



QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

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# IS THE NEW TESTAMENT TRUE?

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## QUESTION

# IS THE NEW TESTAMENT TRUE?



When examining the reliability or trustworthiness of the New Testament, there are two overarching questions that must be answered...

1

**HAVE THE ORIGINAL WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BEEN ACCURATELY COPIED AND PASSED DOWN TO US THROUGH HISTORY?**

In other words, is the New Testament we read today the same as the original documents written approx. 2,000 years ago?

2

**DID THE EVENTS RECORDED IN THE ORIGINAL WRITINGS ACTUALLY OCCUR?**

Were the apostles telling the truth, or were they lying, or perhaps innocently mistaken, about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?

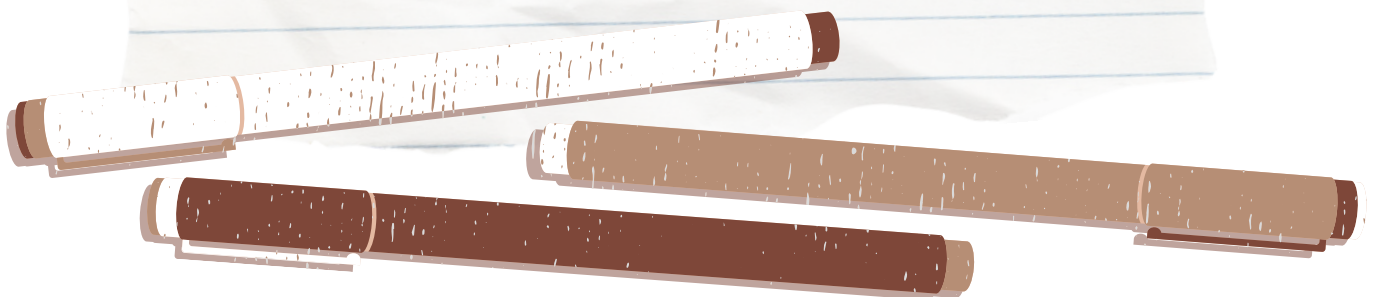


# **THIS BOOKLET IS DEDICATED TO ANSWERING THE SECOND OF THESE TWO OVERARCHING QUESTIONS.**

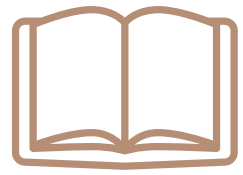
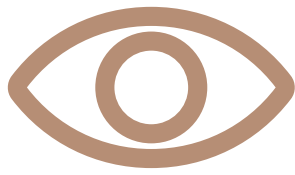
An effective way to do this is to examine a cumulative case for the truth of the New Testament which consists of five lines of evidence - all starting with the letter 'e'.

## **evidence**

- (1) EARLY TESTIMONY,**
- (2) EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY,**
- (3) EMBARRASSING TESTIMONY,**
- (4) EXCRUCIATING TESTIMONY,**
- (5) EXTRA-BIBLICAL TESTIMONY.**







Taken together, these five pieces of evidence/lines of reasoning point to the conclusion that the New Testament is true. We can be confident that the apostles accurately reported the truth about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1

## EARLY TESTIMONY

Many skeptics and critics of Christianity contend that the gospels and other New Testament documents were written nearly a century or more after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Skeptics contend therefore, that if the gospels were written so late it seems most reasonable to hold that they aren't true or accurate, because given that so much time





had passed, surely a number of important details would've been forgotten, or remembered incorrectly, or accidentally exaggerated or intentionally embellished. Skeptics often also contend that 100+ years is more than enough time for a legend to develop.



**Given all these objections, how then can we be sure the New Testament is actually true? How should Christians respond to these difficult questions? What evidence is there to hold that the gospels and other New Testament documents were written early, within the first century A.D?**

While a lot more can be said in response to these objections, there are at least 3 important pieces of evidence to keep in mind, which helps establish the early testimony of the gospels and New Testament.

## 1. The Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D

It's a historical fact that the Jewish capital of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. The event has come to be known as 'The Siege of Jerusalem'. It was the decisive battle in the First Jewish-Roman War. The Roman army captured Jerusalem, which had been controlled by Jewish rebel factions since 66 A.D. before destroying the city, along with its temple.

It's an understatement to say the event was extremely significant and devastating for the Jewish people. Interestingly, for our purposes, there is not a single record of this important event in any of the four gospels, the book of Acts, nor any other writing of the New Testament. Not even close...





What's more, Jesus predicted such an event in Matthew 24. Recording this event would've benefited the early-Christian movement, but still no mention of it. What do we make of this? It appears most reasonable to hold that the New Testament must have been written prior to 70 A.D, before this cataclysmic event.

On this point, Christian apologist Frank Turek provides a helpful example. Imagine you're reading a book. You don't know when it was written, but it's about the history of New York City. Imagine you get to the end of the book and then realise there's been absolutely no mention of the devastating events that occurred on the 11th of September 2001. When would you assume the book was written? Before 9/11 of course.

