

**Power of Eyewitness Testimony for Gospel Reliability:  
A Trial Lawyer's Review of the Historical & Objective Evidence**

**I. Overview**

Eyewitness testimony provides compelling evidence not only for historians, but also courtrooms. The Gospels and Acts explicitly rely 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 Gospels and Acts.

This analysis of the eyewitness testimony in the Gospels and Acts addresses three primary issues:

- Why Seek Proof Supporting the Gospels and Acts?
- What Eyewitness Proof Appears in the New Testament?
- Why Are the Skeptics Wrong?

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

**II. Why Seek Proof Supporting the Gospels?**

Some ask why historical proof matters when we are saved by faith alone.<sup>1</sup> The answer is simple: for many people, proof has been a stepping-stone to faith.

**A. Jesus' Ministry with Proof**

In his ministry, Jesus sometimes employed proof in support of His message in speaking to the apostles and others.

“To these [apostles] He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs. . .” [Acts 1:3 (NASB)]

“Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.” [John 14:11]

*See also* John 20:27 (Jesus inviting Thomas to touch Him and believe). Thus, using tangible and objective proof to bring others to belief and faith is consistent with Jesus' own ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> James Beilby & Paul Eddy, eds., *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*, p. 33 (2009) quoting Timothy Luke Johnson; *see also* Ephesians 2:8 (“by grace you have been saved through faith”).

## B. Proof in Today's World

Proof works. In fact, atheists have become Christians after investigating the evidence proving the reliability and authenticity of the Gospels. Former homicide detective Warner Wallace explained how “following evidence” paved his path from atheism to Christian faith and salvation:

Isn't true faith *blind*? Can someone come to a “saving faith” by following *evidence*? . . . But this book *is* my “salvation story.” It describes the **evidential journey** I took to become a follower of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Others have followed a similar path, investigating the evidence on the way to becoming Christians.

- Lee Strobel (crime journalist & leading author): Spent more than a year investigating and trying to disprove Christianity before he became a leading popular author and advocate defending Christianity.<sup>3</sup>
- Nabeel Qureshi (leading author): Sought to convert his friend to Islam, but the evidence instead led him to Christianity.<sup>4</sup>
- Frank Morison (advertising agent & author): Believed Jesus' Resurrection was a “primitive mythology” until he thoroughly investigated the last seven days of Jesus' life and found a “profoundly historical basis” for the Resurrection.<sup>5</sup>
- C.S. Lewis (professor & author): Rejected atheism and became a Christian after investigating classic Christian literature and the New Testament in Greek.<sup>6</sup>

## C. Proof to Rebut the Skeptics

As Christians in a fallen world, we have a duty to defend the New Testament against those who question its truth and accuracy.

- What are the skeptics saying?
- What is our response to such challenges?

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<sup>2</sup> Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, p. 13 (2023) (italics in original; bold added).

<sup>3</sup> Lee Strobel, *The Case for Easter*, p. 8 (2003); Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, pp. 280, 336 (2016); Strobel, *The Case for Creation*, pp. 18-19 (2004).

<sup>4</sup> Nabeel Qureshi, *No God But One*, pp. 24-26 (2016).

<sup>5</sup> Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?* pp. 9-10 (1958) (foreword by Lee Strobel).

<sup>6</sup> PBS, *The Question of God: The Life of C.S. Lewis* (2004)  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/questionofgod/twolives/lewisbio.html#:~:text=As%20a%20result%20of%20his,and%20later%20Christianity%20in%201931>.

## 1. What are the Skeptics Saying?

Worldwide, approximately 450 to 500 million people are atheists or agnostics.<sup>7</sup> Even more question the New Testament. From atheists to college professors to radical Christian scholars, the attacks on the Gospels' reliability come from many angles.

