

Series: **Easter Sunday 2024**

CDOBC

Today's Title: **"Witness #4"**

March 31, 2024 - **John 20:19-23; Luke 24:36-48**

Easter Sunday

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**OBJECTIVE:** To help people gain confidence in the resurrection through the eyewitness testimony recorded in Scripture.

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### *Opening Prayer*

Welcome!

Easter is recognized and celebrated by the 2.6 billion Christians around the globe.

(Source: <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/resources/status-of-global-christianity/>)

Most of those 2.6 billion Christians have already...or will soon gather today to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

My guess is that millions of others will attend an Easter celebration service who are not yet Christians, but they are investigating what the resurrection of Jesus is all about.

So, I'm glad you've joined us today to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus – or, if you're curious about Jesus and checking out the Christian faith and what it's all about – I'm really glad you've here.

It's actually quite predictable... Every Easter, there are cover features by Time magazine – National Geographic –

Newsweek – and a few other media outlets and platforms – that call into question the resurrection of Jesus.

The headlines refer to “New Discovery” – “Rethinking the Resurrection”, or something like that.

Around 2016, National Geographic produced a special, claiming an archeological discovery had found Jesus’ family tomb – and they found the bones of Jesus!

If this was a legitimate discovery, it would prove that Jesus was not raised from the dead – and the entire basis of the Christian faith would be destroyed.

However, after only a few days, this alleged discovery was proven to be false – nothing more than a hoax - and the articles and reruns of the show were pulled.

**The resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact** – with multiple eyewitnesses – and over the centuries many have attempted to disprove it, but all attempts have failed.

Over the past several Easters, I have taken a look at each of the resurrection appearances of Jesus as documented in the Gospel accounts – and the eyewitnesses who saw the resurrected Christ.

### **Resurrection Appearances & Eyewitnesses:**

1. Mary Magdalene - **Sunday morning** - **John 20:11-18** (Mark 16:9-11)

2. The group of women - **Sunday morning**

Mary - (mother of James and Joseph and wife of Clopas - Matt. 27:56; John 19:25);

Salome (mother of James and John, wife of Zebedee - Mark 16:1; Matt. 27:56) **Matthew 28:8-10**

3. Disciples on the Road to Emmaus - **Sunday mid-late morning/afternoon?**  
2 disciples - **Luke 24:13-35** (Mark 16:12-13)

***This morning***, I want us to look at the 4<sup>th</sup> resurrection appearance and eyewitness account - when Jesus appeared to:

His Disciples in the upper room - w/out Thomas - **Sunday night**

5. Disciples in upper room - with Thomas - **8 days later** - John 20:24-29 (Mark 16:14)
6. Shore - Sea of Galilee / Breakfast - 7 disciples - **sometime later** - John 21:1-14
7. 500+ people - **various times before His ascension** - 1 Corinthians 15:1-7
8. Saul/Paul - **Road to Damascus** - 1 Corinthians 15:8; Acts 9:1-19

This appearance is recorded in 2 of the Gospels – **John 20** and **Luke 24** – and it is referenced to in **Mark 16**.

My primary focus today will be in **Luke 24**.

**Turn to Luke 24** (p. 885) - We pick up the account in **vs. 33**.

**Read Luke 24:33-35**

**The surprise and shock that Jesus was alive.** vs. 33-35

It's important we understand that the disciples were surprised by the resurrection of Jesus.

Their surprise is somewhat difficult to comprehend since Jesus told them numerous times that He would be killed, and then raised 3 days later.

**Matthew 16:21**

“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”

**Mark 9:31**

...He was teaching His disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He is killed, after three days He will rise.”

**Luke 18:32-33**

“For He (The Christ) will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging Him, they will kill Him, and on the third day He will rise.”

**But, for some reason, the disciples didn't get it.**

*It is easier to believe someone can die – but pretty difficult to believe they were raised from the dead – brought back to life!*

But that's exactly what happened.

***But not 1 of the disciples believed Jesus would be raised from the dead.***

For centuries, critics of the resurrection of Jesus have tried to discount and discredit the resurrection account. **Matthew 28:1-15** records the Jewish religious establishment bribing the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb of Jesus when the resurrection occurred. They bribed them to lie – to tell people that they fell asleep while guarding the tomb, and the disciples of Jesus came and stole His body.

**Matthew 28:12-14**

“...they (Jewish leaders) gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’ And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.”

