

Grounded: From Facts to Faith to Follower → The Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?

Pastor Stefan Duerksen -March 27, 2026

A. The CLAIM: Jesus lived, died for our sins, rose from the dead, & appeared to many

READ the CREED: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8, 12-19 – Paul received from Peter & James – 3-8 yrs after Jesus' death & resurrection.

IF true – we have forgiveness of sin, restoration, redemption, and eternal life IN CHRIST → HOPE!

IF false, we have SIX disadvantages:

1. Preaching is useless → you are all wasting your time

1 Corinthians 15:14 (ESV) And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

2. Faith is useless → you are putting your trust in nothing at all

1 Corinthians 15:14 (ESV) And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

3. The Apostles were liars → of ALL the religions – you chose the wrong one

1 Corinthians 15:15 (ESV) We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

4. You are still in sin → not forgiven & not redeemed

1 Corinthians 15:17 (ESV) 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

5. Those who have died are lost forever → NO hope to see Christian family & friends again

1 Corinthians 15:18 (ESV) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

6. Christians are to be pitied → Standing for truth, for faith, persecuted, died for their faith, suffered, etc., did it ALL for NOTHING.

1 Corinthians 15:19 (ESV) 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Which other religion stakes the truth of its claims on a historical event? NONE. This separates the Bible and Christianity from ALL other religions.

B. The Case for the Resurrection: Did Jesus die & come back to life?

1 Corinthians 15:20–26 (ESV) But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,... ..in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Skeptic: People do not rise from the dead. Therefore, the Bible is false and is legendary.

The logical fallacy: “miracles are impossible because they don’t happen.” This is circular.

Answer: “You are right, people do not rise from the dead naturally, that is why we call it a miracle!”

Further Answers: Here, I would usually take someone back to the beginning. How did we get here?

- **PODCAST coming on how to do this! Romans 1 → arguments for the existence of God**

ASSUMING → We can agree that something/someone created everything seen. The Resurrection is well within the capabilities of that something/someone (GOD).

"Science is the study of how the 'machine' of the universe works. But if there is a 'Designer' who built the machine, He can reach in and move the gears. To say 'God cannot raise the dead' is to say 'The Painter cannot change his painting.' If God exists, a resurrection is not only possible, it's easy."

Minimal Facts Approach: 1.The data are strongly evidenced. 2.The data are granted by virtually all scholars on the subject, even the skeptical ones. (*Gary Habermas – case for the resurrection of Jesus*)

Gary Habermas, the leading expert on the resurrection, writes, *"This approach considers only those data that are so strongly attested historically that they are granted by nearly every scholar who studies the subject, even the rather skeptical ones.*

4 + 1 Facts that move us beyond a reasonable doubt:

1. Non-Christian sources: Jesus lived & died by crucifixion

Crucifixion was the most gruesome sentence that Rome could inflict on a person. Designed to cause excruciating pain and slowly asphyxiate the victim, which could often take days.

The four Gospels all report that Jesus lived and died by crucifixion. (These are RELIABLE)

What about non-Christian sources?

- **73 AD Mara Bar-Serapion**, writing to his son from prison, comments, "Or [what advantage came to] the Jews by the murder of their Wise King, seeing that from that very time their kingdom was driven away from them?"
- **93-94 AD Josephus** writes, "When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified. . . ."
- **116 AD Tacitus** reports, "Nero fastened the guilt [of the burning of Rome] and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus."
- **165 AD Lucian** of Samosata, the Greek satirist, writes, "The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account."
- **400-600 AD Talmud** reports that "on the eve of the Passover, Yeshu was hanged." Yeshu is Joshua in Hebrew. The equivalent in Greek is Iēsous or Jesus.
- *Habermas, Gary R.; Licona, Michael R.. The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus (p. 49).*
- **QUESTION: What motive would they have had for falsifying these reports?**
- **200 AD graffiti** – mocking Christians for the absurdity of worshipping a crucified Lord.

Jesus' life & death by crucifixion is a historical fact supported by considerable evidence.

2. Eyewitness accounts: Jesus' disciples believed He rose from the dead

1 Corinthians 15:3–8 (ESV) ... he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

- **1 Cor 55 A.D., the creed, 3-5 yrs after events, Paul learned from Peter & James**

The disciples who had fled before Jesus died claimed they saw their risen Lord and willingly died for their claim.

