

Apologetics Course

Lesson Two

Bible, Jesus & The Resurrection

- Questions we may face about Jesus, the Bible and or the Resurrection.
 - Questions LAB
- Bible – Telephone Game? Can't trust the Bible – why trust anything else?
 - Secure Transmission – Chain of Custody
 - Undesigned Coincidences
 - Apparent Contradictions
 - Archeology – the more we dig – the more we find.
 - Prophecy – OT fulfillment as well as NT fulfillment
- Jesus – the Man? Myth?
 - Who is Jesus : from Foundations 1
 - Prophecies fulfilled (probability of 8, he fulfilled over 300)
 - Did Jesus think he was God? Daniel 7 reference.
- The Resurrection – Lies, Motives, Evidence
 - Minimal facts argument
 - Chinese References
 - Roman/Greek & Jewish References
- Conclusion & Common Questions
- Workshop

Jesus, the Resurrection & The Bible

LAB

- The Bible is just a bunch of fabricated stories with errors - how could you believe in it?
- Can we trust Jesus wasn't a myth?
- Is the Resurrection a fable?

The Book of Books

The Bible is God's Holy, inspired Word. It is the most powerful and most quoted book in the world. Some of the greatest men in modern history have had a deep respect for the Bible:

Abraham Lincoln: *"I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book."*

Immanuel Kant: *"The existence of the Bible, as a book for people, is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it is a crime against humanity."*

Daniel Webster: *"If there is anything in my thought or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me early love for the scriptures."*

Hundreds of millions of people have read its sacred pages, making it the best-selling book of all time.

Unique Composition of the Bible

1. Written over a 1,600 year span. (~1450 BC to 100 AD)
2. Written by more than 40 authors from every walk of life. (kings, military leaders, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, tax collectors, poets, musicians, statesmen, scholars and shepherds.)
 - Moses (political leader, judge trained in the universities of Egypt)
 - David (king, poet, musician, shepherd and warrior)
 - Amos (herdsman)
 - Joshua (military general)
 - Nehemiah (cupbearer to a pagan king)
 - Daniel (prime minister)
 - Solomon (king and philosopher)
 - Luke (physician and historian)
 - Peter (fisherman)
 - Matthew (tax collector)
 - Paul (rabbi)
 - Mark (Peter's secretary) – accompanied Paul and Barnabas.
3. Written in different places:

Moses in wilderness, Jeremiah in dungeon, Daniel on a hillside and in a palace, Paul inside prison walls, Luke while traveling, John while in exile on the isle of Patmos.
4. Written at different times:

David in times of war and sacrifice. Solomon in times of peace and prosperity.
5. Written during different moods:

Some at heights of joy, others from deep despair, others during times of certainty and conviction, others during confusion and doubt.
6. Written on three continents:

Asia, Africa, and Europe.
7. Written in three languages.

Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic (12 verses).

8. Written in wide variety of styles.

Poetry, historical narrative, song, romance, didactic treatise, personal correspondence, memoirs, satire, biography, autobiography, law, prophecy, parable and allegory.

9. Addresses hundreds of controversial subjects.

10. Despite diversity, the Bible presents a single unfolding story: God's redemption of human beings. The "Paradise Lost" of Genesis becomes the "Paradise Gained" of Revelation.

11. There is one lead character in the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament points to the coming of a savior, while the New Testaments also springs from the revelation that the Savior has come. This savior being Jesus Christ. Both the old and new testaments share the characteristic that they are heavily Christo-centric.

Testimony

A representative of the *Great Books of the Western World* came to visit Josh McDowell, author of *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

He challenged the man to take just 10 of the authors from the *Great Books* series, all from one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language, and all addressing one controversial subject.

"Would the authors agree with one another?"

He replied, "No. you would have a conglomeration."

Two days later that man committed his life to Jesus Christ.

