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[0 : 00] He is risen. Really? Really. I don't know about you, but the people who have died that I know have not come back from the dead.

People don't normally come back from the dead. And that's the claim of your Bible. That Jesus came back from the dead. This morning, here's the case I'm going to make.

Either the resurrection of Jesus Christ happened or it didn't. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is either the biggest con job the world has ever known, or the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest news the world could ever know.

He was either raised from the dead or He wasn't. And this morning, I want to help you see from the Bible, from the New Testament, from Luke, who was a doctor, Dr. Luke's account of the resurrection of Jesus.

We're going to look at 12 verses out of Luke chapter 24. It's the last chapter in the Gospel of Luke. You've got Bibles in your pews. And if you want to just start opening up your Bibles, it goes Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

[1 : 35] So what we're going to do this morning is this. I want to help you see what the New Testament actually says about the resurrection of Jesus.

And then, I want to help you ask a question. A question everyone must ask. And then, I want to help you realize what's riding on this stuff.

what's riding on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And then, we'll bring it home. I'll ask the question, how do you respond? So let's look at this biblical account, the Gospel of Luke.

Here's how to think about your Gospels in the New Testament. Think of them as eyewitnesses' accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Take them at their word.

That's what they're claiming to be. We have eyewitnesses writing the New Testament saying this is what we saw. This is what we experienced. And so we're going to look at Luke 24, 1-12.

[2 : 45] This is what Ben read just moments ago. So if you're there, let me draw your attention to some things. In verses 1-3, we read about these ladies, these women, who early on that first Sunday went to the tomb and they brought spices with them.

And they were surprised. Now there's a couple things I need to clarify real quick. Notice that it's on Sunday, not Saturday.

And so the reason for that is this. On Friday, Jesus was crucified. And on sundown, on Friday, the Sabbath began. And so they were preparing the body of Jesus for burial.

And so when sundown hit, they could work no longer. And so they had to wait out the Sabbath day, which was Saturday. And so first thing on Sunday, they made their way back to the tomb to finish preparing the body.

So that's what's going on here. But there's something else I want to draw your attention to. They're not bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, Peter Cottontale, hopping down the bunny trail. They're not that.

[4 : 00] They're sad. Do you know why? Because Jesus had been killed. Their Savior, or so they thought, their teacher, was dead.

They saw where His body was laid. You can look back at Luke 23, verse 55. They saw where the body of Jesus was laid.

And then they went home. Which helps us understand, they didn't get the wrong tomb when they went back Sunday morning. They knew where the tomb was. But they were going there to do something gruesome.

They were going there to prepare Jesus' body. How far along they got on that Friday in preparing His body from burial, we don't know. But what we do know, He was beat up.

His body would have had holes, wrists, and in His feet, and in His side. He would have puncture wounds all around His skull. I don't know if His hair kind of had that coagulated, crusty blood in it still.

[5 : 10] That's what they're going to. His back would have been a bloody mess. The cat of nine tails, which He was whipped with, was a Roman device that had stone, pieces of metal, in the nine lashes of the whip.

And it was designed to tear a back open. It would have been ugly. What they were going to do was gruesome.

They were sad. And so early that Sunday morning, they're making their way to the tomb to finish preparing His body.

And the stones rolled away. It was like one to two tons. Not light. And so they're already like, what is going on here? And they walk in, and what they find is an empty tomb.

That's the claim. That's the fact non-Christians and Christians need to deal with. It's an empty tomb. There's no body of Jesus. So whether you're a Christian or a non-Christian, we're looking at the same fact.

[6 : 18] No body. The difference is how you explain that. How do you make sense of the empty tomb? And so what we see in Luke chapter 24, verses 4 and forward, is the explanation of the empty tomb.

In verses 4 through 8, we see in this account a movement. In verse 4, these ladies are really not only sad, but now they're perplexed.

They're confused. In addition to their sadness, where is the body of our Lord Jesus? Where is it? And then if you look in verse 5, they were frightened and they bowed their faces to the ground.

Why? Because there are two men there now. In dazzling appearance. They were angels.

Announcing something. That might remind you of Luke 2 in Bethlehem.

The angels announcing the birth of the Christ. These angels were announcing the resurrection of the Christ. You see, all heaven had been waiting for this moment.

