

Evidence for Easter

Presented by Allen Quist

Author of *The Reason I Believe: The Basics of Christian Apologetics* (CPH, 2017)

Palm Sunday, March 25, 2018 | Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn.

- I. In 1 Peter 3:15 we are admonished to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”
 - A. Are you prepared to state your reasons for being a Christian?
 1. If you were asked: “Why should I believe that Jesus rose from the dead?” what would you say? You could reply: “The Bible says so.”
 2. But what if this person then says, “I don’t believe the Bible”? Or, “Why should I become a Christian instead of a Muslim?”
 - B. A starting point for answering such questions is recorded in Acts 1:8 where Jesus told his disciples: “You will be my witnesses [Greek: mártýres].”
 1. Does “witnessing” mean that Jesus’ followers would do evangelism and mission work?
 - a. No. In the New Testament to witness does not mean to evangelize. (Jesus had already admonished His disciples to do evangelism and mission work in the Great Commission.)
 - b. To “bear witness” (martyreō) in the New Testament means that the apostles would present evidence, especially eyewitness evidence, to substantiate the truth of the resurrection and other important events.
 2. Does Christianity require a “blind leap of faith”?
 - a. No. Christian “faith” comes from a fair “hearing” of the “Word of God” (Romans 10:17), which consists of Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by numerous “eyewitness” (mártýres) accounts (a term used about 300 times in the NT).
 - b. The foundational facts of Christianity receive further corroboration from sources beyond the Bible (including Jewish, Christian, and Roman authors of the first and second centuries, plus archaeological artifacts).
 3. Do all other religions, and religions positions, require a blind leap of faith? Yes. No other religion is based on eyewitness testimonies corroborated by external sources.

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II. What are some primary criteria for evaluating historical documents?

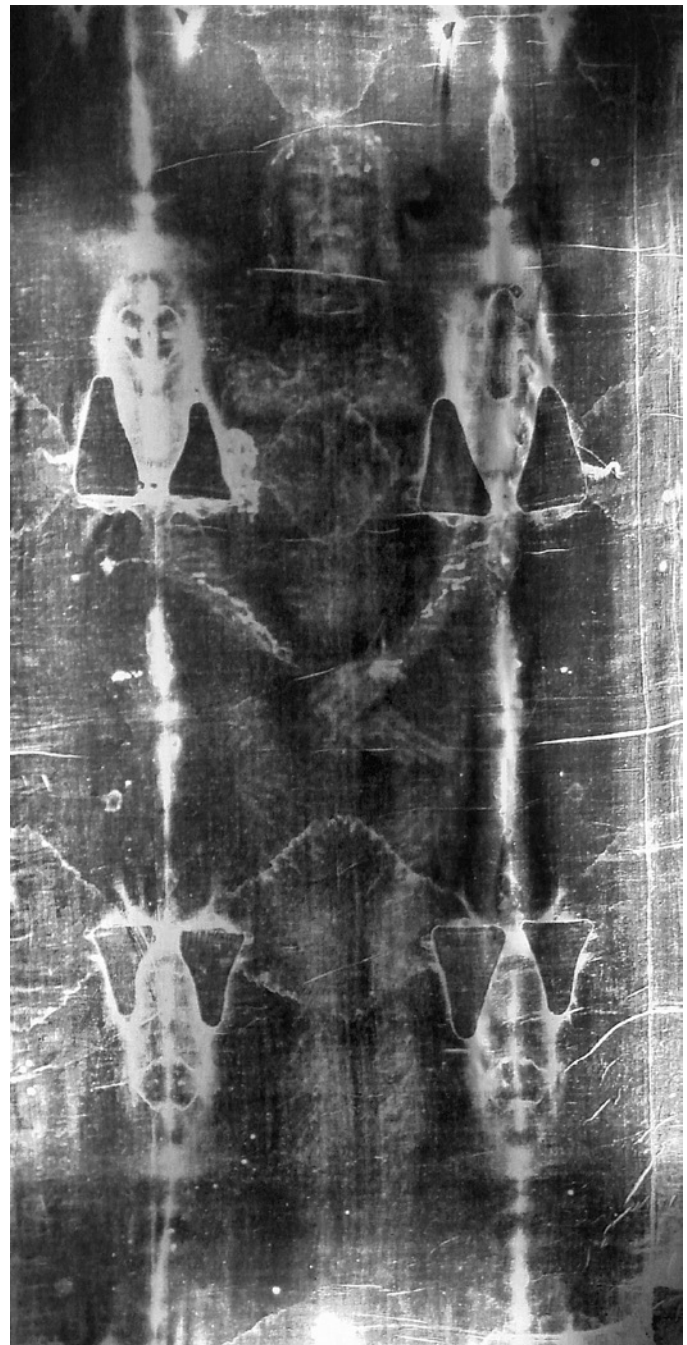
- A. Was the document written soon enough after the events it describes to be reliable?
- B. Does it contain or is it based on eyewitness testimony?
- C. Is there corroborating or conflicting evidence?

