

**Date:** Sunday April 4, 2021

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

1 Corinthians 15 and we're going to begin in verse 1. Will you read along with me as I read our passage this morning? 1 Corinthians 15 in verse 1 says this.

*15:1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.*

*3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. (1 Cor 15:1-11)*

These days that we're living in, we are taught, and especially by our culture, what our culture wants us to do is to question everything, right? They want us to question everything. There is no truth. If you hear something and you think it's a truth, well, you should question it.

Like last Sunday, an article ran in the New York Times, talking about fragments of Deuteronomy that were supposedly discovered back in 1883 by Wilhelm Moses Shapira. These fragments of Deuteronomy were claimed to be the oldest fragments ever discovered. Shapira was paid \$1.3 million for these fragments by the British Museum. But it was later discovered that these fragments were fake. And they've been lost and they're nowhere to be found. Since then, another scholar has made the claim that the fragments could be real. And he wants to find them so that they can be tested again. But there are still many, many scholars who still doubt that those fragments are real.

Now, why would the New York Times run a story like this? The New York Times, why would they run a story like this? Because they want to get you to question the Bible. That's what they're after. That's ultimately their goal. Look, if these scholars are debating about fragments of the Bible, then how can you believe it's true?

Maybe it's just a book written by a bunch of humans over history? Maybe it's just a historical book that may or may not be true? And if they can convince people that this book, that we hold in our hands, the Bible, if they can convince people that it is not a book by a divine author with divine authority, then to them it's not true. And if it's not true, then they will convince themselves that they won't be held accountable for what it says. That's ultimately what they're after. If it's not true, then we're not held accountable to this. And if it's not true, then what is contained in our Bible is not fact.

But we know -- we know that every word in our Bible is true because it is God-breathed. (2 Tim 3:16) It has a divine author with divine authority. 2 Timothy 3:16 says *"all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."* And because it is God-breathed, it is fact. It is fact. And that's exactly what Paul is arguing in our text here this morning...only he's not arguing for the fact of *the Bible*, although he does believe it. He does believe that everything written down in Scriptures is true. But Paul is arguing for the fact of *the resurrection*. That's what he's arguing here.

Now there were some similarities in Corinth to what we are facing in America today. What these believers in Corinth were facing at that time were the same things that are going on in America today and one of the things that had crept into the church was question the resurrection, you should question it.

There were some in Corinth that had been questioning the teaching of the resurrection, which is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:12. He says,

*12 Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (1 Cor 15:12)*

Some believers in Corinth had been believing the lie that there was not a future resurrection for them. But Paul is going to argue for the fact of the resurrection, from the fact of Christ's resurrection. That's what he's doing here. And he's going to tell the Corinthians specifically, and implied as us, why this is so important. And he's going to tell them not to question the resurrection. Don't question it. Because it's a fact. He's going to argue from Christ's resurrection.

Now today people have just broaden this to the entire Bible. Question the whole Bible right? That's what they want us to do. Question everything in the Bible. Question Christianity, question the existence of God, question it all. Which, in turn, causes people to question the fact of the resurrection and specifically the resurrection of Christ.

In fact, there are even theories that men have created to deny the resurrection of Christ.

- One of them is this. It's called the swoon theory. The swoon theory. This lie says that Jesus didn't really die but He only fainted or swooned from the exhaustion. He just fainted on the cross. And when He was placed in the tomb, He was still alive, and the disciples making Him for being dead buried Him alive. And then after several hours He revived in the coolness of the tomb. He just needed to be laid in there, in the coolness of the tomb, so that He could gain all of His strength back. Then He arose and walked out. That's the swoon theory.
- There is another one called the hallucination theory. This lie says that all of Christ's post-resurrection appearances were only hallucinations that these people were having, and therefore did not actually see the risen Savior. But as we see in our text this morning, if that were true well, there was a lot of hallucination going on right? There's a lot of eyewitnesses that saw the risen Christ.
- Then there's the impersonation theory. This lie says that the appearances of Christ weren't really Christ, but they were just someone impersonating Him. A good actor.

And there are many other theories that men have come up with to deny the fact of the resurrection, to deny the fact of Christ's resurrection. But as we'll see this morning, all of these theories are wrong. They are all wrong. And if you were to believe these lies and don't believe in the fact of the resurrection of Christ, then all of Christianity is only wishful thinking and without any hope. It's hopeless. It's a hopeless religion.

