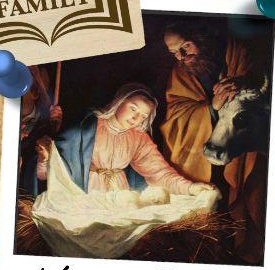


Authentic

BIBLE BASED FAMILY



Virgin Birth

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."
- Isaiah 7:14

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."
- Micah 5:2

Pool of Siloam Jerusalem, Israel Found in 2004.



Did Jesus Possess God's Power to Do Miracles?

fear, your God come with retribution to you." Then will

eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped" (Isaiah 35:4-5).



Caiaphas

Can we corroborate Jesus' rejection with historical people and places?

Isaiah 53:3
"He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain."

Psalms 41:9
"Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me."

Was Jesus a real person born in Bethlehem, Israel?

Church of the Nativity

- CHECKLIST
Who Was Jesus?
- A historical person
 - God in human form
 - The Savior & Messiah
 - Killed by crucifixion
 - Risen on the 3rd day



Kalam Cosmology Argument

Did Jesus really die on the cross and rise again?



Crucifixion



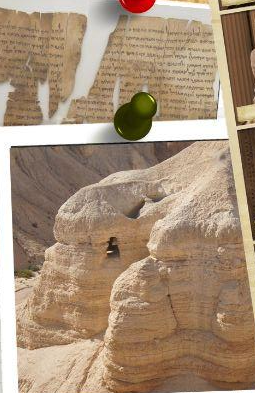
Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Can We Verify the Reliability and Trustworthiness of Scriptures Over Time?

"The grass withers and flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him" (Proverbs 30:5).

"The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever" (Psalm 119:160).



Dead Sea Scrolls Qumran, Israel



Premise #1
Whatever begins to exist has a cause.

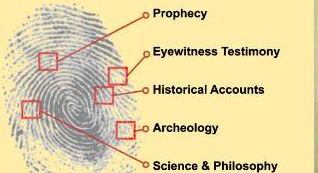
Premise #2
The universe began to exist.

Conclusion
Therefore, the universe has a cause

Which = GOD!

John...
"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied, by his knowledge righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:8,11).

Resurrection



Evidence Confirming Christ

Introduction

Thank you for opening this critical investigation into the evidence confirming Christ. While some people believe the Bible contains the trustworthy, reliable, and timeless words of God, others claim it to be made up by men, exaggerated over time, and functionally irrelevant today. Either way, we shouldn't just take someone else's word for it. Instead, we have to look at all the evidence and make a well-informed, rational decision for ourselves.

To authenticate the evidence, you'll complete six missions that look back into the first century events and biblical claims of a man called Jesus of Nazareth. Was he a real person? Did he claim and/or prove to be God? Are the stories about His life, betrayal, and rejection true? Did he really die by crucifixion? Is the resurrection even plausible? Can we actually trust the Bible as an accurate, historical source?

While all of these questions are important and each one builds upon the others, the foundation of Christianity ultimately rises or falls with Jesus' bodily resurrection. The apostle Paul put it this way, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). If the evidence doesn't lead us to a real resurrection, we must look elsewhere for life and hope. But, if Jesus did actually rise, he proved to be God and everyone should worship him accordingly.

How to Use This Study

- ◆ We recommend taking on one mission per day as an individual or one per week as a family. If possible, make it a special, planned night with snacks or even themed decorations.
- ◆ You can view the evidence online, but it will be more engaging for your family if everyone has their own printouts. To store the exhibits, create a case file by attaching the included evidence label to a 6x9 Kraft envelope. Add exhibits to your file as you proceed through each mission.
- ◆ Begin each session with the mission inquiry. The first objective will take you right to the source of the eyewitness accounts found in scripture. You can read it as a family or watch it narrated and portrayed thanks to the Lumo Project video.
- ◆ Talk about the account and then relate it back to the prophecy exhibits. Make sure to point out when they were written and how they were fulfilled by Jesus.
- ◆ Next, examine the extra biblical exhibits and specifically concentrate on the areas highlighted in red. Take note that many of these sources are hostile to Christianity. That makes them more credible and unbiased, but it may bring up some questions. Help any younger Kids process the context and how it actually helps to prove Jesus and the Bible.
- ◆ Watch the archeology video and discuss the exhibit to show how the discovery authenticates Jesus. Several missions will also include a bonus scientific or philosophical exhibit. If you can, search online together to uncover even more resources.
- ◆ Debrief throughout using the probing questions. Since they're only designed to start the discussion, it'll be more impactful if you ask a few extra questions of your own.
- ◆ Complete each mission by summarizing your deductions and announcing the final verdict.
- ◆ As always, feel free to customize everything to best fit your investigative team.

Types of Evidence You Will Encounter

Eyewitness Testimony

Jesus' followers and their close companions wrote down first and/or secondhand accounts of Jesus' life. These historical biographies serve as the primary source material from which we will launch our investigation.

Prophecy

The Old Testament scriptures made monumental claims about specific events, places, and characteristics of the coming Messiah. Did Jesus really fulfill them hundreds and sometimes even more than a thousand years later?

Ancient Non-Christian Historical Accounts

Often hostile toward Christianity, these external sources ironically add an extra layer of credibility to the biblical record. Without a "religious bias," they simply wrote down what they observed as historical realities.

Archeology

Over the years, numerous discoveries have been unearthed that provide strong, correlative insights into the people, places, culture, and historicity of the Bible.

Science & Philosophy

By substantiating the biblical narrative with empirical evidence and rational arguments, we can build a reasonable foundation for a confident faith.

EVIDENCE

Department:

Authentication Agency

Investigator:

Case:

Confirming Christ

Documentation:

Eyewitness Testimony, Old Testament Prophecy, Non-Christian Historical Accounts, Archeological Discoveries, Science, & Philosophy.

Subjects in Question:

Are the claims about Jesus from the Bible historically reliable? If so, how should we respond to these truths?

We pray that your investigation will strengthen your faith and develop or confirm your confidence to proclaim:

"That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures"
(1 Corinthians 15:3b-4).