- Robert Price (Christ-Myth advocate). “[I]t is quite likely there never was any historical Jesus.”<sup>8</sup>
- College Campuses. “Every year, countless university students around the world are taught that only a small percentage of the New Testament accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth reflect what he really said and did.”<sup>9</sup>
- 2006 Newsweek Survey Response. “It’s not even obvious that Jesus was a historical figure. If he was, the legends around him – a Son of God who was born of a virgin, worked miracles, and rose from the dead – were common stories in the ancient Near East. The myths about Jesus are not even original.”<sup>10</sup>
- Jesus Seminar. This seminar “concluded that only 18% of the sayings and 16% of the deeds described in the *five* Gospels [including Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*] corresponded even reasonably closely to the words and actions of the historical Jesus.”<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, more than 100 books and essays “in the past two hundred years have fervently denied the very existence of Jesus.”<sup>12</sup>

## 2. What is Our Response to Such Challenges?

The New Testament tells us to respond. First, the Great Commission extends to “all nations,” not just those that are receptive. Matthew 28:19-20. Second, Peter calls us to answer:

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, **always being ready to make a defense to anyone who asks** you to give an account of the

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen Bullivant & Michael Ruse, eds., *The Oxford Handbook on Atheism*, Abstract (2013) <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/37199/chapter-abstract/327369979?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

<sup>8</sup> James Beilby & Paul Eddy, eds., *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*, p. 55 (2009) quoting Robert Price, “Jesus at the Vanishing Point.”

<sup>9</sup> Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, p. 15 (2007); see also Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus*, p. 14 (2007) (“More than half of college professors believe the Bible is ‘an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts,’ compared to less than one-fifth of the general population.”).

<sup>10</sup> Sally Quinn & Jon Meacham, “Who Was Jesus,” *Newsweek website* (Dec. 26, 2006) quoted in Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus*, p. 11 (2007).

<sup>11</sup> Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, p. 16 (2007) citing Funk, Hoover and the Jesus Seminar, *Five Gospels*; and Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *Acts of Jesus*.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*, p. 6 (2000) quoted in Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p.162 (2024).

hope that is in you, yet **with gentleness and reverence**. [1 Peter 3:15 (emphasis added)].<sup>13</sup>

In one of his many books promoting Christianity, C. S. Lewis put it more forcefully, explaining the plain need to be ready to defend our faith against critics:

If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all were uneducated. But, as it is, a cultural life will exist outside the church whether it exists inside or not. To be ignorant and simple now – not to be able to meet the enemies on their ground – would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, we have an obligation to use not only our hearts and souls, but also our “minds” to promote and defend our faith as we worship the Lord. Matthew 22:37.

### **III. Eyewitness Testimony as Evidence for the New Testament**

Both historians and the judicial system place great weight upon eyewitness testimony. Overwhelming eyewitness testimony lays a factual cornerstone for the New Testament.

#### **A. Gathering the Proof of Eyewitness Testimony**

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.

Each of these categories of proof are examined below. In combination, these categories weave a tapestry of proof that the skeptics have yet to refute.

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<sup>13</sup> See also Philippians 1:16 (Paul: “I am appointed for the defense of the gospel”); Jude 3 (Jude: “appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints”); Norman Geisler & Paul Hoffman, eds., *Why I Am a Christian*, p. 7 (2006) (“Indeed, we are instructed by three different apostles to defend attacks on the faith . . .”).

<sup>14</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, p. 50 (1949) quoted in Geisler & Paul Hoffman, eds., *Why I Am a Christian*, p. 7 (2006).

## 1. 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).<sup>15</sup>
- “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).<sup>16</sup>
- “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).<sup>17</sup>

The following Scripture is a textbook example of the legal standard 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 touch or taste?”<sup>18</sup> 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 this legal standard for eyewitness testimony.

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<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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”).

<sup>17</sup> *See also* 1 Peter 5:1 (“witness of the sufferings of Christ”); 1 Corinthians 15:3-9 (multiple witnesses to resurrection); *see also* Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, p. 145 (2009) (list); Nabeel Qureshi, *No God But One*, p. 189 (2016) (references); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 297-98 (2017) (witnesses & references); Lee Strobel, *The Case for Easter*, pp.73-74 (2003) (references).

<sup>18</sup> Irving Younger, “No. 1: The Art of Cross-Examination,” *American Bar Association (ABA) The Litigation Monograph Series*, p. 3 (1976).

## 2. What Do the Earliest Christian Records Say?

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

Matthew. As one of the “Twelve” disciples with Jesus “from the beginning,” Matthew readily qualified as an eyewitness. Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13. As author of a five-volume Christian work in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century, Papias (Bishop of Hierapolis) recognized Matthew as the author of the first Gospel.<sup>19</sup> *See also* Section IV.B. below.