But look, we understand, and we know that Christ has been resurrected, right? We know that this is a fact -- Christ has been resurrected, and it's the most important fact for any of us to believe, because we serve a living God, not a dead God, right? We serve a living God. Christ came to offer us eternal life, and the only way that He can offer us life is if He is alive and He is today. If He's still dead, He can't offer us life. And if He didn't die, then we're all still under sin, without a sacrifice, and therefore all of us are damned to hell. But He offers us life, because He conquered death and He is alive today.

And so this morning I want us to look at 1 Corinthians 15. And I want I want us to see four testimonies that give evidence for the fact of the resurrection of Christ. **Four testimonies that give evidence for the fact of the resurrection of Christ.**

1. First, we're going to see the **Testimony of Believers.**
2. Second, we'll see the **Testimony of Scripture.**
3. Then we'll see the **Testimony of Eyewitnesses.**
4. And finally, the **Testimony of Paul.**

So let's look at our first point here this morning,

## **1. The Testimony of Believers**

Look at verse one.

*15:1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (1 Cor 15:1)*

Now notice who Paul is talking to here in this passage. Notice who he's talking to. He calls them brethren, brethren, why does he call them, brethren? Well, these are believers within the church of Corinth. And some of them had become influenced by others that there was no resurrection, no resurrection for themselves. There's no future resurrection.

But Paul's argument is if there is no resurrection, then there was no resurrection of Christ, and if there's no resurrection of Christ, then there is no future resurrection for anyone, and therefore no hope for anyone. All hope is lost.

Now we know that Paul taught them the resurrection. And he taught them the resurrection of Christ. How do we know? Well, look at what he says he preached to them. What was it that he preached to them? The gospel, right? He preached to them the gospel. And what is the gospel? The death and the resurrection of Christ...it's not just the death of Christ, it is also the resurrection of Christ. That is the gospel. Don't forget to tell people about the resurrection of Christ when you preach the gospel to them. Tell them that He's alive, that He conquered death.

That was the message that Paul preached. The death and the resurrection of Christ. Now Paul does say back in chapter 2 and verse 2,

*"For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Cor 2:2)*

We would ask, well, what happened to the resurrection, Paul? Why do you want to know Christ and Him crucified? What about the resurrection? Well, in chapter 2 Paul is addressing the foolishness of the message of the cross. That's what he's doing there. Paul didn't come into Corinth preaching some kind of eloquent persuasive message. He was preaching about a man who was crucified on a Roman cross. I mean come on, Paul, don't you have something better to preach about? Something better to give us? And you're going to tell us about a man who's crucified on a cross? It's a foolish message.

But it's the message that saves, right? It's the gospel message. Paul obviously didn't stop there with his message talking about the crucified Savior. What else did he say about Christ who was crucified on the

cross? He then told them He didn't stay dead, but He rose again. He resurrected, which is why Paul begins talking about the body being a temple of the Lord in chapter 6, verse 14, where he says,  
*"Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power." (1 Cor 6:14)*

Paul continued on and he told them about the resurrection of Christ. The church at Corinth, they knew of the resurrection of both Christ, and their own personal future resurrection, that they would be resurrected in the future. Paul taught this to them as he preached the gospel to those who were there in Corinth.

What was their response to it then? Look what he says at the end of verse 1, *"which also you received."* Which also you received. You guys believed this message, and it was because of this message that you are saved. We know what Paul says in Romans 1:16 *"for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also the Greek."*

It is this powerful message that changed your heart...believers...Corinthian believers...this message changed your heart and you repented of your sin, and you put your faith in Christ. Remember that? That's what you guys did. And therefore your whole life is dependent upon this one message.

And the same is true with us today. Our whole life is dependent upon this one message --that Christ died and He rose again. It's dependent upon that. And think about this everyone's life will either fall or stand based upon how they respond to this one message.

Look at what Paul says there... *"in which you stand"* you believers...stand upon this message. You stand upon the truth of the gospel. And everyone's life will either fall or stand, based upon how they respond to this one message.

- You'll either fall for rejecting this message --- or you will be able to stand if you receive this message.
- You will either fall and spend eternity in hell, because you reject this message --- or you will stand, and you will have eternal life with Christ, because you receive the message.

