

Evidence for the Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:17

I. Introduction

- A. By the second year of World War I, the fighting between the German and Allied forces had ground down to a deadly stalemate, which neither side having the ability to gain the upper hand. In 1915, a young British minister by the name of Winston Churchill, hoping to break the deadlock, proposed opening up a second front by sending troops to seize Istanbul and gain control of the Black Sea.
 - 1. Churchill believed this strategy would give the British a clear sea route to their Russian allies and knock out the fading Ottoman Empire, which the British described as the “sick man of Europe.”
 - 2. The first attack would take place on the Gallipoli Peninsula, but the British War Office did not send as many troops as Churchill requested. Nevertheless, he went ahead—suffering huge losses both at sea and on land. In the first month, the Allies lost 45,000 troops.
 - 3. Churchill was blamed for the failure, and it seemed his political career was over. “I am finished,” he told a friend. He resigned from government and headed to the front lines in France to serve as an infantry officer. After several brushes with death, he returned to politics after the war ended.
 - 4. Churchill eventually embraced his defeated and used it to his advantage. “Don’t imagine I am running away from [Gallipoli],” he said, “I glory in it.” In 1940, he became prime minister and led the British through the horrific and trying events of World War II.
- B. For the early followers of Jesus, it appeared they had suffered the greatest defeat possible. Jesus had been executed on a Roman cross, and all their hopes of Christ being the Messiah had come an end. But what happened *after* this seeming defeat, when Jesus *rose from the dead*, forever changed history.
- C. Jesus’ resurrection led his followers to one inescapable conclusion: “Surely this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39 NIV). All of Christianity hinges on the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. But how can we know this actually occurred? What is the evidence for the resurrection? And is that evidence reliable?

II. Teaching

- A. The testimony of the four Gospel writers was that Jesus *actually* died.
 - 1. “And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit” (Matthew 27:50 NIV).
 - 2. “With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last” (Mark 15:37 NIV).
 - 3. “Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’ When he had said this, he breathed his last” (Luke 23:46 NIV).
 - 4. “When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19:30 NIV).
- B. However, there are many today who dispute this claim from the Bible that Jesus physically died on the cross.
 - 1. Muslims say Jesus did not die on the cross and therefore there was no resurrection.
 - a. Surah 4:157 of the Qur’an plainly states, “They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him.”
 - b. Surah 5.72 states, “Surely they disbelieved when they said: ‘Christ, the son of Mary, is indeed God.’ . . . Allah has forbidden Paradise to those who associate anything with Him in His divinity and their refuge shall be the Fire.”
 - 2. A prominent Hindu teacher said, “[Jesus] was only injured and after treatment returned to India where he actually died.”
 - 3. Another popular belief states that Jesus did not die but just became unconscious (or “swooned”) and was only *thought* to be dead.
- C. Other critics dispute the claim that Jesus was divine, noting that Christ never said the exact words, “I am God.” Is this accurate?
 - 1. It is true that Jesus never specifically declared, “I am God.” However, Jesus *does* make unmistakable claims about his divinity.
 - a. In John 8:58, Jesus makes an audacious claim that he was alive before Abraham—the revered forefather of the Jews.
 - i. Jesus said, “Before Abraham was born, I am!” (NIV). Jesus actually applied the holy name of God, Yahweh—“I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14 NIV)—to himself.
 - ii. The Jews understood Jesus was claiming to be divine, for they “picked up stones to stone him” (John 8:59 NIV).

