


Reasons to Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

2026-04-05 – 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

	<p>In 1 Corinthians 15:1–8, Paul gives two foundational reasons to believe in the resurrection: the Old Testament Scriptures foretold Christ’s death and resurrection, and the risen Jesus appeared to many eyewitnesses—including the apostles and Paul himself—whose lives were transformed. These truths remain the foundation of our faith, as the risen Christ continues to change lives today.</p>
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He is risen indeed. Happy Resurrection Sunday. Praise the Lord. My name is Dan, and I am a pastor here at Cornerstone Church. Today we are celebrating the most important historical event in our Christian faith: the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Bible is emphatic. Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins. He was buried, and He rose back to life on the third day. He appeared over a period of 40 days to the apostles and the church, and then He ascended into heaven to send His Holy Spirit to fill believers. Today He stands at God’s right hand, and He offers the gift of eternal life by grace through faith—not anything we can earn—by His grace alone, through faith in Him alone, in Christ alone.

God tells us to give a defense to anyone who asks us to give a reason for the hope that we have, yet with gentleness and respect. So today, as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, we are going to study a passage of Scripture that gives us two reasons to believe that Jesus Christ truly rose from the dead.

You know, we forget that many of the people that we look up to in the Christian world, we think that they were always Christians, but many of the people that we look up to actually started out as skeptics. C.S. Lewis, Lee Strobel, Josh McDowell, even the Apostle Paul—all started out seeking to discredit, to disprove, and even to destroy the faith of Jesus Christ. One might ask the question, why do so many people try to disprove something that they don’t even believe in? Paradoxically, this is actually tangential evidence for the living Christ.

But there are also honest seekers—people who ask sincere questions like, “Is Jesus really the Son of God? Was He really crucified to pay the penalty for my sins? Did Jesus really rise again? And what evidence does the Bible give in answer to these questions?”

Today we’re going to talk about two main lines of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are many, many layers and aspects of evidence, but we’re going to focus on the two most foundational aspects of evidence that the Lord gives us through the Apostle Paul.

Before we dive into the Word, I’d like to make a note that our own stories can be one of the most powerful things we have to share with others. Because our lives have been changed by our relationship with Jesus Christ, this is evidence in itself that He is alive today, because His Spirit lives in us. Peter says, ***“Though you have not seen Christ, you love Him. And even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled***

with an inexpressible and glorious joy, and are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”
(1 Peter 1:8–9)

It’s true. The cumulative testimonies of the church is a powerful evidence. Today’s passage will be a reminder that eyewitness testimonies in the early church, combined with the written prophecies of the Old Testament, were such a powerful combination that nothing—with the Holy Spirit’s power—could stop the message of Jesus Christ’s resurrection from spreading across the world from twenty centuries ago to today.

Now please allow me briefly to speak to anyone here who doesn’t yet believe in Jesus, anyone here who doesn’t yet call Him Lord and Savior. The Bible says that everything about the Christian faith, everything about the claims of Christ, stand or fall on the resurrection of Jesus. If Christ was raised from the dead, then all of the things He said about Himself and eternity and everything else—heaven and hell—immediately become believable, even to the skeptic. But if Christ wasn’t raised, as Paul says himself in the Bible, Christians are to be the most pitied among all people.

God asks, then, that those—even here—who are considering the claims of Christ, to not harden your heart when you hear the Holy Spirit’s voice through the Word of God. I ask you to please listen to today’s message and consider with a soft heart and an open mind what God might be saying about Jesus Christ to you. Maybe even pray a prayer from your heart now if you don’t yet know the Lord: “God, if what this man is saying is true, show me.”

Before we open the passage, I’d like to talk briefly about this idea of resurrection. What did people in Jesus’ day, twenty centuries ago, think about resurrection? What is resurrection anyway? Resurrection is something that is dead and it is brought back to life. We throw the word around, but just define it briefly.

People in Jesus’ day thought about resurrection going back to Adam—people died, and they died, and they died. But there was a hope that God gave through the Word to the nation of Israel, to the people of God, and this hope was a resurrection hope. I’m going to demonstrate it to you. The Jewish nation had a belief in the future resurrection from the dead—at least part of them did. This resurrection from the dead was a belief that at the last day everyone would be raised, some to eternal glory, some to eternal punishment.

