

They Remembered His Words

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- [0 : 0 0] Luke 24 verse 1, but on the first day of the week at early dawn, they went to the tomb taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.
- But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.
- And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, Why do you seek the living among the dead? He's not here. He's risen.
- Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.
- And they remembered his words. And returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles.
- [1 : 1 0] But these words seemed to them an idle tale. And they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb. Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves.
- And he went home marveling at what had happened. Amen. As I mentioned last Sunday when we looked at the triumphal entry in Luke 19, we really need to understand Luke's objective in writing the book.
- And for it to get a good grasp of this text, even a familiar resurrection text like this one. Remember, he didn't seek in writing this to provide a biography of Jesus' life.
- That's not what the gospels are. They're not really biographies, though they certainly contain biographical information. That's not really the essence of what they are. He didn't write this to entertain us with some amazing stories about Jesus' works or stimulate our minds with some rehearsing of Jesus' teachings either.
- Now, all of those things happen, but that's not the reason why Luke is writing. Neither is it why Matthew, Mark, and John wrote their gospels either. The New Testament gospels are collections of historical data meant to persuade the reader to trust that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of God, the Son of God, sent from heaven to save us from our sins.
- [2 : 5 1] That's why he's writing. That's his purpose in writing the book, collecting the material, and arranging it the way that he did. Now, the other New Testament books, particularly Acts and the Epistles, they focus on interpreting the data.
- But the gospels aren't doing so much interpretation of the data. They're really presenting the historical data in order that the data itself might convince us of the good news of salvation in Jesus.
- That's what gospel means. It means good news. So they're writing, they're collecting the data, they're describing what happened, they're telling us what happened, they're arranging it in order that they might convince us of good news.
- And that good news is that salvation has come in the person and the work of Jesus Christ. But as with all information that is meaningful and pertinent, the data needs to be carefully examined.

But the problem seems to be that not too many people seem inclined to give it a close examination. One author writing in the mid-20th century said, the Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting.

[4 : 13] It has been found difficult and left untried. I think that's pretty helpful for us in understanding our own times. How many people in our lives, how many of us even today, maybe you count yourself a believer in Christ and a believer in the resurrection, but not because you've actually closely examined the evidence that the gospels give us, just because for whatever reason in your life, your parents believe that, or that's just kind of the culture you've come up in, so you've subscribed to the same things that the people around you believe.

Now, I'm grateful that you believe the truth of it, but it demands our close examination. Of course, there are many others who would outright deny the things that Christians claim are true of the resurrection of Jesus, not because they've examined the evidence and found that it is lacking, but they just find the concept itself to be difficult, and they refuse to even really try it out.

Now, my aim this morning is to examine at least a small portion of the material that Luke gives us, and in these 12 verses, what we find is that Luke is not interpreting the events.

He is describing them based on eyewitness testimonies he recorded, and as he does this, the fact that he is giving us a description of events means that he's making an assumption about the reader, the reader in this case being you and me.

He's making an assumption, and the assumption is that we are actually interested in sorting these things out. We're actually interested in considering the facts of the story to determine whether or not this whole ordeal is actually valid.

[5 : 55] And that's the idea that I want to build on this morning in the time that we have together. It's really to ask this question, is the resurrection of Jesus worthy of our consideration?

Is it worthy of our consideration? Luke assumes that we think it is. But when I ask that question, whether you're a believer or not, the question really holds true.

If you're an unbeliever, I want to convince you that actually, yeah, it is worthy of your consideration. In fact, it actually demands your consideration. But even those of you who are already believers, perhaps you've gotten to a point in your Christian life where you've lost the perspective of joy and hope that rests solely in the resurrection of Jesus.

And for you, I also want to say, this is worthy, again, of your consideration. In fact, it demands your consideration day by day.

Now, looking at the text, I want to say something of the resurrection's credibility as in a historical event. I want to say something of its essential nature in Christian theology.

[7 : 10] That is to say that the resurrection matters. And then, of course, I want to say something of its power to compel us to saving faith. Okay, so those are the three categories of consideration for the morning.

First thing is this, the resurrection is historically credible. The resurrection of Jesus is historically credible. Look with me again at verses one to five and then verses 10 to 12.

But on the first day of the week at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared, and they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

And while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, why do you seek the living among the dead?

