

Proof: Visible Appearances

Loving Our Magnificent, Invincible Savior

In any court of law, the testimony of eye witnesses is crucial to establishing the facts of the case. In this “case” we have a super-abundance of testimonies. What really compels faith in these accounts, however, is not the number of them, but their unexpected character. True to form, the resurrected Jesus didn’t act in a way anyone could predict—even though He was the One who most frequently predicted it.

And they rose up that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Luke 24:33-34 ESV

Seeing Is Believing

The resurrection appearances of Jesus convinced everyone who received one in the New Testament. This continues to be true into our own day: “seeing is believing” after all. Not only that, but God stands ready to open the spiritual eyes of anyone who desires to receive Jesus as Savior.

All of us who now believe in the Risen Lord can say that “once I was blind, but now I see.” Still, to take that first step towards believing most of us needed some convincing. That’s where the vast treasury of resurrection appearances comes in handy.



Were Their Eyes Deceiving Us?

Before we look more closely at this testimony, we should make sure that it is authentic. Even things plainly seen can lead to mistaken impressions. We have to ask: Were the disciples mistaken in what they believed they saw? Had their eyes deceived them? If so, as we look through their eyes, so to speak, won’t we be deceived as well? Then let’s first consider all other possible explanations for the reported resurrection. There are only four possibilities, leaving resurrection out.

1) Swoon

One theory is that Jesus didn’t actually die on the cross, but lost consciousness and was mistakenly believed to be dead by the Romans. In the tomb He recovered enough to rise and walk out.



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Refutation:

The Romans were experts at killing people. The executioner's life depended upon it. If there was any doubt that Jesus wasn't dead, His legs would have been broken to make sure of it. Even so, supposing He did "miraculously" survive crucifixion, how could a half-dead man have rolled that massive stone away? How could He have slipped past the guards? How could the disciples ever have thought that such a battered, bleeding man could be a resurrected Person of power? And why was He never seen again afterwards? This theory is simply preposterous!

2) Hallucination

Other theorists have speculated that what the disciples "saw" was really a hallucination. In their distress and shattered hopes, they saw what they wanted to see, but it was just a projection of their unconscious longings or a figment of their imaginations.

Refutation:

The great problem here is that hallucinations happen to crazy people, to very disturbed people, or to individuals in private moments, not to massed gatherings of ordinary folks. Actual hallucinations are deeply subjective and extremely transitory, lasting only moments. These appearances went on "in public" for 40 days! Hallucinations have no substance in the real world: this One ate fish on two occasions, could be touched and examined, and held intelligent audible conversation for days on end with whole groups of listeners. Nothing like this has ever happened by way of hallucination in the recorded history of the world. Case closed.

3) Myth

It is well-known that many great stories are mere legends which grew up around every day events. The religious imagination hates a vacuum and always seeks to fill in details, no matter how bizarre or unworldly, as readings of saints' lives in many religions demonstrates. The disciples simply allowed the myth to grow that Jesus had resurrected, becoming more than just a man. They didn't conspire to create the myth, but they didn't act to silence it either.

Refutation:

Myths take time to develop—lots of it. There is scant evidence in history of myths developing around major historical figures within 30 years of their lifetime. Why? Because too many people would be still alive to debunk the legends. Yet, the proclaiming of the resurrection began immediately at the center of events by people who claimed they were telling truth, not myths.

In addition, the stories they told have nothing of the character of myth about them. Myths are fantastic and spectacular, filled with excessive description and under-developed characters—just the opposite of what we have in the gospels and the Book of Acts. Read enough actual myths and you will quickly spot a counterfeit. The gospels are

“counterfeit myths.” They only seem like myth if you can’t accept the resurrection as a real event. Otherwise, they read like lean and clean reporting.

4) Conspiracy

The disciples for whatever reason couldn’t let Jesus’ life and ministry die out with His death. They conspired together to say that He had resurrected, was still alive and was Lord of all.