Mark. While not an eyewitness, Mark had a very close personal relationship with Simon Peter. *See* 1 Peter 5:13. Papias (see above) described Mark as “Peter’s interpreter.”<sup>20</sup> Other early Christian leaders, such as Irenaeus and Justin, confirmed this view.<sup>21</sup> Many modern scholars agree that Peter served as Mark’s primary source.<sup>22</sup> In his 615-page analysis of ancient records and the evidence in the Gospel of Mark itself, Richard Bauckham summarized his findings as follows:

Papias portrays Mark as no more than a translator scrupulously accurate in reproducing Peter’s oral testimony because in that case his Gospel would be free of falsifications introduced by “translators,” even those who claim to report the testimony of eyewitnesses. Short of a text actually written by an eyewitness, Mark’s Gospel, as represented by Papias, would be as good a historical source as one could get in the period after all eyewitnesses had died.<sup>23</sup>

Given Simon Peter’s status as such a prominent member of Jesus’ inner circle, Mark’s Gospel has a powerful claim to being based on eyewitness testimony. *See also* Section IV.B. below.

Luke. As stated at the very beginning of his Gospel (Luke 1:2), Luke expressly relied upon eyewitnesses.<sup>24</sup> Around AD 160, an ancient record known as the Muratorian Fragment confirmed Luke’s opening Gospel text, stating that “Luke based his Gospel on personal

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<sup>19</sup> Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 69 (2003); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 12-18, 202-03 (2017); *see* Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, pp. 147-48 (2007) (rebutting attack on reliability of Papias).

<sup>20</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable*, p. 32 (1981).

<sup>21</sup> Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 2 (Irenaeus) & p. 50 (Justin) (2003).

<sup>22</sup> 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.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 210 (2017). The Gospel of Mark confirms this view of Peter as the eyewitness source based upon other facts, including the greater frequency of referencing Peter than any other Gospel, extensive reliance of Matthew on Mark, and literary techniques. *See, e.g.*, Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, pp. 8, 50-52, 59, 82 (2003).

<sup>24</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 29-30, 116-24 (2017).

interviews.”<sup>25</sup> Based upon his detailed textual analysis of Luke and Acts, historian Colin Hemer found support for the view that Luke interviewed witnesses.<sup>26</sup> *See also* Section IV.B. below.

John. In both his Gospel and later letter, John explicitly describes himself as an eyewitness. John 19:35; 1 John 1:1 (NASB). Irenaeus (Christian bishop) emphasized the importance of eyewitness testimony and described how another Christian leader (Polycarp) had conversations directly with John.<sup>27</sup> The Muratorian Fragment (referenced above) attributed the Gospel to John’s eyewitness testimony.<sup>28</sup> *See also* Section IV.B. below.

Gospels Generally. Irenaeus (referenced above) “linked each New Testament Gospel to an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord.”<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> *See also* Section IV.B. below.

Thus, the earliest Christian leaders and records trace the Gospel sources back to eyewitness testimony of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

### 3. 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.

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.<sup>31</sup> In his book *Christianity on Trial*, he explicitly assessed the Gospels as based on eyewitness testimony.<sup>32</sup>

Warner Wallace (former LAPD homicide detective). Spending most of his detective career investigating cold-case homicides for the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD),

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<sup>25</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, pp. 109-10 n.1 (2007).

<sup>26</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, pp. 338-48 (textual analysis), pp. 351, 354-55 (indications of eyewitness interviews).

<sup>27</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 295 (2017).

<sup>28</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, pp. 109-10 n.1 (2007).

<sup>29</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, p. 110 n.3 (2007) citing Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, 3.11.

<sup>30</sup> Tertullian of Carthage, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.2 cited in Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, p. 110 n.5 (2007).

<sup>31</sup> Lanier Law Firm website <https://www.lanierlawfirm.com/case-results/>

<sup>32</sup> W. Mark Lanier, *Christianity on Trial: A Lawyer Examines the Christian Faith*, pp. 193-96 (2014).

