Grace to You :: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

Witnessing Women and Doubting Disciples

Scripture: Luke 24:1-12

Code: 42-292

Let's open the Bible now to the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke's gospel, Luke chapter 24. We have begun to look at the opening twelve verses which is Luke's treatment of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And I'm going to read these verses for you so that you have them in mind as we look at them. Luke 24, beginning in verse 1.

"But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they entered they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling apparel. And as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again?' And they remembered His words and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James, also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. And these words appeared to them, the apostles, as nonsense and they would not believe them. But Peter arose and ran to the tomb, stooping and looking in he saw the linen wrappings only and he went away to his home, marveling at that which had happened."

This is Luke's account of the resurrection. There is one in Matthew. There is one in Mark. And there is one in John. Because the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is not just a feature of Christianity, it is its essential truth. In fact, without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is no Christianity. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is not the epilogue to the story. It is not the epilogue to the life of Christ, it is the goal of His life, it is the objective of His life, it is the purpose of His life. The church has always understood that. In fact, the church understood it right from the day of the resurrection on. For since that time the church has chosen to meet on Sunday, the first day of the week, the day that Jesus rose from the dead to commemorate the most important event in His life and the most important event in human history, His resurrection from the dead. The church did not choose to meet on Friday. The church chose to meet on Sunday because Sunday is the interpretation of Friday. Easter is the interpretation of Good Friday. Resurrection is the divine interpretation of the death of Christ. Resurrection is the divine vindication of the work that He did on the cross. Without the resurrection, the cross means nothing for it has no validation, it has no vindication, it has no affirmation. But when God raised Jesus from the dead, He was affirming and validating and vindicating the fact that He had

indeed bore our sins in His own body on the cross. And it satisfied the justice of God with His sin bearing. Without the resurrection, the cross is meaningless, just another death.

The resurrection is everything. The resurrection vindicates the great reason for the gospel and for all redemption. The purpose of the gospel is not just that we might experience the forgiveness of sin. The purpose of the gospel is that we having been forgiven of our sin could enter in to eternal life and live in the bliss of heaven forever in perfect holiness and perfect joy in glorified physical resurrected bodies. Bodily resurrection is peculiar to Christianity. And bodily resurrection is essential to Christianity.

The Christian gospel is not designed to deliver you from your troubles here, not at all, not even close. The Christian gospel is not so that your spirit can float on into eternity in some nebulas way. The Christian gospel does not promise that you will live on in influence in some way, nor is the gospel saying that Christ lives on in His influence, or Christ lives on in spiritual form. The Christian message is that Jesus Christ rose from the grave in a glorified, physical body, in some way like the body you have now only stripped of all that is sinful and fatal and that we one day will receive a body like unto His glorified body and we will live in bodily resurrected form through all the eons of eternity. That is the Christian message, that is not the message of the other religions of the world. There is no resurrection in Buddhism. There is no resurrection of the body in Hinduism, just a recurring, cycling, reincarnation in some different form. Christianity teaches a bodily resurrection and that is the goal of redemption, that we might in glorified human bodies live forever with our glorified Christ and serve Him and worship Him in joy and peace.

Christianity promises a physical resurrection. Now your body will be different, thankfully. It will have nothing about it that's fatal, terminal, nothing about it that's sinful, or wicked. Nothing about it that's imperfect, but it will be a physical body in a glorified form.

You say, "What's the model for that?" The glorified resurrection body of the Lord Jesus. It could be seen, it could be touched. It had scars. He ate. He walked. He talked. He thought. He heard. He acted in that body in ways familiar to those He met.

Listen to the importance of the resurrection in the language of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." If Christ is not raised from the dead in bodily form, then all gospel preaching is useless which means the New Testament is useless because that's where the first gospel preaching took place. You can cancel Christianity totally. There is no Christianity without the resurrection. None. If Christ is not raised, our preaching is useless, your faith is useless. Worse than that, we are found to be false witnesses of God because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ when He didn't raise Him, if in fact the dead are not raised. If the dead aren't raised, then Christ isn't raised and we have no Christianity and what we've been preaching is a lie and a deception.

