

Eyewitnesses to the Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:5-8

Introduction:

1. Paul has dealt with numerous controversial issues that were problems in the church at Corinth in the book of 1 Corinthians.
2. In chapter 15 he begins to deal with the issue of the resurrection. The problem is stated in verse 12. Some were teaching that there was no resurrection of the dead (cf. vs. 35). Paul is dealing with objections to the doctrine of the resurrection.
3. He begins this chapter by explaining the special message that Christ had given him to preach. vs. 1-4
4. Then, beginning in verse 5, Paul begins to detail the eyewitness accounts of those who personally saw the resurrected Christ.
5. Here is the point that Paul is making - in that day, as Paul wrote this letter, you could actually find and talk to people who were personal eyewitnesses of Christ after His resurrection - people who saw Him, heard Him, ate with Him, and spent time with Him.
6. Paul goes through the order of people here in verses 5-8 and it harmonizes perfectly with the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
7. Many times it can get confusing because the four gospels are not written in chronological order. They each are giving details of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Many times they will each give the same details, but other times a detail may only be written down in one of them.
8. In this lesson, we will examine the chronological order of Christ's appearances after His resurrection and see how it harmonizes with Paul's order here in 1 Corinthians 15.

First, Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene. Mark 16:9

1. Several women go to Jesus' tomb early in the morning (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, etc.) to anoint Christ's body with spices. When the ladies get to the tomb, the stone is already rolled away.
2. Mary Magdalene immediately runs to tell Peter and John, and they come and see the tomb and leave and go home. **John 20:1-9**
3. After this, Mary Magdalene is outside the tomb weeping when Christ appears and talks to her. **John 20:11-17**
 - The first to see Jesus was Mary Magdalene. She was the woman from whom Jesus cast out seven devils. After this, she became one of His devoted followers.
4. A couple of important sidenotes:
 - Christ did not need the angel to roll the stone away to get out of the tomb. Jesus arose with a glorified body that was not limited by time or space. **John 20:19**
 - When Lazarus was raised up, he arose with the same corruptible body that he had before he died.
 - Christ is the only One who possesses immortality. He was raised never to die again. He had a glorified body that just stepped right out of those linen clothes

and the empty tomb. He just walked right out. The angel rolled away the stone or nobody would have known that the tomb was empty.

Second, Jesus appeared to the group of ladies that had come to the tomb.

Matthew 28:9

1. Either after Mary Magdalene's encounter with Christ, or even possibly while she was talking to Christ, two angels appear and explain the empty tomb to all of the ladies. **Matthew 28:5-8**
2. While they are on their way to tell the eleven, Christ appears to them and says, "*All hail.*" At this point He has already ascended to heaven and performed His high priestly duties. The ladies hold Him by the feet and worship Him.

Matthew 28:9-10

3. I'm sure Jesus appeared to them so they could validate Mary Magdalene's testimony. The Bible says that in the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word be established.

Third, Jesus appeared to Simon Peter and then two men on the road to Emmaus.

1. The ladies run quickly and tell the eleven disciples of Christ, but are met with skepticism. **Luke 24:10-11**
2. Peter leaves and heads to the sepulcher for a second time (**Luke 24:12**). At some point after this that day, Jesus personally appears to Peter.
3. Luke tells the story of two men on the road to Emmaus that same day that have a conversation with Jesus, not knowing that it is Jesus. **Luke 24:13-31**
4. After they realize that it was Jesus they go to Jerusalem and find the eleven disciples, Notice what they say in verse 34. The Lord had already appeared to Simon Peter before appearing to these two men.
5. This is very special given the fact that Peter had denied Christ three times before His crucifixion. Jesus came to Peter before any of the others. What a gracious Savior!

Fourth, Jesus appeared to the eleven (except Thomas).

1. Later that evening, as the two men on the road to Emmaus are telling of their conversation with Christ, Christ suddenly appears in the room. He eats and converses with them. **Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-20**
2. We learn in John's gospel that Thomas was not present with the group. Where was Thomas? We do not know, but when told of Christ's appearance, he doubted. **John 20:24-25**

Fifth, Jesus appeared to the eleven (with Thomas).

1. Eight days later, Christ appears to the eleven again and this time Thomas is present and sees Christ for himself. **John 20:26-29**
2. Shortly thereafter, Christ appears to seven of the disciples that had gone fishing (**John 21:1-13**). This is the third time Jesus appears to them. **John 21:14**
3. When we read **Acts 1:1-6**, it reveals that Christ then made numerous appearances to the apostles, teaching and instructing them for 40 days before His ascension.

Other appearances of Christ (from 1 Corinthians 15)

1. At some point, after His appearance to the twelve, Christ made an appearance to over 500 believers at one time. vs. 6
2. Christ also appeared to James, his step-brother (vs. 7). James was a non-believer during Christ's earthly ministry, but later would become the leader of the church at Jerusalem and write the book of James.
3. Christ appeared to all the apostles during that 40-day window. vs. 7
 - There were men who were apostles but were not one of the twelve. Barnabas would be an example (**Acts 14:14**), as would Paul. An apostle was a person who had seen the resurrected Christ and demonstrated the signs of an apostle.
4. Last of all, Christ appeared to Paul from heaven. vs. 8

We do not serve a dead Savior, but a living Savior! He is risen!!