There's no in-between. It's one or the other. And everything is dependent upon your response to this message...the death and the resurrection of Christ.

Which is exactly what Paul says in verse 2, *"by which also you are saved."* (1 Cor 15:2) Notice what he says there – *"by which also you are saved"* --- when you received this message, you repented of your sin, and when you put your faith in Christ. The One in whom this message points to. That's Who it's all about. And you were saved then. But Paul then qualifies it with this...notice this... he says, *"if you hold fast to the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."*

What Paul is saying here is that, that is, if you really have true saving faith...if you really have true saving faith...then you are a believer, and you will continue to believe this message about the death and resurrection of Christ. If you're truly saved.

But if you don't hold onto it, it's not as if you have lost your salvation...that's not what Paul is saying here. He's not saying somehow you've lost your salvation if you don't stand upon this message and hold to this message. He's saying that if you fall away from believing this message of the gospel, it shows that you weren't saved in the first place. You thought you had a faith in God. You thought you had a faith in

Christ. But it wasn't genuine. It wasn't true saving faith. You've fallen away...because you weren't saved in the first place.

Some of you are here this morning and you think that you're saved because you go to church. You think you're saved because you do good religious deeds, or you said a prayer at one point in your life, or you were baptized. But none of that saves you. None of that saves you.

You must place your faith in Christ alone for salvation. There is nothing that you can do to earn salvation. You must turn from your sin and put your faith in Christ alone and receive the free gift of eternal life that He offers to you.

And all of those who have -- we give testimony to the power of the gospel, and to the fact that Christ died on a cross and rose again on the third day, right? We give that testimony as believers. It's the power of this message that has saved us. And now all of us who believe in this message, we give testimony to the fact of the risen Savior. That's our testimony as believers.

We know the life-change that's happened when we believe this message and put our faith in Christ, right? We know that, we know what's happened. We know the effects that this message has had on our lives. We know that we have eternal life now because we have received this message. We can know that. We can have confidence in that, knowing that Christ has done a work in our heart. And all of that is testimony to the fact that Christ is risen. Christ is risen. Because if He didn't, His message and our faith would have zero effect on us, right? You would have no effect. It would all be for nothing. But this faith that we have is not for nothing, it is everything. It is life. It is our everything. And it tells the world that they must believe this message as well in order to be saved.

They look at us and they go, 'You're different. What is it about you?' I have faith in a Savior who died on a cross for my sins and was buried and rose again. Because He rose again and He lives today, I have eternal life with Him. That's the testimony that we have as believers.

So not only do we as believers give testimony to the fact of Christ's resurrection, but second, there's the testimony of the Scriptures.

## 2. There's The Testimony of the Scriptures.

Look at what Paul says in verse 3.

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

Now notice what Paul says about this gospel that he preached here to the Corinthians. He delivered what he also, what? Received. He also received it. This gospel message did not come from within Paul. This was not his own truth that he's preaching to the Corinthians, as if it came from within Paul. In fact, I was watching something the other day where this guy said, "You might disagree with me, but this is my truth." No one cares about your truth. They don't care about your truth. The question is, is it true or is it not? That's the question.

And what Paul is saying here is, this is not some kind of truth that I mustered up from within me. But it was delivered to me and then I passed it on to you. Where did this message come from then? If it didn't

come from Paul, where did this message come from? The answer: God. It came from Him, as God revealed it in His Word.

Notice what Paul says at the end of verse 3, according to the what? Scriptures. According to the Scriptures. This message came from the Scriptures. And as we have already said, the Scripture is breathed out by God. They came literally from the mouth of God. This Bible that we hold in our hands has come from God Himself. It's the Scriptures that give testimony to this message.

Specifically, what Paul is referring to here is the Old Testament Scriptures, think about this. He didn't have the New Testament ... he's writing the New Testament, right? He doesn't have the New Testament all written out like we have it in our Bibles today. It's being written at this time, so what Scriptures is he referring to? The Old Testament Scriptures. And what was the message? What does Paul tell us?

Well, first he tells us that Christ died for our sins. That He's the sacrifice for our sins. He paid the price for sins that you and I could not pay. He came to lay His life down as a sacrifice, so that our sins could be forgiven by God. That's what He did. And how do we know this fact? Because the Bible tells us so. Right? Those of us that grew up in the church, we learned that song as a kid...for the Bible tells me so.

