

Of This We Are Witnesses; John 20
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The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. There is nothing more foundational, more non optional, more necessary. All of Christianity stands or falls on the doctrine of the resurrection. If the doctrine of the resurrection is not true, then nothing of Christianity is true.

Every word of your New Testaments was written by men who were thoroughly convinced of the truth of the resurrection. And without that truth and without their convincing of that truth, then none of the New Testament makes any sense whatsoever, because it is the most foundational doctrine Of all of our faith.

Paul says to the Corinthians in first Corinthians 15. He says this now if christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead then not even Christ has been raised And if christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain We are even found to be misrepresenting god because we testified about god You That he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. So as Paul writes those plain and piercing words, the context there in the church in Corinth was that there were some there among the church who had began, begun to feel as though that they could have Christ without the resurrection.

The concept of the resurrection was perhaps one that they had begun to find problematic and they had decided upon. may be holding to their faith, so to speak, while leaving behind this doctrine of the resurrection. Paul says quite plainly, I came and proclaimed to you a gospel. And if you have departed from that gospel, you have departed from the faith.

Because God himself is the one who determines the parameters of his faith. And this faith is determined by God. exclusively solely on the doctrine of the resurrection. Without the resurrection, then your faith is in vain, Paul says, and you are still in your sins. So this is the most foundational doctrine of all of the Christian faith.

So as we turn our thoughts to this doctrine of the resurrection this morning, let me just begin by recognizing something that we all instinctively know, and that that is there are two different Should we say expressions of the Christian faith? And if we think of these two expressions of the Christian faith in their extremes, then the two extremes of these expressions would look something like this.

On the one hand, there are those who would express a Christian faith in terms that are nearly completely or almost purely. intellectual terms that would be very much enthused about the doctrines of the scripture, and they love the doctrines of the scripture, and they love the truths

that the scriptures teach, and their faith is one that is mostly or nearly all an intellectual type of faith, so much so that that faith would even be devoid of the love that that faith calls them to, and they would have a love, maybe a deep and profound love, For the doctrines of the scripture and the scriptures, which bring those doctrines to us, but they would be lacking in the love of God.

Well, even the God of those scriptures that wrote the scriptures to us or the God that those doctrines are about not to say the love for the fellow man, which those scriptures call us to have. So that would be maybe one extreme, an extreme of our faith that is so intellectual and so dry and so brainy, so to speak.

That is devoid of all of love and the other accompanying emotions of the faith. That would be something akin to the Pharisees in Jesus's day. And the other extreme, the other expression of our faith in the extreme would look something like this. It would be so emotional in its content as to be Well, practically anti-intellectual, so emotional as to say, whether the faith is comprised nearly completely or even completely of the emotions that accompany the faith.

And that would be a type of faith that viewed the doctrines of the word as, as something that is at least maybe optional at best and sometimes even harmful at worst. And so that would be a type of faith that would pose itself or position itself. In such a way that one might describe it as faith and reason being two different things.

That you can have reason, or you can have faith, but you cannot have faith, or you cannot have both. Because faith and reason stand in opposition to one another. So that would be an extreme of that expression of Christian faith. That is an expression of the Christian faith, and which would say, which would say, All that's important is how we feel about Jesus and what's, what's not important are the doctrines and the truths of the scriptures.

What's important is that we love and that we're filled with love and forgiveness and all these emotional components of the faith to such a degree that the doctrines and the truths of scripture are not things that we are served well to think about. So those are the two extremes. So if we think about the second extreme, that would be an extreme.

Expression of the Christian faith that would be, shall we say, not very favorable to thought about the doctrines of scripture or reasoning or consideration of the doctrines of scripture. And so, as we think about that, and we compare that to the scriptures themselves, we recognize that the scriptures, of course, would teach us that both of those extreme expressions of the faith are un Christ like.

But in the example of the second, The scriptures themselves call us all the time to think, to reason, to use our brains. The scriptures themselves would have no understanding of a faith that is separate from reason, or a faith that is separate from reason. In contradiction to reason, the scriptures themselves would have no understanding of that type of faith because the scriptures themselves call us on a regular basis to think and to use our powers of reasoning to consider these things and consider them well.