There was division on the topic in Jesus’ day, just as there is today. There were two leading religious groups that you’re probably aware of that taught two different things: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees taught that there was resurrection, there was life after death, there’s a literal heaven and hell, there are angels and demons, there’s the unseen spiritual world. The Sadducees—as they say, “they’re sad you see”—because they denied the existence of all of these things.

Fundamentally, those who took the Scriptures literally believed in the spiritual world. And those who didn’t take the Scriptures literally disbelieved. It’s that simple. In fact, Jesus, during His ministry, rebukes which group? The Sadducees. He tells them, ***“You are wrong... You do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”*** (Matthew 22:29) He’s that clear. He says you’re fundamentally wrong.

But even with wrong teaching that was present in Israel, many people did believe that there would be a resurrection at the last day. In John 11 we read about Jesus's interaction with a woman named Martha, a friend of His, whose brother Lazarus we know had just died. Martha says to Jesus when He arrives for the funeral, **"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."** Jesus says to her, **"Your brother will rise again."** Resurrection. But Martha answers, **"I know he will rise in the resurrection at the last day."** See, she believed in a resurrection at the last day, as did many of the Jews.

But Jesus then said to her, **"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though he dies. And whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"** **"Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."** (John 11:21–27)

Jesus then goes to the tomb of her brother, and He calls out to Lazarus, who had been buried for a few days already, and raises him back to life at the command of His voice—a resurrection before the resurrection at the last day. With only two weeks left before Jesus Himself would go to the cross, Jesus proves at the grave of Lazarus that He has total power over death and resurrection. He calls a dead man back to life with the sound of His voice.

Jesus said, not actually long before this whole event happened, **"No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."** (John 10:18)

So the Jews, having the Old Testament in their possession for 1,500 years at this point—fifteen centuries—they should have known. Not just about the resurrection at the last day, but also that their Messiah would be resurrected from the dead, because this is exactly what their Scriptures foretold, which is what we're going to look at together here in a moment. But they weren't reading all of their Scriptures carefully. Even the devil wasn't reading all of the Scriptures carefully. They were motivated to focus on prophecies about the Messiah's conquering rule and reign politically. They missed the prophecies about His first coming, His suffering, and then His resurrection.

But Jesus Christ, the Author of the Word, knew what the Word said about Himself. He knew His mission, and He knew He was returning to heaven. So He said in advance to the people around Him, multiple times, multiple times, **"How slow you are to believe"** that He would die and then rise. He said it many times, but no one seemed to hear or understand.

We're going to turn our attention now to today's text, and we're going to see how Jesus wasn't alone in telling people about His death and resurrection in advance. Because as Paul says, the prophets of the Old Testament foresaw and foretold the details of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and eternal reign. In our passage today, Paul will remind us that the apostles themselves and the early church saw Jesus with their own eyes after He rose from the dead. They were transformed as a result into bold witnesses who died for their faith. Think of that—they died for their faith.

Paul also points in this text to his own testimony as one who was formerly a persecutor of the church and the last person anyone at that time would have ever expected to become a believer in Jesus. Yet after

Jesus appears to Paul from heaven, he becomes the most powerful preacher of Christ's resurrection the world has ever known.

So let's turn to today's text and stand as we read God's Word. I will read, but please follow along.

"Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I passed on to you as most important what I also received (Paul says): that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the Twelve. Then He appeared to over 500 brothers and sisters at one time. Most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep (died in the Lord). Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, He also appeared to me. For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." (1 Corinthians 15:1–9)

Please be seated.

Paul had one goal in life: to know Christ and to make Him known, to preach Jesus Christ crucified. He said, "I didn't come to baptize. I came to preach Christ and Him crucified." He preached this message to the Corinthians. They received it. They believed it. Paul says in verse 1 that they took their stand upon it. He then tells the church to hold firmly, to not let go of the word that he preached to them. Because by believing this good news about Jesus, we are saved.

Like an expert attorney, Paul puts forth a two-part defense for the resurrection of Jesus Christ to give the church down through the ages a bedrock confidence that Christ was raised from the dead. He begins by pointing to evidence contained in the Old Testament. Please look with me at verse 3.

