

Our Risen and Ascendant King: Proofs (Part 2)

Introduction

The Text

¹In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ²until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:1–3)

Part 2

- A. This is now part 2 of what we began last time, where, if you recall, we set our sights on v. 3 in general and that little word “proofs” in particular.
 1. Look at it again: “He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”
- B. Now I told you that Greek word translated “proofs” here, *tekmērion* is a very strong term—perhaps the strongest Luke had access to in the Greek language.
 1. This would explain why some of our English translations aren’t satisfied to merely translate it as “proofs” as our ESV does.
 2. No, some feel the need to attach a descriptor to it. So the NASB has “convincing proofs” and the NKJV, even more aggressively, translates the word as “infallible proofs.”
 - a. Whatever the case, you get the sense of it I think: Jesus is concerned to stimulate their faith, to bolster their belief, to dispel their doubts, to overcome their skepticism . . . by way of good reason and evidence and proof.
- C. And I love this, because, as I said last time, we need to see that according to Jesus here, our faith is actually reasonable.
 1. Faith and reason are not pinned against one another as our culture would have us believe.
 - a. In the culture, faith and reason are seen as mortal enemies. To the degree that you give sway to faith, well you have to forsake and even crucify your reason.
 - b. But if you get enlightened and purpose to use your mind, well faith will fall victim and die a quick death.
 2. But this is a false dichotomy. In the church and in the world, faith and reason actually go together. They are inevitably and invariably joined at the hip.
 - a. The secular unbelieving person has a lot of faith tucked up behind all their reasons.

- b. And the Christian has (or should have at least) a lot of good reasons tucked up behind their faith.
 - i. Their faith is built on “many proofs.” We don’t know everything, to be sure, we don’t have all the answers, but we do have sufficient evidence, reasons, proofs.

B. And we’re going to need it, if we’re going to hold strong, if we’re going stand in the face of all the skepticism and unbelief that’s rampant round about us these days—both outside and inside the church.

So What Are These Proofs?

A. So what are these proofs? What did Jesus offer to these disciples? And what, by extension, does he offer to us?

- 1. Well, last time we went back to [Luke 24](#), where he records the sorts of things Jesus does with his disciples after his resurrection and before his ascension. And there I said we can essentially distill down the various proofs into two basic categories. He gives us (1) His Word, and he gives us (2) His Body.

B. I don’t have time to recount what we covered last time. We left off with our consideration of His Body as proof for us. And so that is what we shall pick right back up with now . . .

Proofs for Us (Continued): His Body

A Secondhand Proof

A. You remember that I said this evidence of Jesus’ body, it’s not going to work for us in the same way that it worked for the apostles.

- 1. They actually saw it. They touched it. They could know he’s not a ghost. They’re not seeing things. He has risen.
- 2. For us, this evidence comes to us necessarily now in a secondhand sort of way. Because Jesus is now risen and ascended, we’re not going to see his body the way that these first apostles and witnesses did (at least not until he returns!).

B. Nevertheless, we’re still called to base our faith on their testimony, that they saw his body—that he truly is alive.

- 1. That’s why Paul says that we as the church are “[built on the foundation of the apostles . . .](#)” ([Eph. 2:20](#)). Our faith is built upon their testimony.

C. I think that’s what Jesus is getting at in that famous exchange he has with Thomas—doubting Thomas as he’s commonly called—at the end of John’s gospel. You remember.

- 1. The other disciples had all seen the risen Jesus at this point, but not Thomas. They came telling him about it. They testified to him of what they’d seen.

2. But he wouldn't have it: "So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe'" (John 20:25). He's skeptical. He's incredulous. He's like you and me.
 3. But Jesus is gracious and he soon appears to him as well. And when Thomas is, at last, convinced, do you remember what Jesus says to him? "Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed'" (v. 29).
 - a. I think Jesus is giving a shoutout here to people like you and me, people who will not have the physical body of Jesus to see or touch.
 - b. Instead all we have is the testimony of these apostles who have seen him and touched him. And we believe on that basis and are thereby blessed.
- D. But all of this begs the question then: Can we trust their testimony? Did they really see and touch his resurrected body? What proof do we have, if any?
1. That's precisely where I left us hanging last time. And that's what the rest of this sermon shall endeavor to answer . . .

