

**WITNESSKIT CLASS 4:  
What Can We Know  
About The Resurrection  
of Jesus Christ?**

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# Three things we can know because it is true that Jesus Christ rose from the dead:

1. God has communicated in this world.
2. Life goes on forever.
3. God wins against evil, even when it looks like a lost cause. (Hebrews chapters one and two cover these topics.)

**“Making Sense of the Unlikely Easter Story”** by Ben Witherington—*Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 37, #2.

One of the founders of form criticism (a skeptical style of criticism) once said that you have to propose

**a historical theory**

**“big enough**

to explain *the rise of Christianity* after the ignominious death

of Jesus

on a Roman cross.”

“Making Sense of the Unlikely Easter Story” by Ben Witherington—*Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 37, #2.

“What happened that caused

- ▣ the deserters to become the martyrs,
- ▣ the deniers to become the confessors,
- ▣ and women to take a chance at being laughed out of court
  - by telling the men that **‘He has risen and has appeared to us’?**”

# We CAN Make Sense

- Of the Easter Story. It makes perfect sense IF the resurrection actually happened.
- It makes NO SENSE if the resurrection did not happen.
- To show that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the BEST explanation for the historic data, we will follow the outline of *THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS*, by Dr. Gary Habermas and Dr. Michael Licona.

# The Roman Empire was a Scary Place.

- Roman soldiers in The Turtle Formation: **100 men in tight ranks of ten, wearing tall Roman helmets and carrying curved full body shields painted red.**
- The men on the front, back and sides of the formation carried the shields toward the outside of the formation.
- The men in the middle carried the shields over their heads, to deflect arrows.
- And they **all ran, in step, full speed ahead.**

# Roman soldiers

- They would trample down anyone who got in their way, and arrows could not touch them.
- They were the toughest of the tough.
- There was only one thing they feared:

# Crucifixion.

That was the penalty for desertion or failure to perform their duty.



# Death on a Roman Cross

Was a terrifying matter.

# Everyone can quickly consider the evidence for Jesus' resurrection

## Facts and Sources

From *THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS*, by Dr. Gary Habermas and Dr. Michael Licona

By following the 4+1 Method :

- 4 facts accepted by even the worst critics

Including 5 sources outside the Bible for fact 1  
Including 9 certain sources within the Bible and early Christianity for the other facts

- Plus 1 fact accepted by most critics

- Plus analysis of the alternate explanation at the time

Leading to the **truth** of the resurrection.

# The Four Certain Facts that even the critics know are true.

**PART 1**  
of the  
4+1  
Method:  
  
4  
**FACTS**

1. **Jesus of Nazareth died on a cross.**
2. His followers claimed and believed they saw Him **alive again** after he died. Their lives **changed** because of that belief.
3. A **persecutor** of the church named Paul also claimed and believed He saw the risen Jesus, and his life changed.
4. Jesus' skeptical **half-brother** James claimed and believed he saw the risen Jesus, and his life changed.

## Fact 1

Jesus Died on a Cross.

We want to establish fact 1 by looking at sources independent of the early church.

We will start with **general background sources** to show that crucifixion happened during the era of the Roman Empire. Then we will look at specific sources which describe events.

# Background on Crucifixion

First, crucifixion was a common form of execution in the Roman empire, according to historical sources—for execution

- ▣ of the lower classes,
- ▣ slaves,
- ▣ conquered people,
- ▣ soldiers, and
- ▣ people accused of treason.

# Background on Crucifixion

Second, physical evidence of crucifixion has been found by archaeologists.

Third, historical sources besides the Bible report Jesus' death by crucifixion.

# Background on Crucifixion

- The Roman empire was a military tyranny which stretched from England to the edge of India and across North Africa.
- The Romans used crucifixion to keep conquered people in line.
- It was a form of rule by terror.



# Background on Crucifixion

Jewish-Roman **historian** Flavius Josephus reported multitudes of crucifixions when the Romans sacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He had defected to the Roman side 2 years before and so survived the war.

