The Minimal Facts
A. Jesus' Death

1. RECORDS - His death by crucifixion is multiply attested by early and independent sources.
   - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul
   - Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, Mara bar Serapion
   - Thallus (via Julius Africanus)

2. EXECUTION - The Romans were proficient executors
   - Flogging
   - Carrying the patibulum
   - Crucifixion
   - Excruciating
   - Roman military had a strict code of penalties to ensure following of orders

3. MEDICAL - The description of his conditions matches known medical understanding
   - Hypovolemic Shock
   - Median Nerve
   - Dislocation
   - Asphyxiation
   - Respiratory Acidosis
   - Cardiac Arrest
   - Pericardial/Pleural Effusion

Matthew
Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 27

v. 31 ...led him away to crucify him
v. 35 ...and when they had crucified him
v. 38 ...two robbers were crucified with him
v. 44 ...the robbers who had been crucified with him
v. 50 ...Jesus...yielded up his spirit
Mark
Gospel of Mark, chapter 15

v. 20 ...they led him out to crucify him
v. 24 ...they crucified him
v. 25 ...third hour when they crucified him
v. 27 ...they crucified to robbers with him
v. 37 ...Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last
v. 44-45 ...[Pilate ascertained from the centurion that he was dead]

Luke
Gospel of Luke, chapter 23

v. 21 ...crucify him, crucify him!
V. 23 ...Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted
v. 33 ...when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified him
v. 46 ...he breathed his last
v. 7 ...crucify, crucify
v. 16 ...handed him over to be crucified
v. 18 ...there they crucified him
v. 20 ...the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city
v. 23 ...when they had crucified Jesus
v. 33 ...they saw he was already dead

vv. 3 - 9  For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
3. Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

Make no mistake, my brothers: adulterers will not inherit God's Kingdom. If, then, those who act carnally suffer death, how much more shall those who by wicked teaching corrupt God's faith for which Jesus Christ was crucified. Such a vile creature will go to the unquenchable fire along with anyone who listens to him.
44. ...Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, **suffered the extreme penalty** during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful...

The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day,—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was **crucified** on that account.

You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the **crucified sage**, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on trust, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.
And in the name of **Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate**, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed.

What are we to say, when the wise are dragged by force by the hands of tyrants, and their wisdom is deprived of its freedom by slander, and they are plundered for their superior intelligence, without the opportunity of making a defence? They are not wholly to be pitied. For what benefit did the Athenians obtain by putting Socrates to death, seeing that they received as retribution for it famine and pestilence? Or the people of Samos by the burning of Pythagoras, seeing that in one hour the whole of their country was covered with sand? Or the Jews by the murder of their **Wise King**, seeing that from that very time their kingdom was driven away from them? For with justice did God grant a recompense to the wisdom of all three of them. For the Athenians died by famine; and the people of Samos were covered by the sea without remedy; and the Jews, brought to desolation and expelled from their kingdom, are driven away into Every land. Nay, Socrates did "not" die, because of Plato; nor yet Pythagoras, because of the statue of Hera; nor yet the Wise King, because of the new laws which he enacted.
AND A HERALD PRECEDES HIM etc. This implies, only immediately before [the execution], but not previous thereto. In contradiction to this it was taught: On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostacy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover! — Ulla retorted: 'Do you suppose that he was one for whom a defence could be made? Was he not a Mesith [enticer], concerning whom Scripture says, Neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him? With Yeshu however it was different, for he was connected with the government [or royalty, i.e., influential].'

B. The Empty Tomb

1. Context
   - Jerusalem - scene of crucifixion, burial, and the growth of the movement of Christianity
   - Acts 2
   - Tacitus, Annals 15:44

2. Conditions
   - The burial location would have been known, verifiable
   - Burial by a Jewish leader lends credibility to the Biblical account
   - Resurrection understood as physical by Jews and pagans

3. Consequences
   - Disciples wouldn’t believe without empty tomb
   - Others would not believe and follow with body still in known tomb
   - The motivated Jewish leaders could have derailed the Christian movement by producing a body
B. The Empty Tomb

4. Corroboration
   - **Early, Independent Testimony**
     - Mark 16:1-8
     - 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 Creed
     - Matthew 28:1-10
     - John 20:1-18
     - Acts
   - **Testimony of Opponents**
     - Allegation of stolen body – i.e. an attempt to account for a missing body
     - No body produced - to suppress Christian proclamations and growth of movement
     - No evidence offered to deny empty tomb
       - Matt. 28:11-13
       - Justin Martyr, Trypho 108
       - Tertullian, De Spectaculis 30
       - Celsus, 2nd Century (see Origen Contra Celsus)
     - Jerusalem’s climate would preserve hair, stature, wounds enough for ID of body
     - Example of tomb vs. Common grave
       - Archaeological find by Vassilios Tzaferis
       - body of Yohanan Ben Ha’agalgal
       - evidence of crucifixion
       - Buried in tomb
As they were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them, "Say this, 'His disciples came during the night and stole Him while we were sleeping.'