While many theories can be offered to explain why the destruction of Jerusalem is not mentioned in the New Testament, it appears most reasonable to hold that it wasn't mentioned because it hadn't yet occurred at the time the New Testament was written. This is one compelling piece of evidence for the early testimony of the gospels and New Testament.



## 2. The Life of Paul

The life of Paul is an important key for the early testimony of the New Testament. Paul - who was originally a pharisee and persecutor of Christians - reports that he had an encounter with the risen Jesus, which caused him to convert to the new Christian movement. Years later Paul was martyred in Rome under Roman Emperor Nero sometime around the mid-60s A.D.



Between the time of his conversion and his death in the mid-60s A.D, Paul lives a life completely devoted to the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ; he meets with the disciples and other followers of Jesus on multiple occasions; he travels around the Mediterranean planting churches in Asia Minor, Greece, and other locations; and he ends up writing approx. 50% of the New Testament.

Obviously, Paul's writings must have been completed before his death. Straight away we know that approx. half of the New Testament was written before the mid-60s A.D. Interestingly, Paul in 1 Timothy 5:17-18 quotes the gospel of Luke (10:7) as scripture alongside a quote from Deuteronomy. If Paul is quoting Luke, Luke's gospel must have been written sometime even earlier than Paul's writings.


Furthermore, for our purposes here, another key from the life of Paul is found in his first letter to the church he planted in Corinth.

Historians have been able to determine that Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 quotes an even earlier creedal statement, which was formed by the Jerusalem church and dates all the way back to 33 - 35 A.D. (just a few years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in approx. 30 A.D.).



## THE PASSAGE READS...

"...For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance **that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time,** most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. **Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,** and last of all he appeared to me also..."  
(\*creed in bold).

An illustration of Paul, a man with a white beard and hair, wearing a brown robe. He is holding a scroll and looking towards the right. A large white arrow points from the scroll towards the text on the right.

**Paul likely received this creed when he first visited Peter and the other disciples in Jerusalem, just a few years after his conversion in approx. 33 A.D.**



### 3. The Writings of Luke

The writings of Luke is another important key for the early testimony of the New Testament. Luke was an associate of the apostle Paul. He authored two books included in the New Testament; the gospel of Luke, and the book of Acts. Luke begins his gospel with the following introduction...

#### **Gospel of Luke 1:1-4**

***“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word (Jesus). With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”***

Here Luke clearly identifies that his gospel is an orderly account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for his friend 'Theophilus'. Interestingly, Luke starts the book of Acts with the following introduction...

## The Book of Acts 1:1-2

*"In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven..."*

Here we can clearly see that the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts is a 2-part work written by Luke to his friend Theophilus. The gospel of Luke being part 1; the book of Acts being part 2.

Interestingly, the book of Acts - which recounts the acts of the apostles and the happenings of the early Christian movement - ends without any mention of Paul's death. This leads us to believe that Acts was written sometime prior to the mid-60s A.D. Now if Acts is part 2 of Luke's writings to Theophilus, the gospel of Luke must've been written even earlier (perhaps mid-late 50s A.D).

1

LUKE

+

2

ACTS



LIFE OF JESUS



LUKE + ACTS

THE WRITINGS OF PAUL

PAUL DIES MID-60S A.D.

0

30 A.D.

60 A.D.

90 A.D.

Furthermore, it's been established that Luke's gospel was written after the other synoptic gospels. The gospels of Matthew and Mark must've been written even earlier than Luke (perhaps early-mid 50s A.D.).



**What impact does early testimony have on the truthfulness of the gospels and the entire New Testament?** If early testimony can be established, we can be confident that the gospels and other New Testament writings are not a product of myth or legend written centuries after the time of Jesus.

## **2** EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

It is clear that the authors of the New Testament claimed to be eyewitnesses or close friends/associates with access to reliable eyewitness testimony.



Take for example the introduction to the gospel of Luke mentioned earlier, or 2 Peter 1:16-17...

*"For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."*

Many skeptics and critics of Christianity contend that the gospels and other New Testament documents were written 100+ years after the supposed life of Jesus. If this is true, it means they were written at a time well beyond the lives of the apostles and other eyewitnesses. Therefore, the New Testament couldn't have been written by eyewitnesses.

**How then can we be expected to trust such late accounts not even written by eyewitnesses?**

Accounts not even written at a time when opposing eyewitnesses could've challenged what was being said about Jesus?



# WHEN ANSWERING THESE OBJECTIONS THERE ARE AT LEAST 2 IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER:

- (1) the **internal evidence** supporting eyewitness testimony,
- (2) the **external evidence** supporting eyewitness testimony.

