

## 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 “We have seen Him”

### I. Intro

In the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul addressed another question of the Corinthian Church one of the great questions of all time, “*What happens to us after we die?*” Paul in Acts 17 debated some of them on Mars Hill but when he spoke to them concerning Jesus’ resurrection “*some mocked*” him. There were many philosophies, which dealt with this subject, but most saw the material body and all matter as being evil. Thus though they welcomed death they struggled with any bodily resurrection. This chapter is the single greatest chapter in the entire Bible dealing with the subject of the resurrection; 23 times in 58 verses Paul specifically mentions it. The resurrection of Jesus is the single greatest difference between Christianity and all other religions. Paul boldly declares to the Corinthian Church that “*if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.*” (verse 14). **Apart from Jesus’ resurrection we are following a dead man who no matter how good a life he lived, wise words he spoke and miracles he preformed on earth can not save us!** In 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Paul offers his testimony to Jesus’ resurrection and in so doing proves the reality of our own! Before Paul offers up the evidence he first speaks of what believing in this evidence will produce:

1. Vs. 1-2 The first four verses he speaks of **what the gospel does and then what it is.** Paul starts out by telling the Corinthian believers that **the gospel he preached to them did two incredible things in their lives:**
  - A. **Security** Vs. 1 “*in which you stand*”: Their reception of the gospel caused instant “**stability**”. The gospel brings to those who receive it “**security**” in an insecure world. Paul’s first piece of evidence of the reality of the resurrection is the Corinthian’s own experience, “*You have stability and security where you never had it before!*”
  - B. **Significance** Vs. 2 “*by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain.*” Look at these words here carefully as Paul say’s that their reception of the gospel caused them to be saved. The words “**you are saved**” are in the present tense. Paul does not say that that their reception of the gospel is that which they “**were saved**” past tense. He doesn’t say that their reception

of the gospel is that which they “***will be saved***” future tense (although both would be true). There are **three ways in which we are saved when we receive the gospel**:

1. **Past tense**: We ***were*** saved in the sense that our spirits were dead and when we received Jesus His spirit came into us and made us alive in Christ Jesus. That happened in time and that time has past though the truth of the event remains.
2. **Future tense**: We ***will be*** saved in the sense that our earthly bodies which were sown in corruption will be, as Paul sates in verse 42, raised in incorruption. Right now we are dual citizens our heart is new but we still dwell in this body of flesh and we await the time when as verse 52 states “*in the twinkling of an eye, ... the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*”
3. **Present tense**: Finally, we come to that which Paul speaks of here which is **not** our salvation as it relates to eternity **nor** does it relate to our salvation as it relates to our glorified bodies. What Paul speaks of here is our salvation from an aimless existence to a life with **significance** and purpose. That is why Paul uses the words “*if you hold fast that word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain.*” Our life will have meaning only to the degree that we continue to walk in the truth of the gospel.

Then in verses 3-4 Paul **gives three elements that make up the gospel**:

- a. “**That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures**”: The gospel is not about the 33 years that make up Jesus life which include His miraculous birth, sinless life and powerful ministry (all of which are true). As far as the gospel is concerned the gospel centers around His death and not His earthly life. The next words bring out the importance of His death, “*for our sins according to the Scriptures*”. There on the cross we are told that He dealt with our rebellion, failures and sins. Twice in these three elements that make up the gospel Paul mentions that the events of the gospel were, “*according to the Scriptures*”. This was not a new thing, a new plan of God.
- b. “**That He was buried**”: The second part of the gospel Paul say’s deals with His burial. Have you noticed how hard it is to accept the death of a loved one? I don’t think these disciples were any different then we are today. Prior to the event even though Jesus spoke about His death they refused to understand it and even after the event all that remained were dashed hopes. His disciples didn’t want Him dead, they did not want to believe it prior to His death nor did they want to accept it after His death and even upon seeing Him alive struggled with it. They understood the finality of Jesus death even though He had told them that He would in three day’s rise from the dead. In each of these three elements of the gospel the one thing that links each of them to each other is that Jesus died!
  - He **died** for our sins
  - They **buried** Him in a tomb
  - He was raised from the **dead**

It is through out the whole message of the gospel but it is not the final word!

- c. “**That He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures**”: The central point in the gospel is the resurrection. Not a resuscitation, He did not come back to life as He was before no he came back to life as they had never seen Him before. Once again we are told that this was in fulfillment of the Word of God. But what proof of this do we have you ask?

In any courtroom across America the most powerful testimony is “*eyewitness*” testimony. A person who has witnessed for themselves the events on trial can be the most effective type of evidence offered at a trial. There are ten appearances of the resurrected Lord given besides the one to Paul, (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 Paul call only six to the stand but the sum total is still over 527 people. As important as these six accounts are what carries even more weight is not only what they saw and heard Jesus prior to His death and resurrection but that what they heard and saw Him after. What they witnessed of Jesus after his resurrection completely changed how they lived their lives.

#### **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 is:
  - a. That 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, 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. We know it was **some time after Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene and before His appearance to the two disciple’s 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 run, to the tomb to check it out. In Mark 16:17 Mary was given a message to tell Peter of the truth of the resurrection, by the time the two had turned back from Emmaus and went back to Jerusalem the disciple’s exclaimed that “*The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!*” It is my opinion that Jesus did so because clearly Peter need a fresh glimpse of His glory! Is that not great to know this morning? Who here does not need a close encounter with the risen Lord?
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*”. The first of these 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. Aren’t we glad that Thomas was a skeptic?
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 is 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.*” The

- quality** of the eyewitnesses is bolstered by those who saw Him after the resurrection as the ones who knew Him best it is here supported upon the sheer **quantity** of those who could testify of His appearance after the resurrection. Paul makes an even more amazing statement to the Corinthian believers by saying, “*of whom the greater part remain to the present*”. Paul wrote this letter in the spring of A.D. 54 or 55 thus it was not over 25 years after the resurrection and he says that most of those who were present of the over 500 believers who saw Jesus were still alive and could simply be ask concerning His resurrection. Think of the truth of this, over 500 all at once saw Jesus after the resurrection although one or two may become persuaded based upon wishful thinking of this clearly over 500 at once would not be persuaded.
4. Vs. 7a “*After that He was seen by James*”: This is the only place that this is recorded. 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. You knew He was better then every body but still He’s your brother. What could possibly change your opinion except for an appearance after the resurrection? Twice in the letter that James wrote he refers to Jesus as “**Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord of glory**”. You who have siblings; can you ever imagine calling you brother the “*Lord of Glory*” if you weren’t convinced that He was?
  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 coarse culminated in the finally 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 was revealing Himself, teaching from the scriptures about His death, burial and resurrection. What else could explain Peter’s transformation on Pentecost as he so empowered by the Holy Spirit preached the gospel with such sounding conviction that over 3,000 were added to the Kingdom of God.
  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*”. Paul’s own encounter with the resurrected Lord came long after the ascension. This no doubt this is the 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.

The only other witness to call to the stand with regards to Jesus’ resurrection is each and every believer who can give evidence of the resurrection by what Jesus has done in our lives sense we have believed!