

FIGURE IT OUT

APOLOGETICS

BOOK 7 - THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Dr. David Newton

HARBOR VIEW PUBLISHING HOUSE
SANTA BARBARA ⌘ CALIFORNIA

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ISBN: 979-8-89342494-2

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*"Be perpetually ready to make
an 'apologia' [a legal defense or
reasoned argument] to everyone
who asks you to give a 'logos' [word]
for the hope that is within you, yet do
this with gentleness and reverence"*

1st Peter 3:15

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the summer of 2023 I taught a 12-week series on Apologetics at Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara. Turning my notes into a book resulted in over 450 pages. Would potential readers readily take on a book of that size? Thanks to everyone who gave me feedback that it would be much preferred to have a series of 12 paperback books – one covering each of the 12 Apologetics topics. People could easily find the topic they have interest in, and the entire series could then fit on a desk or bookshelf as a ready reference about foundational Apologetics issues.

Thanks to Bret Shellebarger who first approached me about teaching a series on Christian Worldview, which then turned into the Apologetics study. Thanks to senior pastor Tommy Schneider for his encouragement to go deep on each topic, and then inviting me to do the first teaching at the Calvary Wednesday midweek service. Thanks also to the 120+ who signed up online for the summer series and faithfully attended Monday evenings - and for all those challenging Q+A sessions after each topic.

Big thanks to Jef Richardson for videorecording and editing the Monday night teachings, and to Kevin Hurtado and Sam Shellebarger who filled in and covered for Jef when he was unable to attend. Readers can view the 12 video-teachings that correspond to the 12 Apologetics books at my *YouTube* channel **Figure It Out @NewWaveDave1977**.

Special thanks again to Jenny Yarbrough for another great job designing book covers for this Figure It Out series – just like your graphics work on my other FIO books and at the **NewtonFIO.com** website. Thanks also to all those who did proof-reading – providing edits and comments. And many thanks always to my family for their love, prayers, and support

FOREWORD

We cannot teach, much less defend, what we do not know. Apologetics is for every Christian because it addresses the questions a typical skeptic uses to challenge the claims of Christianity. While speaking around the nation at secondary schools, churches, and college/university campuses one concern is obvious: Biblical literacy is rare, as increasing numbers of people are choosing to follow the ways of the world. Many who grew up in Christian environments do not know what they believe or why they believe it. At a time when God's Word and name are challenged and ridiculed [even in places founded upon Judeo-Christian values], many well-meaning believers struggle with how to articulate and defend their beliefs. For this reason, Dave Newton's book series on Apologetics is both timely and important. These excellent resources are packed with wisdom from Newton's decades of teaching the Bible and defending the faith. Each short book is well-researched, easy to follow, and provides logical, reasoned answers to one of the twelve most common objections to Christianity. Dr. Newton's use of compelling statistics, analogies, and stories prove why Christianity is true and has withstood the test of time. Whether you are new to the faith, a mature Christian, or still trying to answer life's biggest questions, this Apologetics series will further equip you to defend your faith with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. I have no doubt you will return to this resource time and again to find great information to explain a reason for the hope within you.

The fact that the Church exists today should make any skeptic seriously consider the reality that this historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth, did exist in the 1st Century AD. This is confirmed by many non-biblical sources, including the writings of 1st Century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, along with a Roman named Tacitus in the 2nd Century. The vast majority

of modern scholars, many of whom are not Christians, also affirm this Jewish carpenter lived in Nazareth, claimed to be Messiah, had a large following, and was executed on a Roman cross. After establishing that Jesus really lived and died [facts that are no longer seriously debated by credible scholars], Dr. Newton delves into the abundance of historical evidence to explain the significance of what happened after the crucifixion: the empty tomb, numerous appearances of the resurrected Jesus, and how dozens [if not hundreds] of individuals were martyred for standing firm in their eyewitness testimonies that they saw Jesus of Nazareth alive after his death by crucifixion. This continues to be true, as Christianity has flourished for over 2,000 years despite consistent and serious opposition worldwide. This volume also debunks every major theory posed by doubters of the resurrection. It also makes clear *How and Why* Jesus literally changed world history and today remains the most influential and significant person to have ever lived throughout all of Earth history. In the end, Newton's thorough examination of the entire range of evidence supports the overwhelming case for the historical Jesus. Now you can be really well-equipped to confidently defend Jesus the Christ to anyone who asks about the hope that is within you.



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degrees from: University of Texas, Duke University, and Southern Methodist
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College, Career, and Eternity** [2021]. His latest book [2024] is **Prayerful:
How the Scriptures, History, and Experience Can Shape Our Prayers.

INTRODUCTION *to* APOLOGETICS

What exactly is Apologetics? A great starting place is in Acts chapter 17 where Saul is on the Areopagus [Mars Hill] just below the Acropolis in Athens, Greece. There he had a dialogue with skeptical Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. I have been up on that rock outcropping many times over the years and always love to read Acts 17:16-34 out loud, which is also engraved right there on a large stone placard. It is Paul's teaching about the *Unknown God* and his defense of the Christian faith within the pantheism of that First Century Athenian culture. Apologetics comes from the Greek word **apologia** [ἀπολογία] meaning "a verbal defense, a reasoned argument". Peter used this [1st Peter 3:15] when encouraging his readers to ALWAYS be ready to give an **apologia** about the Logos, regarding the hope within you, to anyone who would ask.

The 12 booklets in this FIO Apologetics series each examine one topic in the context of the questions a typical skeptic asks about the Christian faith, and how to reply with a well-prepared, thoughtful, rational, logical, reasonable response – information to equip you for such conversations. The primary focus is to provide my readers with content that is easy to remember and easy to explain. However, there are three caveats. First, everything in these booklets faces significant challenges, concerns, and oftentimes outright ridicule, because no matter what position you have there will always be those who oppose it. Challenges will come from outside Christian circles and Christian thinkers, but [sad to say] they also come from within Christian circles and Christian thinkers. I can guarantee

that all I present in these 12 volumes will have philosophers, theologians, pastors, and scholars who will all thoroughly disagree with my position. Second, rarely if ever does a great Apologetics response convince the skeptic to change a position. But reasonable-logical-rational-thoughtful responses can help remove the stereotypical way that people often think about most conservative Christians - that we are unreasonable, illogical, irrational, close-minded, not very thoughtful. And third, the Bible will not be my primary source of defense, because skeptics usually say, "I don't believe the Bible, what else have you got?" I will utilize Scripture as I go deeper into each topic and cover solid evidence that align with facts.