Skeptic: How is that any different than Muslim extremists who die for their beliefs?

Answer: The disciples said they saw the physical Jesus after the resurrection. **Firsthand testimony.** People who die for their faith today are placing their faith in secondhand testimony.

Though people may die for what they BELIEVE to be true. No one dies, especially not a cruel death, for what they know to be FALSE.

Witnesses: 500 – Peter – the Twelve – James – ALL Apostles – to PAUL – Cleopas & friend (Emmaus) – women at the tomb.

- The Gospels report that women were the first witnesses. Women were considered unreliable witnesses. This lends credibility to the accounts.

Within 20 years of Jesus' death. The church was regularly teaching that He had risen from the dead. Witnesses were named, and people encouraged them to ask for themselves.

Early Church Fathers: Clement wrote and confirmed in 95 AD; Irenaeus in 180 AD & Polycarp in 110-140 AD, all of whom confirmed that this was the testimony handed down from the original apostles.

The skeptics claim that these events were fabricated later do not align with the facts.

Late NT critic at the UofC, Norman Perrin, who rejected Jesus' resurrection, wrote, "*The more we study the tradition with regard to the appearances, the firmer the rock begins to appear upon which they are based.*" Habermas, Gary R.; Licona, Michael R.

3. Paul: the church persecutor suddenly changed

Acts 9:1–5 (ESV) *But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, ...if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now,... as he approached Damascus, a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ...And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*

- **Paul was a religious zealot.** He had devoted his life to serving GOD. Why would he give up a good career, his life's work, and be willing to suffer **IF he knew what he was saying was a lie?**
- **The only reasonable conclusion:** Paul believed he SAW Jesus ALIVE after he was killed.

4. James: the skeptic brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed

During his time on earth, James, Jesus' brother, did not believe Jesus was God. NOT A CHANCE.

John 7:5 "...for even his brothers did not believe in him..." **Mark 3:21** "...out of his mind..." **Acts 15**

AFTER claiming to see Jesus alive, he became a primary leader of the Jerusalem Church. He was stoned to death in 62 AD because he refused to renounce his beliefs that his brother was the Risen Christ.

- **Non-Christian sources:** Josephus, Hegesippus, and Clement of Alexandria confirm martyrdom.

5. The Tomb was EMPTY

Habermas reports, “roughly 75% of scholars on the subject accept the empty tomb as historical fact.”

The Roman authorities and the Jewish religious leaders crucified Jesus. It remained in their best interests to keep him DEAD.

Had the disciples and others made up accounts of him rising from the dead? **Why not simply provide the body and dispel the myth?**

We have NO accounts either within Christian or Non-Christian sources of the body being missing being refuted. Just various theories of WHY it was missing.

Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 AD) *Dialogue with Trypho* (Chapter 108), Justin argues that by claiming the body was stolen, the Jewish leaders were publicly admitting that the tomb was, in fact, empty. If the body were still there, they would have produced it to end the movement.

Tertullian (155–220 AD) *De Spectaculis* (Ch. 30) and *De Resurrectione Carnis*. "Gardener" Theory: Tertullian recounts a story in which a gardener allegedly removed the body because he didn't want the crowds of visitors trampling his lettuce/vegetables. Using "enemy reports" to show that nobody in Jerusalem—Christian or non-Christian—disputed that the body of Jesus was missing.

The testimony of Women: already mentioned.

C. FACT → BEST EXPLANATION is Jesus died & rose from the dead!

1. **Non-Christian sources:** Jesus lived & died by crucifixion
2. **Eyewitness accounts:** Jesus' disciples believed He rose from the dead
3. **Paul:** The persecutor of the Church was suddenly changed
4. **James:** The skeptical brother of Jesus was suddenly changed
5. **The Tomb was EMPTY – NO ONE CLAIMED OTHERWISE**

"We don't judge historical events based on whether they fit our daily experience. We judge them based on evidence. We have more historical documentation for the life and death of Jesus than we do for many Roman emperors. If we dismiss the Bible solely because it records an extraordinary event, we'd have to throw out most of ancient history."

THE BEST conclusion to the evidence is that Jesus lived, was crucified, rose from the dead, and appeared to many people, proving that EVERYTHING He had said about Himself before this was TRUE.