

How Do Eyewitnesses Support New Testament Reliability?
A Study of the Eyewitness Evidence Corroborating the New Testament

- “The number of eyewitnesses supporting or writing the New Testament accounts is large. . . . No like testimony is possessed for any event from ancient times.”¹
- “[I]n the period up to the writing of the Gospels, gospel traditions were connected with **named and known eyewitnesses**, people who had **heard the teaching of Jesus from his lips** and committed it to memory, people who had witnessed the events of his ministry, death and resurrection . . .”²

I. Overview

Eyewitness testimony provides compelling evidence not only for historians, but also courtrooms. The New Testament explicitly relies upon eyewitness testimony that verifies the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, no ancient document comes close to the depth and breadth of eyewitness proof found in the New Testament.

This analysis of New Testament eyewitness testimony addresses three primary issues:

- What Eyewitness Proof Appears in the New Testament?
- Does this Eyewitness Testimony Meet Historical & Legal Standards?
- How Strong Is This Eyewitness Evidence in the New Testament?

II. What Eyewitness Proof Appears in the New Testament?

Proof of New Testament eyewitness testimony comes from multiple sources, any one of which provides compelling evidence:

- (1) the plain language of the New Testament itself;
- (2) the earliest records about the New Testament;
- (3) the legal experts on eyewitness testimony; and
- (4) the top scholars on New Testament eyewitness testimony.

Even standing alone, the multiple eyewitness testimonies make the New Testament the most reliable, objectively verifiable record of any ancient documents in history. When combined with additional evidence to follow in later analyses, Christians have an unmatched record for carrying out the Great Commission “to make disciples of all the nations.”

¹ Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, p. 314 (1976).

² Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, p. 93 (2017) (bold added).

A. What Do the Scriptures Say?

By its plain terms, the New Testament explicitly relies upon eyewitness testimony for the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- “and you will **testify** also, because you have been with Me **from the beginning.**” John 15:27 (NASB) (bold added).³
- “just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were **eyewitnesses** and servants of the word.” Luke 1:2 (bold added).⁴
- “we were **eyewitnesses** of His majesty.” 2 Peter 1:16 (bold added).
- “And he who **has seen** has testified, and his testimony is true.” John 19:35 (bold added); *see also* John 21:24 (“testifying to these things”).
- “Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have **accompanied us all the time** that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us – beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us – one of these must become a **witness** with us of His resurrection.” Acts 1:21-22 (bold added).⁵

B. What Do the Earliest Christian Records Say?

Following the publication of the New Testament, the most ancient Christian scholars and records expressly recognized eyewitness testimony as a cornerstone of proof.

Ancient Sources Confirming Gospel Authorship. More than ten ancient sources unanimously confirm the authors of the Gospels as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These sources range from John the Elder (late 1st century) and Papias (early 2nd century) to Irenaeus (AD 174-189) and Clement of Alexandria (AD 195-203).⁶

- Richard Bauckham. “[N]o evidence exists that these Gospels were ever known by other names.”⁷

³ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, p. 389 (2017) (John 15:27 “closely linked to a requirement of eyewitness presence at all the events of the history of Jesus”); *see also id.*, pp. 115-16.

⁴ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 389-91 (2017) (Luke specifies the qualifications to be an eyewitness (Greek: “autoptai”) with “firsthand contact with the events of Jesus’ history”).

⁵ *See* 1 Peter 5:1 (“witness of the sufferings of Christ”); 1 Corinthians 15:3-9 (multiple witnesses to Resurrection); *see also* Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 297-98 (2017) (witnesses & references); Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, p. 145 (2009) (list); Nabeel Qureshi, *No God But One*, p. 189 (2016) (references); Lee Strobel, *The Case for Easter*, pp.73-74 (2003) (references).

⁶ Simon Gathercole, “The Alleged Anonymity of the Canonical Gospels,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 69 No. 2, p. 473 (2018); Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, pp. 25-27 (2007).

⁷ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 303 (2017).