[7 : 39] All heaven had been seeing the outworking of these things. There's been eager excitement. God sent these angels down to tell these ladies that in fact, Jesus has been raised from the dead.

That's what they're declaring. They're like, duh! You're not going to find the living among the dead! He's not here.

He is risen. And then if you look at verse 6, He's not here but He's risen. Remember how He told you while He was still in Galilee, verse 7, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.

Do you see what the angels are doing? They're quoting Jesus. Do you know why they're quoting Jesus? Because Jesus' word is authoritative.

Jesus predicted His own death and His resurrection in Luke chapter 9. And here it is. Being fulfilled. And so with these angels declaring this, it adds weight to the words of what Jesus has said.

[8 : 58] And then these disciples, these ladies, lights go on. They remembered verse 8.

They remembered His words. They remembered what He would say. By the way, that whole episode right there in Luke chapter 9, you might remember this. This is the whole episode where Jesus asks His disciples, hey, who do people say that I am?

Some say John the Baptist come back from the dead. Others say Elijah, one of the prophets, and then Peter. Do you remember what Peter said? You are the Christ. The Messiah.

The long-anticipated King of God. And what Jesus does with that, it's very important to know. That confession, Jesus then says, and then the Son of Man, a title for the Messiah, will be handed over to sinful men, killed, crucified, and on the third day, rise again.

What these angels are saying, it's bringing clarity to who Jesus is. A risen Messiah.

[10 : 18] So these ladies, now remembering, make a beeline to the other disciples. And Luke is very purposeful in verse 10 in pointing out these were all women who first saw the empty tomb.

If you were in the first century, basing a case on the witness of women was something that you wouldn't do.

At that time, women's testimony was seen as lesser than men's. And so it wouldn't have carried the same weight. But what Luke is doing here is saying, this is how it happened.

It's almost counterintuitive. And what it ends up doing is authenticates the genuine outworking of what happened. These women were the first to see the empty tomb.

And then we see them showing up, talking to the disciples, and the disciples, they're like, whatever. Sure, yes, I know you're upset.

[11 : 24] Sure. They thought it was a quote-unquote idle tale. And they disbelieved. It's a very strong word. They did not believe what they were saying.

Jesus' disciples met the resurrection news with skepticism. Doesn't say much of the disciples, does it?

upon hearing of the resurrection of Jesus, it's something we don't hear of that often. A dead man raised from the dead?

Alive? One of the other disciples who was there was Peter. And in verse 12, we see what happens. when he hears, he jumps up and runs. Runs to the empty tomb. The question is, why?

[12 : 27] Why would Peter respond this way? And the rest of the disciples respond with idle tale, whatever, disbelief. What's the difference? let me make a suggestion.

In Luke 22, Jesus is arrested. And before he's arrested at the Last Supper, Jesus says, one of you is going to betray me.

And Peter says, not me, I'm going to the death, baby! Peter was a hothead, very passionate. I'm bringing it down with you, Jesus!

And what Jesus told him was this, you're going to deny me three times before the rooster crows. And it happened. Peter denied Jesus three times, there was a rooster that crowed, and then Peter wept bitterly.

It happened just a couple days before this. Which means, Peter has in mind, Jesus' words come true.

[13 : 39] And so when he hears these ladies saying they met an angel, and the angel said, Jesus is the one, remember what he said? He was going to be handed over to sinful men, crucified and rise again.

Peter's like, yes! And he jumps, and he's running to the tomb. We don't know how long he's running for. We don't know what his heart rate was.

We don't know any of that kind of detail. But I am guessing that as he's running, it's okay, okay. All right.

I can't. This is amazing. Okay. Wait, wait. I said he was the Christ, and then he said he was going to rise from the dead. Yes.

And then there was Jairus' daughter raised from the dead. Yes. And then there was that widow's son in the town of Nain. He raised him from the dead. And then there was Lazarus raised from the dead.

[14 : 43] And Jesus said at that point, I'm the resurrection and the life. If any of you die, if you believe in me, yet you will live. I can't wait. I can't wait. I can't wait. He gets to the tomb.

Bows down. Looks in. And he sees the linens quote unquote by themselves. Do you know what that means? There was no body. No body.

