</b>	Thomas was speared while in India on a missionary journey. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Matthew</b>	Matthew was killed by a sword in Ethiopia. <sup>6</sup>
<b>James</b>	Little is known about James the Lesser, he is believed to have been martyred while preaching the gospel.
<b>Thaddaeus</b>	Thaddaeus was crucified in Edessa. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Simon</b>	Simon preached the gospel in Africa and was crucified in AD 74. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Matthias</b>	Matthias was first stoned and then beheaded. <sup>6</sup>

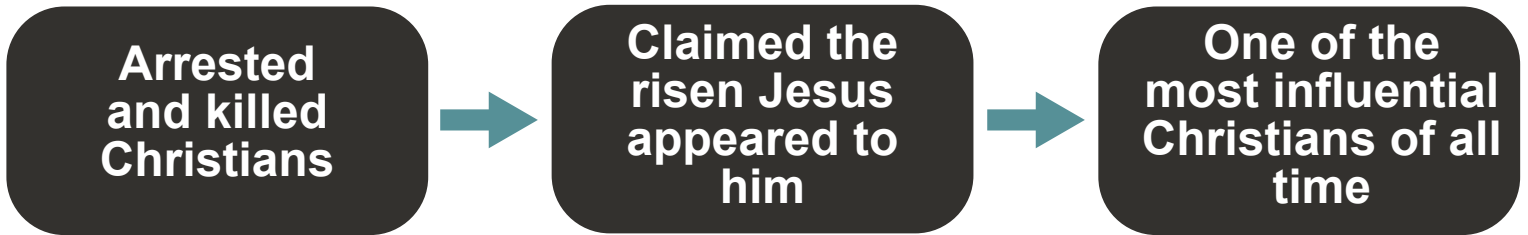
**Many people are willing to die for their religious beliefs... how are the disciples any different from millions of other religious individuals who have died for their faith?**

The disciples were eyewitnesses to the events they were proclaiming. Many people might be willing to die for a false religion that they believe is true, but nobody is willing to die for a false religion that they know is false.



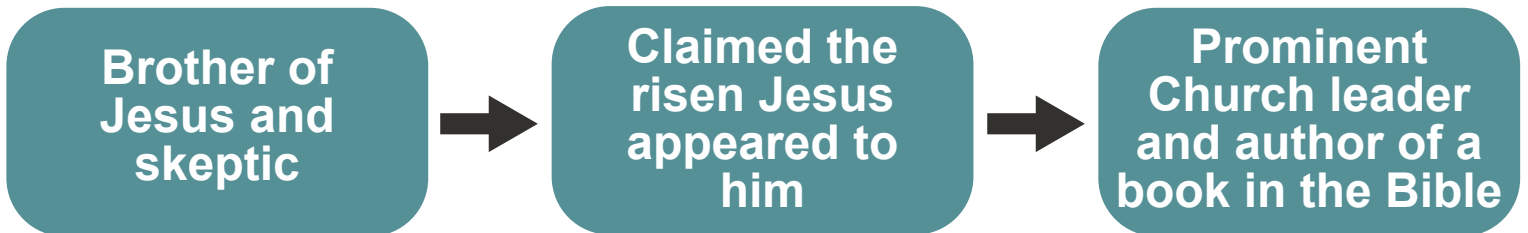
# PAUL AND JAMES' CONVERSION

## Paul's Conversion



Paul radically transformed from an enemy of Christians to one of their leaders. He wrote about half of the New Testament and died still proclaiming that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and gloriously appeared to him.

## James' Conversion



“Look at the changed life of James, the brother of Jesus. Before the resurrection he despised all that his brother stood for. He thought Christ’s claims were blatant pretention and served only to ruin the family name. After the resurrection, though, James is found with the other disciples preaching the gospel of their Lord. His epistle describes well the new relationship that he had with Christ. He describes himself as a ‘bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ’ (James 1:1). The only explanation for this change in his life is that which Paul gives: ‘after that He [Jesus] was seen by James’ (1 Cor. 15:7).”

*Josh McDowell<sup>7</sup>*



# 1 CORINTHIANS 15 CREED

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.

*1 Corinthians 15:3-8*

**A creed is a statement of belief. In the case of the creed in 1 Corinthians 15, it originated as an oral tradition that existed prior to Paul writing it to the Corinthians. Some scholars even date the origin of this creed within 5 years of Jesus' resurrection.<sup>8</sup>**

## Why does this matter?

### Early Testimony



This creed affirms that Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead. It also lists many people who Jesus appeared to after His death. This proves that Christians were proclaiming Jesus' resurrection right after it occurred and not decades or centuries later as some claim.

### Eyewitness Testimony



Not only was the creed early, it even lists many eyewitnesses to the events mentioned. Due to how early this creed was composed, most of the eyewitnesses were still alive and able to share their personal experiences with the risen Jesus.

### Debunks Various Theories



The creed also debunks a few theories that were created to try to explain away the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. Some theories that are debunked include The Legend Theory and Jesus' Spiritual Resurrection Theory (see next page).



