

Chapter 1. Controversial Jesus

Can We Trust the New Testament?

Besides Donald Trump, Jesus may be the most controversial person in the world today. The New Testament describes Jesus as the Christ or Messiah. “Christ” comes from the Greek word *Christos* which means the anointed one, and “Messiah” comes from the Hebrew word *Mashiach* which also means the anointed one. In English “Christ” and “Messiah” are interchangeable. In Biblical times, kings, priests, and other high officials were anointed, that is, oil was poured on their head when they attained high office. The New Testament also describes Jesus as a miracle worker, a great teacher, a compassionate friend, a moral authority, God’s son, and even as God in the flesh (incarnate). It says He was crucified, died, rose from death to life, and that His death was a sacrifice of atonement to cover our sin ¹. These are extraordinary claims. Are they true? They are definitely controversial and demand examination.

Was Jesus a real, historical person who lived in Palestine in the first century AD and was crucified when Pontius Pilate was the Roman Governor? That will be this chapter’s first topic. **Do we have multiple eyewitness and good second-hand accounts that claim Jesus was resurrected after dying by crucifixion?** That will be this chapter’s second topic. Modern historians agree that Jesus was a real, historical person who was crucified, and they agree that the New Testament writers believed Jesus was resurrected ², but many of these historians do not believe His resurrection was a real event. Jesus’ resurrection is key to Christian faith, so His resurrection is an important controversy. **If we are to believe that Jesus’ resurrection was real, we must have evidence that the writers were reliable and that their documents have been transmitted accurately.** That will be this chapter’s third topic. If Jesus’ resurrection was not a real event, the documents, which are real, must be explained. **Many people have attempted to explain why the resurrection accounts exist given their belief that there was no real resurrection,** and that will be this chapter’s final topic.

In the past, some scholars asserted that Jesus was not a real, historical person, that He was not crucified, that He did not die on the cross, that the New Testament was invented in the third or fourth century AD, that the writers were not eyewitnesses or associates of eyewitnesses, and that the New Testament has changed over time. This chapter will lay out the evidence that corrects these past assertions.

The Historical Jesus

Early Christian writers

Christian writers in the late first, second, and third centuries wrote extensively about Jesus and the New Testament documents.

Clement of Rome--AD 95, Bishop of Rome, wrote *Epistle to the Corinthians*

Ignatius--70-110 AD, Bishop of Antioch, wrote letters

Polycarp--70-156, Bishop of Smyrna, disciple of John, wrote letters

Irenaeus-- ~130-202, Student of Polycarp, Bishop of Lyon, wrote *Against Heresies*

Clement of Alexandria-- 150-212, Scholar, teacher, wrote *Exhortation to the Pagans*

Justin Martyr--133, Scholar, apologist, founded a school in Rome, wrote *Dialogue with Trypho*

Tertullian--160-220, Lawyer, apologist, many writings, coined the term "Trinity"

Origen--185-253, Head of School in Alexandria, 6000 works, apologist, disciple of Clement

Eusebius-- ~262-340, Christian historian, Bishop of Caesarea, wrote *Ecclesiastical History*

Gnostic Writers (Gnostic--special knowledge), 2nd century mysticism, Gospel of Thomas, etc.

Some people may wish to discount the statements of Christian writers as being biased, so we will turn to statements by non-Christian writers.

Early Non-Christian Writers

The following quotes are from non-Christian writers³. Many of them have a negative view of Christians.

Cornelius Tacitus was a Roman historian writing around A.D. 115.

"To dispel the rumor [that Nero had burned Rome], Nero substituted as culprits, and treated with the most extreme punishments, some people, popularly known as Christians, whose disgraceful activities were notorious. The originator of that name, Christus, had been executed when Tiberius was emperor by order of the procurator Pontius Pilatus. But the deadly cult, though checked for a time, was now breaking out again not only in Judea, the birthplace of this evil, but even throughout Rome, where all the nasty and disgusting ideas from all over the world pour in and find a ready following."

Gaius Seutonius Tranquillus was a Roman historian and secretary to Emperor Hadrian. He wrote around AD 120.

"Punishment by Nero was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to new and mischievous superstition. As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome" (see Acts 18:2).

Lucian was a 2nd century Roman satirist.

“... the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world.... Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they were all brothers one of another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws.”

Thallus was a 1st century Roman historian, probably of Palestinian origin. Fragments of his works are known only from other writers. The following is an excerpt from Julius Africanus, also an historian.

“Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun; unreasonably, as it seems to me.”

Matthew (27:45), Mark (15:33), and Luke (23:44) recount that from the sixth hour to the ninth hour (noon to 3:00), while Jesus was on the cross, “darkness came over all the land.” Jesus died at the ninth hour. Thallus tried to explain the darkness as a solar eclipse, but Africanus pointed out that a solar eclipse was not possible at that time. The reason the darkness needed an explanation is that it was a known historical fact at the time. Since Christ was crucified at Passover, which is one week long and begins with a full moon, a solar eclipse is not possible because the moon is in the wrong position to cause a solar eclipse during that time. Tertullian, a second century Christian, reported that the darkness was world-wide. It was apparently observed in Rome, Athens, and other Mediterranean cities. Phlegon, an early second century Greek writer, reported a great “eclipse” and an earthquake (Matthew 27:51) in the year 33 AD⁴.

Pliny the Younger was the governor of Bythynia under Roman Emperor Trajan and wrote around AD 110.

Letter to Trajan:

“Meanwhile this is the course I have adopted in the case of those brought before me as Christians. I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it, I repeat the question a second and a third time, threatening capital punishment. If they persist, I sentence them to death..., their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy should certainly be punished. ... All who denied that they were or had been Christians I considered should be discharged... because they cursed Christ, a thing which, it is said, genuine Christians cannot be induced to do...”

Trajan’s reply:

“You have taken the right line, my dear Pliny, in examining the cases of those denounced to you as Christians, for no hard and fast rule can be laid down, of universal application.... If any one denies that he is a Christian, and actually proves it... he shall be pardoned as a result of his recantation, however suspect he may have been with respect to the past.”