My position throughout this entire 12-volume series begins from the premise there are just two competing worldviews. Book-1 introduces the **Naturalist Worldview** opposite the **Biblical Christian Worldview**. The former is inherently atheistic [there is no God and everything happens by random accidental iterations over long periods of time]. The latter is inherently theistic [there is a God who designed and created everything]. There is also a **Theistic Evolutionary Worldview** that tries to blend the prevailing scientific paradigm with the Biblical account of God's creation. These underlying worldviews directly impact how one views the origin of the universe and life on Earth [the topics of Book-2 and Book-3]. It also impacts one's position on the origin of the Bible and if it is true [Book-4 and Book-5]. It then impacts how one approaches Absolute Truth vs. Relativism [Book-6] AND all the factors dealing with the historical Jesus.

The evidence presented for each Apologetics topic can be persuasive to even the most ardent atheist. Providing sound, logical, and thoughtful *apologia* of the Christian faith clearly reminds me of my work as an expert witness in legal cases, where I have been hired by various law firms to provide testimony for either a plaintiff's or defendant's legal case

about negative economic impacts, business valuations, financial loss due to breach of contract, failure to perform, or outright fraud. My summary report lays out the logic of all the supporting evidence and rationales related to the issue that bitterly divides the two parties – to bring an unbiased and objective *verbal defense, a reasoned argument* - based on the evidence reviewed. That is my **apologia**. There are usually several other “expert witnesses” hired by the opposing legal counsel who submit perspectives that directly contradict my professional opinion. My expert witness” approach is the exact same for this series on Christian Apologetics – to carefully examine perspectives and evidence for anyone responding to the skeptics who challenge the credibility of Christianity.

The 12-volume series covers the most common questions asked about Christian faith – and how best to respond with confidence using rational, logical thought-processes with reliable common-sense evidence. Each book tracks the on-going dialogue between a skeptic of Christianity and a well-informed, well-equipped believer who is able to confidently reply with a defense supported by sound logic and verifiable evidence. Each booklet concludes with a bibliography of Additional Resources where readers can find more information on each Apologetics topic. As you can imagine, it is virtually impossible to cover every topic or question that can be raised. But this series examines the twelve most popular issues you are likely to encounter and provides solid answers for the skeptics. May this series become a trusted resource you go back to time and again regarding the foundational rationales for the hope within you, with the page-edges frayed and folded over from regular use as you dig in and learn to master the underlying Apologetics of your own Christian faith.

- Dr. Dave Newton
June 2024
Santa Barbara, California

BOOK 7

THE HISTORICAL JESUS

I will show how shaky the evidence is regarding the alleged existence of a would-be messiah named Jesus.

- Frank Zindler, Board of American Atheists

Historians have no evidence of a historic Jesus in the 1st Century.

- Dan Barker, Freedom From Religion

Did historical Jesus really exist? The evidence doesn't add up.

- Rafael Lataster, Washington Post

The Jewish high priest Ananus instigated the death of James, who was the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ.

- Flavius Josephus, Antiquities 20.200

Contemporary religious and philosophical skeptics continue to question whether there ever was an actual, literal, historical Jewish man named Jesus who lived in Nazareth during the 1st Century AD. The three skeptics quoted above are joined by numerous scholars such as G. A. Wells, author of the 1999 book *The Jesus Myth*, who claims everything about Jesus was poorly constructed, but well-imagined, legends and folklore. "This fictitious person Jesus was made up to support the Apostle Paul's teachings about his own newly concocted Gospel for man's salvation."

Another popular book is *Jesus of Nazareth* by Paul Verhoeven. His colleague Robert J. Miller praised it, saying, "*With a filmmaker's eye for detail and a healthy skepticism of biblical scholarship, Verhoeven breaks down the gospels and reassembles them into a unique and fascinating reconstruction*". This sets the stage for the skeptics' opinions about the historical Jesus: **Group 1-** Jesus never even existed – he was completely fabricated. **Group 2-** Jesus was a real person, but He was not like the man described in the Gospels. **Group 3-** He may have done some of the things stated in the Gospels, but He absolutely was NOT the Son of God.

A Rational Logical Approach

My plan for this book presents a rational process-flow of logical thought that first examines whether Jesus ever existed. While many skeptics state "Jesus is myth" as a foregone conclusion among the learned elite, the reality is that only a very small minority of theologians, historians, and archaeologists hold this position - including those from decidedly secular bases. In fact, the overwhelming majority of scholars are satisfied that the historical *Jesus did in fact exist* during the 1st Century AD - teaching throughout Judaea and Galilee within the Syrian Province of the Roman Empire. So, while there are books about the *mythical* Jesus, these are generally viewed as very biased in their disregard of significant historical evidence that ***Jesus did in fact exist***. This rationally-logically moves to the sequential matter of whether this now agreed-upon historical person was actually executed on a Roman cross. Once again, you might assume that secular scholars and liberal theologians all deny Jesus was crucified. However, similar to the previous matter, the overwhelming majority of contemporary theologians, historians, and archaeologists accept the crucifixion as a true historical event that occurred in Roman occupied Jerusalem in the early 30s AD. The third sequential matter is that if Jesus was crucified, was He literally/physically resurrected afterward? This is

where there is much criticism, skepticism, doubt, and push-back from liberal scholars. This book proposes the rational, logical approach that these matters are cumulatively sequential [His existence, the crucifixion, the resurrection]. Apologetics looks at all the available evidence for these three matters and will clearly show that there is solid support that Jesus was an historical person AND that He was crucified on a cross by the Romans. The third matter of the resurrection then comes down to these factors: 1] the Romans and Jews could not produce His dead body soon after that historical execution, 2] the credibility of the theories used to explain why the body of Jesus was never found, and 3] the credibility of the evidence that Jesus was seen physically alive again [the tomb was empty] by hundreds of people after His death by Roman execution.

Was Jesus A Historical Person?

The credibility and reliability of the Bible were covered in Book-4 and Book-5 in this Apologetics series. If the Biblical record does provide rational, logical, and verifiable information, there is then an extremely detailed account of His life and what He did. The skeptic typically argues that the Bible cannot be used as a source of supporting evidence for the historical Jesus - for example: "*The resurrection happened because the Bible says so*". However, the overwhelming majority of scholars do agree [concede?] that the Gospel accounts of Matthew, John-Mark, John, and Luke's two-volume set [his Gospel plus Acts] are credible historical works regarding the life of Jesus of Nazareth. They also accept seven of Paul's letters [to Rome, two to Corinth, to Galatia, Philippi, and Philemon, and the first epistle to Thessalonica] as being historically accurate. So, while many reject these as inspired by God, they are accepted as credible accounts contemporary to the life of this Jesus of Nazareth. This is a very significant point to make, because if there are 12 sources even liberal

skeptics accept as credible historical narratives about Jesus, it makes sense to utilize these as source documents within an overall **apologia** [defense] regarding the ongoing debate about the historical Jesus.

