

# 3

## Gospel, Resurrection and History

### Introduction

Expert historians, also known as critical historians, both Non-Christian and Christian, would examine any ancient document by two criteria for its accuracy of any event mentioned in them.

- (a) The ancient document must have **at least two reliable, independent early eyewitnesses** of any historical event
- (b) The ancient document must be **written close** to the historical event.

So, when it comes to the New Testament, expert non-Christian historians would not consider it a sacred document revealed by God. But they would examine it on the same basis as any other ancient document.

Here, we will examine the historical accuracy of our Lord Jesus' Resurrection.

### Outline

1. Paul is a very reliable eyewitness of the Resurrection
2. Paul wrote reliable ancient documents very close to the Resurrection
3. Paul wrote the gospel message in 1 Cor 15:3-8

#### 1. Paul is a very reliable eyewitness of the Resurrection:

Expert historians consider Paul to be a very reliable eyewitness because:

- Paul started by being a hostile persecutor of Christians before he became a Christian himself.
- Paul was also a learned scholar by training (under Gamaliel) and in his writings (e.g., Paul's scholarly epistle to the Romans).
- Paul lived as an adult before and after the crucifixion. So, he knew what was happening. He also knew others who lived in that period who knew what was happening.

Therefore, historians consider Paul to be a very reliable source of information.

Paul writes in 1 Cor 15:3-8 that hundreds of people witnessed the risen Jesus— Peter, James and Paul, 12 Apostles, 500 brothers simultaneously, and all the apostles. Except for Paul, the rest saw the risen Jesus during the first 40 days after his Resurrection (30 AD). Paul saw the risen Jesus, probably two or three years later, on his road to Damascus in 33 AD (Acts 9:1-19). Paul writes in 1 Cor 15:6 that many eyewitnesses of Jesus' Resurrection were still alive at his writing in 55 AD. He means one could ask them to verify that the Resurrection is true. So, besides Paul, at least 500 eyewitnesses of the Resurrection lived at the time Paul wrote his letters, and they could refute him if it were not true.

#### 2. Paul wrote reliable ancient documents at a date very close to Resurrection

*Gal 1:17-21 I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus. <sup>18</sup> Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup> I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup> I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. <sup>21</sup> Then I went to Syria and Cilicia.*

*Gal 2:1-2 Then, after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. <sup>2</sup> I went in response to a revelation, and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain*

<b>30 AD</b>	<b>Most Historians estimate that Jesus died in 30 AD</b> (see End Note)
<b>33 AD</b> Gal 1:17,18 Gal 1:11-12	<b>Most Historians estimate Paul saw the risen Jesus on the Damascus road in 33 AD.</b> Soon afterwards, Paul went to Arabia and Damascus and lived there for three years. During this time, Jesus personally taught the gospel to Paul.
<b>35-36 AD</b> Gal 1:18-19  Gal 1:18-21	<b>After Damascus, Paul went to Jerusalem to get “acquainted” with Peter and Jesus’ brother James for 15 days.</b> “Acquainted” (Greek historeo) — means to visit for information about the gospel.  Then Paul went to Syria and Cilicia.
<b>50 AD</b> Gal 2:1-10	<b>Paul and Barnabas returned to Jerusalem</b> to check with Peter, James and John whether the gospel message Paul preached to the Gentiles was correct — with no Gentile circumcision. They said it was right.
<b>51-52 AD</b> Acts 18:12	<b>Paul goes to Corinth and preaches the same gospel message.</b> He was persecuted in Corinth when Gallo was proconsul. In 1905, at Delphi in Greece, archaeologists found an inscription on stone, dated 51-52 AD, with Gallio’s name inscribed (people appointed city leaders for a one- year term only). It makes 51-52 AD the most reliable date in Biblical history. See <a href="https://bit.ly/3YNW5I1">https://bit.ly/3YNW5I1</a>
<b>55 AD</b>	Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in 55 AD (latest), 25 years after the Resurrection.

### Comparing ancient historical documents of notable people

- Alexander the Great historical record was 425 years after his death in 330 BC.
- Gautam Buddha's earliest historical record was 386 years after his death in 486 BC. (Earliest Pali Canon 100 BC)
- Mohammad's earliest historical record was 135 years after his death in 632 AD.
- Jesus' earliest historical record was a maximum of 25 years after His death and Resurrection in 30 AD.

### 3. Paul wrote the Gospel Message in 1 Cor 15:3-8

*1 Cor 15:3-8 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

Paul writes that the same gospel message he received (from Peter, James & John) is what he passed on to the Corinthians. The language used of transmission (*what I received I passed on to you as of first importance*) shows the message is not a story that gets distorted over time. But it is an important message (or teaching) that rabbis would use to transmit accurately down the generations.

**Now, when was this message composed?** Answer: Soon after the Resurrection by the first eyewitnesses Peter, James and John, **around 30 AD**. Paul received this message in 35-36 AD when he visited Jerusalem to meet them. Historians say Christians composed this gospel message (1 Cor 15:3-4) in a rhythmic creedal

form around 30 AD. In those days, few people were literate and would need a simple form to memorise, similar to how we recite nursery rhymes (like Jack and Jill went up the hill etc.). And we know that simple nursery rhymes pass on from one generation to another, for over 100 years, without distortion.

**That message is** that Christ (Messiah) died for our sins according to the scriptures, that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. He appeared to Peter and the others. That message is the gospel in which we must have Faith —Jesus is Divine, died for our sins, was buried, and rose again.

Leading scholars today say that for Christianity to survive in 30 AD, at least two vital doctrines must exist. If not, then Jesus would be one among many other false Messiahs. Those two essential doctrines are:

- The Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus
- The Divinity of Jesus. (His Resurrection proved His claims that He was God)

**The amazing expansion of the Church in 30 AD (after Resurrection & Pentecost) took place despite persecution.**

There are two things that no Jew [or Muslim] would believe, even today

- That a man could be God
- The Resurrection with an incorruptible body could occur in the middle of history and not only on the last judgement day.

That's precisely what 1 Cor 15:3-4 teaches — and so the rapid expansion of the Early Church in Israel is another proof of the Resurrection of Jesus and the truth of the gospel message.

The Romans and Jewish leaders persecuted and killed thousands of early Christians. To prevent persecution, all they had to do is to deny that Jesus rose from the dead. But they didn't. Many people die for their country. But no one dies to insist that a fantastic event, like the resurrection, occurred. This is another proof of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**End Note:** Traditionally, Christians say that our Lord Jesus died and rose again in 33 AD. If you would take 33 AD as true, then it would make reduce the time from 25 years to 23 years between the year of the resurrection to when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15.