"For what I passed on to you as of first importance I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)

Now Paul says first, ***for what I received***. Bible scholars know that this was one of the first creeds in the early church. Paul was given it. He received the creed and he's giving it to the church here. He had received it from the apostles and was passing the creed on to the Corinthians here in chapter 15.

Two times within this creed we are reminded that the Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would be crucified, buried, and resurrected from the dead. Christ died, Paul says, ***according to the Scriptures***. He was buried and He was raised ***according to the Scriptures***. He's not talking about the Gospels in the New Testament. He's talking about the Old Testament Scriptures. Do you see that? The creed points to the Old Testament, written by the prophets hundreds and hundreds—up to 1,500 years—before the time that he was writing.

The reason the authors of the Old Testament are called prophets is because God showed them by His Spirit what would take place prior to it happening. Then they carefully wrote it down. Jesus says in Matthew 13, ***"For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it. They***

longed to hear what you hear, but they did not hear it. (Matthew 13:17) Because the prophets knew that Christ was coming, and they wanted to be here when He came, but they weren't.

Peter says of these prophets, ***"No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*** (2 Peter 1:21) The picture there is a boat being pushed by the wind, carried by the wind. It's powerful evidence because God announced long before, long before it happened that Christ would suffer and rise.

When Jesus told His disciples repeatedly throughout His ministry that this is what would happen, they should not have been so slow to understand or believe because they had the Scriptures. Had they been searching the Scriptures like Bereans, they'd have said, "Oh, I've heard this before. I see this." But they didn't.

Moses wrote the Pentateuch 1,500 years before Christ came. David wrote the Psalms a thousand years—ten centuries—before Christ came. Isaiah wrote over 700 years before. Daniel over 550 years prior.

So as we think of Paul writing today's passage, 20 centuries ago, we need to be reminded how well Paul knew the Old Testament. He's a Pharisee of Pharisees who studied under Gamaliel, was blameless according to the Old Testament law, a Hebrew of Hebrews. Paul says the Old Testament Scriptures foretold the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Plainly put.

Paul and the early church are claiming through this creed that the prophets of the Old Testament foresaw and foretold that Jesus the Messiah would be crucified for our sins and then rise from the dead. During His ministry, Jesus also taught that the prophets spoke of Him. He told the Pharisees, ***"Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day. He saw it and rejoiced."*** (John 8:56) Abraham had lived twenty centuries prior to Jesus. Yet Jesus says to the Pharisees that Abraham saw, foresaw His day. The Pharisees, confused, reply, ***"You are not even fifty years old, and You say that he saw Your day?"*** Jesus says, ***"Before Abraham was born, I AM!"*** (John 8:57–58)

After Jesus was raised from the dead but before He ascended into heaven, He joins two men walking on the road to Emmaus who were talking about all that had happened recently around Christ's crucifixion in Jerusalem. Christ hides His identity from them as He joins them on the road. We are going to unpack what He may have said in a moment. Hearing their confusion, Jesus walks alongside them and says to them, ***"How foolish you are and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken (all that the prophets have spoken)! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter into His glory?"*** Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, (all the Prophets we read), He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself. When He then disappeared from their sight at the table, having broken the bread, they asked each other, ***"Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"*** (Luke 24:25–27, 32)

As Jesus walked with them, he began with Moses and all the prophets. Jesus doesn't directly reveal himself to these two men at first. He takes them to the Word of God in the Old Testament and their hearts burned within them because the Spirit of God wrote the Word of God and the people of God here chiefly through the Word of God. By the Spirit of God's illumination in our lives and hearts.

In Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham tells the rich man who is in hell and asks him to go to his living brothers, Abraham says to him, your brothers who are still alive, they have Moses. What does that mean? It means they have the Old Testament. And he goes, if they don't believe Moses, they're not even going to believe it if someone comes back to life and talks to him. (Luke 16:29, 31)

Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, known as the Pentateuch, and his writings along with the rest of the Old Testament—the 39 books—are filled with both prophetic promises and gospel pictures of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Let's walk with Jesus and the men as best we can through some of the Old Testament scriptures together now.

