

Witnesses for the Prosecution: Of the Resurrection; Ps 16 Quoted by Peter in Acts 2:22-32; the Lord Prophesies His Crucifixion, John 2:13-22; Mt 12:39-40; 16:21; 20:17-19; New Testament Witnesses of the Resurrection; Consistency of Their Reports; Scripture Is the Ultimate Witness, 2 Peter 1:16-19; the Lord's Assertion, Mk 14:61-63

Psalm 16:10 - You [God the Father] will not abandon my soul in Sheol [שְׁאוֹל *she'ol*: Hebrew for the Greek ἄδης, *Haidēs*, specifically, Paradise]; nor will you allow your Holy One [Messiah] to see corruption [חֲשָׁח *shachath*: to not experience the decay of the grave but rather be resurrected].

6. Prior to the ascension of Christ, all Old Testament saints souls and spirits were directed to the Paradise compartment of Hades. Such was the case for our Lord's soul following His physical death on the cross.
7. This passage is quoted by Peter to the Israelites who were visiting Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church in A.D. 29. He explains to them that Jesus, whom they crucified, is both Lord and Christ:

Acts 2:22 - "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man revealed to you by God with miracles and wonders which God performed through Him among you, just as you yourselves know—

v. 23 - this Man, being delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God [sovereignty], you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death [free will of man].

v. 24 - "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

v. 25 - "For David says of Him, [Psalm 16:8] 'I saw [figurative: David envisioned the Lord with Him at all times] the Lord always in My presence; for He is at My right hand [military recognition of senior- ranking authority], so that I will not be shaken.

v. 26 - [Psalm 16:9] 'Therefore My heart was glad [inner happiness] and my tongue exulted [expressions of thanksgiving]; moreover my flesh also will live in confidence [of a resurrection body];

Acts 2:27 - [Psalm 16:10] because You will not abandon My soul in Hades [double application: David knows his soul will not remain forever in Paradise because the Messiah's will not], nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay [the Messiah will be resurrected, therefore, so will David].

v. 28 - [Psalm 16:11] ‘You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence [because David now understands Phase 3, he is able to orient to Phase 2].’

v. 29 - [Peter continues] “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

v. 30 - “And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to Him with an oath¹ [ὄρκος, *horkos*: the Davidic Covenant: 2 Samuel 7:12-13,16] to seat one of his descendants on his throne,

v. 31 - he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay [Repetition of Psalm 16:10].

v. 32 - “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses [Peter and his fellow disciples witnessed the resurrected Christ].”

Acts 2:36 - “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

8. The power of Peter’s sermon is his reference to Psalm 16 which has always been regarded by the Jews as a Messianic Psalm. It is one of sixteen such Psalms that are prophetic of Messiah, and one of five that contain direct quotes from the Lord.² Peter has systematically identified Jesus of Nazareth with Psalm 16 and its prophecy by the Lord of His future death and resurrection. Peter’s peroration of his sermon boldly identifies Jesus as the Christ (v. 36).
9. It is also noteworthy to reference the Lord’s prophecies of His death during the Incarnation. The first occurred at the Passover of A.D. 26:

John 2:13 - The Passover of the Jews³ was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

v. 14 - And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers [Sanhedrin authorized bankers who converted foreign coin into Hebrew half shekels] seated at their tables.

¹ According to the New Testament, God Himself uses an oath as a reinforcement of his word (Acts 2:30). The passage refers to the Old Testament covenant with David. The oath emphasizes the binding character and eternal validity of the divine promise (Horst Blaz and Gerhard Schneider, eds., “ὄρκος,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991], 2:532-33).

² Psalms 2; 8; 16; 22; 23; 24; 40; 41; 45; 68; 69; 72; 89; 102; 110; and 118 are generally considered Messianic. These Psalms, either in whole or in part, speak of the Messiah (C. I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Study Bible: NASB* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 748).

³ It is referred to as the “Lord’s Passover” in Exodus 12:11 but the Jews had allowed it to become a religious exercise that did not relate to the coming of Messiah. It was a ritual without reality.

v. 15 - And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables;

v. 16 - and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."

