

He Appeared

The risen Lord Jesus appeared to His _____ over a forty-day period. Today, we're examining the eyewitnesses of Jesus _____ His resurrection. God has not been _____. He revealed His written _____ in both the Old and New Testament. He also revealed Himself through the _____ Jesus, who is called the "Word." John 1:1-3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Jesus Christ has always existed and is _____. It's easy to see how He rose again. The One who made the world could overcome death.

We're looking at the historical _____ of the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection. Jesus presented Himself _____ by many convincing proofs to His disciples. If we were to question these eyewitnesses whether Jesus really rose from the dead, the record reveals that they were fully convinced of His resurrection and were willing to _____ and to die preaching the gospel message of His death burial and resurrection. They wouldn't take it back!

We'll also briefly _____ whether Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are credible witnesses. Can we _____ them? We'll see _____ we can trust their independent accounts of His resurrection. We're certainly not the first to do this, and we'll see how historians and legal scholars have handled the ancient _____. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ have been the most investigated events in _____. No stone is unturned. The facts of the first century _____ still remain the most important witnesses to the resurrection. We'll see what conclusions scholars and investigators have made.

Our reading today comes from I Corinthians 15:3-8.

An undeniable evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ came in the _____ of those who followed Him and knew Him best. Virtually all critical scholars recognize an unmistakable _____ in the disciples after Jesus "presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

Before the appearances and proofs of His resurrection the disciples had lost _____; they were depressed, afraid, and doubting. Though the women brought back word of the empty _____ and what the angel said about His resurrection, Luke 24:10-11 says, "But these words seemed to them an _____ tale, and they didn't believe them." John 20:19 speaks of the apostles hiding in an upper room with the doors locked, for _____ of the Jews. Thomas said in John 20:25, "Unless I see in his hands the marks of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." It's evident these disciples _____ convincing before they would believe Jesus fulfilled His prediction. Even though they had seen many miracles, they couldn't grasp how God would raise Jesus up.

The risen Jesus Christ, however, did _____ Himself to His disciples. The New Testament provides numerous appearances of the Lord Jesus to the people who _____ Him best. He first appeared to Mary Magdalene weeping outside the tomb in the garden. When she realized Jesus was speaking to her, she grabbed _____ of Him. Jesus sent her to tell the disciples. Later that day Jesus appeared to Peter, to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and to the apostles without Thomas. Later He appeared to Thomas and invited him to feel the mark in His hands.

Longer quotations may not appear in the Study Sheet, but can be read in the accompanying transcript.

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Jesus appeared to seven disciples while they were _____ at the Sea of Galilee and enjoyed a breakfast of fish and bread with them. Jesus appeared to “more than _____ brethren at one time.” He appeared to James. Matthew records His words telling them to make disciples of all the nations. Last of all He appeared to the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul later received many revelations from the Lord. The book of Revelation in chapter one reveals how Jesus appeared to John.

Lee Strobel, interviewing Gary Habermas, put the number of witnesses to the resurrection appearances into perspective in his book, *The Case for Christ*, he wrote: “Without question, the _____ of testimony and corroboration of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances is staggering. To put it into perspective, if you were to call each one of the witnesses into a _____ of law to be cross-examined for just fifteen minutes each, and you went around the clock without a break, it would take you from breakfast on Monday until dinner on Friday to hear them all. After listening to 129 straight hours of eyewitness testimony, who could possibly walk away unconvinced?”

The apostles are convincing to us because they themselves were convinced. The disciples, after the forty days of convincing proofs of the Lord’s resurrection, were a very _____ group of men than they were just days before. No longer did they _____ faith or hope. No longer were they unsure. No, they were a bold and outspoken band of witnesses who couldn’t hold back their _____. You can hear it in the words of Peter at Pentecost: “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with _____ works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite _____ and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be _____ by it (Acts 2:22-24). The twelve declared that they were witnesses of the resurrection (Acts 2:32). This public declaration was exactly what the Jewish leaders wanted to _____. Interestingly, they knew the stone was moved and the tomb was empty. Now they know Jesus appeared to the disciples.

We can see their boldness continuing: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 3:13). When the Jewish Council charged Peter and John not to _____ any more in the name of Jesus, Peter and John answered them, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but _____ of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:18-20). Later, “the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison” (Acts 5:17-18). When the high priest told them not to _____ in Christ’s name, Peter and the apostles answered, “We must _____ God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of _____. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who _____ him. When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them” (Acts 5:27-33).

Later, “when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to _____ in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, _____ that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not _____ teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus” (Acts 5:40-42).

The New Testament reveals how the Jewish leaders with _____ stoned Stephen and began persecuting the church. Acts 8:1-3 says, “Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to _____. And on that day a great persecution began against the _____ in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and

dragging off men and women, and he would put them in prison.” In those days, to be a Christian meant there was a _____ to pay, in those days and for some even today there is a price!