In Genesis chapter 3, after Adam and Eve sinned, God makes a promise that He's going to curse the serpent: ***"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel."*** (Genesis 3:15) Jesus is the seed of the woman who crushed the serpent's head. Then the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and Eve as they were banished, which was the first ever sacrifice required for sin in the world.

Further in Genesis, God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, which incidentally was close to where Christ himself was sacrificed outside Jerusalem. Abraham, in obedience to God's command, takes Isaac up the mountain with him, telling his boy that God would provide the lamb. He ties Isaac to the wood, lifts his knife, only to be stopped by an angel of the Lord. Abraham looks and there is a ram stuck in the thicket, which becomes the sacrifice instead of Isaac. The angel says that God will bless all nations through Abraham. Jesus came from the line of Abraham, and the New Testament mystery of the Gospel—once hidden, now revealed—is that God offers salvation to every people, language, tribe, tongue, and nation through the offspring of Abraham, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, because God provided the sacrifice. He did not withhold His one and only Son.

In Exodus, God commands Moses and Israel to observe the Passover, which requires the Israelites to put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts so that the angel of death would pass over their families. The lamb of Passover points us directly to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world by His own blood.

In Leviticus, God gives Moses the sacrificial system—the means for relationship with God through atoning sacrifices, high priests, with a tabernacle which had an outer court, an inner holy place, and then the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, where God's presence dwelt. Because sin was ongoing, there was the necessity of an endless killing of animals which had to be without blemish or defect. ***"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."*** (Hebrews 9:22) This was a constant reminder that sin requires death. ***"The soul that sins, it shall die."*** (Ezekiel 18:4) The sacrificial system that God gave His people, it presses the point that anyone who would live with God needs their sins to be atoned for through death because God is holy and we are not.

Jesus is our great High Priest and He's greater than the temple itself. He's our lamb without defect or blemish. He was once and for all made the sacrifice for our sins. When He died on the cross, God ripped the temple curtain from top to bottom in the Holy of Holies to show that through the death of His Son,

Jesus Christ brought direct access to God the Father. This is why we as the church can boldly approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and grace in our time of need.

In the book of Kings, we read about king after king after king failing and falling, because God wanted to show that there's only one King, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is the only King of Israel and the people of God, and His name is Jesus Christ.

As Isaiah wrote 700 years before Christ came into the world, ***“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over His kingdom...”*** (Isaiah 9:6–7)

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14) God with us.

God made a covenant with one king in particular, David, and He promised that a son of David would always sit on His throne. Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Son of David, who will forever sit on the throne of David.

A thousand years before Christ came, 10 centuries, David prophesies numerous times throughout the Psalms. He wrote 75 of the 150 Psalms. Psalm 2, David says, 1,000 years before Jesus comes, that the Son of God will come and rule in the face of opposition from earthly kings. In Psalm 16 he prophesies specifically about the resurrection: David writes that God will not allow the Messiah's body to decay. He says, ***“For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let Your Holy One see decay.”*** (Psalm 16:10) Logically, this verse implies that the Messiah would die first in order for His body not to see decay. The disciples should have known this. And he died. And when He died, Jesus fulfills this prophecy because He rose on the third day before His body could decay in the grave.

Psalm 22 shockingly details the entire crucifixion scene: ***“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”*** (Psalm 22:1) Jesus quotes these words from the cross and he's actually referencing this Psalm. It goes on, ***“why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out to you by day, but you do not answer by night, but I find no rest. I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone despised by the people. All who see me mock me, they hurl insults, they shake their heads. He trusts in the Lord, they say. Let the Lord rescue him, let him deliver him since he delights in him. I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint, my heart has turned to wax, it has melted within me, my mouth is dried up like the potsherd. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me. A pack of villains encircles me. They pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display. People stare and bloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.***

When did that ever happen to David? And then he transitions to the Messiah's resurrection after death at the end of the Psalm. ***I will declare your name, Jesus says to my people through David in Psalm 22. In the assembly I will praise you. All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations, The mystery of the gospel foreshadowed, will bow down before Him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations.”*** (Psalm 22:22, 27–28)

We could read Psalm 40, 41, how a friend who would eat his bread would betray him, or 45, or 40, or 68, or 69, how he would be given vinegar to drink on the cross. Talk about that detail! Specificity.

