

TRUST THE
STORY

4 (Unspiritual) Reasons to Trust the Story

Series Introduction on 1 Corinthians: “Think Christian”

Teaching Text: 1 Cor 15:1-8

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2024 Theme: Trust the Story

Trust the story is a call to trusting our lives in the story of God. Our culture is increasingly teaching us to rely on ourselves. We each have a story of our lives played out in our head, yet a story without God will never satisfy our deepest longings for purpose + fulfillment. This year is an invitation to explore the biblical story, to find your place in it, and to discover how its perils and promises answer the greatest questions of modern life.

INTRO: 4 (Unspiritual) Reasons to Trust the Story

If we’re going to build our lives around the Bible, we should have good reasons for trusting in its teaching and instruction. Fortunately, there’s tons of evidence that validates the biblical record and, because of that, there are very good reasons to trust the story of the Bible. We’ll look at four primary areas:

- I. **The Archaeological Validity of the Bible**
- II. **The Type of Evidence that Matters to Historians**
- III. **The Verifiable Evidence for Jesus’ Resurrection**
- IV. **The Quality of Evidence for the Biblical Record**

Lastly, we will examine how the most popular skeptical claims stand up to scrutiny.

1 Cor 15:1-8

*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that **Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,** ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the **Scriptures,** ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷**Then he appeared to James,** then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

REMEMBER THE GOSPEL IS SO MUCH BIGGER THAN MY LIFE

- **Story: Ryan Skoog, Russian Gulag Church Stones**

“We are a community of believers who are being forced to take the stones of our church and turn them into our own prison where we will die... but we are putting a prayer out to the Lord, that one day these stones will be a church again.”

I. The Archaeological Validity of the Bible:

There is no doubt today that Jerusalem was a real city, or that Galilee is a region in Northern Israel. But because we don't have copies of the Old Testament that date back to the time of Moses, the best way for us to test its claims is through archaeology. Modern archaeological methods verify the historical claims of the OT all the way back to the 1st Millennium B.C.

- **In laymen's terms, everything as far back as the book of Esther is %100 verified in contemporary archaeological study.** As contemporary archaeological methods continue to improve, archaeologists are only now beginning to uncover as far back as King David's time and some findings that reach as far back as Moses and Joshua. Let me share with you some of the recent findings:

The Hittites:

Prior to archaeological discoveries that revealed the Hittite civilization, the only source of information about the Hittites had been the Hebrew Bible. No one had ever known or even heard of the Hittites, but their civilization was described in the OT. Scholars of various fields in the 1800s believed this group of people was just made up, until they began to find evidence of the Hittite Empire in north-central Turkey.

- What they found confirms that the Hittite Empire was one of the dominant powers of the Near East from the 18th c. B.C. until the 12th c. B.C., just as they are described in the Old Testament—and at the time and place the biblical authors placed them. The beauty of what this means is, the biblical account contains eye-witness descriptions as far back as the 2nd Millennium B.C.

Jericho:

Modern archaeology has discovered the city of Jericho eight miles northeast of the Dead Sea. It is situated approximately 900ft. below sea-level. In archaeology, a dig-site is called a “Tel,” or “Tell,” which means “an artificial topographical feature.” Today you can find all the information you like about Jericho by searching “Tel Jericho,” or “Tell es-Sultan.” **There have been three major excavations carried out at Tel Jericho and several smaller excavations. Across a wide host of archaeology teams, each of the teams agree upon the following six facts:**

1. *Tel Jericho is ancient Jericho. This is not under dispute.*
2. *The upper-brick walls fell outward, away from the city.*
3. *There is a massive burn layer throughout the site.*
4. *Full jars of burnt barley have been found in many rooms throughout the site*
5. *There is an abandonment layer, indicating no one occupied Jericho for centuries*
6. *The remains of a later Israelite settlement are present on top of the abandonment layer.*

What the various archaeological **teams disagree upon is the precise date of this ancient Canaanite site because there are multiple layers of settlement** (23 total). But the available timeframe of destruction provided by the archaeological teams is between 1550 B.C. and 1405 B.C.

Consider the significance of these six facts confirmed by several different archaeological teams of researchers:

1. **The fact that the walls fell outward** tells us that the destruction of the walls was sudden. If an earthquake were responsible, the walls would be scattered every which way; if it were beaten by a battering ram, the walls would break inward. But all of the mud-brick walls break outward at the same time, which means something sudden brought them down.
2. **The burn layer is found** throughout the site at the exact same layer of the Canaanite settlement. The Israelites were commanded not to ransack the materials in Jericho, but instead to burn the material remains.
3. Throughout the site there have been **found full jars of barley and grain**. Grain jars are full at the beginning of a harvest season, and empty toward the end of the year. This tells us when the siege of Jericho occurred: Spring.
 - Second, full jars of grains throughout the site means the siege could not have lasted several months, for these foodstuffs would have been consumed. The siege finished in a very short period of time.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The archaeological evidence confirms that Jericho was taken in a short siege during the Spring, and that the walls of Jericho tumbled outward all at once. This is exactly the time of year the Israelites are reported to take the city in the book of Joshua, and collectively this is archaeological confirmation that it occurred as the book of Joshua describes:

Josh 5:10: "While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal [plains of Jericho] they celebrated the Passover [Spring ceremony] on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho"

Josh. 6:20: "As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout and the walls fell down flat"

Josh. 6:24 "Then they burned the city with fire and everything within it"

These are not the only biblical sites discovered.