- b. Later, in John 10:30, Jesus claimed, “I and the Father are one.”
 - i. Jesus’ Jewish opponents again certainly took this to mean that Jesus was claiming to be God, for they “picked up stones to stone him” (verse 31 NIV).
 - ii. When Jesus asked why they wanted to kill him, they replied, “For blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God” (John 10:33 NIV)
 - c. When Jesus was on trial before the high priest Caiaphas, he gave three indications that he was divine
 - i. When Caiaphas asked if Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, he answered, “Yes, it is just as you say” (Matthew 26:64a NIRV).
 - ii. Jesus then said, “You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64b NIV). Jesus was quoting from Daniel 7:13–14 and applying the prophecy to himself.
 - ii. The high priest tore his clothes in response to this claim and said, “He has spoken blasphemy!” (Matthew 26:65 NIV). His reaction indicates that *he* certainly believed Jesus had claimed to be God!
- D Jesus’ claims to be God led the Jewish leaders to hand him over to the Roman authorities to be flogged and then die by crucifixion.
 - 1. The Gospel accounts report that Jesus *actually died* on the cross, and historical data shows it’s virtually impossible to survive a crucifixion.
 - a. Jesus likely endured two separate floggings—one being the least severe and the other being the most severe.
 - b. In John 19:1, the Greek word used to describe the flogging is *mastigoo*, which was typically decreed by a synagogue.
 - c. In Matthew 27:26, the Greek word used is *phragelloo*, which was a punishment inflicted after a death sentence.
 - 2. It is likely Jesus was in hypovolemic shock after this second beating. As one physician noted, “Because of the terrible effects of this beating, there’s no question that Jesus was already in serious-to-critical condition.”
 - 3. It’s sobering when we consider the amount of suffering Jesus endured to fulfill his mission of being the atoning sacrifice for the world.

III. Application

- A. What would motivate any innocent human to willingly face the horrors of the most torturous death devised? The answer can be summed up in perhaps the most famous passage in Scripture: “For God *so loved* the world that he gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16 NIV, emphasis added).
- B. As one philosopher noted, “God took the very worst thing that can ever happen in the history of the universe—deicide, or the death of God’s Son on the cross—and he turned it into the very best thing that could ever happen in the history of the universe: the opening of heaven for all those who follow him.”
- C. God took the worst for *you*—and because of Jesus, he will give the best to you. God did this all for you. So, how will you respond to his incredible act of love?

SERMON OUTLINE 2

An Excruciating Execution

Mark 15:24

I. Introduction

- A. The 2004 movie *The Passion of the Christ* depicts the last twelve hours of Jesus' life and his horrific death by Roman crucifixion.
 - 1. Mel Gibson, who directed the film, stated, "I think what I've attempted to do with the film is make it realistic and human. I think the first things that hit you are the human aspects of the story."
 - 2. While scholars and critics debate as to whether the all details in the film are completely accurate for the time period, historians and medical experts agree that Roman crucifixion had only one terrifying and absolute aim: *the certain death of the crucified victim*.
- B. Crucifixion was a form of execution employed from c. 500 BC to AD 337.
 - 1. The Greek writer Herodotus describes the crucifixion of a Persian general at the hands of the Athenians c. 479 BC.
 - 2. Alexander the Great was said to have crucified 2,000 survivors from the siege of the city of Tyre c. 332 BC.
 - 3. The Jewish king Alexander Jannaeus, who ruled Judea from 103 BC to 76 BC, is reported to have crucified 800 rebels.
 - 4. The Romans perfected crucifixion as a form of execution until it was banned by the emperor Constantine. Ancient writers, including Josephus, recount that the Romans executed thousands of people during their rule.
- C. Few people today doubt Jesus' crucifixion actually took place. However, some believe Jesus *survived* his crucifixion and was only unconscious, giving the appearance of death. Others doubt the claims from the Gospels that Jesus actually rose again. Today, we will look at what comprised a Roman execution, to see if this "swoon theory" is possible, and the early accounts of Jesus' resurrection.

II. Teaching

- A. Jesus understood the suffering he would endure at his execution.