The Scripture records Stephen’s death by stoning in Acts 7 and the beheading of the apostle James in Acts 12. Ancient tradition provides _____ the apostles and other leaders died for their faith. Though these are human sources and may be flawed, they reveal what the _____ church recorded about these martyrs. Matthew suffered death from the _____ in Ethiopia. Mark was dragged through the streets in Alexandria, Egypt. Luke was _____ in Greece. John was sentenced to the mines on the _____ island of Patmos. Peter was crucified _____ down in Rome. Accounts about James the Just, the brother of Jesus, differ. Some say he was thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple, while others say that he was beaten to death. Bartholomew was whipped to death or crucified in Armenia. Andrew was crucified in Patras, Greece. Thomas was stabbed with a _____ in India. Jude was killed with _____. The Emperor Nero had Paul tortured and beheaded outside Rome.

These men remained _____ to Jesus and were committed to preaching the gospel, even if it cost their lives. One cannot _____ their faith and total commitment. One must attribute their unquestionable loyalty to the _____ that they preached. They wouldn’t have suffered death for a fraudulent _____. Paul expressed his conviction, “But I do not account my life of any _____ nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). We must take this radical change into account!

You may ask, “Phil, how can we trust the four gospel accounts as historical?” Gary Habermas, a recognized university professor and historian, in his book *The Historical Jesus* recorded and examined 45 ancient sources for the life of Jesus _____ the New Testament. Some were Christian, but many were non-Christian, and some were archaeological. He found 129 reported _____ revealing the life, person, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He noted that Jesus is one of the most mentioned and most substantiated lives in ancient times.

The early church fathers, who lived in the second and third centuries, _____ the New Testament an astounding 36,289 times; and one can reconstruct the _____ New Testament from these quotations with the exception of eleven verses. If the life, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus were simply a _____ without credibility, one must wonder why so many writers within such a short time wrote about Him, quoted the witnesses, and regarded the New Testament testimony as the ultimate, divine authority for life and godliness.

Dr. Harvey W. Everest in his classic textbook, *The Divine Demonstration*, lists some criteria used to _____ historical evidence. When the criteria are met, we can judge the testimony to be the _____. First, the evidence is credible when the witnesses are honest, competent, and have the opportunity to _____. The apostles and disciples were _____ witnesses.

Second, evidence is credible when the witnesses _____ in general statement, although they may differ on minor points. This is exactly the case with the four gospel accounts. They all note the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They all say the tomb was empty and the stone rolled away.

Third, evidence is credible when there is no known _____ for imposture or faking. The apostles and preachers who witnessed Jesus didn’t become rich or powerful because of their testimony.

Fourth, the testimony is reliable when the facts recorded are strongly _____ the well-being or interest of the narrator. Since most suffered martyrdom for their preaching, one cannot question whether they believed what they preached. God raised Jesus up!

Fifth, the testimony is reliable when such witnesses are _____. More than 500 people saw Jesus alive, and some saw Him numerous times.

Sixth, the testimony is reliable when the recorded facts and the existing facts are _____ as cause and effect. One can substantiate the lives of many New Testament people in history. Geographical and historical references are to be correct.

Seventh, the testimony is reliable when recorded _____ are sustained by existing documents, coins, games, or other public institutions. The existence of the church, their meeting on the first day of the week (that is, the resurrection day), the taking of the Lord's Supper, and baptizing penitent adults in water uniting them with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection are direct results of the life, teaching, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Since the testimony of the New Testament meets these criteria, one can have confidence that these Biblical books are credible! For the earliest disciples, the Lord's resurrection was not a "leap in the dark"; there were too many witnesses who knew the truth!

Simon Greenleaf, professor of law at Harvard, and author of a three-volume classic work, *On A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*, wrote a small work about the Testimony of the Evangelists. He concluded, "Let [the Gospel's] testimony be sifted, as it were given in a _____ of justice on the side of the adverse party, the witnesses being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently _____, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth." He believed the _____ accounts could hold up in a court of law!

First Corinthians 15:1-2 speaks of the gospel message; Paul defines that message as the _____ of the Lord's death, burial and resurrection. Paul wrote, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." They believed the message of Christ's resurrection and took their _____ on it! As long as they held to their faith and conviction, they were saved by it!

Those who lived at the time saw Jesus _____ and knew the truth. They touched and ate with Him. Their preaching of His death, burial, and resurrection cost them dearly, but they were willing to _____ to proclaim the gospel message. They sacrificed their lives, because the message is _____.

What about you? Do you believe the message is true? Will you hold fast? The salvation of the Lord comes to those who make a total commitment! Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him _____ himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Luke 9:23-24)

Your love for and faith in Christ must lead you to repentance, turning from sin to righteousness, from the world to following Jesus. Repentance is necessary; Jesus said that unless we repent, we'll perish in Luke 13:3. Peter follows up in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Won't you repent and be baptized today?

Focus your heart on God today by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. There's probably a church of Christ in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one.