# POSSIBLE THEORIES

<p>✓ the theory explains the corresponding evidence</p> <p>✗ the theory does not explain the corresponding evidence</p>	Jesus died	The tomb was empty	The disciples' transformation	Christianity grew rapidly	Paul and James' conversions
<p><b>The Swoon Theory: Jesus did not actually die on the cross</b></p>	✗ Nearly all historians agree that Jesus died, to say He only passed out on the cross refuses to accept basic historical evidence	✗ Jesus would have been severely beaten and on the edge of death, there is no way He could have rolled away a giant stone and sneaked past guards	✗ Jesus could not have convinced His disciples that He rose from the dead, He would have been rushed to a doctor - not worshipped as God	✗ This theory cannot account for the spread of Christianity	✗ Although somewhat possible, Paul claimed that Jesus appeared to him in glorious form, therefore it does not seem likely that Jesus appeared to him if He had not resurrected
<p><b>The disciples stole Jesus' body</b></p>	✓ This theory assumes that Jesus died	✓ The disciples would have been responsible for the empty tomb	✗ In order for this theory to be true, we must believe that the disciples went from cowards to brave deceivers who were all willing to die for a lie that they created	✗ If the disciples knew that the resurrection was a hoax, they would have been less motivated to risk everything to spread the teachings	✗ Jesus could not have appeared to Paul and James after His death if He did not rise from the dead
<p><b>Someone other than the disciples stole Jesus' body</b></p>	✓ This theory assumes that Jesus died	✓ Someone other than the disciples would have been responsible for the empty tomb, possibly some of Jesus' other followers	✗ The disciples swore that they saw the risen Jesus, not just an empty tomb	✗ If Jesus did not rise, the spread of Christianity seems unlikely	✗ Jesus could not have appeared to Paul and James after His death if He did not rise from the dead
<p><b>Wrong Tomb Theory: Everyone went to the wrong tomb and found it empty</b></p>	✓ This theory assumes that Jesus died	✗ Even if the disciples went to the wrong tomb, the Romans would have went to the right tomb and produced Jesus' body	✗ The disciples swore that they saw the risen Jesus, not just an empty tomb	✗ If Jesus did not rise, the spread of Christianity seems unlikely	✗ Jesus could not have appeared to Paul and James after His death if He did not rise from the dead
<p><b>Hallucination Theory: The disciples hallucinated and thought they saw the risen Jesus</b></p>	✓ This theory assumes that Jesus died	✗ The Romans would have went to Jesus' tomb and produced Jesus' body	✗ There is no way that 11 men all hallucinated the same thing at the same time	✓ Although unlikely, if the disciples truly believed Jesus rose from the dead, people may have believed them and converted to Christianity	✗ This theory would require Paul and James to have experienced hallucinations as well
<p><b>Legend Theory: The story of Jesus became a legend that grew over time</b></p>	✓ This theory assumes that Jesus died	✗ Since the resurrection of Jesus was preached early on, the Romans still could have went to Jesus' tomb and produced His body	✗ The disciples were all willing to die for what, according to this view, would have been a legend that they helped create	✗ Christianity spread immediately with people believing in Jesus' resurrection, if Christianity spread rapidly then the resurrection would have been taught right away	✗ Jesus could not have appeared to Paul and James after His death if He did not rise from the dead
<p><b>Allegorical Story Theory: The story of Jesus was not meant to be taken literally</b></p>	✓ This theory assumes that Jesus died	✗ Since the resurrection of Jesus was preached early on, the Romans still could have went to Jesus' tomb and produced His body	✗ The disciples were all willing to die for what, according to this view, would have been a fake story that they helped create	✓ People may have heard the gospel and not realized it was just a story	✗ Jesus could not have appeared to Paul and James after His death if He did not rise from the dead
<p><b>Spiritual Resurrection: Jesus' resurrection was spiritual but not physical</b></p>	✓ This theory assumes that Jesus died	✗ This theory states that Jesus' body was not missing and the tomb was not empty	✗ The disciples clearly stated that Jesus' resurrection was bodily	✓ People may have misunderstood the disciples' explanation of Jesus' resurrection and thought they were describing a bodily resurrection	✗ Jesus could not have appeared to Paul and James after His death if He did not rise from the dead in bodily form
<p><b>Bodily Resurrection: Jesus physically rose from the dead</b></p>	✓ This theory assumes that Jesus died	✓ If Jesus rose bodily from the grave, His body would be missing from the tomb	✓ The disciples claimed that Jesus' resurrection was bodily and as a result became bold witnesses of Jesus to the entire world, even being murdered for their claims	✓ If Jesus rose from the dead (confirming He is God), it would be logical that His message would overcome persecution and go into the entire world	✓ As God, Jesus could appear to anyone at any time, as both Paul and James claimed He did with them

*The only explanation that explains all of the evidence conclusively is that Jesus died by crucifixion and then rose from the grave in bodily form three days later. He then appeared to His disciples, hundreds of His other followers, James, and then to Paul. These other theories are weak attempts to ignore the obvious: Jesus rose from the dead!*



# THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS



*Each one of these pieces of evidence by themselves do not prove anything, however when you put them all together there is only 1 logical conclusion:*

**Jesus died**



**Jesus' tomb was empty because He rose from the dead**



**Jesus' disciples actually saw the risen Jesus**



**The risen Jesus appeared to hundreds of believers**



**The risen Jesus appeared to James and Paul which led to their conversions**



**Christianity spread because of the power of the Holy Spirit**



**Jesus is LORD!**