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian who was born in AD 37 and wrote histories of the Jews in the late first century. He was the general of Jewish military forces in northern Israel when the Jews revolted against Rome in AD 69. He was captured by the Romans, somehow made friends with his captors, and wrote under the auspices of the Roman government. According to Paul Maier: “Apart from the Bible itself, Flavius Josephus is by far the most important historical source illuminating the entire biblical era, and for some New Testament personalities, he is an even more comprehensive source”⁵. Josephus included a passage about Jesus in his Jewish Antiquities. According to Collins, scholars believe that Josephus’ Greek text passage about Jesus was tampered with by Christians; although, there isn’t any solid textual evidence that the passage has been altered⁶. An Arabic text that dates to the 10th century is recommended by Maier⁷. English translations of both the Greek text and an Arabic text of the passage are given below.

Greek text:

“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day.”

Arabic Text:

“At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and [he] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.”

Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin (early 3rd century A.D.):

“It is taught: On Passover Eve they hanged Yeshu [Jesus] ... ‘because he practiced magic and led Israel astray...’ They found nothing in his favour, so they hanged him on Passover Eve.”

It is clear from these non-Christian accounts that Jesus was a real historical person who lived in Palestine in the first century AD, that He was crucified when Pilate was the Roman governor, that He had a following, and that some of his followers claimed to have seen him alive after he was crucified.

Accounts of Jesus' Resurrection

A very important requirement for the reliability of historical documents is that they depend on eyewitness or good second hand accounts. Reliability is judged to be even stronger if there are multiple, consistent but independent accounts.

New Testament Eyewitness Accounts

Four of the New Testament writers directly claim to have seen Jesus alive after being crucified: Matthew, John, Peter, and Paul.

Matthew 28:16-18: “But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.” Matthew was one of the eleven. Irenaeus wrote that Matthew published his own Gospel in the Hebrews’ own tongue (Aramaic) when Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome ⁸.

John 20:19-21: “So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.” John was one of the disciples. John identified himself as a disciple and the author in John 21:20-24: “Peter, turning around saw the disciple whom Jesus loved [John] following ... This is the disciple who bears witness to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his witness is true.”

1 Peter 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” And **2 Peter 1:16** “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” Peter names himself as author of these two letters.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas [the apostle Peter], then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.” Paul named himself as the author of this letter. Jesus appeared to him while he was on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians. Some scholars believe that Paul quotes an oral creed (statement of belief) in the above passage, a creed that was used within two or three years of Jesus crucifixion.

James and Jude were Jesus’ half brothers who wrote New Testament letters, but did not specifically say that they saw the resurrected Jesus, although they probably did.

New Testament Second Hand Accounts

The account in Mark was written by John Mark. Irenaeus said that he was a disciple of Peter and wrote Peter's account ⁹. John Mark may have been an eyewitness to Jesus' resurrection, but that is not explicitly stated in the New Testament. Mark 14:51-52 tells about a young man who was caught when Jesus was arrested but escaped naked leaving his linen sheet behind. Was this the author John Mark? If so, he was a follower of Jesus and might have been an eyewitness. The following verses were not included in the earliest copies of Mark's gospel, but it is possible that they were added later by Mark as an addendum to his gospel.

Mark 16:9-14: "Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either. Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen."

Luke, a companion of Paul, wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. He opens his gospel with the following statement: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught."

Luke 24:13-42: "And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them... Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, 'The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.' They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be to you.' But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?'"

Acts 1:3: "To these (apostles) He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." **Acts 2:32** is from Peter's first speech to the people in Jerusalem: "This Jesus, God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses." **Acts 3:15** is from Peter's second speech to

the people in Jerusalem: "...the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead, to which we are witnesses." Luke records similar statements by Peter in Acts 4:10, 5:30, and 10:39-41.

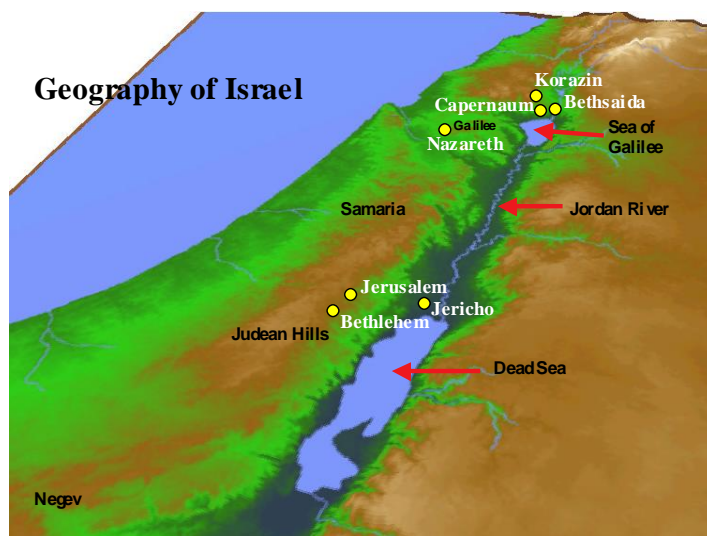
Reliability of the Writers and Their Documents

If the New Testament documents are considered to be reliable, they must meet several criteria.

- The writers must get their facts about places, people, and events right when compared to known history.
- The documents must be internally consistent but independent.
- The documents must come from the first century to be considered eyewitness accounts and good second-hand accounts.
- They must have been transmitted accurately.
- The writers must have been truthful in what they wrote.

Persons, Places, and Events

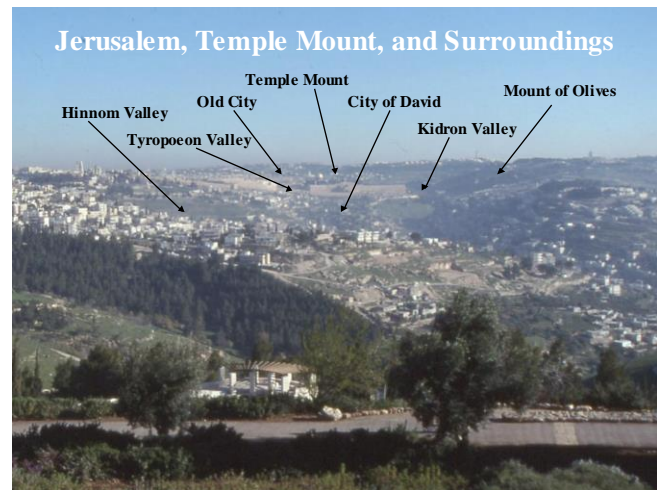
One requirement for a reliable historical document is that it get its facts right. The New Testament mentions many place names and geographical features. It also mentions people like Herod, Pontius Pilate, and Festus, and it mentions events like an earthquake and darkness at noon when Jesus was crucified. Mentioning places, people, and events invites comparison to known geography and history.