III. How well does the position of the Quran meet these criteria?

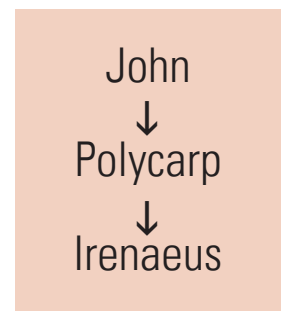
- A. The document is too late (7th century A.D.) to have any historical value when denying (in Surah 4:157–158) both the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- B. There is no eyewitness testimony.
- C. There is no corroborating evidence, but there is a wealth of conflicting evidence.

IV. How well does the New Testament meet these criteria?

- A. We have seven clearly identified New Testament authors who all wrote within 62 years of the crucifixion—most and perhaps all of whom wrote within 30 years:
 - 1. Matthew 5. James
 - 2. Mark 6. Peter
 - 3. Luke 7. Paul
 - 4. John
- B. The writings of all seven authors are eyewitness in nature.
- C. There are a significant number of other sources that corroborate the biblical accounts.
 - 1. Early church scholars attest to the authenticity of the accounts: Clement of Rome (AD 30–100), Polycarp (AD 69–156), and Ignatius (AD 35–108), each of whom associated with one or more apostles. Papius (AD 70–163), Justin Martyr (AD 100–165), Irenaeus (AD 130–202), and Tertullian (AD 160–220) affirm their reports.



The Shroud of Turin



2. Jewish and Roman writers also lend support: Josephus (AD 37–100), Tacitus (AD 54–120), Pliny (AD 61–113), etc.
3. Historical artifacts further confirm the New Testament documents: James Ossuary, Shroud of Turin, and hundreds of early and substantially identical copies of the New Testament manuscripts themselves.



Detail of inscription—The James ossuary was on display at the Royal Ontario Museum from November 15, 2002 to January 5, 2003. ©

The James Ossuary

Is this the burial box for a relative of Jesus of Nazareth?

Aramaic Inscription: יעקוב בר יוסף אחי ישוע

Transliteration: “Ya’akov bar-Yosef akhui diYeshua”

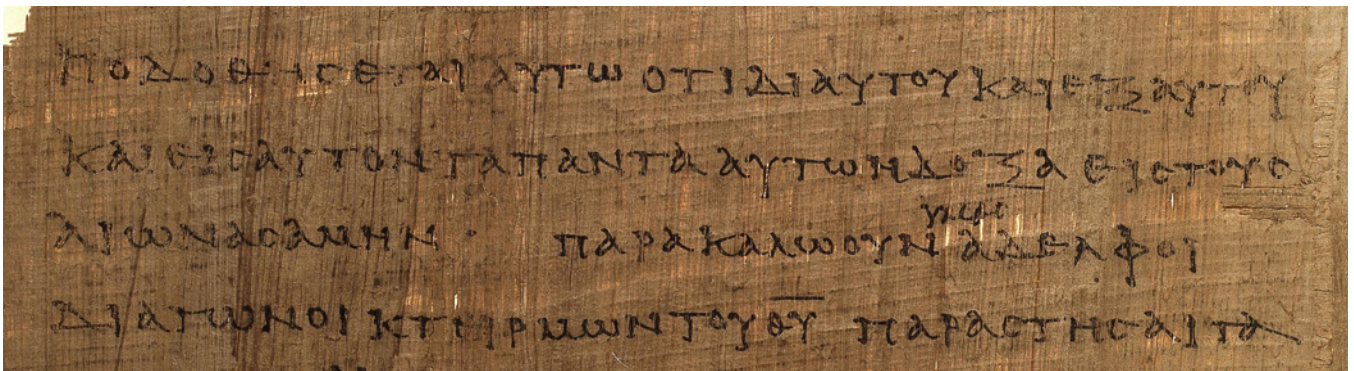
English translation: “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus”



The Shroud of Turin

Was this the burial cloth of Jesus of Nazareth?

- V. There is only one religion that is substantiated by objective, historical evidence. That religion is Christianity, where matters of faith and matters of fact meet at the death and resurrection of Christ. All other religions and religious positions require a blind leap of faith.**



Detail of Papyrus 46

Papyrus 46

One of the oldest surviving manuscripts of the New Testament, this papyrus is dated between A.D. 125 and 225 and contains the epistles of St. Paul—including the well-known resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15.



Hosted by the Bethany Lutheran College History Department,
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Credits:

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