There's a reason why you will learn that as a kid. Because the Bible tells us so. In fact, Paul here is talking about the Old Testament Scriptures. What Scriptures is he referring to in the Old Testament? Well, we read on Friday night, Isaiah 53, and Isaiah 53 told us that Christ would come, and do what? *Lay His life down for our sins. He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.* (Isaiah 53:5) It's in the Old Testament. Scriptures testify to the fact of Christ's death.

And to solidify that fact, Paul goes on and he says that He was buried. Not only did He die, but He was buried. Look at what he says in verse 4.

*“and that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Cor 15:4)*

He was buried. Now Paul, why would you have to tell us that He was buried? You already told us that He died on the cross. Why would you have to tell us that Christ was also buried? Because he wanted to solidify the fact of Christ's death. That's what he's doing there. He's saying He really did die. It wasn't some far-fetched swoon theory -- that He was just exhausted on the cross and then got laid in a tomb, and somehow the cool air within the tomb brought Him back to life. No, Paul says He was buried because He was dead. That's what you do with a dead body, you bury it. And that's what they did with Christ.

He was buried. He actually died. It was a real death. In fact, if you remember the account of Christ on the cross, the Roman soldiers come up to the cross to break Christ's legs while He was hanging there. They broke the legs of the other two guys, but they come to break the legs of Christ, and what does the Roman soldier do? Doesn't break his legs. Why? Because He was already dead. He was already dead. That Roman soldier knew and understood that that man is there hanging there, He is dead. And after He died, they realized 'wow...He's something special. He wasn't just an ordinary man. He truly is the son of God.

John tells us that these soldiers didn't break His legs because it was a fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Psalm 34:20 says *not a bone of him shall be broken*. And so even there, what's going on the cross is all to fulfill exactly what God said in His Word in the Old Testament.

God said it, and therefore it came to pass. God said it would happen and it did happen. Everything that happened on that cross, on that cross, was exactly what God had already told us in the Old Testament Scriptures. And so, the fact that Jesus was buried is important, because it shows the fact of His death. But the Scripture also tells us that He would be what? Resurrected. Now where did the Old Testament Scriptures tell us about this rising on the third day? Where did it tell us that?

Well, remember when Christ was dealing with the Pharisees...and He's confronted with the Pharisees, and they come to seek a sign from Him? They've come to seek a sign from Jesus, and Jesus says in Matthew 12:39, *"an evil and adulterous generation craves a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it. But the sign of Jonah the prophet"*, remember that? *No sign will be given to this evil and adulterous generation, but the sign of Jonah the prophet.*

What is Jesus saying here? What is this sign of Jonah? He's an Old Testament prophet, right? Old Testament prophet. Jesus goes on in verse 40...

*40 for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matt 12:40)*

What is Jesus saying here? Jesus is saying the prophet Jonah gives testimony to the fact that He will be in the grave three days and then rise again. You see that? It's there in the Old Testament Scriptures. That whole incident with Jonah was pointing forward to the fact of Christ's resurrection. That's what's going on there.

Paul must have also had Psalm 16:10 in mind, where David says,

*"For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."*

Christ didn't undergo decay because He did what? He rose again, He came back to life. He didn't undergo decay. Isaiah 53 also tells us that *"He will see His offspring"* (Isaiah 53:10). That is, He will come back to life and He will see all of those whom He has saved. It's the Scriptures that give testimony to the fact of Christ's resurrection, and because the Scriptures are breathed out by God, it is God Himself who tells us of the fact of the resurrection, right?

While the world is trying to get us to doubt the Bible...we can be confident, and we can know for certain that it's true. And that what it says is a fact, Christ rose again. So not only do we have the testimony of believers and the testimony of Scriptures, but third, we have the testimony of eyewitnesses.

### 3. We have the Testimony of Eyewitnesses.

Look at verse 5. Look what Paul says as he writes to the Corinthians. In verse 5, he says,

*"...and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;*

*7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.” (1 Cor 15:5)*

The testimony of eyewitnesses. Paul gives us this record here of all those in whom Christ appeared to after his resurrection-- post resurrection -- and why is this important? Because God has established that witnesses confirm a fact. Deuteronomy 19:20 says *“on the evidence of two or three witnesses, a matter shall be...”* (what?) *“confirmed.”* It's a fact. Two or three witnesses.