Throughout history, critics of the resurrection have not only passed along this lie, but they've contrived other stories attempting to explain away the empty tomb.

A popular one is that His disciples were so enamored with the idea of Jesus' resurrection – so smitten with it – that they unconsciously made it into a false reality that they started to tell others – as if it was true!

They wanted it to be true so badly that it eventually became true in their own minds!

***But the Bible makes clear*** – both before and after the crucifixion, the disciples couldn't get their mind around the idea of resurrection.

They didn't even believe the initial eyewitness testimony of the risen Jesus!

**Once a person is dead...they stay dead!!!**

But Jesus was no ordinary person!

He was God incarnate – God in flesh – raised from the dead – and the disciples were surprised and shocked by what they were seeing!

**Troubled at great news!** vs. 36-40

This is a fascinating account – which in my mind, only adds to the reliability of the account.

You would think upon seeing the resurrected Jesus, the disciples would be out-of-their-minds excited!

But they weren't.

## Read vs. 36-40

Jesus had told them numerous times that He would be raised from the dead.

And now He's standing there – among them.

vs. 37 - “But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.”

Can you imagine Jesus' thoughts here?

*‘Are you kidding me? I told you guys about this – but you obviously didn't listen!!’*

Jesus tells them, “Peace to you!”

When Jesus was born, the angels proclaimed to the shepherds,

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!” - Luke 2:14

Peace was always one of the primary reasons Jesus took on flesh – and went to the cross.

To make “peace” possible between man and God.

This is not primarily a “peace” between nations, or even between people – although that should be a by-product of mankind being reconciled to God.

**Jesus came – to make a way of forgiveness – and through His sacrifice on the cross He made peace with God possible.**

So, the disciples are “startled and frightened” because they think Jesus is a ghost.

Their reaction is understandable in the sense that all of a sudden – a person suddenly appears in a room that – according to **John 20:19** – is locked-up tight.

John tells us the disciples were fearful of being arrested and put to death by the Jewish religious establishment, so they were hiding – in a locked room somewhere in Jerusalem.

But here, all of a sudden, in a room locked-up tight – Jesus suddenly appears!

But, at the same time, Jesus had told them He would rise from the dead...

Earlier in the day, **Mary Magdalene and the other ladies** had told them they saw the resurrected Jesus and talked with Him.

**Peter** had seen and talked with the resurrected Jesus.

Jesus knows this, and His comment (vs. 38) is a rebuke to their lack of faith and doubts.

**vs. 38** - “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?”

**Mark 16:14**

“Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and He rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw Him after He had risen.”

This is a rhetorical question.

They have no reason to be afraid.

They need to look at the evidence – use their minds – trust what He has told them and believe what the O.T. prophesied about Him!!!

**vs. 39** is very interesting...

Notice where Jesus says, “It is I Myself.”

This is easy to miss in the English, but in the Greek, this is the same pronoun and verb that Jesus uses throughout the book of John and His “I am” statements.

“I am the resurrection and the life...” – John 11:25

“I am the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep” – John 10:11, 14

“I am the way, the truth, and the life...” – John 14:6

“I am the true vine...” – John 15:1, 5

“I am the bread of life...” – John 6:35

“I am the light of the world...” – John 8:12

This is a clear statement (**vs. 39**) by Jesus of His divinity.

“I am” – it is the name God told Moses at the burning bush in **Exodus 3:14** – And God said (to Moses), “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Jesus used this same ‘name’ – “I am” – in reference to Himself throughout His ministry.

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!”

At that point they picked up stones to throw at Him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple.” - John 8:58-59

Jesus is once again – using this name / title – which means ‘self-existing one’ – and applying it to Himself.

“It is I Myself.”

He then proceeds to invite them to look at His “hands and...feet”.

He’s referring to the nail marks – the holes where the nails were placed when He was crucified.

The wording is more specific in **John 20:25-27**.

In this first appearance of Jesus to His disciples, Thomas wasn’t there.

When Thomas returns, the disciples tell him they just saw Jesus!!

But Thomas isn’t convinced.

But Thomas said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into His side, I will never believe.”

Eight days later, His disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”

The resurrected Jesus had a real – corporeal body.

He wasn’t a spirit – but a real, physical body.

It was certainly different from His pre-resurrection body.