Now, I want you to skip down to verses 10 to 12. Now, it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles.

[8 : 18] But these words seemed to them an idle tale. They did not believe them. But then Peter rose and ran to the tomb, stooping and looking in. He saw the linen cloths by themselves, and he went home marveling at what had happened.

The resurrection is historically credible, and there's a few things here that I want to point out to you to prove my case. Now, let me start with it this way. August 16, 1977, Elvis Presley died in his home in Memphis.

Multiple physicians examined his body via autopsy to determine the cause of death. Two different morticians prepared his body for burial. His wardrobe manager dressed him.

His cosmetologist made him up. His hairstylist colored his hair jet black. And then finally, his family was brought together to view his lifeless body before its internment.

But despite all of that testimony, some people bought into a theory called the Graceland hoax, which insisted that Elvis is still alive, that he never died.

[9 : 39] Now, still, the evidence of his death was so great that the burden of proof, it didn't actually fall on those who were claiming he was dead. The evidence was tremendous in putting forth the probability of Elvis's death.

The burden of proof really fell on those who were denying that he was dead and that he was still living, but no such proof was ever actually given. Now, Jesus's resurrection is routinely considered a grand hoax by skeptics, but the sheer amount of evidence for the resurrection is so great that the burden of proof really falls on those who reject it.

And like with the Graceland hoax, no such proof has ever actually satisfactorily been provided. And of course, the skeptics try.

They've presented many different theories, but ultimately, those theories, when it comes down to it, they actually require more faith to believe than the biblical narrative itself requires to believe in the resurrection.

Now, my objective is not to address each of those theories. We've done that before on Easter Sunday, and you can find all those recordings, and we can engage about that later. My purpose is not to address all of them.

[11 : 00] What I'd actually like to do in these 12 verses is to present just a few of the pieces of evidence that Luke presents that need to be considered.

Three types of evidence are here in these verses. First, there is circumstantial evidence. Circumstantial evidence, and we see this with the empty tomb in verses one to three.

There is a tomb. Supposedly, Jesus' body was laid in, and it is no longer there. Circumstantial evidence.

Now, we have to be careful with this, don't we? Circumstantial evidence. Though it provides the context for certainty, it doesn't actually prove anything. The fact that there's an empty tomb doesn't prove anything.

There are all kinds of explanations for an empty tomb that do not involve resurrection, and of course, many possible explanations have been provided.

[12 : 01] Some of them certainly more rational than others. Some have said, well, they just went to the wrong tomb on that Sunday morning. Well, if they went to the wrong tomb, then so did the angels go to the wrong tomb.

So did the Roman soldiers go to the wrong tomb. So did Joseph of Arimathea, whose tomb it actually belonged to. It just doesn't hold water, right? But that's one of the more ridiculous notions.

Others are a little more worthy of our consideration and of our thoughts for sure. But the point is that the empty tomb itself doesn't actually prove anything, but it is circumstantial evidence that we must take into consideration.

Now, those who actually saw the empty tomb being even Jesus' closest friends and followers never even considered the possibility of a resurrection based on the fact that the tomb was empty.

That just wasn't in their thoughts at all. These women, they go to the tomb, they don't assume that, oh, he must have risen from the dead. That's the furthest thing from their minds.

[13 : 06] Peter doesn't do that either. Peter runs to the tomb in verse 12, and he marvels, but the marveling of Peter in this moment is not a marveling of faith. It is a marveling of confusion. Confusion, perplexing disbelief is what dominates Luke's account of the resurrection here, at least in terms of those who saw the empty tomb.

Now, John's gospel fills us in a little bit more on the details, at least as it relates to Mary Magdalene. Mary was the first one to the tomb, and when she finds that it's empty, her first assumption is not that Jesus rose from the dead.

Her first assumption is that somebody stole his body, and she immediately leaves to go and tell somebody they've stolen the body of the Lord. Later, she returns to the empty tomb, and the Lord himself encounters her.

But in that moment, at least in the initial moment of the encounter, she was so convinced that someone had stolen the body of the Lord that she didn't even recognize that it was the Lord himself standing before her.

Now, my point is that the empty tomb, in and of itself, it doesn't actually mean anything, and yet, it is still a necessary piece of evidence because it provides the context in which a resurrection is one possibility.

