

## **Luke 24:36-43 Undeniable Proof of Jesus' Resurrection**

It's been said that extraordinary claims demand extraordinary proof. Christianity makes an extraordinary claim—Jesus rose from the dead. It's the central claim of the Christian faith; everything in Christianity hangs on the reality of that one historical event. The claim that Jesus rose from the dead is an extraordinary claim, and it demands considerable proof.

I mentioned a few weeks ago that the Gospels record at least 10 appearances of Jesus after his crucifixion. The eleven disciples and those with them saw Jesus alive several times. In addition to that, Paul tells us that more than 500 people saw Jesus at one occasion after the resurrection. The Bible gives us the testimony of many people who saw the resurrected Christ.

Last time we were in Luke, we were looking at the account of the two men who talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus (24:13f). They had a remarkable experience as Jesus “expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (vs 27). Jesus explained how the whole OT anticipated his coming, and how they should have expected the Messiah to suffer before entering into glory. How amazing it would have been to have heard Jesus himself explain how his ministry fulfilled OT expectations.

In Luke 24:36f, we have the account of Jesus appearing to his disciples. By this time, he had appeared to several women, to Peter, and to the two disciples walking to Emmaus. And now he appears to “the eleven” and to “them that were with them” (vs. 33). And his appearance was such that there could be no remaining doubt that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. There is adequate proof to see the resurrection of Jesus as a fact of history, not merely a legend and not mere religious language.

Let's consider this account and see how Jesus proves his physical resurrection from the dead. And notice here the appeal to the senses. This experience was not merely in the minds of the disciples. It was a physical experience that the disciples sensed with their physical faculties. And as readers of this account, we would have to admit that Jesus provided undeniable proof to many people that he had risen from the dead.

- I. Jesus appears in the midst of them. .36 (sight)
- A. From the previous context, we learn that the two disciples who had been walking to Emmaus returned to Jerusalem to report their experience to the disciples.
  - B. And those two men had more to report than merely seeing Jesus. Jesus had spoken to them and taught them the scriptural basis of his suffering and death (vss. 26-27). They had seen Jesus, spoken with him, and eaten with him.
  - C. .36 As the two were giving their report, Jesus suddenly was there, right in the middle of the group.
  - D. The Gospel of John tells us that the doors were shut in the room where the disciples were meeting (Jn 20:19). Jesus entered the room without knocking on the door and without the doors being opened. Jesus appeared in the midst of them without going through the doors.
  - E. That tells us that Jesus' resurrection body is significantly different from the normal human body. Jesus is able to appear and disappear at will. He is not restrained by physical objects.

**Quote:** Since he is in his risen and glorified state, time, space, the rock of the tomb, the walls and the doors of buildings no longer [hinder] the body of Jesus. He appears where he desires to appear, and his visible presence disappears when he desires to have it so. This is wholly supernatural, wholly incomprehensible to our minds.<sup>1</sup>

- F. Notice several sight-related words in this context:
  - 1. Vs. 37 –“they had seen (θεωρέω) a spirit”
  - 2. Vs. 39 “behold (εἶδον)...see (εἶδον)...as ye see (θεωρέω)”
  - 3. Vs. 40 “he showed (ἐπιδείκνυμι) them” – to show, exhibit, display
  - 4. Vs. 43 he ate “before (ἐνώπιον) them”—in their sight.

After all of these visual experiences, it's no wonder that the disciples call themselves witnesses. They had seen the risen Christ with their own eyes. And in the future they would repeatedly affirm that they were witnesses of Jesus' resurrection.

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<sup>1</sup> Lenski, 1196.

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

Acts 3:15 ... *God hath raised [Jesus] from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.*

Acts 5:32 *And we are his witnesses of these things...*

A witness tells about what he has seen; he testifies to the validity of a claim. The claim is that Jesus rose from the dead, and the disciples gave personal testimony that they knew this claim to be true.

- G. Now we have a large number of witnesses—the women, Peter, the two from Emmaus, the rest of the 11 disciples (other than Thomas, who was not there), and the others. We don't know how many this would be in all, but it's got to be at least 20, perhaps many more than that.

