

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built inside the old city walls of Jerusalem in the late 4th century. It was chosen because it was considered by many to be the site of the tomb where Jesus was buried. That was until early in the 19th century when someone suggested a different site known as the Garden Tomb. This lesser known site exists outside the old city walls of Jerusalem. So two sites both with evidence to support them, both having people who speak for and against them as the location of the tomb of Jesus. Two sites where either one could be the tomb and neither one might be the tomb. How can you know?

Millions of visitors have seen both sites over the years. I haven't. Maybe you haven't either. Having not seen it are you concerned that you don't have the proof you need? We want proof of the resurrection just like everyone else throughout history. But how can you know which site is the real site if either one? Maybe if we did see it for ourselves we would get a feeling and just know. But there will always be lingering doubt. Did I see the genuine site or a fraud?

The proof you need isn't in some old church or garden on the other side of the world. The proof you're looking for isn't waiting to be discovered by some archaeologist or in some lost history book. It isn't even seeing it with your own eyes. The proof is closer than you think. Jesus ensured you would have proof. In the first lesson Peter knows exactly what we need...

**We need resurrection proof
Witnesses prove he rose
Message proves you have peace with God**

Were you a little sleepy during the day on Friday? Did you get up for the wedding of the year? No matter how high definition your TV might be you can't say you were there. Only 1900 people inside the church can say they were. Billions watched it around the world but there were only some who saw it live and in person. No matter how accurate our information about the time of Jesus is none of us can say we experienced it firsthand. Peter was one who was there though. He reviewed some of the more widely known events. **"You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil."** The things Jesus did during his life were not secret to anyone.

Proof that Jesus was dead wasn't hard to come by. It was widely known that no one survived the cross. A great many people saw him hanging on the tree. In fact Jesus dying on the cross mixed people up the most. Jews knew well what Deuteronomy says, **"anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse."** Jesus looked like he was under God's curse. He couldn't possibly be the Messiah. He soon would be dead and in a tomb. God certainly turned his back on him. No one like that could ever be the Messiah. The witnesses all thought he was dead and gone. A dead Messiah can't help anyone.

On this week after Easter when everyone has returned to normal, the amazement of just a week ago can be soon forgotten. With the disastrous events of the last days in the southeastern part of the country doubts of God's love and care return too quickly. Natural disasters make us wonder what good is a resurrection story or a Savior dying if it doesn't help us with the troubles of today. When the doubts set in we sound just like Thomas. **"Unless I see... I will not believe it."** "I'll never get this cleaned up and back to normal. I'll never be free from these money issues. It will never get better." We don't sound equipped with resurrection hope. We need resurrection proof.

If just one had seen it would be tough to believe. If even only one small group we still might not believe it. God went further than that to make witnesses of the resurrection. **"God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen."** The women early in the morning, Peter, Mary, the Emmaus disciples all saw him. Then he appeared to the ten behind locked doors, and to the eleven including Thomas the following week. At one point he appeared to 500 at the same time. Notice there's no Pharisees, no mention of King Herod, or Pontius Pilate. Your name and mine aren't there either. God chose the witnesses. They were handpicked to serve us. Their sightings of Jesus serve as our proof of the resurrection. He rose! We're convinced because we see through their eyes recorded in the Word.

Others see through us. Be a witness to the resurrection for someone else. Instead of saying to someone who's facing death "I'm sorry for your loss" or "Hang in there things will get better" try "We rejoice in what Christ has done. Heaven is yours today." Speak to those who have lost someone in death about the joy you have in the resurrection. Speak about the hope for the future and the reality of today. Give them resurrection hope for their own life. Point them to Christ Jesus in the words of the eyewitnesses. We need resurrection proof and the witnesses prove he rose.

When an eyewitness takes the stand they're asked a series of questions. They're expected to give responses to the best of their knowledge. What happens if they refuse? They might be the only eyewitnesses. If they don't speak up the criminal might get away with it. If they don't tell what they saw no one else will know. The disciples of Jesus and others were made into witnesses of the resurrection. If they had remained silent no one else would have known. Thankfully those witnesses went out with their message. It was a message that proves you have peace with God.

Jesus was a Jew. God's message to the world came through a Jew first for Jews. But the people Peter spoke to were not Jews. God's message didn't stop with Jews. **"You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all."** Peter indicates Jesus was Lord of all. If Jesus is Lord of all then his message is meant for all. This world no longer waits for a Messiah to come; they have a Messiah who has already come. The Messiah brings peace but not just for Jews, for all.

As much as something might be for all people, I still like to feel it personally. This is eternity and I know the things I've done. We all know things we've done that would shock everyone so we keep them secret. Sins happening in the dark, done in the private moments of our lives, and that's just where we want them kept. So the reality of our sins causes us to have that moment where we wonder if Jesus' death could possibly have paid for it all. It's a mountain of debt we owe, how could one man pay it all? And if he didn't pay then we need to get busy paying God back. Works of merit, acts of worship, proper amounts of contrition are all things we'll need to get us back into God's favor.

Hear the message Jesus left us in Peter's letter and in the Psalms. **"God raised him from the dead on the third day."** **"You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay."** All over, the Bible speaks about life and resurrection for the Messiah. Christ rose from the dead. That's the proof God accepted his payment. Now his name brings forgiveness of sins. **"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."** His name is everything about him that saves. His life, his death, his resurrection. We can't take hold of Christ's name. It only happens by believing.

Many events we see today, we see through someone else's eyes recorded on video. We see what they saw. When disaster strikes we're eyewitnesses to the destruction without being present. When a wedding happens halfway around the world we can think of ourselves as almost being there. And when a Savior rises on the third day we get to be eyewitnesses through those in the Scripture who were eyewitnesses. They prove to us he rose. And they share their message with us. Now we have that testimony to share with others. We have the proof of what the resurrection means. Because Jesus lives we too shall live.