Refutation:

All the other three theories devolve into this one. If Jesus truly swooned, recovered and disappeared the disciples participated in the cover-up. If Jesus was a hallucination the disciples exaggerated and lied about His bodily form. If His resurrection was a myth, the disciples would have had to be involved in promoting it. But could they have been so devious? Could they have conspired together and kept it together for all the years that followed? Under enormous pressure against them, under unceasing scrutiny by their enemies, and even under torture at their deaths, not a single one recanted!

The disciple’s proven character throughout the rest of their lives argues strongly against any such conspiracy. Besides, what would have been their motive? It brought a fire-storm of trouble upon them. Not only that, but if they were lying, the Jews would have quickly (and gladly) produced the corpse. That never happened! [The Empty Tomb](#), the known character of the disciples once they became apostles, and the lack of refutation by their adversaries demolishes this theory.

Down to Brass Tacks

What are we left with? Resurrection! It is the only possible explanation. Honestly, logically, thoroughly examining the evidence knocks out all other theories, leaving this one standing. What we have about it in narrative form is a marvel. The gospel accounts read with the crisp precision of a Hemmingway and the attention to detail that eye witness accounts typically supply. Referring to the scene of Jesus writing in the dirt as an example, Peter Kreeft observes:

The only explanation is that the writer saw it. If this detail and others like it throughout all four Gospels were invented, then a first-century tax collector (Matthew), a “young man” (Mark), a doctor (Luke) and a fisherman (John) all independently invented the new genre of realistic fantasy nineteen centuries before it was reinvented in the twentieth.

The unexpected elements of these resurrection appearances are especially intriguing. So many non-miraculous, but decidedly *odd* things happen. If someone were making up these accounts with a view to “selling” them as authentic, why add in all the whimsical and troubling details? Why have women receive the divine revelation ahead of the men? They had no standing as legal or credible witnesses in that day, especially Mary Magdalene who had seven demons cast out of her.

Or, why have the two men on the road to Emmaus fail to recognize Jesus except in retrospect after “the breaking of the bread”? For that matter, why have Jesus act as if He wanted to leave them without revealing His identity, if that was the devised purpose for the story? And what



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about that fish breakfast and the way Jesus used the opportunity to “grill” Peter—his number one man—in front of all the others? What a strange way for any author to highlight Peter, the group’s leader! Read through the gospels with this in mind and discover more for yourself.

The numerous instances of people not recognizing Jesus at first raise interesting questions, as well. Were they too shocked and dumbfounded to recognize Him, or was there something about the resurrection body that made Jesus appear different to their eyes? Was He “veiling” Himself for some undisclosed reason? Was He, perhaps, having some good-natured fun with them? Or, was He weaning them off their natural dependence upon His visible presence? After all, they had been with the Lord in “flesh and blood” fellowship for three years. They were “hooked” on knowing Him that way. Now, they needed to be readied for a time that was soon coming when their fellowship with Jesus would be only by His Spirit. Their eyes were clearly on the surprise (and delight) of His resurrection. He was always looking ahead. Still is.

Explore More about Jesus

[Resurrection Proof: Transformed Lives](#) The evidence keeps mounting up. You may already be one whose transformed life is evidence to your friends and family that something or Someone has powerfully been at work in your life. Let’s hope that you’ve told them (in so many words) that Jesus is Alive—that’s what’s changing you! A changed life can be tremendously convincing. The testimony of changed lives after the resurrection of Jesus is just as powerful a witness today as it was then.

[His Glorious Ascension](#) This one gets overlooked. It seems almost like an afterthought, appended to the earth-shaking events of death and resurrection: a lovely way for the Lord to make an exit. Don’t underestimate how important it is that Jesus ascended! Suppose He had stayed down here. Wouldn’t you? Why didn’t He? There is something crucial in this to know; even more, it is vital that we learn to live by it.

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Scriptures on Resurrection Appearances of Jesus

See also Mark 16:9-20, Luke 24:1-53, John 20-21, Acts 1:1-11 and 9:1-19, and 1 Corinthians 15:3-9

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and



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became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."... Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20 ESV

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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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