

# JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD

Easter Sunday 2026. 1 Corinthians 15:14-19.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. April 5, 2026.

## THE CHRISTIAN CLAIM

**Jesus Christ rose from the dead.**

That's what Christians say.

The earliest followers of Jesus proclaimed the resurrection:

- **Mary Magdalene** met the risen Jesus close to the empty tomb. She ran to the disciples and said, *“I have seen the Lord”* (John 20:18)
- **50 days later, the apostle Peter** spoke to a crowd in Jerusalem and said, *“God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this”* (Acts 2:32).

**BUT ... the question most skeptics ask is, “Yes, I know the New Testament claims that Jesus rose from the dead, but did he really?”**

Is the resurrection a hoax or history?<sup>1</sup> Great question.

If you've been asking the same question, you've come to the right place. I'm going to give you reasons to believe that Jesus really rose from the dead.

**But first, I want to tell you why this matters.** What difference does the resurrection of Jesus from the dead make today?

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.garyhabermas.com/articles/J\\_Study\\_Historical\\_Jesus\\_3-2\\_2005/J\\_Study\\_Historical\\_Jesus\\_3-2\\_2005.htm](https://www.garyhabermas.com/articles/J_Study_Historical_Jesus_3-2_2005/J_Study_Historical_Jesus_3-2_2005.htm)

# WHY THE RESURRECTION MATTERS

**What difference does the resurrection make?** It's no exaggeration to say that the Christian faith depends on it. One passage in the Bible makes this plain. This is part of a first-century letter to the church in Corinth, in Greece:

*1 Corinthians 15:14-15, 17-19 (CSB) ... if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith. 15 Moreover, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified wrongly about God that he raised up Christ... 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Those, then, who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. 19 If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.*

**The passage lists FIVE reasons why** the resurrection is essential. Without the resurrection:

1. **Christianity is just powerless religious talk:** *“Our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith”* - empty, powerless, useless - verse 14. **vs powerful**
2. **The Christian faith is based on a lie:** *“Moreover, we are found to be false witnesses about God”* - verse 15. **vs true**
3. **God’s plan of salvation has failed:** *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins”* - verse 17. **vs saving**
4. **There is no afterlife:** *“Those, then, who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished”* - verse 18. **vs eternal life**
5. **We’ve been ripped off:** *“If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone”* - verse 19. **vs hope, life, valuable**

**So, the resurrection matters,** which brings us back to the original question: Did it happen? Did Jesus rise from the dead?

# THE MINIMAL FACTS ARGUMENT FOR THE RESURRECTION

**Is there any reliable evidence outside of the Bible?** Yes, there is.

**This is evidence that even skeptical, agnostic, or atheist scholars** of ancient history are willing to accept. When you add up all the evidence, it makes it more likely that Jesus rose from the dead than that he did not.

**Dr. Gary Habermas is a philosopher and historian** who earned a doctorate from Michigan State and has spent his career studying the resurrection. He has surveyed thousands of scholarly works on the resurrection over decades and has found that a small number of crucial facts are recorded in multiple ancient sources and accepted by modern scholars. He claims these facts back up the resurrection. He calls it the “**minimal facts argument.**”

**The argument goes like this:** *“If these minimal facts are granted by the vast majority of experts, what is the best explanation of them all together?”*

**Let’s look very briefly at THREE of these minimal facts (there are 12 facts in total)<sup>2</sup> ...**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://crossexamined.org/the-minimal-facts-of-the-resurrection/>

## FACT ONE: JESUS DIED BY CRUCIFIXION

**Christian, Jewish, skeptical, and atheist researchers** all concede that Jesus was executed by crucifixion under Pontius Pilate.

**Multiple Early Sources, including** the New Testament, the Jewish historian Josephus, the Roman historian Tacitus, the Greek satirist Lucian, and the Jewish Talmud (the central text of Rabbinic Judaism).<sup>3</sup>

**Josephus**, the Jewish historian, tells us that:

*“Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us...condemned him to the cross...”*<sup>4</sup>

**Tacitus**, the Roman historian, wrote in his annals:

*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 ... (Annals 15.44).*

**Modern Historian: Dr. John Dominic Crossan**, a skeptical scholar, writes, *“That Jesus was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be.”*<sup>5</sup>

Jesus’ crucifixion meets the historical criteria of multiple, independent, and early eyewitness sources, including attestation by enemies. **So, that’s fact one: Jesus died.**

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<sup>3</sup> Jewish Antiquities 18.3.3; Tacitus Annals 15:44; Lucian of Samosata The Death of Peregrine 11-13; Talmud Sanhedrin 43a

<sup>4</sup> Flavius Josephus, The New Complete Works of Josephus, Rev. ed., trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 590.

<sup>5</sup> John Dominic Crossan, Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 163.