- **Sodom + Gomorrah.** The archaeological sites of Sodom and Gomorrah have been found and excavated, which you can find by searching for the archaeologist Dr. Steven Collins and "Tell el-Hammam." The story is the same: What Genesis 19 says happened is reflected in its entirety at both of the two sites of Tell el-Hammam.
- **Israel out of Egypt.** More recently archaeologists have begun to find evidence of Israelite migration out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan, but we must move along to the historical evidence in the New Testament.

II. The Type of Evidence that Matters to Historians:

Often when we read a passage in the Bible, we don't notice the "incidental details " because we're reading to get to the point of the passage. But incidental details are how historians can evaluate the types and quality of evidence in a historical document: observational evidence, material evidence, and testimonial evidence. For example, in a passage of Mark's Gospel describing Jesus carrying the cross, we read:

After they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross (Mk. 15:21)

When we read this, we mostly take note of Simon because he was forced to help Jesus carry the cross, and that's the point of the passage. However, what historians look for is the incidental details.

- As New Testament historian Richard Bauckham notes, "[T]he way Simon is described by Mark—as "Simon the father of Alexander and Rufus"—needs explanation...
- The reference to Alexander and Rufus certainly does presuppose that Mark expected many of his readers to know them, in person or by reputation... but this does not itself explain why they are named.
- There does not seem to be any good reason available other than that Mark is appealing to Simon's eyewitness testimony"¹ **through his sons who were present.**
- In other words, what reads as incidental details to us today was a form of EVIDENCE they were appealing to!
- **By the time Mark wrote his Gospel, Simon of Cyrene was no longer alive; but his sons, who were present and saw their father compelled to carry the cross with Jesus, are still alive and can be asked if this information is accurate.**

- That's why Mark includes the incidental detail, "father of Alexander and Rufus."
- **This is an invitation to the reader to check with the eyewitnesses.** This kind of evidence is all over biblical passages... From this kind of evidence, one of the most highly regarded historians of the New Testament, Richard Bauckham, wrote an entire book evaluating these features and concludes that the Gospel accounts are equivalent to eyewitness testimony.
- It's been nearly 20-years since Bauckham originally published his findings and no scholar since has challenged them; in fact, as we'll soon see, atheist and agnostic scholars agree with him.
- As we consider the evidence for Jesus' resurrection, bear in mind that the historians we're discussing—whether atheist, agnostic, or otherwise—are evaluating all of these kinds of details.

III. The Empirical Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection:

There are four verifiable facts that all scholars in the fields of Ancient History, New Testament History, and Late-Antique History agree upon regarding Jesus' death by crucifixion, burial, and subsequent sightings in 1st c. Judaea:

1. **THE TOMB.** Jesus' burial in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea after his crucifixion;
2. **THE WOMEN.** Jesus' tomb was found empty the Sunday following his crucifixion by a group of his woman followers;
3. **THE APPEARANCES.** On multiple occasions and under various circumstances, different individuals and groups of people experienced appearances of Jesus alive after his death; and
4. **THE DISCIPLES.** The original disciples suddenly and sincerely believed that Jesus was risen from the dead despite having every predisposition to the contrary.

None of these facts by themselves entails that Jesus rose from the dead. You can evaluate them each independently, as historians already have, and there is no commitment to Christian faith required when evaluating these four facts. **To evaluate the evidence, we need to think like a historian.** When historians examine ancient texts, biographies, customs and laws of the time, and cultural norms, they're looking for key elements to establish plausibility and implausibility, i.e., how a certain piece of data fits within the time and culture it belongs to:

1 Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006/2017), p. 52.

- *Does a piece of evidence describe an opponent or adversary in a sympathetic light?*
- *Does a source of evidence admit to things that would be embarrassing in that time and culture?*
- *Is a given piece of data attested in other sources?*
- *Do we have independent sources that confirm the same data, preferably with differences in minor details so we know it's actually a different source?*

This is ordinarily how historians evaluate the various forms of material, textual, and observational evidence available in a given historical inquiry. For example, these are the same methods of examination that enables historians to reconstruct the day-to-day details of the Civil War or the French Revolution. With these questions in mind, consider the following:

(1) THE TOMB: Jesus' burial in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea after his crucifixion:

As a member of the Jewish court that condemned Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea is not a person Jesus' followers would describe in a sympathetic light. There was strong resentment against the Jewish council that condemned Jesus, which makes it historically implausible that Christians would invent a member of that court who honors Jesus by giving him a proper burial. Second, Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy member of that society which means that, according to the customs of that time and place, his tomb was much larger than the average burial grounds and it is located in a visible, public location. If Jesus had not been buried in Joseph's tomb, everyone would know because they know exactly where the wealthy keep their family tombs. And yet, there are zero alternate burial accounts in the ancient record. For these reasons the Cambridge University scholar, John A. T. Robinson, states that Jesus' burial in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb is "one of the earliest and best-attested facts about Jesus."² Thus, Jesus' burial in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea is a historically verifiable fact.

(2) THE WOMEN. Jesus' tomb was found empty the Sunday following his crucifixion by a group of his woman followers

In all three synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, women are the first witnesses to Jesus' tomb being empty.