1. Jesus experienced and expressed deep distress the night before his execution. “He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled” (Mark 14:33 NIV).
 2. Jesus’ distress caused a condition known as *hematidrosis*, in which the blood in capillaries seeps into sweat glands due to extreme distress. “And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:44 NIV).
- B. The Roman crucifixion brought unbearable pain and anguish for the victim.
1. Floggings were given before the actual execution. Victims sometimes died due to the severity of the beating.
 - a. The whips, constructed of leather thongs holding metal balls and pieces of bone, cut deeply into the victim’s flesh, sometimes exposing the person’s bones and organs.
 - b. Floggings created hypovolemic shock due to loss of blood—high heart rate, exhaustion, and extreme thirst.
 - i. “A certain man from Cyrene, Simon . . . was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross” (Mark 15:21 NIV).
 - ii. “Later, knowing that everything had now been finished . . . Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty’” (John 19:28 NIV).
 2. The Romans were efficient at making sure the victim of crucifixion suffered great pain and shame—and that it led to the person’s death.
 - a. Five- to seven-inch spikes were driven through the wrist, which caused severe pain when it crushed the victims’ median nerve. (The wrist was considered part of the hand.)
 - b. The victims’ stretched-out arms caused their bones to get out of joint. “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint” (Psalm 22:14 NIV).
 - c. The victims primarily died of asphyxiation.
 - i. Hanging in a vertical position locks the lungs into the inhaled position. Victims had to push up to breathe.
 - ii. When victims could no longer do this, they would go into respiratory acidosis, which led to irregular heartbeat. Jesus would have known when he was at the moment of death.

- ii. Sometimes the victims' legs were broken to hasten death. "The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other" (John 19:32 NIV).
 - iii. Crucifixion resulted in fluid collecting around the victims' heart and lungs. John reports, "One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water" (John 19:34 NIV).
- 3. There is no question that Jesus actually died on the cross.
 - 1. A person can't fake the inability to breathe, the spear in the heart would have inflicted a mortal wound itself, and the Romans would never allow someone to survive an execution.
 - 2. Josephus records an instance of someone surviving a *partial* execution (though two others taken down at the same time, under the care of a physician, still died). If Jesus *had* managed to survive, he would have been in a horrible physical condition.
 - 3. Such a condition would not have inspired the disciples to risk their lives in proclaiming Jesus had triumphed over the cross.
- C. We have also very early accounts that Jesus rose from the dead.
 - 1. Paul preserves an early creed of the church in 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 that says Jesus died, was buried, and rose on the third day. The creed also mentions specific individuals to whom Jesus appeared.
 - a. Given that Paul wrote his letter twenty-two to twenty-five years after Jesus' death, and he had already given them this creed, we can date it to about twenty years after Jesus' death.
 - b. However, it is believed Paul received the creed when he went to Jerusalem and met with Peter and James. This means he was given the creed within one to six years of Jesus' death.
 - c. This means the beliefs that make up the creed go back to the cross itself. So there was no time gap between the death of Jesus and a later development of a legend.
 - d. In addition to mentioning Peter, James, and the disciples, Paul also mentions there are 500 witnesses—many of whom are still living. Paul is saying, "If you don't believe me, go ask them."

2. The Gospels, Acts, and letters of Paul—which also confirm the resurrection—also date so early they were circulating during the lifetime of Jesus’ contemporaries, who would have pointed out any errors.

III. Application

- A. All the evidence we have from history and from medical research on crucifixion undeniably validate the claim that Jesus *actually died* on the cross.
- B. Furthermore, the evidence points to the fact that Jesus actually rose again. New Testament scholar James D. G. Dunn states, “This tradition [contained in the early creed of the church], we can be entirely confident, was formulated as tradition within months of Jesus’ death.”
- C. One other piece of evidence points to the fact Jesus rose again.
 1. Jesus had four half-brothers and some half-sisters. One of his brothers, James, was not a follower during Jesus’ lifetime.
 2. However, the creed states that Jesus appeared to James. He saw the evidence for the resurrection with his own eyes—and he became a leader of the church in Jerusalem.
 3. Later, James is martyred for his faith in Jesus.
 4. As one scholar asked, “What would it take to convince *you* that your brother is the Lord?” Only witnessing the resurrection!
- D. The resurrection of Jesus is the linchpin of the Christian faith, and we can be certain that Jesus *actually died* and *actually rose* again to provide our salvation.