Here in 2024, many still assume that when you read popular articles in *Time Magazine*, *Atlantic Monthly*, or *The New York Times* that the whole world believes that Jesus is a fictional character and no one believes the gospels are true. However, that is simply NOT the case! Even scholars at the most liberal seminaries and graduate schools are in agreement and recognize the evidence that there was a real person named Jesus who taught in and around Judaea, Galilee, and Jerusalem during the late 20s to early 30s of the 1st Century Roman Empire. World renowned historian Dr. Michael Grant taught at the University of Edinburgh and Queen's University Belfast. He wrote over 50 books on the politics and society of ancient Greece and Rome. He has stated that if contemporary standards of historical textual criticism are applied to the New Testament, *"We can no more reject Jesus' existence than we can reject the existence of many pagan persons whose reality as historical figures is never questioned - no serious scholar has ventured to postulate the non-historicity of Jesus, or at any rate very few, and they have not succeeded in disposing of the much stronger, indeed very abundant, evidence to the contrary"*. Even Bart Ehrman [an agnostic-atheist], the Gray Distinguished Professor at the University of North Carolina and author of more than 30 books says, *"I don't think there's any serious historian who doubts the existence of Jesus, we have more evidence for Jesus than for almost anybody from his time period"*. In fact, when Dr. Ehrman openly debated Craig Evans [Houston Theological Seminary] in the 2020 book, *Can We Trust The Bible on The Historical Jesus?* – moderated by Bob Stewart, from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary [see Additional Resources, p. 39], the most foundational point they both agreed upon is: **there was an**

historical Jesus. And consider that Marc Borg, a widely quoted liberal theologian and longtime participant in the *Jesus Seminar*, stated, “Some judgments are so probable as to be certain, for example, Jesus really existed, and he really was crucified, just as Julius Caesar really existed and was assassinated - we know as much about Jesus as we can about any figure in the ancient world”. From an Apologetics standpoint, the first matter of whether Jesus is a historical figure is really no longer open for debate. To deny Jesus ever existed is widely recognized as a “fringe” position for any theologian, historian, or archaeologist. A small minority of scholars still hold to the position that the Apostle Paul [Saul of Tarsus] made up the person of Jesus 40 years after He died. They are typically called *mythicists* – focused on the myth of a fictional Jesus, believing there are no historical records in Roman archives and no archaeological evidence to support Jesus ever existed. They argue that all ancient pagan gods also died and were then resurrected so this was simply borrowed from religious folklore of that time. The *Jesus Seminar* began in 1985 by Robert Funk with 30 scholars meeting in Berkeley, California. In subsequent years, attendance grew to over 200 theologians who debated what was recorded in the Gospels. Over time, the seminar ultimately concluded that only 18% of what Jesus said and just 16% of what He did actually occurred. It is important to understand that these theologians attempt to present their position as being “mainstream” Christian thought; however, it is actually just a very small percentage of contemporary Biblical scholars worldwide. The competing rational-logical matter is thoroughly mainstream - **there was a historical Jesus.**

There are four distinct stages in what is commonly referred to as “*The Quest for the Historical Jesus*”. Beginning in the 1830s, liberal German theologians in Munich, Berlin, Hamburg, and Frankfurt were challenging

whether there ever was a historical Jesus. These 19th Century scholars were looking for the next “new thing” to research and debate, as it had been 300 years since Martin Luther initiated the Protestant Reformation and a renewed, strong adherence to the veracity of Biblical content. The next stage was during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s - about 100 years after the initial “Quest” had launched. Two big names are synonymous with this era: Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth. They held to a very liberal view of the Bible and as WWII ended that proclaimed, based upon their works, the quest for the historical Jesus **was now completed**. It is sad to see today, how many seminaries and graduate theology schools still try to maintain that same premise from almost 100 years ago, but the quest did not conclude at that time. A third stage took place during the 1950s and 1960s - the “Second Quest” - as the next generation of theologians argued that the previous works of Bultmann and Barth did NOT make a strong enough, sound historical case that there was no Biblical-historical Jesus. These younger scholars wanted to ensure that Jesus did not end up slipping away into folklore, myth, and legend. Then came stage four, known as the “Third Quest”, beginning with the 1970s and continuing until today, during which there have been literally hundreds of new books published that clearly bring to life the specific details of Jesus as a typical Middle Eastern Jewish man who spoke Greek and Aramaic.

Extra-Biblical Sources

There are many sources other than the Bible about Jesus. He is recorded in the *Jerusalem Talmud* [folio 24] and by Josephus [*Antiquities of the Jews*], where book 18, chapter 3 states, “Now **there was about this time Jesus**, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. **He was the Christ**, when **Pilate**, at the suggestion of the principal men

among us, **had condemned him to the cross**, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for **he appeared to them alive again the third day** as the prophets foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him, and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day". Book 20, chapter 9 says, "After the death of the procurator Festus, when Albinus was about to succeed him, the high priest Ananias considered it a favorable opportunity to assemble the Sanhedrin. He therefore caused James, the **brother of Jesus, who was called Christ**, and several others, to appear before this hastily assembled council, and pronounced upon them the sentence of death by stoning". In 2002, archaeologists unveiled a limestone ossuary [box used for burial bones] dated to the 1st Century AD with an Aramaic inscription "**Jacob son of Joseph brother of Jesus**". Jacob is Aramaic for James. After a decade of analysis and a formal trial, it could not be refuted and is deemed authentic. Roman Senator and noted historian Tacitus, in his *Annals* book 15, chapter 44 [116 AD], wrote "they were called Christians by the populace. **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**". The Stoic philosopher Mara, in the late 1st Century AD, living in the very same Syrian Province as Jesus and Pilate, wrote to his son Serapion regarding: 1] the murder of Socrates, 2] how Pythagoras was burned, and 3] "**the execution of the wise king of the Jews**" and how God punished those who killed these prominent figures. Suetonius [also late 1st Century AD] was a well-regarded Roman historian who referenced "**Christians**" in his writings about Caesar Nero. He also writes how Emperor Claudius had all the Jews expelled from Rome, "since the Jews constantly made disturbances **at the instigation of Chrestus** [means 'Christ'] he expelled them from Rome". This is confirmed by Luke [Acts 18:2] "Because Claudius had

commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome". Pliny [61-113 AD] was governor of Pontus and Bithynia and wrote to the Emperor Trajan on how to handle **'those who worship Christus'** and "how to deal with these **'Christians'** whom I am prosecuting for they are accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn among themselves **to their Christ**, as though he were a god". Eusebius mentioned the third book of *History* by Thallus [mid-late 1st Century AD], as does Julius Africanus [early 3rd Century AD] which references **the crucifixion** from the Gospel accounts. Phlegon of Tralles [mid-2nd Century AD] is noted by Origen [*Against Celsus*, book 2 chapter 33], "with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign **Jesus appears to have been crucified**, and the great earthquakes which then took place". In book 2 chapter 59 Origen continues his reference to Phlegon, "**Jesus**, while alive, was of no assistance to himself, but that **he arose after death**, and exhibited the marks of his punishment, and **showed how his hands had been pierced by nails**". One Talmud reference [William Davidson translation, No. 43a] states the, "**Nazarene** is going out to be stoned because he practiced sorcery, incited people to idol worship, and led the Jewish people astray". The Babylonian Talmud [70-200 AD] makes reference to **'Yeshu'** [Jesus] and **'Yeshu ha-Notzri'** [Jesus of Nazareth]. The *Didache* [from between 50-70 AD] explains how Christians should act and the **teachings of Jesus**, with instructions for celebrating communion to remember **His death and resurrection**. Clement of Rome wrote [70-97 AD] many statements about **Jesus** and His ministry. Papias wrote [95-110 AD] that he learned of **Jesus** from those who heard Him in person. Ignatius of Antioch [110 AD] wrote that **Jesus was crucified at the time of Pontius Pilate and Herod the Tetrarch**. Polycarp wrote in *Philippi* [110-140 AD] about how **Jesus lived and died**. Quadratus wrote [117-138 AD] to Emperor Hadrian that "the works of **our Savior** were always present for

they were genuine". Justin the Philosopher [posthumously known as the 'Martyr'] wrote in 155-157 AD that **Jesus** was a teacher, was **crucified**, he **died and rose again**. Lucian of Samosata wrote [166 AD] in his *Death of Peregrine*, as he mocked Christians, "**Christians**, you know, worship a man to this day, the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites and **was crucified on that account**, it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver they are all brothers from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and **worship instead the crucified sage**". Celsus sarcastically writes in 175 AD about a Jew who had a direct conversation with Jesus, noting that he disputes with, and confutes Jesus on many points in their dialogue. Together, these 21 sources: Jerusalem Talmud, Flavius Josephus, Tacitus, Mara, Suetonius, Pliny, Eusebius, Thallus, Julius Africanus, Phlegon cited by Origen, the Davidson translated Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud, the Didache, Clement of Rome, Papias, Ignatius, Polycarp, Quadratus, Justin, Lucian, and Celsus provide very strong evidence to support the historical Jesus.

Other Historical Figures

There are literally hundreds of persons from antiquity that are also widely accepted as historically true who have far less evidence than the sources that support the historical Jesus. Lucian of Samosata [noted earlier] also wrote a famous biography about Alexander the Great in 100 AD, over 400 years after Alexander died in 323 BC. Arian of Nicomedia wrote his Alexander biography in 130 AD - more than 450 years after his death. Caesar Tiberius was the Emperor at the time of Jesus and died in 37 AD, five years after Jesus was crucified in 32 AD. Tacitus and Suetonius each wrote what are considered definitive biographies of the life of Tiberius [in 110 and 120 AD respectively] that were both penned around 80 years after his death. Consider how Socrates of Athens [470-399 BC] did not

write any texts and yet is clearly accepted as a historical figure because of how many philosophers quoted him posthumously. Aristotle, Plato, Epicurus, and Democritus all have just a fraction of the written evidence that exists confirming the historical Jesus. Cyrus the Great [590-529 BC] is known primarily from the *Cyropaedia* written by the Greek historian Xenophon about 150 years after his death – and from the books of Daniel and Isaiah in the Bible. There are similar writings of Roman historians on the lives of the 1st Century AD Caesars: Augustus, Tiberius, Nero, and Domitian – all penned anywhere from 50 to 175 years after each of their deaths. Genghis Khan [1162-1227 AD] is almost exclusively recorded within internal court documents chronicling his reign, with very few other outside accounts about his life. Ramesses II of Egypt's 19th Dynasty ruled during the 13th Century BC, but his life and reign are pieced together in bits of cuneiform from wall-carvings and pieces of broken stone tablets. The detailed written accounts about Jesus of Nazareth are significantly more credible than many other historical figures from antiquity.

Was Jesus Crucified?

With the historical Jesus from Nazareth firmly established as a literal, true person who lived in the 1st Century AD, the second matter in the rational-logical sequence is whether this man was in fact executed by the Romans on a cross just outside the walls of Jerusalem during Passover in 32 AD. It was noted earlier that even the most liberal scholars and textual critics accept the four Gospels as historically accurate source documents about Jesus. Matthew the Levite was an eyewitness of Jesus for the nearly three years of Jesus' ministry and writes [27:33-35], "*They came to the place called Golgotha, which means 'Place of a Skull' and **they crucified Him**, and divided His garments among them*". John Mark wrote his Gospel as the eyewitness Simon Peter told him of his nearly three years with Jesus and writes [15:22-24] "*They brought Jesus to the place Golgotha – which*

is translated 'Place of the Skull' and **crucified Him**". John bar-Zebedee was an eyewitness for those same nearly three years of Jesus' ministry, and records [19:17-18], "*They took Jesus bearing His own cross to the place of the skull, which is called in Hebrew 'Golgotha' and **crucified Him** and with Him two other men, one on either side and Jesus in between*". The Greek physician Luke got the information for his Gospel from many eyewitnesses and writes [23:33], "*They came to a place called 'The Skull' and there **they crucified Him**, and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left*". The Pharisee Saul of Tarsus wrote in his first letter to Corinth [1:23], "*We preach **Christ crucified***" and [2:2], "*What I know is **that Christ was crucified***" alongside [2:8], "*Had the rulers understood, they would not have **crucified the Lord***". In his second letter to Corinth Saul writes [13:4], "*For **indeed He was crucified***". The four Gospels and Saul's two letters to Corinth are then accepted as six credible and reliable direct accounts that the historical Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross.

Previous citations in this book were cited to verify Jesus was a historical person and also stated that He was crucified. Origen, in *Against Celsus* [book 2, chapter 33] wrote, "*With regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign **Jesus appears to have been crucified***". Ignatius of Antioch [110 AD] wrote that **Jesus was crucified at the time of Pontius Pilate** and Herod the Tetrarch. Justin Martyr wrote [155-157 AD] that **Jesus was crucified**, he died, and rose again. Tacitus the Roman Senator and historian wrote [115 AD] about Caesar Nero's persecution of Christians, and that **'Christus' was crucified by Pontius Pilate**, which resulted in an "*immense multitude*" adhering to Jesus' teachings. Lucian wrote [166 AD], "*Christians worship a **man who was crucified** and they deny the gods of Greece, and worship **the crucified sage***". These four accounts are also credible and reliable extrabiblical accounts that Jesus

was crucified on a Roman cross by Pontius Pilate and are consistent with what is written in the four historically accurate Gospel narratives. Each of these ten accounts are supported by archaeological evidence that Rome regularly used crucifixion to execute individuals just outside Jerusalem's walls in the 1st Century time of Jesus. For example, in 1968 the remains of the body of a crucified man were uncovered at Givat HaMivtar in east Jerusalem. Hadassah Medical School estimated he was in his late 20s and was crucified around 70 AD - the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian. At the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, I took this photo of the remains of the metal spike driven through the foot and