# Background on Crucifixion

Roman statesman Cicero (b. 106 B.C., d.43 B.C.) called crucifixion **“A most horrendous torture.... The word ‘cross’ should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen, but from his thoughts, his eyes, and his ears.”**

# Background on Crucifixion

The brutality of the Roman system is seen in that beheading was considered merciful compared to crucifixion, and was the execution method of choice for Roman citizens.



## The Romans Ruled by Fear of Crucifixion

**Physical evidence for crucifixion:** the ankle bones of a crucified man found in an ossuary in Israel.

Photo of a plaster cast from a museum in the Netherlands, original in Israel. — used by permission.

# Five Sources **outside** the Bible

Who report Jesus' Death by  
Crucifixion, reporting from diverse  
locations around the Roman Empire

# 5 Sources Who Report Fact 1

1. Josephus—Israel and Rome—official Roman Empire source
2. Tacitus—Rome—Official Roman Empire source
3. Lucien of Samosata—Greece—Popular Culture source
4. Mara Bar-Sepion—Syria, individual source
5. The Babylonian Talmud—Mesopotamia / Iraq, religious source

# 5 Sources Who Report Fact 1

There are more sources than this, of course. In a lecture at Biola University, Scholar Gary Habermas testified that 17 early sources (within 100-150 years of Jesus' life)

outside the Bible

report sixty facts from Jesus' life.

The title of the lecture was "The Historical Jesus."

# #1 of 5 Certain Sources outside the Bible: **Josephus**

## Source, Date, Location

1. Flavius Josephus,  
Jewish-Roman  
western source,  
b. 38 AD, d. 109 AD,  
completed **JEWISH  
ANTIQUITIES** in 93-  
94 AD

## Quote or Paraphrase

Josephus reported  
that Pontius Pilate  
condemned Jesus  
to be crucified.



# #2 of 5 Certain Sources outside the Bible: Tacitus

## Source, Date, Location

2. Cornelius Tacitus
  - Roman Gentile, considered one of the finest ancient historians,
  - **b. 55 AD d. 120 AD.**
  - ANNALS covered empire from 14 to 68 AD,
  - HISTORIES from 68 - 96AD.

## Quote or Paraphrase

Tacitus reported that Emperor Nero condemned Christians to torturous deaths after Rome burned, and that a Roman procurator named Pontius Pilate caused Christ to suffer the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius Caesar.

# From Cornelius Tacitus' Report...

Pilate was prefect from **26-36 AD**. So this is the window of time for the crucifixion of Jesus.

**Tacitus** reported that Nero **blamed the fire of Rome on Christians** to dispel rumors that he, Nero, had ordered it.

After mentioning the death of the Christian's leader, Christ, Tacitus reports that **a pernicious superstition broke out in Judea and also in Rome**, possibly referring to belief in the resurrection. ANNALS XV 44.

# #3 of 5 Certain Sources outside the Bible: Lucian of Samosata

## Source, Date, Location

3. Lucian of Samosata
- Greek satirist
  - 150-200 AD
  - His religion appeared to be the Greek pantheon of gods
  - Quote from “The Death of Peregrine.”

## Quote or Paraphrase

“ the Christians, you know, worship a man to this day – the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites and was crucified on that account.”

# Lucian of Samosata...

- This source, from the popular culture of the time, demonstrates that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was common knowledge around the empire.

# #4 of 5 Certain Sources outside the Bible: Mara Bar-Sepion

## Source, Date, Location

## Quote or Paraphrase

4. Mara Bar-Sepion
- Syrian philosopher
  - Probably a Stoic
  - Imprisoned after 70 AD—awaiting **execution**
  - Letter to his son written from prison—I suspect he was worried about his home town.

He described three instances in history when a righteous man was executed, and his home city was destroyed soon after:

Socrates and Athens

Pythagoras and Samos

Jesus and Jerusalem

He said each man lived on through his teachings.

# #5 of 5 Certain Sources outside the Bible: **The Babylonian Talmud**

## Source, Date, Location

5. The Babylonian Talmud
  - Eastern Jewish source
  - Religious source

## Quote or Paraphrase

- The Babylonian Talmud reports that Jesus was hanged on the eve of Passover.