Map by Accordance Bible Software and John Witte Moore

The Jordan River flows through the rift valley between modern Israel and Jordan. **The Sea of Galilee** is 680 feet below sea level. The Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea, which is 1300 feet below sea level and is the lowest point on earth. It is 23% salt compared to 2-4% for oceans. Central highlands extend through **Judea** and **Samaria**, and a coastal plain lies between the highlands and the Mediterranean Sea. This geography is consistent with New Testament documents.

To the right is a photo of **Jerusalem** taken from the Promenade, south of Jerusalem. Modern Jerusalem is on a horseshoe shaped ridge with the **Temple Mount** in the center. These features are completely consistent with New Testament geography. The modern city of Jerusalem has the same features as those described in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.



Michael Edenburn, 1998



Michael Edenburn, 1998

To the left is a picture of the **Sea of Galilee** taken from the **Mount of Beatitudes**. This is the location for several of Jesus' events in the New Testament.

Matthew 5-7: His Sermon on the Mount
 Matthew 8:26: Jesus calmed a storm
 Matthew 14:25: Jesus walked on the lake

Christ taught at the **synagogue in Capernaum**. Mark 1:21: "They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach." The picture to the right shows the remains of the synagogue at Capernaum. The white walls date to the third century AD, but the black foundation dates to the first century.



Michael Edenburn, 1998



Michael Edenburn, 1998

Luke 4:20-21: "And He [Jesus] closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'" This message was delivered in Nazareth. At the left is a picture of the **synagogue seat** in Korazin, like the one on which Christ would have sat in Nazareth, as was their custom.

Mark 14:32-33: “They came to a place named **Gethsemane**; and He said to His disciples, ‘Sit here until I have prayed.’” (*Gethsemane* means olive press.) The picture to the right is an olive grove at the base of the Mount of Olives. If this is not the site referred to in Mark 14, it is nearby. The Romans cut these trees down when they destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, but they left the roots, which sprouted the trees you see.



Michael Edenburn, 1998

To the right is a picture of the south end of the **Temple Mount** as seen today from the Mount of Olives. Hezekiah built a retaining wall around the temple mount and backfilled it to create a level platform for the Jewish temple. The Macabees and Herod the Great extended the platform. The Macabees were a family of Jews who led a successful rebellion against the Greek Seleucids in the second century BCE, and Herod was the Jewish king when Jesus was born. The Romans destroyed everything above the platform level in AD 70 and threw the stones into the valleys around the temple mount.



Michael Edenburn, 1998

This destruction was foretold by Jesus in Matthew 24:2: “... not one stone here will be left upon another...” The original foundation stones for the retaining wall are still there and can be seen. The Dome of the Rock, with the golden dome, is a Muslim shrine and is in the middle of the temple mount. On the very southern end of the temple mount is the Al Aqsa Mosque. Leen Ritmeyer (pictured), a reconstructive archaeologist, was hired by the Jewish Temple Society to determine the exact location of the temple. He has convincing evidence that it stood where the Dome of the Rock stands now ¹⁰. Ritmeyer made a **model of the temple mount** as it would have looked during Christ’s time (shown below).



Photo of Ritmeyer’s Temple Mount Model provided by Leen Ritmeyer

John 5:2: “Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew **Bethesda**, having five porticoes (covered porches).” Jesus healed an invalid there. Critics doubted the existence of the baths at Bethesda. There was no evidence for the baths since the Romans filled them in during the destruction in AD 70, but they were excavated in 1938, and found to have five porticoes. The baths are far below the ground level (bottom of the picture), down a steep, narrow stair, and the invalid Jesus healed could not get anyone to carry him down.



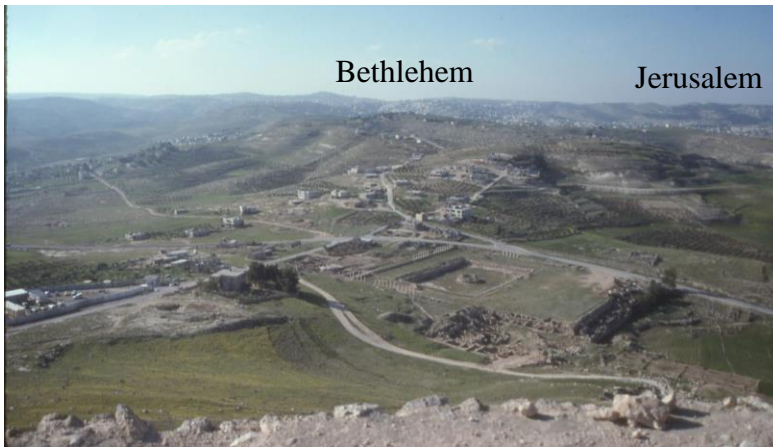
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This **Pilate Inscription** was found in 1966 at Caesarea Maritima saying “Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea.” Critics doubted the existence of Pilate, the Roman governor who sentenced Jesus to death, until extensive and recent archaeological evidence confirmed him.

Luke 2:1-3 tells about **the census preceding Jesus’ birth**: “Now in those days a decree went out from **Caesar Augustus**, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while **Quirinius** was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.” Josephus describes a census in 6-7 AD under Quirinius ¹¹, but this census was conducted after Herod the Great died, which was in 4 BCE. Since Luke asserts that Jesus was born when **Herod the Great** was alive and since Quirinius was not governor until 6 AD, critics believed that Luke was confused and that there was no census before Jesus was born. However, Augustus conducted a census every 14 years, and people in some provinces were required to return to their ancestral homes ¹². A Latin inscription found in Antioch ¹³ says that a Syrian governor had two terms. Although the inscription does not name Quirinius, it could indicate that two disjoint terms for Quirinius were possible. Going back 14 years from the 6-7 AD census puts a possible census in 8-7 BCE. Quirinius was a well-known military leader in Asia Minor at that time, and Luke referred to him as “*hegemoneuo*,” which may simply mean ruler instead of the title “governor.” Jesus was born before Herod died in 4 BCE. Before his death, Herod ordered the death of all boys in Bethlehem two years old and younger. All this could put Jesus’ birth in or before 6 BCE, which would match an earlier census in 8-7 BCE. Luke called this the first census under Quirinius implying that there was a second census which would have been the one in 6-7 AD. Luke’s census is very plausible.



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The picture on the left shows **Bethlehem**, as seen from the Herodium, a palace built in a man-made mountain by Herod the Great. Bethlehem is located south of Jerusalem.

