

Purpose

The minimal facts approach takes the **smallest, agreed upon set of historical facts** by the vast majority of New Testament scholars to argue for the historical resurrection of Jesus as the **best explanation** of those facts.

Assumptions

- The Bible is an _____ collection historical documents from various authors.
- Christianity _____ without the historical resurrection of Jesus.
 - *¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, “There is no resurrection of the dead”? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁴ and 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—whom he did not raise up, if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 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.***

Minimal Accepted Facts

(facts accepted by >75% of NT Scholars; Habermas bib.)

1. Burial of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea ⇒ 100% New Testament Scholars
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15.4 says Jesus was buried: ³ *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.*
 - b. Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the _____.
 - i. Matthew 27.57-60; Mark 15.42-46; Luke 23.50-53; John 18.38-42
 1. *When it was already evening, because it was the day of preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath), ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin who was himself looking forward to the kingdom of God, came and boldly went to Pilate and asked for Jesus's body. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had already died. ⁴⁵ When he found out from the centurion, he gave the corpse to Joseph. ⁴⁶ After he bought some linen cloth, Joseph took him down and wrapped him in the linen. Then he laid him in a tomb cut out of the rock and rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus were watching where he was laid.*
 - c. Mark's Passion Narrative is _____, _____, and _____, likely late 30's.
 - d. No other extant burial stories.
2. Empty Tomb ⇒ 75% New Testament Scholars
 - a. _____ found the tomb.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15.3-4: Early Christian _____, by mid to late _____.
 - i. ³ *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,*
 - c. Matthew 28.11-15 presupposed empty tomb _____.
 - i. ¹¹ *As they were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² After the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money ¹³ and told them, "Say this, 'His disciples*

came during the night and stole him while we were sleeping. ' ¹⁴ If this reaches the governor's ears, we will deal with him and keep you out of trouble. " ¹⁵ They took the money and did as they were instructed, and this story has been spread among Jewish people to this day.

3. Post-mortem Appearances of Jesus ⇒ a qualified 100% of New Testament Scholars)

a. 1 Corinthians 15.5-8

- i. 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; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me.*

b. Varied Gospel Traditions, e.g. Emmaus Road appearance in Luke 24

- i. ¹³ *Now that same day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ Together they were discussing everything that had taken place. ¹⁵ And while they were discussing and arguing, Jesus himself came near and began to walk along with them. ¹⁶ But they were prevented from recognizing him.*

4. Disciples' Conversion ⇒ 100% New Testament Scholars

a. Peter – from fearful to bold

- i. Matthew 26.69-75; Mark 14.66-72; Luke 22.54-62; John 18.15-27/Acts 2

1. **Fearful** - ⁶⁹ *Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl approached him and said, "You were with Jesus the Galilean too." ⁷⁰ But he denied it in front of everyone: "I don't know what you're talking about." ⁷¹ When he had gone out to the gateway, another woman saw him and told those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazarene!" ⁷² And again he denied it with an oath: "I don't know the man!" ⁷³ After a little while those standing there approached and said to Peter, "You really are one of them, since even your accent gives you away." ⁷⁴ Then he started to curse and to swear with an oath, "I don't know the man!"*

2. **Bold** - ³⁶ *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."*

b. Paul – from persecutor to preacher

i. Galatians 1.13ff., 1 Corinthians 15.9, Philippians 3.6, 1 Timothy 1.13, cf. Acts 7.58, 8.3-4, 22.4-5,19, 26.9-11

1. **Persecutor** – ¹³ *For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I intensely persecuted God’s church and tried to destroy it.*
2. **Preacher** – ¹³ *even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

c. James – from skeptic to leader

i. Mark 3.21, 6.2-4,6; John 7.1-5 cf. Acts 15; 1 Corinthians 15.7; Galatians 2.9; Acts 1.14

1. **Skeptic** – *After this, Jesus traveled in Galilee, since he did not want to travel in Judea because the Jews were trying to kill him. ² The Jewish Festival of Shelters was near. ³ So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea so your disciples can see your works that you are doing. ⁴ For no one does anything in secret while he’s seeking public recognition. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” ⁵ (For not even his brothers believed in him.)*
2. **Leader** – ⁹ *When James, Cephas,^b and John—those recognized as pillars—acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ They asked only that we would remember the poor, which I had made every effort to do.*

Historical Criteria for Theories

(from William Lane Craig from C. Behan McCullagh in *Justifying Historical Descriptions*)

- Explanatory Scope – Does theory explain _____ of the facts?
- Explanatory Power – Does theory explain the facts _____?
- Plausibility – Does theory fit the _____, _____ context?
- Uncontrived (ad hoc) – Does theory lack a _____ feel?
- Belief Accordance – Does theory _____ with common knowledge? (few extras)
- Better than the rest – Does theory exceed other theories concerning the above?