NOTE: The temple was now a place of bilking money from those who came to fulfill the obligation of the Passover sacrifices. This exorbitant income was shared by the Sanhedrin and the bankers. For the Lord to restore proper protocol to the temple, He must flush cosmic modus operandi and evil from it. Doing so emphatically, publically, and dramatically is how He clarifies the issue as He begins His public ministry.

John 2:17 - His disciples remembered that it was written, [Psalm 69:9] "Zeal for Your house will consume me [Jesus has the right to clean out the rabble from His own house]."

v. 18 - The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as Your authority for doing these things?"

v. 19 - Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

v. 20 - The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple [Herod's reconstruction], and will You raise it up in three days?"

John 2:21 - But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

v. 22 - So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

10. In Matthew 12 the Lord scolds the scribes and Pharisees who pester him to show them a sign.⁴ He responds with a put-down and a prophecy:

Matthew 12:39 - He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet on sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

v. 40 - for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster [Jonah 1:17], so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

11. In Matthew 16, in a discussion with His disciples, the Lord reveals to them that He is the Christ, but, in verse 20, He implores them to tell no one about it. He then enlarges on His reference to Jonah's prophesy to them:

Matthew 16:21 - From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.⁵

⁴ σημεῖον (*sēmeion*): an act that the unbeliever might consider proof of divine presence or power.

⁵ See also Mark 8:31 and Luke 9:22.

12. Jesus again tells the disciples about the details of his upcoming Passion in:
 - Matthew 20:17** - As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them,
 - v. 18** - "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death,
 - v. 19** - and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.
13. The disciples really didn't believe all of this. They grieved over the Lord's crucifixion and physical death. They were reluctant to believe Him when He later appeared initially to them in resurrection body.
14. But in time they came to understand that He had indeed risen from the dead and that for them the eternal future took on new meaning.
15. Yet at first they did not believe, nor did many to whom they eventually took the message. Prophecies are one thing, but proof of fulfillment is quite another.
16. Proof must be confirmed by two or three witnesses and each must stand up to the scrutiny of the laws of evidence. The calling forth of such witnesses thus became an imperative.

IV. Witnesses for the Prosecution:

1. The proof of the resurrection cannot stand on hearsay. Eyewitnesses or authentic documentation of the event must be presented. Even then the benighted rejected it and do still, but they do so out of doubt by rejecting faith.
2. Those who were associated with the resurrected Christ provide legitimate eyewitness testimony:
 - 1) Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18).
 - 2) Women returning from the tomb with the angelic message (Matthew 28:8-10).
 - 3) Peter, later that day (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5).
 - 4) Emmaus disciples toward evening (Luke 24:13-32).
 - 5) The disciples minus Thomas (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25).
 - 6) The disciples a week later with Thomas present (John 20:26-31; 1 Corinthians 15:5).
 - 7) Seven of the disciples on the shore of Galilee (John 21:1-14).
 - 8) The disciples plus over five hundred believers (Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 15:6).
 - 9) James, the half-brother of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7).
 - 10) The disciples on the Mount of Olives at the time of the ascension (Acts 1:3-12).
3. In addition to these there are also recorded incidences of three men having seen the Lord in post-ascension Christophanies:

- 1) Stephen, at his stoning (Acts 7:55-60).
- 2) Paul (a) at his conversion (Acts 9:3-8, 17; 22:6-11, 14-15; 26:12-19; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8); (b) at Corinth (Acts 18:9-10); (c) in the temple at Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-21); (d) later in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11); (e) in another vision (2 Corinthians 12:1-4).
- 3) John, the apostle, on Patmos (Revelation).
4. Primarily, the thirteen disciples (minus Judas but including Paul and James) plus several women make up a group of witnesses who knew Jesus well. Especially notable are Peter, James, and John who were consistently with Him during His ministry and were present at His many miracles and heard His prophecies of His resurrection.
5. All of these people faced inhuman persecution because of their testimony that Jesus was the Christ and that He was resurrected.
6. Scripture shows that the disciples were men hard to convince of anything. They constantly revealed their inability to understand the Lord's parabolic teachings and were reluctant to believe His prophecies.
7. Greatest of all was their rejection of news about the Lord's resurrection. When Jesus appeared in the upper room they were only convinced after His display of His hands and feet and the discovery after touching Him to learn as Jesus said:
Luke 24:39 - "... a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."
8. Thomas would not believe until he put his fingers on the stigmata of the Lord's hands, feet, and side (John 20:27-28).
9. These thirteen men, called apostles, were commissioned to take the message of a risen Christ to the world. Circumstances in the Empire enabled them to make consistent headway so the converted could continue proclaiming the gospel of faith alone in Christ alone until it gained enough momentum to change the world.
10. The validity of the numerous eyewitnesses' testimonies is upheld by the consistency of their message. It defies logic that so many would expound the same phenomenal report if the whole affair was a deception or, worse, a phantasm. Dr. Cyrus Scofield addresses this argument:

The tests were such as to exclude the possibility of deception. Jesus talked with His friends; He ate before them; they handled Him, in proof that He was a body of flesh and bones—not a phantasm or so-called "materialization," in a garden outside His tomb, in an upper chamber before the whole discipleship, or a mountain side, in Galilee, by a lake on the shore of which He had Himself prepared for His disciples a breakfast of fishes broiled on living coals—these are the tests. To attempt to account for them on the theory of phantasm is an insult, not alone to the intelligence of the witnesses, but to our own intelligence.

These witnesses, His closest friends, men of the highest character, numerous, themselves incredulous, were furnished with tests which put out of court the theory of deception or phantasm.

If their conviction of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ had rested on a single appearance, there might be left in the candid mind a residue of doubt, notwithstanding the great number of the witnesses who have testified. But when the appearances of the risen Lord were numerous, it is hard to see how a candid mind can still hold a rational doubt. It is evident that by sheer dint of frequency, if in no other way, the incredulity with which the disciples at first received the fact of the resurrection, had wholly disappeared.⁶

11. For two-thirds of the first century the apostles and many of their protégés, eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ, carried the message of what they had seen and observed during the forty days of the Lord's post-resurrection ministry.
12. Paul, who was a contemporary of Jesus' and of those who were witnesses of the resurrection, became the foremost opponent of these people called Christians. He saw to their murder and persecution and aggressively pursued them.
13. Paul was a brilliant, highly educated, polyglot man of letters, a Roman citizen, a Pharisee, and his lineage was the tribe of Benjamin meaning his bloodline went back to Abraham through Rachel making him a sophisticate within the Jewish community.
14. Yet Paul became convinced that Jesus rose from the dead when he encountered the Lord on the road to Damascus. He saw proof when he saw the resurrected Christ. Paul considered it logical to believe in Christ. A man of his background, education, and credentials thought and wrote logically as is evidenced from his epistles.
15. Even with this "great a cloud of witnesses," there is yet another that supersedes them all and is expressed by Peter in:

2 Peter 1:16 - We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we [Peter, James and John] were eyewitnesses of His majesty [compare Matthew 16:28 with 17:1-5: the transfiguration].

v. 17 - For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"—

v. 18 - and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

v. 19a - We keep on having a more reliable and certain prophetic word [the authority of Scripture], to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place ...

⁶ C.I. Scofield, *In Many Pulpits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1922; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966), 165-66.

16. The testimony of Scripture is the supreme witness to the truth of the resurrection. When the Word of God is more real to you than those things that are visible then you have discovered the ultimate criterion for establishing absolute truth.
17. If the Bible is the absolute criterion, if the Bible is more real than what we see, hear, taste, or feel, then it must have an absolute source.
18. That source is the Holy Spirit and the prophecies about Messiah and their fulfillment by Jesus of Nazareth introduce Paul's letter to the Romans:
 - Romans 1:1** - Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, called an apostle, having been set apart for the gospel of God,
 - v. 2** - which gospel He Himself had previously promised through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,
 - v. 3** - concerning His son, who was born from the seed of David according to the flesh [**by comparison to His deity, Jesus was weak in His true humanity**],
 - v. 4** - and who was declared the Son of God by means of power belonging to the Holy Spirit by means of the resurrection from the deaths of the cross: Jesus Christ our Lord.
19. Scripture states and the Holy Spirit confirms the resurrection of Christ, at which time He was demonstrated to be what He claimed to be: the Son of the living God.
 - Mark 14:61** - The high priest, Caiaphas, was questioning Jesus, and saying to Him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"
 - v. 62** - And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."
 - v. 63** - Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses?"
20. Exactly!