I'm reminded of how the prophet Isaiah begins his prophecy in Isaiah chapter one as he's quoting God and God says, come now, let us reason together. And what are we reasoning about though your sins were scarlet, they are now as white as snow. So come and let us reason over this. Let us consider this. Let us ponder this.

But scripture continues the same pattern of calling the believer to not disengage their mind, but to use their mind to consider the truths and the realities of the truth claims of scripture, such as Jesus, who will often times As we said, noted just last Sunday will ask these probing sort of questions that are provocative in nature or he puts them in a provocative way.

We mentioned this just last Sunday in which it seems to be a habit of Jesus in which he likes to ask these probing questions in such a way that the listener is maybe put off guard and forced to think deeply about what Jesus is asking them or times in which Jesus will say things like this. Consider the lilies of the field.

Consider, think about the lilies of the field and in thinking about the lilies of the field, compare those to your father. Now, if your father is so concerned to clothe the fields with lilies, how much more concerned will he be to provide everything that you need? Paul invites the listener there to use their powers of deduction, their powers of reason to consider the truth claims of scripture.

Or we think of the example of Paul. Paul, as we see this pattern throughout the book of Acts, his pattern was to go into the synagogue and do what we read over and over. We read this thing in Ephesus and he goes to Corinth, he goes to Athens, he goes all these different places. And we always read that he goes into the synagogue and he.

He reasoned from the scriptures. He opened the scriptures and he invited people to come and listen and consider the truth claims that you hear and reason over these truth claims. Or for example, at the end of the book of Acts, when Paul stands on trial before King Agrippa and he is trying his best, his human best to compel, to convince Agrippa to believe upon this gospel.

And Agrippa has a. Root a foundation in the scriptures of King Agrippa understands something about the scriptures and Paul Understands that King Agrippa is getting this at least to some degree he's getting this but then as the conversation goes on Festus there you recall the situation Festus speaks up and says Paul stop it. Your higher learning is driving you mad and Paul answers by saying not at all Because the words that I speak are true and rational He gets these.

And what I'm saying to you, this is not, I'm not asking you to use your imagination. What I'm saying to you are words of truth and ration. And I'm inviting you to use your powers of reason to consider the truth claims that I am making. And so this is what scripture calls for us to do. It doesn't call for us to check our brains at the door and just to have a faith that is brainlessly emotional, but instead it calls us to reason over the truth claims of scripture and to apply our powers of logic and powers of thought and to consider what God has for us.

And so that's what we wish to do this morning as we turn here to the doctrine of the resurrection, this most foundational of all doctrines. As we said earlier, this cannot be overemphasized. Everything about the Christian faith stands or falls on the doctrine of the Resurrection. So, with that being said, let's just look here to John's Gospel in chapter 20.

And we're just going to read a few verses, and we're going to kind of follow along on some thoughts, and then we're going to ask some questions that really relate to how it is that we can accept the truth claims of the Resurrection. How is it that we, none of whom here in the room were eyewitnesses, how is it that we can have confidence of these truth claims?

So now look with me at chapter 20 in verse 1. This is a familiar story to all of us. Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon, Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him.

So in those few verses, here's one of the many places that we see the reality of the disciples on the morning of the resurrection, the reality of their thought pattern of their thought processes. was such that none of them expected the resurrection. Mary is not a gullible woman, and she sees this tomb rolled away, and she immediately just jumps to the conclusion that he's been risen.

No, instead, she sees the stone rolled away, and she jumps to the most reasonable, natural conclusion, which is somebody has tampered with the grave. And they have taken the body. Wouldn't that be the most reasonable conclusion to come to as she first sees that it's so far from her thoughts as well as the rest of the disciples.

We see it not only in this story, but we could see it in Luke 24 on the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We can see it in Matthew's gospel. We can see it in Mark's gospel. We see it everywhere that the resurrection is narrated that those Who were witnesses to the resurrection that seems as though the last thing that they would have expected.

They weren't looking for this. They weren't anticipating this. In fact, their first assumptions were much the same type of assumptions that you and I would make. They're naturalistic type of assumptions with naturalistic explanations that someone perhaps has tampered with the body. The body is now missing.

And what are we going to do? Because We will be incredibly distraught if they have taken this body and we cannot recover this body and mourn properly over this man, Jesus. So, these witnesses, Mary and the others, they come here and they witness this, this most startling of events. In verse 2, she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple and the one whom Jesus loved, the one whom Jesus loved, which is John, the one narrating this story.

Gospel. And she said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him. So Peter went out with the other disciple and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first and stooping to look in.

He saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there. And the face cloth, which had been on Jesus's head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw, and he believed.

So now we have these witnesses, now John and Peter are here, as well as Mary and the other women are here. John chooses not to narrate the aspect of the angels speaking to them, but instead, He's focusing on their seeing the empty tombs, seeing the cloth, seeing the stone rolled away, and now seeing these things, belief seems to come upon John and upon Peter, as they have now become witnesses to this resurrection.

And hence begins a theme. A theme that continues throughout the remainder of John's gospel and is picked up in the book of the Acts and continues on throughout the entire Acts story, and it continues on throughout all the epistles, and it is the theme of the eyewitness. The theme of the eyewitness in which God has in his sovereign wisdom has determined that the truth of the resurrection will be proclaimed by way of eyewitnesses who have seen not only the empty tomb, not only the angel, in fact, not only the risen Christ, but they have seen all these things from the beginning because remember, when we turn to Acts chapter one, And the apostles who are now 11, they say to themselves, you know, 12 isn't a pretty important number.

Jesus chose 12. There were 12 tribes. And so we are now 11. And so in order to make ourselves 12 again, we will replace Judas with another. And remember, they choose Matthias. But in the choosing of Matthias, they say that there is a requirement, and that requirement is He has been with us since the beginning and he has seen everything.

And so beginning from the ascension of Christ and Acts chapter one and the the appointing there of Matthias from that point on, 12 means the 11 original plus Matthias. That's what the 12 then means. All 12 of whom have been with Jesus and seen his ministry from the beginning. Seen the miracles, seen the cleansing of lepers, seen the waters being, the storms being calmed, seen all these things, seen his death, seen his resurrection, seen his ascension.

And so this theme of witness, eyewitness, in fact the word in the Greek is the word witness. And from which, of course, we get our word that means not a eyewitness, but one who gives their life for a higher cause. And the reason we make that connection is because the book of Acts makes it quite plain to us that those who are eyewitnesses to this, In almost all cases, we'll end up giving their lives as what we would call martyrs.

So that's how we make that connection. But this theme of eyewitness is God's sovereign plan for the moving forth for the proclamation of this most foundational truth. Again, we cannot overemphasize that, that if the resurrection is not true and is not proclaimed, then Christianity does not go forth.

Christianity does not exist. And in all likelihood, you and I would know nothing of this man, Jesus, were it not for the resurrection and the proclamation of the resurrection. So God in his wisdom has determined that that will be proclaimed, not because it's not Someone made a painting of Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, or not because a statue or a sculpture of the resurrected Jesus was made, or not because there would be some, oh, I don't know, Roman court documents in which the risen Christ was testified about in Roman courts.

Instead, God in his sovereign wisdom has proclaimed, this is how my witness will go forth of the resurrection by way of eyewitnesses who have seen all of this. So this defense, this proclamation of the resurrection goes forth by way of the eyewitness account. Now, one of the things that we make note of if you think about If you think well with me about, well, the apostolic treatment of the resurrection in the Gospels, and if you think about the apostolic treatment of the resurrection in the Book of Acts, and if you think about the epistles, and if you ask yourself this question, how did the apostles defend their testimony of the resurrection?

How did they make a defense? Because whenever someone's an eyewitness, of course, it matters a great deal what kind of witness that is, It matters a great deal that the witness is reliable and

trustworthy. It matters a great deal that their testimony is true and believable. And oftentimes a witness is questioned on the veracity of their testimony.

And that witness might have to defend their testimony to say, No, I really did see these things and what I saw really was the truth. So how did the apostles defend their eyewitness account of the resurrection? If you think about this, you will find that They really didn't. There's only one time in all of scripture in which a defense of the apostolic witness of the resurrection even comes close to being an apologetic, and that would be the text that we read earlier in 1 Corinthians 15.

Which is really, if you think about that text, and if you look at it closely, that's not so much a defense of the resurrection as it is an application of the resurrection. So the apostles really exert no effort whatsoever to defend their testimony. Instead, the veracity, the truth, the believability of their eyewitness testimony.

Is their life itself is them. That is the truth claim that they make the veracity of their claims of seeing the resurrection. All of those are encompassed in the radical changed life, which they have all now received. And that is how this defense of the apostolic witness of the resurrection. That is how that goes forth.

It goes forth purely by the apostles saying we saw this. Now look upon those who saw this and see for yourself what witnessing that resurrection has done for us. Because these apostles went from, do we need to be reminded in Luke's gospel just a few chapters earlier, of Peter being questioned by the little servant girl, You knew him.

You know that man. No, I don't. And then Peter, in order to make this little servant girl believe him, calls down curses upon himself. Literally, I'll be damned if I know that man. That same man now goes into Acts chapter 2 proclaiming boldly before the crowd, You crucified this man, Jesus. The same one I denied, you crucified him.

Or we think about Acts chapter 5 and how Peter and John Rejoice because the council has beat them because they know Jesus. The change that come upon them was the proof that was the believability claim that they put forth. They didn't waste their time trying to say, no, listen, we always tell the truth.

You can believe us when we, when we tell you, I really did see Jesus. Thomas. You know, the one who says, I'm not going to believe unless I stick my finger in the wounds and I see him. I'm not going to believe unless I do that. Nonetheless, upon seeing the risen Christ, he falls to his knees. He says, my Lord and my God, and from that moment on he and all the others were changed people just as Paul will say in 2nd Corinthians 5 verse 17, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

And so that is the witness. These men who would die. Would gladly and happily give their life now for this man, Jesus, the risen Jesus, these men who would suffer with joy now, that is their proof. Now you say, well, we're not quite sure that that's enough proof for us. We're not quite sure that that's really enough of a, of a reason for modern day people to believe this because you know what?

People all the time will die for a cause. People will die for a fanatical religious cause all the time. That's pro That's why we have the problem of terrorism, of Muslim terrorism. People will die for a cause that they believe in. I thought of, who was it? Was it the, in Scotland where the couple where

the whole liquid bomb thing started because the couple Went onto the plane with their infant and they smuggled the bomb the explosives onto the plane in their infant's bottle Was it was am I thinking of that right?

And so here is a cause that they believe in so deeply that not only will they each give their lives They will give their infants life. So people die for religious causes all the time. Here's the difference You People will die for a cause they believe to be true, but no sane person will die for a cause they know to be false.

People will die for a conviction, but they will not die for a concoction. Not sane people anyway. And so here are these disciples. Who now say, this is what has come over us because we saw him, and that is what God and his wisdom has declared. This is how my most foundational doctrine will go forth and be proclaimed and be believed because of my witnesses whom I rose, who I'm whom I raised up, who saw everything from the beginning.

They saw the risen Christ, and they were changed by seeing him. Now look upon them. That's your proof. So once again, Mary comes here. She sees the empty tomb. They've taken the Lord outta the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him. So Peter went out with the other disciple and they were going toward the tomb.

Both of them were running together. Verse five. They come to the tomb. They've come to the tomb, stooping in to look to look in. He saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloth lying there in the facecloth. So here they see the empty tomb and this empty tomb serves for them as a type of evidence for the eyewitnesses to see and then fortify their belief.

So let's be clear and understand that an empty tomb does not prove a risen Savior. We say that a lot. That's a mantra. It's sort of a cliché. We hear that over and over that, that empty tomb is proof that Christ is risen. Well, it's not because an empty tomb doesn't prove anything except that the tomb is empty.