## 1. The internal evidence

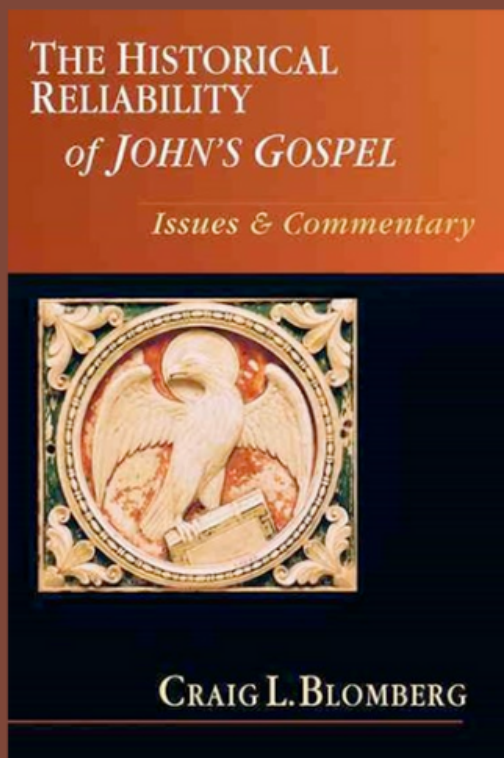
*Internal evidence* refers to any evidence we can gather from within the New Testament itself. How do the claims and the recorded details of the New Testament stand up to investigation and scrutiny? Do they pass the truth test or can they be falsified?



**DR. FRANK TUREK**  
*Christian apologist*

Christian apologist Frank Turek notes that there are 84 details in the book of Acts alone, from chapter 13 - 28 that have been identified as historical eyewitness details by Roman historian Colin Hemer. He went through the text with a fine-tooth comb and admitted that Luke must be witnessing what he's writing or at least knows somebody who has, because all the details recorded are of a nature that only an eyewitness could know.

Why would Luke seek to write an orderly account for his friend, go through the painstaking task of getting all the little details correct, but then lie about the bigger more important issues/events like the miracles performed by Paul or the resurrection of Jesus. He wouldn't, he was telling the truth.



Furthermore, New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg in his work entitled, 'The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel' identifies 59 confirmed or historically probable eyewitness details contained in the gospel of John.

## 2. The external evidence

External evidence refers to any evidence we can gather from outside the text of the New Testament. Thanks to the historical writings and testimony of early church figures, such as, Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Rome, Linus and others, we can be confident that the New Testament must've been written (1) early, (2) by eyewitnesses, and (3) by the traditionally named authors of the New Testament.



These early church figures were the students of the original disciples and eyewitnesses. It's unreasonable to contradict their historical writings and testimonies and allege that the gospels were written 100+ years after the life of Jesus or that 'eyewitness testimony' was planted into the New Testament by corrupt church officials hundreds of years after the life of Jesus.

The following is a brief exploration of how the historical writings and testimony of the early church fathers serves as strong external evidence in support of the truthfulness of the New Testament.

## **Students of John - Ignatius + Polycarp**

**Ignatius** (ca. AD 35-117) was a student of John the disciple. He went on to become the bishop of Antioch (successor to the apostle Peter). Ignatius wrote a number of important letters to the early church. Seven authentic letters from Ignatius survive to this day (six to local church groups and one to Polycarp). These letters have been dated to AD 105-115. In these letters Ignatius frequently mentions that he knew many of the apostles, and wrote as though many of his older readers also knew them.



Furthermore, scholars have determined that Ignatius quoted (or alluded to) seven to sixteen New Testament books (including the gospels Matthew, John, and Luke, and several, if not all, of Paul's letters).

**Polycarp** (ca. 69-155 AD) was a friend of Ignatius and fellow student of John. Irenaeus, another important figure from the early church, who lived from approx. AD 130-202, testified that he once heard Polycarp talk about his conversations with John. Polycarp was known to have been converted to Christianity by the eyewitness apostles themselves. One important fact from the life and writings of Polycarp is that, he went on to become the bishop of Smyrna, with one surviving letter which he wrote to the church in Philippi. This letter was written sometime between AD 100-150. Polycarp wrote about Ignatius, Paul, and Paul's relationship with the Philippian church. Furthermore, he quoted or referenced fourteen to sixteen New Testament books (including Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 1 Peter, and 1 John).

**As students of John the disciple, the life and writings of Ignatius and Polycarp serve as important pieces of external evidence that help to establish that the gospels and other New Testament writings contain early, eyewitness testimony.**

## Students of Paul - Linus + Clement of Rome

The apostle Paul (5 - 67 AD) was an eyewitness of the risen Jesus and author of approx. 50% of the New Testament. He had many close associations with key apostles, historians, and other eyewitnesses. Furthermore, we know that Paul had several key students and disciples who protected and passed on his writings. Two in particular were Linus and Clement of Rome. Irenaeus, in his writings, described a man named Linus as a coworker of Paul, and in 2 Timothy 4:21, Paul himself specially identifies a coworker named Linus. We know from history that **Linus** later became the pope of Rome following the deaths of Peter and Paul.