[14 : 30] So, this notion that Christians are claiming a resurrection merely because there is an empty tomb that they suppose at one point, Jesus was laid in, his lifeless body was laid in, well, no, that's not what Christians are saying at all.

We recognize that the tomb being empty in and of itself doesn't actually mean anything, but it does provide the context. If the tomb is not empty, then the Lord isn't risen.

Provides the context. Now, whether you believe the Bible or not, you're going to have to answer the circumstantial evidence. You have to provide a solution for that. Maybe your solution is, well, just somebody stole it.

Maybe Mary was right, but you're going to have to deal with some other pieces of evidence that seem to contradict that. There's lots of things you might say, but you've got to deal with the fact that the tomb was actually empty. Circumstantial evidence.

The second type of evidence here is supernatural evidence. Supernatural evidence. This is seen in the heavenly messengers, the angels, who appear to the women in verses four and five.

[15 : 41] Now, a naturalist will dismiss this evidence on principle because the naturalist worldview doesn't allow for anything supernatural at all.

But, of course, the burden of proof rests on the naturalist because there is so much evidence contrary to his basic principle of naturalism that all things are only what can be observed, that there is no supernatural occurrences that ever happen or have ever happened.

There's so much evidence to the contrary of that, not only within Christianity, but across cultural and religious divides. It's just there. I read an article this morning in the New York Times.

They were running an ad on some research or an article on some research they've done on spirituality in the United States over the last year. And the article said, this is not in relationship to Christianity, the article said 92% of Americans now have an understanding, a worldview that acknowledges that supernatural things happen.

Now, again, that's not just about Christianity. It's not saying 92% of Americans are Christians. It is far from that. It is just saying that most people, the vast majority of people, do not follow that line of thinking that the naturalist, the secularist, secularist follows anymore.

[17 : 04] So, given the probability, then, of supernatural occurrences, the presence of heavenly messengers at the tomb actually makes a lot of sense, doesn't it?

God regularly uses angels to accomplish His purposes in the Scriptures. In Luke, angels are often seen as messengers specifically at Jesus' birth, resurrection, and ascension.

This kind of explanation that they give to the women here, this explanation of the empty tomb of resurrection, had to come from a divine source to strengthen its credibility.

A purely human explanation would not have sufficed if it was a purely human messenger standing at the tomb telling the women, He is not here, He has risen, who would have believed that?

It's actually the supernatural evidence itself that doesn't diminish the credibility of the resurrection. It actually increases the probability of the resurrection.

[18 : 22] It increases its plausibility. It doesn't diminish it. So, we've got circumstantial evidence. There's an empty tomb. We have to deal with that, right? There's a lot of explanations potentially, but we have to deal with it.

There's supernatural evidence that we're going to build on top of that. Well, there's a lot of stories here. There's a lot of accounts that are saying that there were these heavenly messengers. This was kind of a unique moment. They're the ones who interpret the empty tomb for the women.

But the strongest evidence is the third type. It's eyewitness testimony. It's eyewitness testimony. And of course, the eyewitness testimony in these verses is the group of women who have gone to the tomb.

Now, we'd be foolish to say that eyewitness testimony is inerrant. It isn't. Keith's a lawyer. He'll tell you just because somebody says they saw something doesn't necessarily mean that they really did see what they think they saw.

I understand that. Yet, it's still a very powerful form of proof, isn't it? There were literally hundreds of eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ who at the time the Gospels were written, at the time the New Testament epistles were written, could have taken that material and found more than 500 witnesses!

[19 : 44] and asked them to cooperate their accounts of actually seeing the resurrected Christ. they're plentiful. The very purpose of the apostles, their mission was to give witness to Jesus' resurrection.

However, to establish the strongest possible credibility for the reliability of the resurrection, it was essential that it be this group of women who were the first witnesses of the resurrected Lord.

Essential. Let me explain. On one hand, that these women are recorded as the first witnesses of the resurrection actually pushes against the notion that this was a hoax perpetrated by Jesus' disciples.

And here's why we say that. It is irrefutable that the culture in which they lived generally viewed women as inferior to and less reliable than men.

Now, that's not to say anything of what the disciples believed. It's what their cultural culture generally thought. It's how they lived and believed. Now, if the disciples desired to fabricate a hoax that people would readily believe in their culture, it is doubtful, highly unlikely, that they would have used women as their key witnesses.

