

Witnesses: After He Died They Saw Him Alive

by Dr. J. Vernon McGee



Published and distributed by
Thru the Bible Radio Network
P.O. Box 7100
Pasadena, California 91109-7100
(800) 65-BIBLE
www.ttb.org

Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *King James Version Bible*.

Preface

This is a spoken message delivered before a live audience. It has been transcribed with a minimum of editing in order to preserve the spirit of the message and the warmth of the pulpit. Literary excellence has been sacrificed that the reader might sit in the atmosphere of the congregation and enter into the anticipation and enthusiasm created by the Holy Spirit.

May the Spirit of God move again upon these dead words, making them life-giving to the readers as they were to the hearers.

To prepare our hearts for the message, let us first consider the great “Resurrection Chapter,” found in 1 Corinthians 15. It underscores the tremendous importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the consequent promise of our own resurrection. The glory of the Christian faith is that it never views life as ending with death. This life is not all there is. The Christian faith always looks beyond the sunset to the sunrise. It looks out yon-der into eternity — and what a hope it offers!

1 Corinthians 15

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every

man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible

must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Witnesses: After He Died They Saw Him Alive

[Jesus] *said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day....And ye are witnesses of these things.* (Luke 24:46, 48)

This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. (Acts 2:32)

Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. (Acts 10:40, 41)

The Present-Day Importance of Witnesses

There are on record two famous court trials which in their day made the headlines across the country. The outstanding feature of each of these lawsuits was the importance given to the testimony of a single witness; the deciding factor in each case was the witness of a solo voice.

Alger Hiss, a State Department employee, was convicted of Communistic connections on the sole testimony of one, Whitaker Chambers. The defendant was charged with conveying secret documents to a foreign power. If true, this was an act of betrayal of country which was despicable. Therefore, the evidence was considered carefully and seriously. The defense sought to discredit the witness whose testimony was the basis of decision. The court was convinced that the witness was reliable and gave credence to his story when the facts appeared to corroborate his statements.

Dr. Herman N. Sander, a medical doctor in New England, was accused of murdering one of his patients by letting air into her veins. This was not only a serious crime, but it would throw a great deal of weight on one side of the controversial subject of euthanasia. Does a doctor have the moral and legal right to bring about the death of a patient who is suffering from an incurable disease? This case would have a tremendous effect upon public opinion, and therefore the evidence must be considered carefully. The expert testimony of Dr. Richard Ford was the deciding factor in the acquittal of Dr. Sander.

One man is condemned, and another one is acquitted on the testimony of a lone witness. A man's life hangs in the balance, and the voice of a witness can determine whether it be life or death. Thus the importance of witnesses is revealed in our modern world and complex civilization. All of this is considered fair and just in this so-called enlightened age and land. With all of our modern devices and gadgets, the old-fashioned witness is not outmoded. No better method has been devised. However, it is well to note that one witness could not condemn a man in Bible days. There had to be a more substantial basis for proof: "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death" (Deuteronomy 17:6).

Witnesses are very important in establishing a fact, and this has been recognized in both ancient and modern times. It does seem, however, that in Bible times they exercised more care in coming to decisions based on the testimony of witnesses. Not only did they demand in ancient times the plurality of witnesses to establish an important fact, but the character of the witnesses was of supreme importance.

Just as long as a witness does not perjure himself today, he is acceptable to the court. The credibility of the witness seems to be the only thing for the modern jury to determine. An example of this was revealed in Los Angeles. A police scandal was disclosed that rocked the city hall more than any recorded earthquake. The public, perhaps, never got all the facts, but when some of the “smog” cleared away, it looked as if the entire affair was precipitated by the statement of a common prostitute in prison. The entire police department was shaken up by this case.

The credibility of any statement of a witness is vital, but there is another aspect which is of equal importance, if not greater. The capability of a witness was determined in the “old days” — not everyone could qualify as a witness. Perjury and prejudice can change the color, climate, and complexion of facts. A witness can be honestly mistaken; a witness may be wrong. All of these factors should be considered when the testimony of witnesses is taken down.

Paul faced this vital issue in regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ when he suggested the possibility of being “found false witnesses of God.” Either Jesus Christ rose from the dead, or those early apostles were false witnesses. There is no other alternative. No honest decision can be made until the apostles’ voices are heard. They must be heard!