But Christ has been raised, verse 20, and is the firstfruits of those who are asleep. If Christ isn't raised, there is no New Testament to be believed. There is no preaching about Christ to be believed. Your faith is worthless. But He has been raised. And this is the Christian message.

Little wonder then that all four gospels deal with the resurrection. They cover this monumental, unparalleled event, this most important, crucial, preeminent event in His life. We give a lot of time to the cross and rightly we should, but it is the resurrection that vindicates the cross. And so, all four gospels record the resurrection. The book of Acts records the history of the preaching of the resurrection, as the apostles and the prophets and the other preachers and missionaries went out preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that He arose from the dead in physical form and so shall those who put their trust in Him. The epistles follow the book of Acts and the epistles give us the explication, or the explanation and the implications of the resurrection...what it means and how one is to understand the resurrection and how one is to apply that great reality to one's own life. The book of Revelation closes the New Testament with a culmination, and it tells us where we're going to be in our risen form in the glories of the New Heaven and the New Earth that will be established by the risen Christ.

So when you look at the New Testament, it features the resurrection. Prior to the resurrection, Jesus says it's going to happen. Then it happens. Then it's preached. Then it's explained and applied, and finally realized in the book of Revelation.

Now as we look at the four accounts of the resurrection, the four historical accounts by the writers of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, I want you to understand that there is in those accounts what I would call an implicit harmony, an implicit harmony, maybe rather than an explicit harmony. That is to tell us that this isn't contrived, that some committee didn't sit down and say, "Well we've got these four different records here, we need to tie these things together and make them precise or somebody's going to question their validity."

There's a wonderful, natural component to these gospels so that each writer writes out of his own experience with the Spirit of God and his own understanding of the event and it's natural and it's personal. And at the same time there's an implicit harmony by which we weave it together in a perfect tapestry of understanding. Each of the writers have of their own emphases and they feature elements of the resurrection that are unique to them, but they all agree on four truths. They all feature four things that are critical to the validity and the evidences and verification of the resurrection. And those four are the emptiness of the tomb. They all talk about the empty tomb. That's critical as evidence that Christ is alive. They all talk about the angelic testimony. They all talk about the fact that angels brought a divine message explaining what had happened. They all refer to the witness and the testimony of the women who had seen the risen Christ with their own eyes and touched Him and talked with Him. And they all note the unbelief of the Apostles. The emptiness of the tomb, the

testimony of the angels, the witness of the women, and the unbelief of the Apostles, these are the four core evidences for a real resurrection.

Now let's go back to briefly review the first two that we did last time. Number one, the emptiness of the tomb. Let's look at our text. "On the first day of the week at early dawn, they came to the tomb." They...meaning the women, the women are identified in verse 10, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women. Mark 16:1 names one of them Salome, probably a half a dozen, maybe more women. The reason they came was you will remember they were there at the cross, remember? Standing there watching Jesus while He was dying in silence, stunned silence. If you go back in to chapter 23 they are also there when Jesus is buried, verse 55. "The women who had come with Him out of Galilee, followed after Joseph of Arimathea who was taking His body to bury it in his own tomb in which no body had ever been placed. And they were following, they saw the tomb and how his body was laid." They saw the death of Christ. They saw Him die. They were there when the soldiers didn't break His legs, they pierced His side and blood and water came out. They were there when He was buried.

And they saw Nicodemus show up with his hundred-pound weight of spices, of myrrh and aloes, to put on the body of Christ as a testimony to his own love for Christ. And they determined that they weren't going to be outdone by these men, Joseph and Nicodemus, up to now secret disciples, and so it says that they returned, verse 56 of chapter 23, and prepared spices and perfumes. Remember they put Jesus in the grave on Friday. They went home, they had a few hours perhaps, or maybe an hour left that evening before Sabbath begins at six, or a little after, and they went back and prepared spices 'cause you couldn't do it on the Sabbath, you couldn't do any work. They did it and they were ready now to bring those spices back on Sunday when the Sabbath was over early in the morning and anoint the body of Jesus as an expression of their affection for Him.

So they came, bringing the spices they had prepared. It is now dawn on Sunday morning, an early dawn. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, remember, on their way they were discussing what they were going to do when they got there because the stone would be there and who would be able to remove it. To their shock, when they arrived, the stone was rolled away from the tomb. When they entered they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus.

