

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

¹⁹ And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (NIV84)

Theme: Confident in the Truth

1. The Apostles were eye witnesses
2. The Bible is God’s inspired, inerrant Word.

You’ll never believe what we saw while we were in Wisconsin this week. We saw crowns worn by famous kings and queens, magnificent suits of armor, a statue of a 200 foot whale battling a colossal squid, the world’s largest carousel assessed at 4.8 million, a reconstructed early 20th century town, and rooms and rooms of orchestras made up of self-playing instruments. It was at a place called, “the house on the rock,” which not only includes a house built into and on top of a rock, but also an expansive and eclectic collection of art, music, Americana, and more.

“You’ll never believe...” That is how I started out. People will often say that before they tell a story about something they did or saw. When someone starts off by saying, “You’ll never believe” we often don’t. We may even skeptically respond, “I’ll believe it when I see it.” Because that is what it often takes—seeing it for yourself, in person; then you’ll believe it.

But that isn’t really faith. Faith is believing something is true and whether you see it or not. As the Writer to the Hebrews gives us this definition of faith in chapter 11, **faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.** Although we’ve never seen

the resurrected Jesus, we see today that we can be confident in the truth of Jesus’ resurrection because the Apostles were eye witnesses and the Holy Spirit inspired the Words of the Bible.

Jesus made a handful of appearances that first Easter Day. He first appeared to a group of woman outside of his tomb, then to Mary Magdalene. Later in the day he appeared to two of his followers on the way to Emmaus, and sometime he appeared to Peter. Then at night, when all the disciples were in a locked room Jesus suddenly appeared in the room with them. He showed them his hands and his feet and ate some fish to prove to them that he truly did rise from the dead with his own physical body.

All the disciples were there except Thomas. And he wouldn’t believe it when the other disciples told him. He said, **Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.** And it wasn’t until the next Sunday when Jesus again appeared to the disciples with Thomas present that he saw Jesus and believed that Jesus truly did rise from the dead.

Thomas is known as doubting Thomas because of this instance. But if you read the rest of the gospels, you’ll notice that whenever Thomas is mentioned elsewhere it is demonstrated that he had a strong faith. In this respect, he is a lot like us. There are times when we have a strong faith; when we know the truth and believe them. But there are other times when doubts creep into our minds. We wonder if Jesus truly did rise from the dead, or if God is lying to us. Perhaps nothing in the Bible is true and it is nothing other than one big elaborate hoax. If only we had some sort of proof, if only we had some sort of visible evidence that would prove that what the Bible says is correct. For instance, many people want to find Noah’s Ark—hoping that doing so would convince the skeptics about the reality of the flood. Or maybe we can find some sort of secular record about Jesus—specifically about his death and resurrection. Maybe we doubt God’s care and protection of us on this sin-filled world. If only God would come to us in a vision, or give us some sort of sign that he is in fact watching over us and protecting us. We say, “If only we see some proof, then more would believe.” But there is a good chance that those signs will never come.

But we don't need any. That is because we have eye witnesses. We already mentioned that five appearances Jesus made on that first Easter Sunday, and the one to the disciples a week later. We also know he appeared to the disciples in Galilee on numerous occasions, to James, to Paul, and to 500 of his followers at one time. There were hundreds of eye witnesses. They saw Jesus with his full body. They talked with him; they touched his hands and his feet and saw where the spear pierced his side. Luke summarizes this time in Acts 1, **After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.**

Peter and the other Apostles weren't making this up. As Peter, James, and John saw a glimpse of Jesus' glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, they saw Jesus' glory after he rose from the dead. It was a true story—Jesus truly did rise from the dead! Peter says in our first verse, **We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.**

The Apostles, as eye-witnesses, not only saw but they believed. They knew what they saw to be true. This wasn't a made-up fable. Jesus truly did rise from the dead. Jesus in his actual and glorious body really did appear to hundreds of people after his death. They also knew what it meant for them. It meant that their sins had been paid for and that eternal life was theirs through Christ's resurrection. They knew that even though they would die, they would not die eternally because Christ paid the ransom price for our sins which was accepted by God; and that through his life they too would rise to live in heaven with him forever.

