

# JESUS IS LORD WORSHIP CENTER

## INFALLIBLE PROOFS of JESUS' RESURRECTION

### RESURRECTION SUNDAY 2017



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This is the first article in a series which explained the importance of the Resurrection of Jesus to the Christian faith. Its **centrality** to Christianity is shown by the fact that believing Jesus rose from the dead is **essential** for salvation (*Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:12–21*). So, does belief in this all-important miracle stem from blind faith or do Christians have tenable reasons for believing that the Resurrection was a real event in history?

When we start from God's Word, there is absolutely no legitimate way to deny the angel's words to the women who came to the tomb on that glorious morning: "**Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen!**" (*Luke 24:5–6*). The Bible repeatedly affirms the bodily Resurrection of Jesus, even stating that He demonstrated it "...**by many infallible proofs**" (*Acts 1:3*). What are some of these infallible proofs? Are there any other good arguments consistent with this belief?

### INFALLIBLE PROOFS

In the "prologue" to the book of Acts, Luke told Theophilus that Jesus "...**presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.**" (*Acts 1:3*) The Greek word translated as "infallible proofs" is τεκμηρίοις (tekmēriois), a technical term from logic<sup>1</sup> that refers to that which causes something "to be known in a convincing and decisive manner, a proof."

So, what are these infallible proofs of the Resurrection? Before answering that question, consider what it would take to convince you that someone was alive again after dying. Of course, the best evidence would be an opportunity to spend time with that person again—you could see him walk and talk, and you could eat with him. That is precisely what Luke is referring to here. After being crucified, Jesus showed Himself alive by appearing to His disciples on several occasions. He walked with them, talked with them, and ate with them.

Combining the data from various books of the New Testament, we know that Jesus appeared to some of His followers on at least ten occasions before ascending to Heaven. Determining the precise chronological order of the following appearances is beyond the scope of this article, so I have listed them according to Dr. Elizabeth Mitchell's excellent article, "The Sequence of Christ's Post-Resurrection Appearances":

To: Mary Magdalene (*John 20:11–18*)

To: Mary, Salomé, Joanna, and at least one other woman (*Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10*)

To: Peter (*Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5*)

To: Cleophas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus (*Luke 24:13–35*)

To: The eleven disciples without Thomas (*Luke 24:36–43; John 20:19–25*)

To: The eleven disciples (*John 20:26–29*)

To: Seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (*John 21:1–23*)

To: Disciples at a mountain in Galilee (*Matthew 28:16–17*)

To: His brother James (*1 Corinthians 15:7*)

To: Disciples, possibly in Jerusalem before He led them to the Mt. of Olives where He gave them the Great Commission, then ascended into Heaven (*Luke 24:49–53; Acts 1:3–11*)

In most instances, Jesus did more than just appear before people. Christ's own words (*John 20:17*) seem to imply that Mary Magdalene clung to Him, indicating that He could be physically touched. The other women worshiped Him and held Him by the feet (*Matthew 28:9*).

He broke bread with Cleophas and an unnamed follower (*Luke 24:30*).

He showed His scars in His hands, feet, and side and then ate fish and a honeycomb before the gathering of Disciples without Thomas (*Luke 24:40–43; John 20:20*).

Later, when Thomas arrived, Jesus invited Thomas to touch the wounds on His hands and His side (*John 20:26–27*).

At the Sea of Tiberias, He performed a miracle, allowing the Disciples to catch 153 large fish (*John 20:6–11*). He also cooked and ate some of the food (*John 20:9,15*).

Paul affirmed that Jesus had appeared to over 500 people at one time (*1 Corinthians 15:6*). This may be an additional appearance, or it may be the same event as the one on the hillside in Galilee (*Matthew 28:16–17*).

The report in *1 Corinthians 15* is probably the earliest extant writing about the Resurrection appearances, penned around AD 55. Paul claimed that he was writing what he had received. What was the source of the message that Paul preached? It could have been given to him directly by Jesus (*Galatians 1:12*), although Paul was probably referring here to his meetings with Peter and James in Jerusalem within five years after the Crucifixion and Resurrection (*Galatians 1:18–19*). Paul wrote that he went to “see Peter” (v. 18). The word translated as ‘see’ is from the root *ἵστορέω* (*historēō*), which refers to inquiring for the purpose of coming to know someone or something, and from which we derive our English word ‘history’. So, Paul told the Galatians that he not only received his message from Jesus, but also had it confirmed by Peter and James. Even critical scholars have acknowledged that Paul received this teaching within a few years of the death of Jesus.

Some skeptics claim that the idea of the Resurrection was simply a legend that grew for several decades before being written down, but *1 Corinthians 15:1–9* smashes this objection. Not only is five years much too short a time for such a legend to develop, but Paul cites a number of eyewitnesses “...**most of whom [were] still alive**.” (*1 Corinthians 15:6, ESV*). Essentially, he told the Corinthians, “Hey, if you don’t believe me, then go ask one of these guys.” The idea that the Resurrection was the product of legend will be further examined in an upcoming article in the series.

So, are the reported appearances truly “infallible proofs” of the Resurrection? According to Luke they were, and he was not alone. Paul told the Greek philosophers who gathered in the Areo’pagus in Athens that God had “...**furnished proof to all men by raising [Jesus] from the dead.**” (*Acts 17:31*) ‘Proof’ in this context is from the Greek πίστιν (pistin) and refers to “a token offered as a guarantee of something promised.” It is a “proof” or “pledge.”

Jesus said on multiple occasions that His death and Resurrection would be the one sign He would give to an unbelieving and wicked generation. When asked by the Jews to perform a sign, He predicted His Resurrection by saying, “**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**” (*John 2:19–22*). Later, some Scribes and Pharisees asked Him for a sign, and Jesus replied, “**An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**” (*Matthew 12:39–40*). He provided a similar response to such a request in *Matthew 16:1–4* as well.

In one of His debates with the Pharisees, Jesus said, “**It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true.**” (*John 8:17*). This oft-repeated concept refers back to Deuteronomy 19:15—“**by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.**” This same idea is at the heart of the American judicial system. Witnesses appear in trials to help establish the truth of the matter. Prior to the use of modern forensic experts and recording devices, reliable eyewitnesses were essential. People believe in the historical authenticity of many past events because of eyewitness testimony without ever seeing any photographic evidence for those events.

Multiple reliable eyewitnesses testified that Jesus was alive after being dead and buried. Some of these eyewitness accounts have been preserved for us in the Bible, and because this is the inspired and inerrant Word of God, Scripture is **actually another infallible proof** of Christ’s Resurrection. Nevertheless, many people still refuse to believe because the hardness of their heart.

## **THE HEART OF UNBELIEF**

Some may wonder how a proof could be called infallible when so many people refuse to believe it. In the case of the risen Jesus, the problem was not with the evidence. After all, He was standing in front of them and could be touched and heard. Even today, the problem is not with the infallible proof of Scripture, nor is there a problem with the evidence from history or archaeology. The main problem is with humanity’s stubbornly rebellious heart.

## **Will you believe that Christ lives?**