The Case for the Empty Tomb

Mark 16:6

I. Introduction

- A. History is filled with stories of people who were so confident in themselves or what they believed they were willing to take great risks to achieve their goals.
 - 1. In 49 BC, Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon River with his army, essentially declaring war on the Roman Republic. The historian Suetonius quoted Caesar as saying “the die is cast” as he made the crossing. Caesar would go on to become the first Roman emperor.
 - 2. In 1191, King Richard “the Lionheart” faced the forces of Saladin at the Battle of Arsuf. Richard was outnumbered three to one, but instead of retreating, he took the risk of waiting for his enemy to make a mistake. Saladin eventually did this, giving Richard the victory.
 - 3. Henry Ford took a huge risk in 1914 by doubling the pay of his workers and reducing their workweek to five days. People thought his company would go bankrupt as a result, but instead he ended up attracting the best mechanics. His example set a new model in the business world.
 - 4. In 1953, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay risked their lives to do something no one had done before—scale to the summit of the highest mountain in the world. Their successful attempt started a string of expeditions by other climbers up the slope of Mount Everest.
- B. History records the followers of Jesus also took great risks when they claimed Jesus had rose from the dead. They were willing to endure stonings, crucifixions, burnings, and other forms of execution—all because they refused to renounce their beliefs that Jesus was the Son of God and had risen from the grave.
- C. Today, skeptics and believers alike agree the tomb of Jesus was empty—but they disagree as to *why* the tomb was empty.
 - 1. Some critics say the body of Jesus was moved, or stolen by his followers, or not buried in a place that anyone could later identify. They believe the early Christians died for beliefs that were not based in reality.
 - 2. But is this accurate? How can we know Jesus actually *rose* from the tomb?

II. Teaching

- A. Each of the four Gospels state that Jesus was taken from the cross and buried in the tomb of a man known as Joseph of Arimathea.
 - 1. “Joseph [of Arimathea] took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock” (Matthew 27:59–60 NIV).
 - 2. “Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock” (Mark 15:46 NIV).
 - 3. “Then [Joseph] took [Jesus’ body] down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid” (Luke 23:53 NIV).
 - 4. “There was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, [Joseph and Nicodemus] laid Jesus there” (John 19:41–42 NIV).
- B. Each of the four Gospels also state that when women later visited Jesus’ tomb on Sunday morning, they found it to be empty.
 - 1. “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay’ ” (Matthew 28:5–6 NIV).
 - 2. “‘Don’t be alarmed,’ [the angel] said. ‘You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him’ ” (Mark 16:6 NIV).
 - 3. “[The angels] said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!’ ” (Luke 24:5–6 NIV).
 - 4. “So [Mary Magdalene] came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!’ ” (John 20:2 NIV).
- C. There are three key pieces of evidence from the time that also reveal Jesus’ tomb was actually empty.
 - 1. The site of Jesus’ tomb was well known to Christians and non-Christians alike. If it were not actually empty, it would have been unlikely for a movement founded on the resurrection to explode into existence in the same city where Jesus had been executed just a few weeks before.
 - 2. The Gospels report *women* discovered the tomb empty. In first-century Jewish and Roman cultures, the testimony of women was considered

questionable. If the writers felt the freedom to invent the story, they would have bolstered their case by saying men discovered the empty tomb.

3. Even the opponents of Jesus conceded the tomb was empty. All they had to do was instruct the disciples to open the tomb, and it would have put the burden on them to prove it was vacant. Instead, they conceded it was empty—and then tried to explain how it *became* empty.