No body of Jesus. And then it records Peter leaving and wondering or marveling. He knew what was up.

Soon thereafter, he would have a personal encounter with the risen Christ himself. The biblical account claims that Jesus raised from the dead.

Supernaturally raised from the dead bodily. That's the claim Luke is making right here. The point is Jesus is alive.

[15 : 48] Jesus' corpse was carried into that tomb and three days later, he walked out on his own power.

That's the claim. That's the biblical account. The New Testament claims that Jesus not only died, but he was raised bodily from the grave.

Supernaturally. Now here's the question everybody must answer. How do you explain the empty tomb? How do you make sense of it? There have been several attempts to make sense of the empty tomb.

One is called the stolen body theory. It goes something like this. There's two versions. The enemies of Jesus stole his body.

The enemies of Jesus stole his body. wanted to prevent something from happening. But here's the deal. If the enemies of Jesus stole the body of Jesus and then there's this rumor that starts going around that Jesus' body he had raised from the dead.

[16 : 58] If you were an enemy of Jesus, what would you do? I'd pull a Jerry Maguire. You know, show me the money. show me the body. That's what I would do.

I'd just wheel out the body of Jesus right in the middle of Jerusalem and say, here it is. Squash that rumor. The other version of the stolen savior theory is Jesus' disciples stole it.

Not only would that first be like doing what Jesus told you not to do, but did you know that ten of the eleven disciples died martyrs' deaths proclaiming that not only Jesus died but he was raised from the dead bodily?

Let me ask you this way. Would you die for a known lie? Would you give yourself up for something you knew that wasn't true? The best explanation of the empty tomb is that God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead because he's the Messiah.

Here's another explanation for the empty tomb. It's the swooned savior theory. Now I'm guessing that when you hear the word swoon you think of teenage girls swooning at one direction, something like that.

[18:18] It gets at fainting, becoming unconscious. And so the difference here is the difference between being resuscitated and being resurrected. and so the theory goes that Jesus didn't really die on the cross and that when he was brought back into, put in the tomb, he recovered.

You know how brutalized he was? He couldn't even carry his cross. He was so beat up. He lost so much blood. He was pierced.

He probably went into shock. Do you know that crucifixion was one of the most horrific ways to die? You eventually died of asphyxiation.

You couldn't breathe. It was a whole body kind of death. The word, our word excruciate for pain means literally out of the cross.

that's the kind of pain we're talking about. People didn't recover from crucifixions. Not to mention the Roman soldiers who were there assigned to make sure that he was dead.

[19:30] They knew what they were doing. They knew a dead body when they saw it. And so when Jesus was put in the tomb, he was dead.

Let's just pretend he wasn't dead. That he kind of recovered. He would still have to move a one or ten, one or two ton pound stone out of the way. And then he would have to clear a guard stationed in front of him.

Now a better explanation is that God supernaturally raised him from the dead. And then there's the sentimentalized Savior. It goes something like this. The disciples were so grieved.

They were so sad that their Savior died that as soon as they heard any kind of rumor that Jesus was alive, they grabbed onto it.

And they believed it and wanted to believe it so much they said it was true. That's how it goes. It's kind of like a mass psychosis of the early disciples of Jesus. They wanted to believe it so much that they actually kind of felt Jesus' presence.

[20:41] that they felt him speaking to him after he died. But that's not what the New Testament claims. The New Testament claims that there were over 500 eyewitnesses to Jesus after he was raised from the dead.

Even in Luke 24, what you'll read is eyewitness account after eyewitness. Even Jesus, after he was raised from the dead, walks into the upper room that was locked and he says, hey, it's me, Jesus. And hey, look it, you can touch my hands. I'm kind of hungry. Can you give me some fish? Munch, munch, munch. It's me, bodily raised from the dead. The New Testament doesn't give any space for this psychosis.

The best explanation for the question, the best answer, how do you explain the empty tomb? Is that God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead?

That it actually happened? Here's the crazy claim. It's just not a religious claim. It's a claim to history. That it actually happened.

[21:56] That Jesus was really dead. Dead. And then was raised from the dead three days later. that's the eyewitness testimony of his disciples.

Did you know that his disciples, their lives were dramatically changed? Do you remember what happened in the garden when Jesus was arrested? His disciples bolted like, out of here!