Luke 3:1 mentions **Lysanias as the Tetrarch of Abilene** (west of Damascus). An inscription dated between 14 and 29 AD, confirms that Lysanias was the Tetrarch of Abilene at that time ¹⁴.

Romans 16:23 names **Erastus, director of public works in Corinth**. An inscription found in Corinth refers to Erastus who laid the pavement ¹⁵.

Acts 14:6 implies that **Iconium was not in Lycaonia with Lystra and Derbe** (in modern Turkey). Critics said that this was wrong until a monument found in 1910 confirmed that **Iconium was in Phrygia** ¹⁶. Both Lycaonia and Phrygia were Roman political territories within the Roman province of Galatia, which was in central Asia Minor (Turkey today). Roman boundaries moved somewhat confusing the issue, but the monument putting Iconium in Phrygia comes from Paul's time and proves Luke to be correct.

Details of people, places, events, word usage, and customs in the New Testament have been confirmed by 19th and 20th century historians and archaeologists. General historical accuracy of the New Testament is acknowledged by a mix of Christian and non-Christian historical authorities such as F.G. Kenyon, F.F. Bruce, M. Burrows, A.T. Robertson, J. W. Montgomery, K.A. Kitchen, W. Durant, and W. Ramsay ¹⁷.

New Testament manuscripts show intimate knowledge of pre-AD 70 Jerusalem and Israel. Places, people, and events have been confirmed by modern geography and history. The authors got their facts right which supports assertions that they were eyewitnesses or giving the accounts of eyewitnesses.

Internal Consistency and Independence

Another requirement for a reliable historical document is that it be internally consistent. You may have heard someone say that the Bible is full of errors. Many of the so-called "errors" are simply differences in perspective or emphasis. If all observations are identical, we might suspect collusion. J. Warner Wallace is a Los Angeles homicide detective who used to be an atheist. In Cold Case Christianity he says: "Every case I handle is like this; witnesses seldom agree on every detail. In fact, when two people agree completely on every detail of their account, I am

inclined to believe that they have either contaminated each other’s observations or are working together to pull the wool over my eyes. I expect truthful, reliable eyewitnesses to disagree along the way ¹⁸.” He goes on to say: “When I first read through the gospels forensically, comparing those places where two or more gospel writers were describing the same event, I was immediately struck by the inadvertent support that each writer provided for the other. The accounts *puzzled together* just the way one would expect from independent eyewitnesses ¹⁹.” To examine internal consistency among the manuscripts we will focus on some of the events surrounding Jesus’ trial, crucifixion, and resurrection as recounted in the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and summarized in the table below.

Comparison of Events from Jesus’ Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
At his trial Jesus appeared before	1. Caiaphas, chief priests, teachers of the law, Sanhedrin 2. Pilate	1. Caiaphas, chief priests, elders, teachers of the law, Sanhedrin 2. Pilate	1. high priest, elders, chief priests, teachers 2. Pilate 3. Herod 4. Pilate	1. Annas 2. Caiaphas 3. Pilate
Christ said on the cross	My God my God, why have you forsaken me? cried out again	My God my God, why have you forsaken me? loud cry	talked to thief Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit	talked to John and his mother I am thirsty It is finished
Discovered the empty tomb	Mary Magdalene and another Mary	Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, Salome	Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, Joanna, others	Mary Magdalene
Who was at the tomb?	an angel in white clothes, sitting on the stone, appeared like lightning	Young man in white clothes sitting inside tomb on the right	two men in gleaming clothes, like lightning, standing	two angels in white, one at the head, one at the foot

John’s gospel says that Jesus appeared to Annas and Caiaphas (past and present high priests), and Pilate, the Roman governor. To that list, Matthew and Mark add elders, chief priests, teachers of the law, and the Sanhedrin. Annas was Caiaphas’ father-in-law and the past high priest, so he is probably included with chief priests. Luke adds Herod Antipas, the Jewish tetrarch. This is exactly what Wallace was talking about when he said the gospel writers supported each other. There is no error here. Each writer adds independent detail to the sequence of events.

The accounts of Christ’s words from the cross are also different in the Gospels. We know from John 19:26 that John was right in front of the cross. The Gospels don’t say where Matthew and Mark were during the crucifixion, but their accounts are almost identical. Scholars believe that Matthew borrowed from Mark, and Clement and Papias (early Christian writers) say that Mark gave the account of Peter ²⁰. Both accounts (Mark 15:40, and Matt 27:55) say that the women

were there, looking on from a distance. It is possible that Matthew, Mark, and Peter were there, looking on from a distance like the women, or that they recorded what the women saw and heard. Luke's record comes from interviews with eyewitnesses, but he doesn't say who or where they were during the crucifixion. The accounts are different, but people in different places may have heard different things. John would have heard everything if he was there for the whole time, but may not have recorded everything. Again, the gospel writers support each other by adding details to the account. Christ could have said all of these things, with different writers recording what they heard or what they thought was particularly significant.

The different gospels mention different women who discovered the empty tomb. They do not disagree. They simply complement each other's accounts.

The gospel accounts are slightly different in describing the angels or men that the women saw at the tomb. Matthew and John call them angels while Mark and Luke call them men; however, Mark and Luke's description imply that they were angels, so there is no error here. Matthew and Mark say that there was one angel while Luke and John say that there were two. It is possible that there were two angels with one drawing more attention than the other. It is also possible that the reports were made at different times. In Matthew, the women were coming to the tomb. In Mark, the women were entering the tomb, in Luke, the time is not clear. In John the women are entering the tomb after going to the disciples. Matthew says that the angel was sitting on the stone, presumably the one used to close the tomb. Mark says that he was sitting inside the tomb on the right. Luke does not say where the angels were. John says that one was sitting at the head and one at the foot of where Jesus had been laid. A careful examination shows that the observations were made at different times, which may account for the differences.

The alleged inconsistencies are actually characteristics of good, eyewitness testimony. Keep in mind that the most important part of the story, on which all the writers are in complete agreement is that **the tomb was empty and the women were met by at least one angel. Accounts that agree on the main points but have different perspectives or remember details differently are the best possible witnesses. If the accounts are carbon copies, one might suspect that they are not independent accounts.**

Independence of the accounts might be questioned because wording in some passages of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the same. Bible scholars believe that Luke borrowed from Mark, and Matthew borrowed from both Mark and Luke; however, each has significant unique material. As seen above, the accounts of Jesus' trial, crucifixion, and resurrection are clearly independent.