- Benjamin Shaw. “In the ancient world, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were the *only* names attributed to the four canonical Gospels.”⁸
- Martin Hengel. “What is striking here is the **complete unanimity** over the four titles of the Gospels in a distribution extending throughout the whole of the Roman Empire towards the end of the second century, from Lyons to Carthage and as far as the Egyptian Chora.”⁹

In fact, no one in the first couple of hundred years after the Resurrection even alleged, much less proved, that someone else wrote the Gospels.¹⁰ Thus, eyewitnesses wrote Matthew and John.

Peter as Mark’s Source. Ancient sources confirmed Peter as Mark’s primary source.¹¹ Modern scholars agree.¹² Thus, Peter, Matthew, and John all served as eyewitnesses.

Ancient Confirmation of Eyewitness Sources. Ancient records and early Church leaders found the Gospels to be supported by eyewitness testimony.¹³ For example, Irenaeus “linked each New Testament Gospel to an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord.”¹⁴ Thus, the earliest Christian leaders and records trace the Gospel sources back to eyewitness testimony regarding the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

C. What Do the Legal Experts Say?

Legal experts who really know eyewitness testimony have cited such testimony as factually supporting the New Testament, particularly the Gospels and Acts. No one with comparable legal credentials has rebutted these legal professionals who have analyzed eyewitness testimony in the New Testament.

⁸ Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy*, p. 46 (2024) (italics in original).

⁹ Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 66 (2003); *see also id.*, p. 80 (“the surprising constancy and unity of the titles of the Gospels”).

¹⁰ Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 66 (2003); Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy*, p. 46 (2024); Simon Gathercole, “The Alleged Anonymity of the Canonical Gospels,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 69 No. 2, p. 474 (2018).

¹¹ F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable*, p. 32 (1981) (Papias); Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 2 (Irenaeus) & p. 50 (Justin) (2003); *see also* 1 Peter 5:13 (Mark & Peter).

¹² Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 210 (2017); Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, pp. 8, 50-52, 59, 82 (2003); Joshua Pelletier, “The Modern-Day Scholarly Opinion of Dating Mark’s Gospel” (master’s thesis), (April 9, 2020), pp. 32-38, *cited in* Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 109, n. 42.

¹³ Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 2 (Irenaeus), p. 50 (Justin), p. 69 (Papias) (2003); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 12-18, 202-03 (2017) (Papias); Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, pp. 109-10 n.1 (Muratorian Fragment on Luke and John), pp. 147-48 (2007) (defending reliability of Papias).

¹⁴ Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, p. 110 n.3 (2007) *citing* Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, 3.11. Similarly, around AD 200, Tertullian of Carthage stated that the Gospels either came from the apostles (Matthew and John) or relied upon the apostles as sources. *See* Tertullian of Carthage, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.2 *cited in* Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, p. 110 n.5 (2007).

Mark Lanier (trial lawyer). As a nationally recognized trial lawyer who has won multiple billion-dollar cases before juries, Mark Lanier knows plenty about eyewitness testimony.¹⁵ In his book *Christianity on Trial*, he explicitly assessed the Gospels as based on eyewitness testimony.¹⁶

John Mauck (trial attorney). With more than 40 years of zoning and land use litigation, John Mauck had ample experience with eyewitnesses.¹⁷ In his book *Paul on Trial*, he explained that “witness” is “used throughout *Acts* in its judicial courtroom sense of one who is called to testify.”¹⁸

Warner Wallace (former LAPD homicide detective). Spending most of his detective career investigating cold-case homicides for the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), Warner Wallace built his cases by evaluating the reliability of witness statements and verifying them against other available evidence.