Being hanged on a *XULON*, (ξύλον) a wood or timber, or tree,...

was used to express crucifixion in the TALMUD and also in the New Testament.

It compared crucifixion to hanging in reference to Deuteronomy 21:22 where the Law of Moses discusses hanging.

Josh McDowell explains that this wording was used to conform Roman practice to the terms of Jewish law, since crucifixion was unknown at the time Moses wrote.

# Christian Sources Used the Same Terminology...

New Testament references are

Acts 5:30 and 10:39,

Galatians 3:13,

I Peter 2:24,

where XULON (ξύλον) is sometimes translated cross and sometimes tree.



# An archaeologist named James Fleming reports that

Often the Romans used a tree trunk for the vertical portion of a cross, since it was already in the ground.

Fact 1 Is Established both by the Bible and outside sources.  
Jesus Christ died on a cross.

Fact 2. Jesus' followers claimed and believed they saw Him alive again after he died. Their lives changed because of that belief.

Jesus' followers claimed and believed they saw Him alive again after he died.

- The disciples' lives changed because they believed this fact...
- They became courageous even when faced with death from persecution.
- Before seeing Him alive again, they had been afraid.
- Their fear took two forms—fear of the authorities, causing them to hide, and fear that they were seeing a spirit or ghost when they first saw the risen Savior.

# The issue of miracles

Miracles are a worldview issue.

Modernists do not accept the possibility of miracle because they **assume** the universe is a closed system.

**The reality is** that IF God exists, and God is powerful enough to have **caused the universe's existence,**

THEN miracles are possible.

Many critics of the Bible are Modernists.

# Fact 2: Disciples Saw, Believed, Changed

- The critics do not accept miracles, and they deny that the New Testament could be authored by God.
- Our approach does not require considering the Biblical documents as inspired by God, but rather just as historic documents from the Roman era.

The critics rule out all the miracle passages in the Bible. **But they do count the remainder as historical record.**

(Since God exists, the assumption that miracles cannot happen is a poor assumption. The Bible treats miracles **as a clue** of communication from God.)

# Even starting from the modernist's assumption

that miracles do not happen, the evidence for ONE miracle is extremely strong, and that is what we are trying to show.

# Fact 2: Disciples Saw, Believed, Changed

- Critics consider Paul's letters as early, first century documents.
- Events in them can be verified by secular history and cross-referenced to the book of Acts. Historic names, titles, and events in Acts correspond to known facts from archaeology.

# The Critics' Basis for Denying Inspiration...

The critics accept fact #2: The disciples **thought they saw** the resurrected Christ, believed, and were changed.

The critics don't want to accept this fact. They are actually required to accept it by the weight of the evidence. It would be easier to maintain their disbelief in miracles if they found an escape hatch for this fact. So the evidence is very strong for fact #2.



## 9 Sources (accepted as historic, even by the critics) for Fact 2: Disciples Saw, Believed, Changed

1. Saul of Tarsus' writings
2. Oral Tradition Creed
3. Oral Tradition Sermon Summary
4. The Gospel according to Matthew
5. The Gospel according to Mark
6. The Gospel according to Luke
7. The Gospel according to John
8. Clement of Rome
9. Polycarp of Smyrna

# The New Testament Writings

- Are very early. The letters of Paul, often called epistles, were written **by the 50s AD, within 25 years of the crucifixion.**
- Three Gospels were written in **the 60s AD, within 35 years of the crucifixion.**
  - The fourth Gospel was written **around 95 AD, by the aging Apostle John.**
  - The oral traditions recorded in the New Testament were much earlier, **very near the events.**

# 1 Corinthians 15:3-9 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received:

*that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.*

<sup>6</sup> After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

# 1 Corinthians 15:3-9 (NKJV)

- <sup>37</sup> After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.
- <sup>8</sup> Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.
- <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

# 9 historic sources for fact 2

- No. 1 of 9 sources:** Paul's description of the belief of the other apostles.
- I Corinthians 15:3-8 Here Paul describes some of the apostles and Jesus' half-brother James as eyewitnesses of the resurrection, as well as 500 other witnesses, many of whom were still alive at the time of writing.
  - The *creed* in the same passage helps to establish this as a very early account. The creed is believed to predate the New Testament.