The All-Time Importance of the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Did Jesus Christ rise from the dead bodily? Was He alive on the third day? Did He come back from the grave in a body? The answer to these and related questions are vital, for the Christian faith stands or falls on the answer. The gospel rests upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the determining factor in the salvation of men. It is their only hope. Roy L. Smith has said, “The humblest soul in all the world has the stake of an eternal destiny in that emptied tomb.” The resurrection is the key in the arch of faith; it is the central shaft in the gospel temple.

There is a lovely story that demonstrates the importance of the empty tomb to Christianity. A little boy stood at a show window of a large department store looking at a famous painting of Jesus on display. As the little boy was gazing intently upon the picture, which was familiar to him as he had seen it many times in his Sunday school material, a man came up and stood beside him. The man, too, began to look at the picture. Noticing him, the little fellow opened up the conversation by saying, “That’s Jesus who came into the world a long time ago to die for us.” The man merely said, “Is that so?” This was all that was needed to start the little fellow off on the entire story. He began to tell the familiar story of His birth. He told about the manger, the shepherds, the wise men, the star, and the angels. Then the little fellow told of the trip into Egypt to escape Herod. He omitted none of the details. Then he launched into a description of the ministry of Jesus which included His parables and miracles. He concluded the narrative by

telling of His arrest, of the unfair trial, and of the crucifixion. The little boy had been well taught in Sunday school and had given accurately all the story up to that point. After describing the death and burial of Jesus, he ceased, and both the man and the boy stood gazing in silence at the picture. The man turned and walked away thoughtfully. After he had gone a great distance, he heard the cry of the little boy behind him, "Hey, mister! Hey, mister! Wait a minute!" The man stopped as the little fellow came running up breathlessly and exclaimed, "Say mister, I forgot the most important part of the story about Jesus. He rose from the dead!"

The part the little boy forgot was the most important feature, Jesus "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

Luke said that Christ showed Himself alive "by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). One of the many infallible proofs is the testimony of witnesses. The resurrection of Christ is essential to our salvation; the testimony of witnesses is important to establish the resurrection. Capable and credible witnesses testified to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let us hear their testimonies.

Ancient Witnesses in a Modern Courtroom

This morning I wish to turn this beautiful and spacious auditorium into a courtroom. You will constitute a jury, and this service will be a court in session. I intend to bring to this pulpit and to this microphone some of the witnesses who saw Him alive after He died. Time forbids us from bringing all. In fact, there can be only a very small segment, but they will be important witnesses. Actually five hundred saw Him at one time. Although He never appeared in Jerusalem to the mob after His resurrection, He did appear often to many of His followers. You will hear some of these witnesses. You will hear the testimony that they give, you will examine the evidence, and you will decide for yourselves whether Jesus arose or not. These witnesses are not on trial, Jesus is not on trial, but you and I are on trial. Our decision determines our destiny. It is vital for us. Therefore let us weigh carefully every shred of evidence, since the eternal destinies of our souls are at stake.

The First Witness: John the Apostle

Let us call the first witness.

John, son of Zebedee, will you take the witness stand, and will you tell this congregation what you know about the resurrection of Jesus Christ? First of all, what was your occupation?

Members and friends of this great church, I shall be happy to testify to you regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ in order that you might have fellowship with us. I was a fisherman and plied my trade on the Sea of Galilee. My brother James and I were partners with our father Zebedee. God had blessed us with our nets, and we became prosperous. We had a home in Jerusalem, which we used when we went up to the feasts according to the Mosaic system.

Thank you, John, for your straightforward answer. Now will you tell us what you know about Jesus Christ? How did you meet Him? Did you see Him die on the cross, and did you see Him alive afterward?

Again, I am happy to bear witness and to show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and which was manifested to us. One day Jesus came by our fishing boat where my father, my brother, and I were mending nets. Peter and Andrew were with Him. He called my brother and me to follow Him, which we did. This was not our first contact with Him. We had seen Him in Jerusalem at the Passover that year when He cleansed the temple, and at that time we all expressed a willingness to follow Him. However, He did not call us until that day by the Sea of Galilee, and we left our nets to follow Him. We followed Him for three years, and we were convinced during all that time that He was our Messiah. There were many things that He both said and did which we did not grasp in their full significance. For instance, on the very first day that we saw Him in Jerusalem, He said to the Jews when they asked for a sign, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." It was not until after His resurrection that we clearly understood His statement to these Jews.