Well, here it is, Sunday morning. Here it is, the first day of the week. Here it is, the third day since Jesus died. And He did exactly what He said He would do, He would rise again on the third day.

Now to put the story together, just very briefly, remember this, the women are probably all connected to places in Bethany which is about two miles away and in the morning it appears that Mary Magdalene and one other Mary, Mary the mother of Joseph and James and the wife of Cleopas, they start out together according to the other gospel records. They start out together, the other women are trailing along. Mary Magdalene is assumed to be the youngest of them, she gets there first. According

to John 20, she arrives while it's still the dark side of dawn. And she's alone when she gets there because John says Mary Magdalene arrives there, she looks through the dusk of that dark side of dawn and she sees the stone is rolled away. She draws one immediate conclusion, that somebody has stolen the body of Jesus. She doesn't go in the tomb. She doesn't go and look for the other women. She turns and heads back. On the dark side of dawn they didn't see her, maybe she went another way. There would be lots of ways to go. But anyway, she heads back. John tells us she is making a beeline to get back to the apostles, to Peter and John, to tell them that somebody has stolen the body of Jesus. And according to John, that's what she does. She goes back and John 20 verses 1 and 2 says she tells Peter and John they've stolen the body of Jesus. She's drawn that conclusion. She had no expectation of a resurrection, nobody did, none of the women did, she didn't, the apostles didn't, no one did.

Peter and John then in response to her message decide they've got to go and check it out. So they head toward the tomb. Well probably before Mary ever got to them, the other women arrived and that's where we see the story here. The other women have arrived.

They are a little more patient to try to discern what's gone on here and so Luke says they entered the tomb. They didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. What they did find was the grave clothes lying in perfect place, as we learn later, because that's the testimony of Peter and John.

Mary Magdalene then arrives first, goes back the two miles or so to tell Peter and John. In the meantime, probably soon after she left, the rest of the women arrive. They have no idea of what has happened, nobody does. Matthew tells us what has happened. "In the dark of night," Matthew 28:2 to 4 says, "The Roman guard was placed there. The Jews went to Pilate, they said, 'We want a guard, we're afraid somebody will steal the body and the end deception will be worse than the first deception. So we need to guard that tomb so they don't steal it and pretend there was a resurrection.' So a guard was placed there for security. The guard was placed there in the dark of night and some time in the darkness of night, Matthew 28:2 to 4 says, an angel came down from heaven simultaneous to the angel coming down there was a very severe earthquake that shook the ground. And the soldiers saw the angels, felt the earthquake, saw the dazzling blazing angel roll the stone away and sit on it. And then they fainted in a semi-coma out of sheer terror and shock. But they remembered what they had seen up to that moment."

When they finally were aroused, the angel was no longer to be seen by them. The stone was still rolled away. They must have looked in to check. They too saw the wrappings lying there, and they would have been wrapped like this.....and they're just lying there and a napkin that would have been wrapped around the head was lying in a place by itself. And immediately, still in the dark of night, they headed for the Jewish leaders. And when they got to the Jewish leaders, it says in Matthew 28:11 to 15, they told them exactly what had happened. We were there. We had the place guarded. We had it secured. We had it sealed and all of a sudden there was this horrendous, severe earthquake. It must

have been a very localized earthquake because the Jews make no comment about the earthquake. Nonetheless in the midst of the earthquake down out of the sky comes a dazzling, blazing angel who pushes the stone away and sits on it. And we checked the tomb, and there's no body there.

Wow! This is so important. The response of the Jewish leaders is this. You can't tell anybody that. You cannot tell anybody that. You have to lie. You have to lie and say the disciples stole the body. And we're going to pay you, here's some money to lie.

Now why do you invent a lie? To cover up...what?...the truth. I mean, here is testimony by the Jewish leaders that there was a resurrection. That doesn't shock them because Jesus had the power of life, they knew that. He gave sight to the blind. He gave hearing to the deaf. He gave a voice to the dumb. He gave legs to those who were disabled and handicapped. And He raised people from the dead. Miracles had followed Him everywhere for three years. They had never denied His miracles. They had never investigated His miracles. They never tried to debunk His miracles by some extensive investigation of them, never. They were...they were constant, they were ubiquitous. They were plentiful. And they were verifiable.