I had interviewed hundreds (if not thousands) of eyewitnesses and suspects. I had become familiar with the nature of eyewitness statements, and I understood how testimony was evaluated in a court of law. Something about the Gospels struck me as more than mythological storytelling. **The Gospels resembled ancient eyewitness accounts.**¹⁹

Lee Strobel (Yale law graduate & former crime reporter). As a journalist covering Chicago crimes and the Cook County criminal courts for the *Chicago Tribune*, Lee Strobel had ample exposure to eyewitness accounts.²⁰ In his book *The Case for Christ*, he devoted the first two chapters to “Eyewitness Evidence” and “Testing the Eyewitness Evidence” where his expert (Dr. Craig Blomberg) validated the Gospels as reliable eyewitness testimony.²¹

Simon Greenleaf (Harvard Law professor). As a professor of law at Harvard (1833-48) and the author of the landmark three-volume work, *A Treatise of the Law of Evidence*, Simon

¹⁵ Lanier Law Firm website <https://www.lanierlawfirm.com/case-results/>

¹⁶ W. Mark Lanier, *Christianity on Trial: A Lawyer Examines the Christian Faith*, pp. 193-96 (2014).

¹⁷ Mauck Baker website <https://mauckbaker.com/john-mauck/>

¹⁸ John Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, p. xv (2001); *id.*, pp. 43, 47, 52, 62.

¹⁹ J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, pp. 19-20 (2023) (bold added).

²⁰ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, pp. 14-15 (background); *see, e.g.*, pp. 9-13 (Dixon case), 19-20 (Carter testimony), pp. 40-41 (McCullough testimony), pp. 58-9 (Ford Pinto), pp. 78-80 (Aleman trial), pp. 99-100 (McDonald case), pp. 119-20 (Moss case) (2016).

²¹ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, pp. 19-57 (interviews with Dr. Craig Blomberg) (2016).

Greenleaf knew and taught the law of evidence governing eyewitnesses. Based upon this experience and expertise, he concluded that the Gospels rested upon eyewitness testimony.²²

In summary, these legal experts – trial lawyers, homicide detective, crime reporter, and law professor – know how to review and analyze eyewitness testimony. And they have done so with respect to the New Testament eyewitnesses. In the absence of any real rebuttal by legal experts with comparable credentials, these legal assessments have the winning edge.

D. What Do the Top Eyewitness Scholars Say?

After analyzing the New Testament, many major scholars have confirmed that eyewitness testimony laid a factual foundation for Jesus' life, death and Resurrection.²³ As Dr. Craig Blomberg stated, "But in any event, the gospel [of John] is obviously based on **eyewitness material**, as are the other three gospels."²⁴

Dr. Gary Habermas stands at the top tier of scholars on the Resurrection. In his two-volume work *On the Resurrection*, he provides the most current (2024) and comprehensive (over 1,800 pages) defense of the Resurrection.²⁵ In the first volume, he assesses the historical standards governing evidence and eyewitness testimony.²⁶ Then he cites extensive eyewitness evidence in the New Testament, such as the following:

- Generally. New Testament "largely written by, under the general control of, or made good use of eyewitness sources and testimony."²⁷
- Blind Bartimaeus Healing. "derived at least in part from eyewitness testimony."²⁸

²² Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists: The Gospels Examined by the Rules of Evidence*, pp. 7-8, 12 (bold added) (originally 1874; reprinted 1995); *id.*, pp. 21 (Matthew as eyewitness), 23 (Mark based on Peter's eyewitness testimony), 25-26 (Luke based on investigation and eyewitness accounts), 26-27 (John as eyewitness); see also Nancy Kippenhan, "Seeking Truth on the Other Side of the Wall: Greenleaf's Evangelists Meet the Federal Rules, Naturalism, and Judas," *Liberty University Faculty Publications and Presentations*, p. 5 (Fall 2010) (concurring with Greenleaf's conclusion that the Gospel testimony meets the evidentiary tests under the Federal Rules of Evidence).

²³ See, e.g., Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy*, pp. 59-60 (2024); Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, pp. 145 (2009); Nabeel Qureshi, *No God But One*, p. 189 (2016); Darrell Bock, "Response to James Dunn," in James K. Beilby & Paul Eddy, eds., *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*, pp. 247, 251 (2009); Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, pp. 107-20 (2007); Lee Strobel, *The Case for Easter*, pp. 73-74 (2003).

²⁴ Craig Blomberg interview in Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 24 (2016) (emphasis added).

²⁵ Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences* (2024); Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Refutations* (2024).