- Women's testimony was discounted and disregarded in 1st c. Judaea. According to the 1st c. historian Josephus, the testimony of women was regarded as so worthless that it could not even be admitted into a Jewish court of law.³

² John A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), p. 131.

³ Recounting Jewish Law, Josephus writes: "But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex," Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 4:219.

- The claim that women were the first eye-witnesses would be natively perceived as embarrassing and untrustworthy given the norms of that time. SO... it is historically impossible that Christians simply invented this account.
- Second, the earliest Jewish allegation against Christians was that they had stolen Jesus' body—for this claim to even arise requires that the body is missing from the tomb. For these reasons every scholar in the relevant fields acknowledges that the empty tomb was first witnessed by Jesus' women followers as a historically verifiable fact.

(3) THE APPEARANCES. On multiple occasions and under various circumstances, different individuals and groups of people experienced appearances of Jesus alive after his death

The list of eye-witnesses to Jesus' resurrection appearances, quoted by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:5–7, includes Peter, the Twelve disciples, 500 people at one time, and Jesus' brother James.

- The appearances of Jesus as described in the Gospels provide multiple, independent attestation of these appearances.
- The appearance to Peter is independently attested in Luke's writings; the appearance to the Twelve disciples is independently attested in both Luke and John's writing.
- The appearance to the women at the tomb is independently attested in Matthew and John. And the appearance to hundreds of people at once is independently attested in Mark, Matthew, and John.
- **Furthermore, neither James nor any of Jesus' younger brothers believed Jesus was the Messiah in his lifetime.**
- But it is indisputable that James and his brothers did become active Christian believers following Jesus' death.
- According to the 1st c. historian Josephus, James was killed for his faith in Jesus in the late 60s A.D.4
 - **Most of us have siblings—what would it take to convince you that your brother is the Lord such that you would be prepared to die for that belief?**
 - The only historically plausible answer is, in Paul's words, *"then he appeared to James."* Even one of the harshest New Testament critics, the atheist scholar Gert Lüdemann, admits, "It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus' death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ."⁵
 - **Gert Lüdemann is not a Christian**, he is an extreme critic of the Gospel accounts; nevertheless, as a historian he must admit that the people who claimed to see Jesus alive after his crucifixion genuinely believed that they had seen and touched him personally.

(4) THE DISCIPLES. The original disciples suddenly and sincerely believed that Jesus was risen from the dead despite having every predisposition to the contrary

No Jewish person of the 1st c. held a belief in a dying, much less rising, Messiah. The Messiah according to 1st c. perception was supposed to rid Israel of Roman occupation and re- establish the Davidic Kingdom in Judaea.

- But Jesus suffered the death of a criminal. According to Jewish law and custom, Jesus' execution by crucifixion proved that he was a heretic, a man cursed by God (Deut. 21:23).
- The disaster of Jesus' crucifixion in his followers' eyes was not that he was dead and gone, but that the crucifixion *proved* he was not and could never be the Messiah. This is precisely what Jesus' critics, the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin leadership, would have known as well, because Jewish beliefs about the afterlife in the 1st c. preclude anyone rising from the dead until the end of the world.
- Nevertheless, all of Jesus' disciples and several of those who had previously disbelieved Jesus' claims suddenly and sincerely came to believe that Jesus rose from the dead, and they were willing to suffer death for that belief. On the basis of these historical facts, one of the world's leading and most prolific historians of Second Temple Judaism, N. T. Wright, concludes, *"That is why, as a historian, I cannot explain the rise of Christianity unless Jesus rose again, leaving an empty tomb behind him."*⁶

SUMMARY PERSPECTIVE

Each of these four facts are historically verifiable.

- We can weigh them, test them, and examine each independently.
- Moreover, none commit one to Christian faith; knowing as fact that someone else genuinely believes they saw someone rise from the dead doesn't commit you to that belief personally. Much less does knowing that a man was buried in a public tomb that was later seen empty by a group of women commit you to the belief that Jesus rose from the dead.
- However, when we ask what event could plausibly explain all four of these facts together, then there is only one answer that satisfies this historical record: Jesus rose from the dead. Every other attempt to explain these facts fails in accounting for all four.

4 "James, the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, was stoned to death by order of Ananus ben Ananus," a Herodian-era High Priest, Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9,1.

5 Gerd Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus?* Trans. John Bowden (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), p. 80.

6 N. T. Wright, "The New Unimproved Jesus," *Christianity Today* (September 13, 1993), p. 26.

- The claim that Jesus' body was stolen could explain (3), but it fails to explain (4). We need an explanation that accounts for all four, because all four are historically verifiable facts. This is the historic bedrock that needs to be accounted for in its entirety.
- **Some have claimed that people had mass hallucinations**, but professional psychology has already researched that field and concluded that there is no such thing as mass hallucinations.
- When someone hallucinates, their hallucinations are individual; **people don't have identical hallucinations to one another in any case study ever researched**. One of the most extravagant theories offered to explain these four facts is the claim that Jesus had an identical twin brother that no one had ever seen or known before.⁷
- This is how desperate skeptics have become in their attempt to explain away these four facts. And this is why a scholar of Jewish history, a person who *disbelieves* that Jesus is the Messiah, declared himself convinced on the basis of this evidence that the God of Israel raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead.⁸

IV. The Quality of Evidence for the Biblical Record:

Tied to the previous evidence, Jesus' burial and resurrection have been established by scholars of all stripes as extremely early in the historical record, ranging from within 3-months to at most 5-years after the events.