They knew they were dealing with a very powerful, powerful person. And they knew that when the soldiers told them what happened, that's exactly what happened because they knew no one could steal the body, not with the Roman guard there. And so, all they could do was cover it up. And in covering up, they invented the lie that proved the resurrection. Never asked for an explanation. Isn't it interesting to you that they did not call for further investigation? They didn't say, "Whoa...whoa...wait, what is this again? A what? An earthquake and then an angel came down? And a blazing angel the likes of which they had never seen? Nor did they know anyone who had ever seen? What? We need to look into this more carefully, more thoroughly." They had the most at stake, did they not? They were the ones who wanted Jesus dead. They had the most at stake. If in fact He was alive, don't you think they would want to find out the reality? Look, it was obvious, you have an empty tomb, you have grave clothes lying in the place where they were when they were around the body and the body has gone through the grave clothes and they're in the same place they were when the body was lying there and nobody steals a body and leaves the grave clothes like that. You get it and run and you take in the form that it's in when you get there."

And the soldiers were guarding the grave. What they had was a resurrection. They knew they had a resurrection. They knew there was no other explanation. And they said, "Let's lie about it." By the way, they had a lot more integrity than many of the skeptics and liberal critics through the years who have tried to say the disciples stole Jesus body. Even the Jewish leaders knew that wasn't true. That's why they invented the lie that they stole His body. The story was believable. The story satisfied them. They never investigated anything, never asked for an explanation, never questioned the efficiency of the guard. They didn't say, "Well what were you guys doing? Were you awake? What kind of security do you provide?" They never questioned that. They never even questioned the

resurrection, never questioned the angel. They never questioned the earthquake.

The empty tomb is powerful evidence. They certainly didn't offer some lame theory, "Well Jesus probably swooned and came out on His own." No. Not a crucified man, not someone who has been hanging on a cross for six hours and bleeding out His open wounds, someone who is so obviously dead that they don't break His legs and they ram a spear into His side and blood gushes out of His heart. A dead body then pealed off the cross and hauled off and put in a grave, you mean to tell me He felt better after a couple of days in there? And He got up, woke up, stood up, walked over to a small opening with a massive stone across a small opening and from the inside had the strength? And by what angle to push the stone away? Ludicrous....ludicrous, and left all His grave clothes there?

They knew. They didn't even suggest such a stupid idea. And they knew the soldiers had checked the tomb to make sure He wasn't there. And I'm sure the soldiers gave them the testimony about the grave clothes. And that was so convincing that that's what convinced John, first of all, and I think Peter...the grave clothes, the empty tomb and the grave clothes lying right where the body was.

So the first line of evidence that all four gospel writers want us to understand is the tomb is empty and there is no explanation except a resurrection. Second line of strong evidence is the revelation from the angels, the testimony from the angels, verses 4 to 7. "It happened while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood near them in dazzling apparel." The other writers tell us they were angels in the form of young men. "The women were terrified, bowed their faces to the ground. The men said to them, 'Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee saying, the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise again."

This is the most important evidence, this is divine revelation. Two angels come down from heaven, from God with the truth and declare to them that He is risen, He is not here.

So you have the emptiness of the tomb and you have the message of the angels to verify the resurrection. You have the evidence from the facts and the evidence from divine revelation. Now that brings us to the third and the fourth lines of evidence the New Testament writers give us. Thirdly, the witness of the women...the witness of the women.

This is wonderful. Verse 8, in response to the angels reminding them that Jesus had said to them while He was still in Galilee, remember they were the women who followed Him from Galilee, they heard Him teach there, and He is now in Judea for the last year of His ministry. But when He was way back in Galilee, He had told them He would be delivered to sinful men, crucified, third day rise again, verse 8, they remembered His words.

It was on at least three separate occasions that Jesus said this. It's recorded multiple times in the four gospels but at least three separate occasions in which He told them that He would be delivered over to sinful men, He would be crucified and He would rise again the third day. And now it's beginning to make sense. The angels bring them a revelation they can't deny. They know they're godly angels, that's why they fall on their faces, bow down in terror before these holy beings. They hear the message from God, they remember the connection with what Jesus promised. And it's not only dawn on the outside, it's dawn on the inside. They're starting to get it. They remembered His words.