I was very close to Him during those three years, and I discovered that when you know Him intimately, there is a special love that you experience. It is not that He "plays favorites," for each one of those who believe on Him can also come to the place where he or she is the disciple whom Jesus loves. I came to know Him in this manner. Yonder in the Upper Room, I reclined upon His breast and heard the heartbeat of God. I never got familiar with Him, for on several occasions we had beheld His glory, and we, likewise, knew that He was the Son of God. I was present at His trial, as I was permitted to enter the courtyard while the trial was in progress. I was present when they crucified Him. I stood with Mary, His mother, beneath the cross, and He committed her care to me. I saw Him taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus. I saw Him buried. He was embalmed and I, for one, never expected to see Him alive again in this world.

Then on Sunday morning, very early, Mary Magdalene came rushing into my home in Jerusalem with a very strange story. She stated that she had been that very morning to the tomb and that the stone was rolled away and that the body was gone, coming to the conclusion that someone had evidently removed it. She did not suggest the resurrection. Peter was present at the time, and we both rushed out to the tomb. Neither of us believed that He was raised from the dead. I understand that in the Twentieth Century, in which you folk live, there are many weird stories used to explain away the resurrection of Jesus. I understand that Dr. Kirsopp Lake at Yale Divinity School suggested that the women went to the wrong tomb. I, likewise, thought of that when I ran out to Joseph's tomb that morning. It was dark when the women were there, and they were excited; I thought that they could have made an honest mistake. I knew where He was buried — I was familiar with the entire area — I knew the tomb and went directly to it. By the time I got there, it was daylight, and I had not come to the wrong tomb. When I arrived, I saw His grave clothes in the tomb in the shape of a mummy, just as if the body were enclosed within, but the body was not there. It was physically impossible to remove the grave clothes without unwinding the hundreds of yards of linen which had been wrapped about the body. Not one thread was disturbed, and even the handkerchief was in place as if it were wrapped about His head. This small bit of evidence convinced me that He had arisen from the dead. However I received still further confirmation of the fact that He was

alive. That very evening He appeared to all the disciples — with the exception of Thomas. Again He appeared a week later when Thomas was present. I saw Jesus on several occasions after that.

I am here to testify that Jesus was alive after He died. I heard, I saw, I gazed intently, and I handled the Word of life.

Thank you, John, for giving us your word as a witness concerning the resurrection of Jesus. I am sure that this congregation will not treat it lightly as they examine the evidence for the resurrection.

The Second Witness: Simon Peter

Simon Peter, will you take the witness stand and tell this great congregation what you know about the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

I am always ready to give an answer with meekness and with fear to every man that asketh me a reason of the hope that is in me. I was present when He appeared alive after He died, but my testimony is brief. First of all, I was with John when Mary came that first morning and told us that the body was not there. John and I both rushed to the tomb. John outran me. When I arrived, he stood without looking inside the tomb. I rushed past him and entered. I had no notion that my Lord was alive until I entered that tomb. I saw what John saw — the grave clothes lying undisturbed — and I, too, was convinced that He was alive. All that day long I had a conviction that the Lord Jesus Christ was alive in the body, and I had this conviction confirmed that evening when He appeared to us. I saw Him many times after that during the next forty days.

Just a moment, Peter. Would you tell us about the personal appearance of Jesus to you alone? Both Luke and Paul tell us that He appeared to you personally. We would like to have you tell us about it. It is true that they give us no details; they merely mention the episode.

Well, you see I had denied Him. My sin was as black as that of Judas. I had made such loud and boastful professions of loyalty, and that made my crime appear more heinous. Christ had said to me beforehand that He had prayed that my faith fail not, and He encouraged me by saying not to let my heart be troubled and to believe in God and in Him. This I had done, but after I visited the empty tomb, I wanted to see Him desperately. He appeared to me while I was alone, and I confessed to Him privately. He forgave me and restored me to fellowship and to service. He is a wonderful Savior. I cannot tell you more, for I do not believe in the error of public confession of sin. You see, He permitted me to preach the first two sermons after the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. In the second sermon, I charged the people of Israel that they had denied the Holy One and the Just One. You know that I too had denied Him, and I was truly repentant of my wicked act. However, He appeared to me privately, and I had confessed to Him privately; it was settled

privately. This old account was settled long ago, and it was not necessary to air it again. That would have been dishonoring to my Lord.

Just one final question, Simon Peter. Will you answer again whether you thought that He was alive when you went to the tomb with John that first morning?