**Clement** was also a coworker of Paul (see Philippians 4:3), and later became an important assistant to both Paul and Peter in Rome. Clement wrote several letters, one in particular - *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* - survives as potentially the earliest Christian document outside of the New Testament. This letter was written sometime between AD 80-140. Scholars have observed that Clement quoted or alluded to seven New Testament books (Mark, Matthew or John, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians).

## Students of Peter - John Mark + others

The apostle Peter (ca. 1 BC- 67 AD) was one of the twelve. As such, he is a most-significant eyewitness of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Peter preserved his eyewitness testimony through his primary student and disciple John Mark, who passed it on to the next generation in what we now recognise as the gospel of Mark. Early church leaders such as Papias (ca. 70-163 AD), Irenaeus (ca. 115-202 AD), and Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215 AD) all claim that Mark's gospel was a record of Peter's eyewitness observations. Papias, claimed that Mark penned his gospel in Rome as Peter's scribe, stating that, *"Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ."* (Papias, quoted in Eusebius, "Church History," Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 172.





**Irenaeus** wrote, *“Mark the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter.”* (Irenaeus, quoted in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translation of the Writings of the Fathers down to 325*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers-Justin Martyr-Irenaeus* (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1885), 414.

**Clement of Alexandria** records that those who head Peter’s teaching *“were not satisfied with merely a single hearing or with the unwritten teaching of the divine Gospel, but with all sorts of entreaties they besought Mark, who was a follower of Peter and whose Gospel is extant, to leave behind with them in writing a record of the teaching passed on to them orally.”* (Clement of Alexandria, quoted in Eusebius, *“Ecclesiastical History,”* *The Fathers of the Church: Eusebius Pamphili, Ecclesiastical History Books 1-5*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1953), 110.

**Mark** established the church in Alexandria, and disciplined several men who went on to become church leaders in North Africa. Mark disciplined and taught Anianus (?-82 AD), Avilius (?-95 AD), Kedron (?-106 AD), Primus (ca. 40-118 AD), and Justus (?-135 AD).

**MANY SKEPTICS MAY CONCEDE THAT THERE IS GOOD EVIDENCE TO HOLD THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS WRITTEN EARLY AND CONTAINS EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY. BUT...**

At this point, many skeptics might object, claiming that the disciples were biased or lying - either making up the entire story or embellishing certain elements. The theory being, the resurrection did not actually occur and so the disciples, after suffering the embarrassment of their leader being crucified, decided to fabricate the entire account in order to save face. Is this a fair and reasonable position? Were the disciples biased or motivated to lie?

In regards to the allegation that the disciples were biased or lied about the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, there are two important factors to keep in mind: **(1) embarrassing testimony** found within the gospels and New Testament letters, and **(2) excruciating testimony** - the martyrdom of the apostles.



## EMBARASSING TESTIMONY

The gospels and other New Testament writings are filled with many embarrassing details involving the disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ. Based on the principle of embarrassment, **the inclusion of embarrassing details is highly significant for our investigation in determining whether the New Testament is true.**

**The principle of embarrassment** is a type of critical analysis rendering an account likely to be true as the author would have no reason to invent a story which might embarrass them. The disciples had nothing to gain either for themselves or for family and friends by maintaining that Jesus had been raised to life after death. The earliest followers of Jesus faced arrest, torture, and death for preaching about the resurrected Jesus. And they faced opposition from both the Jewish religious leaders and Roman authorities.

**HERE ARE JUST 12 EMBARRASSING DETAILS FROM THE TESTIMONY OF THE DISCIPLES WHICH POINT TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPELS AND NEW TESTAMENT.**

## **1. The disciples are repeatedly depicted as dimwitted**

Throughout the gospels the disciples are repeatedly depicted as dimwitted and slow of understanding. Time and time again the disciples fail to understand Jesus' identity and mission. Time and time again the disciples fail to understand why Jesus came, why He had to die, why He had to be resurrected, and what it all meant.

## **2. Peter is called Satan by Jesus**

In Matthew 16, Jesus explains to the disciples that He must be killed then raised to life. Peter, lacking understanding, takes Jesus aside and rebukes him stating, "Never, Lord. This shall never happen to you." Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God but merely human concerns."

## **3. Peter denies knowing Jesus 3 times**

In Matthew 26, as Jesus is on trial before the Sanhedrin, Peter stands at a distance. Bystanders recognise Peter and begin to recall his association with Jesus. 3 times Peter denies knowing Jesus.

## **4. Paul rebukes Peter**

In Galatians 2 the apostle Paul rebukes Peter on a theological issue. If the New Testament writings are nothing but carefully concocted stories, why do we read about two apostles arguing over theology?

## **5. The disciples run away at the crucifixion**

In Mark 14 we read that the disciples succumb to cowardice and run away from the scene of Jesus' crucifixion out of fear. That's embarrassing. Why would they admit this?