[21 : 17] witnesses. That's an important piece for us to tuck into our pocket there. But the strength of this evidence is far greater than that. Had anyone other than these women been the first to the tomb, the evidence would have been insufficient according to their own customs.

A matter could not be established without at least two or three witnesses to corroborate the account. That was the law.

It had been the law for a long time in Israel and it was a law even among Rome to some extent. Because of the faithfulness of these women, because of their loyalty to Jesus, that in this case exceeded the disciples, exceeded the men, because their love for the Lord, there is an unbroken chain of evidence regarding the details of Jesus' death and his crucifixion, his burial in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, and in his resurrection on the third day.

Only one of the disciples was present for Jesus' crucifixion. This group of women though, they were there. Look at chapter 23 verse 49.

And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things. Watching what things? The crucifixion.

[22 : 54] They saw his death. They saw the spear plunge into his side. They heard his words. They watched him suffer. They watched him die.

Only John was present among the disciples. John's testimony on its own would not have been enough to establish the chain of evidence, but this group of women, they were there.

Multiple witnesses. None of the disciples were present when Jesus' body was removed from the cross and laid in Joseph's tomb. But these women were there.

Again, chapter 23, verse 55. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed Joseph of Arimathea and they saw the tomb.

They saw how his body was laid and after seeing it all, they returned and prepared the spices and ointments. Now Luke doesn't mention it in that verse, but they must have saw a massive stone rolled into place because we know on their way to the tomb on Sunday morning, they were asking one another, how are we actually going to move this stone so that we can get to the body of the Lord?

[24 : 08] They saw it all. For the strongest eyewitness testimony possible, it was necessary that these women were the first to see the empty tomb, to receive the angelic message, and to meet the risen Lord.

All of this evidence, evidence of the historical credibility of the resurrection, and there's much more than this available for anyone that's willing to actually look at the data, including the personal appearances of the Lord.

Still, the credibility of the resurrection doesn't say anything about its purpose, which is where we now turn our attention. So the first thing to say here with Luke's little section is that the resurrection of Jesus is historically credible, but the second thing is to say the resurrection of Jesus is theologically crucial.

It's critical. Without it, nothing else makes sense. Look with me at what the angels say in verse 5. As the women were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, why do you seek the living among the dead?

He's not here. He has risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.

[25 : 38] The resurrection is so crucial to Christian theology that the angelic message here reads almost like a mild rebuke. Now I think typically when we come to this, we imagine the angels are making this statement, why do you seek the living among the dead?

almost tongue in cheek as if we got you, surprise. I don't think that's at all how they're saying this. I think they're asking a serious question to the women.

Why are you here? Why are you seeking the living one among the dead? They're making an affirmation, something that it seems like from their perspective the women should have already known and been expecting and anticipating.

for the heavenly messengers looking for Jesus in the tomb was scandalous. So they proclaimed his resurrection, they reminded the women that not only is he risen from the dead, but remember he told you over and over in Galilee that he was going to do this, that this is exactly how things would happen.

The son of man must be delivered, they said. He must be crucified, he must be raised. They insisted on it. And the key word is must because the resurrection is crucial.

[26 : 59] It was critical that Jesus suffer, die, and rise if he was to truly be Lord and Savior. But as of that moment, none of Jesus' followers understood that.

They hadn't yet comprehended that Jesus' death was an atonement for their sins. So they had no thought at all in their mind of him being vindicated, of his death, of his crucifixion, receiving vindication through resurrection, which is exactly what the resurrection does.

It wasn't anywhere in their thoughts. But they would quickly realize that their salvation hinged entirely on Jesus' resurrection.

If Jesus remained dead, if he was still in the tomb, it would prove only that he was a sinner like everybody else, and that his death ultimately was the justice of God for his sin.

But he didn't stay in the tomb, and he wasn't a sinner like anybody else. We get to Acts chapter 2, and Peter, after all of the encounters that he has with Jesus, of course he is believing, and he preaches that amazing sermon on Pentecost about 40 days after this, or at least a few weeks after.

[28 : 31] What is it that he says? Acts 2, 24. He proclaims, God raised him up. God raised Jesus, loosing the pangs of death. Why, Peter says, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Why was it not possible? Well, the angels tell us. He is the living one. They're not just asking the women, why are you seeking for people who are alive in a cemetery?