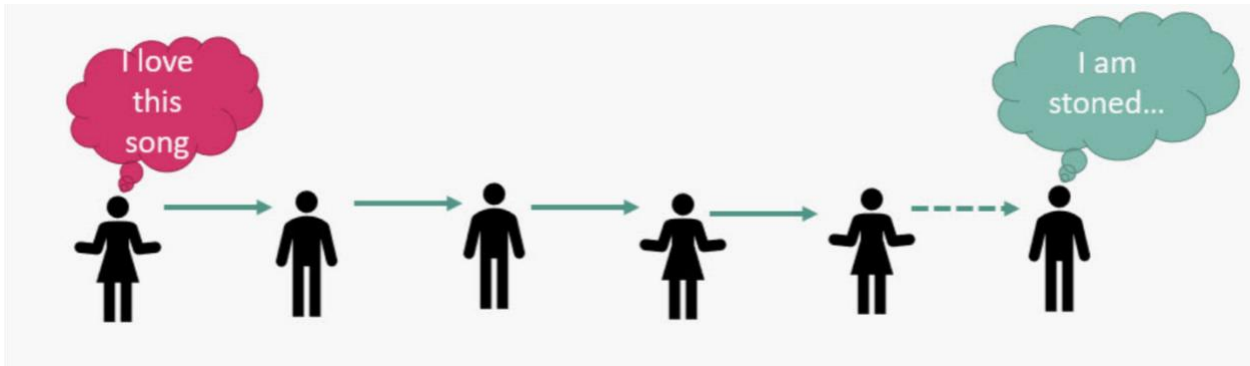
Corrupted fairy tales? Can We Trust the Bible?

Almost everyone who challenges the Bible eventually raises the same objection. Maybe you've heard it yourself — maybe you've even wondered about it.

"The Bible has been copied and translated so many times over thousands of years — it's basically like a giant game of telephone. Who knows what the original even said?"

— The most common objection to biblical reliability, David Cross — comedian in show "Bigger and Blacker"

It sounds reasonable. It feels intuitive. And if it were true, it would be devastating to everything we believe. So let's take it seriously — and then let's dismantle it with the facts.



The telephone analogy assumes that the transmission of the biblical text worked like a children’s party game: a whispered message passed down a single oral chain, with each link introducing new errors that compound invisibly until the original is unrecognizable. This is not how manuscripts work.

The telephone game assumes...	Manuscript transmission is...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One oral chain with no branching • No originals to check against • Errors compound invisibly • No way to detect or correct mistakes • The “message” is heard once and forgotten 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thousands of written copies • Multiple independent lines of transmission • Errors detectable by cross-comparison • Scribes trained to preserve, not improvise • Written documents that can be checked

The telephone game is oral, linear, and unverifiable. Biblical manuscript transmission is written, multi-branched, and cross-checkable. These are not the same thing. Not even close.

When a scribe in Alexandria in AD 300 made a copy, that copy could be compared to copies made in Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople — independently, from independent ancestor manuscripts. Errors don’t compound; they stand out. This is the entire science of textual criticism.

WHY THE MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE IS EXTRAORDINARY

Consider the sheer quantity of what we have. No other ancient document comes close to the New Testament in manuscript support.

<p>5,800+</p> <p>Greek NT manuscripts</p>	<p>25,000+</p> <p>Total manuscripts (all languages)</p>	<p><100 yrs</p> <p>Gap to earliest fragments</p>
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Ancient Work	Manuscripts	Earliest Copy	Time Gap
New Testament	5,800+ Greek; 25,000+ total	~AD 125 (P52)	<100 years
Homer's Iliad	~1,900	~400 BC	~500 years
Caesar's Gallic Wars	~10	AD 900s	~900 years
Plato's Dialogues	~7	AD 895	~1,200 years
Tacitus' Annals	2 manuscripts	AD 850 / 1050	~800 years

The New Testament isn't just the best-attested ancient document in history. It isn't even a close competition. Historians consider the Iliad's ~1,900 copies to be remarkably well-attested for an ancient text. The NT has thirty times that in Greek alone.

