

1 Corinthians 15:5-11
“We have seen Him”

I. Intro

II. Vs. 5-11 Visible evidence of the resurrection

- a. Vs. 5-8 What people have seen
- b. Vs. 9-11 What He has done to be seen in us

I. Intro

In our modern jurisprudence we are most familiar with “*eyewitness*” testimony but there are many other types of evidence called “*circumstantial*”. The question is how can the jury determine if the evidence being presented is the truth? The answer to this is you have to investigate the testimonies of those who have witnessed the event. In dealing with the resurrection, the apostle Paul starts out in verses 1-4 with the jury testifying to the effects of the resurrection in their own lives. He told the jury that the resurrection had two immediate impacts upon their own lives:

- a. It brought them stability “**security**”; prior to receiving Jesus they were insecure.
- b. It brought them “**significance**”; prior they had no real purpose.

In those verses, Paul not only gave them the evidence, but he also stated that the evidence had been **foretold in scripture 100’s of years before**. Peter wrote in his 2nd letter says the same thing in chapter 1:16 when he wrote “*we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but were eyewitnesses of His majesty*.” Then in 19th verse Peter calls his experience on the mount of transfiguration “*the prophetic word confirmed*”. **It is Peter’s testimony that all the “eyewitness” testimony did was confirm the word of God.** Jesus Himself in Luke 24:33-49 after raising from the dead confirmed the physical proofs (*His Hands and feet*) with the word of God as He (*opened their*

understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures). This resurrection morning we will look at the visible evidence of the resurrection.

II. Vs. 5-11 Visible evidence of the resurrection

In every courtroom the most powerful testimony is “*eyewitness*” testimony. A person who has witnessed for themselves the events on trial is the most effective type of evidence. According to this passage in consider these 4 points:

- There are ten appearances of the resurrected Lord given besides the one of Paul’s, (11 including his).
- Nine are in the Gospels but of those Paul only mentions five of the ten and adds James not given elsewhere.
- For his eyewitness testimony here in this passage, Paul call only six to the stand, but the sum total is still over 527 people.
- As important as these six accounts what carries even more weight is that they not only saw and heard Jesus prior to His death and resurrection they heard and saw Him after.

The evidence of their eyewitness testimony proves that what they witnessed of Jesus after his resurrection completely changed how they lived the remainder of their lives. The point of this testimony reveals the following: *As inspiring as it was to be around Jesus during His three and half years of earthly ministry, none of His followers remained consistent upon seeing His arrest and subsequent death.* Yet, *what they witnessed after His resurrection convinced them too trust Him in a new radical way that they most were killed trusting in Jesus and not turning away by denying Him even if it cost them their own lives! The resurrection alone made heroes of the faith out of cowards!*

A. Vs. 5-8 What people have seen:

1. Vs. 5a “*He was seen by Cephas*”: The word “*seen*” in the Greek means to “*make manifest or appear*”. Paul’s point by use of this word is to say two things:
 - a. That what each of these witnesses saw was not a vision or a dream but an actual appearance.
 - b. The word also suggests what the gospel accounts say namely, that until Jesus revealed His identity to them none of them recognized Him.

- Cephas is the Hebrew word for Peter but what is a bit fuzzy is when this “appearance” took place. Here is what we know it was **some time after Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene** recorded for us in Matt. 27 yet **before His appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus** as they told Jesus in Luke 24:23-24 that He had already revealed Himself to the two women and that John and Peter had ran to the tomb to check it out. In Mark 16:17 Mary was given a message to tell the disciples, especially Peter, of the truth of the resurrection. In fact by the time the two had turned back from the road to Emmaus to go back to Jerusalem the disciple’s exclaimed that “*The Lord is risen indeed and has appeared to Simon!*” What we can understand from this is that: **Even though Peter had forsaken the Lord the Lord had never forsaken him!** The Lord chose to reveal Himself to Peter before the other disciples; in my opinion, not upon worthiness but upon need as clearly Peter need a fresh glimpse of His glory!
2. Vs. 5b “*Then by the twelve*”: Actually Jesus appeared to only 10 of the disciples as Judas was dead and Thomas was absent, but they are still referred to as the “twelve” as recorded for us both in John 20:19 and Luke 24:36. The first of these encounters was on the evening when He had appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. A week later with Thomas now present Jesus again appeared to them inviting Thomas to touch His wounds so to satisfy his unbelief. So important was Jesus’ appearance before these witnesses that we are told in Acts 1:22 that we are told that to be considered a candidate to become an apostle one had to be “*a witness with us of His resurrection.*”
 3. Vs. 6 “*After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep*”: This was most likely the prearranged meeting spoken of in Matthew 28:16 where we are told that they “*went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.*” Initially what Paul emphasizes is **the quality of the eyewitness’s do to the fact that those who saw Him after the resurrection were the ones who knew Him best!** Here the emphases is NOT upon the quality of the witness but rather upon **the sheer quantity of those who could testify of His appearance after the resurrection.** To bolster this testimony, Paul makes an even more amazing statement to the Corinthian believers by saying, “*of whom the greater part remain to the present*”. It is believed that Paul wrote this letter in the spring of A.D. 54 or 55. That would mean that it hasn’t been over 25 years since the resurrection and Paul says that most of those who were present of the over 500 believers who saw Jesus were still alive and could still testify of the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. The point Paul is conveying is that since over 500 all at once saw Jesus after the resurrection it would be normal to think that perhaps one or two may become persuaded to see the events of the resurrection differently 25 years later. Yet Paul’s words bolster the evidence as nothing had changed their testimony in all that time! It’s difficult to get 5 people who witness the same event to agree to what they saw; yet Paul says that there are over 500 who could come forward at that very moment and all of them would still say the same thing they did 25 years earlier!
 4. Vs. 7a “*After that He was seen by James*”: This is the only place that this eyewitness account is recorded. But James the ½ brother of Jesus eyewitness testimony to His appearance after the resurrection is supported by Acts 1:14 where we are told that