We do this in the Court of Law, right? We bring in witnesses. We bring in multiple witnesses, not just one, but we bring in as many witnesses as we can because we want to confirm a fact. We do that today. These witnesses, they give testimony to a fact. Well, Paul lays out a lot more than just two or three witnesses for us of the resurrection of Christ, right? Notice first he tells us that the risen Christ appeared to Cephas, to Cephas. Now who's that? Peter, it's Peter, it's another name. It's Aramaic for Rock, which is what Peter means. Peter's name. That's Peter there.

And why would Paul single out Peter here in this list of people that saw Christ post-resurrection? Why would he single out Peter here? Well, we're not told exactly why, but possibly because, remember when Peter rebuked Christ? (Mark 8:32) Why did he rebuke Christ? Because he didn't like the message that Christ had given to him, that He was going to die and rise again on the third day. Remember that? He rebuked Christ.

Peter also rejected Christ three times after Jesus was arrested, remember that? *You will deny me three times* and Peter did that (Mark 14:72). And so Jesus appears to Peter out of a heart of grace and love for him. Because, although Peter denied Christ, he was going to be used by Christ in amazing ways in the church of God. As the church would be established after this, and then Peter is going to be used to go out and to proclaim the gospel.

Peter was also a leader of the twelve apostles. He was the spokesman for them. Sometimes he opened his mouth a little too much, right? But he was their spokesman. And then after Christ resurrected, Peter had a personal encounter with Jesus where Jesus asked him three times, “Peter. Do you love me?” (John 21:15-17) Do you love me? Peter said, you know, I love you. What did Jesus say? Then go and feed my sheep. Go and tend my lambs. Go and proclaim the gospel and draw people to me. That's your job, Peter.

Peter would also be the one who would give us the first sermon in the church on the Day of Pentecost. He was the first preacher to ever preach in the church. It was Peter. He preached the gospel, and he preached the gospel mainly to Jews. And so Jesus appears first of all to Peter, a key figure in the church, which is what Paul tells us here in 1 Corinthians 15.

And then Paul tells us that Jesus *“appeared to the twelve.”* Now we know that Judas hanged himself because he betrayed Christ, right? We know that so you got 12 - 1. How many do you have? 11, right? But he appeared to the twelve, Paul tells us. Why would Paul say *“the twelve”* if there is only 11? Well, because the twelve was a title that was used for those apostles, those twelve in whom Jesus chose in His ministry. In fact, these guys, after Judas hanged himself in Acts chapter 1, they added another one to them...Mathias was then added to them to make twelve again, remember that? So they've got the twelve.

The twelve are the guys that Jesus chose during His ministry. They were closest to Jesus in His ministry and they would be used to go and preach the gospel to the world. That's what their task would be. Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection. Then Paul tells us that Jesus "*appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time.*" (1 Cor 15:6) Now we don't know when this event was, but there were over 500. Notice that, over 500. Oftentimes when we tell people we just say, oh, Jesus appeared to 500 after His resurrection. But notice what it says there, '*He appeared to more than 500*' at one time, in one specific event. Where there were more than 500 that were gathered together there, and Jesus, the risen Savior appeared before them.

Now who were these 500? We don't really know who they were. We don't really know of this event. But the early church knew who they were. They knew who these 500 were. Possibly even some of those who were there in Corinth knew who these 500 were. That's why Paul says "*most of whom remained until now.*" (1 Cor 15:6) They're known by Paul. Paul knows who these 500 were, most of whom remained until now. But Paul adds, but *some have fallen asleep*. How do you know, Paul? How do you know some have fallen asleep?

Because I know who they are. I met them. I know who these 500 are. They've fallen asleep. That is, they have died. That's what he's talking about there. And so you have way more than just two or three witnesses of the resurrected Christ. You have over 511 witnesses, eyewitnesses up to this point, but Paul doesn't stop here.