Or Psalm 72, Psalm 78, Psalm 89, Psalm 110, Psalm 118, but we don't have time to go into all of them.

We don't have time to talk in detail about Micah, who predicts that Christ will be born in Bethlehem, or Jeremiah, who pictures Him being sold for thirty pieces of silver, or to go into too much detail about Daniel, who in chapter 7 says, In my vision and night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the ancient of days and was led into his presence. **He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.**" (Daniel 7:13–14) Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man 82 times in the Gospels.

And when he was standing before the high priest, before he's condemned to death, guess what He quotes? This very verse. And then the high priest rips his garment and says, "Why do we have need for any more witnesses?"

But we can't talk about Old Testament prophecy about Jesus without reading parts of Isaiah 53. Some groups avoid it altogether because it's that clear.

"Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces. He was despised, and we held Him in low esteem. Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, this is 700 years before Jesus came to earth, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth... By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living. For the transgression of my people He was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the Lord makes His life an offering for sin, whose life was ever made an offering for sin other than Jesus Christ? He will see His offspring the church and prolong His days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in His hand. After He has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied resurrection; by His knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities, It is clear as day, For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:1–12)

Let me ask you this question. These passages that I just read to you—if you were to print them out and ask a friend of yours who's not a believer to sit down at a table with you over a cup of coffee, and say, "I want you just to do a quick thought exercise with me. Read something for me, and at the end of it, don't put any—like Isaiah or Daniel or Genesis." Don't put any—like names of the books. Just ask them to read it. And then at the end of it, just ask them, "Who is this talking about?" What do you think, honestly, they would say? Jesus Christ. People do this. They go out on the street, and they go up to people and say,

"Read this." They'll even go up to Jewish people and say, "Read this." "Who is this talking about?" Jesus Christ. It is clear as day today. It's clear as day today because it matches what the Old Testament said. You see, the resurrection of Jesus, this is very important.

This is why Paul says, and the creed says, according to the scriptures, according to the scriptures. The resurrection of Jesus isn't a cleverly devised fable or legend that was made up sometime after Christ lived. It's a very important distinction.

This was pre-planned and pre-told by God repeatedly throughout Scripture—not just with prophetic descriptions of the event, but pictures with the tabernacle system, the Exodus, and Abraham's sacrifice. There are gospel pictures and gospel promises and prophecies of the Christ, all told well in advance over and over throughout Old Testament Scripture and then fulfilled by His Son Jesus Christ. The specificity of the fulfillment of these promises proves the authenticity of the identity of the Messiah. Think about that. The specificity of the fulfillment of the prophecies proves the authenticity of the identity of the Messiah. He fulfilled every single prophecy of the Old Testament regarding His first coming. He perfectly proves His identity as the Son of God, and He fulfills the promise that He would rise again.

Two things are true for you and me today. First, practically, when you read the Word of God moving forward, I would like to encourage you to look into the Word of God in the Old Testament, and on every page of Scripture, ask God to show you Jesus. Ask God to reveal Jesus to you. There are missionaries who go to groups that have never heard about the Lord before. They don't know the name Jesus. They don't know about any of this stuff. And they begin with the Old Testament to lay the foundation so people understand. Then they can understand the need for a Savior, because of the holy God and sin. So when you read the Old Testament, ask the Lord. I'm going through the Old Testament right now—the Pentateuch—as is David Cruzat, and we were talking. We're both in Numbers together. I just finished Leviticus. I used to avoid Leviticus. I went through Leviticus. You know what the problem is? People go too fast. I started doing three to five verses a day, just thinking about it. Like, whoa, whoa, whoa. I love Leviticus now because it makes me understand better who Jesus Christ is. Slow down and ask the Lord to show you Jesus in the Old Testament.