See ya! After his resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples and something changes in his disciples. They go from being cowards to being courageous.

They go from being, I don't want to be identified with this guy. I'm going to die for this guy. The best explanation for the empty tomb is that God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead.

How do you explain the empty tomb? There's more writing on this than just history.

[23 : 09] There's more writing on the resurrection than the question did it happen or not? It's bigger than that.

Here's what's writing on it. Who did Jesus claim to be? That's what's writing on the resurrection. Did you know that he claimed to be God?

He said, I and the Father are one. Before Abraham was, I am, as in the great I am, God. He claimed that for himself. He taught things like this.

The human problem is not an external problem. It's an internal problem. What makes us dirty in God's eyes is not outside of us, it's inside of us.

It's called sin. That's what he taught. He taught his kingdom was going to come and spread. He taught that he was going to come back one day and make all wrongs right, that he was going to bring justice for everything.

[24 : 19] And then there was his miracles. He calmed seas. He cast out demons. He cured diseases.

He raised people from the dead. If the resurrection did not take place, all of this about Jesus, nothing.

It doesn't mean anything. Because he himself said, I'm going to die three days later. I'm going to be raised from the dead. So if Jesus was not raised from the dead, do you know what that means?

Jesus is either a liar or he is a lunatic. He's a liar if he wasn't raised from the dead because what he said about himself and what would happen didn't come true.

And it cast doubt on everything else he said about himself. If he wasn't raised from the dead, he could be a lunatic. Which means he believed that he was really God in the flesh, but in actuality he wasn't.

[25 : 27] He just lost his marbles. He was not in his right mind. That's if Jesus was not raised from the dead.

But if Jesus was raised from the dead, that puts Jesus in a camp all by himself. He's not a liar. He's not a lunatic. He's Lord of all. Because what he said would happen happened. He said happened. God in the flesh, he made this outrageous claim.

I am the way, the truth, and life. No one comes to the Father but through me. If you want to be saved, if you want to go to heaven, you need to come through me. That's his claim. There's no other name under heaven which man can be saved.

That's what's riding on this. It's who Jesus is. God in the flesh, teacher bar none, the one who would return and make all things right.

[26 : 41] What's riding on the resurrection? Who Jesus really is and what he offers. He offers real forgiveness. On Good Friday, we celebrate Good Friday because Christians believe that's the day that Jesus was killed, crucified, put to death for all the sins of those who would one day believe in him.

So think about it this way. Friday is when the payment was made. Sunday was when we got notice that the payment was accepted. Jesus rose from the dead and it was this declaration by God saying payment received in full, my wrath fully satisfied.

See what's riding on this? If Jesus was not raised from the dead, you know what Paul says? We're still in our sins. The resurrection points to real forgiveness and of course the resurrection points to real hope.

our Savior's alive. He's not dead. The resurrection demonstrates Jesus' victory over death. Death could not hold him down. So do you know what that means for Christians? We have confidence that our Savior's gone before us.

[28 : 11] We don't need to fear death now. Jesus is our resurrection and life. If we believe him though we die yet we shall live because our Savior lives.

Peter calls him our living hope. What's riding on the resurrection? Who Jesus really is. Real forgiveness and real hope. How do you respond?

How do you respond to something like this? How do you respond to this message of Jesus God in the flesh crucified on Friday raised from the dead on Sunday? How do you respond?

I'll give you five options. How's that? You like options? First is this. You can deny him. Reject him outright.

Maybe you're the type that says you know what I don't believe in the supernatural stuff. Dead people stay dead. They don't come back to life. Sorry I don't buy it. Okay. Or maybe you're saying

you know what it's a good case I can see why Jesus would be Lord of all but you know what I really love my sin.

[29 : 18] I don't want to change my life. I like what I get to do and I know if I bowed my knee to Jesus I'd have to give it up. Just as long as you know why you're denying him.

So you can deny him. Option two. You can inquire about him. Pull a Peter. Run to the tomb.

Explore. Is it empty? It's going to hold up. Ask the question did it happen or not?

Let that drive the conversation. Inquire about him. But realize when you inquire about Jesus you're going to have to eventually make a decision of whether he's Lord of all or not.