- This means that there were publicly known facts about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection far too soon in the historical record for stories to be invented or 'fables' constructed decades after the fact. For example, 1 Cor. 15:3–5 records:

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures And that he was buried And that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures And that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve."

Paul uses a rabbinical formula, "received" and "delivered," that is stylized not as Paul's own writing but as a four-line creed that didn't originate with Paul.

- This has convinced *all* scholars in the relevant fields, whether atheist, agnostic, or Christian, that Paul is quoting an older tradition that predates his own conversion to Christian faith.
- What scholars in this area do disagree upon is how early this creed arises as public information: If Paul discovered this information during his fact-finding visit to

Jerusalem (A.D. 36), where Paul spent two weeks with Peter and Jesus' brother James (Gal. 1:18), then the information is within months of the events they describe.

- If the information originates from elsewhere, then it is at most 5-years removed from the events described. However, if one takes the 5-year account, then this information was even more widespread—i.e., publicly available knowledge—than when Paul would have encountered it in Jerusalem. So, on either account, we have publicly available information that arrives on the scene far too early for 'fables' or fabrications to arise. In terms of ancient history, this information about Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection sightings is either a newspaper report from the week it occurred, or it is a biopic detailing the most public and memorable features of Jesus' life from a few years after the events.
- This report derives from the living memory of the people who saw it either way, and it is provided to us by someone who was able to test its accuracy in person—Paul.

7 This is a claim deriving from people who neither know nor study ancient history, i.e., they do not work in these fields of research. If they had, they would know that Galilee was a communal gathering of families—everyone there knows everyone else's name, who lives in which houses, how many family members there are, and so on. Furthermore, the person making this claim doesn't understand how extreme the claim they're making is: They're alleging that a 1st c. Judaeen mother, for no conceivable reason whatsoever, somehow managed to prevent the father's attendance at birth, decided to conceal one of her children from the father in a shared home, from their siblings, prevented this child from ever leaving the house, managed to perfectly preclude the child from all social gatherings and trips outside of town, only then to release the child at over 30 years of age. It should be obvious that, not only is there is no evidence provided for this speculation, but there is no *possible* evidence even available for such wildly out-of-touch claims. Absolutely none of these entailments could be historically verified; it is pure, blind-faith speculation. That's how desperate the attempts to explain away these four facts have become.

8 **Pinchas Lapide**, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (London: SPCK, 1983).

Reductio Ad Absurdum:*Skeptical Claims Reduced to Absurdity*

Often times one will hear a skeptic claim that, “The Bible is made up, it’s full of stuff we can’t know for sure, and it’s been copied, and copied, and copied so many times that we’ll never know what was originally written. People could have changed it a hundred times and we’d never know.”

- Okay, sure, there was a bunch of overzealous monks who ran around altering the Bible, making certain things match-up and other things slightly different so that it would look like we have earlier documents than we actually have.

3 Phases of Conspiracy:

Okay, let’s run with that story. In order to accomplish that goal, there would have to be at least three phases of conspiracy:

Phase 1: They would have to have a manuscript conspiracy

Julius Caesar’s records of *The Gallic Wars* survive in only 10 manuscripts; The historical and geographical writings of Herodotus survive in less than 10 manuscripts; The writings of Homer survive in less than 10 manuscripts; Aristotle’s poetics survive in 5 manuscripts; There are over 6,000 manuscripts for the New Testament itself. If these overzealous monks wanted to doctor the Bible, they would have to find *all* 6,000 of these manuscripts, change *all* of them without showing any of their ink-work, get them all back where they stole them from without anyone noticing, and then never tell a living soul what they did. That’s just “Phase 1.”

Phase 2: They would have to have an international conspiracy

Christians made disciples of Christ across the ancient Mediterranean, Africa, the Middle-East, and the European world. Within the first two centuries after Jesus’ death the Bible was translated from Greek into Syriac, Coptic, and Latin. So, let’s see: After these overzealous monks have found 6,000 Greek manuscripts from all over the Mediterranean, doctored them all up without showing their ink-work, and got them all back without being noticed, *now* they need to go find all the Syriac, Coptic, and Latin translations of the Greek manuscripts, change *all* of them to match exactly the lies they told in another language without showing any of their ink- work, and then get those translations back to where they stole them without anyone noticing, and then never tell a living soul what they did. That’s just “Phase 2.”

Phase 3: They would have to have an inter-generational conspiracy

The earliest Christians were in the habit of quoting the Bible often, writing commentaries on the books and letters of the Bible, and discussing the theology of different biblical books in their own writings. Textual criticism is the scholarly discipline of comparing different manuscripts of the same text to determine what is original, as well as what and how anything changed between the two. The most prolific textual critic of the Bible, Bruce

Metzger, who is regarded by scholars as the Godfather of textual criticism, explains that, “[S]o extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone in reconstructing practically the entire New Testament.”⁹ In other words, if all we had were the early Christian’s citations and commentaries from their own works, we could reproduce nearly the entirety of the New Testament.