WHAT WE'LL COVER TODAY

1. **The telephone analogy** why it fundamentally misrepresents how manuscripts work
2. **The manuscript quantity and quality** the numbers behind the New Testament's extraordinary manuscript base
3. **How textual criticism works** how scholars recover the original text with remarkable confidence
4. **What the variants actually are** and why none of them threaten a single core Christian doctrine
5. **Conversational apologetics** how to walk a skeptic through this argument in a real conversation

By the end of this lesson, you won't just know that the Bible is reliable — you'll know how to explain why, calmly and confidently, the next time someone brings up the telephone game.

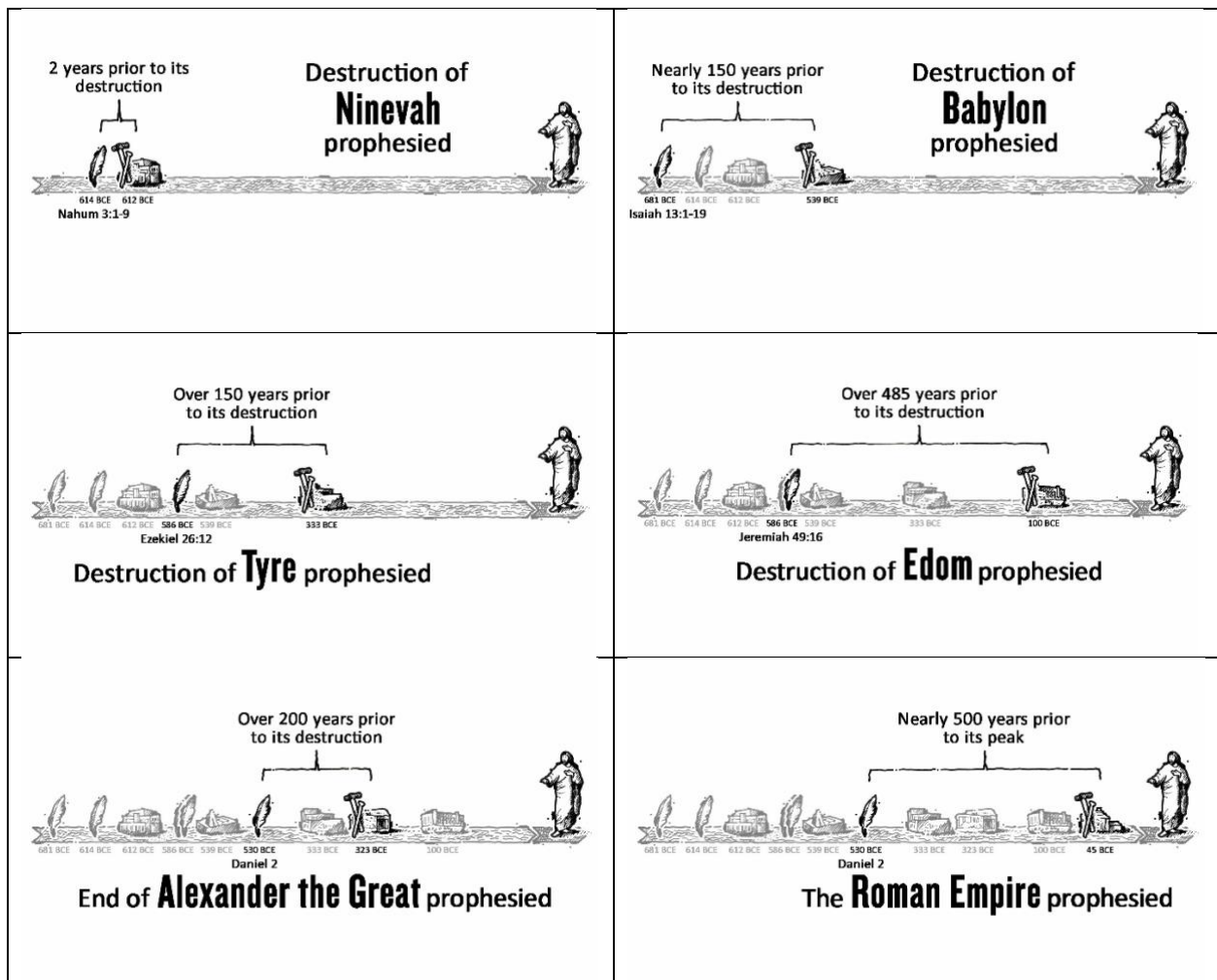
We're not getting **farther** from the original text as time goes on, we're actually getting **closer!**