Dating the New Testament Documents

If the New Testament writers were eyewitnesses or recorded the statements of eyewitnesses, we would expect their documents to come from the first century AD (CE) when the events they wrote about had occurred. As the original New Testament documents were written, they were copied and distributed to churches. Papyrus, on which originals and copies were written, typically lasts for only about 100 years, so, to preserve the New Testament documents, churches would make copies of their copies as they wore out. We do not have the original documents, and would not be able to distinguish originals from copies if we did. The copies are dated using technical dating methods for ancient documents which examine paper, ink, style, and embellishment.

We have hundreds of fragments of New Testament copies from the second century. The oldest fragment is the **John Rylands Papyrus** dating from between AD 94 and 125 and now residing in the Rylands Museum in England. It has verses from John 18.



Rylands Fragment in the Rylands Museum

The **Broadmer Papyrus II** contains most of John and dates to AD 150-200.

The **Chester Beatty Collection** contains 4 Gospels, Acts, 10 of Paul's letters, Hebrews, and Revelation and dates to AD 200.

All of the New Testament documents except the Third Book of John and the Book of Jude were cited by one or more of the early Christian writers before 150 AD. Most were considered to be authentic by Irenaeus by 200 AD, and all were accepted as authentic in the fourth century AD²¹. These early citations confirm that the documents existed in the first century AD. According to F.F. Bruce: "The New Testament Books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth and general apostolic authority, direct or indirect."²²

Early Church Writers

Pseudo Barnabas AD 70-130
Clement of Rome AD 95-97
Ignatius AD 110
Polycarp AD 110-150
Hermas AD 115-140
Didache AD 120-150
Papias AD 130-140
Irenaeus AD 130-202
Diognetus AD 150

Justin Martyr AD 150-155
Clement of Alexandria AD 150-215
Tertullian AD 150-220
Origen AD 185-254
Cyril of Jerusalem AD 315-386
Eusebius AD 325-340
Jerome AD 340-420
Augustine AD 400

The table titled *Dates of the New Testament Writings* shows estimated dates for the New Testament manuscripts ²³. The New Testament Book of Acts, which is a history of the early church and Paul’s evangelical missions, is instrumental in dating most of the New Testament documents. The Gospels could have been written earlier than listed, but earlier dates cannot be confirmed.

Dates of the New Testament Writings

Dates and History	Dates of New Testament Writings
<p>Intertestamental Period ~430 BCE to 0</p> <p>63 BCE Rome “conquers” Jerusalem 7-5 BCE Jesus of Nazareth born 30-33 AD Jesus Crucified 30-33 AD Pentecost 44 AD James (brother of John) killed</p> <p>47-49 AD Paul’s first journey 49 AD Apostolic Council 49-52 AD Paul’s second journey</p> <p>52-56 AD Paul’s third journey</p> <p>56 AD Paul’s arrest</p> <p>60 AD Paul taken to Rome</p> <p>62 AD James (brother of Jesus) death</p> <p>64-68 AD Paul killed 64-67 AD Peter killed</p> <p>70 AD Jerusalem and temple destroyed</p> <p>98 AD John died</p> <p>132 AD Bar-Cochba revolt 312 AD Constantine comes to power</p>	<p>Galatians (Paul) 49 AD James (brother of Jesus) 45-49 AD 1 Thessalonians (Paul) 50-51 AD 2 Thessalonians (Paul) 50-52 AD 1 Corinthians (Paul) 54-55 AD 2 Corinthians (Paul) 55-57 AD Romans (Paul) 55-57 AD Mark (John Mark) 55-65 Philemon (Paul) 60 Colossians (Paul) 60 Ephesians (Paul) 60 Luke 60 Acts (Luke) 61-70 Philippians (Paul) 61 Matthew 60-65 1 Timothy (Paul) 62-64 Titus (Paul) 62-64 1 Peter 62-64 2 Timothy (Paul) 63-67 2 Peter 63-64 Hebrews (Unknown) 60s Jude (brother of Jesus) 65 John 85-90* [possibly before 70 AD] 1-2-3 John 85-90 [possibly before 70 AD] Revelation late 80s or early 90s [possibly before 70 AD]</p>

*In Matthew 24:2 and Luke 21:6, Jesus predicted that the buildings on the temple mount would be destroyed. That became a reality when the Romans conquered Jerusalem following a Jewish revolt and leveled all the buildings on the temple mount. Some scholars believe that John would have mentioned the destruction of the temple if he wrote his gospel, letters, and *Revelation* after AD 70. He made no allusion to the destruction, suggesting that he wrote before AD 70.

We have many more copies of the New Testament that are much closer in time to the originals than any other ancient manuscript.

Comparison with Other Ancient Writings ²⁴

AUTHOR	DATE OF WRITING	DATE OF EARLIEST COPY	NUMBER OF COPIES	TIME SPAN BETWEEN ORIGINALS AND SURVIVING COPIES
Aristophanes (playwright)	450-385 BC	AD 900	10	1,300 years
Aristotle (philosopher)	384-322 BC	AD 1100	5	1,400 years
Caesar (historian)	100-44 BC	AD 900	10	1,000 years
Catullus (poet)	ca. 54 BC	AD 1550	3	1,500 years
Demosthenes (orator)	383-322 BC	AD 1100	several hundred	1,400 years
Euripedes (poet)	480-406 BC	AD 1100	9	1,500 years
Herodotus (historian)	480-406 BC	AD 900	8	1,300 years
Horace (poet)	65 BC - AD 8	AD 900	very few, if any	900 years
Plato (philosopher)	427-347 BC	AD 900	7	1,200 years
Sophocles (playwright)	496-406 BC	AD 1000	100	1,400 years
Seutonius (historian)	AD 75-160	AD 950	8	1,000 years
Tacitus (historian)	ca. AD 100	AD 1000	20	1,000 years
Thucydides (historian)	460-400 BC	AD 900	8	1,300 years
The New Testament	AD 45-70	AD 125 (fragments) AD 200 (many whole books) AD 400+ (whole NT)	thousands	mere years and decades for fragments; only about 300 to 400 years for complete copies