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.**<sup>33</sup>

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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup>

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 Greenleaf knew and taught the law of evidence governing eyewitnesses.<sup>36</sup> Based upon this experience and expertise, he concluded that the Gospels rested upon eyewitness testimony:

The foundation of our religion is a basis of fact – the fact of the birth, ministry, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. These are related by the Evangelists as having actually occurred, within their **own personal knowledge.**<sup>37</sup>

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

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<sup>33</sup> J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, pp. 19-20 (2023) (bold added).

<sup>34</sup> 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).

<sup>35</sup> Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, pp. 19-57 (interviews with Dr. Craig Blomberg) (2016).

<sup>36</sup> Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists: The Gospels Examined by the Rules of Evidence*, pp. 7-8 & back cover (originally 1874; reprinted 1995).

<sup>37</sup> Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists*, p. 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).

#### 4. 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.<sup>38</sup> 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."<sup>39</sup>

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.<sup>40</sup> In the first volume, he assesses the historical standards governing evidence and eyewitness testimony.<sup>41</sup> 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."<sup>42</sup>
- Blind Bartimaeus Healing. "derived at least in part from eyewitness testimony."<sup>43</sup>
- Deaf Healing. "early and eyewitness testimony."<sup>44</sup>
- Feeding 5,000. "'independent eyewitness recollection."<sup>45</sup>
- Gospel Women. MaryMagdalene and the women as "early witnesses."<sup>46</sup>
- Paul, Peter & James. "solid eyewitness foundation" for earliest creed.<sup>47</sup>

Given the mountains of evidence in the *On the Resurrection* series (including many admissions even by atheists), the skeptics find themselves on the short end of this factual debate.

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<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., Benjamin C. F. Shaw, *Trustworthy: Thirteen Arguments for the Reliability of the New Testament*, 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).

<sup>39</sup> Craig Blomberg interview in Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 24 (2016) (emphasis added).

<sup>40</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences* (2024); Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Refutations* (2024).

<sup>41</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 23-26, 37-38, 44-47, 51-52, 83-86 (2024).

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*, pp. 117-18.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*, p. 259.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*, p. 260.

<sup>45</sup> *Id.*, p. 267 citing P. W. Barnett, "The Feeding of the Multitude," in Wenham and Blomberg, *Miracles of Jesus*, pp. 273-93.

<sup>46</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 438 (2024).

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*, p. 454; see also pp. 46, 440 (Paul), 438 (Matthias), 455 (John, Peter, James & Paul).

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.<sup>48</sup> Just as his title says, Dr. Bauckham finds ample eyewitness testimony in the Gospels. Examples include:

- Four Gospels. Eyewitness testimony supported all four Gospels.<sup>49</sup>
- Gospel Women. Mary Magdalene and other women served as eyewitnesses.<sup>50</sup>
- Jesus’ Family. James, Jude and other relatives were eyewitnesses.<sup>51</sup>
- Healed People. Those healed by Jesus (Jairus’ daughter, Bartimaeus, and Lazarus) were eyewitnesses.<sup>52</sup>

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

## **B. Weighing the Proof of Eyewitness Testimony**

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?
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).

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<sup>48</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 271, 46 n. 27, and 110 (2024).

<sup>49</sup> 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).

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*, pp. xiii-xiv, 47-51, 129-31; *see also* Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, pp. 189, 193, 262 (2002).

<sup>51</sup> 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).

<sup>52</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 40 (2017).

## 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].<sup>53</sup>
- “the **best** relevant evidence.” [Historian David Hackett Fischer].<sup>54</sup>
- “**best** evidence . . . from eyewitnesses.” [Sean McDowell].<sup>55</sup>
- “evidence that the historian should **not discard**.” [Dr. Richard Bauckham].<sup>56</sup>
- “**strongest** evidences that these events *did* happen.” [Dr. Timothy Paul Jones].<sup>57</sup>

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.<sup>58</sup>

## 2. How Many Eyewitnesses are Needed?

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

Many facts from antiquity rest on just one ancient source, while two or three sources in agreement generally **render the fact unimpeachable**.<sup>59</sup>

As a practical matter, a number of published decisions 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

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<sup>53</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 38, 45 (2024) (bold added).

<sup>54</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies*, p. 62 (1970) cited in Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 45 (2024) (bold added).