Let me ask you a question: If I thought that He was alive, why do you think I went to the tomb? I went there to see a dead body. I thought the women were mistaken.

There is one final statement that I would like to make. I died for Him; men do not die for what they know is a lie. Many men have died for a cause which was a lie, but they believed in it. In your memory, multitudes believed in Hitler and they died for him. They were wrong, but they believed in their hearts that they were right. Don't you know that I would not have died for the Lord if I had known all the time in my heart that the resurrection was a lie? Men die for that in which they believe. I saw Him alive after He died and devoted my life to witnessing to that fact. I gladly died as a martyr for Him.

We might place this addenda to the testimony of Simon Peter this quote by Pascal: "I readily believe those witnesses who got their throats cut."

The Third Witness: Thomas

Thomas, would you mind telling the congregation assembled in this church what you know about the resurrection of Jesus? We understand that you were the last of the apostles to be convinced that He rose from the dead. Why did you not agree with them the first day?

I did not agree with them simply because I had not seen Him personally. I never accepted evidence until I had tested it. Even in the Upper Room when He talked about going away and about "the way," I could not sit there as the other apostles did and drink it all in. Frankly, I did not understand where He was going and I surely did not know the way. I frankly interrupted Him in order to get information, and I surely received it, for Jesus answered me, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." I was not convinced the first day because I was skeptical and was not willing to accept the testimony of the others. When the women came and told us early in the morning that the tomb was empty, I scoffed because it seemed to me that they were a bunch of hysterical women. When Peter and John returned from the tomb, and they carefully said that they believed He was alive for the tomb was empty as the women had stated, I candidly was shaken, but I was not convinced. Later in the day, Cleopas and a friend came rushing into our midst declaring that they both had seen and talked with the risen Lord. Again I was shaken but not convinced. The next day all the apostles stated that they had seen the risen Lord. I knew that these men were not deliberately stating a falsehood. But there must be some other explanation, for at that time I did not believe that He was raised from the dead. It was not Canon Streeter in your day who first suggested the theory of a vision; the idea had occurred to me that somehow He was projecting to

them an image of Himself in heaven. These men had seen something — that was obvious. They had seen a vision, I thought. I said at that time that I would not believe that He was alive until I had touched His body. It would take more than seeing to convince me. Eight days later I was with the apostles in the room, and Jesus came and appeared to us all. He invited me to feel with my finger the wounds in His hands and side. I was thoroughly convinced. I confessed then, “My Lord and my God.” This skeptic was convinced.

The Fourth Witness: Paul

We are going to call to the witness stand now one who was not among the original twelve, nevertheless one who saw the living Christ after His death. Paul the apostle, who was formerly Saul of Tarsus, had one of the greatest minds this world has known. He was the greatest missionary of all time. He is prepared to give expert testimony. His experience on the Damascus Road has confounded men down through the ages. This man explains the marvelous transformation which took place in his life by simply saying that he met the living Christ on the Damascus Road. This experience turned him upside down, inside out, and right side up.

Paul told the Philippians that the experience caused him to change his bookkeeping system. “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Philippians 3:7). It was as radical a change as if the business world should suddenly change its bookkeeping system. Suppose that when you went to the department store to pay your account, you found that there was a check for you in the amount you owed and that you were not permitted to pay for it. The entire economy of the world would be shaken more than it is now by the defense program of our country; it would be revolutionary. This is what happened to Saul of Tarsus. Merely to say that he was suffering from sunstroke is begging the point, and it reveals the impasse in which the critic finds himself. As another has cogently stated, “If Paul was suffering from a sunstroke, give us more men who have had sunstrokes.”

Now let us call Paul to the witness stand and let us hear the exact testimony which he gave before the court of Fetus and Agrippa on a former occasion:

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when

they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. (Acts 26: 1-23)

Beloved friends, you have heard the testimony of four men who saw Jesus alive after He died. Evidently all four of these men saw Him die. They were convinced that He died. You have heard all of these men state as eyewitnesses that they saw the Lord Jesus Christ alive after His death. Evidence such as this cannot be dismissed lightly by an honest and inquiring mind. This kind of evidence would be accepted in a court of law today. A man's life could hang in the balance on the testimony of witnesses who were not as numerous nor as credible as these.

Your life hangs in the balances. Heaven and hell stand before you. Do not turn your back upon heaven and upon God without hearing the evidence.