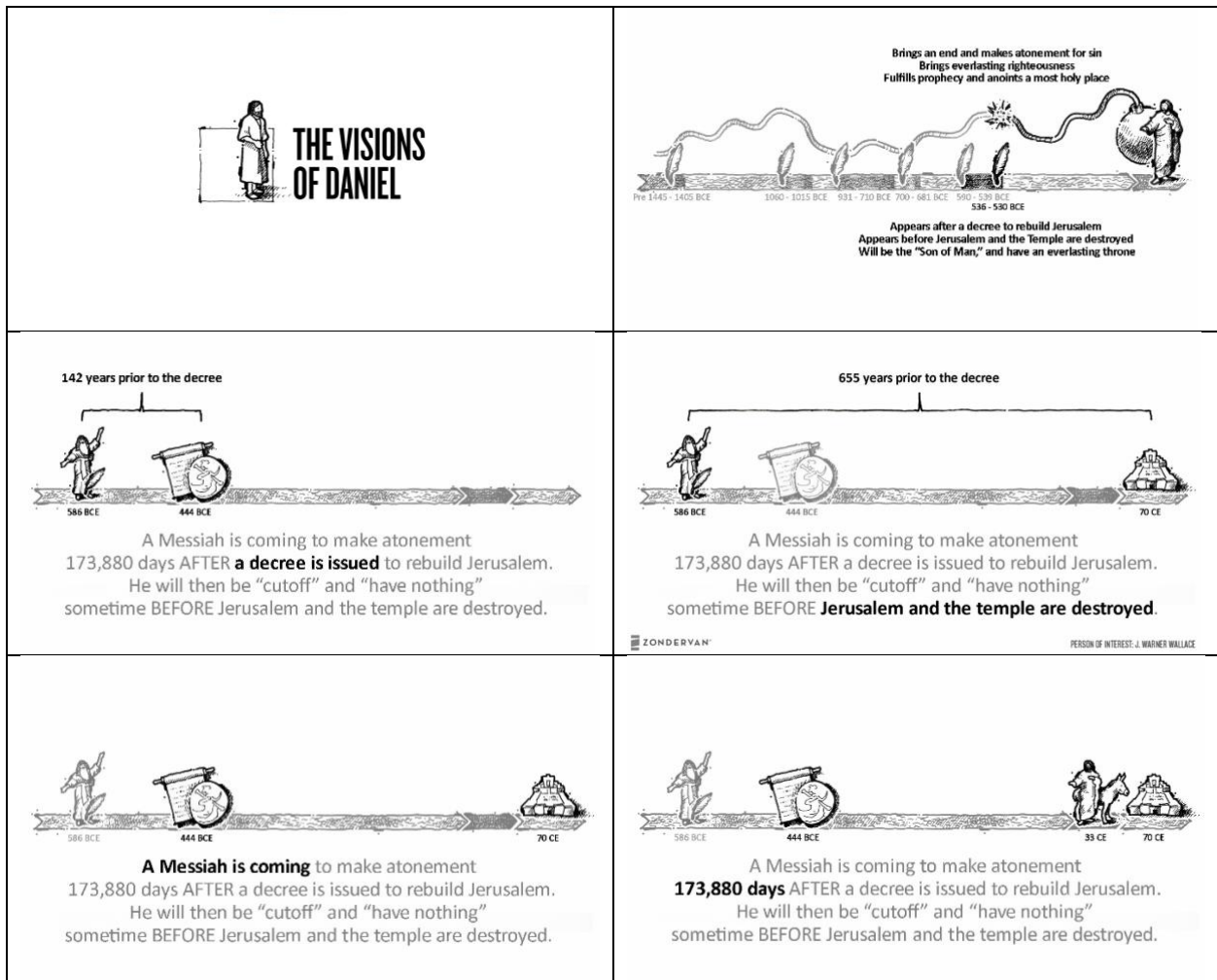
 YEAR	 NUMBER OF MANUSCRIPTS	 EARLIEST MANUSCRIPTS
1611	7	11TH CENTURY (1000 AD)
2023	5000 +	2ND CENTURY (100 AD)