D. Skeptics of the Gospel accounts propose three primary theories as to why the tomb of Jesus was found to be empty.

1. Some say the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was empty because Jesus' body was never placed there in the first place.
 - a. Bart Ehrman wrote in *How Jesus Became God*, "If the Romans followed their normal policies . . . it is highly unlikely that Jesus was decently buried . . . in a tomb that anyone could later identify."
 - b. However, other scholars have made a convincing case the Gospel accounts describing Jesus' removal from the cross and burial are consistent with archaeological evidence and with Jewish law.
 - c. In addition, it would have been in Pilate's best interests to permit Joseph to take Jesus' body. Pilate didn't want to enrage the Jews by leaving three victims of crucifixion on their crosses over Passover. He would also have wanted to avoid any unrest during this time in Jerusalem, when the streets were packed with Jewish pilgrims.
2. Another theory is that Jesus' tomb was empty because the disciples stole his body and then circulated rumors he had risen from the dead.
 - a. Matthew reports this was a plan the Jewish authorities put together to explain the empty tomb: "They gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, 'You are to say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep"' (28:12–13 NIV).
 - b. However, ancient sources report the disciples endured great suffering and deprivation as a result of their belief that Jesus had risen. It is implausible they would have been willing to die as martyrs for something they knew was a lie.
3. Another theory is that the disciples and early believers, out of great love for Jesus, imagined him alive or experienced mass hallucinations.
 - a. As discussed previously, an early creed of the church (which is preserved by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3–8) states 500 people *at one time* saw Jesus alive after his death. This would mean all 500 people experienced the *same hallucination at the same time*.

- b. Dr. Gary Collins, a preeminent psychologist, wrote, “Hallucinations are individual occurrences. By their very nature only one person can see a given hallucination at a time.”
- c. In the end, we find that Christianity is an *investigatable* faith that is grounded in historical events—not in mystical or subjective ideas.

III. Application

- A. Sir Lionel Luckhoo, who is in *The Guinness Book of World Records* for being the most successful attorney ever, once wrote, “I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt.”
- B. When we examine the evidence for the resurrection, we likewise must come to the conclusion that Jesus actually *did* rise from the grave.
 - 1. As the example of history reveals, people are not willing to risk their lives for a belief unless they are absolutely convinced that belief is *true*.
 - 2. The disciples of Jesus believed his tomb was empty—and they endured great persecution because they refused to renounce that belief.
 - 3. There is simply no way to explain the birth of the early church and the expansion of Christianity if it were all based on lies.
 - 4. If we believe God who is able to create the entire universe, then it is not a stretch for us to believe that he could bring a dead person back to life.
- C. Jesus’ tomb was empty *because he conquered the grave*—and he has conquered death for us as well. “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20–22 NIV).

Eyewitnesses to the Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

I. Introduction

- A. The format of newscasts has changed greatly since the early days of television.
 - 1. In the early days, local newscasts were seen as just a service to the viewing audience. A newscast was divided into three “blocks” that consisted of news (national, international, and local stories), sports, and weather. The newscast typically had a solo anchor who read the stories to the audience.
 - 2. Then in 1959, a television station in Cleveland, Ohio, realized that adding “eyewitness” to the title of their program would lend credibility to their news reporting, as people tend to believe that what they see firsthand or hear directly from those who have witnessed the actual events.
 - 3. In 1965, a news director in Philadelphia created the familiar eyewitness-news format we know today. The station hired reporters to go out of the newsroom and into the “field,” where they became “eyewitnesses” of the stories that they were covering for the viewing audience.
 - 4. Today, most television news operations in the United States use some form of this “eyewitness news” format.
- B. Eyewitness testimony is also crucial when it comes to examining the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection and determining whether it really happened. After all, as we have seen, an empty tomb in itself does not mean that Jesus rose from the dead. We have to consider whether people at the time also reported seeing Jesus alive.
- C. History tells us the same disciples who were fearful and in hiding at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion were later in the streets of Jerusalem boldly preaching the message of Christ at the risk of their own lives.
 - 1. What do the biblical sources say about these eyewitnesses to Jesus’ resurrection? Can those sources be trusted?
 - 2. What non-biblical sources do we have that report that same eyewitness testimony? What do we know about those eyewitnesses?