²⁶ Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 23-26, 37-38, 44-47, 51-52, 83-86 (2024).

²⁷ *Id.*, pp. 117-18.

²⁸ *Id.*, p. 259.

- Deaf Healing. “early and eyewitness testimony.”²⁹
- Feeding 5,000. “independent eyewitness recollection.”³⁰
- Gospel Women. Mary Magdalene and the women as “early witnesses.”³¹
- Paul, Peter & James. “solid eyewitness foundation” for earliest creed.³²

In addition, Dr. Richard Bauckham’s 615-page book, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, received Dr. Habermas’ favorable review as a “sophisticated” and “most noteworthy” work that “may well be the single best book of all here” on Gospel reliability.³³ Just as his title says, Dr. Bauckham finds ample eyewitness testimony in the Gospels. Examples include:

- Four Gospels. Eyewitness testimony supported all four Gospels.³⁴
- Gospel Women. Mary Magdalene and other women served as eyewitnesses.³⁵
- Jesus’ Family. James, Jude and other relatives were eyewitnesses.³⁶
- Healed People. Those healed by Jesus (Jairus’ daughter, Bartimaeus, and Lazarus) were eyewitnesses.³⁷

Without a work of comparable depth, breadth, and scholarship, the skeptics lack an effective rebuttal to Dr. Bauckham’s careful analysis of the “Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony.”

²⁹ *Id.*, p. 260.

³⁰ *Id.*, p. 267 citing P. W. Barnett, “The Feeding of the Multitude,” in Wenham and Blomberg, *Miracles of Jesus*, pp. 273-93.

³¹ Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 438 (2024).

³² *Id.*, p. 454; *see also* pp. 46, 440 (Paul), 438 (Matthias), 455 (John, Peter, James & Paul).

³³ Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 271, 46 n. 27, and 110 (2024).

³⁴ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 6-8, 12-21, 29-30, 39-55, 114-116 (witnesses “from the beginning”), 116-124 (Luke), 124-27 (Mark & Peter), 127-29 (John & Peter), 129-131 (women), 145-148 (named witnesses), 155-180 (Mark & Peter), 183-201 (anonymous witnesses in Mark later named in John), 202-239 (Mark, Peter, Matthew & John), 260-99 (eyewitness testimony & controlled transmission), 297-98 (eyewitnesses in Acts and Paul’s epistles), 319-357 (eyewitness memory & reliability), 358-83 (John) (2017).

³⁵ *Id.*, pp. xiii-xiv, 47-51, 129-31; *see also* Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, pp. 189, 193, 262 (2002).

³⁶ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. xiii, 46 (2017); *see also* Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (1990).

³⁷ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 40 (2017).

III. Does This Eyewitness Evidence Meet Historical and Legal Standards?

In evaluating historical or legal sources, experts generally consider the following factors bearing upon reliability: (1) early sources; (2) real eyewitnesses; and (3) multiple sources.³⁸

A. How Early Are the New Testament Sources?

Earlier sources are generally better than later ones. The New Testament meets this standard better than any other ancient record.³⁹

Gospels Dating. Due to the interconnected nature of the New Testament, the most reliable analyses assess dates for the New Testament as a whole – *i.e.*, all 27 Books.⁴⁰ In the last 50 years, the only such analyses date the Gospels within the lifetime of key eyewitnesses.⁴¹

Gospels	Jonathan Bernier	Dr. John A. T. Robinson
Matthew	AD 45-59	AD 50
Mark	AD 42-45 ⁴²	AD 45
Luke	AD 59	AD 60
John	AD 60-70	AD 65

During these time periods, the key apostles remained alive, including Peter, Paul, James (brother of Jesus), and John.⁴³

Acts Dating. The most comprehensive historical and legal analyses date the writing of Acts between AD 61-63.⁴⁴ Given that Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke before Acts, then the Gospel must be dated prior to AD 61-63. And given that Luke draws passages from the Gospel

³⁸ See e.g., Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 44-52 (2024); Justin Bass, *The Bedrock of Christianity*, pp. 28-29 (2020); Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy*, pp. 65-66 (2024); Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist*, pp. 40-42 (2012); Norman Geisler & Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, p. 231 (2004).