Three Common Pushbacks

- A. On our way towards a conclusion in all of this, it seems best to me that we should begin by dealing with the various pushbacks skeptics have leveraged through the years as a way of discounting the testimony of these apostles and therewith the validity of the resurrection.
1. The proofs, I think, will come out as we go.
- B. So let's look at three of the more common pushbacks—each of which can be summed up with a word: (1) Myth; (2) Mischief; and (3) Misapprehension. I want to show you why these don't hold up under scrutiny. So let's take them one-by-one . . .

Pushback #1: Myth

- A. This is perhaps the most common pushback of them all these days. Certainly it's what you hear swirling around in our culture whenever Jesus comes up.
1. Just look for it—Easter is only a few months away. Inevitably they'll run those documentaries and publish those articles all of which seem to be offering a case for the same basic narrative at bottom: namely, that the Jesus of history, if he even existed at all, is certainly not the one Christians claim he is today. He's buried under embellishment, legend, and myth.
- B. As it goes, we're told that the early communities passed stories down about Jesus by way of oral tradition and, in one way or another, over time, they exaggerated things—things about his supernatural power, about his claims of deity, about his fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, and certainly about his resurrection from the dead.

1. They exaggerated in this way perhaps because they were attempting some sort of a power grab.
 2. Or maybe because they just simply missed him—and there was something strangely cathartic about making these stories up about him.
 - a. Whatever the case, when these stories finally got put into writing, one thing is sure: they no longer accurately described the Jesus of history. They make for an entertaining read, perhaps, but at the bottom, Christianity, at least as we've come to understand it . . . it's just another myth.
- C. But let me now quickly give you three (of many) reasons why such a thing is utterly implausible. They'll build each one on the other getting cumulatively stronger as we progress . . .

REASON #1: EXPLICIT CLAIMS

- A. The first thing we have to note is that the records we have in the Bible of Jesus and his life and ministry, they are self-consciously historical documents. In some cases the authors go out of their way to emphasize this fact.
1. So, for example, just look at the way Luke begins his two-volume work Luke-Acts back in the opening verses of his gospel: “¹ Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:1–4).
 2. The Apostle John, in his first epistle, writes this: “¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you . . .” (1 John 1:1–3).
 3. Peter, another apostle himself, would write in one of his own epistles: “[W]e did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16).
 - a. So there you have it. Luke says: “I’m hunting down the eyewitnesses.” John and Peter say: “We are the eyewitnesses.” All seem equally concerned with getting the facts right, with getting the history straight.
- B. So at least, according to their own admission, they’re not writing myth.
1. But, of course, this alone doesn’t amount to much. A person can say whatever they want. So we need more here if we’re going to be inclined to believe them.

REASON #2: INTERNAL CONTENT

- A. With this I'm simply referring to the fact that these authors don't just make empty claims about their intention for historicity and things. They actually back it up in the way that they write.

- 1. I'll give you three quick examples . . .

Example #1: They Identify Prominent Historical Figures

- A. I'll just give you the words of scholars Geisler and Turek at this point: "The New Testament documents cannot have been invented because they contain too many historically confirmed characters [all in all, there are at least thirty characters in the New Testament who have been confirmed as historical by archaeology or non-Christian sources' (269)]. The New Testament writers would have blown their credibility with their contemporary audiences by implicating real people in a fictional story, especially people of great notoriety and power. There is no way the New Testament writers could have gotten away with writing outright lies about Pilate, Caiaphas, Festus, Felix, and the entire Herodian bloodline. Somebody would have exposed them for falsely implicating these people in events that never occurred. . . . [T]he best explanation is that the New Testament writers accurately recorded what they saw" (Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 283-84).
- B. If they were trying to massage the facts or shape a myth, they would be intentionally ambiguous. They'd have to be or they'd blow their cover. "This all happened in a corner somewhere, no one else was around, I wish I could show you, but you'll just have to take my word for it."
 - 1. But that's not what they do. They talk about key historical figures, not just for the purpose of dating the events they're recording (e.g. Luke 3:1-2), but also to show how in many cases these prominent people were personally involved in what was happening with Jesus in and around Israel at the time.
 - a. If they are falsifying these accounts and even implicating these prominent figures, they are putting themselves in grave danger and jeopardizing their efforts to spread the stories of Jesus abroad.