# God wants us to believe truth.

The 500 witnesses contrast with the handful of witnesses other religions' claim for their founding events. God demanded multiple witnesses to establish truth. He fulfilled that principle in the matter of Messiah's resurrection. Psalm 22:22 predicts an assembly of witnesses for this event.

Paul was writing while many of the witnesses were still alive, so they could challenge his accounts if in error.

The creed in I Corinthians 15 is called “**oral tradition.**” It probably is older than the written gospels.

# 2 Thessalonians 2:15

“So then, brothers, stand firm, and hold to the traditions which you were taught, *whether* by word *of mouth* or by letter from me.”

This verse may show that the letters to the Thessalonians were written before the Gospels, and indicate that the early churches had a defined body of teaching which they taught from the earliest days of the church.

# Oral Tradition...

- The church began to grow by response to personal testimony before the New Testament was written. This early testimony is called oral tradition. The words *oral tradition* mean that the stories were handed down by word of mouth.
- The New Testament is a treasure, and people found Jesus' gift of eternal life even before they had the New Testament.



# Source 2 of 9: Early Oral Tradition

- The creed in I Corinthians 15:3-8 counts as early oral tradition, and it also tells us the apostles believed they saw Jesus alive again after the crucifixion.
- “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, and then to the twelve.”

# Source 2 of 9: Early Oral Tradition

- The repeated phrase, “according to the Scriptures,” sounds like it belongs in an early creed that was repeated in worship. It also brings out the fact that Jesus’ life fulfilled predictions in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- The phrase “what I also received” is Paul’s way of saying that these words were given to him by others in the early church.

# Source 2 of 9: Early Oral Tradition

- The most likely time for Paul to receive this creed was within three years of his conversion, since most of his life afterward was spent traveling the Roman empire.
- This places the creed as close as 5 years to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- This early dating of the text rules out legend as a source of the resurrection accounts.

## Source 3: Also from early oral tradition: A Sermon Summary.

Luke is the only Gentile writer of the Bible. He was a physician and Paul's traveling companion. He was also a historian of the events of the first century.

He wrote *the Gospel according to Luke* and *the Acts of the Apostles*.

He explains in the introduction to each book how he proceeded to write them.

Acts chapter 2 reports the words of a sermon preached on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after the crucifixion.

# A Sermon Summary, Continued

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- While Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years, Luke was able to interview the apostles and others in Judea. This would have been the most likely time to do the research for his gospel.
- Luke explains that his gospel is a compilation in Luke 1. Acts was Book 2 of his set.

# A Sermon Summary, Continued

- This places the writing of Acts within the lifetime of the eyewitnesses, and places the oral tradition of the sermon summary earlier than the writing of the gospels.
- The sermon summary reveals the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus and the need **to repent of sins and receive the Holy Spirit into one's life in response—Acts 2:37-41.**

# Acts 2:37-41

**37** Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?"

**38** Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

# Acts 2:37-41

- <sup>40</sup> And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."
- <sup>41</sup> Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.



# A Sermon Summary, Continued

- You can see that the facts of the crucifixion and resurrection and the response to those facts were established from the beginning of the church.
- They were and still are the central message of the Gospel.
- You can also see that the Gospel is for everyone— **“to you and to your children, to all who are far off,…”**

# These verses may sound confusing about baptism:

- <sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.—Acts 2:38.
- The word **FOR** in this verse is actually the Greek word "**INTO**"—so it literally is saying "be baptized *into* the remission of your sins."

# These verses may sound confusing about baptism:

The New Testament is not teaching that water baptism is necessary for sins to be removed, but that baptism **is a symbol** of the removal of sins through the atoning blood of Christ, and of commitment to Christ's kingdom, and of a **transformation** into new life.

Romans **6:4** “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

# You can see that in I Corinthians 1:17

Where the Apostle Paul says, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void.”

If baptism were the “clincher” for obtaining salvation, the apostle would have been sent to baptize.