**Trans:** The only way to explain all these people having the same experience is that they all saw the same thing. They were not having a mass hallucination. It was not a vision or a mystical, dream event. The only reasonable conclusion is that it really happened; Jesus was alive.

So when we talk about the resurrection of Jesus, it's not just a religious story; it's a historical event. It happened in space and time, and many people willingly gave testimony to the fact that they had seen and interacted with Jesus. The resurrection of Christ is indisputable. We have undeniable proof.

## II. Jesus spoke unto them. .36 (hearing)

In addition to the disciples seeing Jesus is the fact that they heard him.

- A. .36end Jesus' greeting, "Peace to you," is a common form of greeting in the Jewish world. He probably spoke this in Hebrew—*shalom*.
- B. .37 Jesus said, "Peace to you," but the reaction from the disciples was anything but peaceful. Although they had reason to believe that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, they were not expecting him to appear before them.
- C. "They were terrified and frightened." Both are strong words expressing great fear; the disciples were exceedingly afraid when they saw Jesus. This astonishing appearance produced terror in their hearts.

- D. .38 Jesus questions this response. The word “troubled” means “agitated, stirred up, excited.” The word expresses the reaction of terror in the face of astonishing phenomena.<sup>2</sup>
- E. .38b In addition to fear is “doubts” arising in their hearts. Jesus knows their hearts/minds. Like the two on the road to Emmaus, the disciples are “slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken” (vs. 25).
- F. What contributed to this fear and doubt?
1. They knew that Jesus was dead; some of them had seen him die on the cross. Some of them had carried his dead body from Calvary to the tomb. Every bit of evidence assured them that Jesus was dead. And dead people simply don’t come back to life.  
  
Imagine attending the funeral of a friend, seeing his dead body in the casket, accompanying the family to the graveyard, and watching the casket being lowered into the ground. Then imagine seeing the deceased person appear before you suddenly a couple of days later. You’d be scared out of your wits, too.
  2. Part of that fear was probably due to the sudden, unexpected, surprising appearance of Jesus. He didn’t knock on the door and ask to be let in. He simply appeared; suddenly he was there. That just doesn’t happen normally. So his sudden appearance likely led to this reaction of fear.
- G. .37b Their alarm and fear lead them to think that this must be a ghost/spirit/apparition. Fear leads them to superstition.  
  
Just like in the modern world, if someone saw the appearance of a person who was known to be dead, he would likely think that the appearance was a ghost, a disembodied spirit, not the person risen from the dead.

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<sup>2</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997).

**As an aside:** Belief in ghosts is still quite common—about 45% of people admit to believing in ghosts. But ghosts—in the sense of disembodied spirits of dead people—don't fit the biblical pattern. Our spirits/souls don't remain here after death; they go immediately either to heaven or to hell. The Bible expressly forbids the effort to communicate with the dead (Deut 18:11; Isa 8:19). Ghost stories can be kind of interesting and amusing, but we should not be enamored of ghosts.

If we know the Lord, we should not be superstitious. We should not believe in ghosts or disembodied spirits roaming around. We believe in the unseen supernatural world, but we also believe that the Bible accurately describes that world. A biblical worldview does not leave much room for ghosts.

**Trans:** So now a good number of disciples had seen and heard Jesus. But he was about to present more proof.

III. Jesus invited them to examine him. 39-40 (touch)

- A. What the disciples saw was not a disembodied spirit or a phantom. It was not a hallucination or a hoax. Jesus was willing to prove that by letting the disciples verify his physical presence.
- B. The disciples had the opportunity to examine Jesus' hands and feet to see the scars from crucifixion. So his body is supernatural in some ways, but it still bears the marks of crucifixion.
- C. .39b Jesus invites the disciples to “handle me” (ψηλαφάω) – the word means “touch, feel.” It's the same word John uses in 1 John 1:1 “that which we have handled of the word of life.” Jesus invited the disciples to verify that it was indeed him; they could verify that physically.
- D. .39c “It is I myself” – this person appearing before them is the same Jesus of Nazareth that they had known. He's the same person whom they had previously followed, who had been crucified and buried.

So here is the explanation of what happened to Jesus' body after the crucifixion. The tomb was empty; Jesus' body was gone. The Jews didn't take it; the Romans didn't take it; the disciples didn't take it; the gardener didn't take it. That dead body that went into the tomb experienced a miraculous resurrection, and it's that same now living, glorified body that appeared before the disciples.