II. Teaching

- A. We have seven early sources from the New Testament that contain references to eyewitnesses of the resurrection.
1. The Early Creed of the church (preserved in 1 Corinthians 15:1–8).
 - a. The creed is important for this discussion because it mentions specific *eyewitnesses*: Peter, the Twelve, more than 500 people at once, James (the Lord’s half-brother), and Paul himself.
 - b. Paul writes that he “received” the creed and “passed on” the creed. This terminology is used of passing on truths of the faith.
 - c. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians earlier than any of the four Gospels. Some believe this essential creed of the church may have actually been created within *weeks or months* of the resurrection.
 - d. As we discussed previously, the early date of this creed means it cannot be the product of legendary development.
 2. Paul’s testimony about the apostles.
 - a. After Paul’s encounter with the risen Christ, he came to know some of the disciples personally, including Peter, John, and James, who was the leader of the Jerusalem church (see Acts 9:26–27).
 - b. In 1 Corinthians 15:11, Paul wrote, “Whether, then, it is I or [the disciples], this is what we preach, and this is what you believed” (NIV). Paul states that are all saying the same thing about Jesus.
 3. The Book of Acts.
 - a. This document was written by Luke, a first-century “investigative” report and companion of the apostle Paul.
 - b. At a minimum, Luke preserves the teaching of the early apostles through his summaries of sermons. Two of these include:
 - i. Peter: “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it” (Acts 2:32 NIV).
 - ii. Paul: “God raised [Jesus] from the dead, and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people” (Acts 13:30–31 NIV).
 4. The Gospel of Matthew (see 28:8–10).
 5. The Gospel of Mark (see 16:6, 9, 14).

6. The Gospel of Luke (see 24:33–35, 48).
 7. The Gospel of John (see John 20:18, 20, 28).
- B. In addition to these sources, we have two additional early sources from outside the New Testament that contain references to eyewitnesses of the resurrection.
1. Clement of Alexandria.
 - a. Clement was a first century leader in the church who was taught by the apostles and wrote about their bold eyewitness reports of the resurrection. He was ordained as bishop of Rome by Peter.
 - b. The early church father Irenaeus wrote of Clement that he “might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing, and their traditions before his eyes.”
 - c. In Clement’s letter to the church in Corinth, he wrote of the apostles, “Having received orders and complete certainty caused by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and believing in the Word of God, they went with the Holy Spirit’s certainty, preaching the good news that the kingdom of God is about to come.”
 9. Polycarp of Smyrna.
 - a. Polycarp was a second-century bishop in the city of Smyrna. Tertullian states the disciple John personally appointed Polycarp to this position. He was later martyred for his faith in Christ.
 - b. Irenaeus reports that Polycarp “was instructed by the apostles and conversed with many who had seen Christ.” He said Polycarp “recalled their very words” and “always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles.”
 - c. In Polycarp’s letter to the church in Philippi, he mentioned the resurrection of Christ five times. He referred to Paul and the other apostles when he wrote, “For they did not love the present age, but him who died for our benefit and for our sake was raised by God.”
- C. Darrell Bock, professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote an article titled “Sources for Caesar and Jesus Compared.” Bock concludes, “If we believe what the best sources say about Julius Caesar, then we should believe what the best sources say about Jesus Christ.”

III. Application

- A. The early church creed that Paul preserves in 1 Corinthians 15:1–8 is simple yet profound: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures . . . was buried, and . . . was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (verses 3-4 NIV).
- B. Jesus’s death and resurrection were “according to the Scriptures.” We do have early sources for the historical events of Jesus’ first century life, death, burial, and resurrection. Even more, all these events are anchored in the Old Testament prophecies of Israel’s promised Messiah, the Savior of the world.
- C. If Jesus is truly the unique Son of God, as the evidence for his resurrection affirms, then it has five implications for our lives:
 - 1. Jesus is alive today and is available to us. “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me” (Revelation 3:20 NIV).
 - 2. Jesus deserves our allegiance, obedience, and worship. “Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them’” (John 14:23 NIV).
 - 3. Jesus sets the standard for our morality, and we need to follow his example. “Then [Jesus] called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me’” (Mark 8:34 NIV).
 - 4. Jesus understands us and can comfort us. “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15 NIV).
 - 5. Jesus gave his own life so we could be reconciled with God. He has our best interests at heart. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8 NIV).
- D. Jesus offers a life beyond death to all who accept his sacrifice for their sins and make him their Lord and Savior. Have you trusted in Jesus alone for your own salvation? If not . . . what is keeping you from making that decision today?