## **6. The first witnesses at the tomb were women**

In Luke 24 we discover that the gospel writers acknowledged that the women were the first witnesses at the tomb. This is a highly significant admission and detail. In first-century Palestine, women had low status as citizens and legal witnesses. Their testimony was not considered on par with that of a man. If the empty tomb story were a lie or a product of legendary development written centuries later, it would've stated that men, not women, had discovered Jesus' empty tomb. Yet all four gospels state that the women were the first witnesses. Christian apologist Sean McDowell notes that, *"The fact that the disciples include women as the first witnesses to the empty tomb points to one thing – they were reporting the truth."*

## **7. After the resurrection, some still doubted**

In Matthew 28, as Jesus stands on the mountain with the disciples before his ascension and just before commanding them to go and make disciples of all nations, the account states that, *"When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted."* That's embarrassing. Even after Jesus' resurrection and triumph over death some still doubted. Why is this detail included if not true?

## **8. Jesus' own family thought he was insane**

In Mark 3, we read about how Jesus' own family thought he was "out of his mind". Many skeptics claim that the New



Testament writers invented the lie that Jesus was God. If so, why are they saying that his own family at one point tried to seize him because they thought he was insane?

## **9. Jesus was called a 'drunkard'**

Luke 7:34 reporting the words of Jesus states, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'"

## **10. Jesus was called 'demon-possessed'**

In Matthew 12 and Mark 3 Jesus is called demon-possessed by the Jewish religious leaders.

## **11. A prostitute wipes Jesus' feet**

In Luke 7:36-40 we read the account of Jesus having dinner at a pharisee's house when a previously immoral woman, apparently broken and regretful for the sinful life she had been living, comes to Jesus in worship, pouring perfume on his feet and wiping them with her hair. Christian apologist Frank Turek notes that this would've been a highly scandalous scene. Such actions by the woman could've easily been misunderstood as a sexual advance. Indeed, in the gospel account we read about the pharisees outrage at Jesus for not harshly dismissing the sinful woman.

## **12. Jesus' bloodline includes prostitutes/questionable women**

At the beginning of the gospel of Matthew we are

presented with Jesus' genealogy. Embarrassingly, Matthew includes two prostitutes/questionable women - Rahab and Tamar. If the gospel writers were making the whole Jesus story up, it is highly unreasonable to believe that these two questionable women were added to the messiah's bloodline. Matthew was simply reporting the truth, as embarrassing as it is.

## 4

# EXCRUCIATING TESTIMONY

The fourth reason why we can be confident that the New Testament is true, is because a number of the New Testament writers died for it. They were killed for sincerely believing and proclaiming that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the Messiah, and that he rose again after death.



## Christian apologist and historian Michael Licona notes that...



*"...after Jesus' death, the disciples endured persecution, and a number of them experienced martyrdom. The strength of their conviction indicates that they were not just claiming Jesus had appeared to them after rising from the dead. They really believed it. They willingly endangered themselves by publicly proclaiming the risen Christ."*

The martyrdom of the apostles is an historical fact. One which doesn't make any sense if the disciples were lying. Nobody dies for a lie, they know is a lie. Especially a lie which doesn't even secure some benefit or security for loved ones left behind. A person may die for a lie they sincerely believe is true. Throughout history there has been thousands and thousands of martyrs for the various world religions. However, the circumstances involving the death of the disciples was different. They were eyewitnesses. They were in a position to truly know whether the resurrection of Jesus was true or false. They claimed it really happened and they backed up their claims with their very lives.

# THE FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE MARTYRDOM OF KEY APOSTLES.



## Peter

Peter, the unofficial leader of the disciples, was crucified in Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero between AD 64 and 67. The earliest evidence of His martyrdom comes from the gospel of John (Chapter 21:18-19), Clement of Rome (1 Clement 5:1-4), and Ignatius (Letter to the Smyrneans 3:1-2).

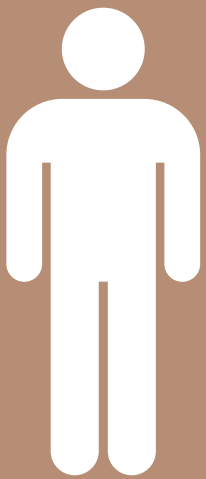


## Paul

The apostle Paul was initially a pharisee who actively persecuted Christians. However, following an encounter with the risen Jesus, Paul became a Christian. He later goes on to write approximately 50% of the New Testament. Paul's transformation and martyrdom is an extremely compelling piece of evidence in support of the truthfulness of the New Testament. Paul was beheaded in Rome during the reign of Emperor Nero between AD 64 and 67. The death and martyrdom of Paul is not explicitly stated in Scripture. However, there are hints in the book of Acts and 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

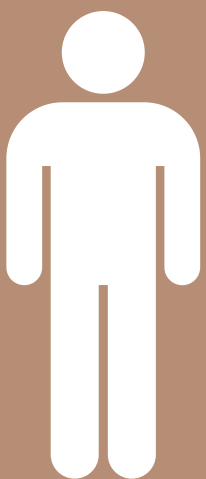


The first extra-biblical evidence is found in 1 Clement 5:5-7 in which Paul is described as suffering greatly for his faith and then being “set free from this world and transported up to the holy place, having become the greatest example of endurance.” Further early evidence comes from Ignatius (Letter to the Ephesians 12:2), Polycarp (Letter to the Philippians 9:1-2), and Irenaeus (Against Heresies 3.1.1).