SUMMARY:

Okay, so now these overzealous monks have to find over 6,000 Greek manuscripts, steal them, change them without showing ink-work, get it back without anyone finding out, then they need to find all of the Syriac, Coptic, and Latin translations in Africa, Europe, and the Middle-East, change those to match exactly the lies they told in another language without showing ink-work, get those back without anyone finding out, and then they need to find all of the writing of all of the Christians across the world who wrote commentaries, change those to match exactly the lies they told two layers of conspiracy ago, never tell anyone what they did and never, ever get caught.

Very often we do not question skeptics to the same degree that they question Christianity.

- Consequently, most skeptics are not aware of how extreme their claims are, so, in the plainest terms possible, there is no scholar who finds these desperate speculations credible.
- Not only because there is no evidence for anything of the sort, but because all of the available evidence indicates that the Bible is a collection of documents that is historically reliable.
- When you watch a crime-drama series, they never begin with multiple, corroborating eye- witness testimonies.
 - If an episode began with multiple, corroborating eye-witnesses to the event, you don’t have a mystery that needs to be solved—you have an answer as to what happened. The Bible is a collection of various documents, letters, books, and biographies.
 - **LAW & ORDER EXAMPLE**
 - ***Why do people love it?** It's thought that true crime dramas are so popular because they play out our deepest anxieties. If that's the case, perhaps the real comfort in a show like Law + Order is that it offers the hope there might be someone there to fight for us if they ever come true.*

⁹ Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 86

- THIS IS ONE OF THE KEY ELEMENTS OF WHY YOU CAN TRUST THE STORY OF SCRIPTURE
- HOPE THAT GOD HIMSELF HAS COME TO FIGHT FOR US AND HAS LAID DOWN HIS LIFE AND BROKEN THE CURSE OF SUFFERING + DEATH

You need to know... These documents have been weighed and tested by historians and textual critics for centuries. What scholars have found is that the Bible, as a collection, is a historically reliable source of information for the events they describe. The texts that claim to be eye-witness accounts are, in fact, eye-witness accounts, and the events they report are historically verifiable through a variety of empirical tests.

Put differently: You can Trust the Story.

APPLICATION:

1- DEALING WITH ADVERSITY

Throughout life you are going to face adversity and hardship.

- For some of us it is financial struggle, others will have health crises, be separated from family for years, or perhaps even labor at work that is never truly rewarding. These are the normal difficulties of everyday life. But then there are the big things, divorces, unexpected deaths in the family, the kind of catastrophes that make you wonder if God is even there, if He's even listening, does He even care?
- It is a guarantee that you will face adversity like this at some point in your life, and in those moments, you need to have something real to stand on. You need to know that what you've placed your trust in is real;
- ***You need to know that it's not all for nothing, because when you face that kind of adversity, it matters that God is real and that His Son really suffered death on a cross to redeem you.***
- ***You need to know that the evidence for the Bible, for God, and for Jesus' resurrection can withstand the harshest scrutiny when you face the harsh scrutiny of life. When that comes, know that your faith and trust in God is real and it will make a difference that you have something secure to stand on in those moments of trial and tribulation.***

2- DEEPER LEVELS OF FAITH AVAILABLE

Second, many of us already have a deep faith and trust in God and His Word. We've walked with the Lord long enough to know and experience firsthand how real it is. And if that's you, then you also know that there are always deeper levels of faith and confidence in the Lord that are available to us.

Spending the time to learn more about how secure and solid our faith is will take those layers of confidence deeper than you thought possible, and it will enrich your faith when you grow your confidence in the Lord that way.

3- DEALING WITH DOUBT + QUESTIONS

Third and lastly, you know there will be people who ask you these kinds of questions and they're not going to take it seriously unless you can provide them with strong answers.

As 1 Peter 3:15–6 instructs us: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” As we’ve seen, there are tons of very good reasons for the hope you have. Learn how to explain them to others and watch their faith grow. That, too, will build deeper layers of confidence in your own heart, and just as important, it will bless someone new with the solid rock of faith we have in Jesus Christ.

Power Point Friendly Guide:

The Hittite City of Hattusa¹⁰ and an Ivory Hittite Sphinx¹¹:



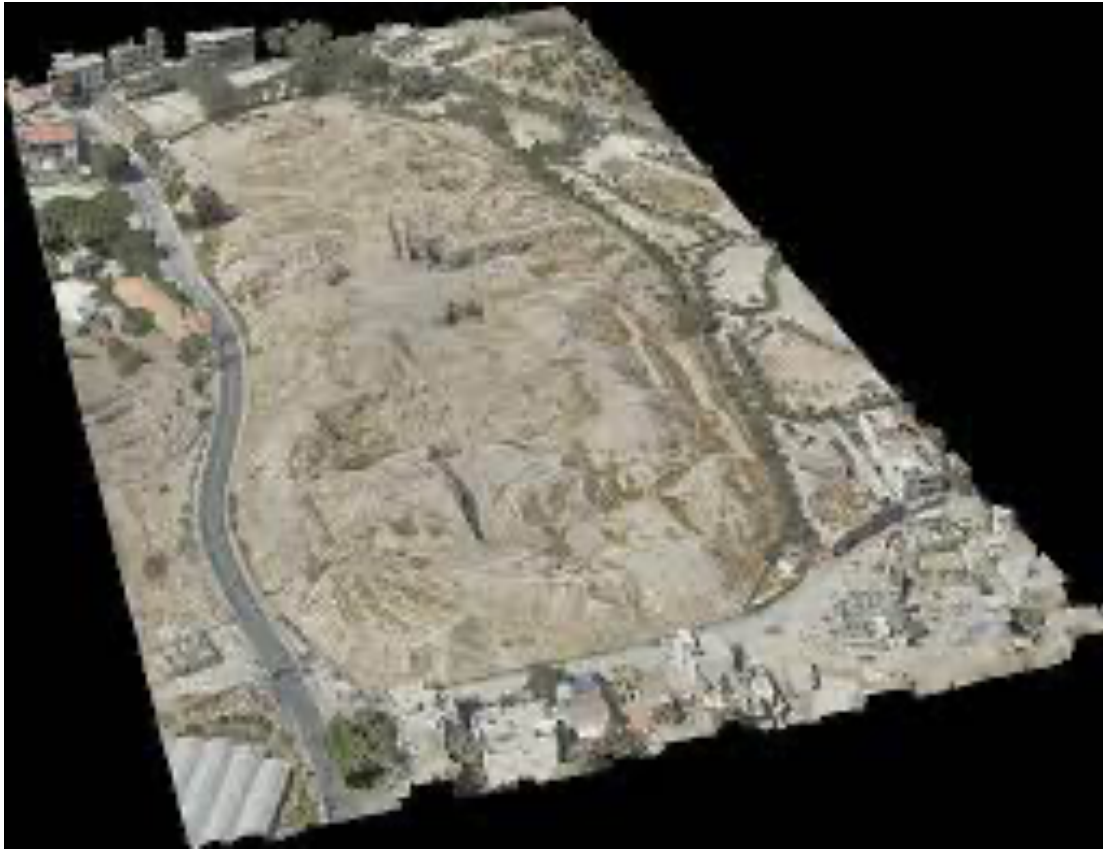
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Jericho:
The site of ancient Jericho¹²:



12

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What it would have looked like in its own time¹³:



13

https://www.google.com/search?q=ancient+jericho&&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwi0oYK6mPeDAxU0tIkEHeX3BicQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=ancient+jericho&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAzIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQ6BAgjECc6BwgAEIAEEBg6CAGAEIAEELEDogIABCABBCKBRBDogIABCABBAYEApQmA9YuShgvipoAXAAeACAaw2IAZ4JkgEEMTQuM5gBAKABAaoBC2d3cy13aXotaW1nwAEB&sclient=img&ei=7J6xZbT7L7ToptQP5e-buAl&bih=780&biw=1258&rlz=1C5CHFA_enUS971US971

Burn layer of Tel Jericho¹⁴:



14


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Full Jars of Burnt Grain¹⁵:

15

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"This riveting account of Dr. Collins's fascinating journey and discovery has contributed a unique body of knowledge that surpasses anything published on this subject."

*—James M. Holman, Ph.D., author of *Men of Faithful Doubt**

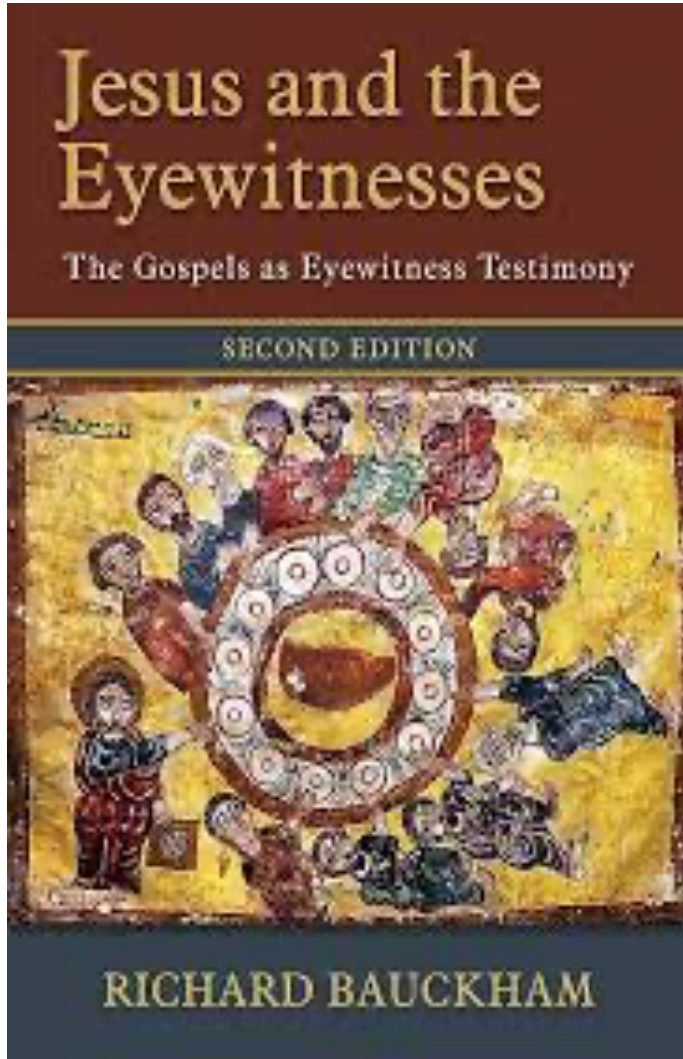
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DISCOVERING
THE CITY OF
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DR. LATAYNE C. SCOTT