And then, I love this, they return from the tomb. They turn and they take off. Where are they going? Verse 9, "To report to the eleven and to all the rest." They're all hiding, by the way, they're all hiding, they're afraid. The men are afraid.

Now remember, they're going to turn and leave. Who's on the way? Peter and John. Peter and John are on the way because Mary's already gone back, told her story that somebody stole the body. Peter and John are on the way. These women are now beginning their journey, they have a different story than Mary Magdalene. Mary never looked in the tomb. She never saw the grave clothes. She never saw the angel. She's got misinformation. These women have the right information.

They start back. It's so interesting to me, verse 9, "And they returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and all the rest." But wait a minute, wait a minute. Something happened on the way. Look at Matthew 28. Something happened on the way. I don't know how Luke could leave this out, except by divine work. On the way, this is Matthew 28:8, "And they departed quickly from the tomb in response to what the angel told them. They...they departed quickly from the tomb, verse 8, with fear, same terror being in the presence of holy angels, but now with the addition of great...what?...joy because it's all starting to come clear to them...wow...and they are now running and they ran to report it to His disciples."

I love this, "And behold, verse 9, Jesus met them and greeted them." Good morning, ladies. I just love the simplicity of that. This is no...there's no wow factor, it doesn't say again the earth shook and the sky rent and the stars fell and people blew trumpets. It was just, "Good morning, ladies." And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. They saw Him.

So now they've seen the empty tomb. They've heard the angelic divine revelation. And they've seen the risen Christ. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid." Now their joys gone back to fear. Go, take Word to My brethren to leave for Galilee and there they shall see Me. They're going to see Me. In fact, they're going to see Me in Galilee. Oh they're going to see Me before that but I want them to be in Galilee and there'll be a big meeting in Galilee, and that's exactly what happened later on.

So they're on the way. They're going to tell the eleven, which is the official title for the Apostles now that there aren't twelve of them, instead of being called the Twelve, they're called the Eleven. In

actuality there are only nine there, because Peter and John are on the way to the tomb. So the women as they head back, see the risen Christ and their desire to tell the Apostles is confirmed, go ahead and do that. What an experience.

You say, "Isn't it sort of odd that the women are the ones who are the original and initial witnesses of the appearance of the Lord Jesus?" You say, "Is that for the sake of elevating women?" Well it sure does that. I don't know how else you could elevate them any more than that. But that's not the primary reason. How many apostles were standing there watching Jesus being crucified? How many? One, John, that's not enough because if anything is to be given as a testimony, it has to be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Where were the apostles? Oh they were the sheep that were scattered when the shepherd was smitten, right? They were hiding.

This is a loving testimony to the love of the women, to the courage of the women. And to the dignity of women. But more than that, folks, this is the same little group of a half dozen or so that saw Jesus die, that saw Jesus buried, and that saw Jesus risen and therefore they are the only ones who can be credible eye-witness testimony. We don't have any men who saw Jesus die, except John. We don't have any men who saw Him buried, which was a confirmation of His death. And it has to be the women because they're the eyewitnesses of everything else and you can't have a resurrection unless you have a death and a burial. And you have to give testimony to the real death, the real burial and the real resurrection.

They've seen it all. They saw Him die. They knew He was dead because they didn't break His legs. They knew He was dead 'cause the spear went into His side and out came the fluid and the water. They knew He was dead because they watched Him being buried. And now they know He's alive because they've seen Him.

So in verse 9 they report all these things to the eleven and all the rest. You've got the nine remaining from the eleven, although they're called the eleven because that's their official title. And you've got all the other believers, the group of disciples who were there who a couple of them appear on the road to Emmaus, one was named Cleopas so there are other disciples there along with the Apostles.

Then in verse 10, this is so interesting, it says, "Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James, also the other women with them were telling these things to the Apostles." That brings up a problem. What do you mean they were Mary Magdalene? How did she get in this group?

The last thing we heard about Mary Magdalene, she went there, saw nothing but an empty grave, came back with the wrong information. Up to now, as far as we know, she hasn't come to any conclusion except that somebody stole the body, she told Peter and John her conclusion that somebody stole the body, which sent them on their way back. How does she get into this group?

