



Hoax or History

An investigative analysis of the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Core Historical Claim

INCIDENT 1: THE EMPTY TOMB

“I have seen the Lord.”

— Mary Magdalene, reporting an encounter close to the empty tomb (John 20:18).

INCIDENT 2: THE PUBLIC DECLARATION

“God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this.”

— The Apostle Peter, speaking to a crowd in Jerusalem 50 days later (Acts 2:32).

The Stakeholder's Ledger: Evaluating the Consequences

Written in the first century to the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 15:14-19), this text establishes that the Christian faith is entirely dependent on a single historical event.

WITHOUT THE RESURRECTION

WITH THE RESURRECTION

Proclamation & Faith

Empty, powerless, vain (v. 14)

Powerful

The Core Message

Based on a false witness/lie (v. 15)

True

Human Salvation

Failed; humanity remains in sin (v. 17)

Saving

The Deceased

Perished entirely; no afterlife (v. 18)

Eternal life

Present Value

Pitiful; a ripped-off existence (v. 19)

Full of hope and value

The Minimal Facts Methodology

Dr. Gary Habermas, a historian and philosopher (Ph.D., Michigan State), surveyed decades of scholarship to isolate a set of facts surrounding Jesus' death.



Evidentiary Filter

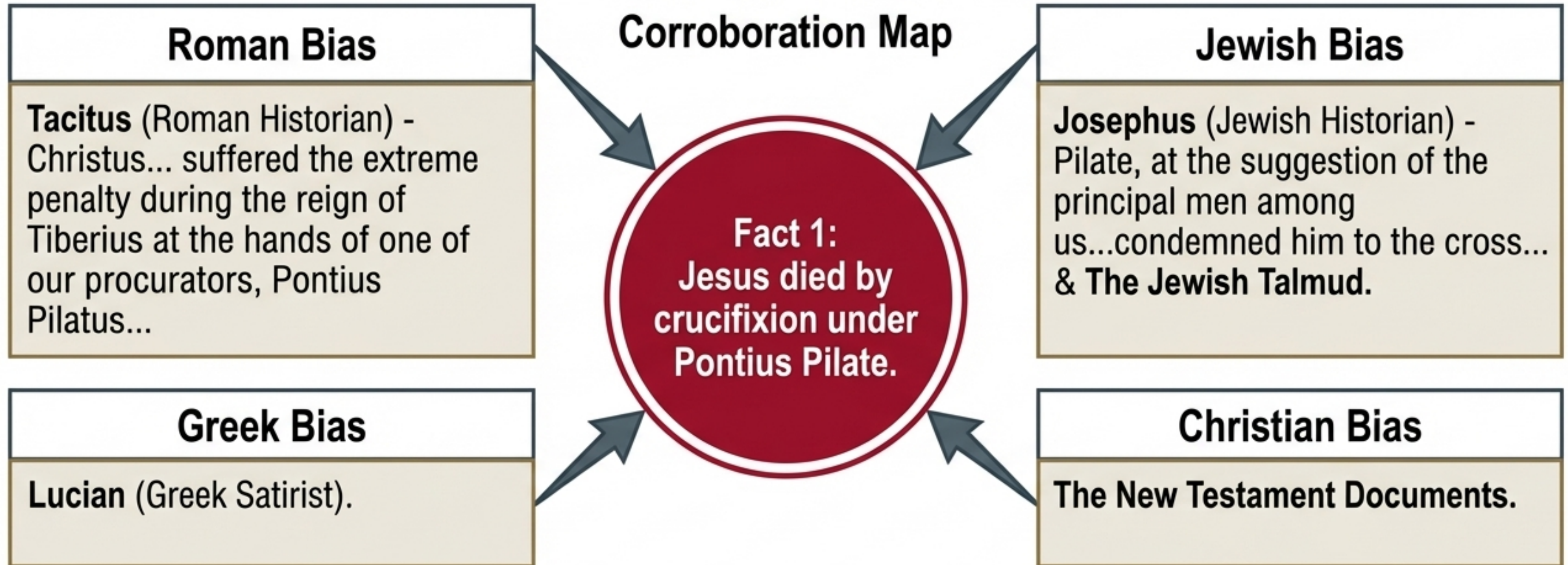
Thousands of Scholarly Works on the Resurrection

12 Total Historical Facts

The Minimal Facts:
Accepted by skeptical, agnostic,
and atheist historians.

The Argument — If these minimal facts are granted by the vast majority of experts, what is the best explanation of them all together?

Multi-Directional Corroboration of the Execution



Expert Testimony — That Jesus was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be. — Dr. John Dominic Crossan (Skeptical Scholar).

Fact 2: The Immediate Conviction and Preservation of Belief

Historians have identified around 18 first-century Christian creeds attesting to the resurrection. The most critical is preserved in 1 Corinthians 15:3-6.

“...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was **raised on the third day**... and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then he **appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time...**”

Expert Testimony: We can say with complete certainty that some of his disciples at some later time insisted that... *he soon appeared to them, convincing them that he had been raised from the dead.*

— Dr. Bart Ehrman (Skeptical Historian, UNC).

The Timeline of Conviction

According to skeptical scholar Dr. Gerd Lüdemann, the 1 Corinthians creed dates to within two years of Jesus' death.

Under 2 Years



His earliest followers went from hiding in fear to boldly proclaiming a living Christ overnight, memorizing these encounters in creeds to pass on to the next generation.