### **James, son of Zebedee**

James, son of Zebedee, together with his brother John, and Peter, were among the earliest of Jesus' disciples, and had been with Him the longest. The scholarly consensus is that James, the brother of John, was killed in Judea in approximately 44 AD. The martyrdom of John was firmly entrenched in the early church. Acts 12:1-3 states that King Herod had James put to death with the sword.



### **James, brother of Jesus**

Like Paul, James the skeptical half-brother of Jesus, is a compelling figure. The gospel of Mark records that James thought his half-brother Jesus was insane. However, following the crucifixion, James had an encounter with the risen Jesus. James goes on to become

the leader of the Jerusalem church and is eventually stoned to death for his belief that Jesus is God. Evidence for the martyrdom of James comes from the Jewish historian Josephus in his *Antiquities*. According to this account, the high priest Ananus had James stoned to death for his belief that Jesus was God.



# 5

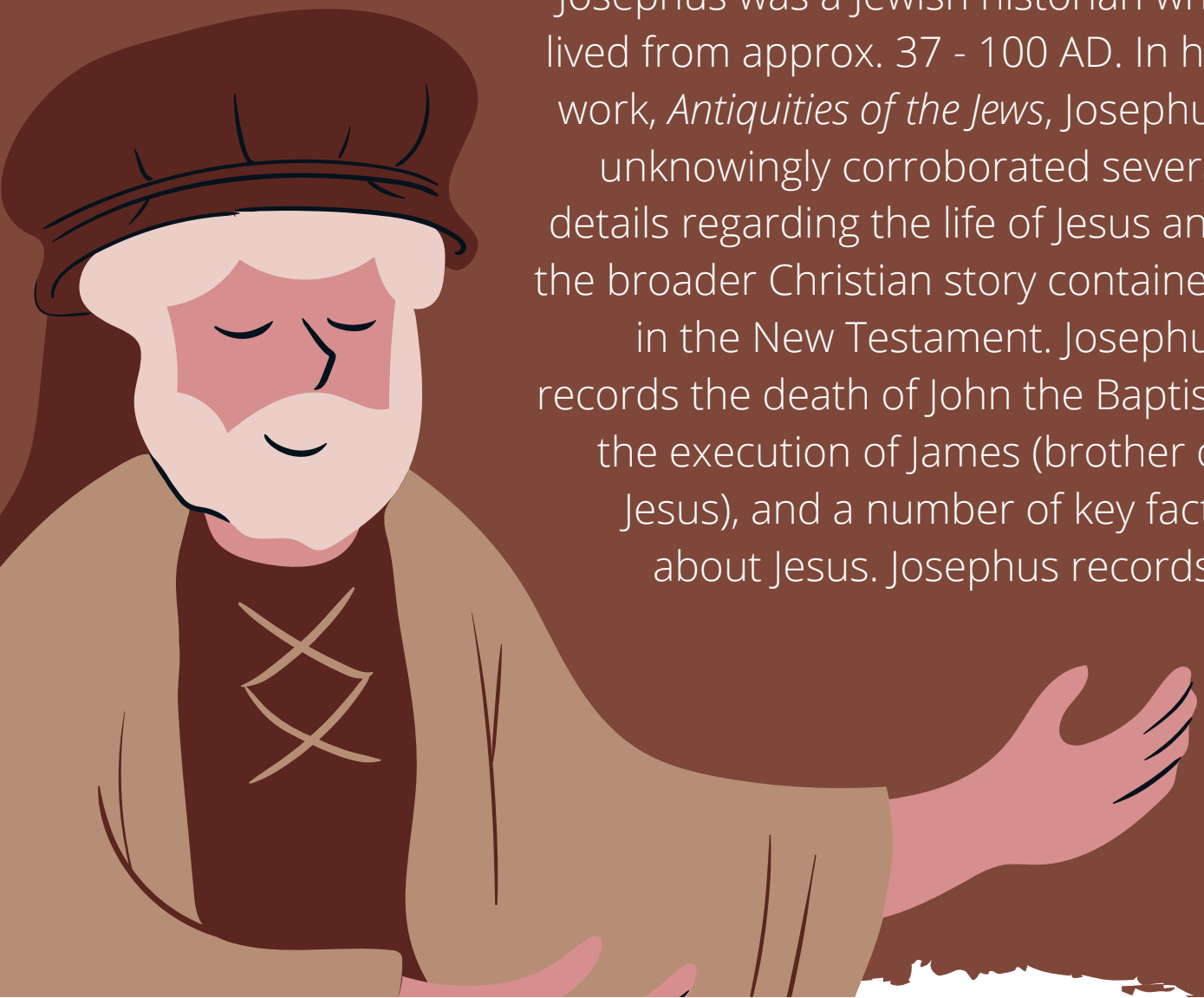
## EXTRA-BIBLICAL TESTIMONY

The fifth and final line of evidence in support of the truth of the New Testament is extra-biblical testimony. If the events recorded in the gospels and other New Testament documents actually occurred they must've impacted real people, communities, cultures and locations in history. So, are there any sources outside of the New Testament which corroborate the writings of the apostles?