*Soli Deo Gloria,
(For the Glory of God Alone)
Daniel & Jenni Dixon*




Resurrection

Crucifixion

Virgin Birth

MISSION

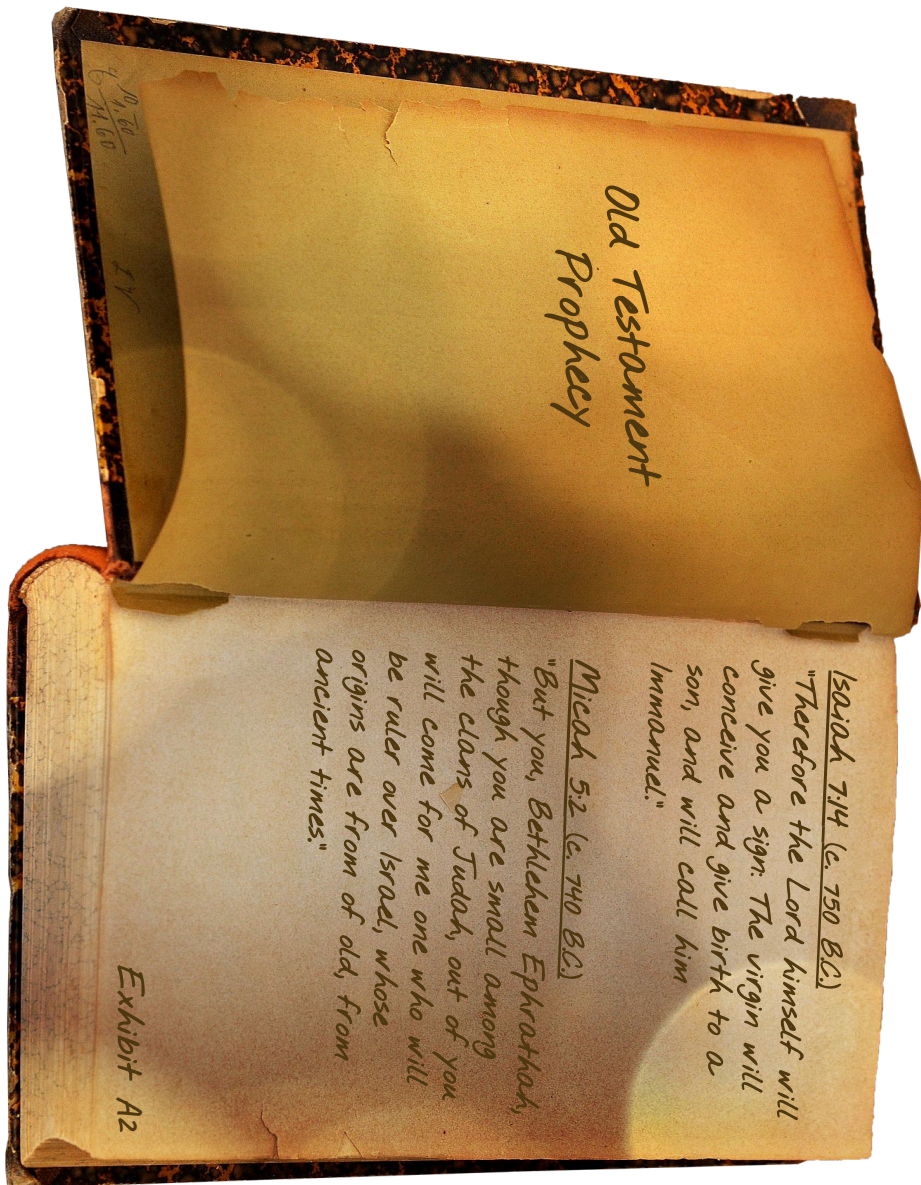


Discover Jesus' Birthplace and Authenticate Him as a Real Historical Figure.

OBJECTIVES

1. Read and discuss the secondhand account of Jesus' birth found in Matthew 1:18-2:12.
2. Verify prophetic connections.
3. Cross examine the biblical accounts with unbiased, external, historical sources.
4. Look for archeological support to back up the claims.

Inquiry: A1

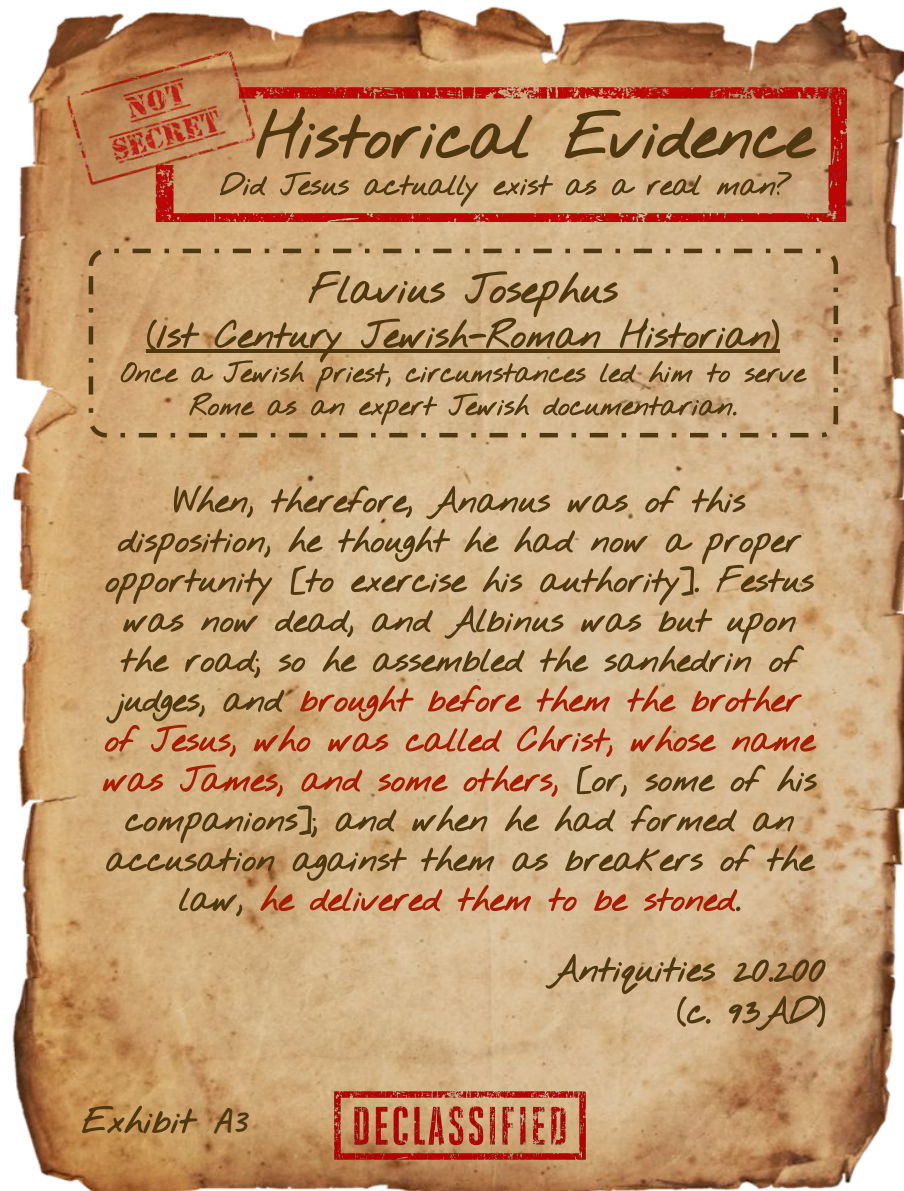


Old Testament
Prophecy

Isaiah 7:14 (c. 750 BC)
"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

Micah 5:2 (c. 740 BC)
"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Exhibit A2



NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Did Jesus actually exist as a real man?