The heart commitment IS necessary. “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

# Commitment and Persecution

The commitment to the Kingdom of Christ is a serious matter. God sees the heart. He baptizes the individual by the Holy Spirit when repentance and faith take place—and that baptism is in the heart—

1 Corinthians 12:13.

- Often public profession of faith results in ostracism, or persecution. Water baptism may be followed by persecution.
- Commitment is of the whole heart—remembering that **“the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of the one whose heart is completely His.”**

# Guidance from God

- If an individual delays public commitment because of fear of persecution, he must take that fear to God and ask for help. God is able to guide **to the right time and place and manner for speaking up, and care should be taken to follow God's guidance.**
- Matthew 10:16-42 describes the attitude required for such situations—refusing to deny believing in Christ, and accepting the difficulties of all kinds that occur without being afraid. The lack of fear in that moment demonstrates the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life.

# The Early Church Experienced 300 Years of Severe Persecution.

- In many places in the world of today, persecution of Christians is institutionalized and very severe—often with imprisonment or death as a result. Where that is the case, I see no problem establishing security for new converts within local congregations.
- I do see a problem when churches fail to address this concern.

# The Early Church Experienced 300 Years of Severe Persecution.

- Church records in this world are much less important than the record in heaven, as described in Hebrews 12:23. It was traditional in the early church to take a Christian name upon baptism—and that name could be recorded in church records—or records could be omitted for those in persecution situations.
- It is right for churches to face these issues and develop strategies to protect God's flock.



# Guidance from God

- The New Testament requires that a Christian never deny Christ—as seen in Matthew chapter 10.
- The early church, during 300 years of severe persecution, certainly did practice hiding to protect human life. So there is a balance—being “wise as serpents and innocent as doves,” realizing we are sent “as sheep among wolves.”
- If persecution occurs, Christians must “entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”—
- 1 Peter 4:19.

# Back to the Topic: Source 4, 5, 6, & 7: The Gospel accounts

- The gospels count as historic records of the disciples' belief in seeing the risen Messiah. Here are reasons why they count.
- The Gospel according to Luke was written as part of a two volume set with the book of Acts. Two scrolls were required because of the number of words. **It should be dated in the same time-span as Acts.**

# Source 4, 5, 6, & 7: The Gospel accounts

- Many critics believe Matthew and Luke used a separate source called Q which has not been found, because they report many of the same incidents. The critics believe Mark wrote first and that Matthew and Luke used his information as well.

# Source 4,5, 6, & 7: The Gospel accounts

- Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, (lifetime 60 AD to 130 AD) reported that Mark wrote his gospel from Peter's recollections, but not in time order.
- He also reported that Matthew originally wrote in Hebrew (or Aramaic), a document which is a very good candidate for Q.
- Hierapolis was in present day Turkey.

# Source 4,5, 6, & 7: The Gospel accounts

- Matthew's Hebrew document is sometimes called the *Logia*, and is described as a collection of the sayings of Jesus.
- It makes sense for Matthew, an apostle, to be author of a document used to compose the Gospels. Peter was present for more events in the Gospels, so it would also make sense for Matthew to consult Mark's Gospel.
- (Papias' claims were preserved in the writings of Eusebius in the early 300s in a document called HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.)

# Critics look at such data

When they try to establish a time frame for the writing of the gospels.

- Critics tend to reject miracle, and so reject Divine inspiration.
- The witness of the facts of history are very important for establishing truth.
- **Truth in matters of history is consistent with Divine inspiration.**

# Source 4, 5, 6, & 7: The Gospel accounts

- If Luke's gospel was written around 62 AD, that places Matthew's and Mark's gospels around the same time, within the lifetimes of eyewitnesses to the events.
- If Matthew's Hebrew or Aramaic version is Q, it had to be written even earlier in order to be used to compile the others.

# Source 4, 5, 6, & 7: The Gospel accounts

- It is reasonable for Matthew to have conferred with Peter regarding events as well, since Peter was in the inner circle and present for more of the events. It was reasonable for Luke as well, since he describes his work as a compilation.
- Thus the gospels represent very early accounts, too close in time to be the product of legends.