- “Mary the mother of Jesus, with His brothers”* were in the upper room with the disciples on Pentecost. James was the oldest of Jesus’ brothers and sisters from Mary and Joseph’s union, yet we are told in John 7:5 that *“even His brothers did not believe in Him.”* Think of growing up with Jesus as your older brother. Yeh you knew He was better than everybody but still He’s your brother. What could possibly change your opinion except for Jesus’ appearance after the resurrection! Twice in the letter that James wrote he refers to Jesus as **“*Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord of glory*”**.
5. Vs. 7b *“Then by all the apostles”*: Paul lumps together what Luke spoke of in Acts 1:3 saying that *“He (Jesus) also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”* Some of which no doubt John has in mind in 21:1-14. This of course culminated in the final occasion recorded in Acts 1:11 where we are told at His ascension on the Mount of Olives that *“He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”* For forty days Jesus just continues to reveal Himself and teach from the scriptures about His death, burial, and resurrection. Nothing else can better explain Peter’s transformation on Pentecost then that he was empowered by the Holy Spirit preached what Jesus had revealed those 40 days with such sounding conviction that over 3,000 were added to the Kingdom of God. Paul’s argument is simple: You wouldn’t preach a hoax concerning the resurrected Lord as you would be risking your life to do so.
 6. Vs. 8 *“Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time”*: Paul finally calls himself to the stand as one whom he calls **“*born out of due time*”** that is literally miscarried in the Greek. Paul’s own encounter with the resurrected Lord came long after the ascension. This is a reference to Paul’s conversion in Acts 9:4-5 where he is on his way to persecute Christians and ends up meeting Christ instead. What makes this testimony so powerful is his own admittance of his hatred for anything to do with Jesus. This is called a witness from a hostile source and one in whom has not only nothing to gain from their testimony but everything to lose.

B. Vs. 9-11 What He has done to be seen in us

Paul not only testifies about what he witnessed concerning the resurrected Jesus but also what

Jesus had done that could not be explained any other way. There are **four things Paul lists here**

that Jesus Changed upon revealing Himself to Paul that could not be explained any other way then that Jesus had risen from the dead:

1. Vs. 9 *“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because **I persecuted the church of God.**”* **A deep recognition of personal sin.** Paul left Jerusalem with a deep conviction and personal hatred of anything Christian, then outside Damascus he ends up with a personal hatred of his own sin. What else could explain such a radical change then Paul having an encounter with the very One whom He hated and believed was dead but was instead in fact alive and in love with him. Notice that Paul does not seek to minimize his actions instead chooses to call himself

- unworthy to be called one that is to be sent out. There was never a day that he did not regret his actions that had caused some much pain and suffering in others.
2. Vs. 10a “*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain*”: **A complete change of character**. From persecutor of the church to defender of the faith, from hatred to love. Paul did not just have a meltdown he was recreated completely. Three times in this section Paul attributes this change to the “grace of God” it was Christ’s unmerited favor that so changed his life.
 3. Vs. 10b “*But I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*”: **A complete redirection of focus**. All of his life had been geared towards the zeal that was found in the law. In fact to the to the Philippians Paul would write saying concerning his former life “*If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*” Then he continues, “*But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness*”.
 4. Vs. 11 “*Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*”: **Finally a practical humility**. From pride and arrogance to that of just wanting Jesus to be seen and known by all whom he came into contact with. Paul understood that the power was in the Person of the message and not in the personality of the messenger.