heel bone from the body found at Givat HaMivtar. Many other crucifixion nails have been uncovered by archaeologists, including what are known as 'Caiaphas-1' and 'Caiaphas-2' nails found in the Jerusalem burial cave of the Jewish high priest Caiaphas, who was involved in the interrogation of Jesus prior to Him being crucified [Matthew 26 and John 18]. The two nails [next page] were found to have microscopic fragments of wood and bone embedded within the rusted metal [wood from a cross, bone from a victim who had been crucified]. Researchers can only speculate why the burial cave ossuary of Caiaphas would have crucifixion nails. Some

archaeologists have claimed that the two nails were from the crucifixion of Jesus, based upon reasoning, "Why else would Roman crucifixion nails



be in the tomb of Caiaphas?" However, it is not possible to know that these particular nails were used in the crucifixion of Jesus. In addition, a 2017 archaeological dig near Cambridgeshire, England unearthed a full skeleton of a man buried in a cemetery [inside a 3rd or 4th Century AD Roman settlement] with a nail driven through the heel bone [below]. It is



yet another confirmation of Roman crucifixion. The 'Caiaphas' nails plus these two human feet with nails in the heel bone, DO provide excellent tangible evidence that the Roman Empire crucified people, including during the exact same time period as the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Taken together, the accounts of the credible historical Gospels, plus the letters from the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus, along with writings from Origen, Justin,

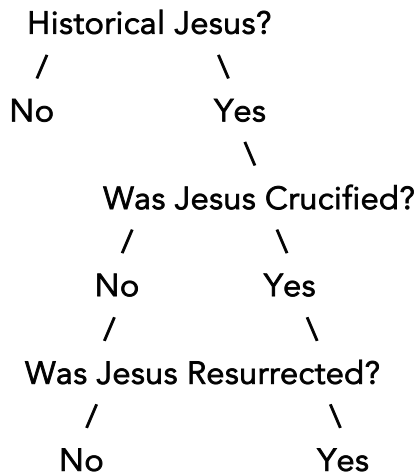
Tacitus, and Lucian, plus the archaeological evidence about crucifixion at the time of Jesus all provide excellent support to draw the conclusion that the 1st Century AD historical person named Jesus of Nazareth was in fact crucified on a cross by the Romans. Skeptics will always challenge this, but their arguments lack the evidence to disregard these facts.

Was Jesus Resurrected?

The first matter covered in this book, “Was Jesus a Historical Person?” has been definitively answered, “Yes!” There is overwhelming evidence that He was a real man who lived in the early 1st Century Roman Empire. While a very small minority of hyper-skeptics continue to argue that Jesus never existed and was simply made up by Saul of Tarsus, the significant majority of theologians, historians, and archaeologists – many of whom are not Christians – all agree that Jesus is clearly a historical person. The second matter, “Was Jesus Crucified?” has also been well-documented as an actual historical event that happened in Jerusalem during the time that Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of the Syrian Province. There is very strong evidence that these first two matters are well-defended by sound, rational, logical Apologetics research. When you read articles or view podcasts that deny Jesus existed or that Jesus was not crucified, rest assured that these positions are far outside the mainstream of contemporary scholarship. Even the most liberal theologians, along with a majority of non-Christian historians and archaeologists together agree: 1] the historical Jesus of Nazareth existed, and 2] He was crucified in the 1st Century AD by the Romans at the direction of Pontius Pilate. But this third matter is where the debate about Jesus really begins to heat up.

Consider where we have arrived at this point in my Apologetic sequence. The decision flow-chart on the next page comes down to this logical line-of-reasoning. First, Is there a historical Jesus? If ‘No’, our Apologetic is

finished. If 'Yes', then we ask, "Was He crucified?" If 'No', our Apologetic is finished because Jesus in the Bible was crucified. If 'Yes', then we ask, "Was He resurrected?". If 'No', our Apologetic is finished because Jesus in the Bible **was raised** from the dead. If 'Yes', then that opens up many more additional questions that will be addressed in the Summary.



Strong evidence has been presented at the first two levels of this rational flow-chart and concludes: *there was a historical Jesus who was crucified and died on a Roman cross*. [Note: there could perhaps be an option where Jesus was *not* crucified and died by some other means, and if so, the question could be asked if Jesus was resurrected.] But this is quite problematic because *that Jesus* is NOT the one described in detail in the Bible. The few scholars who say there was a historical Jesus, but He was not crucified, requires us to ask, "How did that Jesus die?" and logically, "Did Jesus remain dead?" The accepted historical Gospel accounts clearly record that: 1] Jesus died while on the cross, 2] had a spear thrust into his chest to be absolutely certain He was dead before removing the body from the cross, 3] His body was embalmed and wrapped in grave-cloths, and 4] His body was then laid inside a 'new' tomb just outside

Jerusalem that was owned by a man named Joseph from the Judaeen city Arimathea [noted by Eusebius of Caesarea to be Ramathaim-Zophim in his day]. If one gets to the point in the logical flow-chart that: 1] the historical Jesus 2] was crucified, that covers two of the three matters from the beginning of this book. Once Jesus was dead and buried, there are then numerous proposals [and theories] to explain what happened next. He was either resurrected from the dead . . . or He was not. There are no other logical possibilities. However, there are seven counterproposals to the resurrection that must also be examined.

Proposal-1 Swoon Theory

Hugh Schonfield's 1965 book, *The Passover Plot*, tried to make the case that Jesus had not died on the cross, but had fallen into a comatose state that allowed everyone to assume He was dead. Schonfield tried to resurrect the 'Swoon Theory' originally proposed by German theologian Heinrich Paulus in the 1800s. Based on his 'modern' principle of *natural explanation*, Paulus theorized that Jesus could not have died on the cross, because *naturally*, no man can come back to life after being dead. There has to be a *natural explanation* for why so many people saw Jesus alive in the days and weeks following the crucifixion. The 'Swoon' is then explained: Jesus went into a coma and had no recognizable pulse or heartbeat, so He was presumed to be dead. Once he rested in the cool air of the tomb, He regained consciousness, rolled the stone away from the inside, and eventually presented Himself alive to His disciples and many others. While initially provocative, Paulus' theory was never given serious credence and has long since been almost universally rejected by scholars and medical experts as having no basis and being completely implausible. Consider that Jesus was flogged, sharp thorns were pressed into his scalp, then He was nailed to the cross where he hung for six long hours - from the third hour [9:00 am] until the ninth hour [3:00 pm], then

a Roman centurion thrust a spear into His chest, and after all that, He woke up inside the dark tomb and found strength to roll away the large stone *from the inside*, even as the tomb was being guarded by soldiers placed there to ensure no one would remove Jesus' body.