And so the third option is to decide to follow him. To bow your knee to Jesus. To become a Christian. Here's how you know it's time to become a Christian.

[30 : 27] you become aware of your own sin. And you become aware that your sin is against the Holy God and that his just wrath is over you.

And then you also know that this same God whose wrath is just has provided a Savior for you. Who was put to death for you.

and was raised from the dead for you. When you realize this information when that gets real personal like that man I'm a sinner I need a Savior.

God's provided this Savior who died and was raised from the dead. You're ready to become a Christian. Put your faith in Jesus. The Bible describes it as repentance and faith.

Turning from your sinful ways your sinful life and trusting in Jesus. It's decisive. You can decide to become a Christian today on Easter Sunday 2015.

[31 : 39] All you need to do is just say to Jesus who's alive I'll take it. I believe it. I believe who you are.

I believe you died and I believe you rose from the dead and I believe you did it for me to rescue me from my sin. That's all you need to do. If you do that today would you let me know?

I would be so glad to know. Fourth thing for Christians in the room your salvation is based upon the death and resurrection Jesus.

You're saved because Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead. But did you know that the resurrection of Jesus provides a very potent motivation to continue to follow Jesus after becoming a Christian?

Check this out. Any Christians in the room have ever had doubts about the Christian faith? I have. I've talked to some very smart people and I'm like oh that's a really good point.

[32 : 54] You know what to do? Did the resurrection of Jesus Christ happen or not? It provides encouragement for a questioning soul.

Or maybe you're facing some danger because you're sticking your neck out as a Christian in your workplace or your school or with your non-believing family and friends and they're giving you some heat for it and you're like is this worth it?

Was Jesus raised from the dead or not? It's a historical event that happened. Be encouraged by that. Maybe you're in despair brother. Maybe you're in despair sister.

Going through some kind of divorce. You've been diagnosed with a disease. You're facing your own death. You're seeing devastation.

Did the resurrection of Jesus Christ happen or not? Because if it happened, God's got a plan for everything. Maybe you're a Christian who's distracted.

[34 : 04] Maybe you're being lulled to sleep by some lullabies of the world. The resurrection is like spiritual smelling salts for the Christian soul.

It wakes you up. It snaps you out of it. It either happened or it didn't. It's very clarifying. Or maybe you're a Christian who's being tempted to devilish delights.

Desires of the flesh. Here's how the resurrection functions for you. God has united you to the Savior who died and was raised for you.

Death, sin, sin no longer has any power over you. Therefore, you can now say no to sin with a smile because you would rather please Jesus than satisfy your flesh.

That's what the resurrection is. It happened. I've been raised with Jesus. The fifth option is this.

[35 : 21] If you've become a Christian, you go public. You go public. You go public with becoming a Christian.

It's called baptism. Baptism is a declaration, an outward declaration of an inward change. When someone becomes a Christian, they're united to death in Christ's death and resurrection.

They become one with Jesus. And what baptism is, is saying to anybody who would care to listen, I become one with Jesus. You see this pool of water here?

The water represents death. And so we have five people going to be baptized this morning. And each one, I'm going to ask them two questions. Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins, the promise of eternal life?

Yes. Is it your purpose, desire to follow Jesus all the days of your life, no matter what happens?

Yes. And I'm going to say, based on your public profession of faith, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[36 : 25] And I'm going to say, united with Christ in his death, under the water, raised with Christ to newness of life. What they're saying is that they have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection.

You get it? It's awesome. I couldn't sleep last night because I was so excited about this. Before we go there, the resurrection either happened or it didn't.

It's either the world's biggest con job or it's the greatest news the world could ever hear. Because the resurrection verifies who Jesus is and his offer of real forgiveness and real hope for any who would believe.

Let me pray and then we'll start doing some baptizing. Lord Jesus, we do thank you so much for who you are and what you've done.

God, we give you praise for the resurrection of Jesus. For those of us in the room who are Christians, God, you be praised. Thank you for uniting us to Jesus.

[37 : 50] Thank you that we have the promise of forgiveness of sins and the hope of a life eternal because our Savior reigns. God, I pray that you would do your work now.

We thank you for your word. We thank you, God. There's no question from the Bible that Jesus has been raised from the dead. Thank you, Jesus.

In your name we pray. Amen.