Example #2: They Highlight Seemingly Random Individual Names

- A. Have you ever noticed this? Along the way, in the gospel accounts, there's random people named here or there. They're not big-players, they're not apostles or something, but their name is briefly highlighted and then they never show up again.
 - 1. I'll give you a couple examples in a moment, but let me say up front here that scholars now believe what's happening is these biblical authors are highlighting their sources—people who were eyewitnesses to the whole thing, people you can go to and check with if you want to verify what's being claimed.
- B. Remember, in the ancient world, eyewitness testimony was all you had. "[E]very charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses" (Matt. 18:16).
 - 1. You don't have video cameras. You don't have audio recorders. You don't have news teams hot on the scene with helicopters hovering overhead.

2. You have eyewitnesses. That's all you've got.

a. So if you're trying to establish a claim, if you want to lend credibility to it, you highlight those to whom your readers can go if they want to verify it.

C. Listen to Rebecca McLaughlin now, reflecting on British scholar Richard Bauckham's groundbreaking work *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*: "Bauckham . . . uses his knowledge of contemporary norms for citing eyewitnesses to illuminate name-dropping in the Gospels, arguing that many of those named were eyewitnesses who told their stories 'as authoritative guarantors of their traditions.' This accounts for strange cameo appearances. For example, in Mark's crucifixion account, the soldiers press-gang a passerby to carry the cross when Jesus collapses. This man is identified by his place of origin as 'Simon of Cyrene,' but also described as 'the father of Alexander and Rufus' (Mark 15:21). Bauckham argues that Simon's sons are mentioned because they were known within the early Christian community and could corroborate the account" (McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, 106). In other words: "If you don't believe me, talk to them."

1. Another quick example of this: why with the two on the road to Emmaus, are we only given the name of one of them? The one Luke tells is named "Cleopas" (Luke 24:18). And the other? We have no idea.

a. Why? What a strange thing to do if you're writing myth or something. You either give both a name or you let both be anonymous. Why one and not the other?

i. It's likely that Luke does this because Cleopas is his source. Here's one of the eyewitnesses he spoke with about the matter. And if you want to verify what he's claiming, go find this man that he's naming. That's the idea.

Example #3: They Record Accurate Details

A. On this you could just take the book of Acts that we're currently studying as an example. In this book, Luke displays an astoundingly accurate knowledge of local places, names, environmental conditions, customs, and so forth.

1. Classical scholar and historian Colin Hemer has chronicled Luke's accuracy in the book of Acts verse by verse. For instance, he identifies 84 facts in the last 16 chapters of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research. These are things that you just couldn't make up unless you were there.

a. This is why Roman historian A. N. Sherwin-White says: "For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted" (as quoted by Geisler and Turek, 259-60).

REASON #3: EARLY COMPOSITION

A. One of the things you need if you're really going to develop a good myth or legend around someone and convince folks of miracles and things . . . is time.

1. That's one of the critical components to this whole theory. The embellishments get added over a long period of time—while the stories are passed orally and details can shift and change and get unmoored from historical reality.
- B. This is precisely the sort of thing that happened with Muhammed in Islam.
1. As a prophet and founder of the faith he was publicly active on the stage of history in the early 7th century A.D. By his own admission, according to him, the only miracle he ever performed was the bringing of the Quran.
- C. But that didn't stop the legends from developing up and around him, which many Muslims take as fact even here today. But the thing is these legends really didn't develop and take root until over a century after his death. You see, all the eyewitnesses were gone. No one could verify what was being said.
1. Now we can talk about how his finger once split the moon, how poisoned meat once warned him not to touch it, how trees would move out of his way and even salute him as he passed, how he cast no shadow, how from his dripping sweat a rose sprung up from the earth.
 2. They even try to make parallels between him and Jesus it would seem. Where he feeds a thousand people by multiplying a small meal; he turns water to milk (not quite as awesome as turning water to wine, but still not shabby); they even come to claim that he ascended into heaven.
 - a. It's an event that is still celebrated to this day—where he supposedly rode this winged creature alongside the archangel Gabriel where they traversed through the seven spheres, until he finally reached the divine presence of Allah.
 - i. But, again, the earliest connected and coherent account of such a thing comes some hundred years after Muhammed had already passed on (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3269714>). At this point no one could corroborate one way or the other. It was too late. If there ever were any eyewitnesses, there were none left alive.
 - (1) How convenient. That's how you start to develop legend and myth. You need time removed from the historical facts so that you can start to embellish and shape them in one direction or another.
- D. That's what many claim happened with Jesus.
1. But there's one little problem with that theory. Most all the records we have of Jesus in the Bible are now almost universally understood to have been written within the range of 10 to no more than 60 years after the death of Christ, with the majority somewhere in the middle of that.
 - a. This time frame, then, would fit well within the lifetime of many of the eyewitnesses. They're not written hundreds of years later.

