

Empire Church of the Brethren
Sunday Service Sermons

22 March 2026

The Certainty of the Resurrection

Text: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." *1 Cor. 15: 3-4*.

In one of Plato's dialogues, there is an account of Socrates' last day on earth.

As he awaited execution, a group of his followers came to visit.

Naturally the discussion turned to the subject of immortality.

Where would the philosopher go after death?

What lies beyond the grave?

Could Socrates shed any light on these questions?

They talked all day, examining the questions from every angle they could.

They concluded that it was almost impossible to attain any certainty about such questions in this present life.

All people can do, they reasoned, is take the best of human notions and let that be a raft on which they sail through life.

Furthermore, they considered, this voyage as risky, but it is the only alternative, unless people could find some word from God to more surely and safely carry them.

These friends who assembled in the jail in Athens never found that sure word of God.

But we have it.

It is given to us in *First Corinthians 15*.

Clearly, according to *verse 12*, some in Corinth doubted the resurrection of the dead and said so.

Paul begins this chapter by giving proofs of Christ's resurrection because his and ours rise and fall together.

Paul begins with the gospel that Christ died, was buried, and rose again on the third day.

But can we justify such a contention?

He lived; no intelligent being can deny that.

He died; that fact nobody need to deny.

He died quivering on a cross after about six hours of agony and suffering.

To be sure of his death, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and the last remaining drops of his blood were poured out to prove that he had, in fact, died.

The soldiers didn't even take the trouble to break his legs, for he was clearly dead.

That is all well, but what about his resurrection?

What are the proofs of that?

Paul gives us three proofs in the text.

The testimony of scripture.

The resurrection of Christ should not have been a surprise.

Jesus often spoke of it.

But before Jesus spoke of it, it had been prophesied in the Old Testament.

He referred to these prophecies on the road to Emmaus.

The Scriptures Jesus used were *Psalms 16* and *68*.

What shall we say of this kind of evidence?

Fulfilled prophecy is the greatest and highest of all the attestations that Christ is truly the Son of God and was raised from the dead.

It is evidence cited again and again in the first apostolic sermons in the early chapters of Acts.

The apostles kept quoting fulfilled prophecy to prove that Jesus is the Messiah.

It is evidence that led to the conversion of the learned Greek rhetorician Justin Martyr.

He said, "To declare that a thing shall come to pass long before it is in being, and then to bring it to pass, this is nothing but the work of God."

It is evidence that convinced Pascal, one of the greatest scientific minds of all times.

He wrote, "The greatest of the proofs of Jesus Christ are the prophecies."

The testimony of eyewitnesses.

Paul next relates a list of those who had seen Christ.

The word seen refers to seeing with the eye as opposed to a vision or a hallucination.

This is also strong evidence.

How do you prove anything?

In a court of law, we determine the credibility of a case by the number, agreement, and reliability of witnesses.

The resurrected Christ was seen by Peter and then by the rest of the Twelve.

The resurrected Christ was seen by five hundred brethren at one time.

When Paul wrote this, most of these people were still alive and could have been questioned if his readers had desired to do so.

If one man told you that he saw something, you may or may not believe it.

If ten people told you that they all saw the same thing, you would have to be impressed.

If five hundred people told you that they saw the same thing at the same time, you could not doubt the veracity of their statements.

The resurrected Christ was seen by James.

James was the half brother of our Lord.

At the time he saw Jesus, he would have been classified as a hostile witness.

He and his family did not believe Jesus was the Messiah until after the resurrection.

The resurrected Christ was seen by the apostle Paul himself on the road to Damascus.

Paul would certainly be classified as a hostile witness.

He was devoting his life to destroying Christianity at that time.

The testimony of a changed life.

Paul's last, and perhaps strongest, argument is a personal testimony of the change Christ had made in his life.

Paul's words here have all the ingredients of a good testimony.

He tells of his past life; "I persecuted the church of God."

He tells what made the difference in his life: "But by the grace of God I am what I am".

He tells about his changed life: "I labored more abundantly than they all".

In essence, Paul says, "You know what I used to be, you know what I am now: meeting the resurrected Christ is what made the difference.."

G. Campbell Morgan said that some people say the true account of what happened to Saul of Tarsus was that he had an epileptic seizure in a thunderstorm. "If that is true," said Morgan, "men ought always to pray for a multiplication of thunderstorms and an epidemic of epilepsy."

Here are the convincing evidences of the resurrection: the testimony of Scripture, the testimony of eyewitnesses, and the testimony of a changed life.

You need to believe it today and act on it by following the risen Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Lord of life and light.

If you want to live in the light and have true life you must put him first and follow his lead.

Now and for evermore.