### Josephus

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Josephus was a Jewish historian who lived from approx. 37 - 100 AD. In his work, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus unknowingly corroborated several details regarding the life of Jesus and the broader Christian story contained in the New Testament. Josephus records the death of John the Baptist, the execution of James (brother of Jesus), and a number of key facts about Jesus. Josephus records,





*“At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. 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 his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.”*

Shlomo Pines, *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and Its Implications* (Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities: Jerusalem, 1971)

**Christian apologist, J. Warner Wallace** notes that, *“From this text, we can conclude that Jesus lived, was a wise and virtuous teacher who reportedly demonstrated wondrous power, was condemned and crucified under Pilate, had followers who reported He appeared to them after His death on the cross, and was believed to be the Messiah.”*





# Thallus

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Thallus was a Samaritan historian who lived from approx. 5 - 60AD. Thallus wrote an expansive three-volume account of the history of the Mediterranean area in the middle of the first century (only 20 years after Jesus). Unfortunately, like many writings from the ancient world, his work is now lost to us. However, it was not lost to another historian by the name of Sextus Julius Africanus who lived from approx. 160 - 240 AD. Africanus wrote a text entitled *History of the World* in 221 AD. In this work Africanus quoted an important passage from Thallus' original account, in which he refers to the crucifixion of Jesus and the alleged darkness which was observed at the time of Jesus' death.

***'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.'***

Quoted in Ante-Nicene Christian Library:  
Translation of the Writings of the Fathers  
Down to AD 325, eds. Alexander Roberts and  
James Donaldson, vol. 9, Irenaeus, Vol. II -  
Hippolytus, Vol. II - Fragments of  
Third Century (Edinburgh:  
T & T Clark, 1870), 188.

Thallus, in his attempt to deny a supernatural explanation for the darkness, unknowingly corroborated the fact that Jesus was indeed crucified and that darkness covered the land when He died on the cross, just as recorded in the New Testament.

## Tacitus

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Cornelius Tacitus was a senator and historian of the Roman Empire who lived from approx. 56-117 AD. Among his works are the *Germania*, describing the Germanic tribes, the *Histories*, concerning the Roman Empire from 69-96 AD, and the later *Annals*, covering the history of the Roman Empire from 14-70 AD. Tacitus records several key facts in relation to the life of Jesus when describing Emperor Nero's response to a great fire in Rome, and Nero's claim that the Christians living in Rome were to blame.





*"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 Judea, 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."*

Cornelius Tacitus, Works of Cornelius Tacitus. Includes Agricola, The Annals, A Dialogue concerning Oratory, Germania and The Histories (Boston: MobileReference, 2009), Kindle edition, Kindle locations 6393-6397.

Tacitus unknowingly corroborated several details regarding the life and death of Jesus, including: that Jesus lived in Judea, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and had followers in Rome who were persecuted for their faith.

### **Other extra-biblical sources include:**

Greek physician Galen,  
Greek philosopher Celsus,  
Greek writer Phlegon,  
Syrian philosopher Mara Bar Serapion,  
Roman historian Suetonius,  
and specific accounts  
from the Jewish Talmud

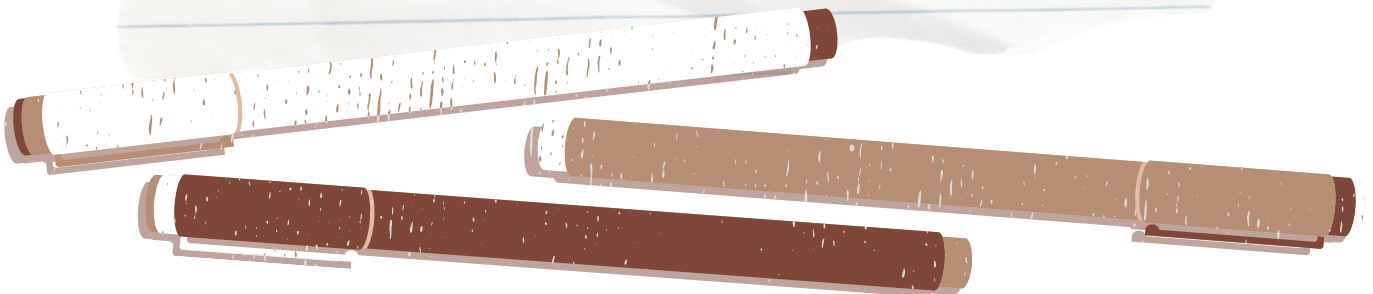
# SUMMARY

So, is the New Testament true?  
We can be confident that it is because of...