Second, if God so perfectly fulfilled His word through Jesus Christ's first coming, we should count on the fact that He's going to perfectly fulfill the rest of what He has said in Scripture about His second coming. Think about that. If He is being given vinegar on a cross, you can count on the fact that when the New Testament says Jesus Christ is coming in fire to destroy the elements by fire and to judge the ungodly and unbelieving, He is going to come with fire, burn up everything and all the elements with fire. He is going to judge the ungodly and unbelieving. That's the warning. But the comfort is you can also trust Him that when He says, I will take away your sins. Those who believe on Me will never be disappointed. You can trust Him with your future. You can trust Him with your resurrection. You can trust Him with your eternity. Amen? Amen. We can trust Him.

So let's turn our attention back to Corinthians, and I'll try and go a little bit more quickly because our time is short. Paul moves here from the written Old Testament evidence to the eyewitness testimony of Christ's resurrection. And he begins with the apostles and hundreds in the early church who saw Jesus

after He rose from the dead. And then he finishes with his own testimony from his own life of seeing Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15: 5–7: ***“And that He appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the Twelve,”*** which is the name of the apostles as a group even though Judas was missing at this point and was removed and would later be replaced. ***“And after that, He appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters at that time,”*** probably up north in Galilee, ***“most of whom, at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15, are still living,”*** so you could go and talk to them, ***“though some have fallen asleep,”*** which means they died in faith in the Lord. ***“Then He appeared to James, Jesus’ half-brother, and then to all the apostles.”*** (1 Corinthians 15:5–7)

Now, the order of the evidence that Paul lays out is very important. He doesn’t say, “The apostles saw the resurrection and then they wrote about it; therefore, you should believe in it.” Instead, he says, as the creed says, the Scriptures foretold the plan of God—who pre-planned, pre-foretold, prophesied, pictured in the Old Testament for hundreds, over a thousand years prior to the coming of the Messiah, who then fulfilled perfectly, with specificity, every prophecy written regarding His first coming. And the apostles and the early church saw it with their eyes. They stand on the Scriptures, and now we stand on their testimony and on the Scriptures. Do you see the line of evidence here, how it builds and grows? These are the two foundational pillars of evidence for the resurrection.

So Paul brings out eyewitness number one: Peter. Now, before the resurrection, the last time Peter had seen Christ was when he was warming himself by the fire, remember? He’s in the courtyard of the high priest, and at the Last Supper, Jesus had warned Peter that he’d deny Him three times. And He was right. And in the courtyard, when asked multiple times, even by a young servant girl, if he was one of Jesus’ disciples, he vehemently denied knowing Jesus and called down curses on himself. And when he realized what he had just done, he went out and wept bitterly.

So Peter—he caved in fear and abandoned his Lord when He needed him most. But a few days later, hope was reborn in his heart. Early on the first day of the week, Sunday, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to tell Peter and John.

So Peter, the Bible says, and the other disciple (John) started running for the tomb. John was faster. Both were running, and Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in place, separate from the linen. And then John also went inside, and he saw and believed. Now, they still did not understand what the Scriptures had said really about Jesus—that He had to rise from the dead. But the disciples then went back to where they were staying, kind of amazed and wondering what had happened. There’s belief, but it’s mixed with not yet fully knowing, which makes sense in a way.

And so Peter ultimately goes back to what he knows: fishing. So Peter’s on a boat one morning, and Jesus calls out to him to restore him. Peter swims to shore, and the Lord restores this broken man who had denied Him. And Peter then becomes a leader of Christ’s church. Jesus says, “Feed My sheep.”

So Peter’s not the only disciple who saw Jesus, although Paul puts him first, calls him Cephas. The Rock. Paul writes that Jesus also appeared to all of them, but not all at once. We know Thomas wasn’t with the

disciples when Christ first appeared to the group in the locked room. So the other disciples told Thomas, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, **“Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side where the spear had pierced Him, I will not believe.”**

Eight days later, Jesus appears to all of them, with Thomas in the room this time. And with gentleness, He tells Thomas, **“Put your finger here, and look at My hands. Reach out and put it in My side. Stop doubting and believe.”** Our Savior will forever be known by the scars. Isn’t that awesome? Raised bodily, and for all eternity—all eternity—He will have scars in His hands, even in His resurrected, glorified body. Praise the Lord.

