

# HE SHEWED HIMSELF ALIVE

## **TEXT: ACTS 1:1—3**

### **Introduction:**

1. This Easter Sunday morning I would like to preach the great doctrine of the resurrection of Christ.
2. In Colossians 4:14, the apostle Paul refers to Luke as “the beloved physician.” Luke, the only Gentile writer of Holy Scripture, wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.
3. Luke says in Acts 1:3 that our Lord “shewed himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs.”
4. His “passion” refers to His terrible sufferings, His cruel crucifixion and death.
5. “Infallible proofs” means “evidences.” I have in my library two books entitled, *Many Infallible Proofs*.
6. One was written by Dr. AT Pierson and was published in 1886. The other was written by Dr. Henry Morris and was published in 1974.
7. Both these books deal with the important subject of Christian apologetics, the systematic defense of the Christian faith.
8. Apologetics deals with the reliability of God’s Word, fulfilled prophecy, creationism, the miracles in the Bible, etc.
9. The resurrection of Christ is central to the Christian faith. The apostle Paul said, “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (I Cor. 15:14).
10. Our Lord’s resurrection was a bodily resurrection (cf. John 20:24-29).
11. Unbelievers talk about a so-called “spiritual resurrection.” This is nonsense. Spirits do not die and therefore they are not resurrected.
12. The JW’s teach that our Lord was not raised bodily from the grave, but was recreated as a new “spirit body.” They actually teach that our Lord’s body dissolved into vapor and that He was raised as an invisible spirit creature, with no physical body.
13. What a shame that millions of lost souls believe this foolishness.
14. This morning we will look at these “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3).

## **I. THE EMPTY TOMB (MATTHEW 28:1-15)**

1. The first infallible proof is the empty tomb. This infallible proof is still unanswerable.
2. A Jewish Christian friend once told me he thought the empty tomb was a better symbol of the Christian faith than the cross. I believe the cross is a wonderful symbol of our Christian faith, as long as it is an empty cross, and not a crucifix (which is actually an idol).

3. One of the problems with the crucifix is it stresses our Lord's suffering and death and diminishes His resurrection.
4. The crucifix represents a denial of our Lord's own words from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30).  
     Lifted up was He to die;  
     "It is finished!" was His cry;  
     Now in Heav'n exalted high.  
     Hallelujah! what a Savior! (PP Bliss)
5. The cross is now empty and so is the tomb. The empty tomb is the first of "many infallible proofs." You may recall that Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, had the tomb sealed and set Roman guards to watch it (Matt. 27:57-66).
6. It would have cost these guards their lives if they had gone to sleep. Roman soldiers were disciplined and well trained. It simply isn't possible that these men would all fall asleep.
7. The Bible does not say how many Roman soldiers were guarding the tomb, but there had to be quite a few of them. Albert Roper wrote a book entitled, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965). He numbers the Roman guard as numbering anywhere from ten to thirty.
8. He says the seal on the tomb was the Imperial Seal of Rome. Any violation of this imperial seal would have carried the full retribution of the Roman Empire.
9. Even if all of the Roman soldiers dozed off (highly unlikely), moving a huge stone (which probably weighed over a ton) would have certainly awakened them.

## II. MANY EYEWITNESSES (ACTS 1:3)

1. Luke says in Acts 1:3, "To whom also He shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days..."
2. This is the only reference in the Bible to the 40 days between our Lord's resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven.
3. Many people saw our Lord after He rose from the dead. These many eyewitnesses are an infallible proof to the resurrection of Christ. The apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:6 that the resurrected Christ "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once."
4. That is a large number of eyewitnesses!
5. Mark 16:9 says, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils" (cf. John 20:11-18).
6. I could preach a whole message on Mark 16:9. Before she met the Lord, Mary Magdalene had been possessed by seven devils. But the Lord saved

- her and cast the devils out of her, and she was the very first person to see the resurrected Lord.
7. This illustrates the matchless grace of Jesus.
  8. In John 20:19 we are told that our Lord appeared to His disciples. Thomas was missing from that Sunday night meeting, but Thomas saw the resurrected Lord the next week (John 20:24-31).
  9. In John 21, our Lord ate with the apostles by the Sea of Galilee. As I mentioned earlier, the JW's teach that our Lord's body dissolved into vapor and that He was raised as an invisible spirit creature, with no physical body.
  10. But that was no invisible spirit eating with the apostles by the Sea of Galilee (cf. John 21:1-14).
  11. Our Lord also ate with Cleopas and the other disciple in Luke 24. You will recall that at one point they thought Jesus was a spirit. Luke 24:37 says, "But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit."
  12. But our Lord said to them, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:38, 39).
  13. Then the next verse says, "And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them His hands and His feet" (Luke 24:40).
  14. These are some of the "many infallible proofs" – our Lord's wounded hands and feet!
  15. There are many other appearances recorded in the NT. The Scofield Study Bible lists these appearances on pages 1043, 1044.
  16. If you are not familiar with these appearances, it would do you well to study them.

### **III. THE POWERFUL TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES**

1. Consider the apostle Peter. On the night of the crucifixion Peter denied the Lord three times. But in the book of Acts, Peter emerges as a bold and powerful preacher of the Gospel.
2. Let us see what Peter himself said (Acts 2:22-24; I Peter 1:3).
3. Please allow me to give you a rather lengthy quote from Simon Greenleaf, who was Professor of Law at Harvard University. He wrote: "The great truths which the apostles declared, were that Christ had risen from the dead, and that only through repentance from sin, and faith in Him, could men hope for salvation. This doctrine they asserted with one voice, everywhere, not only under the greatest discouragements, but in the face of the most appalling errors that can be presented to the mind of man. Their master had recently perished as a malefactor, by the sentence of a public tribunal. His

religion sought to overthrow the religions of the whole world. The laws of every country were against the teachings of His disciples. The interests and passions of all the rulers and great men in the world were against them. The fashion of the world was against them. Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition, revilings, bitter persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, torments and cruel deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay, rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution. The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and unblenching courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths which they asserted; and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy and terrific frequency. It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact” (*Testimony of the Evangelists, Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965, reprinted from 1847 edition).

4. Of the twelve apostles, eleven went on to die martyr’s deaths preaching that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God who rose from the dead.
5. Eventually, John was the only apostle left. He was exiled as a prisoner on the isle of Patmos. Our Lord appeared to John on the isle of Patmos, and said to him, “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen” (Rev. 1:17, 18).

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is often referred to as a “fundamental” doctrine of the Christian faith. Sincere Christians can disagree over baptism. We can disagree over church polity, or certain aspects of Bible prophecy.
2. We can disagree over a number of things and that is OK. But if a man denies the bodily resurrection of Christ he cannot be saved.
3. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9).
4. In I Corinthians 15:3, 4, the apostle Paul defines the Gospel as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
5. (By the way, there is no so-called “social gospel,” or “black gospel,” or “white gospel,” etc. There is only one true Gospel.)

6. Paul states very clearly, “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...” (I Cor. 15:1, 2).
7. This is the only way to be saved.

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