Well Luke is condensing this story. I'll tell you how she got into this group. Turn to John 20, this is just so wonderful. How can she belong to the group of eyewitnesses when she didn't go in the empty tomb and she didn't hear the angels say anything? She left before the angels spoke, or appeared. And she had not seen the risen Christ, so how can she be one of the witnesses?

Answer: This lady went back to the tomb. This lady went back to the tomb. At some point she decides she has to go back. So in John 20 verse 11 we find her standing outside the tomb weeping. She's all alone. And so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb and she beheld two angels in white sitting. Now they're sitting on the inside. These are two different scenes and two different times and this one is a private viewing for Mary.

And they're sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" I mean, it just seems so like you walk in an empty tomb and an angel talks to you and he just says, "Hey, why you crying, lady?" It's just such a natural conversation. She said, "Because they have taken away My Lord and I don't know where they have laid Him." She's still sticking with her theory. "And when she had said this, she turned around and behold...or beheld Jesus standing there and didn't know it was Jesus. Why? Maybe she couldn't see through her tears. But then nobody after the resurrection of Jesus could really know who He was until He revealed Himself, right? That was true of the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

And Jesus asked the same question, "Woman, why are you weeping? Why are you crying? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You've laid Him and I'll take Him away." That's a really stupid thing, why would the gardener steal a body out of tomb? I love this, "Jesus said to her, 'Mary,' she turned and said to Him in Hebrew, '*Rabboni*' which means teacher."

"And then she grabbed Him, hung on to Him probably on His feet and ankles. 'Stop clinging to Me, He said to her, I've not yet ascended to the Father. Go to My brothers, say to them, 'I ascend to My Father, Your Father, My God and Your God. Now, Mary, you go, you tell them you saw Me, I am alive for a while, you can't keep Me here, I'm going to ascend to heaven, I'm going to go back to the Father but I will meet you all in Galilee for a while." In fact, He met them there that night and the next Sunday night as well, and many other appearances in the 40 days before He ascended. So He says to Mary, "You go," and this is wonderful, verse 18, "Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and said that He had said these things to her."

Can you get the picture? These women are there. They've arrived breathless from their encounter with Jesus on the way back. And they're saying to these nine guys, "Look, we're telling you He's alive. He's alive, we saw Him, He said Good Morning, Ladies, and we had a conversation with Him and we saw angels and the angels told us He was alive and it was exactly what He said He would do

and He did it and exactly did it when He said He was going to do it." And these nine guys are saying, "Slow down, one at a time." And the wonderful truth is they're all saying the same thing, they're all saying exactly the same thing. They don't need to kind of put the stories together. But they must have been breathless. And in the midst of all of this discussion in the place bolts Mary Magdalene. And she's been running, so she is breathless. "I've seen the Lord, I've seen the Lord." And she starts telling them what they said...what He said to her. She has now had a private audience, seen the empty tomb and the grave clothes, heard an angelic revelation, and had a personal experience of Christ. So therefore she had the same experience all the other women had and can be included by Luke in chapter 24 as one of the three eyewitnesses to a risen Christ.

Skeptics have said, "Oh, they went to the wrong tomb." Really, so did the angels. So did the Romans. What a ridiculous thought. So why not go to the right tomb and pull out the body and end the deception?

Others have said, "No, actually Jesus was never in a tomb, that's why He wasn't there, they threw Him in a criminal's pit." Really, so they made up the story about Joseph of Arimathea, I think Joseph would have made an end to that story because his reputation was at stake and if they accused him of stealing...of taking the body of Jesus and burying it, he would have lost his place in the Sanhedrin for sure. And if that was not true, he would have managed to debunk that very, very fast.

Now all these women are giving testimony to the same thing. These are multiple eyewitnesses. And this is just the beginning. He appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, as we'll see. Peter saw Him in a private appearing. That night He appeared to the Eleven, minus Thomas. A week later He appears to the Eleven with Thomas. He appears with the disciples by the Sea of Tiberius. Then He appears, that's in Galilee, then 500 brethren at one time in Galilee. Then He appears to James. Then He appears to the Eleven in a mountain in Galilee where He gave them the Great Commission. Then He appears in Jerusalem on the time of His ascension. Then He appears to Saul on the Damascus Road, appears to Paul again in the temple, appears to Stephen at his stoning...many, many eyewitnesses of a risen Christ.