<sup>55</sup> Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, p. 29 (2008) (bold added).

<sup>56</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 9 (2017) (bold added).

<sup>57</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Jesus*, p. 109 (2007) (italics in original; bold added).

<sup>58</sup> 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 skeptics cannot meet. FED. R. EVID. 403; see *United States v. Dennis*, 625 F.2d 782, 797 (8<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>59</sup> 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).

testimony as the only surviving eyewitness, Leo Carter provided the evidence to convict the defendant and two accomplices for murder.<sup>60</sup>

- 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.<sup>61</sup>
- 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.<sup>62</sup>

In summary, these cases illustrate the fact that the testimony of a single eyewitness can prove a decisive fact and win a case. For the New Testament, not just one, but instead **many** eyewitnesses prove the facts relating to the life, ministry, miracles, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Compared with the typical non-Christian ancient histories that have one eyewitness (or none), the New Testament rests upon unmatched proof.

There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.<sup>63</sup>

As an example, ancient historian Paul Maier identifies “at least *seven* ancient sources” for the Resurrection.<sup>64</sup> In fact, these seven sources contain many times more eyewitnesses to the Resurrection – the women, Jesus’ relatives, the disciples (plus Matthias), and others.<sup>65</sup> See Section III.A.4 above. Thus, based on the evidentiary standards for ancient records, the multiplicity of the New Testament eyewitnesses renders them “**unimpeachable**.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, pp. 19-20 (2016).

<sup>61</sup> Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, pp. 75-6 (2023).

<sup>62</sup> *Alloy Surfaces Co., Inc.*, ASBCA No. 59625, 20-1 BCA ¶ 37,574 (2020).

<sup>63</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments: How We Got Our English Bible*, p. 178 (1950) quoted in Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p. 37 (1999); see also John A. T. Robinson, *Can We Trust the New Testament?*, p. 36 (1977) (the New Testament copies “make it by far the best attested text of any writing in the ancient world”) quoted in Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 111, n. 47 (2024).

<sup>64</sup> Paul Maier, *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church*, p. 197 (1998) (italics in original).

<sup>65</sup> 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).

<sup>66</sup> Paul Maier, *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church*, p. 197 (1998) (bold added).

### 3. What is the Standard of Proof?

How much evidence is enough to prove a fact?<sup>67</sup> 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.”<sup>68</sup>
- Legal Standard. Under the “preponderance of evidence” standard, a party must offer “the stronger evidence, however slight the edge may be.”<sup>69</sup>

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. To make this example more concrete, if 51 eyewitnesses said Jesus died on the cross, but 49 witnesses disagreed, the judge could reasonably find that Jesus did die on the cross because slightly more witnesses testified to this fact.

Why does the “preponderance of evidence” matter? For those that deny that Jesus existed or allege the New Testament is fiction, such skeptics ignore the wealth of evidence documenting the fact of Jesus’ existence and the reliability and authenticity of the New Testament. Even the atheist scholars have dismissed such Jesus-myth claims in popular culture as “wrongheaded,” “poorly substantiated,” “utter falsehoods,” and “completely spurious from beginning to end.”<sup>70</sup>

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.<sup>71</sup> Historians apply the same evidentiary test: evidentiary facts are conceded if not challenged with facts.<sup>72</sup> Applying simple logic, the following are true:

- Evidence is better than bald denials and mere allegations.
- Witnesses are better than no witnesses.

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<sup>67</sup> 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.

<sup>68</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 23-24 (2024).

<sup>69</sup> *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).

<sup>70</sup> *See, e.g.*, Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?* p. 21 (2012); Maurice Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 245 *quoted in* Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 159, 161 (2024).

<sup>71</sup> *Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 256 (1986) (opposing party must offer “significant probative evidence”).

<sup>72</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 25 (2024) (an event established by research is a proven fact when uncontested by evidence).

Thus, both legal and historical standards for evidence agree. Ample evidence proves that eyewitness testimony supports the New Testament. Under these evidentiary standards, skeptics lacking hard facts have a losing argument, failing to refute the overwhelming eyewitness proof supporting the reliability and authenticity of the New Testament.