evidence

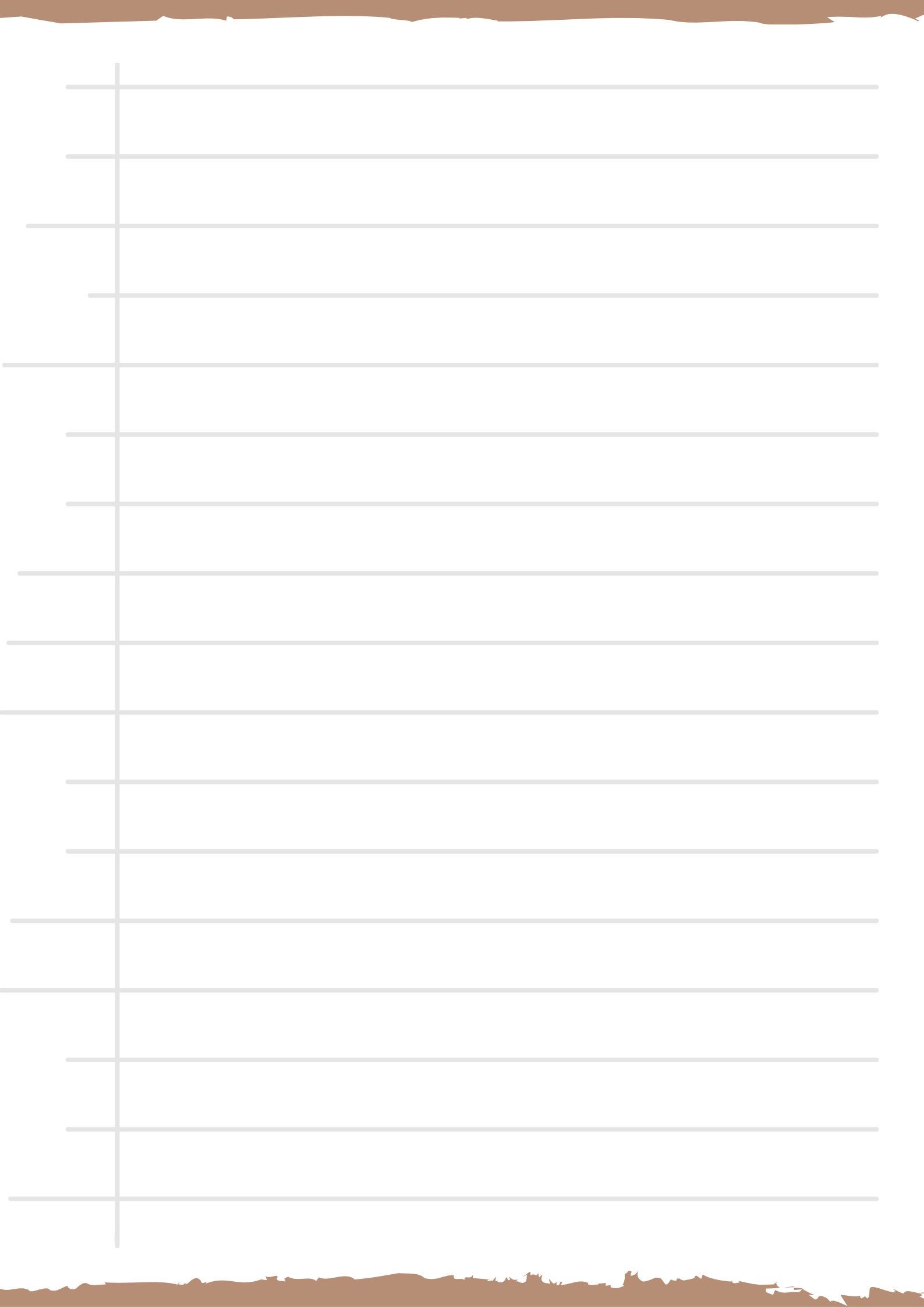
- (1) EARLY TESTIMONY,
- (2) EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY,
- (3) EMBARRASSING TESTIMONY,
- (4) EXCRUCIATING TESTIMONY,
- (5) EXTRA-BIBLICAL TESTIMONY.

Taken together, these five pieces of evidence/lines of reasoning point to the conclusion that the New Testament is true. We can be confident that the apostles accurately reported the truth about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.







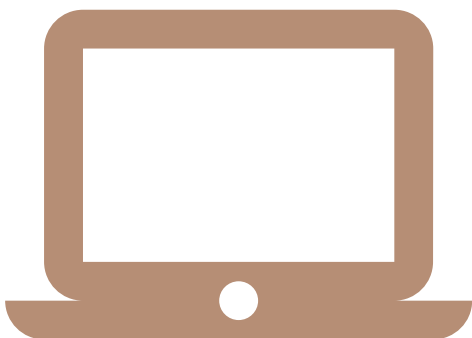




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