# Sources 4,5, 6, 7: The Gospels

In the gospels, the disciples were terrified by the crucifixion. They hid. Peter denied Christ.

- Because this information is so embarrassing, it would never have been reported unless true.
- (The critics are funny this way – they won't accept many things, but embarrassing stories about the apostles are fine.)

# Sources 4,5, 6, 7: The Gospels

Then, after seeing the risen Christ, the disciples became bold.

- ▣ Acts reports their courage during persecution.

Believing in the resurrection of Christ changed their lives.

The church exists **as a result**.

# Source 8: A Second generation Christian's report

Clement of Rome, ( b. 30AD, d. 100 AD.)  
His letter to the church in Corinth mentioned the resurrection. We have quotes from his letter, although the letter itself has been lost.

- *“This man, as he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing and their traditions before his eyes...”*

# Source 8: A Second generation Christian's report

*...Nor was he alone, for there were **many** still remaining who had received instructions from the apostles.”*

- This provides a chain of evidence going back to Peter's belief in the risen Christ.
- It also reports multiple witnesses, not just one or two.
- A disciple named Clement is mentioned in the Bible as a fellow worker of Paul, and he is likely to be the same man—Philippians 4:3.

# Source 8: A Second generation Christian's report—Clement of Rome

Clement's ordination by Peter was reported by Tertullian 200 AD. (Peter was crucified upside down, at Rome, in 68 AD for refusing to recant his belief. Clement's ministry had to begin earlier than that.)

Clement's letter, dated 95 AD, was described by Irenaeus in 185 AD as shown. It continues... *"In the time of this Clement, no small dissention having occurred among the brothers at Corinth, the Church in Rome dispatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians."* This certainly fits the profile of the Corinthian church.

## Source 9: Another second generation Christian's report –

- Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna, a church mentioned in Revelation.
- Irenaeus had personally met Polycarp and he reported Polycarp's death due to persecution when he was a very old man.
- Tertullian reported that the Apostle John appointed Polycarp Bishop of Smyrna.

## Source 9: Another second generation Christian report – Polycarp

- Smyrna was located in present day Turkey. This shows the early spread of the gospel was over a wide territorial range.
- Just as the previous source showed Peter travelling to Rome and appointing Clement as bishop there, this source shows the Apostle John travelling to Turkey and appointing Polycarp as bishop there.
- This also is consistent with the Apostle John's exile to Patmos where Revelation was written.

# Source 9: Another second generation Christian report –Polycarp

A later church historian, Eusebius, preserved information from Irenaeus' letter to Florinus, where he described Polycarp's ministry in detail.

- *“I can even picture the place where the blessed Polycarp sat and conversed, his comings and goings, his character, his personal appearance, his discourses to the crowds, and how he reported his discussions with John and others who had seen the Lord...”*



## Source 9: Another second generation Christian report –

*...He recalled their very words, what they reported about the Lord, and his miracles and his teaching – things that Polycarp had heard directly from eyewitnesses of the Word of life and reported in full harmony with Scripture.*”

# Sources 8 and 9 Verified

the change in the apostles' lives due to believing they saw the risen Christ. The courage of the early Christians under Roman persecution is well documented in history.

People will only die for something they believe is true. If they know it is false, they will cave rather than die under persecution.

# Sources 8 and 9 Verified the change in the apostles' lives

- The apostles were in a position to know what they were saying was what they truly believed. They were eyewitnesses.
- They were early follower of Christ, so they were biased toward Him.
- The next two facts are from people biased against Christ.

## Fact 3

A persecutor of the church named Paul also claimed and believed He saw the risen Jesus, and his life changed.

## Fact Number 3: A Persecutor believed.

A murderous persecutor of the early church named Saul was changed when he claimed to see the risen Christ. The change was

- ▣ *from* imprisoning everyone he could find who claimed to believe in Christ
- ▣ *to* devoting his life to witnessing about the risen Christ.

## Fact Number 3: A Persecutor believed.

- Evidence from a hostile witness that supports the other side deserves additional weight.
- The description of the change is in Acts 9:1-31 and 26:1-32, with additional information in Galatians 1:11-24.