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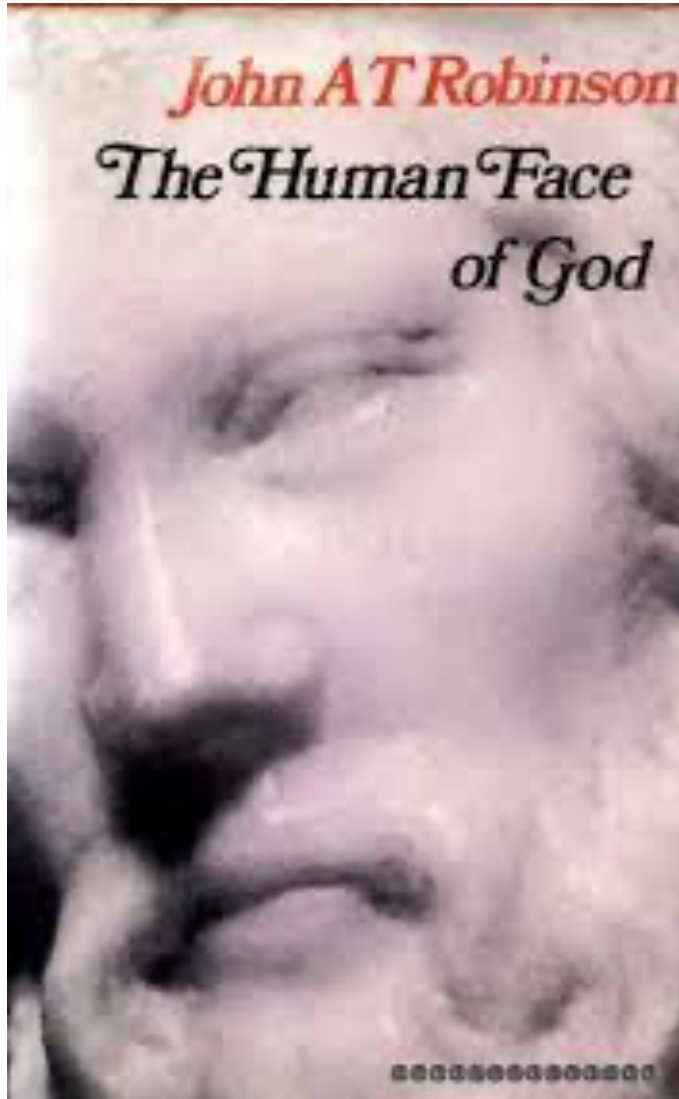
Type of Evidence: Eye-Witnesses¹⁷



17

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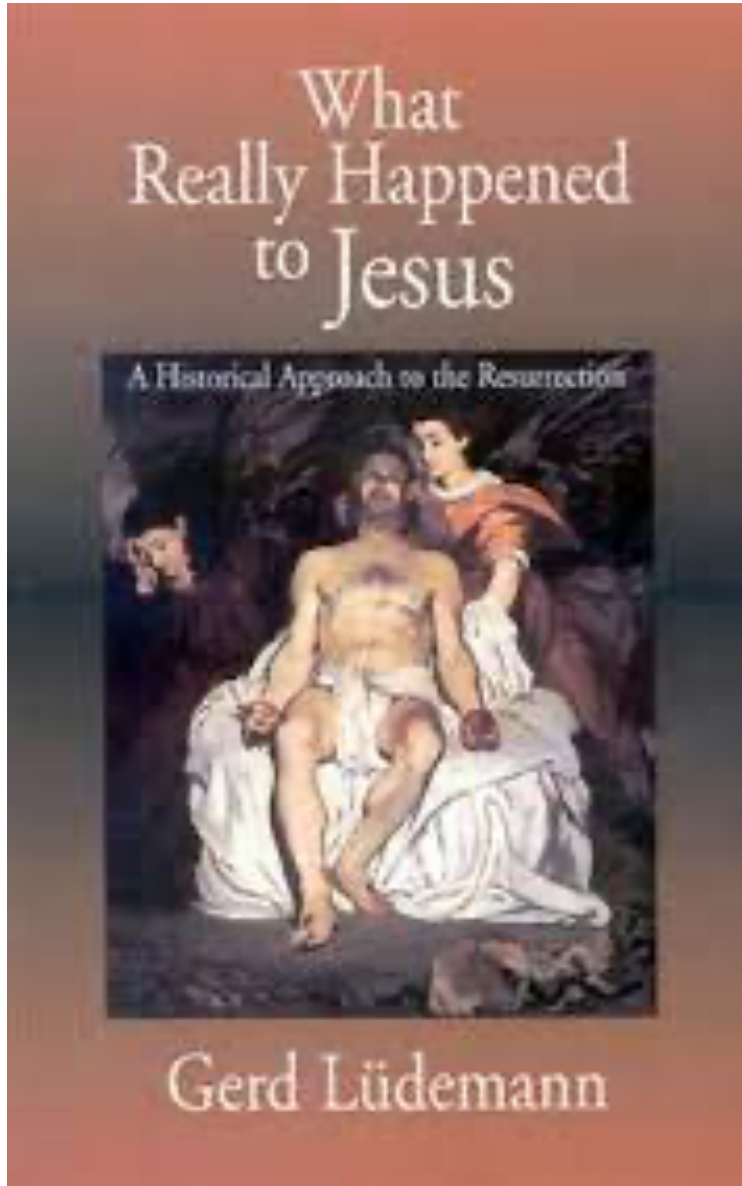
Evidence for the Resurrection, points 1 & 2¹⁸