What does he do? He continues on, and he says, now, let me give you more eyewitnesses. He then tells us that Christ appeared to James. (1 Cor 15:11) Notice that in that list there *he appeared to James*. Now we aren't told exactly what James this is. You had James, the brother of John. You had James the son of Alphaeus, but these guys, these two James were apostles who were chosen by Christ, and so they are most likely lumped in with who? The twelve, right? They're lumped in there with the twelve. But there was another James, another James.

We have a book in our Bible in the New Testament called James. And it's that James that he's talking about here. Who is this James? This James was the half-brother of Jesus. He's a half-brother of Jesus. He was born to Joseph and Mary. And why would James be important for Paul to note here? Why would James be important for him to note? You want to know why? Because James was a skeptic of Jesus. Although he was his half-brother, he was a skeptic of Christ. He didn't believe in Him in His earthly ministry. In fact, John 7:5 tells us *for not even his brothers were believing in Him*. James did not believe in Christ, as Christ walked the Earth on His, in His earthly ministry.

And it's most likely after the death and then the resurrection of Christ, when James sees the resurrected Christ, he knows my half-brother died on a cross, and He was buried in a tomb, but he saw him risen and it was at that point that he believed. He put his faith in Christ, who he didn't see as his half-brother, he now saw as his who? Savior. He was a skeptic, but now he's a believer. Why? Because he saw the risen Christ.

So, you have this close family member of Jesus, who, although at one time was a skeptic and unbeliever, he now believes because he has seen his risen Savior. What a testimony that is! Amazing testimony!

And then Paul goes on in the list and he says all the apostles. Now who are these guys? Well, these aren't the twelve because he's already talked about the twelve, right? Paul already told us that Jesus appeared to the twelve. So who are these apostles? These are guys that we would call "lowercase a"

apostles who would serve alongside of the twelve. They're not "capital A" Apostles, as the twelve were. We would call them "lowercase a" apostles, who served alongside of these guys.

These would be guys described in Acts 1:21, where Peter says this,

*"Therefore, it is necessary that the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us. Beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."*

And so that's a qualification to become an apostle, you must have seen the resurrected Christ. That's why we don't have apostles today. No one is seeing the resurrected Christ. He's not appearing to anyone. We don't need apostles anymore because we have the written Word of God, right? The apostolic period is over. But in this apostolic period, there are men like Joseph and Matthias in Acts chapter 1. Both of these men, who saw the risen Christ, who had walked with Christ in His earthly ministry, who were there, and they come, and they say, we've only got 11. We need a 12<sup>th</sup>, Joseph and Mathias...you guys come forward, and they cast lots and Mathias is chosen.

What about Joseph? He's qualified to be an apostle, right? He was brought forth. He would be one of these that we would call a "lower case a" apostle in this apostolic period.

We also see James. James is called an apostle in Galatians 1:19. We're going to be studying Galatians on Wednesday nights and we'll see that there, where James is called an apostle. He's not one of the twelve as in, as what we would call an "uppercase A" Apostle, but he would be a "lowercase a" apostle. And what did these guys do? They accompanied the twelve apostles as they went around and proclaimed the message of Christ.

And so these guys are eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. It's a fact that He has risen, because they have seen Him, and they all give testimony to this fact that Jesus is no longer dead, but He is risen. So we have the testimony of believers, we have the testimony of Scripture, the testimony of eyewitnesses, and finally, we come to our fourth point.

#### 4. The Testimony of Paul.

We have the testimony of Paul. Look at verse 8.

*"And last of all is to one untimely born. He appeared also to me, for I am the least of the apostles and not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God." (1 Cor 15:8-9)*

Now if you look at the other twelve apostles and you see what it takes to be an apostle, Paul really doesn't fit the mold, right? He doesn't fit the mold. He didn't follow Christ during His earthly ministry. He didn't see the resurrected Christ during His 40 days on earth before He ascended to heaven. He wasn't like the other twelve apostles, walking around with these guys, seeing all the things that they saw.

In fact, his goal as a Pharisee was to do what? Persecute the church. Kill these guys...get rid of them because they're proclaiming the message of the gospel, which is exactly what he says at the end of verse 9. But Paul does tell us that he did see the risen Christ, and where did he see the risen Christ? On the road to Damascus. Remember that? On the road to Damascus ... as he goes there to persecute believers, to go and persecute the church, Christ appears to him and He says, "Saul, Saul," (that was his

name before his name was changed to Paul) (Acts 9:4) Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Why are you doing this, Paul? Paul saw Him on the road to Damascus.