## **FACT 2: THE EARLIEST CHRISTIANS BELIEVED THE RESURRECTION HAPPENED AND PRESERVED THAT BELIEF IN CREEDS OR AFFIRMATIONS**

**We have around eighteen first-century Christian creeds** that attest to belief in the resurrection.<sup>6</sup>

One creed is quoted in a New Testament letter to the church in Corinth. Part of the quote goes like this:

*1 Corinthians 15:3-6 (CSB) For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. 6 Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time...*

**The creed quoted there is dated to within two years** of Jesus' death, according to the skeptic Dr. Gerd Lüdemann.<sup>7</sup> Dr. Bart Ehrman, recently retired historian of early Christianity at the University of North Carolina, writes, *"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."*<sup>8</sup>

**His earliest followers were convinced** they had encountered Jesus alive after his death. They went from hiding in fear to proclaiming the living Christ overnight. And they preserved these encounters in creeds that they memorized and handed on to the next generation. **So, that's fact two.**

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<sup>6</sup> See Addendum to this talk OR go to: <https://www.perplexity.ai/search/what-biblical-passages-does-ga-AGpuOXnRFSPcqk9j6BXEQ#0>

<sup>7</sup> Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 38.

<sup>8</sup> Ehrman, B. 1999. *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*. p. 230-231.

## FACT 3: PAUL, THE PERSECUTOR, WAS TRANSFORMED

**Paul was a leader of the early Christian movement.** His original name was Saul, a devout Jew, religious scholar, and persecutor of Jewish-background Christians. He arrested them and oversaw their executions.

**Paul claimed that he encountered the risen Jesus,** and it completely reversed his life: from hunting Christians to becoming Christianity's greatest missionary.

The skeptical scholar, Dr. Bart Ehrman, writes:

*It is a historical fact that some of Jesus' followers came to believe that he had been raised from the dead soon after his execution. We know some of these believers by name; 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.<sup>9</sup>*

**Many scholars** <sup>10</sup> <sup>11</sup> **agree that the expansion of the Christian faith** around the world was due to early Christians boldly proclaiming that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It was the heart of their message; not his miracles, not his ethical teachings, but his indestructible life.

**Let's face it:** people do not suffer rejection, prison, torture, or death for a lie they know is a lie. But those early Christians stood firm on their belief in the resurrection even in the face of persecution and death.

**That's the third fact.** Paul's transformation is linked to meeting the risen Jesus.

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<sup>9</sup> Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, (Third Edition New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 276.

<sup>10</sup> <https://chab123.wordpress.com/2017/05/14/bart-ehrman-the-resurrection-of-jesus-and-the-vision-hypothesis-3/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://jamesbishopblog.com/2015/06/29/jesus-really-did-appear-to-the-disciples-and-skeptics-after-his-death-40-quotes-by-scholars/>

## WHAT IS THE BEST EXPLANATION FOR THE FACTS?

### What is the best explanation for those facts?

Before I answer that, let me respond to some frequent objections:

- **Peter, maybe Jesus didn't die.** Maybe he fainted. Yes, this is a common objection, but it has one serious flaw: The Romans didn't make mistakes; they were expert killers. Jesus was dead.
- **OK. Peter, maybe the early disciples hallucinated.** One problem with that suggestion: there is no such thing as a group hallucination.
- Man, well, how about this, Peter? **The resurrection is a myth or legend** that gullible people bought into. Nope, that won't work either. Legends take generations to grow, but Christian creeds date back to months or a few years after the resurrection of Jesus.

### So, what is the best explanation for the minimal facts?

The best explanation is: God raised Jesus from the dead.

**If that is correct, then we cannot simply shrug and move on.** Jesus is who he and the earliest Christians said he was: the Son of God, God with us, who would die and rise again to save us from our sins and restore us to God.

**Therefore, the time is right to trust/worship him as YOUR Savior/God.** Or, research Jesus for yourself. Here are some suggestions:

- Read the Gospel of John
- Read Lee Strobel's ***The Case for Christ***, also a movie to stream online.
- Google search: *Habermas, the minimal facts argument for the resurrection.*

# SUGGESTED RESOURCES

## Books

### 1. For the "Starting Out" Student

"The Case for Christ" by Lee Strobel

Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ* follows a former atheist and legal journalist as he investigates the historical evidence for Jesus using courtroom-style methods and expert interviews, ultimately arguing for the reliability of the Gospels and the reality of Christ's deity and resurrection.

*The Case for Christ* is available in paperback, on Kindle, and as a streaming movie.

Best for: Someone who wants a "detective story" feel.

### 2. For the "Skeptic" looking for more evidence

"A Doubter's Guide to Jesus" by John Dickson

*A Doubter's Guide to Jesus* is a persuasive and often challenging investigation into the historical figure found in the earliest sources. These sources, which include references both direct and indirect—from Roman, Jewish, and Christian accounts—offer us more than simple evidence that Jesus existed; they begin to form a picture that is both deeply credible and profoundly counterintuitive. Dickson is a renowned scholar who has published over 20 books.