Flavius Josephus

(1st Century Jewish-Roman Historian)

Once a Jewish priest, circumstances led him to serve Rome as an expert Jewish documentarian.

When, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.

Antiquities 20.200
(c. 93 AD)

Exhibit A3

DECLASSIFIED

NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Did Jesus actually exist as a real man?

Mara bar Serapion

(1st-2nd Century Thinker From Syria)

This letter, promoting wisdom over tyranny, was written from prison after Rome destroyed his hometown.

What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. *What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that that their Kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given.*

Mara's Letter to His Son
(c. 75 AD)

Exhibit A4

DECLASSIFIED

Exhibit A5

Archeological Support



*The Church of the Nativity
Bethlehem, Israel*

No one knows for certain the exact place of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, but one site has been heralded as just that since the 1st century. Most modern stories tell of a manger located in a stable, but sources like Justin Martyr from the 2nd century refer to it as a specific grotto or cave. On that location, Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena, built the the Church of the Nativity in the 4th century. Though destroyed, it was rebuilt in the 6th century by Emperor Justinian, and remains as one of the oldest churches still in use today. A 14-point star, now marks what is believed to be the exact spot of the Messiah's birth.



DEBRIEFING

Probing Questions: A6

Secondhand Testimony (Matthew 1:18-2:12)

- ❖ What is the real meaning of Christmas?
 - God came down to be with us and to save us.
- ❖ Why is this claim almost too good to be true?
 - The almighty, all-Knowing, infinite God of the Universe became a human baby boy out of love for us.
- ❖ How does this distinguish Christianity from other religions?
 - Other religions tell us how we get up to God by being good. Christianity tells us that God came down to us because we couldn't be good enough on our own.

Prophecy

- ❖ What do we learn from Micah and Isaiah's prophecies?
 - Messiah had to come from Bethlehem and a virgin conception to be Immanuel, which means "God with us."
- ❖ Why do these two prophecies add validity to Jesus' birth?
 - They were written 700+ years before He was born.

Ancient Non-Christian Historical Accounts

- ❖ How do the accounts show Jesus to be a real person?
 - He had a brother named James and is compared to other ancient figures like Socrates and Pythagoras.
- ❖ Why should we trust writers like Josephus and Mara?
 - They had no reason to lie about his existence.

Archeology

- ❖ What do we learn from the Church of the Nativity?
 - While not 100% verifiable, Jesus' actual birth in Bethlehem is backed by very early physical evidence.

Deductions

- I. The biblical testimony of Matthew clearly regards Jesus as a real person that was born in Bethlehem either right at or just before the 1st century AD.
- II. The prophets foretold that the Messiah would be a real baby boy, miraculously conceived, and born of a woman in the city of Bethlehem.
- III. Mara placed Jesus in a 1st century context and compared him to other famous historical figures. Josephus also referenced Jesus as having a brother named James, and fake people don't have real siblings.
- IV. While the precise location can't be known for certain, the Church of the Nazarene offers very early evidence that substantiates the birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem.



Being born in Bethlehem, Israel, Jesus was a real person who really lived in the 1st century.

Conclusion A7

Resurrection

Crucifixion

Virgin Birth



MISSION

Find Out if Jesus Really Possessed the Divine Power Required to Perform Miracles.



- I. Read and discuss the eyewitness account of Jesus healing a blind man found in John 9:1-41.
- II. Verify prophetic connections.
- III. Cross examine the biblical accounts with unbiased, external, historical sources.
- IV. Look for archeological support to back up the claims.
- V. Review the scientific evidence.

Inquiry: B1

Old Testament
Prophecy

Isaiah 35:4-5 (c. 750 B.C.)

"Be strong, do not fear, your God will come, he will come with vengeance, with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped."

Psalms 146:8 (c. 515 B.C.)

"The Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous."

Exhibit B2

NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Did Jesus prove to be God by doing miracles?

Pliny the Younger

(2nd Century Roman Governor)

Despite finding Christians relatively harmless, he persecuted and executed them for their religious beliefs.

However, they assured me that the main of their fault, or of their mistake was this:

That they were wont, on a stated day, to meet together before it was light, and to sing a hymn to Christ, as to a god, alternately, and to oblige themselves by a sacrament [or oath], not to do anything that was ill: but that they would commit no theft, or pilfering, or adultery, that they would not break their promises, or deny what was deposited with them, when it was required back again; after which it was their custom to depart, and to meet again at a common but innocent meal.

Epistle To Trajan
(c. 112 AD)

Exhibit B3

DECLASSIFIED

NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Did Jesus prove to be God by doing miracles?

Babylonian Talmud

(2nd to 5th Century Jewish Text)

The text does not always depict Christianity accurately, but it does provide many unbiased insights.

And it was taught. On the eve of the Passover Yeshua [the Nazarene] was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place a herald went forth and cried, "He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come and plead on his behalf." And since nothing was brought forward in his favor, he was hanged on the eve of Passover.

Sanhedrin 43a
(c. 70-300 AD)

Exhibit B4

DECLASSIFIED

Exhibit B5

Archeological Support



*The Pool of Siloam
Jerusalem, Israel*

When a sewer pipe burst in 2004, an Israeli construction crew found much more than a leak. Fortunately, all digging in Jerusalem requires an archeologist to be on site. Instead of a mere problem, they discovered a series of ancient steps that led down into a large pool. That pool, situated on the south side of the temple mount, was what the Bible calls the Pool of Siloam. It was originally constructed by King Hezekiah to provide water to Jerusalem while under siege. It was later used in Jesus' time as a ritual washing before entering the temple. Its existence gives credence to the Bible's accuracy when reporting historical people and places.



