

Introduction: Evidence, Hope, and Assurance

Four very specific scenes for skeptics and doubting Christians:

SCENE 1: The physical evidence

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"

³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter who was behind him arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the burial cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

EVIDENCE: The _____ tomb.

SCENE 2: The first eye witness

¹⁰Then the disciples went back to where they were staying, ¹¹but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put Him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵"Woman," He said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking He was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will get Him."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward Him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷Jesus said, "Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to My brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.'"

¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that He had said these things to her.

EVIDENCE: Jesus is _____, _____ with, and _____.

SCENE 3: The skeptics – Ten fearful followers

¹⁹On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you." ²²And with that He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

What does Jesus do?

1. He _____ them.
2. He _____ them.
3. He _____ them.

EVIDENCE: Fearful followers become _____ believers.

SCENE 4: The irrefutable proof – One unreasonable doubter

²⁴Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “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.”

²⁶A week later His disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁷Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe.”

²⁸Thomas said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

EVIDENCE: Thomas is _____ – “My Lord and my God!”

The Book’s purpose – Then and now

³⁰Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

Four timeless truths for honest skeptics

1. Jesus reveals Himself to different people in _____ ways.
2. Meeting the resurrected Jesus produces a total _____.
3. The evidence is overwhelming (then and now) that Jesus _____.
4. God’s desire isn’t a religious response but a real relationship, by _____.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to be an honest skeptic?
2. Discuss the four timeless truths (above).
 - Which one “hit home” for you?
 - Why?
3. How does Jesus’ response to Thomas encourage you?
4. How interested do you think God is in revealing Himself to you?
5. What specific action step would demonstrate a “step” of faith on your part toward Christ?