Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study “Resurrection: the foundation of our faith,” this sermon examines some of the evidence to validate the occurrence of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Believing in these things does us no good if they did not happen.

Introduction: Have you ever been disappointed when you discovered that something you believed was not true? It might have been something monumental like finding out Santa Claus (at least, the commercialized version) is fake. No genuine beard. No flying reindeer. And the fat belly on the guy at the mall quickly deflated as soon as he removed the stuffing. (If only it was that easy for the rest of us!)

You overcame that disappointment only to find that more were on their way. Your love said, “‘till death do us part,’ but his commitment was not true. The company promised a long-term relationship. “Long-term” was over after six months. The tests showed the cancer is back. You had held your breath hoping the “cancer free” statement was accurate, but you never fully believed it. You now find yourself skeptical about any fantastical claims.

So, when people make statements about Jesus returning from the dead, you are inclined to doubt. Disappointment hurts too much. You need some verification this time. Thankfully, God anticipated your hesitancy and put evidence in the Bible to confirm Jesus’ resurrection.

1. Believers verify that the resurrection happened. (v. 1-2)

Paul preached it. They received it, and it saved them. It became the foundation on which they stood. They remembered it and held it dearer to their hearts than even their own identity. What was it? The Gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The reason Paul preached the Gospel and the reason the Corinthian church stood on it was because they believed it. Paul believed it had the power to save anyone who would express faith in it (Rom. 1:16). He believed it so much that he died defending it.

People’s belief in something does not make it true. However, when a person’s belief changes their lives, it rightly causes others to examine that belief’s validity. And when that belief survives both testing and time instead of fading into oblivion, the evidence for its truthfulness continues to grow.
2. **History verifies that the resurrection happened.** (v. 3-4)

Some have gone to great lengths to cast doubt on the Gospel narrative. They questioned Jesus’ death with the swoon theory (Jesus passed out on the cross and later revived in the tomb). They ridiculed Jesus’ resurrection with the possibility that either the disciples faked a resurrection by stealing Jesus’ body or that the women went to the wrong tomb. Historians and theologians have debunked these weak attempts.

Some may try to re-write history to make it fit their worldview, but the facts remain the same. Jesus died. His friends buried His body. The tomb where Jesus’ body lay is empty. Those are important historical facts.

The most important historical fact *for you* though is that He died *for your sins*. Believe it. While Jesus exited the grave and is alive, your sins died, and they remain buried! That’s a fact!

3. **Witnesses verify that the resurrection happened.** (v. 5-8)

Paul was not there at the cross to see Jesus die or at the tomb to see the resurrected Lord. Many others were. And they testified to their experience. The women on the way back from the tomb saw Jesus, touched Jesus, and excitedly reported their joy. Peter saw Jesus and received forgiveness. The remaining disciples saw and spoke with Him multiple times. One gathering of over 500 people saw Him. They all reported the same thing: JESUS IS ALIVE!

The most potent testimony for Paul though was that given by Stephen (Acts 7:59-8:1). Paul (then Saul) listened to the historical/theological lesson Stephen gave. He watched as Stephen offered his life for his belief in the Gospel. Then he heard as Stephen asked forgiveness for his executioners just as Jesus had done. The witness of that man had to have had a great part in Paul’s conversion.

Eventually, Paul got to see Jesus for himself (v. 8). So will you. Assuming the meeting Paul speaks of here was something that happened after Acts 9, Paul’s faith was solid before his sight encounter with Jesus. Is yours? Jesus promised a special blessing on those who believe without seeing (John 20:29).

**Conclusion:** It is normal to doubt. Sometimes, it is even wise to doubt. So much about how we live our lives now, and even more of what comes after the grave is wholly dependent on the truthfulness of Jesus’ resurrection. We are short on trustworthy information sources. We have to get this right. *Nothing* is more important.

Recognizing that, God presented substantiated and verifiable evidence for the resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection is not one of those things that God requires us to accept based solely on His assertion. He met us at our weakness and provided what we
most badly needed—proof that Jesus is alive. With that confidence, we truly can face tomorrow, whatever tomorrow may bring.

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