

Did the Resurrection of Jesus Christ Happen?

Lesson 3 – The Last Three Facts

History 101

1. Multiple independent witnesses are better than one witness.
2. Affirmation by a neutral or hostile source is better than a friendly source.
3. People don't make up details that weaken their position.
4. Eyewitness testimony is better than secondhand testimony.
5. An early testimony from very close to the event is more reliable than one years later.

Fact #1: Jesus died by crucifixion.

Fact #2: Jesus' disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them.

Fact #3: The church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed

1) Take time to read the accounts of Saul's conversion then answer the questions below.

Acts 7:57-8:3 and 13:9 (Luke, companion of Paul, died AD 84)

1 Corinthians 15:9-10 (Paul, an apostle, born/died ~AD 5/AD 67)

Galatians 1:12-17, 22-23 (Paul)

Philippians 3:4-11 (Paul)

Acts 22:3-10 (Luke)

- 2) How do we know "Saul" is "Paul"?
- 3) Paul's notorious pre-Christian activities and conversion are reported, or attested to, by the testimony of who? (Note particularly Galatians 1:23)¹
- 4) What did Paul claim caused him to change?
- 5) How would you answer this skeptic? "Paul's conversion is no big deal, since a lot of people convert from one set of beliefs to another."

Fact #4: The skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed²

6) Take a look backwards over the life of James.

~AD 57 Read Acts 21:17-19. What do you learn about James?

¹ In addition to Paul's writings, Clement of Rome (bishop of the church in Rome, late 1st century) wrote: (1Clem 5:5-6) "By reason of jealousy and strife Paul by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After that he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of the West; and when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place, having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance."

² Josephus, Jewish historian, Antiquities 20.9.1: "Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he (Ananus, the high priest) assembled the Sanhedrin of Judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called Christ; whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned."

~AD 50 Read Acts 15:13-21. What does James do in this passage and what do you learn about him here?

~AD 44 Read Acts 12:17 Who is James associated with and who associates him with them?

~AD 36 Read Galatians 1:18-19, 2:9. What is James considered to be?

~Earlier than AD 33: Read John 7:5 and Mark 6:4. Did James believe in his brother?

7) Read 1 Corinthians 15:7. What could have caused James to have changed?

Fact #5: The tomb was empty

Three arguments supporting an empty tomb:

8) _____ agreement.

Matthew 28:12-13 (Apostle, written ~AD 50-70)

Justin Martyr, an early 2nd century Christian apologist, who wrote in *The Dialogue with Trypho*:

“Yet you not only have not repented, after you learned that He rose from the dead, but, as I said before you have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world to proclaim that a godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified, but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross,”

9) The _____ factor.

Luke, the author of Acts, records two sermons in Acts 2:14, 24, 31-32 and 3:12-15 that were preached in Jerusalem.

What is the main message?

10) The testimony of _____.³

Read Luke 24:1-3. What two things about the resurrection are not explicitly mentioned in the sermons in Acts?

³ Josephus, Jewish historian, Antiquities 4.8.15: “But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex, nor let servants be admitted to give testimony on account of the ignobility of their soul; since it is probable that they may not speak truth, either out of hope of gain, or fear of punishment.”

Talmud, a central text of Rabbinic Judaism, Rosh Hasannah 1.8: “Any evidence which a woman [gives] is not valid (to offer), also they are not valid to offer. This is equivalent to saying that one who is Rabbinically accounted a robber is qualified to give the same evidence as a woman.”