- E. .39end Unlike a ghost/spirit, Jesus has flesh and bones. “as you see I have”—Jesus again appeals to their sense of sight. They are not hallucinating. Jesus is not a ghost/apparition. He’s present physically.
- F. .41a The disciples could hardly believe it.
1. Just a matter of hours before this, the disciples felt utterly hopeless. All their hopes were dashed; their expectations for Jesus came to nothing. He was dead and gone.
  2. But now, here he was, standing right there in front of them. They had a hard time grasping the reality of it. It was too much to take in.
  3. .41 They “believed not for joy.” So again we see that the disciples were very reluctant to believe that Jesus had really risen from the dead, even when he was standing right in front of them. It was too good to be true. Even as he is standing right before them, they had a hard time believing it.
  4. “and wondered/marveled” – same word used to describe Peter’s reaction when he saw the empty tomb (24:12). Jesus’ appearance was astounding to the disciples.

**App:** We live in a skeptical world. People today say that they won’t believe in a claim unless they see scientific proof. The disciples had all the proof they could ask for, and yet they still could hardly believe it.

**The proof for the disciples was undeniable;** Jesus was standing there right in front of them. They could see him, hear him, and even touch him. They could verify that he was living. He provided undeniable proof.

**We don’t have that same privilege.** Our faith is not based on our own personal experience of seeing, hearing, and touching Jesus. Our faith is largely based on the record/account of others’ experiences with Jesus.

**We could wish that Jesus would appear to us in this same way.** We don’t base our faith on personal experiences but on the inspired word of God. Cf. 1 Peter 1:16-21—“we have a more sure word of prophecy”

John 20:29 *Jesus [said...] blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

**Trans:** Now the disciples had seen, heard, and touched Jesus. There could be no doubt that he had really risen from the dead. But there is more.

IV. Jesus ate food before them. .41-42 (taste?)

- A. He asked for food. Why would he ask for food? Was he hungry? No, after the resurrection, I don't think Jesus ever sensed hunger again. His body no longer required food. But it's obvious that such a body can consume food and probably enjoy it.
- B. He ate some fish and honey to show that his body was actual and physical. This was not a vision or a hallucination or a ghost; this was reality. The disciples needed assurance that this was really Jesus and that it was really happening. And eating some food reinforced the idea that Jesus was physically, actually there.
- C. "in their presence." They watched him eat. They could verify with nearly all their human senses that this was really Jesus, the same one who had been dead a couple of days before this.

And speaking of food, the Bible mentions that we will eat and drink in the resurrection. Jesus said that he would not drink the fruit of the vine "until the kingdom of God shall come" (Lk 22:18). Jesus promised that the disciples would "eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Lk 22:30). Rev 19 talks about the "marriage supper of the Lamb." So I think we have several hints that the future kingdom will include eating and drinking.

If the new heavens and the new earth are anything like the Garden of Eden, then it's a reasonable conclusion that eating the fruits from the trees will be part of life in heaven. And I have no doubt that our sensations and satisfaction with food will be even more enjoyable than it is now. I think that eating and rejoicing in the Lord's presence will be a common activity in heaven. And we probably won't even have to worry about gaining weight!

Christians sometimes are ridiculed as gullible and foolish. Only an uneducated person could believe such an absurd claim that Jesus rose from the dead.

But facts are facts; you can't deny history. The Gospel accounts give us first-hand, eye-witness testimony from a multitude of sources showing that Jesus actually, physically rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples. This is the central truth of the Christian faith, and it is likely the best-attested fact from ancient history. It's really undeniable.

The question is not *whether* Jesus rose from the dead; he certainly did. The question is, "so what?" The Bible gives us the answer to that question. Paul tells us that Jesus is "declared to be the Son of God ... by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4). The resurrection proves Jesus to be the Son of God. It validates his claims.

The resurrection of Jesus is a fundamental, essential part of the Christian Gospel. To be saved, you must believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and rose again (1 Cor 15:3-4). These facts are undeniable. And these facts give the assurance of eternal life to everyone who believes the Gospel.