Fulfilled Prophecies as an Apologetic

The fulfillment of prophecies has and always will be a tremendous piece of evidence and it's accumulated calculation of improbabilities of being predicted and fulfilled years before the events were foretold. When we look in the scriptures at the sections titled the major and minor prophets, we can glean the many prophecies God wanted his people to be aware of that announce what is coming ahead. These prophets we call reliable informants filled and guided by the power of the Holy Spirit.

RELIABLE INFORMANTS





Even without Anderson’s calculations, Daniel’s prophecy still helped answer the “when” question by providing a timeframe (after the decree and before the destruction) in which the Messiah would appear:

Daniel provided a range of dates (at the very least), and the last Jewish prophets provided a profile that would identify the Jewish person of interest, within Daniels timeframe...

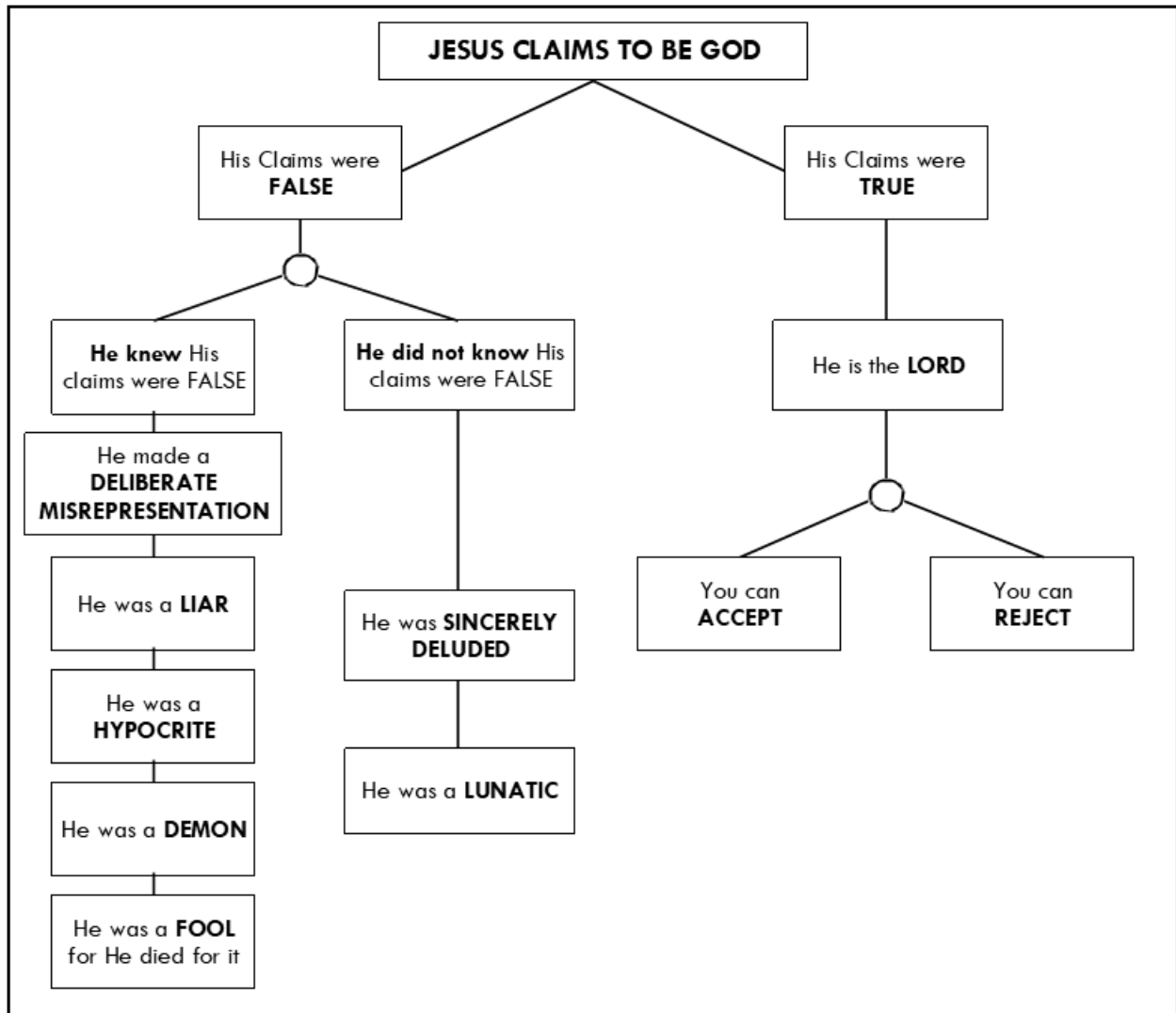
These fulfilled prophecies among many others are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to showing how the scriptures foretold and foreshadowed event to come and when the Lord as the Messiah would appear in the world at the appointed time predicted through the prophet Daniel and others.