This body was eternal – and it was/is different in its molecular and cellular composition – it could travel through walls – into rooms that are locked and secured –

it was able to move through the linen strips of cloth that He was buried in – and He just passed through them when He was raised.

But it's still a physical body with “flesh and bones”.

### **Read vs. 41-43**

This might be really confusing at first, but it's really simple to understand.

vs. 41 - “...they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling...” – this is a bit confusing in how it's written, but it's actually a very familiar concept.

We even have a common phrases for this.

*“This is too good to be \_\_\_\_\_!”*

*“Pinch me... I must be dreaming!!!”*

To prove He is a real, physical bodily presence / person – and not a ghost, Jesus asks for some food – since ghosts / spirits don't eat.

He eats it and it must have settled the issue for them – because He will move on to another point in a minute.

Paul gives us some insight that is probably the most exciting and encouraging detail in this passage for us.

*To know we will have a resurrected body like Jesus does!!!*

### **Philippians 3:21**

“...the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body...”

**1 Cor. 15:49** - NLT

“Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly Man.”

How exciting – that those who believe in Jesus – who have faith in Jesus – will one day be raised in the power of Jesus – and we will have a resurrected body like His body!!!

**Their mission is our mission.** vs. 44-48

**Read vs. 44-48**

Some people in our modern-day really struggle with believing the testimony of people in ancient times. C.S. Lewis struggled with this – and he self-diagnosed his struggle with trusting the ancient witness and labeled it: ‘Chronological Snobbery’.

(<https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/c-s-lewis-on-chronological-snobbery/>)

This is when we believe our modern-day mind, intellect, and belief system is so advanced and superior – ‘enlightened’ – that we discount the testimony of people who lived in the past – thinking they were not smart enough.

But this is an intellectually dishonest dismissal of the eyewitness testimony from the past.

We need to realize these were real people – with working brains like ours.

Yes, their world was different in many ways, but not their brains or their ability to describe what they saw.

Jesus reminds the disciples that He told them about these things.

He taught them the prophecies throughout the O.T. that are about Him - the Messiah / Christ.

vs. 45-46 - “Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead...”

vs. 47-48 - Jesus goes on to ‘commission’ them to the work of the Gospel.

This would soon become the mission of the Church – but the Church hasn’t been introduced or inaugurated yet.

But the disciples – who will now be called the Apostles – their job will be to tell others about these things.

- A disciple is a student / learner.

- An apostle is a sent one – commissioned one.

This message of repentance and forgiveness is to “be proclaimed in all nations...”

It’s for everyone!!!

It’s for you here today!!!

If you’re a follower of Christ – if you’ve put your faith in Christ – then Jesus has commissioned you also – “...that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations...You are witnesses of these things.”

***Apply it...***

What is your reaction / response to Jesus' resurrection?

We've seen how the disciples were shocked and surprised – even troubled and alarmed when they saw the risen Jesus.

- *What is your reaction to the resurrection?*

- *What is your response?*

We've read the 4<sup>th</sup> eyewitness account – recorded by Luke.

But there is another witness – a silent witness that screams out the truth - the empty tomb.

What is your reply to the empty tomb?

Have you put your faith in Jesus as your Savior?

Have you made Him Lord of your life?

Trust in the love and grace of Jesus.

Sometimes, the very thing Jesus wants to forgive is the very thing that keeps you from coming to Him. We think our sin is too ugly – unforgiveable - too 'sinful'.

But Jesus extended His arms on the cross to pay the price for those sins.

They are not beyond His reach – and you are not beyond the reach of His love and grace.

We may put on a good face – a good look – like everything is under control – but in reality, we're empty and hurting inside.

The late Robin Williams – who made us all laugh through his work - he took his own life in 2014 – he famously said:

“All it takes is a beautiful fake smile to hide an injured soul.”

— *Robin Williams*

The great 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and scientist Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) wrote that each person has a “*God shaped hole*”.

A ‘*hole*’ in each of our souls that we try to fill with all sorts of things in this world, but it can only be filled by the God who created us.

[Source: the thoughts and writings of Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* VII (425)]

If you’re keeping your distance from God – because you think you’re beyond His love and forgiveness, then you need to know you’re not!! His love for you far surpasses your sin. He will lavish His love and grace on you when you come to Him in faith.

Today – Easter 2024 – make this the day / the year – that you say ‘yes’ to God – and believe in Him – as your resurrected Lord and Savior.

*Close in prayer*