And that takes us to the final line of evidence, the unbelieving disciples. You say, "Well how in the world does that prove the resurrection?" It proves the resurrection because it proves the fact that they would not fabricate a resurrection because they didn't expect one. 'Cause the critics have said, "Well they stole the body and made it look like a resurrection." Or they said, "They had a mass hallucination. They wanted it so bad they hallucinated that it had happened." They didn't want it so bad and they didn't expect it. They wouldn't have fabricated it because they didn't anticipate it. They wouldn't have seen it as some kind of a hyper illusionary experience because they had no concept that it would happen. We find that, and this is so important, in Luke 24 in verse 11. "These words appeared to them, meaning the Apostles, as nonsense." That's what they thought of a resurrection, folly, idle talk, *leros* is the Greek word, an empty tale, some kind of fable. What is wrong with these

women? And they're all saying the same thing. And no matter that all their stories are identical and they all had the same experience and it was fresh, it wasn't like there were all kinds of weeks in between where they were trying to put it together again, and they all say the same thing. It didn't matter. It didn't matter that their story had cohesion, that it had consistency. It didn't matter that they gave details that had no other explanation. They thought the whole thing was absolute nonsense. And they would not believe them.

They didn't fabricate a resurrection, they didn't even think there would be one. And Luke adds the little note about Peter. Peter arose earlier, this is a flashback, he had gone to the tomb, stooped, looked in, saw the linen wrappings only. Went away to his home marveling at what had happened. What do you think he was thinking? What do you mean marveling at what had happened, *thaumazo*, he was traumatized, he...I think he was beginning to think this is a resurrection...this is a resurrection.

Now when Peter did go to the tomb, it was before Mary Magdalene came back. It was before the full testimony of the women. The chronology is clear in John, so let's turn to John chapter 20. This is wonderful. Verse 3, "Peter leaves after hearing from Mary Magdalene, and the other disciple," that's how John refers to himself in his humble way, "Peter goes to the tomb with John, and they're running." They're going to verify Mary Magdalene's story that somebody stole the body. And the other disciple is faster than Peter, which knowing Peter's personality was something to bother him. He always wanted to be the first. So John's faster, younger; came to the tomb first, stooping, looking in. He's a little more retiring and shy. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, he didn't go in. He's trying to process this. "Simon Peter therefore also came following him and entered the tomb." Of course, just blows right by John and goes in there. And he sees the linen wrappings lying there and the face cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings like was all jumbled up and thrown in a corner, but lying exactly where it had been when it was put on His head.

So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also. He saw and what? He believed. The empty tomb and the grave clothes was all it took. Now remember, they at this point have only heard the testimony of Mary Magdalene. Right? They haven't heard the other women. They left when Mary told them to leave. In the meantime, the women came to the tomb, saw Jesus, came back with the story. So all they have, all John has is an empty tomb and grave clothes, and that's enough...that's enough. He knew that stone couldn't be removed from the inside by a dead Jesus. And he had seen Him dead, he was there. He knew. There was no other explanation but that He rose and he believed. For as yet, or up to that time, they didn't understand the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead. But he understands it now.

So the disciples went away again to their own homes. That's interesting, isn't it? I'm sure they didn't know, "What do we do next?" So they went home. Go back to Luke, that's what Luke says Peter did in verse 12. After he saw the linen wrapping also, went away to his own home, marveling...marveling at what had happened. Hey, this is not a grave robber's scene, folks. Grave robbers, if you wanted

the body, you just take the body intact, you don't fool around in there unwrapping it and then laying everything in perfect order. You take the body and you run. It was very convincing. John believed. Peter...still struggling when he goes home. Meanwhile, the women have these other nine guys on their hands and they're trying to convince them that this thing really happened and they're not buying it at all.

Why are they so stubborn? Go over to verse 19 of Luke 24, this is on the road to Emmaus. And Jesus shows up later that day. These two disciples are walking to Emmaus. Jesus comes, they don't know who He is. And He starts a conversation with them. They're looking sad. "Why are you sad?" Well, verse 19, "Ah it's about Jesus the Nazarene who was a prophet mighty indeed in the Word in the sight of God and all the people and the chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death and crucified Him." And verse 21, "We were hoping it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Oh boy. Besides all this, it's the third day since these things happened." It's the third day, they haven't seen Him. The women told them He was alive, they don't buy that. They don't believe that.