Fact 3: The Radical Inversion of the Persecutor

Saul the Persecutor

Devout Jewish scholar.

Actively arrested and oversaw the execution of early Jewish-background Christians.

The Pivot Point:

Claims to have encountered the risen Jesus.

Paul the Proclaimer

Becomes Christianity's greatest missionary.

Boldly proclaims the resurrection—willing to suffer rejection, prison, torture, and death for this belief.

(Note: People do not suffer and die for a lie they know is a lie).

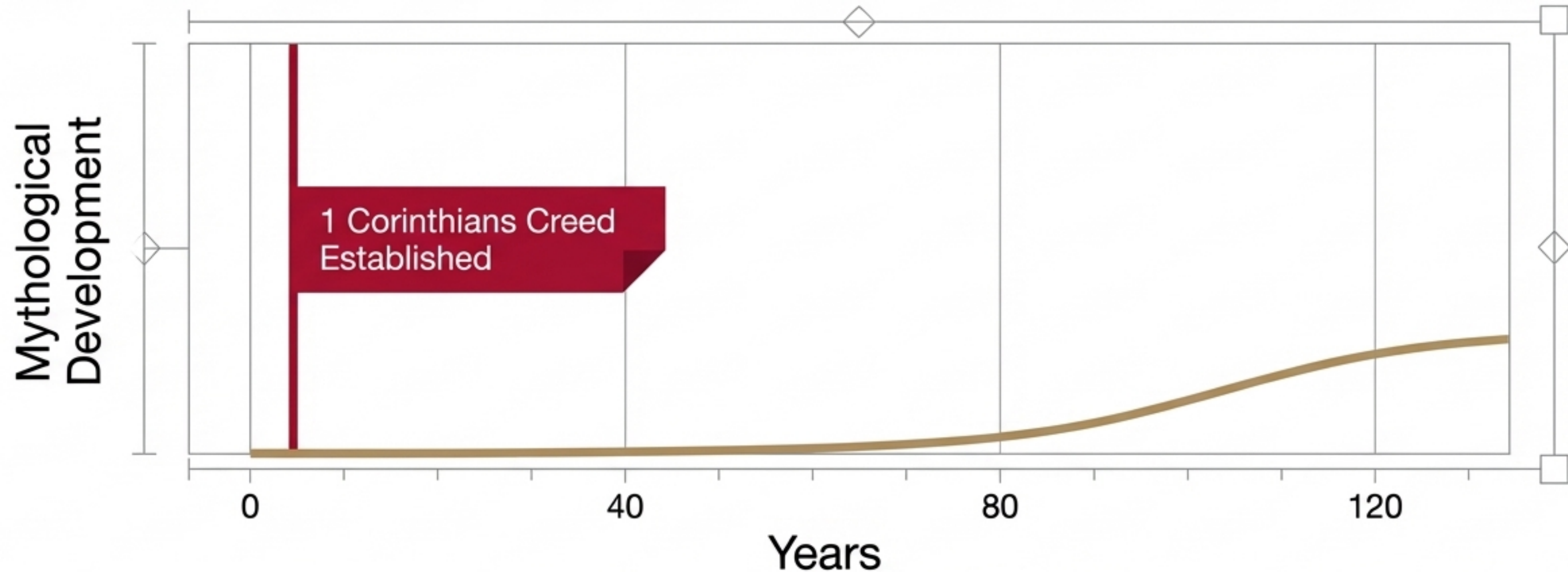
Expert Testimony: One of them, the apostle Paul, claims quite plainly to have seen Jesus alive after his death. Thus, for the historian, Christianity begins after the death of Jesus. — Dr. Bart Ehrman.

Interrogating the Alternative Explanations

| Theory | The Premise | The Fatal Flaw | The Historical Reality |
|---------------|--|--|---|
| Swoon | Jesus didn't actually die; he just fainted on the cross. | The Romans did not make mistakes; they were expert killers. | Jesus was definitively dead (Fact 1). |
| Hallucination | The early disciples experienced grief-induced visions. | There is no such thing in psychology as a group hallucination. | Multi-person, physical encounters were recorded in early creeds (Fact 2). |
| Myth & Legend | The resurrection is a myth that gullible people bought into over time. | Legends require generations of time to develop. | Early creeds date back to mere months or years after the event. |

The Impossibility of the Legend Hypothesis

The development of historical legends is a slow process. It requires the original eyewitnesses to die off so that exaggerated claims can grow unchecked by those who were actually there.



Because Christian creeds affirming the resurrection were cemented within months to two years, there was no time for legendary decay to occur.

Converging on the Best Explanation

Fact 1 demands physical death.
(Eliminates Swoon)

Fact 2 demands immediate, group conviction.
(Eliminates Legend & Hallucination)

Fact 3 demands the radical transformation of a hostile enemy.

**The Best Historical Explanation:
God raised Jesus from the dead.**

The Verdict and The Next Move

If the historical evidence points to the resurrection, we cannot simply shrug and move on. It validates that Jesus is who he claimed to be: the Son of God, who who died and rose again to restore humanity. The time is right to trust him—or to continue your rigorous research.

Read primary accounts:
The Gospel of John

Review a journalist's investigation:
The Case for Christ by Lee
Strobel (Book or Film)

Deep dive the methodology:
Search Gary Habermas
Minimal Facts Argument