DEBRIEFING

Probing Questions: B7

Eyewitness Testimony (John 9:1-41)

- ❖ Why didn't the religious leaders believe the miracle?
 - They didn't believe Jesus was actually from God.
- ❖ What is Jesus' bigger point about blindness in John 9:39?
 - Everyone suffers from the true blindness of sin, but those who realize it can repent and come to Jesus for healing. (See 1 John 1:5-9 for even more details.)

Prophecy

- ❖ What do both prophecies say that the Messiah will do?
 - Miracles, opening the eyes of the blind
- ❖ Who specifically does Isaiah prophecy will come?
 - "Your God will come." The Messiah would be God.

Ancient Non-Christian Historical Accounts

- ❖ Why does the Babylonian Talmud calling Jesus a "sorcerer" actually give us evidence of His miracles?
 - It wasn't denying the works, just how He did them.
- ❖ According to Pliny, who was Jesus to early Christians?
 - He says they worshiped him as God.

Archeology

- ❖ How does the Pool of Siloam help to verify the Bible?
 - It shows the Bible's accuracy in listing real places.

Science & Philosophy

- ❖ How does the Kalam offer reasons to believe in miracles?
 - If God created the world out of nothing, He can do other miracles too. Hence the claim from John 9:33, "If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

Deductions

- I. Eyewitnesses testified to Jesus' miraculous power and claimed that it could only be done by someone that is from God.
- II. The prophets claimed that the Messiah would be able to do miracles because He would actually be God Himself.
- III. While the external sources do not specifically state that Jesus performed miracles, the Talmud does affirm his "magical" acts, and Pliny observed the fact that Jesus' followers honored him as God.
- IV. The Pool of Siloam discovery does not directly prove anything about Jesus' miracles, but it does provide credence to the historicity of the eyewitness account.
- V. The miracle of creating the universe out of nothing makes other miracles, like healing a blind person or raising the dead, highly probable, especially if the person doing them happens to be that same creator.



It's reasonable to conclude that Jesus really did perform miracles. As such, on top of being a real, historical man, He also showed Himself to be fully God.

Conclusion B8

Resurrection

Crucifixion

Virgin Birth



MISSION

Corroborate the Rejection of Jesus with Actual Historical People, Places, and Events.



- I. Read and discuss the eyewitness account of Jesus' betrayal and rejection from John 13 & 18:1-19:16.
- II. Verify prophetic connections.
- III. Cross examine the biblical accounts with unbiased, external, historical sources.
- IV. Look for archeological support to back up the claims.

Inquiry: C1

Old Testament
Prophecy

Isaiah 53:3-5 (c. 750 BC)
"He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain... He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

Psalms 41 (c. 1015 BC)

"Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me."

Exhibit C2

NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Was Jesus really betrayed & rejected?

Celsus

(2nd Century Greek Philosopher)

While his hatred of Christianity is clear, he ironically provides unbiased validation to numerous biblical claims.

Your case is made the harder because not even his disciples believed him at the time of his humiliation... Would a god—a saviour, as you say, and son of the Most High God—be betrayed by the very men who had been taught by him and shared everything with him? What an absurdity. Have you forgotten that while he lived this Jesus convinced nobody—not even his own disciples—of his divinity, and was punished shamefully for his blasphemies? Were he a god he should not have died, if only to convince other for good and all that he was no liar; but die he did—not only that, but died a death that can hardly be accounted an example to men.

The True Word, as Quoted in Contra Celsum
(c. 175 AD)

Exhibit C3

DECLASSIFIED

NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Was Jesus really betrayed & rejected?

Philo of Alexandria

(1st Century Jewish Thinker)

A Hellenistic Jewish philosopher that sought to merge the religious ideas of Judaism with Greek philosophy.

Pilate was an official who had been appointed prefect of Judaea. With the intention of annoying the Jews rather than of honoring Tiberius, he set up gilded shields in Herod's palace... But when the Jews at large learnt of this action... besought Pilate to undo his innovation... When Pilate, who was a man of inflexible, stubborn and cruel disposition, obstinately refused, they shouted... Do not make Tiberius an excuse for insulting our nation... This last remark exasperated Pilate most of all, for he was afraid that if they really sent an embassy, they would bring accusations against the rest of his administration as well, specifying in detail his venality, his violence, his thefts, his assaults, his abusive behavior, his frequent executions of untried prisoners, and his endless savage ferocity.

The Embassy to Caligula 299-305
(c. 42 AD)

Exhibit C4

DECLASSIFIED

Exhibit C5

Archeological Support



The Caiaphas Ossuary
Jerusalem, Israel

In 1990, a roadwork crew unintentionally unearthed a large burial site just south of Jerusalem. Inside, they discovered several ossuaries, one of which was exceptionally elaborate. The most ornate burial box held the remains of an approximately 60-year-old man and included the inscription "Joseph son of Caiaphas." While the Bible only refers to the High Priest at Jesus' trial by his family name, Caiaphas, the 1st century historian Josephus mentions his given name as Joseph in Antiquities 18.35. The find provides insights into the burial practices of Jesus' time, and helps to validate the Bible's historical accuracy.



DEBRIEFING

Probing Questions: C6

Eyewitness Testimony (John 13, 18:1-19:16)

- ❖ How did Jesus show true love in spite of Judas' betrayal?
 - He humbly served and washed his feet anyway. That's the unconditional, choice love the Bible calls "agape."
- ❖ In what way are we actually more like Judas, Pilate, and Caiaphas than we are like Jesus?
 - Though we do some good things, we also chose to betray Jesus by turning away into sin. This is clearly seen in Romans 3:10-12 & 23 with the solution in Romans 3:24-25.
- ❖ Read Matthew 20:25-28. How can we follow His example?
 - In response to Jesus' life, we also serve and sacrifice.

Prophecy

- ❖ How does Isaiah say Jesus would respond to rejection?
 - Gracefully like a silent lamb to the slaughter.
- ❖ What are 3 connections to Judas from Psalm 41:9?
 - Close friend = disciple, shared bread = last supper, and turned against me = betrayal.

Ancient Non-Christian Historical Accounts

- ❖ How does Celsus inadvertently verify Jesus' betrayal?
 - Though hateful, he still accepts the events as fact.
- ❖ Why is Philo's description of Pilate helpful?
 - It gives an outside source that matches the Bible's characterization of the Roman prefect.

Archeology

- ❖ What does the Caiaphas tomb confirm about the Bible?
 - It's historically accurate in naming real people.