# Fact 3, Continued

Paul's witness of his transformation in Acts 26:1-32 took place in front of --

- King Herod Agrippa, relative of Herod the Great who murdered the infants of Bethlehem trying to kill the Infant Jesus, and
- also relative of Herod Antipas who executed John the Baptist on a whim,
- and who also presided over one of Jesus' trials.

# Fact 3, Continued

- Consider the irony of Paul's statement, *“For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice. For this has not been done in a corner.”*



## Fact 4

Jesus' skeptical half-brother James claimed and believed he saw the risen Jesus, and his life changed.

## Fact 4:

- Jesus' skeptical half-brother James became a supporter and leader of the early church after claiming to see the risen Christ.
- James' conversion from skepticism carries particular weight because he would not have mistaken the identity of his brother.

Plus 1 Fact Most Critics Accept

**Fact 5: Jesus' tomb was empty.**

## FACT 5: Jesus' tomb was empty.

- A majority of critics believe this is true.
- The Roman and Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had motive, authority, and opportunity to produce the body when people began claiming that they saw the risen Christ.
- They did not produce the corpse.

# The analysis of the alternate explanation at the time.

- Instead, the soldiers who had guarded the tomb reported an obvious fabrication,
- and the leaders encouraged it.
- This indicates that the truth was less pleasing to the authorities than the fabrication.
- Thus the conclusion that the tomb was empty.

# Fact 5: The fabrication

Matthew 28:11-13 *“Now while they were on their way, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. And when they had assembled with the elders and counseled together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, ‘You are to say,...*

## Fact 5: The fabrication

*“His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.” And if this should come to the ears of the (Roman) governor, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.’ And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.”*

# Fact 5: Problems with the fabrication

- If the soldiers admitted sleeping on duty, they were in severe trouble for dereliction of duty.
- If they said something happened while they were asleep, how did they know what that something was?



# Fact 5: Problems with the fabrication

- For this to be the best story they could concoct, they had to be avoiding a truth they did not want to admit.
- For the authorities to protect their story, the authorities had to like the truth even less.
- The most likely truth they were avoiding was the truth of the resurrection of Christ.

# The Truth of the Resurrection

The Christian religion exists. It exists based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ--

- From the belief of the early followers of Christ that they had seen the risen Christ.
- They believed so strongly that they faced death under persecution rather than recant.
- **The tomb had to be empty for that belief to take hold.**

# The Implications of the Resurrection

Do the facts of the resurrection explain **why** Christ died and rose again?

- We have talked about one reason: that returning victorious over death is a certain way to demonstrate that Christ's message was from God.
- If we are staking our lives and eternal future on a fact, we need that kind of demonstration. God is GOOD to give us such a clear support for that fact.

# The Implications of the Resurrection

- The other message of the death and burial and resurrection of Christ is a message of atonement for sins – not for Christ’s sins, because He had no sins, but for ours.
- The central message of the Hebrew Scriptures was the requirement for God to take human sins away so that humans could be in right relationship with a Holy God.

# The Implications of the Resurrection

- Romans 3:25-26 states that the atoning sacrifice of Christ made it possible for God to remain just while being the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- The atonement of Christ made God's mercy available to us without negating the requirements of justice.
- Therefore Christ is called **“The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”**

# The Implications of the Resurrection

Note that the fact of the Trinity, the complex Unity of God's identity, makes the justice and mercy possible. God was not requiring someone else to die in our place, but Himself, our Judge, in a difficult-to-fathom way. (We will look at the Trinity in more detail in Class 8.)

- ACTS 17:30-31--God will judge the world through a Man whom He appointed, and He furnished proof by raising Him from the dead.
- Acts 20:28—God purchased the church with His own blood.

# Since the resurrection of Christ is true, what should we do?

The sermon summary in Acts 2 says our response should be repentance and faith, and receiving the Holy Spirit into our lives.

# A Step by Step Response

1. Repent of sins. Respect God's right to make the rules. Apologize to Him.
2. Believe the death and resurrection of Jesus are for your own sins. Ask forgiveness on that basis. Receive His atonement for your sins.
3. If you are not yet sure of those events, **ask God to let you know the truth about them.**



# A Step by Step Response

- Commit your life and future to God's kingdom. This was publicly expressed through baptism in Acts, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The basic commitment must take place in the heart.
- Entrust your life to Him.