Figure 6.2

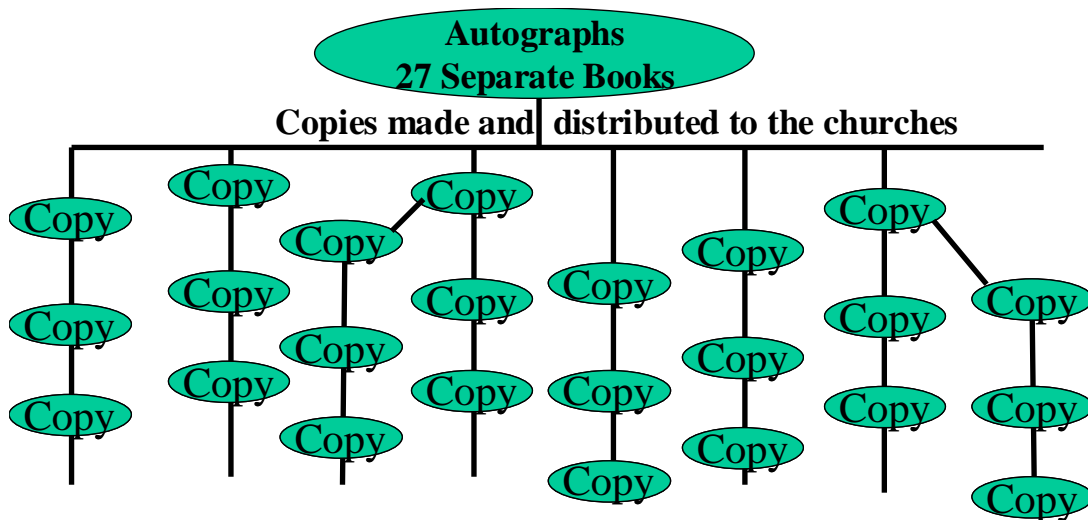
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Because we have copies dating to the second century AD and references to the manuscripts dating to the late first and early second centuries AD, evidence strongly favors the assertion that the original New Testament manuscripts were written in the first century AD and that the writers were eyewitnesses or recorded the words of eyewitnesses.

Transmission Accuracy

An additional requirement for reliable historical documents is that they have been accurately transmitted. The New Testament has eight or nine authors. There is disagreement about the author of Hebrews. If it was Paul, there were eight authors, but if it was someone else, there were nine authors. In general, after an original manuscript was written scribes would make copies. New Testament documents were distributed to the churches throughout the Roman Empire very soon after being copied ²⁵. Churches recopied manuscripts as they wore out. Copies we have today were found in the possession of the original churches. Today, we have roughly 5800 Greek, 10,000 Latin, and 9300 other manuscripts ²⁶. In all of these manuscripts, there are roughly 150,000 variations, nearly all of which are spelling or grammatical errors that do not compromise the text's meaning. Occasionally notes got incorporated into the text, and

sometimes lines got left out. Manuscript families can be traced based on the origin of the manuscripts and their copy errors.



Bible scholars use a process called *textual criticism* to find the original wording. This process compares the different manuscript families and analyzes differences. The process typically selects the most common wording as the original wording²⁷. As a somewhat lighthearted example using an old nursery rhyme, consider the following sentences:

The sow jumped over the moon.
 The cow jumped over the goon.
 The cow bumped over the moon.
 The cow jumped ever the moon.

While each sentence has an error, by comparing each word across the sentences, we can reasonably deduce that the original sentence was: “The cow jumped over the moon.” Three of the four sentences say it was a cow and not a sow, three say it jumped and not bumped, three say it was a moon and not a goon, and three of the four say it was over and not ever. This is basically the process used by the Bible scholars.

The process can be checked when an older manuscript copy is found. From this process, the original text can be determined very precisely. There are two notable uncertainties: Mark 16:9-20 and John 8:1-11. Your Bible probably notes these. To add or alter an important part of the text, a majority of the copies held by the churches would have required alteration, but doing this after the manuscripts were written and distributed would have been almost impossible because of their wide distribution. **Because of the textual criticism process and wide distribution of copies, we can be confident that our modern translations are true to the original writings.**

Reliability of the New Testament Writers

The New Testament writers got their facts right; the documents are internally consistent but independent; the originals come from the first century; and the documents have been transmitted accurately. But, did the writers tell the truth? The tone of the writings is factual, not sensational or surrealistic. There are certainly extraordinary events described, but they are not described in a grandiose fashion as in many legendary texts. Also, the authors were self-critical, which suggests they were truthful.

Mark 14:72: Peter denied Christ

Matthew 16:8-10: the disciples had little faith

John 12:15-16: the disciples were slow to understand

Manuscripts were written and widely distributed when eyewitnesses were still alive; yet, there have been no refuting manuscripts found.

What was the motive of the NT writers in telling this extraordinary story? Were they seeking personal gain, trying to establish a legend, or reporting on what they had witnessed? There was no apparent motive of personal gain, and the writers, with the exception of the Apostle John, gave their lives defending what they believed to be true. It is unlikely that a man would give his life for something he knows to be false.

The martyrdom of the New Testament writers, except for John who was imprisoned, is described in Foxe's Book of Martyrs written in the sixteenth century AD and summarized below ²⁸.

“**Matthew**, otherwise named Levi, first of a publican made an apostle, wrote his Gospel to the Jews in the Hebrew tongue. After he had converted to the faith Aethiopia and all Egypt, Hircanus, their king, sent one to run him through with a spear.”

“**Mark**, the evangelist and first Bishop of Alexandria, preached the Gospel in Egypt, and there, drawn with ropes unto the fire, was burnt and afterwards buried in a place called there ‘Bucolus’ under the reign of Trajan the emperor.”

“**Luke** the evangelist, was the author of the Gospel which goes under his name. He travelled with Paul through various countries, and is supposed to have been hanged on an olive tree, by the idolatrous priests of Greece.”

“**John**, the apostle and evangelist, was exiled by the said Domitian into Patmos. ... John was released, and came to Ephesus in the year fourscore and seventeen; where he continued until the time of Trajan, and there governed the churches in Asia, where also he wrote his Gospel: and so lived...to 100.”

“**Peter** was condemned to death and crucified, as some do write, at Rome; albeit some others, and not without cause do doubt thereof. ... Jerome saith that he was crucified, his head being downward his feet upward, himself so requiring, because he was (he said) unworthy to be crucified after the same form and manner as the lord was.”

“**Paul**, the apostle, who before was called Saul, after his great travail and unspeakable labours in promoting the Gospel of Christ, suffered also in this first persecution under Nero. ... the soldiers came and led him out of the city to the place of execution, where he, after his prayers made, gave his neck to the sword.”