Deductions

- I. John wrote an eyewitness testimony about Jesus' shocking betrayal, rejection, and trial.
- II. This confirmed the prophets' claims that the Messiah would be turned against by a friend and scorned by mankind as he quietly suffered for all of humanity.
- III. Mocking his ordeal as unworthy of a god, Celsus ironically adds credibility to the biblical record of Jesus' ill-treatment. Meanwhile, Philo adds even more integrity to the account by verifying the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate.
- IV. Likewise, the finding of the Caiaphas ossuary also affirms the existence of the high priest who presided over Jesus' trial.



Jesus was actually betrayed and rejected by his followers and condemned by multiple, verified rulers just as the prophets foretold.

Conclusion C?

Resurrection

Crucifixion

Virgin Birth



MISSION

Explore the Evidence for Jesus' Crucifixion and Determine the Veracity of His Death.



- I. Read and discuss the eyewitness accounts of Jesus dying on the cross found in Matthew 27:32-56 and John 19:17-37.
- II. Verify prophetic connections.
- III. Cross examine the biblical accounts with unbiased, external, historical sources.
- IV. Look for archeological support to back up these claims.
- V. Compare to the claims of Islam.

Inquiry: D1

Old Testament
Prophecy

Isaiah 53:5-8b (c. 750 BC)
"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed... For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished."
Psalms 22:16-18 (c. 1044 BC)
"Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment."

Exhibit D2

NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Did Jesus actually die by crucifixion?

Cornelius Tacitus

(Greatest 1st Century Roman Historian)

His Roman heritage and hatred for Christians make him an unbiased, extra-biblical historical source.

Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, 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, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.

The Annals 15.44
(c. 116 AD)

Exhibit D3

DECLASSIFIED

NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Did Jesus actually die by crucifixion?

Thallus

(1st Century Roman Historian)

Though lost, his works continue in quotes like this from Julius Africanus in *Chronography*, 18:1 (c. 220 AD).

On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness, and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus in the third book of his *History*, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun. For the Hebrews celebrate the Passover on the 14th day according to the moon, and the passion of our Saviour falls on the day before the Passover, but an eclipse of the sun takes place only when the moon comes under the sun... how then should an eclipse be supposed to happen when the moon is almost diametrically opposite the sun?

History, as Quoted in *Chronography*
(c. 50 AD)

Exhibit D4

DECLASSIFIED

Exhibit D5

Archeological Support



Yehohanan's Crucifixion Foot
Jerusalem, Israel

Though the practice of crucifixion is well established historically, there is little evidence for its implementation outside of the Bible. Most historians attribute this fact to the torture's incredibly cruel and gruesome nature. Even the Romans, who used it profusely, found it too distasteful to describe in detail. Due to a lack of physical evidence, some scholars concluded that the biblical account was full of fabrications. That changed in 1968 with the discovery of Yehohanan's ossuary. It not only contained the nailed foot pictured above, but his remains also showed signs of punctures to the wrists and shattered leg bones that validate a number of the details described in the Gospels.

EVIDENCE

Exhibit D6

Jesus' Crucifixion: The most attested fact in history!

"Jesus' death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable."¹
- Gerd Ludemann (Atheist New Testament Historian)

"One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate"²
- Bart Ehrman (Agnostic New Testament Textual Critic)

"That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be."³
- JD Crossan (Jesus Seminar New Testament Scholar)

Why does Jesus' historical death matter so much?

Besides being required for a resurrection, it's also a fundamental issue to the reliability of the Bible, especially in contrast with the Qur'an.

Qur'an

An-Nisa' 4:157
(c. 650 AD)

And [for] their saying, "Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah." And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain.

Only one can be right, & unbiased historians clearly side with the Bible!

Bible

John 19:16b-18, 33-35
(c. 70-100 AD)

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them... But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.

¹ Gerd Ludemann, *The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry*, 2004, p. 50

² Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: An Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2011, pp. 261-2

³ JD Crossan, *A Revolutionary Biography*, 1994, p. 145

DEBRIEFING

Probing Questions: D7

Eyewitness Testimony (Matthew 27:32-56 & John 19:17-37)

- ◆ List 3 concrete evidences that show Jesus really died?
 - He was put through a full Roman crucifixion.
 - John was there along with 4 female witnesses.
 - The expert soldiers verified it by piercing his side.
- ◆ What are some additional miraculous verifications?
 - Darkness at noon, temple curtain torn, earthquake

Prophecy

- ◆ How do the accounts foretell details about Jesus' death?
 - Both reference the piercing nails used in crucifixion.
- ◆ Why would the Messiah be crushed, punished, & wounded?
 - To bear our sins, bringing peace, healing & salvation.

Ancient Non-Christian Historical Accounts

- ◆ What was the extreme penalty that Tacitus references?
 - Christus' (or Christ's) crucifixion under Pontius Pilate.
- ◆ How does Thallus verify the darkness at the crucifixion?
 - He accepts the event as reality, but wrongly calls it an eclipse, which Julius proves impossible at Passover.

Archeology

- ◆ How does the Yehohanan foot add credence to the story?
 - The writers were not making up the nails to fit with their Old Testament prophecies. It really happened.

Science & Philosophy

- ◆ How does the Bible's account of Jesus' death hold up to historical criticism, especially compared to the Qur'an?
 - It's the most attested fact in all of ancient history.

Deductions

- I. John and Matthew, two of Jesus' closest followers, both wrote eyewitness testimonies about Jesus' physical death by crucifixion.
- II. This matches with the prophets' descriptions surrounding the Messiah's death, including pierced hands and feet while lots were cast for his clothes.
- III. Tacitus confirms Jesus' crucifixion sentence under Pilate by referring to it as the "extreme penalty." Thallus, as quoted by Julius Africanus, further authenticates the biblical account by providing credible evidence to one of the Bible's more miraculous claims about darkness.
- IV. The Yehohanan foot validates the Scripture's description of how nails were used in Jesus' crucifixion, and it removes any previous doubt about exaggerated stories that were made up to fit in with prophecy.
- V. Qualified historians overwhelmingly attest that Jesus' actual, physical death on the cross is the most certain fact from ancient history.



There was no conspiracy or any made-up stories. Jesus truly died a real, physical death on the cross just as the Bible says.