Response to Proposal-1

Medical doctors have authored dozens of books, professional journal articles, conference presentations, and online podcasts describing what happens to a person who is crucified. First, Jesus' back was torn apart by the flogging received before being crucified and then iron nails were hammered through his hands and feet – so He could have simply bled to death. Second, the crucified person hangs from the nailed hands and feet, and when the cross was lifted into its upright position and dropped into the post-hole, Jesus' shoulder sockets would have dislocated so the body's weight makes it nearly impossible to take in regular breaths and the person can die of asphyxiation. Third, this kind of physical stress from massive bleeding and inability to breathe could cause death by cardiac rupture, even as the body would try to insulate the heart with water filling up the pericardial sac around the heart and lungs. All of this occurred while Jesus' was definitely in traumatic hypovolemic shock, which would cause an extremely rapid heart rate with a very weak pulse, as the heart had difficulty pumping blood during steady blood-loss. Remember that Matthew [27:32] and Luke [23:26] both record that even before being crucified, Jesus was so weakened from the flogging that the Romans conscripted another man [Simon from Cyrene] to carry Jesus' cross to the place for the crucifixion. Jesus was probably already in shock and severely weakened by loss of blood before He was nailed to the wooden cross. Add to this John's accepted Gospel account [19:39] of how the Pharisee Nicodemus [of the Sanhedrin] brought some 100 pounds of myrrh and aloe to embalm Jesus' dead body before it was laid in the

tomb belonging to Joseph. Jesus would have been tightly wrapped in grave-cloths before supposedly regaining consciousness. He would then have to unwrap Himself from the embalming. It is inconceivable that Jesus only 'swooned' [passed out] and was later 'revived' in the cool air of the tomb, and then rolled away the stone from the inside.

Proposal-2 Body Snatchers

In the last two centuries, numerous theologians have put forth the idea that the disciples of Jesus came to the tomb under cover of darkness and took away His body so they could perpetuate the lie that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. This seems plausible at first, because they could then show an empty tomb as the proof, even as they claimed that Jesus had shown Himself to them, but then He had to leave Jerusalem.

Response to Proposal-2

Matthew's Gospel account is accepted as historical and credible. He writes [27:62-66] that after Jesus died on the cross, the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pontius Pilate and explained that Jesus had told many people He would rise from the dead after three days. They asked Pilate *"give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and tell the people He has risen from the dead"*. Pilate responded by saying, *"You have a guard - go make it secure as you know how"*. Some theologians say this means he told the Jewish leaders to use their own Temple guard soldiers to guard the tomb. But the majority of scholars agree that in the context of the dialogue, Pilate is giving his Roman-authority order that they will have a Roman guard. If these were trained, highly skilled Roman soldiers, they would fully understand the penalty was death for failing to fulfill this assignment. How could some Galilean fishermen and maybe a former tax collector overcome these armed soldiers? Whatever way Joseph of Arimathea's new tomb was guarded, it makes no sense that this cohort

of soldiers would not have seen the disciples arrive and then stopped them by force from removing Jesus' body. In addition, the Gospel accounts state clearly that when they got to the empty tomb the linen grave wrappings were still on the stone slab with the face-covering rolled up nearby. If the disciples stole the body, it is not logical that they would unwrap Jesus and then carry the body away. It would probably be much easier to carry the wrapped body, especially after having subdued the soldiers. But if they did first unwrap the body, they probably would have either taken the cloths with them or left them in a pile on the floor. And the women did not take the body because they knew they could not roll away the stone on their own strength [Mark 16:3-4]. If it was some of the disciples, why were they later huddled in a locked room? Simon Peter, Thomas [called Didymus], Nathanael from Cana, and the brothers James and John [sons of Zebedee] left Jerusalem and went back to Galilee to go fishing [John 21:2-3]. They all believed Jesus was still dead.

Proposal-3 Wrong Tomb

Some theologians and atheist-skeptics have proposed that on the third day after the crucifixion, the disciples and the women went to the *wrong tomb* by mistake. Believing it to be the same tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea where Jesus had been placed, they were surprised to find it empty and began to spread the story that Jesus was resurrected.

Response to Proposal-3

It is quite logical and rational to assume that at some point *somebody* would eventually go to the correct tomb and see that the stone was still in place, and that Jesus' body was still inside. In addition, if they were at the wrong tomb and Jesus was still dead in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, there would be no appearances of Jesus alive and in person upon which to substantiate the story of the resurrection. Clearly, there would have to

come a time when this supposed accident was recognized and the reality of Jesus still being dead would be confirmed by many eyewitnesses.

Proposal-4 Hallucinations

In the 1800s, a few theologians introduced their idea that Jesus was not resurrected, but that His followers were so convinced He would come to life again that they *thought they saw* Jesus alive in the days just after the crucifixion. This "Hallucination Theory" proposed that Peter believed he saw Jesus and that same perception was passed along to others who heard Peter's testimony. In time, more and more individuals were drawn into the *mass hallucination* and also were convinced they had seen Jesus alive. Very few scholars give any credence to this theory. However, New Testament History Professor Gerd Lüdemann, an atheist who taught at McMaster University in Canada, was a leading proponent of this proposal up until his death in 2021. He believed that these false sightings became the basis for folklore surrounding Jesus, and eventually caught on as the accepted 'eyewitness' accounts of the resurrected Christ, even though there was no tangible proof that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

Response to Proposal-4

The most important point to refute this theory is that while it is widely recognized in psychology that people can hallucinate, it is highly unlikely that groups of people will have the exact same hallucination. Dozens of articles published in well-respected medical and psychological journals dispute such a mass-phenomenon. Also, the eyewitness accounts written in the historically accepted Gospels do not have a common [generic] way that people came in contact, and interacted, with Jesus. but are instead much different from each other. One example [John 20:15] is how Mary Magdalene saw Jesus at the tomb, but did not recognize Him at first. In another instance [John 20:21], some of Jesus' disciples were fishing and did not recognize Him at first. Another time, two men [one was Cleopas]

were traveling to Emmaus [Luke 24:13-35] when Jesus caught up to them and He walked alongside while talking with them for perhaps a few miles - but they did not initially recognize that it was Jesus until after they were sitting down to dinner with Him once they reached the city.

Proposal-5 *Spiritually Raised*

Many liberal theologians and atheistic skeptics still hold to the position that the accepted historical Jesus died on the cross and was dead in the tomb. However, he did not rise from the dead in a physical body, but in a *spiritual body* that was not flesh and bone. Jesus could then move about and enter locked rooms because He was just a hologram or vapor.