No, they're saying, why are you looking for the living one among the dead? It wasn't possible for him to be held by death.

His death meant something different than it means for us. Now, there's always been those skeptics, and we've talked about a few of them already, there's always been those skeptics who reject the resurrection outright from outside of Christianity.

But there are also many who attempt to reject the resurrection from inside the realm of Christianity. Often, the reason behind this, there may be many reasons, but I think what seems to me often to be the reason is they're attempting to maintain some form of Christianity that interacts well with their understanding of the natural sciences.

[29 : 58] So, they identify with Christian morals and ethics, at least when those things are convenient to them, but they reject notions of the supernatural, like resurrection. They would reject notions of miracles, reject notions of healings and such.

And there's many inconsistencies with that kind of view, but the basic error is that it supposes Christianity can stand apart from its fundamental claims.

Christians. But the truth is that without the resurrection, there is no Christianity. Without the resurrection, you would have never heard the name Jesus in your life.

Christianity wouldn't exist. The resurrection is essential to it. It is critical. It is a theological necessity to the Christian faith. It's a theological necessity if any of us are going to have any hope of eternal life at all.

His resurrection, it's crucial to true hope. We always think of the crucifixion as the central moment of the Christian faith, and indeed it is.

[31 : 13] What is it that Christians see when they look at the cross? They see the sinless Son of God bearing God's wrath in the stead of sinners.

It is not merely atonement. It is a substitutionary atonement that we believe in. That it's not that he died to be an example to us. It's not that he, in some metaphorical sense, died to give us a pattern of atonement.

No, that's not at all what the crucifixion did. His crucifixion was in our place. He bears God's wrath, God's wrath, and so that we can receive his life.

That's the Christian view of the crucifixion. It is indeed the central moment of history and of our faith. But how is it that we can be so certain of that?

That interpretation of the cross is only possible in light of the resurrection. If there's no resurrection, there'd be no atonement.

[32 : 22] At least there'd be no way to validate or verify an atonement. The resurrection was necessary for the crucifixion to actually prove capable of reconciling us to God.

Christians have understood this for 2,000 years now. It's why we worship on Sunday, the day that commemorates the resurrection of the Lord, and we don't worship on Friday, the day that would acknowledge and commemorate the crucifixion of the Lord.

The bottom line is that without the resurrection, the cross means nothing.

It doesn't mean anything at all. That's not in any way to diminish the cross, but it is to acknowledge the essential nature of the resurrection.

And this is the interpretation the apostles give later in the New Testament. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

[33 : 37] If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Now, why does he equate forgiveness of sins to the resurrection of Christ?

Because the resurrection of Christ is what proves the atonement of the cross. And he says if Christ isn't actually raised, we're wasting our time, and we are of all people to be most pitied in the world, he says.

Without the resurrection, there is no salvation. So then the question becomes, what is the motivation for this?

No one strong-armed God into sending his son to die and be raised. Why would he even do it?

God determined this plan. God set the plan in motion. He orchestrated the events. God performed all of this for our salvation.

[34 : 44] But why? The only reasonable answer is love. It's the only possible answer.

God does not need you, and he does not need me. There is nothing for him to be gained by doing all of this.

The crucifixion and resurrection is the ultimate expression of God's love for you and of his love for me.

Indeed, of his love for the world. This is why we sing songs of God's love. What love, my God, would hold you to the tree to bear the overwhelming debt for me to go through hell and down into the grave to raise me up to see you face to face.

What love is this? It's an indescribable love, a compelling love, a divine love.

[36 : 01] The resurrection is historically credible. It is theologically crucial, and we might say theologically joyful.

What a joy it is. But there's one more thing I think we need to grasp before we close our time. The third thing is this. The resurrection is spiritually compelling.

It is spiritually compelling. Now, I want you to look at verses 8 and 9. The women have arrived at the tomb. They've seen it empty. They're perplexed.

Two angels appear before them with a mild rebuke, perhaps. Explain that Jesus has risen, that that's the explanation for the empty tomb. But then what the angels do at the end is they say, remember he told you that this was going to happen.

He told you all of this was going to unfold this way. Now look at verse 8. I think this is the most important verse of this section. And they remembered his words.