Conclusion D8

Resurrection

Crucifixion

Virgin Birth

MISSION

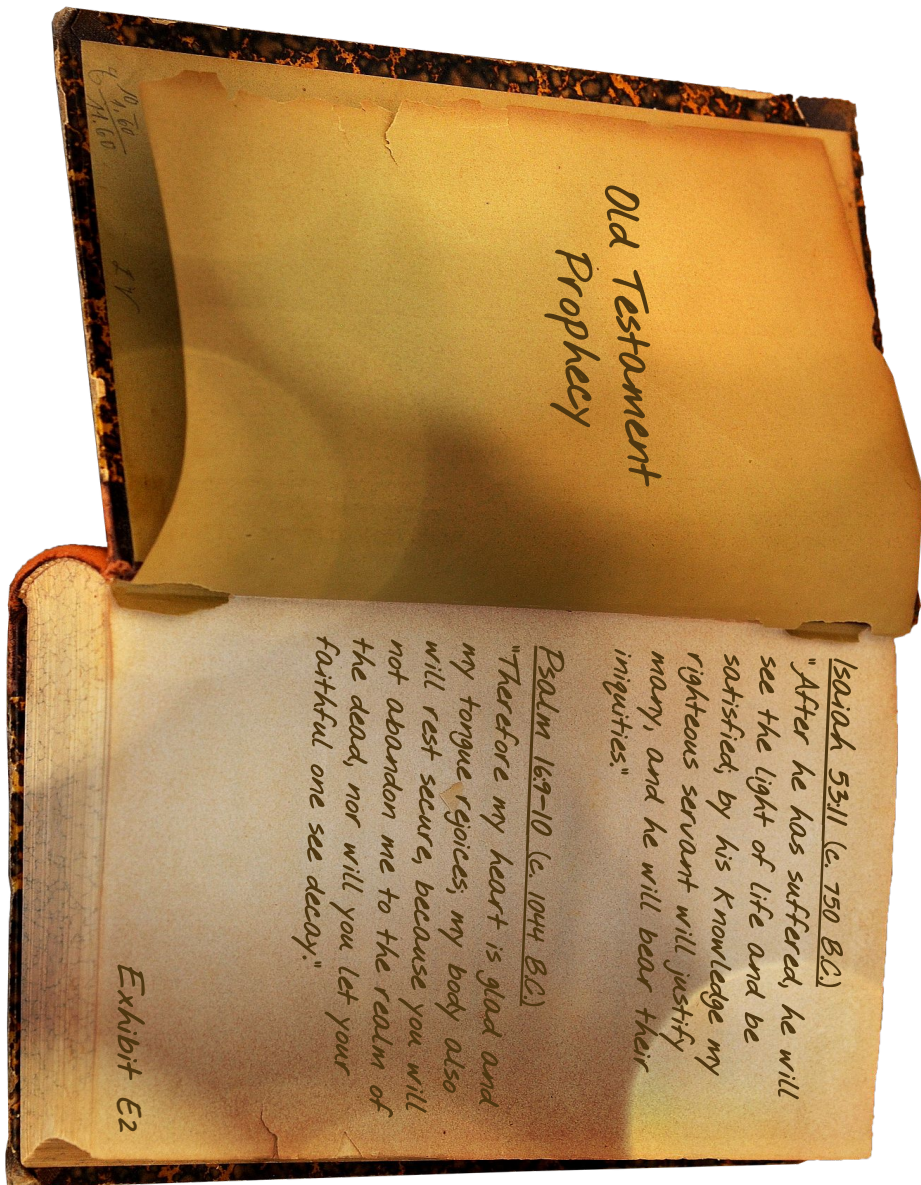


Provide Reasonable
Proof for Jesus'
Actual Bodily
Resurrection from
the Dead.



- I. Read and discuss the eyewitness account of Jesus being buried and rising from the dead found in John 19:38-20:31.
- II. Verify prophetic connections.
- III. Cross examine the biblical accounts with unbiased, external, historical sources.
- IV. Look for archeological support to back up these claims.
- V. Dig into the alternative options.

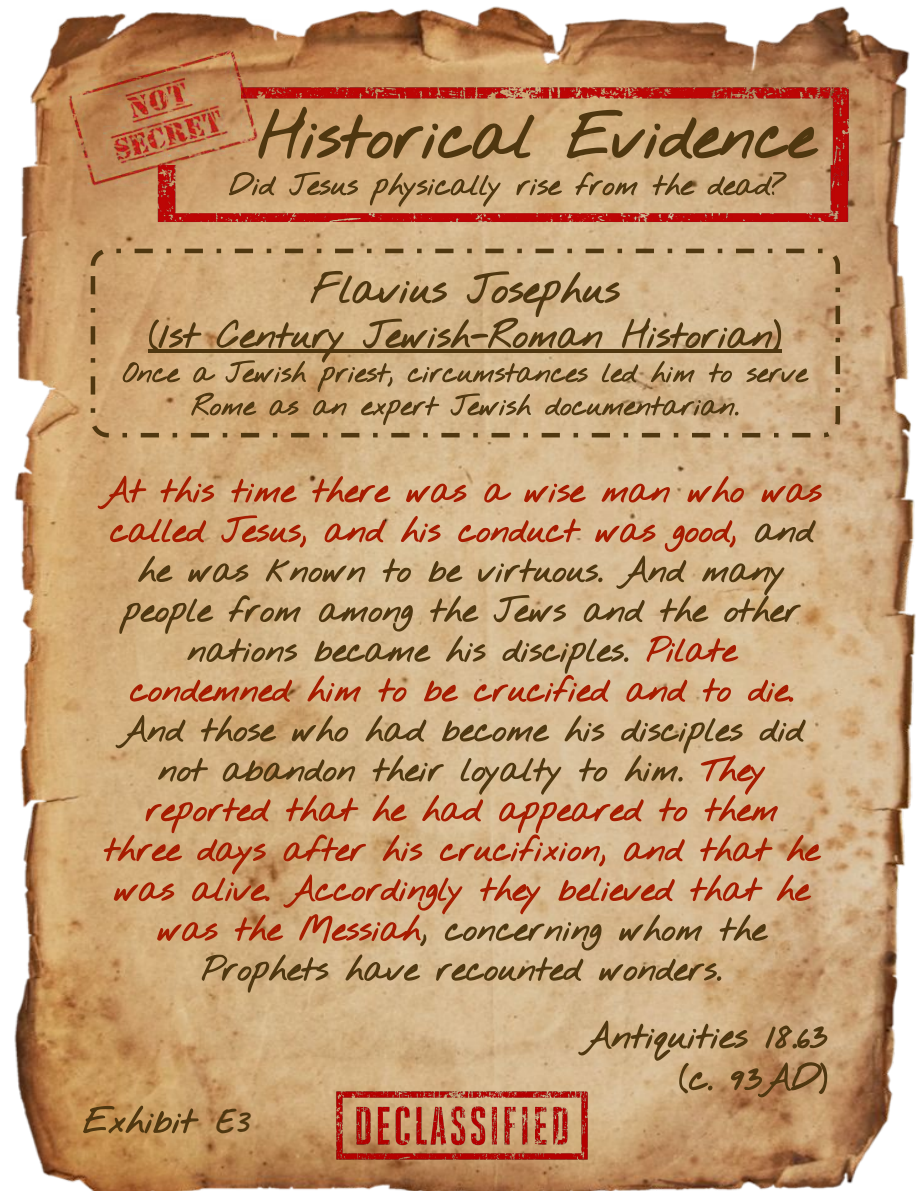
Inquiry: E1



Old Testament
Prophecy

Isaiah 53:11 (c. 750 B.C.)
"After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities."
Psalms 16:9-10 (c. 1044 B.C.)
"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay."