“So Great a Cloud of Witnesses”

The record states that after He had been seen of Peter and the other disciples, “He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present [probably the year A.D. 59 when the Epistle to the Corinthians was written], but some are fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Countless multitudes of witnesses for 1900 years could be marshaled here to show that Christ is alive today. Their lives were transformed, and they would testify that the explanation is found only in a risen Savior.

Augustine is one of the great men who has affected the church and the world. Both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism quote him to sustain their positions. Augustine was a debauched college professor, but he had a godly mother by the name of Monica who never ceased to pray for his salvation. Her prayer was answered, for this man experienced a mighty conversion. His testimony was that He had been transformed by the living Christ.

John Paton was the great missionary to the New Hebrides. This man went in among cannibals when big business stood trembling on the outside. It was among these people that this man buried his wife and little child. As the cannibals stood about, he dug the graves and buried the bodies of his wife and child with his own hands, then stood guard to prevent their being exhumed and eaten. He testified that if the living Christ had not stood by him he could not have endured such a testing. Was this man deluded? His testimony would be valid in a court of law.

The testimony of others could be heard if time and space permitted. Gilbert West and Frank Morrison were two young Englishmen who were skeptics. They determined to investigate some of the evidence which pertains to primitive Christianity. They both went to Palestine with the avowed purpose of discrediting the Bible record. One investigated Paul and the other the earthly life of Jesus. Both came to a firm faith in the Word of God and to a real trust in Christ as Savior. Frank Morrison, in his book, *Who Moved the Stone?*, wrote, "There may be, and as the writer thinks, there certainly is, a profoundly historical basis for that much disputed sentence in the Apostle's Creed — 'the third day He rose from the dead.'"

Lord Lyndhurst, High Chancellor of Great Britain in 1846 (a position which was one of the greatest honors that could come to a man), wrote, "I know pretty well what evidence is; and, I tell you, such evidence as that for the Resurrection has never broken down yet."

The late Dr. Howard Kelly, gynecologist of Johns Hopkins, wrote, "What then does the resurrection mean to me? A clear hope vested in my risen Savior which I could not have, had Christ never risen from the dead."

Multitudes have learned to face the specter of death with calmness and with peace because of an unshakable confidence in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, knowing that because He lives they shall live also.

O joyful day! O glorious hour!
When Jesus, by almighty power,
Revived and left the grave;
In all His works behold Him great,
Before, Almighty to create,
Almighty now to save.

The first-begotten from the dead,
He's risen now, His people's Head,
And thus their life's secure;
And if, like Him, they yield their breath,
Like Him, they'll burst the bonds of death,
Their resurrection sure.

Why should His people, then, be sad?
None have such reason to be glad
As those redeemed to God:
Jesus, the mighty Saviour, lives,
To them eternal life He gives,
The purchase of His blood.

— “O Joyful Day!” by Thomas Kelly, 1875

The Present-Day and Practical Meaning of the Resurrection

Let me close with this story which occurred in Dallas, Texas, during the ministry of Dr. William M. Anderson at the First Presbyterian Church. There was a little girl who lived in a home that was on the route traveled by most of the folk from Highland Park who worked in downtown Dallas. This child was one of those unusual children who attracts the attention of everyone. She was a beautiful child and had personality plus. Folk who passed her home waved and spoke to her; everyone in that section of the city knew her. Dr. Bill Anderson became one of her admirers, and she loved him too.

This attractive child took sick and died suddenly. Everyone was shocked, and it is not exaggeration to say that an entire city mourned. The papers featured the story with many pictures of the child. They sorrowed as those who had no hope.

Dr. Bill was asked to conduct the funeral. In his own inimitable way, he brought a gospel message and also spoke of the fact that since Jesus died and rose again, He was coming again, and that we would see our loved ones who were saved. This little girl had attended Dr. Bill's Sunday school, and her teacher said that she confessed her faith in Christ a short time before she had died. Dr. Anderson mentioned all of this. When he stated that when Christ returns, those who are in Christ would see their loved ones who likewise are in Christ, the mother showed her first signs of interest and conscious contact with the world. Her face brightened and as soon as the message was over, she rushed to Dr. Bill and asked him if there was any hope of seeing her precious child again. He assured her that there was if she would take Christ as her Savior. The mother and father both came to Christ, as well as many others at the funeral service that day.

You see, the resurrection of Christ is more than a cold fact that can be ascertained in a courtroom. It is a reality by which multitudes are living today. They are not only convinced, they are converted.