Jesus, and the Resurrection

Jesus : Lord, Liar, Lunatic

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be (insane)... or else he would be ‘the Devil of Hell.’ You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else (insane) or something worse... but let us not come up with

any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” ~C.S. Lewis



KEY EVIDENCES

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are central tenets of Christian faith, and there are various pieces of evidence that believers and scholars cite to support these events. Here are some of the key evidences:

Ancient Biographies: There are four ancient biographies of Jesus (the Gospels), written by eyewitnesses or based on eyewitness testimony, circulated while many other eyewitnesses were still alive. These texts assert that Jesus rose from the dead.

Non-Christian Sources: Pagan and Jewish writers from the time report that early Christians believed Jesus rose from the dead.

Martyrdom of Eyewitnesses: Many principal eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus died for their claim that Jesus was resurrected, suggesting they truly believed it to be a fact.

Empty Tomb: Historical evidence points to an empty tomb, grave clothes left behind, and the absence of Jesus' body despite a guarded grave.

Post-Resurrection Appearances: There are multiple recorded appearances of Jesus after his death, to various groups of people, in different settings, and at different times of the day.

Conversion of Skeptics: The conversion of individuals like Paul, who was initially a persecutor of Christians, is seen as significant evidence of the resurrection.

Consistency with Jewish Prophecies: The events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection align with prophecies in Jewish scriptures. Over 300 to 570 prophecies. WHAT ARE THE ODDS? Impossible.

Early Christian Worship: The shift in worship practices among early Christians, including the observance of Sunday as the Lord's Day, reflects the belief in Jesus' resurrection.

Growth of Christianity: The rapid spread of Christianity in the face of persecution is often cited as evidence of the truth of the resurrection.

Historical Impact: The influence of Jesus' teachings and the impact of Christianity on the development of Western civilization are seen as indirect evidence of the resurrection's transformative power.

These evidences are often presented in a cumulative case, meaning that while no single piece of evidence may be conclusive on its own, together they form a compelling argument for many believers and scholars. It's important to note that interpretations of these evidences vary, and they are often assessed differently by people depending on their philosophical and theological perspectives.

Group Exercise (25 min)

Group Assignments — Answer the Objection

Group 1: 'The disciples hallucinated — grief can make people see things they want to see.'

Group 2: 'The resurrection is a legend — stories grew over centuries like a game of telephone.'