#### IV. Why Are the Skeptics Wrong?

The skeptics have challenged eyewitness testimony on several bases, arguing that the anonymous Gospel authors lacked eyewitness testimony because they did not publish the Gospels until long after the witnesses were gone. None of this is true. The evidence confirms that Gospel authors (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) wrote the Gospels during the living memory of the eyewitnesses who guaranteed the truth and accuracy of the written Gospels.

##### A. Did Eyewitnesses Support the New Testament?

Some skeptics have denied that eyewitness testimony served as an evidentiary foundation for the New Testament.<sup>73</sup> These assertions are contrary to the evidence.<sup>74</sup>

- Plain Language. In very plain language, the New Testament cites eyewitness testimony as supporting evidence. *See* Section III.A.1 above.<sup>75</sup>
- Ancient Records. After the Gospels had been written, the earliest Christian records and leaders confirmed the Scriptures' plain language of eyewitness accounts. *See* Section III.A.2 above.
- Legal Experts. Legal experts applied their witness experience and found the New Testament to rely upon eyewitness testimony. *See* Section III.A.3 above.
- Eyewitness Experts. Leading scholars, including Drs. Habermas and Bauckham, conducted exhaustive research and confirmed the eyewitness accounts in the New Testament. *See* Section III.A.4 above.

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<sup>73</sup> Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament*, pp. 48 (“None of these writers claims to be an eyewitness”), 51 (“Were the stories told by other eyewitnesses? Equally impossible.”), 210 (“people who were not eyewitnesses”) (2004). The Jesus Seminar and others made a similar argument. *See, e.g.*, Funk, Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *Five Gospels*, p. 16 (Gospel authors not eyewitnesses); Fossum, *Understanding Jesus' Miracles*, p. 23 (Gospels not based on eyewitness testimony) *cited in* Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 268, n. 65-66 (2024).

<sup>74</sup> In fact, Bart Ehrman has taken inconsistent positions on New Testament eyewitness testimony, conceding that Paul met with both Peter and James (brother of Jesus) for “a rundown on what Jesus said and did during his public ministry.” Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?* p. 145 (2012). Based on this admission, Bart Ehrman asks: “Can we get any closer to an **eyewitness report** than this?” *Id.* (bold added); *see also* Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 112, 271 (2024) (citing these passages).

<sup>75</sup> Bart Ehrman also admits that the Gospels represent “significant historical sources,” thus raising the question as to how he ignores the plain language of the Scriptures. Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?* p. 74 (2012) (“Whatever one thinks of [the Gospels] as inspired scripture, they can be seen and used as **significant historical sources**.”) (bold added); *see also* Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 41, n. 15, 104 n. 32 *quoting* these Ehrman passages.

Quite simply, the skeptics have not dealt with this mountain of eyewitness evidence as documented in multiple Scriptures, many ancient records and treatises, top legal experts' analyses, and thousands of pages of leading eyewitness scholarship. In legal terms, these skeptics have a losing case.

## **B. Who Wrote the Gospels and Acts?**

Unable to challenge the eyewitness evidence head-on, skeptics skirt the issue by questioning who wrote the Gospels – and when. The evidence refutes their claims.

### 1. The Misleading Allegation

Denying that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the Gospels, skeptics argue that the Gospels were published “anonymously.”<sup>76</sup> Whether the authors “signed” the original Gospels (which we cannot know due to loss of the originals), the Church knew from the early days who actually wrote them. *See* below. The “anonymous author” theory has been rejected by the best scholars and historians.<sup>77</sup>

### 2. Ancient Sources Confirming Authorship

More than ten ancient sources confirm the authors of the Gospels as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These sources range from John the Elder (late 1<sup>st</sup> century) and Papias (early 2<sup>nd</sup> century) to Irenaeus (AD 174-189) and Clement of Alexandria (AD 195-203).<sup>78</sup> Not only is the authorship evidence overwhelming during this period, but it is also unanimous.

- Richard Bauckham. “[N]o evidence exists that these Gospels were ever known by other names. The unusual form of the titles and the **universal use** of them as soon as we have any evidence suggest that they originated at an early stage.”<sup>79</sup>
- Benjamin Shaw. “In the ancient world, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were the *only* names attributed to the four canonical Gospels.”<sup>80</sup>
- 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

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<sup>76</sup> *See, e.g.,* Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament*, pp. 49 (anonymous – *i.e.*, “not sign names”), 58-9 (unlikely that they authored Gospels based on questions about their education, *etc.*).