- E. The four Gospels were written at the very most some thirty to sixty years after Jesus' death.
1. Even Bart Ehrman, the prominent scholar well-known for his skepticism of Christianity, dates Mark to 65-70 AD, Matthew and Luke to 80-85 AD, and John to 95 AD (Peter J. Williams, *Can We Trust the Gospels?*, 48).
 - a. We're talking, then, about all of this being recorded within a few decades of the events themselves and certainly within the lifetime of countless eyewitnesses who could easily contradict any false content or claim.
- F. Beyond this, the earliest accounts of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection actually aren't found in the Gospels at all but in the letters of Paul—some of which were written just 15 years or so after the death of Christ.
1. Consider [1 Cor. 15:3-8](#) for example. Here we have what "[historians regard as the most significant text about the resurrection](#)" (Dickson, *A Doubter's Guide to Jesus*, 189).
 - a. Paul writes: "³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."
 - i. I want you to observe a couple of things here . . .
- G. First, make note again of the attention drawn to eyewitness testimony.
1. He is invoking hundreds of eyewitnesses to the resurrection, which he emphasizes: "[most of whom are still alive](#)" (v. 6).
 - a. This is not how you write myth. It's how you write history. Paul here is inviting any reader of this public letter to go and test his claims. Do you see that?
- H. But, second—and I think this is why this text is regarded as so important—if you noticed, Paul refers here to "[what scholars universally regard as the earliest 'creed' in Christianity](#)" (Dickson, 189).
1. "[For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received . . .](#)" (v. 3).
 - a. In other words, in this earliest of documents referencing the death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul draws on a creedal tradition that clearly was delivered to him yet still at an even earlier date.
 - i. This isn't something Paul was trying to invent.
 - ii. This is something Paul had already been told by those who had come before even him, and he was simply here writing it down.

- I. This means, in no uncertain terms, that the claim concerning Jesus' death and resurrection could not have been some later embellishment. It was there from the very beginning.
1. So Tim Keller writes: "Since this letter to the Corinthians was written only fifteen or twenty years after Jesus' death, the eminent biblical scholar James Dunn concludes that 'we can be entirely confident' that this summary in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 'was formulated . . . within months of Jesus's death'" (Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 6).
 2. Craig Blomberg points out how even skeptical scholar Gerd Ludemann, a man who personally rejects the reality of the resurrection, nevertheless is forced to admit that "the belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus developed [not slowly over centuries, but] almost certainly within a year or two of his death at most" (Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?*, 187).
 3. John Dickson, therefore, concludes: "This early creed establishes beyond doubt that the claim about the resurrection belonged to the earliest stage of Christianity. It is not an extraneous belief inserted into the Gospels later; it was the bedrock of the Jesus-movement post AD 30. Whatever our personal feelings about 'resurrections,' there is no avoiding the historical conclusion that this claim has always been at the core of what we call Christianity" (Dickson, 191).
- J. This is not a myth that developed later. It was there in the earliest of days. All the facts point to it.
1. But, of course claiming that something is true and that thing actually being true are two separate things, right?
 2. That the early church in general and this apostles in particular claimed that Jesus had risen from the dead, doesn't mean that he actually did.
 - a. There's at least a couple other options, a couple other pushbacks. For one thing, they could have been lying, knowingly deceiving those they went about telling all this nonsense . . .

Pushback #2: Mischief

- A. Here is the claim that the early disciples were actually disingenuous. They were not honestly promoting what they thought to be true. They were knowingly deceiving. This was a hoax of historic proportions. They stole the body, they spread the lies. We're the suckers (cf. [Matt. 28:11–15](#)).
- B. But there is one massive problem with this hypothesis, and it's simply this: If these disciples were knowingly spreading lies about this Jesus as risen . . . why in the world would they be willing to die for it? If they knew that it all was a hoax, why would they hold onto it with such vehemence and conviction even at the threat of death, and brutal death at that (as history [c.f. Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, etc.] and tradition would indicate)?
1. All it would take is for one of them to crack and the whole early church movement would have been over. "Stop! Stay your blade. I know where the body is and I'll take you to it!" But we have no record of any of them ever doing such a thing.