### 3. For the "Deep Dive" into the Facts

"The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus" by Gary Habermas & Michael Licona

Why recommend it: This is the definitive "textbook" for the Minimal Facts Argument we discussed today. It includes a helpful "Resurrection Quiz" and detailed responses to every skeptical theory imaginable.

Best for: The student who said, "Wait, how do we know the skeptics actually agree on these facts?"

#### **4. For the "Philosophical" Thinker**

"Mere Christianity" by C.S. Lewis

Why recommend it: It's a classic for a reason. Lewis doesn't just look at history; he looks at the "big picture" of why morality and the human experience point toward God. It's concise and incredibly witty.

Best for: The student who is asking "Why does God matter?" more than "Did it happen?"

#### **5. For the "History Buff"**

"The Resurrection of the Son of God" by N.T. Wright

Why recommend it: If you have a history major in the room, this is the "gold standard." It's a massive scholarly work that looks at how the ancient world viewed life after death and why the Christian claim was so revolutionary. (Warning: It's a thick book!)

Best for: Someone who wants to see the deep historical and cultural context.

### **Digital & Video Resources**

#### **1. ReasonableFaith.org (Dr. William Lane Craig).**

His "Animated Videos" series on YouTube is world-class. They take complex arguments (like the Kalam Cosmological Argument or the Fine-Tuning of the Universe) and explain them in 5-minute cartoons.

#### **2. The Bible Project (Resurrection Series).**

Excellent for understanding the theological meaning behind the historical events through beautiful animation.

#### **3. Cold-Case Christianity (J. Warner Wallace).**

Wallace is a real-life cold-case homicide detective who used his professional skills to investigate the Gospels. His website and YouTube channel are perfect for visual learners.

# ADDENDUM

## EARLY CHRISTIAN CREEDS

Gary Habermas repeatedly highlights a core cluster of New Testament passages as preserving very early creedal or confessional traditions about Jesus, especially his death, burial, resurrection, and lordship.

### Central resurrection creed

1 Corinthians 15:3–7 – Habermas treats this as the premier “pre-Pauline” resurrection creed, often dated to within a few years of the crucifixion, and sometimes as early as 30–33 AD.

### Other Pauline and NT creeds he often lists

Across his writings and interviews, Habermas also points to a recurring set of early creedal or hymn-like texts:

- 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (sometimes extended through v. 29) – the tradition of the Lord’s Supper.
- Romans 1:3–4 – a tightly worded formula about Jesus’ Davidic descent and being declared Son of God in power by the resurrection.
- Romans 4:25 – “delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” as a compact soteriological formula.
- Romans 10:9 – confession “Jesus is Lord” joined with belief that God raised him from the dead.
- Philippians 2:6–11 (often 2:5–11) – the Christ-hymn confessing Christ’s preexistence, incarnation, humiliation, and exaltation.
- Colossians 1:15–20 – the Christ-hymn on Christ as image of God and agent of creation (cited in broader lists of early material).

- 1 Timothy 2:5–6 – one mediator who “gave himself as a ransom,” treated as brief creedal content.
- 1 Timothy 3:16 – “He was manifested in the flesh...” often identified as a creedal/hymnic summary of Christ.
- 2 Timothy 2:8 – “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David” as a compact traditional formula.
- 1 Peter 3:18 – Christ’s once-for-all suffering “the righteous for the unrighteous” as an early soteriological summary.

### **Early sermon “creeds” in Acts**

Habermas also argues that several sermon summaries in Acts preserve pre-Luke, early-preaching traditions, or “creedal” kernels, particularly concerning Jesus’ death, resurrection, and exaltation. Among those he frequently cites:

- Acts 1:21–22
- Acts 2:22–36
- Acts 3:13–16
- Acts 4:8–10
- Acts 5:29–32
- Acts 10:39–43
- Acts 13:28–31

These passages, together with 1 Corinthians 15:3–7, form the main set that Habermas identifies as early creedal or confessional traditions, providing a window into the earliest proclamation about Jesus.

# SMALL GROUP GUIDE

## Review

- Review Peter's April 5<sup>th</sup> teaching and study guide.
- What were the main insights of Peter's teaching?
- What questions do you have about the passage or Peter's teaching?
- What were the main applications or takeaways for your life?

## Discuss

1. Visit the church website to read a list of resurrection results that have practical implications for today: [FamousGod.com/groups](http://FamousGod.com/groups). Scroll down to the Small Group Leader Resources and click on the "Implications" link. Read through the list as a group, then pick three or more results to discuss together. Look up the relevant Bible passages, survey the brief descriptions, and then answer question 2 below.
2. How does the resurrection affect your daily life? It is not only ancient history but also the power to live right now. Discuss the meaning and application of 1 Corinthians 15:14-19, Ephesians 1:18-23, and Romans 6:4-13.
3. What has helped you to believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Is it blind faith or something else? What would you say to a skeptical friend who asks you why you believe Jesus is alive?

## Prayer Focus

- 247: "Lord, please add daily to the Cornerstone those who are being saved."
- Pray for more opportunities to share the good news message of Jesus Christ, the risen Savior.