Group 3: 'Jesus never really died — he was drugged and recovered in the cool tomb.'

Group 4: 'The Bible we have today has been changed — it can't be the original.'

Each group: (a) State the strongest form of the objection, (b) give your best response,

(c) end with a Columbo question you would ask the skeptic.

1. Why the Resurrection Is the Linchpin

Paul makes the stakes explicit: if the resurrection did not happen, Christianity is false and Christians are the most pitiable people on earth. But if it did happen, everything changes. The resurrection is not one doctrine among many — it is the cornerstone on which every other claim rests.

2. The Minimal Facts Approach — Dr. Gary Habermas (Liberty University)

The minimal facts approach uses only historical data granted by virtually all scholars — including atheists — who study the subject. No faith assumptions are required. Even on this narrow common ground, the resurrection is the best explanation of the evidence.

Minimal Fact	The Evidence
Fact 1 — Death	Jesus died by Roman crucifixion. Confirmed by Tacitus, Josephus, the Talmud, and all critical historians. Not a single serious scholar disputes this.
Fact 2 — Empty Tomb	The tomb was empty on Sunday. Even Jesus' enemies never denied this — they claimed the disciples stole the body (Matthew 28:13), implicitly confirming the tomb was found empty.
Fact 3 — Appearances	The disciples genuinely believed they saw Jesus alive after death. Paul lists named eyewitnesses including a group of 500, many still living when he wrote (1 Cor. 15:3–8).
Fact 4 — Transformation	The disciples went from hiding in fear to dying for their testimony. People die for beliefs they sincerely hold — not for something they know they fabricated.
Fact 5 — Paul & James	Both Paul (a violent persecutor of Christians) and James (Jesus' skeptical brother) became devoted believers after claiming resurrection appearances. What accounts for their dramatic turnaround?

3. The 1 Corinthians 15 Creed — The Earliest Evidence

Scholars date the creed embedded in 1 Corinthians 15:3–5 to within 2–5 years of the crucifixion — Paul says he received it, meaning it predates even his own writing. This is eyewitness-era testimony, not legend. Legends require generations; this creed was circulating within years.

4. Answering the Four Main Objections

Objection	Response
'Wrong tomb'	Both Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders knew exactly where the tomb was. They would have produced the body immediately to end the movement.
'Jesus swooned'	Roman execution was engineered for guaranteed death. A man who merely survived crucifixion could not have inspired belief in a glorious, risen Lord.
'Hallucinations'	Hallucinations are private, individual events. Group sightings involving 500 people simultaneously are not a recognized psychological phenomenon.

Objection	Response
'It's a legend'	Legends require generations to develop. The creed in 1 Corinthians 15 was circulating within 5 years of the events. Eyewitnesses were still alive and could be interviewed.

5. The 4 T's — Manuscript Evidence for the Bible

The Four T's	What It Means
Transmission	Over 5,800 Greek NT manuscripts exist — more than any other ancient document by a factor of 10. The text is extraordinarily stable and consistent.
Timeline	NT letters written within 20–30 years of Jesus' life. Paul's letters within 25 years. The 1 Cor. 15 creed within 5 years. Eyewitnesses were still alive and verifiable.
Testimony	The Gospels show marks of genuine eyewitness accounts: embarrassing details, women as primary witnesses, self-incriminating stories. These are signs of honesty, not invention.
Testing	Archaeology has confirmed biblical people, places, and events repeatedly — the Pool of Siloam, Pilate's inscription, the Tomb of Caiaphas. No confirmed find has disproved the Bible.

6. 'The Bible Has Been Changed' — The Quick Answer

Ask: compared to what manuscript? We have Greek manuscripts from the 2nd century. Textual critics compare thousands of manuscripts and reconstruct the original text with very high confidence. The variants that exist are overwhelmingly spelling differences and word order. No core Christian doctrine is affected by any manuscript variant.