Alternative Theories

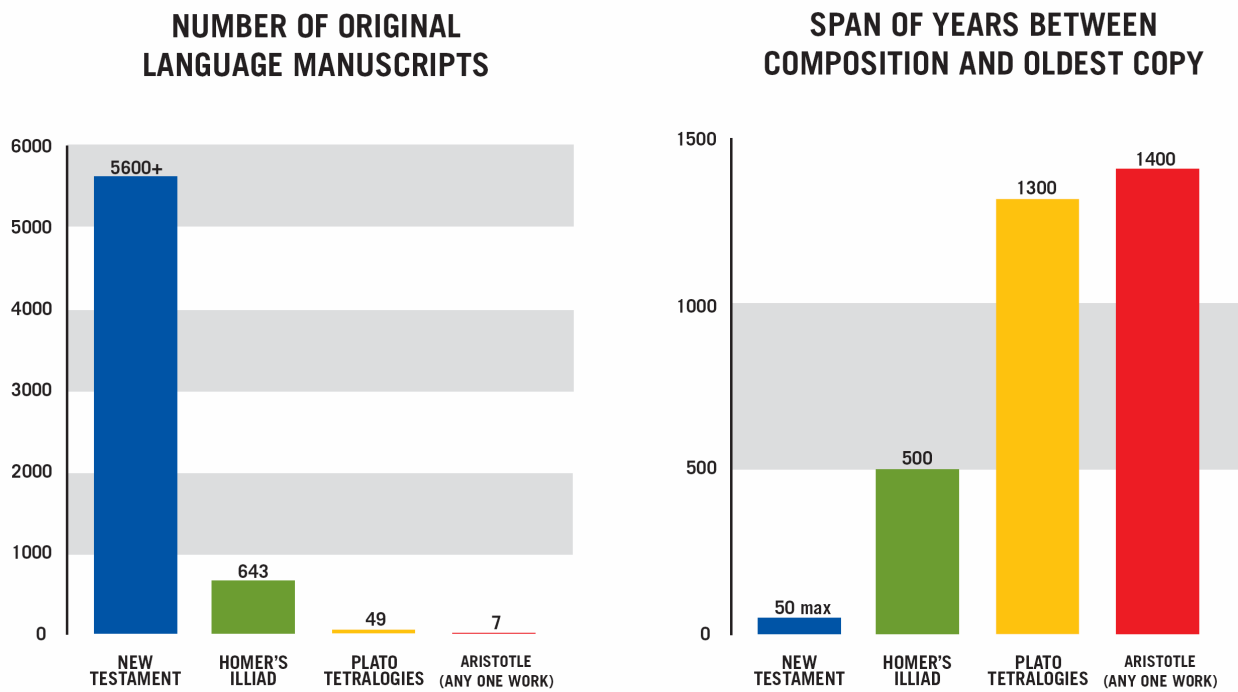
- Conspiracy Theory: Disciples _____ the body, cf. Matthew 28.11-15
 - Everyone knew Joseph of Arimathea who could have cleared things up quickly
 - Explains the empty tomb, but not any of the other facts
 - Implausible because it requires the disciples to be liars to the death
 - Matthew 28 demonstrates the contrivance
 - No expectation of dying, resurrected in middle of history Messiah
- Apparent Death Theory (_____ Theory): Jesus didn't really die
 - Implausible because it assumes the Roman executioners were inept
 - Contrived, e.g. Luke gave coma-like-inducing drugs to Jesus
 - Doesn't accord with medical knowledge
- Displaced Body Theory: Joseph of Arimathea moved the body to the ignorance of the disciples
 - Narrow scope since it only explains the empty tomb
 - No power for explaining why the disciples' error wasn't corrected
 - Many historical records have the criminal's graveyard within 500 yards of Jesus' crucifixion, so why not dispose of him there immediately?
 - Doesn't match Jewish burial procedures.
- Mythology Theory: myths developed about Jesus: divinity, virgin birth, resurrection, etc.
 - The Gospels were _____.
 - Mark likely in the 50's and both the passion narrative of Mark's Gospel and Paul's Creed in 1 Corinthians 15 are dated to the late 30's
 - Sermons in Acts are so early that not nearly enough time passed.
 - The theory does not explain any of the facts at all, it simply ignores them.
 - Doesn't accord with beliefs: 2-3 generations needed before legends develop.
- Subjective Vision Theory (hallucination theory): The disciples, as well as everyone else, simply _____ the visions of Jesus.
 - Implausible because no mid-history resurrection in Judaism
 - Only explains appearances and conversion
 - Doesn't accord with beliefs about hallucination