³⁹ Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, p. 314 (1976) (“No like testimony is possessed for any event from ancient times.”); see also “How Does the New Testament Stack Up Against Other Ancient Records.”

⁴⁰ Jonathan Bernier, *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament*, p. 1 (2022); see also *Arizona v. United States*, 575 F.2d 855, 216 Ct. Cl. 221, 235-6 (1978) (document “must be considered as a whole”).

⁴¹ Jonathan Bernier, *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament*, pp. 277-78 (2022) (comparing the Bernier and Robinson dating of Gospels).

⁴² See also Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p.108, n. 41 (citing “two agnostic New Testament scholars who date Mark approximately AD 40 for different reasons.”); Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 5, n. 35 (2003) (ancient chronology, *Chronicon Hieronym*, indicates that “Mark composed his Gospel in Rome ‘ten years after the ascension.’”).

⁴³ See Karl Armstrong, *Dating Acts in Its Jewish and Greco-Roman Contexts*, p. 157 n. 2 (2021) (deaths of Peter around AD 64, Paul around AD 63-64, and James around AD 62).

⁴⁴ See Karl Armstrong, *Dating Acts in Its Jewish and Greco-Roman Contexts*, p. 158 (2021); John Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, p. 45 (2001); Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, p. 376-408 (1990).

of Mark, then Mark must have preceded Luke, thus corroborating the analyses of Jonathan Bernier and John A. T. Robinson above for early Gospel dating.⁴⁵

Eyewitnesses' Lifetimes. The top scholars agree that the New Testament authors wrote during the lifetime of the eyewitnesses who could still vouch for the facts as recorded:

- Richard Bauckham. “The Gospels were written within the living memory of the events they recount.”⁴⁶
- Martin Hengel. The “personal link of the Jesus tradition with particular tradents [people responsible for preserving the eyewitness tradition], or more precisely their **memory** and missionary preaching . . . is **historically undeniable**.”⁴⁷
- Craig Blomberg. “All of this adds up to a strong case that all three [Synoptic] Gospels were composed within about thirty years of Christ’s death (probably A.D. 30) and well within the period of time when people could check up on the accuracy of the facts they contain.”⁴⁸

If eyewitnesses disagreed with the written accounts, they had a powerful reason to object – *i.e.*, the **truth**. But no record exists of any eyewitnesses disputing the New Testament facts.

B. Does the New Testament Rely on Real Eyewitnesses?

To be a real eyewitness, a person must have firsthand knowledge of the event at issue.⁴⁹ The following Scripture is a textbook example of the historical and legal standards governing eyewitness testimony:

What was from the beginning, what we have **heard**, what we have **seen** with our eyes, what we have **looked at** and **touched** with hands, concerning the Word of Life – [1 John 1:1 (NASB) (bold added)].

As taught by the great law professor (Irving Younger) who trained generations of litigators, the key requirement for eyewitness testimony is: “what did you see or hear or smell or

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, pp. 14-17 (2016).

⁴⁶ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 7 (2017) (bold added).

⁴⁷ Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 143 (2000) (bold added) quoted in Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 7 (2017).

⁴⁸ Craig Blomberg, “Where Do We Start Studying Jesus?” *Jesus Under Fire*, p. 29 (1995) quoted in Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, pp. 143 (2009); see also Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, p. 17 (2016).

⁴⁹ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 389-91 (2017) (Luke specifies the qualifications to be an eyewitness (Greek: “autoptai”) with “firsthand contact with the events of Jesus’ history”).

touch or taste?”⁵⁰ Similarly, Federal Rule of Evidence 602 expressly recognizes that a witness may testify about matters of “personal knowledge” which may be proved by the “witness’s own testimony.” Thus, the plain language of the Scriptures meets both the legal and historical standards for eyewitness testimony.

