The disciples were not, of course, the only ones who had visions of Jesus after he died. People continued to see Jesus alive afterwards. And in fact, he continues to appear in modern times. Here are a couple of interesting examples taken from the draft of ch. 5 of my book, How Jesus Became God:

And consider the modern appearances of Jesus. Some of these are documented by Phillip H. Wiebe, in his book *Visions of Jesus: Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today*. I should stress that Wiebe is not a religious fanatic on a mission. He is chair of the Philosophy Department at Trinity Western University, which is to be sure, a Christian school, but it is not a place for wackos. And Wiebe is a serious scholar. His book is published by Oxford University Press. Still, at the end of the day, he thinks that something “transcendent” has led to some of the modern visions of Jesus that he recounts. In other words, they – or some of them – are veridical.

His book narrates twenty-eight case studies, which he examines from psychological, neuropsychological, mentalist, and other perspectives. Included is a vision of Jesus experienced by Hugh Montefiore, a well-known New Testament scholar at Cambridge University and later bishop of the Church of England, who converted to Christianity from Judaism at age sixteen because he had a vision in which Jesus appeared to him and told him to “follow me” – words that, at the time, the young Montefiore did not know were drawn from the New Testament.

Of particular interest are instances in which Jesus is said to have appeared to entire groups of people, rather than just to an individual. No case is more intriguing that the last one the Wiebe recounts in his study, that of Kenneth Logie, a preacher in a Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oakland California in the 1950s. There are two appearances worth detailing. The first occurred in April of 1954. Logie was preaching at an evening service. In the middle of his sermon, around 9:15 p.m., the door to the church opened up, Jesus walked in and came down to the aisle smiling to people on the right and the left. He then walked through (not around) the pulpit and placed his hand on Logie's shoulder. Logie, understandably, collapsed. Jesus spoke to him in an unknown foreign tongue, and Logie revived enough to reply to him in English, having understood what was said. Wiebe tells us that fifty people were there and witnessed the event.

Strange things happen. But what happened five years later was even stranger. This one was seen by two hundred people, who confirmed they had seen it. And remarkably, it was captured on film. The reason it was captured on film, Logie later indicated, was because very strange things had been happening in the church and they wanted to document it on 8 millimeter. Wiebe himself saw the film in 1965. A woman from the congregation was standing to give her testimony, when suddenly she disappeared and was replaced by a male figure who was obviously Jesus. He was wearing sandals and a glistening white robe, and he had nail prints in his hand. His hands were dripping with oil. After several minutes, during which he apparently said nothing, he disappeared and the woman reappeared.

Unfortunately, by the time Wiebe had decided to write the book, some twenty-six years after first seeing the film of the event, the film had disappeared. Logie claimed it had been stolen. Still, Wiebe was able still to find, and interview, five people who were there and agreed that they saw it happen. Moreover, there still were surviving photographs of the
other odd occurrences in the church back in 1959: images of hands, hearts, and crosses had started to appear from nowhere on the church walls, with liquid like oil flowing from them, and a fragrance being emitted. The walls were checked by a skeptic, and there was no natural explanation for these appearances (no hidden windows or the like). Wiebe has seen the photographs.

Skeptics may point out that the time between when these events allegedly happened in the 1950s and Wiebe’s written account about of them amounts to several decades, and that may indeed raise some suspicions of the accuracy of the witnesses’ memories. But Wiebe points out that it is about the same amount of time between the life of Jesus and the earliest Gospels. Believers may take comfort in that fact and assume that these things really did happen in Kenneth Logie’s church. Nonbelievers will take equal comfort in the fact and assume that the Gospel accounts cannot be trusted either.

Progress on My Book
Visions of Mary