**Evidence for a Decision**

Is there sufficient evidence to warrant acceptance of the resurrection as true?

**34**But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. **35**Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. **36**Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. **37**After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. **38**Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail.**39**But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” Acts 5:34-39

Of all those dozens of movements, only one did not collapse after the death of the leader. Not only did it not collapse, it exploded! In the course of around 300 years, it had spread through the entire Roman empire.

Today I am presenting Evidence for a Decision – A Decision to Trust Christ

Consider:

1. Gospels & Acts as history, 2. Testimony Authentication, 3. Transformation Explosion

1. Consider the Gospels/Acts as history

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilledamong us, **2**just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.**3**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, **4**so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. Luke 1:1-4

* Luke is using the Historical method – a set of guidelines that historians use to research and write about the past.
* Some say the Gospels are legends: CS. Lewis who was a literary scholar long before a Christian said:

“I have been reading poems, romances, vision literature, legends, and myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know none of them are like this. Of this text, there are only two possible views. Either this is reportage...or else, some unknown writer...without known predecessors or successors, suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern novelistic, realistic narrative.... The reader who doesn’t see this has simply not learned how to read.” CS Lewis

* Luke examines things handed down, talks to eyewitness, and carefully investigates everything from the beginning. Scholars largely agree the Gospels are Graeco biography
1. Consider: Testimony authentication

Something has happened; what do we do? We ask for testimony! We have at least three kinds: eyewitness, embarrassing, and hostile. These weave together and become extremely strong.

- Eyewitness – people who saw something

* + 1. Simon of Cyrene, helped Jesus carry his cross (Luke 23:26). Mark says he was the father of Rufus and Alexander.

**21**A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. Mark 15:21

* + 1. Joseph of Arimathea who assumed responsibility for the burial of Jesus after the crucifixion was rich, part of the council, and not in agreement. He asked Pilate to take down the body so he could bury him in his own tomb. Luke 23:50-56
		2. Mary Magdalene, Joana, Mary the mother of James were the first to the empty tomb and to see the risen Lord. Luke 24:9
		3. Peter. Luke 24:11
		4. Others in the Gospel of Luke and also Paul whom Luke traveled with, who had seen the Risen Lord.

“If you were to call each one of the witnesses to a court of law to be cross-examined for just fifteen minutes and you went around the clock without a break, it would take you from breakfast on Monday until dinner on Friday to hear them all. After listening to 129 straight hours of eyewitness testimony, who could possibly walk away unconvinced?” Lee Strobel

- Embarrassing Testimony - Inconvenient and unflattering details that are in these accounts that do not fit expectations of a fabricated account.

* + 1. How foolish the disciples look in the Gospels – All the disciples ran away and deserted him. (Mark 14:50) Peter followed at a distance and denied Jesus 3 times.
		2. Women were first witnesses of the empty tomb and Resurrected Jesus. In ancient societies, as you may know, women were marginalized and the testimony of women was never given much credence.
			1. Celsus, a Greek philosopher who lived in the second century A.D., was highly antagonistic toward Christianity and wrote a number of works listing arguments against it. One of the arguments he believed most telling went like this: Christianity can’t be true, because the written accounts of the resurrection are based on the testimony of women—and we all know women are hysterical. And many of Celsus’ readers agreed: For them, that was a major problem.

- Hostile Testimony

**11**While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. **12**When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money,**13**telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ **14**If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” **15**So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day. Matthew 28:11-15

* 1. The guards saw the empty tomb and went into the city to report what had happened. Corroboration that the tomb was empty by those who were hostile to the movement of Jesus – proposal of the story.

"This stolen body theory would run totally contrary to all we know of the apostles: their ethical teaching, the quality of their lives. Nor would it begin to explain their dramatic transformation from dejected and dispirited escapists into witnesses whom no opposition could muzzle." JND Anderson University of London

1. Consider: Transformation Explosion

- Changed lives: Peter, James and Paul

* + 1. Peter – denied Christ and yet become the first leader of the church.
		2. James – the half-brother of Jesus – who thought Jesus had mental problems.
		3. Paul – the oppressor and murderer of Christians became that greatest proponent for the spread of Christianity.

- The Exponential Growth of Christianity

* + 1. Tacitus, a Roman Senator and historian wrote about 25 years after Christ. Because of the fire in Rome, in which Nero the Emperor blamed Christians, Tacitus wrote, “Momentum was halted, almost squelched, but again broke out not only in Judea but in Rome as well.” (Hostile Testimony)

**Next Steps:**

Make your decision to follow Christ.

Dig into this more!

Summary of the Historical Method - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_method>

Tacitus: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tacitus_on_Christ#cite_note-12>

Essay on the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/bodily-resurrection-jesus/>

Foremost Scholar on Resurrection Gary Habermas Lecture –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay_Db4RwZ_M>

Tim Keller article on the Resurrection of Jesus - <https://www.relevantmagazine.com/faith/tim-keller-resurrection/>

Hope in Times of fear, Tim Keller - <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0525560793?tag=christtoday-20&linkCode=ogi&th=1&psc=1>