“And thus, the forenamed Scribes and Pharisees did set **James** upon the battlements of the temple and they cried unto him, and said, ‘Thou just man, whom we all ought to obey, this people is going astray after Jesus which is crucified.’ And he answered with a loud voice, ‘Why do you ask me of Jesus the Son of Man? He sitteth on the right hand of the Most High, and shall come in the clouds of heaven.’ ... Then the Scribes and the Pharisees said among themselves, ... ‘let us go up, and throw him down,’ ... Yet he was not killed by the fall, ... And they said among themselves, ‘Let us stone the just man, James;’ and they took him to smite him with stones. But while they were smiting him with stones, a priest, said to them, ‘Leave off, what do ye? The just man prayeth for you.’ And one of those who were present, a fuller, took an instrument, wherewith they did use to beat and purge cloth, and smote the just man on his head; and so he finished his testimony. And they buried him in the same place.”

The Authors and Disciples Gave their Lives Defending what They Believed to be True

Matthew: killed with a spear in Egypt
Mark: burned in Egypt
Luke: hanged in Greece
John: exiled to Patmos
James brother of John: beheaded in Jerusalem
Thomas: killed with a dart in India
Simon brother of Jude and James: crucified in Egypt
Simon the zealot: crucified
Bartholomew: crucified and beheaded in Armenia
Andrew: crucified in Achaia
Philip: crucified and stoned in Phrygia
James brother of Jesus: thrown from the top of the temple,
stoned, beat to death in Jerusalem
Peter: crucified in Rome
Paul: beheaded in Rome

While many modern scholars doubt that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, most agree that the New Testament writers believed he was resurrected since they died defending their faith. Could they all have truly believed in something that did not happen?

Theories Concerning Jesus' Resurrection

The truth of Christianity hangs on the reality of Jesus' resurrection. While evidence supports the assertion that the New Testament writers believed He was raised from the dead, the fact of the resurrection is disputed by many scholars. The documents describing Jesus being raised from the dead are real documents, so disputing scholars must give an explanation for the documents' existence if His resurrection was not a reality. Many scholars have attempted to give that explanation. Some of the explanations are discussed below and in more detail by Habermas & Licona in their book [The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus](#)²⁹. Habermas is a professor of philosophy and theology, and Licona is a New Testament historian.

The women went to the wrong tomb.

While unlikely, it is possible that the women could have gone to a new tomb that was being prepared for an occupant, which would explain why the tomb was empty. Jesus could have been lying dead in another tomb. However, in Matthew 27:61, Mary Magdalene and another Mary were at the tomb when Jesus' body was put into the tomb. The wrong tomb scenario does not fit the discussion the women had with the angels at the tomb. If they had gone to the wrong tomb, it seems very likely that Joseph of Arimathea, who owned the tomb and helped prepare Jesus' body, would have corrected their mistake. The main problem with this scenario is that it does not explain the accounts of Jesus being seen alive after dying by crucifixion. Nor does it explain the conversion of Paul after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Jesus' disciples stole Jesus' body.

In Matthew 28, the tomb guards reported to the chief priests and were paid a large sum of money to claim that Jesus' disciples stole His body while the guards were asleep. There is some controversy about whether the guards were Roman or Jewish, but Matthew 27:65 makes it clear that the guards were Jewish. It is possible that the disciples could have overcome their fear, sneaked past the sleeping guards, rolled back the stone, stole Jesus' body, and disposed of His body elsewhere. Each of these is unlikely, but possible. A few men could have rolled back the heavy stone. Three of these disciples were authors of the New Testament documents and made a written claim that they had seen the resurrected Jesus. If they stole Jesus' body, they lied about seeing Jesus alive after they stole the body. This theory has a problem with motive. It is possible that the disciples were trying to start a new religion with themselves as the priests, which could have been lucrative, but all except John, who was imprisoned, were killed defending the reality of Jesus' resurrection. Is it possible that they believed so strongly in Jesus' teachings about a new way of life that it was worth lying about His resurrection and dying while defending their lie in order to spread this new philosophy? It seems extremely unlikely that they would face martyrdom for something they knew to be a lie. Perhaps a single person might accept martyrdom for something he knows to be a lie, but it is implausible that Paul, Luke, and all of the disciples except John accepted martyrdom. None of them recanted under persecution.

Someone besides Jesus' disciples stole His body.

It is implausible that someone besides Jesus' followers would have a reason to steal His body. It is possible but extremely doubtful that grave robbers would risk a confrontation with the guards. The most serious problem with this theory is that it does not explain the sightings of the risen Jesus as documented by the disciples. Nor does it explain the conversion of Paul.

Jesus didn't really die and recovered rapidly.

Perhaps Jesus did not die on the cross. Perhaps He revived in the coolness of the tomb, rolled away the stone, and visited His disciples. Could He have revived in the tomb? Modern medical descriptions of a crucifixion make this implausible³⁰. Before crucifixion, Jesus was scourged with whips made from leather thongs with either metal balls or sharp bones at the end. Scourging would have torn His flesh, possibly to the bone. He would have lost a lot of blood and possibly gone into shock. After scourging, He was most likely near death. The injury done to the wrists and feet in crucifixion is substantial and extremely painful. Crucifixion generally results in suffocation. The Roman soldiers came to break Jesus' legs to speed up suffocation, but found Him dead already. To confirm this, they stuck a spear into His chest causing a flow of blood and water, which confirmed to the soldiers that Jesus was dead. It is implausible that Roman soldiers, who knew about killing, would have been mistaken. If they were, then so were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who prepared Jesus' body for burial. If by some chance He was still alive, it is unthinkable that He could have rolled away the stone and walked around considering the severe trauma done to His wrists, feet, and body. Even skeptics no longer consider this to be a viable scenario.

Jesus' double substituted for Him on the cross.

This explanation of an indistinguishable substitute is one given by some people with a Muslim background. Jesus' double would need to have been someone who looked almost exactly like Jesus since John and Jesus' mother were standing in front of the cross when He was crucified. It seems reasonable that an identical twin would have been necessary, but maybe not sufficient, to fool Jesus' mother, and we have no reason to believe that there was an identical twin. Also, Jesus was in custody surrounded by witnesses from His arrest in the garden until His crucifixion. It seems implausible that a switch could have been made during that time. If a switch was made, it seems likely that the substitute would have gone to his execution with great protest. But, let's consider a "Mission Impossible" scenario. Jesus had a double who agreed to die for the cause. His mother and the disciples were read into the plan. The double was substituted for Jesus before he was arrested and went to his death willingly. The disciples stole the double's body and disposed of it elsewhere. The Jesus who appeared to the disciples was the real Jesus. One problem is finding a willing double who looked like Jesus, but a more serious difficulty is that the disciples would have known that it was a sham; and yet, they were willing to die defending it. This is not a plausible scenario.