<sup>77</sup> *See, e.g.,* Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 303 (2017) (“Gospels would not have been anonymous when they first circulated around the churches” because the church would have received authorship information with the scroll and labelled it accordingly); Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy: Thirteen Arguments for the Reliability of the New Testament*, p. 48 (2024) (“*absence of positive evidence* that ancient writers thought the Gospels were anonymous”) (italics in original).

<sup>78</sup> 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).

<sup>79</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 303 (2017) (bold added).

<sup>80</sup> Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy: Thirteen Arguments for the Reliability of the New Testament*, p. 48 (2024).

Roman Empire towards the end of the second century, from Lyons to Carthage and as far as the Egyptian Chora.”<sup>81</sup>

### 3. No Rebuttal for Authorship Record

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.

- Benjamin Shaw. “These names [Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John] were **not contested**, nor were any other names suggested in their place.”<sup>82</sup>
- Simon Gathercole. “The second silence is the **absence of any other attributions** of authority assigned the Gospels.”<sup>83</sup>
- Martin Hengel. “This unanimity of testimony to the titles of the Gospels, for which there are still **no variants of any kind** in this early period, rules out a late origin from the middle of the second century.”<sup>84</sup>

Thus, the skeptics have zero historical evidence from the early years to contest the authorship of the Gospels.

In summary, more than ten ancient sources identify the Gospel authors as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In contrast, no ancient sources point to a different author for any of the Gospels. Weighing the evidence spanning that early 200-year period, the Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are beating the skeptics by 10 to nothing.<sup>85</sup>

### C. When Were the Gospels and Acts Written?

Skeptics argue that anonymous authors published the Gospels 50 to 150 years after Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, meaning that hearsay and fiction took over after the facts had been lost.<sup>86</sup> The skeptics are wrong. The best evidence shows that the Gospels and Acts appeared during the

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<sup>81</sup> 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”).

<sup>82</sup> Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy: Thirteen Arguments for the Reliability of the New Testament*, p. 46 (2024) (bold added).

<sup>83</sup> Simon Gathercole, “The Alleged Anonymity of the Canonical Gospels,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 69 No. 2, p. 474 (2018) (bold added).

<sup>84</sup> Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 66 (2003) (bold added).

<sup>85</sup> Another un rebutted factor is that if the Gospel writers faked the names of the authors, they certainly would not have chosen Mark (minor role in New Testament except for close relationship to Peter), Luke (another minor role except for close relationship to Paul), and Matthew (a despised tax collector). See, e.g., Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, pp. 9-11 (2017).

<sup>86</sup> See, e.g., Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, p. 140 (2009) (F.C. Bauer and other critics assumed Gospels not written until “late in the second century A.D.”); F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents*, p. 9 (1981) (critics alleging Gospels not written until 100 years later); Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?* pp. 75-76 (2012) (Mark written “around 70 CE” and Matthew and Luke “ten or fifteen years after Mark” around “year 80 or 85”).

lifetime of the eyewitnesses, thus assuring the reliability and authenticity of the Gospel eyewitness accounts.

### 1. Skeptics' Faulty Methodology

As noted above, skeptics have asserted that no one wrote down the Gospels until over a century later (around AD 130 to 180, after the apostles died). When Dr. John A.T. Robinson investigated these claims, the poor scholarship “stunned” him:

The results stunned Dr. Robinson. He said that owing to scholarly “sloth,” the “tyranny of unexamined assumptions” and “almost willful blindness” by previous authors, much of the past reason upon which Bible criticism was based was untenable.<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore, many of the more radical scholars who advocated later dates (AD 80s or 90s) offered no facts or analyses to back up their bare assertions. For example, Dr. Craig Blomberg noted that these late-date advocates made “mere affirmations” or “assumptions” rather than actual arguments or support.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Colin Hemer explained that the modern scholarship favoring later dates is not based on “newly discovered evidence,” but instead has neglected a “groundwork of testing” and failed to show “any concern with the evidential base.”<sup>89</sup>