Thomas replies, **“My Lord and my God.”** (John 20:27–28) He goes from saying, “I will not believe,” to “My Lord and my God.” **And Jesus says to him, “Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not yet seen and yet have believed.”** (John 20:29)

Now, it’s worth pointing out that all of these disciples were in a locked room when Christ appears to them. But because they saw Jesus, they went out and told everybody the good news—particularly after they were filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. We often think of the disciples as though they were as they were in the Gospels while following Christ around during His ministry. But they were transformed from hiding, scared, denying, cowering, running-away followers of the Lord who thought that He had been killed into Holy-Spirit-filled, bold witnesses who spread out across the known world to share the risen Christ with everyone they could.

Church history records that this doubting Thomas, as we call him—he took his faith all the way to India. Kem chal? (Where many people became believers. That’s how you say hello in her language—good job.) And where he was—do you know why she’s a believer? Because TOMA went to southern India. That’s why you see “Toma,” you see “Toma” in the Indian churches, T-O-M-A. It’s because he went to India, where he was ultimately killed with a spear in Mylapore.

Now, Peter was crucified upside down in Rome. He went from denying to a servant girl that he knew Christ to being crucified upside down by tough Roman soldiers in Rome, which fulfilled what Jesus told him would happen on the shore of Galilee, by the way. Andrew, Peter’s brother, was also crucified in Edessa, Greece. James was killed with a sword within 10 years of the resurrection, in AD 44 in Jerusalem. John was banished to the island of Patmos, where he was given the revelation of Jesus Christ. He wrote the book of Revelation. Reportedly, there was an attempt to kill John by putting him in boiling oil, which was miraculously unsuccessful. And he was the only disciple to evidently die a natural death of old age.

Now, Philip’s death is a little unclear, but the best evidence is that he also was crucified upside down like Peter. Bartholomew—I like this one because I’m half Armenian—Bartholomew, having preached in India, also brought the gospel to Armenia. He went to India and then Armenia, where he died a gruesome death in the city of Alban. He was crucified upside down, and then they reportedly took him off the cross, flayed him of his skin, and beheaded him. Matthew was martyred in an unknown way—possibly burned, stoned, stabbed, or beheaded. James, son of Alphaeus, was likely beaten with a club and then stoned to death. Jude was reportedly killed with an axe in Syria. Simon the Zealot was likely crucified, possibly in Persia (Iran). Matthias may have been stoned by cannibals in Georgia.

The bottom line here is that each and every one of these 12 ordinary men went from hiding in a locked house after Jesus' crucifixion to spreading out over the known world after they saw Him alive and after they received the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem, as Jesus had promised. They went out to share the message of Jesus—God's Son—crucified for our sins, raised from the dead, Lord of all. And their message was received—but not well received by everybody. And almost every one of them was killed for sharing the truth of what they saw and heard.

Now, Chuck Colson—he was Richard Nixon's special counsel around Watergate. After he became a Christian (he wasn't a Christian at Watergate), he was in jail, and he started the prison ministry, as you're aware. He said, "I know that the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me." How? "Because 12 men—the disciples—testified that they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, and then they proclaimed this truth for 40 years, never one time denying it. Every one of them was beaten, tortured, stoned, and put in prison," Colson says. "They would not have endured that if it weren't true." And then he goes on: "Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world at the time, and they couldn't keep a lie together for three weeks. And you're telling me that these apostles could keep a lie together for 40 years and die on top of it? Absolutely impossible," he said.

Now, we don't have time here to talk about the 500 witnesses who were eyewitnesses that Jesus appeared to—likely in Galilee—many of whom were alive at the time that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in AD 53, which was, by the way, only 20 years after the resurrection. But I will mention James, okay? Because James is singled out here. He is the half-brother of Jesus. Let me point this out: he's the same family member who in the Gospels didn't believe in Jesus. During Christ's ministry, James thought that Jesus had gone mad, and he came to Him to get Him to come back home. But here James becomes a believer after the resurrection, and a leader in the early church, and then is killed in Jerusalem.