Matthew 28:11-13 (HCSB)

...yet you not only have not repented, after you learned that He rose from the dead, but, as I said before you have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world to proclaim that a godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilaean deceiver, whom we crucified, but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven. Moreover, you accuse Him of having taught those godless, lawless, and unholy doctrines which you mention to the condemnation of those who confess Him to be Christ, and a Teacher from and Son of God. Besides this, even when your city is captured, and your land ravaged, you do not repent, but dare to utter imprecations on Him and all who believe in Him.

Justin Martyr
Dialogue With Trypho, 108
Written 155-167 A.D.
I shall have a better opportunity then of hearing the tragedians, louder-voiced in their own calamity; of viewing the play-actors, much more “dissolute” in the dissolving flame; of looking upon the charioteer, all glowing in his chariot of fire; of beholding the wrestlers, not in their gymnasia, but tossing in the fiery billows; unless even then I shall not care to attend to such ministers of sin, in my eager wish rather to fix a gaze insatiable on those whose fury vented itself against the Lord. [6] “This,” I shall say, “this is that carpenter’s or hireling’s son, that Sabbath-breaker, that Samaritan and devil-possessed! This is He whom you purchased from Judas! This is He whom you struck with reed and fist, whom you contumuously spat upon, to whom you gave gall and vinegar to drink! This is He whom His disciples secretly stole away, that it might be said He had risen again, or the gardener abstracted, that his lettuces might come to no harm from the crowds of visitants!”

B. The Empty Tomb

4. Corroboration
   - Testimony of Women
     - Primary witnesses, all gospel accounts
     - Women had low social status, credibility as witnesses
     - Only plausible if they actually were the first witnesses
Testimony of Women

Talmud
- Sotah 19a
- Kiddushin 82b
- Rosh HaShana

Jospehus
- Antiquities, 4.8.15

Suetonius
- The Twelve Caesers, Augustus 44

"Sooner let the words of the Law be burnt than delivered to women"

"...happy is he whose children are male, but unhappy is he whose children are female"

Rosh HaShana 1:8 takes the testimony of women as no better than that of a thief

"Let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex..." [nor servants]

Suetonius explains how women literally had to take a back seat socially

C. Appearances

Disciples claimed post-mortem appearances of Jesus and believed he was physically resurrected

1. Paul claims it personally
   - 1 Cor. 9:1, 15:8

2. Oral tradition was common for teaching – no printing press or literacy
   - Paul relays a creed – 1 Cor. 15:3-5
     - How we know it is a creed:
       - "Received" and "delivered" – rabbinic terms for transmission of teaching
       - "Cephas" is Aramaic but Paul writes in Greek
       - hoti ("that") commonly used in creeds (akin to quotation marks)
       - Stylized content with parallelisms
       - Use of more primitive, non-Pauline phrases like "the Twelve" and "the third day", etc.
     - How we know it is early and from eyewitnesses:
       - Jesus Death 30 AD – Paul converts 31-33 AD – Paul visits Jerusalem 34-36 AD – receives creed within a few years at earliest and 51 AD at the latest (this is when he visits Corinth and passes on the creed)
       - Galatians 1:18-19 – explicit interaction with Peter and James
For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received...

...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

... hoti Christos apethanen huper ton hamartion hemon kata tas graphas, kai hoti etaphe, kai hoti egegertai te hemera te trite kata tas graphas, kai hoti ophthe Kepha, eita tois dodeka.

3. Appearances

3. Acts sermons – summaries delivered from early church oral tradition (1-5, 10, 13, 17)
  ◦ Early, possible eyewitness testimony
  ◦ Within 20 years of Jesus' death

4. The gospel accounts
  ◦ Written within 70 years max of Jesus' death
  ◦ All four claim the appearances and record belief that Jesus resurrected
3. Appearances

5. **Church fathers**
   - Clement
   - Phil. 4:3?
   - Placed in fellowship with the Apostles, esp. Peter by Irenaeus and Tertullian
   - Clement letter to Corinth
   - Polycarp
   - Taught by apostles, esp. John according to Irenaeus and Tertullian
   - Letter to the Philippians

Referring to the apostles,

"Therefore, having received orders and complete certainty caused by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and believing in the word of God, they went with the Holy Spirit's certainty, preaching the good news that the kingdom of God is about to come."
About Paul and other apostles,
"For they did not love the present age, but him who died for our benefit and for our sake was raised by God."

Polycarp

*To the Philippians, 9:2*

110-140 AD