### 2. Gospels Dated Prior to Acts in AD 62

Nearly everyone agrees with the publication sequence: first Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, then Acts, and finally John.<sup>90</sup> The best evidence shows AD 62 for Acts, meaning that the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) came earlier. In other words, the first three Gospels appeared within 30 years of the Resurrection while eyewitnesses still lived.<sup>91</sup>

Multiple sources support a date of about AD 62 for Acts.<sup>92</sup> In his comprehensive analysis spanning over 40 pages, Colin Hemer evaluated 15 individual factors, many prior studies, and the “immediacy” factor (Acts ending with the extraordinary detail of an eyewitness).<sup>93</sup> Based upon this evidence, he dated Acts in AD 62.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, p. 141 (2009) citing John A. T. Robinson, *Time*, p. 95 (Mar. 21, 1977).

<sup>88</sup> Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, pp. 13 n. 23, 16 n. 28 (2016).

<sup>89</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, p. 366 (1990).

<sup>90</sup> See, e.g., Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, pp. 14-17 (2016).

<sup>91</sup> Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, pp. 141-43 (2009).

<sup>92</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, p. 367-8 (1990) (citing over 20 scholars with dates for Acts from the early to mid-60s); Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, pp. 14-17 (2016) (AD 62).

<sup>93</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, p. 376-408 (1990).

<sup>94</sup> *Id.*, pp. 408, 414; see also Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, pp. 141-42 (2009) (citing Colin Hemer’s analysis favorably).

Acts in AD 62 means that Luke wrote his Gospel earlier. Given that Luke’s Gospel relied on material from Mark, the Gospel of Mark bears an even earlier date.

### 3. Dates for the Gospels

Some of more comprehensive analyses place the Synoptic Gospels well within the lifetime of the major eyewitnesses to the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Gospels	Jonathan Bernier <sup>95</sup>	Dr. John A. T. Robinson <sup>96</sup>
Matthew	AD 45-59	AD 40 – 64
Mark	AD 42-45 <sup>97</sup>	AD 45 – 60
Luke	AD 59	AD 57 – 64

Except for John who likely wrote at a later time (AD 70-90), the better scholarship generally shows the Synoptic Gospels to be written within 30 years of the Resurrection.

The top scholars trace the Gospels to the period when major eyewitnesses lived to vouch for the facts as recorded.

- Richard Bauckham. “The Gospels were written within the living memory of the events they recount. Mark’s Gospel was written well within the **lifetime of many of the eyewitnesses**, while the other three canonical Gospels were written in the period when living eyewitnesses were becoming scarce, exactly at the point in time when their testimony would perish with them were it not put in writing.”<sup>98</sup>
- Martin Hengel. The “personal link of the Jesus tradition with particular tradents, or more precisely their **memory** and missionary preaching . . . is **historically undeniable**.”<sup>99</sup>
- 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

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<sup>95</sup> Jonathan Bernier, *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament: The Evidence for Early Composition*, pp. 277-78 (2022).

<sup>96</sup> John A. T. Robinson, *Time*, p. 95 (Mar. 21, 1977) cited in Josh and Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, p. 141 (2009).

<sup>97</sup> 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.’”).

<sup>98</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 7 (2017) (bold added).

<sup>99</sup> 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).

A.D. 30) and well within the period of time when people could check up on the accuracy of the facts they contain.”<sup>100</sup>

In summary, the best scholarship and experts establish a firm link between the Gospels and the eyewitnesses upon which the Gospels rely. Accordingly, the Gospels display a wealth of proof that the skeptics have not – and cannot – realistically refute. When measured against the historical and legal standards of proof, this evidential record leaves the skeptics on the losing end of the eyewitness analysis.

## V. Conclusion

Individually, each of the reasons above comes with strong eyewitness evidence supporting the reliability and historicity of the Gospels and Acts. In tandem, these big proofs build an overwhelming case validating the historical and factual accuracy of the Gospels and Acts. Compared with other ancient records and works, the Gospels and Acts have no equals in the depth and breadth of eyewitness proof establishing their historical truth and authenticity.

David Z. Bodenheimer  
Trial Attorney (1982-2022)

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<sup>100</sup> 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).