Extra-Biblical Sources for the Death and Resurrection

The darkness at the crucifixion is actually a fascinating area where extrabiblical sources may provide corroborating testimony. Let me walk through what the historical record shows.

The Biblical Claim

All three Synoptic Gospels record a darkness covering the land from noon to 3 PM during the crucifixion (Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44-45).

Extrabiblical Sources Often Cited

Flavius Josephus (Jewish historian, ~93 AD)

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus, described by Bart Ehrman (skeptic) as "far and away our best source of information about first-century Palestine," twice mentions Jesus in his 20-volume *Jewish Antiquities*, written around AD 93.

In one passage, Josephus identifies a man named James as the "brother of Jesus-who-is-called-Messiah." Few scholars doubt the authenticity of this shorter reference.

The longer passage, the *Testimonium Flavianum*, is viewed by the overwhelming majority of scholars as an authentic core from Josephus that was partially modified by later Christian scribes. The three major language versions (Latin, Syriac, Arabic) all preserve the idea that Jesus "was thought to be the Messiah."

Tacitus (Roman senator and historian, ~116 AD)

Scholars generally consider Tacitus's reference to the execution of Jesus by Pontius Pilate to be authentic and historically valuable as an independent Roman source. In a recent assessment by Latinists, the passage was unanimously deemed genuine, with no serious Tacitean scholar believing it to be an interpolation.

As Crossan states: "That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be, since both Josephus and Tacitus agree with the Christian accounts on at least that basic fact." Bart Ehrman adds: "Tacitus's report confirms what we know from other sources, that Jesus was executed by order of the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, sometime during Tiberius's reign."

Pliny the Younger (~112 AD)

Shortly before Tacitus, Roman governor Pliny the Younger wrote to Emperor Trajan that early Christians would "sing hymns to Christ as to a god" — confirming early high Christology worship from a non-Christian perspective.

The Babylonian Talmud

The Talmud indicates Jesus performed miraculous feats, that he was crucified, and that it happened on the eve of Passover — corroborating the Gospel timeline from a hostile Jewish source.

Thallus (c. AD 52)

This is the earliest and most discussed reference. Thallus wrote a history of the Mediterranean world, and his original works are lost — but **Julius Africanus (c. AD 221)** quotes him, noting that Thallus tried to explain the darkness at the crucifixion as a **solar eclipse**. Africanus pushed back, correctly noting that a solar eclipse during Passover is astronomically impossible **since Passover falls on a full moon**.

The significance: Thallus wasn't trying to confirm Christianity — he was trying to *explain away* the darkness. That's actually stronger testimony, because a hostile witness wouldn't invent the event.

Phlegon of Tralles (c. AD 137)

A Greek historian whose works are also lost but quoted by later writers including **Origen** and **Eusebius**. He recorded a great eclipse and earthquake during the reign of Tiberius. Origen (*Contra Celsus* 2.33) explicitly connected Phlegon's account to the crucifixion darkness.

Hou Han Shu, Vol. 1 (31 CE, Emperor Guangwu, 7th Year):

"Yin and yang have mistakenly switched places... The sins of all the people are now placed upon one man... A man from heaven died."

Christian scholars Frederick Baltz (*An Anchor for the Soul*, 2007) and Paul Hattaway ("Not Without Witness") link it to the darkness at the crucifixion (Matthew 27:45), and that Emperor Guangwu reportedly pardoned prisoners, interpreting the event as a sign of heavenly mercy.

Workshop

1. Learn to articulate at least 2 or 3 of these arguments from this lesson.
2. ASSIGNMENT : watch this video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajOYym3luRk>

OTHER RESOURCES

1. Cross Examined Ministry (Dr. Frank Turek)
2. Is God a Moral Monster (Dr. Paul Copan)
3. Cold Case Christianity (Dr. James Warner Wallace)
4. Hidden in Plain Sight (Dr. Lydia McGrew) – undesigned coincidences of the NT narrative
5. CARM.org

The New Testament Chain of Custody



From J. Warner Wallace's book, **Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels**