

The Resurrection 3 The Problem Human Unbelief

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[0 : 00] We're looking at Luke 24, and as you already know, it is on page 85.

Verse 13 of 24. And I'll just pray, and then I'll talk to you about it.

Our God, it was your purpose, by your Holy Spirit, to inspire St. Luke to write this story about your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In order for us to understand this story, we ask that your same Holy Spirit will inspire us as we think about it, and as we meditate on it, and as we try and become subject to the things that you are saying to us in it about your Son, Jesus Christ.

We ask this in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[1 : 59] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, now, this is the way it is. I would like to contend, for purposes of gaining your attention, that this is by far the most beautiful story that has ever been told in the whole history of the world.

Now, that's just me talking, so don't take that too seriously. But, I want to just tell you reasons why I think that may be true. I mean, I'm not the judge of it, and you're not the judge of it, but it still may be true.

One is that it concerns the most important day in the whole history of the human race, and that is the day on which Christ rose from the dead.

It concerns the most unique person in the whole history of the human race, and that is the person of Jesus Christ.

It also has two central characters who, in the whole panorama of history, are totally unknown.

[3 : 13] Nobody knows who they are. So, here is the greatest man in history speaking to two unknown strangers. And the subject of this story is this unique event in the whole of history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now, I've been in the religion business for a long time, I regret to say. I mean, I don't know whether I regret it or not.

It's just one of the facts of life. And I find that people, you know, they like a lot of religion.

They like loving each other, and they like behaving themselves on occasion. They like having a good reputation. They like lots of things about religion.

But the fact of the resurrection is the fact, apart from which, I don't think there's anything to religion at all.

[4 : 29] I mean, I just think it's really not very important. And most people in our society are prepared to treat it as not very important, as you well know.

And I think they have good grounds to treat it as not very important. I mean, it's, as sociologists say, it's a good way of making people behave.

And I suspect it is, you know, that just as well if everybody behaved or tried to be honest about their income tax and drove with some modicum of care for others and took some consideration for their environment and the people around them.

And, you know, that's a good thing. But those are all good things in themselves. But they don't answer any of the ultimate questions, nor do they face any of the ultimate questions of why you should do it in terms of your own personal fulfillment.

Why shouldn't you be the exception who lives with the wonderful freedom among all the slaves of the human race? Why should they all do what they're supposed to do so as to allow you to do what you want to do?

[5 : 43] And that's about the way we'd like to put it all together. Well, so you have this business of the resurrection. And it seems to me that the central fact of the New Testament is how are you, generation after generation, going to teach people of the fact of the resurrection?

How are you going to bring them up against it? How are you going to bring people of the 20th century, products of the Enlightenment, products of the secular age, products of the consumer society?

How are you going to bring them up against the fact of the resurrection? How are you going to bring them up against the United States in the future of the century of the world? How are you going to bring them up against the New Testament, so that they don't just dismiss it outright or try and fit it in to the narrow field of their understanding, and where they just find it's better just to ignore it?

How are you going to do it? And I think that this story is the most beautifully honed instrument in the whole history of human thought, which brings people up against the reality of the resurrection.

If you want to know what Christianity is all about, it's contained in this little story. And I say, I mean, I've tried to make it the subject on which I would like to preach on every Easter Eve of the whole of my career, and I've done it lots of times, but I'm happy to be back to it tonight.

[7 : 26] And it seems to me a far more magnificent story tonight than it has ever been in my recollection. And it seems to illustrate the wonderful truth that the best commentaries and the wisest word study books and the most brilliant theologians can't really come close to saying what this story says.

And I would like, I'd like you to drive it like a javelin right into your heart with barbs so you could never pull it out. Because it is so important, the story.

And so utterly simple. There were two men walking on the road to Emmaus, seven miles distance from Jerusalem.

When Jesus himself drew near and walked with him, and their eyes were restrained that they didn't recognize him, and he joined with them and saw them deeply immersed in conversation and said, What is it you're talking about?

And they stopped and looked sad and turned to him and said, Are you the only one in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?

[8 : 44] Jesus said, What things? And they said, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in word and deed, and in favor with God and with man, and our chief priests and rulers took him and condemned him.

And the day before yesterday, they crucified him. We hope that he was the one who would redeem Israel. And some of the women of our company went out to the tomb this morning where they laid his body, and they found the tomb empty.

And they said, They saw a vision of angels. The angels said, He's alive. Some of our company went out and looked at the tomb, and yes, it was even as they said.

The tomb was empty. They came back and told us that. And we've left and are on our way home. And Jesus said to them, You fools and slow of heart to believe all that is written in the prophets, Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer and enter into his glory?

Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He spoke to them of the things concerning himself. And as they spoke, they arrived at their home in Emmaus.

[10 : 22] And he made as though he would have gone further. And they constrained him and said, It's late. It's towards evening. Come and spend the evening with us. And so he went in with them, And they sat down at table.

And he, though it was not his house or his place perhaps, Took bread and broke it. And in the breaking of bread, they recognized him. And the moment they recognized him, He vanished out of their sight.

And they said, Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the way? And that same hour, they got up and they returned to Jerusalem To tell the things that had happened.

That's the story. Well, the way I want to, I want to just be very brief with you tonight And tell you two things that come out of that story for me.

Things that I'm very anxious to share with you tonight. First, I think Luke brilliantly portrays the condition of unbelief. The condition of unbelief which may have hold of your heart.

[11 : 35] And if it hasn't got hold of your heart, It certainly has hold of the heart of many people whom you know. Among whom you would hesitate even to bring up the subject Of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Or talk about the person of Jesus Christ. That condition of unbelief, Which is so settled and so established, That you don't want to stir up the mud by raising things That you know are unacceptable.

Look, if you will, At what the condition of unbelief is, As Christ describes it. First, This condition of unbelief Is not ignorant Of the fact of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Nor indeed of his teaching. For these were disciples And they had heard him teach. They knew that he was a prophet, Mighty in word and deed.

And they were there When he was taken Out to be crucified outside the city wall. They knew all that. That was part of their unbelief.

[12 : 44] While they knew that, They didn't understand. And so they dismissed it. The next thing about their unbelief Is, In this story, Is that their eyes could not see Who it was that had come And joined himself to them.

And I think that, I think that, You and I, Who live in such a highly visual world, Should understand that. Because I think we are constantly Being deceived By what our eyes see.

One fairly basic example Is pornography. We've created a whole new kind Of human sexuality By the use of pornography.

Which is a sexuality Which is imparted through Visual things. And it's terrible. In the grip, It can take hold on us.

And it's totally artificial. Because it doesn't involve Relationship with anybody. And so in that case, Our eyes fail us very badly.

[13 : 53] And I think because we live In a world of television And movies And all sorts of things. Our eyes and the Lust of our eyes And the hunger of our eyes And the constant sort of Stimulus that our eyes are to us Fills us full of all sorts Of artificiality.

It's probably not surprising That in the long tradition Of prayer, One of the first things You've got to do Is close your eyes. Because they're so deceptive.

And I would like to suggest To you that The reason they couldn't see Who Jesus was Says their eyes were held From recognizing him. But I think the reason is Because your eyes cannot see What your heart cannot imagine.

And they couldn't imagine Who this person was. You know, we have all those people Who go around saying If I see with my eyes I will believe.

And that is the primary way I think of setting yourself up To be deceived. Because every two-bit magician In the world Can take advantage of you If you commit yourself To that statement.

[15 : 18] He can show you What you want to see. And so your eyes Aren't that reliable. And so it wasn't important That they should recognize him physically.

First, that came later on. And a lot of people Who are waiting For their eyes to be convinced Their eyes never will Because your eyes Are never satisfied with seeing.

There's got to be something more. So that's a condition Of unbelief in our society. The third condition of unbelief Is the failure of our political And religious leaders. Because these people, you see Had thought that the chief priests And rulers If the Messiah came If the Christ appeared Who would be the first To recognize and acknowledge him?

The chief priests And the rulers. They were the one That had the cause Of the nation Deepest in their hearts. They were the one Who talked about it. They were the ones Who preached about it.

They were the ones Who read about it. They were the ones Who claimed they knew All about it. When he came They crucified him. Their leaders failed him. As I think Your leaders will fail you Time and time again.

[16 : 36] And they If you're waiting For your leaders To go where You need to go Then Don't wait any longer. Because They won't do it for you.

Their leaders had failed him. And the next thing This is the fourth Was that their hope Their hopes were far too small.

You know They said We hope that It was he that should Redeem Israel. And And we live in a world Of Hopes that are too small.

You know We hope there will be An end to abortion. But That's too small. It's got to be Bigger than that.

We Hope That we will Be able to Renew the environment. But the issue Is far bigger Than that. We hope That people Will Stop fighting Each other.

[17 : 40] But the issue Is far bigger Than that. And we are Fopped off With Little miniature Hopes To which we Commit our lives In order to Realize them.

And those hopes Are way too small. These disciples Hope that it was Jesus who would Redeem Israel. Jesus' Purpose And the kingdom Which he came to Announce Were far bigger Than this tiny Little country In a remote Corner of the world.

Their hopes Were far too Small. This is One that I Take some Delight in Telling you. They didn't Believe the Women.

That was a Condition of Their unbelief. I I Luke is Luke is Very strong On this. And And I think The whole Feminist Movement Has something Very important To say Which they Rarely say.

They They get Caught on Small Little issues That are Peripheral To the Main issue. But I think The main issue Is terribly Important.

[18 : 55] And the fact That the Witness of the Women to the Disciples Was ignored. And that Lovely part Of the story You know That they Could have said When in Reporting that That the Women went To the Tomb and Found it Empty.

And there Were angels There who Said he Is alive. But they Didn't say That. They said The women Went to the Tomb and Found it Was empty. And the Women said There were Angels there Who said He was Alive.

Well They didn't Listen to them. And And then The next Condition of Unbelief Is Well Is that They had No place In their Experience For angels.

They couldn't Fit the angels In at all. And Any reality Beyond that Which we can Sort of Take hold of With our Hands We can't We don't Know what To do With.

And so They dismissed The women's Story About the Angels. And then They said We are Creatures Of time And time Has already Pretty well Demonstrated That Our hopes Are gone.

[20 : 16] It is now They said The third Day. It's too Late for Anything to Happen. Now that Was the Condition of Their unbelief.

And that's The condition Of human Unbelief. As you Encounter it And as I Encounter it. I think I think I didn't Want to get Into this Tonight But I think That you Could go On and See How much More complex And how Much more Sophisticated Is human Unbelief As the Result of Philosophical Trends Over the Last Two or Three hundred Years.

But at The Root of Human Unbelief Are these Things. And Christ Carefully Scrapes away The dirt So you See Where the Human Unbelief Is based On.

It's based On hopes That are Too small. It's based On Knowing the Facts but Having no Understanding of Them. It's based On the Deceptiveness Of our Eyes.

The failure Of our Leaders. It's based On not Believing One Another. Having no Room for The Supernatural And Locking Ourselves Into the Process Of time So that We don't Believe That there Is.

[21 : 43] You know Lots of People when They come Here to Have their Funeral I'm telling You because I don't Want you to Do this When you Come here For yours. I They like You to Read Ecclesiastes 3.

You know There is a Time and There is a Time and There is a Time and There is a Time but By the time You're in That condition Time is No longer Of any Importance At all. There is Now Eternity Or Nothing.

And Well So Jesus Has That And he Starts To build On the Basis Of In a Sense Having Leveled Like With a Bulldozer The The Ground By Showing You What What Human Unbelief Is And What It's Founded On He Then Starts To Build He Explores Their Experience He Asks For Their Understanding He Asks Them To Enunciate What It Is That Comprises Their Unbelief And Then He Makes This Rebuke He Takes Them And Says To Them You Fools By Which He Means You're Ignorant You Know Better Is What He Said You Know A Whole Lot Better It's Not It's Cultivated Ignorance That You're Suffering From And

That's Why He Calls Them Fools I Mean It's Not Derisive In That Sense It's Just That They Are Unintelligent In Not Understanding The Evidence That They Have Already Got Right Before Them So He Says They're Fools And They Are Slow Of Heart And You Know The The Heart Is The Base Of Everything Of Mind And Will And Understanding And It's By The Heart That They Should Have Reached Out And Grasp The Reality Of The Resurrection And It's The Purpose Of Christ To Reach In And Take Hold By The Heart And Quicken Them So That They Will Be Able To Grasp The Reality Of The Resurrection He Says You You Fools And Slow Heart Slow Witted And Slow Hearted To Believe To Exercise The Faith That This Situation Demands

Because You Must Live By Faith Ultimately You Know That You Are Unintelligent And Slow Of Heart To Believe And You Also Lack The Ability To Reason On The Basis Of What You Already Know You Should Have Been Able To Understand That It Was Necessary That The Christ Should Suffer This Is The Christ Speaking To Two Unknown Disciples And Saying To Them You Should Have Known That It Was Necessary That The Christ Should Suffer And Enter Into His Glory You Should Have Been Able To Work That Out On The Basis Of What You Already Knew Suffering Was Not Something Which The Christ Would Detour You May Want To Detour It And You May Think That Life Is Attempt

[25 : 10] To Detour It But I Assure You You Won't And The Christ Would Not Detour It It Was Necessary That He Should Go Straight Into It In Effect He Was Saying To Them You You Read The Bible Much Too Selectively You Choose Choose What You Want From The Bible And If You Weren't So Selective About It Then You Would Recognize That The Christ Must Suffer In Order To Enter Into His Glory So That That Was A Failure Of Understanding What They Should Have Known And He Says And You Refuse To Face The Fact Of Suffering Even Though It Is That Raw Material Of Human Life Of Which There Is

A Super Abundance And Is All That Raw Material Going To Be Wasted Or Is It In Fact Going To Be The Very Means By Which We Share The Glory Of God And Find The Purpose Of God So Jesus Establishes The The Structure Of Faith He's In A Sense Shown Them What The Basis Of Unbelief Is And Then He Establishes The Structure Of Faith And He Says He Takes Them Back And It Says Beginning With Moses And All The Prophets He Spoke Of The Things Concerning Himself And That's That's Why The Bible Is Essential That's Why We Go On Preaching From It Week After Week And Reading From It Week

After Week In An Old Testament Lesson And A New Testament Lesson And A Psalm And A Gospel And Canticles And Trying To Hammer Into Our Hearts And Minds The Kind Of Sub Structure On Which Our Whole Understanding Of The Faith Is Built And Without Which We Don't Have An Understanding See It's Not Enough To Have A Vision There There's Got To To To To To To To To To To University And You Want To Become A Physicist Or A Chemist Or Historian Or Anything Else They Spend Their Time Hammering Into You Some Basis On Which You Can Understand The Reality Of Doing Business So Taking Out Appendixes And Of Doing Whatever Other Business You're In Trading Money Buying Real Estate Building Bridges Whatever It Is You've Got To Have That And In Order For You To Understand God You've Got To Encounter The

Word Of God There's No Shortcuts To And That's Why On The First Easter Day Jesus Took The Time Beginning With Moses And All The Prophets To Give The Most Brilliant Bible Study That Has Probably Ever Happened In The History Of The World If Anybody Could Copyright That And Get It On Tape What A What A Treasure That Would Be But I Suppose It's It's One Of The It's It's A Wonderful Thing Isn't It That He Says Beginning With Moses And All The Prophets And You Will Say Over And Over Again This Does Not Make Sense This Does Not Make Sense This Does Not Make Sense But It Only Makes Sense As It Focuses On The Person Concerning Whom It Was Ultimately Written And That Person Is Jesus Christ And That

Was That That's How Jesus Laid The Foundation For Faith And That's The Only Basis On Which Our Faith Can Be Established And Grounded It's The Only Foundation On Which Faith Can Be Built Is This Knowledge Of The Scripture Otherwise We Can Be Blown Out Of The Water By Every Wind Of Doubt Or Any Questioning That Comes Along We're Just Blown Away By Until You Know Until This Grounding Is There The Grounding Of Faith Comes In And Just Wipes Out The Foundations Of Our Unbelief And Then I Think You Are You're Brought To The Position Where If Somebody Says Do You Believe In The Resurrection On The Basis Of Scripture You Say I Am Compelled To Believe In The Resurrection There Is I Have No Choice But To Believe

[30 : 13] In The Resurrection Now I Know That Can Be Debated But That's What Luke Is Saying That's What That's What's Here And Having Laid That Foundation Then It's All Over And Jesus Made As Though He Would Go Further And They Said Come In And He Came In They Sat At Table He Took The Bread And He Broke It And Wonderful Speculation As To What Happened That They Suddenly Recognized Who He Was They Saw Who He Was They Saw They Saw It Just In A Sense In An Instant Of Time Because It Says As Soon As They Saw Him He Vanished Out Of Their Sight They Didn't Need Anymore In Terms Of Visual Affirmation They Needed Only That Fleeting Moment That Was Enough On

This First Easter Day And Then I Think One Of The Profound Truths Of Faith Is The Recognition Which They Made Of What Had Happened To Them Did Not Our Hearts Burn Within Us As He Talked With Us On The Way That You Recognize In Retrospect What You Don't Sometimes Recognize And Experience You And We're Always Trying To Pack Everything Into This Moment Of Experience And Trying To Create It And And Yet The Loveliest Thing About Going To Hawaii Is Coming Home And Telling Your Friends You've Been There Being There Isn't All That Great That May Be A Slight Exaggeration But It Happens All The Time And And The The Reality Of You Know You You

You May Get Caught In Inviting Your Friends To Come To Church And Your Friends Come To Church And Say So What But the Reason you Invited them Was not because of what Happened in church But because something Happened afterwards And you Recognized that you Encountered Christ Perhaps in the Worship The Prayers The Reading The Fellowship The Breaking Of Bread And that's the Experience you want For your Friends Not an Experience of Music you Might or Might not Like Architecture You might Or Might not Like People You might Or Might not Like All Those Are Incidental The Reality Is That we Encounter Christ In His Word And of Course the Lovely Thing is About The Story Which You know It sort Of Ends The Story Perfectly When it Says And The Same Hour They Got Up

And Went To Tell Somebody About It What Had Happened To Them They Couldn't Go Through This Experience And Then Pull Their Chair Up To The Fire Light Their Pipe Put Their Feet Up And Read The Saturday Paper They Couldn't Do That The Monday Paper The Sunday Paper Whatever It Was They Had To Get Up And Go And Share What Had Happened To Them Now I Think That's It I Think That That That That This Is The Instrument Which God Has Chosen And Which Luke Has Presented To Us The The The Instrument The In The In The In The In The God Wants To Wipe Away All The Obstacles Of Our Unbelief And To Build The Structure Of Faith On The Scriptures So That You Will Understand That

You Will Be Compelled To Believe And That You Will Will Will And From A Quickened Heart With A Quickened Mind Set Out To Share The Good News That Christ Is Risen Amen In A Moment We're Going To Pray But Before We Do That Fiona Is Going To Sing A Very Old Famous Song It's Called All In The April Evening And I'd Like You To Use That To Think About What Harry Has Said And To Lead Us Into Prayer This Is Another Story That Harry Likes Very Much And

[35 : 18] As I Sing This Story I'd Like You To Close Your Physical Eyes And Imagine Two Things Imagine A Very Lush And Green Mountain Side Rolling Hills Covered By White Sheep And Their Little Lambs Newly Born Lambs This Is The Right Time Of The Year For That And About The Right Time Of The Evening As Well As The Sun Is Starting To Go Down Imagine That And In Contrast Imagine The Lamb Of God On A Cross On A Very Barren Hillside Hat Number Mam Anime A sheep with their little lambs

Past rebeye on the road A sheep with their little lambs Past rebeye on the road All in the April evening I thought on the Lamb of God The lambs were weary and crying With a weak human cry I thought on the Lamb of God Going weakly to die Up in the blue, blue mountains

Dewey pastures are sweet Rest for the little bodies Rest for their tiny feet But for the Lamb, the Lamb of God Up on the hilltop green Only a cross, a cross of shame Two stark crosses between All in the April evening April is war abroad I saw the sheep with their lambs

And thought on the Lamb of God Let us sit on the hill to pray I thought on the Lamb of God Beginning with Moses and the prophets He interpreted to them All the scriptures concerning himself Did not let our hearts burn within us

While he talked to us on the road While he opened to us the scriptures Lord Jesus Christ As we come into your presence We thank you for your words We thank you for your deeds We thank you for your death We thank you for your resurrection We thank you for your spirit We thank you for your ascension To and to heaven On the right hand of the Father And we thank you that you're coming again In glory To judge the quick and the dead And Lord we pray That by your spirit You would kindle our dry cold hearts That they would burn within us And that you would set us on fire for you

[40 : 42] To go running and telling people About the risen Lord Lord Lord open our eyes To see you The way For we're lost To see you The truth Because we're so stuck In unbelief And to see you The life For you've risen From the dead Lord Lord Sovereign ruler of all We Turn to you To pray for our governments And our rulers We thank you That they've been instituted by you And we thank you That you watch over All the affairs of mankind We pray for this

Our Canadian government here We pray that you would give them wisdom And justice And compassion Our minds are reminded about the abortion issue And we pray That some legislation Would be drafted Recognizing Lord The danger That as the book of Judges says Where there is no king Every person does What is right In their own eyes So Lord We long for Some Kind of Legislation there And we pray again For wisdom For those who might draft it We pray for the British government And the British people At this time Particularly Pray for Sheffield

And Liverpool And Nottingham The towns and cities Involved in that Horrible Accident At the football match We pray for the families That you would draw close to them That you would comfort them And Lord Because we know That you are a master at it We pray that you would turn A bad situation Into a good one We don't even know The names of those who died But you do And you know The families and friends So draw alongside them And Lord Comfort and strengthen them And turn them to you In this Their Hour of need We pray for the churches Of Liverpool And Sheffield And Nottingham Particularly remember Philip Hacking

The rector In Sheffield That you would give them all And him especially Wisdom and grace As they deal with people We pray for our Church leaders here We pray for our Archbishop with us This morning For our clergy For local ministers Around For free churches For Granville Chapel And First Baptist And University Chapel And all the Other Churches And fellowships Around We thank you For our brothers And sisters in Christ Who worship there We thank you That we are united In the True universal church Thank you For ouraal

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