But perhaps the most convincing evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the eyewitness testimony of the apostle Paul himself, the man writing these words under the inspiration of the Spirit. Because verse 8 and 9 of 1 Corinthians say, "And last of all, Jesus appeared to me also—from heaven, from heaven—as to one abnormally or untimely born, born late. For I am the least of the apostles and don't deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

Paul, formerly called Saul, was a murderous blasphemer and killer of Christians. In the book of Acts, Dr. Luke—who would become Paul's good friend after his conversion—records how Paul watched over the coats of the men who stoned the first ever martyr in the church, Stephen. Acts 8:3 says, "Saul"—"began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison." Saul continued breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest even and asked him for letters to the synagogues up north in Damascus, so that if he found any there belonging to the Way (which is the church), whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

"Now as he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around Saul. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?' 'Who are You, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' He replied. 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.'"

So Saul—he was blinded by the light from the vision, and he only received his sight three days later when a Christian named Ananias, sent by the Lord, came and prayed for him. The church didn't really trust Saul at first, by the way—they were worried about it, and you can imagine why.

But can you imagine what is going through Saul's mind while he's blind? He's taken by the hand, led; he's sitting in this place. Think about it. Can you picture him thinking through, trying to reconcile everything—what he had just seen and all that he knew? Pharisee of Pharisees. The Holy Spirit would be helping him, bringing him through passage by passage: Isaiah 53, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, going all the way through. We skipped Jonah; we skipped so many different passages—Ruth—that show who Christ is. Paul must have been seeing these things. Having been convinced previously that Christians were blasphemers, he's now shaken to his core because he's seen the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ, in heaven. And as he's thinking through the Old Testament, all that he knows from the Word of God begins to converge and come together. And he sees Jesus in that moment, in that time, as the perfect fulfillment of everything he's ever studied.

And Saul—whose name is changed to Paul, which means “little”—becomes unstoppable as a Christian. He writes 13 of the 27 letters of the New Testament, and he takes the message of Christ to the world like no one has ever done before or since.

2 Corinthians 11 records how he suffered for Christ: imprisoned frequently, flogged severely, exposed to death again and again. Five times he received 39 lashes—do the math, that's 195 scars on his body. Three times he was beaten with rods. Once he was stoned—pelted with stones. Three times he was shipwrecked. He spent a night and a day in the open sea, constantly on the move. He was in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from his countrymen, in danger from the Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea, and in danger from false believers. He labored and toiled and often went without sleep. He knew hunger and thirst and often went without food. He was cold and without clothes. And besides everything else, he faced pressure for his concern over all the churches. And finally, he was beheaded in Rome. He went from a man who was killing Christians to a man who was killed for Jesus Christ.

But before he was killed, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15 here to show us that the prophets who foresaw Christ's life, death, and resurrection gave us a foundational reason to believe—because God pre-planned and pre-told, and Christ perfectly fulfilled. And then the apostles saw Christ rise from the dead, and so did the early church. And Paul himself, as one untimely born, saw Christ in heaven as well. And he went to great lengths for you and me to believe.

The resurrection isn't just a past event that was witnessed by the early church; it's a present power that we are experiencing today, here. The reason is that Christ today is transforming people still and transferring them from death to life, from darkness to light. He's doing this today. He's still revealing His resurrection power and life today—not by physically appearing in a locked room, because He ascended bodily into heaven after Pentecost, but by His Holy Spirit who lives in you and me.

For those here who are believers, I hope your faith has been encouraged today by the Word of God and that you feel more ready to give an answer to those who ask you for the reason for the hope that you have. I pray that you will share your story and your belief in the resurrected Lord Jesus with those that the Lord brings into your life—those who ask you questions.

And for those here who have heard maybe for the first time, I hope that you have listened with a soft heart and an open mind to the Word of God about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because Jesus—He wants to have a relationship with you. He wants to forgive you for all of your sins. He wants to give you the gift of eternal life and fulfill this promise which you can stand on for now and eternity. That’s why He came—to be crucified. That’s why He came—to rise again. Paul says, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and if you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you’ll be saved.” So if you’re ready now to place your faith and trust in Christ, you can do so by praying with me. Let’s bow our heads.

“Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God, and that You came to be crucified for the forgiveness of my sins. I believe You rose again, and I believe You are Lord. Please forgive me for my sins. Give me the gift of eternal life and fill me with Your Holy Spirit. You are Lord, and I pray in Your name. Amen.”