And so these eye-witnesses spread the news. They put aside their lives and traveled the world spreading the good news of Christ's resurrection. They put their own lives and the lives of their families in danger in order to spread the news about the world's one and only Savior. And as was mentioned last week—all but the Apostle John was put to death for spreading this message (and John spent many years in exile). This is not something the Apostle's would have been willing to do if they didn't believe what they saw! They believed what they saw.

Of course, all of the eye witnesses to Jesus' resurrection are no longer around. They are all dead and are now living in heaven with Jesus waiting for the Last Day when their bodies will join their souls. But that doesn't matter either because those eye witnesses have written down what they saw. What we have in the Bible is a detailed testimony of what those who had first-hand knowledge saw for themselves!

But the Bible is more than that, of course. The Bible is not merely the accounts of fallible men who had biases, inconsistencies, or who simply may have miss-remembered something. No, the Bible is God's Word. He inspired, or led, the Writers of the Bible to write exactly what they wrote. He told them to write down the words that they did. So we are able to call the Bible God's Word.

Peter equates his writings with those of the Writers of the Old Testament and then says, **no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.** Peter's fellow Apostle, Paul, wrote to Timothy that, **All Scripture is God-breathed.** So we can be sure that the words found in the Bible are not sinful man's thoughts; but the very words of God.

And so what does that make the words of the bible? Jesus once prayed to the Father about his disciples, **sanctify them by truth, your words is truth.** The Lord cannot lie. Everything he says and does must be taken as true. So the Bible contains no lies or deceptions. It is inerrant, that is, it contains no errors or mistakes. Everything found in his Word can be taken as truth. And these are the Scriptures that testify about Christ. We don't need any eye witnesses because what we have is greater than any eye witness account. We have the account of God himself!

This is a gift that God has given to his New Testament Church. What we have today is the fulfillment of thousands of years of prophecies. The Savior was first promised to Adam and Eve in the Garden after the first sin by promising them that a descendant of theirs would defeat Satan for them. He said to the devil, **I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers, he will crush your head but you will strike his heel.** When Jesus died, Satan thought that he had finally won; but it ends up that Satan only struck

Jesus' heal because Jesus rose from the dead and crushed Satan's head in a sound and complete victory!

In the years that followed God would reveal more and more about this Savior through his prophets, including some specifically about the resurrection. Such as Psalm 16, **you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.** Or in Isaiah 53:10 we see a prophecy about both Christ's death and his new life, **It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.**

We have the benefit of seeing these prophecies fulfilled. The Old Testament believers looked forward to the fulfillment of these prophecies, not knowing who or when they would be fulfilled. But we have the benefit of looking back—at Jesus, as the fulfiller of these prophecies and knowing when and how he fulfilled them. And the fact that all the prophecies about Christ, many written thousands of years before his birth, were fulfilled is proof that Bible is true and everything in it is to be taken as truth!

We never seen Jesus—either before or after his resurrection. But that doesn't mean his resurrection never happened. We have eye witness accounts inspired by God himself. We know and believe as true that Jesus truly did rise from the dead. And we believe that because he rose from the dead, we will too—with a perfect and glorious body on the last day. These truths are laid out for us in God's Word, the Bible. Not only do we have the prophecies of the Old Testament laid out and fulfilled for us; but we also have another advantage—we have the Bible readily available to us. We can access it at any time, but opening up our Bibles, or at our computers or on our phones. We can read, watch it, or listen to it. And so when doubts arise in our hearts, when we aren't sure of what we don't see, we turn to God in his Word and the Holy Spirit will strengthen our faith in the truth. So we do well to turn to the Word on a regular basis so the Lord can help us overcome our unbelief. As Peter says, **you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.**

“You'll never believe...” Everything at the House on the Rock is real—in the sense that they exist. But not everything one sees there is

real—in the sense that many of them are fakes, or replicas. Those were not really the crowns of queens and kings; the suits of armor were fabricated relatively recently, the musical instruments all moved but not all of them were actually producing music. It is a mixture of truth and deceptions, all in the name of entertainment. Not so with Jesus' resurrection. We have the eye witness accounts and better yet, the testimony of God himself! We can be confident in the truth—Christ's resurrection is true and certain! And so is yours. He lives and so will you! Amen.