Exhibit E2



NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Did Jesus physically rise from the dead?

Flavius Josephus

(1st Century Jewish-Roman Historian)

Once a Jewish priest, circumstances led him to serve Rome as an expert Jewish documentarian.

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon their loyalty to him. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive. Accordingly they believed that he was the Messiah, concerning whom the Prophets have recounted wonders.

Antiquities 18:63
(c. 93 AD)

Exhibit E3

DECLASSIFIED

NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Did Jesus physically rise from the dead?

Phlegon of Tralles

(2nd Century Roman Historian)

His original works are lost, but they continue in quotes like this from Origen, *Against Celsus* (c. 220 AD).

Now Phlegon, in the thirteenth or fourteenth book, I think, of his *Chronicles*, not only ascribed to Jesus a knowledge of future events (although falling into confusion about some things which refer to Peter, as if they referred to Jesus), but also testified that the result corresponded to His predictions... And he goes on to say, that "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."

Chronicles, as Quoted in *Contra Celsum*
(c. 120 AD)

Exhibit E4

DECLASSIFIED

Exhibit E5

Archeological Support



Church of the Holy Sepulchre
Jerusalem, Israel

While the actual site of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection cannot be known for certain, the Bible claims that his burial took place at a garden close to Golgotha (John 19:17, 41) and outside the walls of the city (Hebrews 13:12). A few places fit this description, but only the Holy Sepulchre can claim any historical credibility. Its current structure dates back to the 19th century, but it was raised atop multiple ruins from the original church built by Constantine in the early 300s. Despite its long veneration, historians initially ruled out the site due to its location within the current city walls, but subsequent archeological evidence has shown it to actually lie outside the walls of early 1st century Jerusalem.

EVIDENCE

Exhibit E6

Resurrection Theories

Swoon Theory: ~~Jesus didn't die but fainted and recovered in the tomb.~~

- (1) There's no record of anyone surviving a full Roman crucifixion.
- (2) He was seen alive and in perfect health a few days later. How could he have completely recovered after being beaten and then crucified?

Wrong Tomb Theory: ~~Jesus' followers visited the wrong tomb.~~

- (1) The women actually followed along and watched as Jesus was buried.
- (2) How many other tombs had guards and a Roman Imperial seal?
- (3) Wouldn't the authorities present the correct tomb and Jesus' body.
- (4) It doesn't answer the disciples' claim to have seen him resurrected.

Stolen Body Theory: ~~Jesus' disciples secretly stole his body.~~

- (1) This assumes the scared, scattered disciples were able to overtake the Roman guards, move the stone, and get away unnoticed.
- (2) History tells us that all of Jesus' followers were willing to die for their testimony. Why would they all persist for a known lie?

Hallucination Theory: ~~They merely imagined it in their extreme grief.~~

- (1) This might be possible for one eyewitness, but the Bible claims that He appeared to the disciples and over 500 people at the same time.
- (2) There is no evidence for mass or shared hallucinations.
- (3) Hallucinations rarely involve more than one of the five senses, and we know the disciples saw him, heard him, and touched him.

Actual Resurrection Theory: Jesus really did rise from the grave.

- (1) The prophets, like Isaiah, foretold it 700+ years before it happened.
- (2) The eyewitness recorded their accounts in the four gospels and included humiliating details like their unbelief and female testimony.
- (3) The apostles all suffered persecution and most died for this belief.
- (4) The event continues to change lives and the trajectory of history.
- (5) Non-Christian, historical writers provide unbiased verification.
- (6) Archeological evidence backs up the claim.

DEBRIEFING

Probing Questions: E7

Eyewitness Testimony (John 19:38-20:31)

- ❖ How did Jesus' followers first respond to the empty tomb?
 - A stolen body, disbelief, wanting to see for themselves.
- ❖ What changed the minds of Mary and the Disciples?
 - Real, physical encounters with the risen Jesus.
- ❖ How does 1st century negativity toward female testimony help validate the account as accurate?
 - To be more credible, a fabricated story would have used men, like the disciples, as the initial witnesses.

Prophecy

- ❖ How do the prophets metaphorically describe resurrection?
 - Seeing the light of life, not left in the grave to decay
- ❖ See Acts 13:35-38. Can Psalm 16:9-10 be about David?
 - No, David's body decayed in the tomb. Jesus' did not.

Ancient Non-Christian Historical Accounts

- ❖ Name 6+ things these writers ascribe to Jesus.
 - Virtuous, foretold the future, condemned by Pilate, crucified, resurrected in 3 days, showed physical nail scars, was the Messiah, & fulfilled prophecies.

Archeology

- ❖ How can the Holy Sepulchre's history bolster our case?
 - It shows that corresponding historical places exist.

Science & Philosophy

- ❖ Why do the naturalistic theories for the resurrection fail?
 - They presuppose the impossibility of miracles and ultimately cannot account for all of the facts.

Deductions

- I. Having seen for himself, the apostle John records the miraculous resurrection of Jesus from the dead and all the Disciples' belief based on real, physical encounters with the risen Jesus.
- II. This matches the Old Testament prophecies that claimed the Messiah would not be abandoned to the grave or see decay, but see the light of life.
- III. While they do not conclude that resurrection actually happened, both Josephus and Phlegon recognize the event and at least believe that Jesus' followers were fully convinced by his appearance, as proved by their loyalty.
- IV. It cannot be 100% substantiated, but the Church of the Holy Sepulchre offers solid archeological backing for the physical location of the crucifixion and resurrection.
- V. Alternative, naturalistic theories ultimately fall short, and only the actual, bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead can account for all of the facts.



As crazy as it sounds, it's more rational to trust that Jesus rose from the dead than to believe in any other theory.

Conclusion E8

Resurrection

Crucifixion

Virgin Birth

MISSION

Assess the Reliability and Trustworthiness of the Scriptures as Preserved Over Time.