The people who saw the resurrected Jesus had a hallucination or a vision.

According to the accounts, Jesus appeared to several of the disciples at the same time. Perhaps mass hysteria caused a mass hallucination or vision. Unfortunately for this theory, hallucinations and visions are individual things and do not happen to groups³¹; however, one might argue that we have the eyewitness testimony of Jesus' resurrection from only four people: Matthew, John, Peter, and Paul. Paul's experience with the resurrected Jesus could have been a vision or hallucination (if there is a distinction) of something that wasn't really there, perhaps caused by stress. It must be understood, however, that Paul did not expect to see the risen Jesus. In fact, he was traveling to Damascus to persecute Christians. It is doubtful that a vision or hallucination, which can be rationalized later, would have caused Paul's complete transformation.

Leaving Paul aside, consider the other three eyewitnesses: Matthew, John, and Peter. They were together with the other disciples when the resurrected Jesus appeared to them, so they would have experienced a common hallucination or vision. But again, visions are experienced by individuals, not groups. Since they wrote their accounts separately, perhaps they individually experienced a vision or hallucination; however, Matthew and John wrote that they had seen the resurrected Jesus collectively. Perhaps they had seen a vision of Jesus individually but wrote that they had seen Him collectively after His crucifixion. Let's look at the details of the "visions or hallucinations." Matthew 28:9 reports that Jesus met the women after His resurrection and they "took hold of Him." Luke 24 reports that two men had a lengthy, walking conversation with Jesus after His resurrection and that Jesus later ate with the disciples. John 20:16-17 reports that Mary Magdalene clung to Jesus after His resurrection, and John 20:27-28 reports that Thomas stuck his fingers into Jesus' wounds. These very physical events defy being interpreted as visions or hallucinations.

The writers truly believed they had seen Jesus alive, but they were preconditioned by their expectations about the Messiah.

This might explain a vision or hallucination if they had one; however, it is doubtful that they were expecting to see the resurrected Messiah. There are no clear references to the death and resurrection of the Messiah in the Old Testament. Isaiah 53:10 might refer to a resurrected Messiah, but that is not clear. Daniel 9:26 refers to Messiah's death but not His resurrection. While speaking to the disciples before His death, Jesus referred several times to His death and resurrection as in Matthew 17:23 and 20:19; and Luke 9:22, and 18:23. The disciples did not appear to take His statement seriously. In all of the resurrection accounts, they seemed to be surprised and even fearful. Even if some were expecting to see Him alive after His crucifixion, visions and hallucinations cannot explain the accounts of His resurrection.

The resurrection was a myth that arose many years after Christ was crucified.

All of the New Testament documents except John's gospel, John's letters, and revelation were written 15 to 30 years after Jesus' crucifixion. Three of the writers--Paul, Matthew, and Peter--said they were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection. The other writers clearly believed that Jesus had been resurrected but did not specifically claim to have seen him alive after being crucified. The process of textual criticism gives excellent evidence that the original documents had not been changed after they were written. If the resurrection was a myth it had to have come into existence in less than 15 years, and it would have to have been adopted by all of the New Testament writers. Also, it would have come into existence when many people were still alive who lived at the time of Jesus' crucifixion; and yet, no refuting manuscripts are known to exist. Some Bible scholars believe that 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 was an early creed used by Christians within a few, maybe three, years of Jesus' crucifixion. That is not much time for a myth to develop, and it is doubtful that the New Testament writers would have died defending a myth.

We don't have enough information to know what happened.

This is an argument given by Anthony Flew in his debate with Gary Habermas³². This argument is a simple evasion of the clearly written evidence. John's gospel, Luke's gospel, and Acts give very clear and somewhat detailed accounts of the resurrected Jesus' appearances to the disciples. There will never be enough information for one who disregards the information we do have. (At the time of the debate, Flew was an atheist professor of philosophy. He later came to believe that there is a god.)

The writers described a real death and resurrection.

All of the New Testament writers (8 or 9 of them) believed in and died (except John) defending Jesus' resurrection account. Four of them: Matthew, John, Peter, and Paul claimed to be eyewitnesses to His resurrection. Thus, we have multiple independent accounts of Jesus' resurrection. We also know that Jesus was a real historical person who lived in first century Palestine and was crucified when Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Palestine. We also know that the New Testament accounts were written in the first century AD and have not been altered over time. The main problem with the resurrection accounts is that, if true, the resurrection was a supernatural event. As seen above, natural explanations have serious problems and are highly improbable. Could the resurrection have been a supernatural event? Belief that a supernatural event is possible depends on one's belief that the supernatural exists. If one believes that there is a God who created the universe, then one could believe that a supernatural event like the resurrection is possible. Does God exist? This controversy will be taken up later as we go backward in time through the major events in the Old Testament, which will be the source of more controversies.

Conclusion

We have examined the evidence concerning Jesus' resurrection. The evidence strongly supports the following statements which are generally believed by modern historians.

1. Jesus was a real, historical person who lived in Palestine in the first century AD.
2. Jesus was crucified when Pilate was the Roman governor.
3. Multiple New Testament writers believed and wrote that Jesus was seen resurrected.
4. Places, names, and events in the New Testament agree with known geography and history.
5. The New Testament documents are internally consistent but independent.
6. The documents come from the first century.
7. The documents have been transmitted accurately.
8. The New Testament writers died defending their resurrection accounts.

While many modern historians agree that the New Testament eyewitnesses believe that they saw the resurrected Jesus and wrote about it, they believe that the resurrection was not a fact. They have given explanations as to why the writers thought they had seen the resurrected Jesus, but none of the explanations are plausible.

The best explanation for why the New Testament writers claimed to have seen the resurrected Jesus is that they really saw Him resurrected. Such an extraordinary and supernatural event must have had a purpose. Jesus states his purpose in Matthew 26:27-29: "And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.'" According to Isaiah 59:2, sin separates us from God. Romans 5:1 says: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 6:23 says "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." John 11:25-26 quotes Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die." Romans 3:21-25 (NIV) sums it up: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood."

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