Response To Proposal-5

This theory still has the same problem of the other theories proposed – namely, *What happened to the physical dead body of Jesus?* If the tomb was empty, where was the corpse that had been mutilated on the cross? Jesus was touched by the disciples [Luke 24:39-40 and John 20:27] and he even ate food with them [Luke 24:30 and John 21:12]. He was not in a vaporous state floating about like some Hollywood movie. He walked alongside two men traveling to Emmaus [Luke 24:15-17] and again with two others who were going out to the countryside [Mark 16:12].

Proposal-6 *Twin Theory*

There are a few scholars who still advocate the position that there was another man who looked very much like Jesus and he either was crucified in Jesus' place or afterward was thought to be Jesus once the real Jesus was crucified. This first option in this "Substitution Theory" is that this other man was the one arrested in Gethsemane and everyone believed they had crucified the correct person. Then three days later the real Jesus presented himself alive and without any physical marks of the crucifixion to introduce the story of His resurrection. The second version is that the real Jesus was in fact crucified and died, but this look-alike was the one

who showed Himself to everyone under the intentional guise of Jesus being resurrected. Proponents of this substitutionary hypothesis point to the episodes in the Biblical account where Jesus is not recognized when He first presents Himself [see the 'Response to Proposal-4' on page 30].

Response To Proposal-6

This notion that Jesus had a very close 'twin' in physical appearance has been around for centuries, but has never gained any traction due to the complete lack of any evidence to support it. It would be difficult [if not impossible] to duplicate the physical wounds of the nails in His hands and the spear thrust into His side that were presented by the real Jesus to Thomas [John 20:24-27]. The disciples had been with Jesus from the Fall of 29 AD when Jesus started His ministry, to this third Passover in April of 32 AD – nearly three years. It is just not plausible that another person could have convinced all eleven of them that this was the same Jesus they all knew and loved. Jesus also appeared to them in a locked room in His glorified resurrected body [John 20:19]. That would be very difficult for a look-alike to pull off, that would be accepted by everyone.

Proposal-7 Impersonator

Finally, there have been some theologians and historians who hold to an "Impersonation Theory" that claims someone who looked just like Jesus picked up the Savior's ministry [for personal gain or popularity] after the real Jesus died on the cross, was buried, and did not come back to life.

Response To Proposal-7

This is similar to the prior proposition and is without any support. That the Gospel is based on a man who looked like Jesus, while the real Jesus remained dead, makes no sense. It is inconceivable the eleven disciples preached their eyewitness testimony of the resurrection if they all knew Jesus was really still dead. Why would they [arguably] die for the Gospel message of the resurrection if they were all involved in this conspiracy?

Produce His Dead Body

Each of these alternative proposals about the resurrection of Jesus has significant concerns regarding its credibility to explain what happened after the crucifixion. Another significant concern is the matter of the empty tomb. The claims that Jesus was alive could have been very easily dismissed by simply producing the dead body. The crowded city of Jerusalem during Passover would be a very hard place to *hide* a dead body from Roman soldiers, Jewish Temple guards, and the massive influx of visitors for Passover. It would also be an easy time and place to *find* a dead body. All it would take is just one person to see men with a dead body [or trying to somehow hide a body] and that report would direct the authorities to immediately investigate. It would only be a matter of time before word spread around the city and *someone* came forward with knowledge about seeing such activity. It is well-documented that at the time of Jesus' crucifixion in 32 AD, there were 5,000 Roman soldiers and some 900 cavalry comprising the *Legio-X Fretensis* [10th Legion of the Strait] based in Jerusalem to keep the peace and support Governor Pilate. It seems implausible that such a large professional army could not find a dead body in an area that is only about one square kilometer [the size of the Old City]. When one considers that Pilate gave his order, "*You have your guard*" for Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, if the tomb was now empty, there would be strong incentive to find the dead body of Jesus and put an end to any rumors that this Jewish rabbi was alive. Matthew's accepted Gospel says [28:4] the soldiers guarding the tomb shook for fear and fell back as if dead men when an angel rolled away the stone. Matthew continues [28:11-15] that the soldiers came back into the city and rather than return to their Roman barracks [for fear of facing officers or Pilate], they instead went to the Jewish leaders at the Temple and

reported the earthquake and how the stone was rolled away. The chief priests paid off the guards with “a large sum of money” so they would testify that Jesus’ disciples came in the middle of the night and took the body while the soldiers were sleeping. The Jewish leaders even assured the soldiers that when this story got back to Pontius Pilate they would intervene on their behalf and “win him over” so they would not be held accountable for falling asleep on guard duty. Pilate could have them all executed for not keeping his direct order. This further undermines Proposal-2 [p. 28] because it demonstrates how ludicrous it is to surmise that fishermen disciples of Jesus overpowered Roman soldiers OR that professionally trained, battle-tested warriors fell asleep at their post.

Jerusalem Crucifixion

It is also worth noting that the Roman occupiers of 1st century Judaea set up a specific place **outside the walls** of Jerusalem to do their gruesome executions by crucifixion. In Hebrew, this was known as *Golgotha* [translated ‘Place of the Skull’]. Below is a famous photo of this location taken in 1920 that shows the deep-set eye sockets above the nose cavity, and these above what was left of the teeth/mouth that clearly resembles



a human skull. Given the many earthquakes that have rocked Jerusalem over the last 20 centuries since the time of Jesus, it is amazing that this

much detail could still be seen in this photo from the early 20th Century. I have been to this site [100 years after this photo] and the eyes and nose details have been greatly altered, while a bus depot has all but paved over the base area where the teeth/mouth once showed. Many skeptics argue that the eyes and nose are not natural in the stone, but were cut intentionally when this area was a quarry. Others argue, this is not even the correct location, that Golgotha [*kranion* in Greek, *Calvariae* in Latin] was actually *inside the city walls* at what is now the site for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre [within the Christian quarter of the Old City]. This was where Emperor Constantine's mother Helena decided to build a church in the shape of a cross to mark where [she said] Jesus was crucified, but there is very little evidence she had the correct location. The accepted Gospel of John states [19:17] "*Jesus went **out** bearing His own cross*". This is interpreted to mean **outside the walls** of Jerusalem. John also writes [19:41] "*near the place where Jesus was crucified was a garden with a new tomb*". I have visited a Garden Tomb that is **outside the city walls**. It has been confirmed by archaeologists to have been a garden with a freshwater well, wine press, and underground cistern that all date to the second Temple period. The rock-hewn tomb has been dated to between the 5th and 8th Centuries BC. This dating challenges the Bible's account [Matthew 27:60 and John 19:41] that it was a "*new tomb*" in which "*no one had been laid*". But I, along with many scholars, see no problem here, because "new" could simply describe this relative to the owner Joseph of Arimathea, meaning it was "newly" purchased by him AND no one from his family had yet been laid in it. The most important matter is not whether today, a person can actually step into the very same tomb in which Jesus was laid, but that the historical accounts clearly state that the tomb where Jesus' dead body had been placed **had no dead body** in it [the tomb was empty] three days after the crucifixion.