C. Do Multiple Eyewitnesses and Sources Confirm the New Testament?

For both historians and trial lawyers, more evidence is generally better than less. The New Testament readily meets this factor with a wealth of evidence supporting its facts.

Multiple Eyewitnesses. The New Testament witnesses range from over a dozen **named** eyewitnesses to hundreds of **unnamed** eyewitnesses.

- Richard Bauckham. Identifying more than a dozen **named** eyewitnesses by verse in Acts alone.⁵¹
- Norman Geisler. Listing more than a dozen eyewitnesses by name and hundreds more unnamed in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles.⁵²
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-9. Identifying eyewitnesses by name (Peter, James, & Paul), by position (12 disciples plus “apostles”), and by number (500).

Multiple Sources. The New Testament includes a multitude of sources, ranging from the Gospels (including underlying written sources), Acts, Paul’s letters, Peter’s letters, John’s letters, and Jude’s letter. As an example, ancient historian Paul Maier identifies “at least *seven* ancient sources” for the Resurrection.⁵³ In fact, these seven sources contain many times more eyewitnesses to the Resurrection – the women, Jesus’ relatives, the disciples (plus Matthias), and others.⁵⁴

IV. How Strong Is The Eyewitness Evidence in the New Testament?

In both history and the courtroom, eyewitness testimony represents a fundamental type of evidence. This section addresses three questions:

1. Why does eyewitness testimony matter?

⁵⁰ Irving Younger, “No. 1: The Art of Cross-Examination,” *American Bar Association (ABA) The Litigation Monograph Series*, p. 3 (1976).

⁵¹ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 297-98 (2017).

⁵² Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, p. 314 (1976).

⁵³ Paul Maier, *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church*, p. 197 (1998) (italics in original).

⁵⁴ See, e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 46, 151, 453, 438, 440, 454-55 (2024); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 6-8, 12-21, 29-30, 39-55, 116-31, 145-148, 155-180, 183-201, 202-239 (2017).

2. How many eyewitnesses are needed?
3. What is the standard of proof – *i.e.*, how much proof?

As discussed below, eyewitness testimony is powerful evidence, even if based upon a single witness whose testimony is merely probable (*i.e.*, more likely than not).

1. Why Does Eyewitness Testimony Matter?

Many types of evidence – oral testimony, documents, or even circumstantial proof – may be used by historians, lawyers, or both. Eyewitness testimony is powerful:

- “the **strongest** evidence possible.” [Dr. Gary Habermas].⁵⁵
- “the **best** relevant evidence.” [Historian David Hackett Fischer].⁵⁶
- “**best** evidence . . . from eyewitnesses.” [Sean McDowell].⁵⁷
- “evidence that the historian should **not discard**.” [Dr. Richard Bauckham].⁵⁸
- “**strongest** evidences that these events *did* happen.” [Dr. Timothy Paul Jones].⁵⁹

Neither historians nor judges can rationally ignore or suppress eyewitness testimony. To the contrary, any doubts must be resolved by admitting such testimony into evidence.⁶⁰

2. How Many Eyewitnesses Are Needed?

Quite simply, a single eyewitness can suffice. As stated by Paul Maier (Professor of Ancient History):

⁵⁵ Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 38, 45 (2024) (bold added).

⁵⁶ David Hackett Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies*, p. 62 (1970) cited in Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 45 (2024) (bold added).

⁵⁷ Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, p. 29 (2008) (bold added).

⁵⁸ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 9 (2017) (bold added).

⁵⁹ Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Jesus*, p. 109 (2007) (italics in original; bold added).

⁶⁰ For the Gospels, such evidence is “relevant” when it has “any tendency” to prove a fact as more probable than not. Federal Rule of Evidence (FED. R. EVID.) 402. The rules favor admission of such evidence unless its value is outweighed by “danger of unfair prejudice” – a standard that skeptics cannot meet. FED. R. EVID. 403; see *United States v. Dennis*, 625 F.2d 782, 797 (8th Cir. 1980) (general rule is that court should favor admission of evidence); see Nancy Kippenhan, “Seeking Truth on the Other Side of the Wall: Greenleaf’s Evangelists Meet the Federal Rules, Naturalism, and Judas,” *Liberty University Faculty Publications and Presentations*, p. 7 (Fall 2010) citing Federal Rules and caselaw above.