# Romans 10:9-13 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, "*Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.*" <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. <sup>13</sup> For "*whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*"

# A Step by Step Response

- Invite the Holy Spirit to come into your life.
- Express those wishes directly to God, with the wish to become a citizen of His Kingdom and a member of His family. That is what is meant by “calling upon God.”
- Ask for His power to do what is right.

# Job 33:4

The Spirit of God has made me  
And the breath of the ALMIGHTY  
Has given me life.

# Homework

## Class Four Set 1:

- Read the Bible references in the “Introduction” section of THE NEW EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT up to page **xlvi**. Each topic in this section will be covered in greater detail later in the book.
- What are some of the ideas about Christianity that this book addresses?
- If history is defined as “a knowledge of the past based on testimony...physical, verbal, and written,” what precaution is necessary for belief?

# Homework

## Class Four Set 1:

- What is the difference between the old and new definitions of tolerance?
- List some problems with postmodernism.

# Homework

## Class Four Set 2:

- Read Romans 1:16-32.
- What are evidences for a Creator implied in this chapter?
- Read the rest of “Introduction” to THE NEW EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT.
- What are some problems of the eastern religious worldview?
- What is at least one problem with atheism?
- What is at least one problem with agnosticism?

# Homework

## Class Four Set 2:

- The section on science in the Introduction needs a bit of explanation. For many years, religious faith and science were seen as incompatible. Religion was relegated to the irrational, emotional realm, and science was elevated to the world of facts and reality.
- However, a new movement has emerged in science called Intelligent Design, based in part on information theory and statistics.



# Homework

## Class Four Set 2:

- Mathematical characteristics of data can be defined using methods from **chaos theory**.
- Some characteristics show the existence of information.
- Other tests reveal patterns and how different they are from randomness.
- When information is found AND that information matches an outside, independent pattern, that set of characteristics indicates the action of intelligence. Intelligence is the bridge between information and outside pattern.

# Homework

## Class Four Set 2:

- People in many disciplines intuitively discern when intelligence produces an effect. Information theory and chaos theory make the intuitive process mathematically precise. The mathematical precision allows natural science to recognize intelligence.
- Intelligent design looks at the complexity of information in the natural world. It seeks to find information and patterns embedded in nature that time plus chance alone could not produce.

# Homework

## Class Four Set 2:

- The discovery of such information has forced scientists to look at their assumptions about whether the universe is closed or open in terms of cause and effect, much as we did when we studied in HE IS THERE AND HE IS NOT SILENT, except using graduate level mathematics.
- Because current theories of science were built on the **closed universe assumption**, and Intelligent Design implies the **open universe assumption**, much of the scientific world is reacting negatively to the news about design. Science is slow to shift paradigms, and this news requires a major shift.

# Homework

## Class Four Set 3:

- If God is the Author of the Bible, and God understands His creation, we would expect **hints of modern scientific conclusions** to be in the Bible before the ideas were known by humans. For the next few days, we want to look at some of these **hints**.
- In 1993, according to THE CASE FOR A CREATOR, scientists discovered that earth's seasons are predictable **because** the moon's gravity and orbital path **stabilize** the earth's axis as it revolves around the sun each year. Read Psalm 104:5,19 and Genesis 1:14. What do these verses indicate about the moon?

# Homework

## Class Four Set 3:

- Read THE NEW EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT chapter 1, pages 3 - 16.
- Describe the diversity of authors and writing situations when composing the 66 books of the Bible.
- Describe the unity of the Bible's thought and purpose.
- How did Josh MacDowell compare the Bible to the Great Books series?
- If God Himself is the hidden Author of the Bible, would one expect Him to want the book to be available to people around the world? Has that happened?

# Homework

## Class Four Set 3:

- How do Bible manuscripts compare to Shakespeare's manuscripts in accuracy of preservation?
- Does the Bible have a track record of surviving persecution and criticism?
- What are some other ways the Bible is unique?