3 Options About Jesus

This short book does not allow me to cover *everything* re: 1] the historical Jesus of the 1st Century AD, 2] – who was crucified by the Romans just outside Jerusalem. And while the third matter about the resurrection continues to be hotly debated, there is another decision flow-chart that must be examined regarding who Jesus is. He made these statements about Himself. He said He was the Son of God [John 3:16, 10:36, 11:4, Matthew 16:15-16]. He said He was One with God the Father [John 8:58, 10:38, 14:9]. He said He would die and be resurrected [Matthew 20:19, Mark 10:34, Luke 18:33]. He said He is the only way to God [John 14:6]. He said He could heal people from physical illnesses [Matthew 8:1-3, Luke 5:12-13]. These are extremely provocative statements for a man to say about Himself. They need to be analyzed within the decision rubric presented below. The first assumption is that what He said about Himself was *completely, unequivocally false*. So, the only two options about His untrue statements are: 1] He did not know they were false, or 2] He did.

Statements Are False

/	\
He Did Not Know	He Did Know

First, if Jesus did say these things about Himself that are presumed to be not true, and **He did not know** that what He spoke was false [He actually believed them], then we have to conclude Jesus was mentally unstable, delusional, and essentially a crazy madman. Second, if Jesus said these things that are not true and **He absolutely knew** He was making false statements, then Jesus is [by definition] a most intentional, egregious, and pathological liar. That means there is only one other possibility. The third option is that Jesus made all of these statements about Himself, but **they are true**, in which case He would obviously know they are true.

There are no other options by which to evaluate Him. It may seem simplistic, but it makes logical, rational, common sense. If His statements are false, He is either out of His mind or He is lying. But if His statements are true, then there are significant ramifications that must be dealt with.

Summary

Everything covered to this point in the discussion with the skeptic hinges on the last line from the logical flow-chart on page 25 [see below]. The evidence is overwhelming *there is a historical Jesus and that man was crucified by Pontius Pilate*. The real difficulty in the debate centers on the

Was Jesus Resurrected?

/	\
No	Yes

subsequent third matter of what happened *after* Jesus was executed on the cross. There are only two possibilities. On the left side of the flow-chart: 'NO' - Jesus was *not* resurrected. He died on the cross and remains dead to this day. This then completely negates the underlying message of the Gospel that Saul of Tarsus stated in his first letter to the church in Corinth [15:3-4], "*Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures*" [the Hebrew Torah, Psalms, and the Prophets], "*and He was buried and raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*". The first two words in this definition of the Gospel [1-Jesus, 2-died] are widely accepted as historical, factual, and no longer up for meaningful debate. This leaves the third matter of the resurrection as the only one still contested. We reviewed seven counterproposals to the resurrection hypothesized by critical-skeptical theologians, historians, and archaeologists. None of these has credibility in explaining the empty tomb. Dozens of 'religious' leaders who have already died are buried in graves all around the world. Islam's founder, Muhammed, is dead and interred under a Green Dome

in Medina, Saudi Arabia. Mormon founder Joseph Smith is dead and buried in Illinois. Buddha's ashes are buried in several stupas, with a purported bone from his skull on display in Nanjing, China. Mary Baker Eddy [Christian Science] is buried in Massachusetts. Charles Taze Russell [Jehovah's Witnesses] is buried in Pennsylvania. Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard is buried near San Luis Obispo, California. Sun Myung Moon [Unification Church] is buried in Gapyeong, Korea. Zoroaster is believed to be buried in Balkh, Afghanistan. Since 1377 AD, all of the Popes who died are buried in Rome - 40 of them in Saint Peter's Basilica. Unlike these others, the third option in the flow-chart is that Jesus **was resurrected** which leaves some big questions that need to be answered. He said [p. 36] He was the Son of God, was One with the Father, could heal people, is *the only way* to God, and would die and be resurrected. That second decision flow-chart means Jesus was either delusional, a deceitful liar, or He *really is everything* He said about Himself. There are no other options. If the historical Jesus was crucified but not resurrected, which theory explains what happened after He died? He was seen alive at least 12 times, by: **1.** Mary Magdalene [Mark 16], **2.** Mary and Salome [Matt. 28], **3.** Peter [1st Cor. 15], **4.** Cleopas and another [Luke 24], **5.** His brother James [1st Corin. 15], **6.** ten disciples without Thomas [Luke 24], **7.** eleven disciples with Thomas [Mark 16, John 20], **8.** seven disciples [John 21] at the Sea of Galilee, **9.** eleven on a hill in Galilee [Matthew 28:16], **10.** a very large gathering of 500 people [1st Corin. 15:6], **11.** His disciples when He ascended [Luke 24], and **12.** Saul on his way to Damascus [Acts 9]. Holographic spirit? Mass hallucination? His Twin? An Impersonator? Revived from being comatose? The best **apologia** [reasoned argument] is that third option: *Jesus is who He said He was*, and the resurrection is the tangible proof of that truth. He said He is the **ONLY** way to God. So, while all the other leading 'religious' personalities

died and remain dead, the case for the historical Jesus indicates that He overcame death and is alive. That clearly merits a more detailed look into *everything* about which Jesus taught. Your life may well depend on it.

Additional Resources from Dr. Newton's Library

Gary Habermas	<i>Evidence for the Historical Jesus</i> [2020] <i>The Historical Jesus</i> [1996]
Josh McDowell	<i>Evidence That Demands a Verdict</i> [1972]
J. McDowell+Williams	<i>Evidence for the Historical Jesus</i> [2011]
Jeff Sheler	<i>Is The Bible True?</i> [1989] chapters 17-22 'Historical Jesus'
Joseph Bergeron, MD	<i>The Crucifixion of Jesus</i> [2019]
Mark Kubala, MD	<i>The Execution of Jesus Christ</i> [2017]
Paul Maier	<i>Genuine Jesus: Evidence from History and Archaeology</i> [2021]
Albert Schweitzer	<i>Quest of the Historical Jesus</i> [1906]
E.P. Sanders	<i>The Historical Figure of Jesus</i> [1993]
Eastman and Smith	<i>The Search for Messiah</i> [1993]
David Newton	<i>The Crucifixion of Jesus on Passover</i> [2022]
Ehrman and Evans	<i>Can We Trust the Bible on the Historical Jesus?</i> [2020]
Lee Strobel	<i>The Case for Christ</i> [1998]
Titus Kennedy	<i>Excavating the Evidence for Jesus</i> [2022]
Ian Wilson	<i>The Bible is History</i> [2000]
David Newton	<i>The Birth of Jesus on Yom Teruah</i> [2021]
Alfred Edersheim	<i>Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah</i> [1993]
Robert Hutchinson	<i>Searching For Jesus</i> [2015]



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