- a. Why not? If they were telling lies, what did they stand to gain? Perhaps they thought they could get power or prestige or something at first, but when they realized claiming such things about Jesus would get them killed, why would they not simply recant? Why would they die for what they knew to be a lie—a lie of their own making?
 - i. Such a thing makes no sense and cuts against the grain of human nature as we know it. When we tell lies, we tell them to benefit ourselves, and we certainly don't hold onto them to our harm (unless, of course, there is some further and greater benefit in it).
- C. Listen to this. I found it fascinating. Chuck Colson, former aide to President Nixon, a man who actually went to prison for the Watergate scandal, at one point compares his experience with that conspiracy to the apostles here.
- 1. And he writes this: “Watergate involved a conspiracy to cover up, perpetuated by the closest aides to the President of the United States—the most powerful men in America, who were intensely loyal to their president. But one of them, John Dean, . . . testified against Nixon, as he put it, ‘to save his own skin’—and he did so only two weeks after informing the president about what was really going on—two weeks! The real cover-up, the lie, could only be held together for two weeks, and then everybody else jumped ship in order to save themselves. Now, the fact is that all that those around the president were facing was embarrassment, maybe prison. Nobody's life was at stake. But what about the disciples? Twelve powerless men, peasants really, were facing not just embarrassment or political disgrace, but beatings, stonings, execution. Every single one of the disciples insisted, to their dying breaths, that they had physically seen Jesus bodily raised from the dead. Don't you think that one of those apostles would have cracked before being beheaded or stoned? That one of them would have made a deal with the authorities? None did” (As quoted in Geisler and Turek, 292-93).
- D. But you say, “Nick, there have been plenty of martyrs who have died for things we would say are untrue.”
- 1. To which I would respond: That is right, but you see, these martyrs are willing to die for these things particularly because they believe them to be true. And, hence, it only proves my point. If they knew it was a lie, they may hold on for a bit, but only until it became obvious there was nothing left in it for them. To hold it all the way to death, you really have to believe that.
 - a. Now hear me: They may be mistaken in what they believe, but we can be sure of one thing: they do truly believe it. They must!
- E. Listen to Greg Gilbert on this: “Because they believed these things, they rearranged their lives so that they could proclaim their beliefs—abandoning careers, leaving homes, and ultimately refusing to back away from those beliefs even as (according to tradition) they were, one by one, beheaded, crucified, impaled with spears, flayed, and stoned. Something happened to cause all that.

. . . [N]obody dies for a hoax. If you're just trying to pull one over on the world, when the jig is up and the axe is about to fall—or the nails are about to pierce your wrists, or they're about to drop you in the boiling oil or throw you off the top of the temple—you don't keep on saying, 'I tell you, the man is alive!' The only way you stick by the story under those circumstances is if you really believe it's true" (Why Trust the Bible?, 118-19).

F. So then, regarding these disciples of early Christianity, have no doubt: They were not mischievous or disingenuous. They honestly believed Christ had risen from the dead.

1. But the question that now remains is: But were they mistaken?

Pushback #3: Misapprehension

A. Here is the claim that these disciples were genuine and honest about what they thought to be true, but they simply, and sadly, got it all wrong.

B. One version of this pushback focuses in on the empty tomb and says, well they thought the tomb was empty but maybe they went to the wrong one, or maybe the Romans really did have it or something like this. But such a thing is highly unlikely.

1. Consider John Stott's insightful commentary on this point: "[W]ithin a few weeks of Jesus' death the Christians were boldly proclaiming his resurrection. The news spread rapidly. The new Nazarene movement threatened to undermine the bulwarks of Judaism and to disturb the peace of Jerusalem. The Jews feared conversions; the Romans riots. The authorities had before them one obvious course of action. They could produce the remains of the body

Instead, they were silent and resorted to violence. They arrested the apostles, threatened them, flogged them, imprisoned them, vilified them, plotted against them and killed them. But all this was entirely unnecessary if they had in their own possession the dead body of Jesus. The church was founded on the resurrection. Disprove the resurrection, and the church would have collapsed. But they could not The authorities' silence is as eloquent a proof of the resurrection as the apostles' witness" (Stott, Basic Christianity, 63-4).

a. If both the Jews and the Romans so badly wanted to quench this new religious movement, and if all they had to do to stop it was put forward the dead body of Jesus, why didn't they do it?

i. Answer: they couldn't, because they didn't have it and, try as they may, they couldn't find it.

C. Another version of this second pushback focuses in on the many appearances and argues that the disciples were somehow given over to wishful thinking and in their broken-hearted, over-emotional state, they somehow saw what they wanted to see, an hallucination, a bereavement vision as it's been called by some. In their desire to see him again they conjured it up, as it were.