"It's the third day, nothing's happened. We were hoping it would happen. And also...this is a throw away, verse 22...some women among us amazed us when they were at the tomb early in the morning, didn't find His body, they came saying they had seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. And some of those who were with us went to the tomb, namely Peter and John, and found it exactly as the women had also said. But Him they didn't see. Peter and John didn't see Him. They sent word back...Hey, we went to the tomb and maybe alive, but we didn't see Him." They're still processing this on the side of believing it but not fully convinced.

And so, this is the reflection of their stubborn unwillingness to believe until they see. You know, you fault Thomas because he didn't believe. Remember he said, "If I don't see the nails in His hands and where the spear went into His side, I won't believe." Well they were just as bad as Thomas. They didn't want to believe the testimony of the women. And Peter and John came back and said, "Well it's a bizarre deal. The tomb is open and the tomb is empty and the grave clothes are lying there. And, you know, He may be alive." But they're not ready to fully commit.

However, before the day is over, He appears to all of them. But the reason the Scripture lays out the unbelief of the disciples is to dispel any ridiculous theories that they invented a resurrection because they wanted one so badly. That's just not the case.

Well there's a lot more to say. Let me just close with some thoughts. When I was a kid we used to sing a little song called "He Lives," anybody remember that? He lives, He lives, He lives within my heart. And there's a line in that song that always bothered me. "You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart." Well that's true. But if you ask me how I know He lives, I've got to give you more than that because that's not verifiable. Somebody might say, "Well good for you. I'm so glad He lives within your heart. That is not universal, that is not verifiable, that is not going to get this thing beyond you." So feeling may be something that helps us emotionally. It removes some emotional

barriers to experience the living Christ, emotional barriers to believing say in the resurrection. But there's got to be something more than that.

You say, "Well you can't have only feeling, how about fact?" Fact is good. And you've been given facts. And all that I've given you are facts. While feelings deal with emotional barriers, facts deal with historical barriers. And what these facts do, what these lines of evidence do, this is what evidentialism always does is it depletes, it dismisses, it dispels bad options, weak arguments, foolish theories. Feeling removes emotional barriers. Facts remove intellectual barriers. But neither of those necessarily saves. You might feel in your heart that Jesus rose from the dead. You might say well the facts look like He rose from the dead, and you would be among the Jewish leaders who all agreed that that was what happened.

That's not going to save you. Your feelings about the resurrection, and even the facts of the resurrection won't save you, the only thing that will save you is faith in the resurrection, confessing with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. That's where real certitude comes from. Don't trust your feelings and you've got to move the facts inside, and that's what faith does. Faith embraces the truth concerning Jesus Christ. So next time somebody says to you, how do you know He lives? You say, number one, the facts indicate that He is alive. That removes my intellectual barriers, my own experience of Him in my life removes any emotional or psychological barriers. More importantly than that, I have a faith that was given to me by God Himself that has with that faith certitude and assurance. It isn't the feelings that deliver the certainty, it isn't even the facts that deliver the certainty, it's the faith that delivers the certainly. It's a component of saving faith. Ask God to give you that faith that makes the resurrection certain and you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, the one whom God raised from the dead.

Our Father, we thank You again for the greatness of this truth. Thank You for the glory of the resurrection. These are truths that are at the peak of our Christian faith, of the Christian gospel, of Christianity itself. It's all about resurrection, His and ours. And help us to know, Lord, that all the gospel intends to do in the end is to take us in glorified bodily form into eternal bliss to serve and love and praise You forever and ever, and to be fully satisfied and fulfilled without any mitigation in a perfect joy that never ends. May we understand the critical place of the resurrection. It is the reason for all redemption that there might be surrounding Your throne, a glorified humanity in a form somewhat like this very form to praise You forever and ever. That's the promise of the gospel, not what happens here only but what awaits us in the new creation, in the new heaven and the new earth. Beyond it as we live in light of that hope and as we proclaim the risen Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

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