Many facts from antiquity rest on just one ancient source, while two or three sources in agreement generally **render the fact unimpeachable**.⁶¹

As a practical matter, a number of public decisions have turned upon the trial testimony of a single witness on the pivotal issue.

- Homicide Case. After the defendant (Elijah Baptist) killed the other witnesses, Leo Carter testified despite having “a .38-caliber slug in his skull.” Based on his testimony as the only surviving eyewitness, Leo Carter provided the evidence to convict the defendant and two accomplices for murder.⁶²
- Robbery. After the defendant punched and robbed Jerry Strickland at night, the defense team tried to raise doubts about the identification of the suspect. Based upon several factors (height, shape, facial features) that Mr. Strickland saw before losing his glasses, he identified the defendant as the robber and the jury convicted.⁶³
- Manufacturing Efficiency. In a \$15 million Government claim against a defense contractor, the contractor’s only technical witness (former head of manufacturing) testified about how a 300% production ramp-up impacted manufacturing and labor efficiency. In rejecting the Government’s claim, the judge specifically (and favorably) cited the manufacturing representative’s testimony.⁶⁴

With more than a dozen named witnesses (and hundreds of unnamed witnesses), the New Testament not only far surpasses other ancient records, but its facts should be considered relevant and admissible, if not “unimpeachable.”

3. What is the Standard of Proof?

How much evidence is enough to prove a fact?⁶⁵ Neither historians nor lawyers must prove absolute certainty. Instead, the question is whether the fact is “probable.”

- Historical Standard. Historians do not seek “absolute certainty,” but ask whether a fact is “probable.”⁶⁶

⁶¹ Paul Maier, *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church*, p. 197 (1998) (bold added); see also Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 46 (2024).

⁶² Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, pp. 19-20 (2016).

⁶³ Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, pp. 75-6 (2023).

⁶⁴ *Alloy Surfaces Co., Inc.*, ASBCA No. 59625, 20-1 BCA ¶ 37,574 (2020).

⁶⁵ The evidentiary standard in a criminal trial (“beyond a reasonable doubt”) is higher than a civil trial, but our objective here is not to try Pontius Pilate (or anyone else) for murder.

⁶⁶ Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 23-24 (2024).

- Legal Standard. Under the “preponderance of evidence” standard, a party must offer “the stronger evidence, however slight the edge may be.”⁶⁷

In other words, even a tiny advantage in proof (*e.g.*, 51% vs. 49%) can make a fact “probable,” thus establishing a winning “preponderance” of evidence

The United States Supreme Court has held that when one party brings evidence to the dispute, the second party cannot respond with unsupported allegations or denials.⁶⁸ Historians apply the same evidentiary test: evidentiary facts are conceded if not challenged with facts to the contrary.⁶⁹ Thus, skeptics lacking hard facts have a losing argument, failing to refute the overwhelming eyewitness proof supporting the reliability and authenticity of the New Testament.

V. Conclusion

The New Testament comes with multi-layered evidence from its many eyewitnesses. In tandem, these big proofs build an overwhelming case validating the historical and factual accuracy of the New Testament. Compared with other ancient records and works, the New Testament has no equals in the depth and breadth of eyewitness proof establishing its historical truth and authenticity.

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⁶⁷ *Black’s Law Dictionary* (2009); *see also* Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute (2023): “the burden of proof is met when the party with the burden convinces the fact-finder [*e.g.*, judge] that there is a greater than 50% chance that the claim is true”; FED. R. EVID. 402 (evidence is “relevant” when it has “any tendency” to prove a fact as more probable than not); David Z. Bodenheimer, *Defective Pricing Handbook*, p. 298 (2025).

⁶⁸ *Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 256 (1986) (opposing party must offer “significant probative evidence”).

⁶⁹ Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 25 (2024) (an event established by research is a proven fact when uncontested by evidence).