[37 : 04] And they remembered his words. And what was the result of them remembering his words? Verse 9. They returned from the tomb. They told all these things to the 11 and to all the rest.

They ran and told. There's an indication of faith at work here. Something has happened in the women. Now I want you to contemplate here at the end what compels an individual to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

what actually compels our faith. Because we would have to acknowledge that evidence itself is not enough to compel belief.

I thought it was funny what Alistair Begg said about this. He said, if evidence compelled belief, nobody would smoke. But it will not compel belief. The evidence gives sufficient basis for further consideration.

That's what it does. So we can't go to point number one and just say, well the resurrection is historically credible and end it there. Because that's not enough to actually compel us to do anything other than just to acknowledge that well the plausibility of this is quite high when you consider the evidence.

[38 : 19] You can see the empty tomb but it will not be enough to convince you that Jesus lives. You can agree that Jesus lives but it will not be enough to convince you that his life matters.

You can have a supernatural experience without believing the gospel. You can even see the risen Christ himself and still refuse to trust him as your savior and follow him as your Lord.

It can't just be about the evidence. So if you're here and you're looking, you know, if somebody could just finally convince me on the basis of evidence that all of this is real, it's not possible. We can give you all the evidence in the world.

Jesus himself can appear to you and it will not make a difference in and of itself. Saving faith, that which compels your spirit to believe in the resurrection, it is not equivalent to agreeing about the plausibility of the Bible's claims.

That is not what we mean when we say you must believe to be saved. That is not what we mean by Christian faith. If that were the case, all we would need to do is examine the various evidences so that we can come to an intellectual agreement on the facts.

[39 : 39] But we must not do that alone. In the end, intellectual assent doesn't accomplish anything, doesn't do anything for you in a spiritual sense.

you can agree while remaining in a state of unbelief. Unbelief, then, is not about insufficient evidence as if more compelling evidence will actually move you.

Unbelief is about the hardness of your heart. what, then, can compel belief?

What, then, can actually transform the heart? Now, I think that's one of the things that Luke is emphasizing in this chapter.

It's not only that he's noting it, I think he's emphasizing it in his account. Consider the three big scenes of the chapter. The first one, of course, is the women at the tomb, verses 8 and 9.

[40 : 49] Just look at the verses again. And they remembered his words, and it was upon remembering his words that they moved toward an act of faith.

The determinative factor in their faith was not the empty tomb, and it was not the presence of the angels. That doesn't mean those things didn't matter. I'm saying those aren't the determinative factors for them.

What made the difference was their recollection of Jesus' words. Remembering his words triggered something in their hearts.

Their faith had less to do with the tomb and the angels than it did with believing the word of God. God, when the word of Christ takes root in someone's heart, the only possible outcome is a joyful trust that runs and tells all that you have seen and heard.

God's heart. But it's not just the women at the tomb that we see that in. We also see it with the disciples who are on the road to Emmaus.

[42 : 07] Now, you can read this account in verses 13 all the way to 35, and the gist of it is there's two disciples of Jesus. They're very discouraged. This is the day of the resurrection.

They've heard the testimony of the women, but they didn't believe it, and they decided to go home, presumably, to a town called Emmaus a few miles away. And they're just walking on the road and they're distraught.

They're mourning, grieving, because Jesus is dead. Jesus appears to them and in some sense he conceals his identity to them. They're not able to recognize that it's him at first.

And what he does is he opens the scriptures for them to understand that the Messiah must suffer, die, and rise from the dead. He does it from the scriptures.

Now I want you to look at verse 32. They said to each other, this is after Jesus leaves them, they said to each other, did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?

[43 : 12] And they rose that very hour and they returned to Jerusalem and they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together saying, the Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon.

Then they told what had happened on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of bread. What was the thing that moved them to faith? It wasn't this amazing experience they had with the risen Lord with them.

That's not the thing. That's not what made their hearts burn within them. The burning of their hearts came before that. The burning of their hearts came as he opened up the word and he explained the gospel from the scriptures.

As amazing as their experience was, the scriptures are what compelled their belief. But there's a third instance in the chapter of the same thing. It's the disciples in Jerusalem.

They're gathered together in the house there. They're scared. They're distraught. They're confused. The women are saying they've seen Jesus, that the tomb is empty and all this stuff.