18

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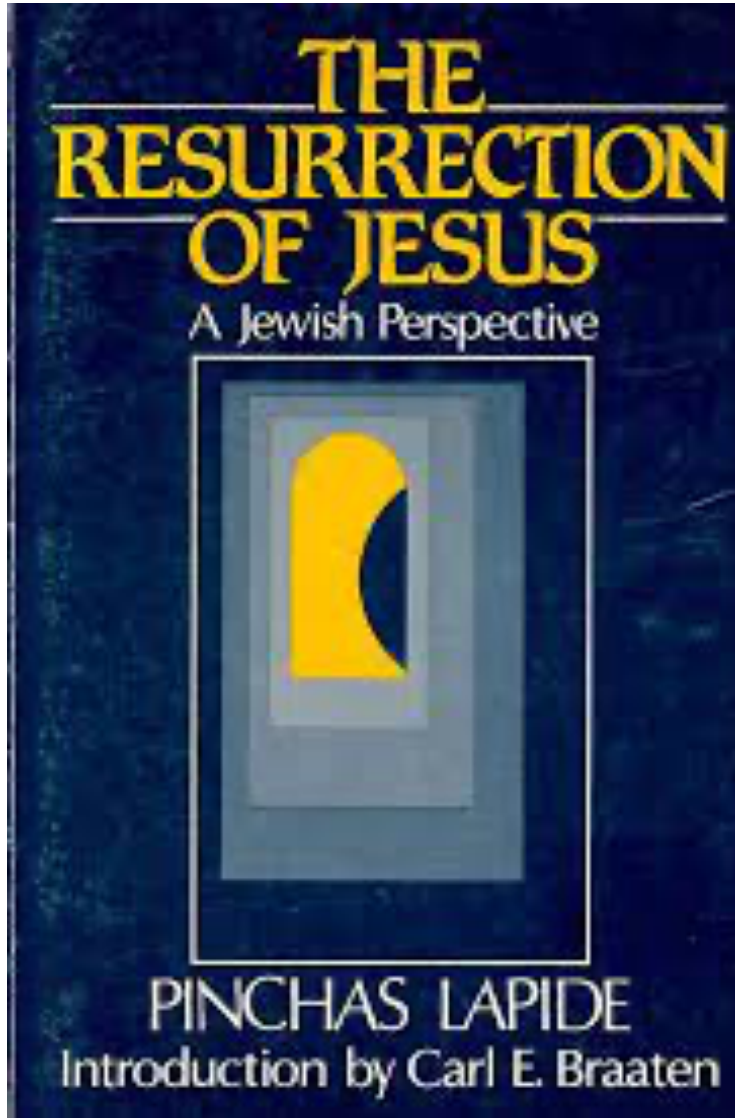
Evidence for the Resurrection, point 3¹⁹



19

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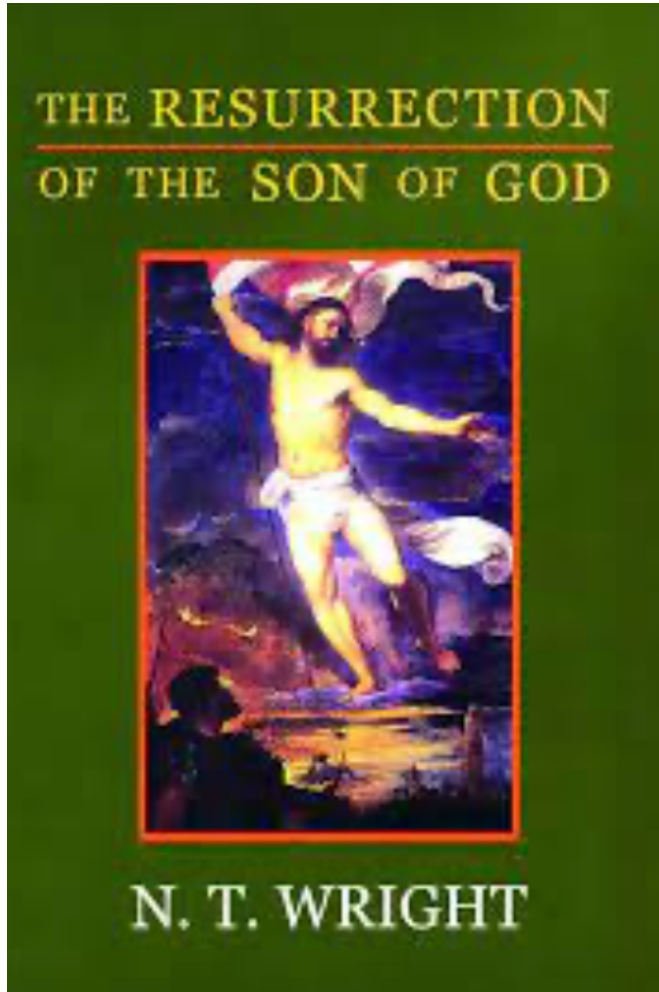
Evidence for the Resurrection, point 4²⁰



20

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Quality of Evidence: 1 Corinthians²¹



21

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