- Objective Vision Theory: The disciples, and everyone who had a vision of Jesus, were given a _____ vision of Jesus wherever he was even though he was not with them.
 - Theory does not fit with Paul's teaching about the resurrection body
 - Does not make sense out of Thomas touching Jesus (nor Jesus eating, etc.)
 - Doesn't explain the empty tomb well
 - Doesn't fit well with what we know about God, e.g. God doesn't trick people.

Further study

- <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-2/s2-doctrine-of-christ/> (lessons 15-23)
- <http://coldcasechristianity.com/?s=historical+resurrection>
- http://www.garyhabermas.com/articles/southeastern_theological_review/minimal-facts-methodology_08-02-2012.htm

Comparisons between Bible and other Ancient Manuscripts

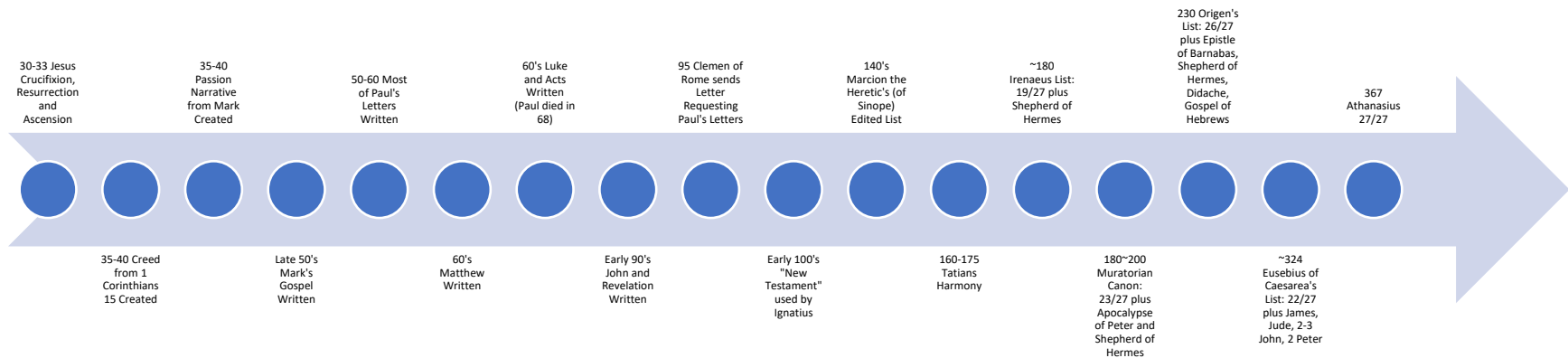


Note: Homer's *Illiad* is the best attested ancient work after the New Testament. Plato and Aristotle are used in the graph for how well known they are.

Bibliography: Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, (San Bernadino, CA: Here's Life, 1972, 1992).

New Testament Canonization

- First generation eyewitnesses were dying
- Model: An understood list of **potentially authoritative texts existed**; debates were editing down, not adding to
- The latest text in the New Testament likely dates to early 90's
- Should we want or demand extra-biblical evidence?
 - Bible is anthology, not a series.
 - Aren't earlier, closer, and eyewitness evidences preferred?



Confirmed at Synod of Hippo in 393; Confirmed again at Synod of Carthage in 397