This was a post-resurrection appearance. But it was also a post-ascension appearance. This was after Christ had ascended, to go be with the Father in Heaven. He appeared to him, and Paul says, *last of all, He appeared to me also.* (1 Cor 15:8) Now, this doesn't mean that Paul was the last one to see Christ, because John saw Christ in Revelation chapter 1, right? Remember that vision that's there...he's on the island of Patmos and he saw Christ there. But Paul is saying that he's the last of all to see Christ and to be an apostle. I'm the last of them. I'm it. And although he was appointed to be an apostle by Christ, he is... notice what he says...how he refers to himself...I am the least of the apostles. What a humble man. A humble man, and although he saw Christ, and was appointed by Christ to be an apostle, he was the last of the apostles. He's not worthy to be an apostle, because what did he do? He persecuted the church. But he was saved. He was called by God and he was saved. He repented of his sin and he put his faith in Christ.

God drew him to Himself and all of this happened by the grace of God, which is exactly what Paul tells us, right? I am what I am by the grace of God. It's not that I've done this myself. God has done this to me. It's all by God's grace, everything that has happened in my life is because of the grace of God.

Paul goes on the middle of verse 11. He says *"I labored even more than all of them"* (1 Cor 15:11) More than all of whom? More than all of the other apostles, I labored, even more than all of the other apostles. But again, it was only by the grace of God that I was able to do it. Part of my laboring and part of their laboring as apostles, was to go out and do what? Preach the gospel. What's the gospel? The death and the resurrection of Christ? That's what they went out to preach.

Which is why he says at the end of verse 11. *"So we preach, and so you believed."*

What did they preach? The death and resurrection of Christ. Why did they preach it? Because it's a fact. Because it's a fact, because it's true. That Christ was dead on a cross, and three days later He rose again. There are witnesses of the risen Savior, and therefore they have to go out and preach this message to the masses. They believed it. And they saw others come to believe that message too, as they preached the gospel to them.

Do you believe it? Do you believe this message? Do you believe the fact of the death and the resurrection of Christ? You can either believe this fact now, and repent of your sin, and put your faith in Christ today. Or you will be confronted with this fact in the future. But at that time, it will be too late. Because you will be confronted with this fact...as you stand before God in judgment...if you don't believe it now, and He will judge you...and He will say, "depart from me." (Matt 25:41) and He will cast you into the eternal lake of fire, where you will be judged for all of eternity if you don't come to believe this now.

It's a fact. It's the truth. Christ died on a cross, and He was buried, and He resurrected on the third day. And He calls for you to come to Him today and put your faith in Him. And all of us who have believed in Him and put our faith in Him, we know that we have been changed by this fact...by this very truth...our lives have been changed.

And your life can be changed too, if you will turn from your sin and put your faith in Christ. Because it's a fact. And He died, and He rose again.

For those of us who believe this message, and have repented of our sin, and put our faith in Christ. Our job now is to go forth, and to preach this message to the world, to be bold and to be confident, to go and proclaim this message: that Christ was dead, He was buried, and He rose again on the third day. How do we know? Because the Bible tells us so and therefore it is a fact.

Father, we thank You. Thank You for this amazing truth that we have come to celebrate this morning -- this fact of Christ's death and burial and resurrection, and we praise You that You have risen Him from the grave. That the tomb is empty. That our Savior is alive today. And that He sits at Your right hand. Father, we know that He will come again. And when He comes again, He will not come as one who will offer salvation, but He will come as a judge, to judge those who do not believe. Father, I pray that if there is anyone here this morning who does not know You, I pray that You would draw them to Yourself. That they would turn from their sin and put their faith in Jesus that they would believe this truth. That their life would be changed by You. That they would leave here this morning with life instead of death. They would know You and believe in Christ as their risen Savior. Father I pray that You would help us to be bold and to be courageous, and to go out and to preach this message to the world. So that the lost would hear it, that they would come to believe in Christ, Your son. Give us the boldness to do that. May we do it all, not for our own glory, but all for Your glory, so that You would be exalted, so that You would be honored in our lives. We thank You for our time this morning in Your Word. We give you all the glory this day, we pray in Christ name. Amen.