- I. Read and discuss the eyewitness retelling of Jesus' parting prayer found in John 17:1-26.
- II. Verify prophetic connections.
- III. Cross examine the biblical accounts with unbiased, external, historical sources.
- IV. Look for archeological support to back up the Bible.

Inquiry: F1

Old Testament
Prophecy

Isaiah 40:8 (c. 750 BC)
"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever."

Proverbs 30:5 (c. 960 BC)
"Every word of God is flawless, he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."

Psalms 119:160 (c. 444 BC)
"The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever."

Psalms 19:1b-10a (c. 1015 BC)
"The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold."

Exhibit F2

NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Was the Bible transmitted accurately?

Lucian of Samosata

(2nd Century Greek Satirist)

He was a classic cynic that wrote parodies about literature, culture, religion, and society in general.

The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account... You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.

The Death of Peregrine, 11-13
(c. 165 AD)

Exhibit F3

DECLASSIFIED

NOT
SECRET

Historical Evidence

Was the Bible transmitted accurately?

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus

(1st & 2nd Century Roman Historian)

Serving as a court official under emperor Hadrian, his report confirms the Jewish expulsion found in Acts 18:2.

He exonerated for ever the people of Ilium from the payment of taxes, as being the founders of the Roman race, reciting upon the occasion a letter in Greek, from the senate and people of Rome to King Seleucus, on which they promised him their friendship and alliance, provided that he would grant their Kinsmen the Iliensians immunity from all burdens. He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus.

The Deified Claudius 25:4
(c. 120AD)

Exhibit F4

DECLASSIFIED

Exhibit F5

Archeological Support



Dead Sea Scrolls
Qumran, Israel

In 1947, teenage shepherds accidentally uncovered ancient jars in caves surrounding the Qumran community. In most places, materials like leather and papyrus decay quickly, but the dry and salty conditions around the Dead Sea provide a unique climate for long-term preservation. Among other ancient writings, the find included fragments from every book of the Old Testament except Esther and an almost entirely intact scroll of Isaiah from the early 1st century B.C. This discovery strengthens our confidence in the preservation of God's Word and provides proof that the Messianic prophecies predate their fulfillment by Jesus.

EVIDENCE

DEBRIEFING

Probing Questions: F6

Eyewitness Testimony (John 17:1-26)

- ❖ What is eternal life according to Jesus?
 - Knowing God & believing in Jesus whom He sent (17:3).
- ❖ How did God pass down His word in the New Testament?
 - Receiving it from God, Jesus gave it to the Disciples (17:8). We get it through the Apostles' message (17:20).
- ❖ According to Jesus, what is God's word & what does it do?
 - The truth that makes sinners holy & pure (17:17).

Prophecy

- ❖ List 5+ claims the Old Testament makes about the Bible?
 - Endures forever, is flawless, provides protection, equals truth, is righteous, firm, more precious than gold

Ancient Non-Christian Historical Accounts

- ❖ Look up Acts 18:2. How does Suetonius help confirm the historical accuracy of an event in the book of Acts?
 - He is the only outside source that describes the same event: "Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome."
- ❖ How does Lucian verify Christians' use of the Bible?
 - He says they worshiped Jesus' by obeying his "novel rites" and "his laws" on complete faith. The church believed and lived by Jesus' commands and teachings.

Archeology

- ❖ How do the Dead Sea Scrolls verify biblical accuracy?
 - They overwhelmingly match our later manuscripts.
- ❖ Why is this specifically true about Isaiah's prophecies?
 - It proves they were written before Jesus' birth.

Deductions

- I. John, who was present at the time, wrote about Jesus' handing down of God's word (referred to as "the truth") to the Disciples, and how Jesus then would be sending them out to preserve and proclaim His message to the rest of the world.
- II. The Old Testament passages make this same truth claim as they guarantee the flawless, firm, valuable, and forever enduring nature of God's word.
- III. Lucian's account shows that this message was passed on to the next generation of Christians as they followed the "novel rites" and "laws" of Jesus by faith. Suetonius writings reveal Christians "making disturbances" for following Jesus instead of Rome while also validating a historical event from the book of Acts.
- IV. The unearthing of the Dead Sea Scrolls provides B.C. era proof of biblical prophecies and serves as just one of many manuscript discoveries that offer confidence in how the biblical writings have been preserved faithfully over time.



Though minor variations exist, the evidence points to a consistently preserved and reliably authoritative Bible that has been passed down as God's own word over time.

Conclusion F?

Conclusion

What do you think? Can we absolutely authenticate Jesus based on the evidence? Well, I've got good news and bad news. The bad news is that we're finite humans and can't be 100% sure about anything. The good news is that we do have great reasons to be extremely confident in God's word and the real, fully man, fully God, betrayed, crucified, and resurrected person of Jesus. So, instead of a closed case, we're actually in the midst of a lifelong pursuit. There's more evidence out there, and it's up to you to find it. Here are a few tips to help you move the investigation forward:

- ❖ Start with the Bible. You'll find more prophetic connections, encounter additional eyewitness accounts, and eventually run into a former skeptic named Saul whose life changed upon encountering the real Jesus.
- ❖ Then, fact check those historical accounts. All are helpful, but some are stronger or less contested than others. Also look for other accounts. Take the early church fathers for example. They may be a little more "biased," but some of them, like Papias, had direct contact with the Disciples and original sources.
- ❖ Next, keep digging into the archeological archives. We barely scratched the surface of what's already been found, and there are new discoveries every day.
- ❖ Finally, search for deeper answers in Science and Philosophy. You're going to find conflicting opinions, but a good investigator considers all sides to discern the truth.

In an ordinary investigation, strong, corroborated evidence is enough, but this is no ordinary case. Eternity itself is at stake, and all the reasonable evidence in the world can't stand on its own. Instead, we've actually just stumbled upon the beginning stages of what the Bible calls faith:

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see... And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:1&6).

So faith relies on the evidence, but it also moves beyond it into earnest seeking. In other words, we can't just trust that Jesus really existed or even simply believe that he did all the amazing things claimed in the Bible. Instead, we are called, based on that evidence, to "trust in" Jesus with our entire lives. Maybe it will help to think of it this way:

- ❖ "Trust That" = Believing the Bible's claims about God and Jesus are true based upon the reasonable evidence.
- ❖ "Trust In" = Acting on that reasonable belief by placing one's life and hope in submission to Jesus through faith.

We believe this investigation has provided compelling reasons for you to "trust that" Jesus is both real and true, but we also pray that you will come to "trust in" Him as the only source of life, meaning, and hope.

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17).