[44 : 17] Most of them don't actually believe that that's true. And then suddenly Jesus appears in the room. Even when he appears, the risen Lord, right in front of them, they're still just perplexed about the whole thing.

They don't know what to think about that. They're even frightened by it. But look at what it says in verse 44. Jesus said to them, these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

You are my witnesses of these things, he says. Everybody likes to pick on Thomas in the resurrection story. Everybody likes to look at Thomas and say, we even coined the name Doubting Thomas.

He wasn't there that night. I don't know where he was but he wasn't there. And when they told him about it later, he said, unless I see it myself, I don't think I can believe it.

[45 : 34] Is that not exactly what every one of the disciples did to these women? Look again at verse 11.

These words seemed to them an idle tale and they did not believe them. You know what the disciples said to the women? Unless we see it ourselves, we won't believe it.

So we need to ease up on Thomas a little bit. He's just doing what everybody was doing at that particular moment. Even when Jesus appeared in the room, they didn't immediately understand or believe what they saw.

What compelled their belief then? Because we know it was compelled, just flip to the book of Acts and you'll see it. What did it? Jesus opened their minds to understand the scriptures.

This isn't just about the resurrection story either. Do you remember the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in the book of Acts? What was it that compelled the eunuch's belief? An explanation of Isaiah.

[46 : 45] What about Lydia and the other women who had gathered next to a body of water outside of Philippi when Paul showed up and began to preach the gospel to them? What was it that compelled their belief?

The scripture literally says the Lord opened Lydia's heart to believe the gospel proclaimed from the scriptures. We just finished studying 1 Thessalonians.

What was it in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 that we saw was evident in the conversion of the Thessalonian Christians? It was the Holy Spirit at work in the proclamation of the gospel from the scriptures.

What about Peter in Acts chapter 10 when messengers from Cornelius come to him and say would you please come and tell us this gospel?

What is it that made the difference for Cornelius who was interested in the things but hadn't come to faith? It was the proclamation of the gospel from the scriptures over and over and over and over.

[47 : 44] The thing that compels belief in the scriptures is not the basic evidence of whatever account you may be considering. It's not an intellectual assent to the facts.

It is a move toward believing God's word. It is a move toward trusting in what God has said. That is saving faith. That is Christian faith.

That is what indicates a true believer. 1 Corinthians 1 it pleased God through preaching to save those who believe.

Not through a great apologetic of all the evidences of why it's plausible that Jesus rose from the dead. No, just the preaching of the resurrection is why God uses. Romans 10 Faith comes by hearing hearing specifically the words of Christ.

God himself compels belief through the resurrection of Jesus and his instrument for calling us to himself is his word.

[48 : 58] The Bible. You may think that what you need is greater evidence to become a Christian. Or you may think that what you need as a Christian is greater evidence to really feel confident about the things that are here.

It just isn't true. It just is not true. Jesus said as much at the end of his parable of the rich man and Lazarus and Luke 16.

You remember that parable. Lazarus was a poor man who ate from the crumbs of the rich man's table. He suffered in this life. The rich man had great pleasure and they both died.

Jesus said Lazarus wakes up and he's in the presence of the Lord. As a believer though he suffered greatly in this life. The rich man though he enjoyed all the pleasures of this life opens his eyes in hell and there's this interaction in Jesus' story that he's telling.

What is the thing that the rich man asked for? He said you know I've got some brothers if you will just let me go back they will believe what I'm saying because I will have come back from the dead to tell them.

[50 : 08] Here's what Jesus says. If they do not hear Moses and the prophets that is the scriptures if they will not listen to the scriptures neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

That same thing is true for you. Jesus himself could stand before you right now and it will not matter in terms of your faith. Evidence may change your mind only God can change your heart.

And he does that through the word. A move toward faith is essentially a move to trust what he says for it is through his word that he calls us.

And this Easter morning the question is not whether God is calling or compelling you or not. The question is am I answering his call?

Will I trust his word repent and follow Jesus? Because he issues his call now in the scriptures that you have just heard.

[51 : 23] Now is the resurrection then worthy of our consideration? Absolutely it is. the abundance of evidence makes it historically credible.

Its reality is theologically crucial. Without it there can be no salvation for sinners. It's also spiritually compelling as God uses its truth to draw us to saving faith.

And we all do well to take it seriously. Let's pray. voy voy! voy