1. Now, there are quite a few glaring issues with this. I can only briefly touch on a couple for you now . . .

- D. In the first case, here is where the sheer number of appearances and the great diversity of it all really comes into play once more.
1. It is one thing to be sad and hallucinate on your own somewhere.
 2. It is quite another thing for this same experience to be had by various groups of people at various times across the space of forty days, with one of those instances, as we've seen, including "more than five hundred brothers at one time" (1 Cor. 15:6).
 - a. Do you have any idea what it would take to get that many people into the same worked up emotional state that they would all hallucinate from sorrow together at once and see the same thing? It seems to me it requires more faith to believe in this than it does to believe in the resurrection itself.
- E. But the second significant issue with this idea of wishful thinking or seeing what they wanted to see is simply the fact that these disciples were not predisposed to wish for such a thing as the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus didn't grow up and out of their worldview, it came in from outside like a stick of dynamite and blew up everything they thought they knew and believed.
1. That's why the disciples are shown all over these accounts to be doubting and questioning what their eyes are seeing. Let me touch your wounds. Let me see you eat some food. Can this be real? (cf. [Matt. 28:17](#); [Mark 16:10-14](#); [Luke 24:10-11](#); [13-27](#); [36-43](#); [John 20:20](#), [24-29](#)).
 - a. It was not wishful thinking, you see, because they never wished for this. They're not just seeing what they wanted because they never really wanted this.
 - i. They didn't want a crucified messiah, that was a stumbling block.
 - ii. They didn't think God could be man or have a son, such a thing was blasphemy.
 - iii. And they didn't think an individual could rise again from the dead in some incorruptible fashion before the end of the age, it was unthinkable.
- F. They didn't conjure up all these things in their sadness. They gave up on him in their sadness.
1. So, again, the two on the road to Emmaus:
 - a. There they are "looking sad" ([Luke 24:17](#)), saying: "[W]e had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (v. 21) . . . but He's dead! It's game over.
 - b. When Jesus shows up He doesn't rebuke them because in their sadness they've started seeing things, He rebukes them because in their sadness they've stopped seeing things. They couldn't believe their eyes.
 - i. They were skeptical and incredulous just like you and I. But the sheer weight of the evidence convinced them, changed them.

One Reasonable Conclusion

- A. So, listen, at the end of all of this, we're left with really only one reasonable conclusion. This is not myth, it's not mischief, it's not misapprehension.
1. All signs are pointing to the fact, instead, that Jesus really is the Messiah. He really is who these apostles are claiming he is. He's the crucified and resurrected King of all!
 - a. As leading NT scholar and ancient historian, N.T. Wright puts it: "No other explanations have been offered, in two thousand years of sneering skepticism . . . that can satisfactorily account for how the tomb came to be empty, how the disciples came to see Jesus, and how their lives and worldviews were transformed" (Surprised by Scripture, 59). It's true!
- B. Listen (this has been the point of the whole sermon): If the testimony of the apostles is true, if it can be trusted, it means Jesus really did live, and he really did die, and he really did rise, and he really did ascend, and he really did it all . . . for you!
1. For your forgiveness—no matter how shot through with sin you are.
 2. For your hope—no matter how hard this life may get.
 3. For your joy—because you can finally come back into intimate communion with the God for whom you were created.
- C. You are loved. More than you could ever imagine. That's where all this is going. That's what all this means. That's what he wants us to be convinced of.
1. That's why he shows back up when Thomas is doubting and says: "Put your fingers in my scars. I want you to know what I have accomplished for you."
 - a. And do you remember how doubting Thomas responds? He proceeds to utter one of the most profound confessions in all the New Testament: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).
- D. And as I've said Jesus blesses Thomas, but then he extends that blessing towards us and says: "Blessed are those who, though they won't see in the same way, they believe nevertheless on the basis of my word, on the basis of the testimony of my apostles."
1. Is that you?
 - a. Even though you cannot see him, do you love him (cf. 1 Pet. 1:8)?
 - b. Have you heard the gospel and believed, have you traced with your own finger, as it were, the outline of his scars?
 - c. Have you seen what Jesus has taken for you, so that you could be forgiven, so that you could have life, abundant and eternal?
 - d. Have you fallen to your knees with Thomas and made the good confession: "My Savior and my God!" Let's do that now together!