An empty, an empty tomb proves only that there's no body in the tomb, but there's something else in the tomb, which the disciples find compelling that not only is the tomb empty, but there is something in the tomb, which they take great interest in. What they take great interest in are these linen cloths, these burial cloths, which are there where the body was.

And then specifically we're told that there was a face cloth that was around his face and we're told specifically that that is folded up and put away neatly. Right. So what are we to gather from this? Well, the first thing that we gathered, the most obvious application for this is that Jesus was a neat and tidy person, right?

If you missed that, then you missed a whole lot. Jesus didn't take his face cloth and throw it down on the floor and, and then just leave it for somebody else to pick up. He folded it neatly. Okay, so, um, kids be like Jesus and fold your, don't throw your stuff on the floor. Fold it like Jesus folded it.

Okay, all right. Well, tongue in cheek there, Jesus has this face cloth and he's bound by this face cloth and the disciples see it and for them that serves as a type of evidence that helps them to comprehend what they're seeing. So let's think this through. So as we think about this unbelief, as

we think about unbelief in the resurrection, there are different types, different aspects of unbelief, different expressions of unbelief that I could say.

I remember when I was much younger back, um, in a couple of generations ago, maybe seventies and eighties, there was a lot of time spent on the part of Christians to defend the resurrection against some of the claims that were coming against the veracity of the truth of the resurrection. And some of those claims really attacked the fact that perhaps Jesus wasn't dead.

If he rose, then that means he wasn't dead to start with. And so you may remember this, this goes way back. The swoon theory, you might remember the swoon theory. When I was younger, 70s and 80s, 90s, that people talked about the swoon theory a lot. The swoon theory was basically this theory that Jesus didn't actually die on the cross, but he came close to death on the cross.

The Romans thought he was dead, put him in the tomb. The cold, brisk air in the tomb revived him. And three days later. He rolls the stone away and then goes and convinces the whole world that he's risen from the dead. That's the swoon theory. I really don't think many people believe that anymore. I don't think anybody really, um, refers to that anymore.

I think that's been pretty much disgraced. I think today we've come to the point where I think we can trust the Romans. These professional executioners who executed people every day and they come and they stab Jesus with the spear outcomes blood water because they penetrated the heart area and they declared him dead.

Put him in the tomb. He was bound up in bedclothes. I think we can trust the fact that Jesus was actually dead and we don't have to go to the extreme to imagine that maybe He was just so close to death that everybody thought he was dead. He wasn't breathing, anything like that. They put him in the tomb, and then somehow he regains enough strength that he pushes this big stone away that three women couldn't push away.

And now he goes and convinces the whole world that he never died to start with, or that he's been risen from the dead anyway. And I think that that is just so far fetched that very few people subscribe to that anymore. So let's just trust the Romans. that he was good and dead. Well, then there's the other aspects that that really were much popular some years ago.

The aspects that if he was dead, then what we need to attack is the fact that he came back to life. And so, yes, if he was dead, then he remained dead. And so from that comes a couple of theories. One would be the hallucination theory. You've probably all heard of this again. It's sort of passed out of favor, but some years ago, people would talk about the hallucination theory, the group hallucination theory.

And if you recall, there would be people that would refer to studies that were done in which they approved that, that groups of people could hallucinate essentially the same. Hallucination. And so Jesus, though he really was dead, he's now not alive, but his disciples are now hallucinating that he is alive.

And that would explain why they think that they've seen the risen Christ. And you know, that, that is even a greater stretch than the swoon theory, because really that falls apart when we recognize the fact that all of these people, group hallucinations. All of them have one thing in common. The

groups of people were hallucinating something that they wanted to happen, something that they were anticipating happening.

And so a group of people could be somehow convinced that they were seeing something happened that they had been anticipating. All of the gospel counts agree that none of the disciples were expecting this at all. This was a surprise to them. So they're not anticipating a resurrection. Therefore, they're not going to hallucinate a resurrection.

Not to mention just a logistical problem of, well, let's take just the apostles, the, the, 12 people are going to have the same hallucination simultaneously. And then, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, it's later on, it's going to be 500 people at a time, all having the same hallucination. That's a greater stretch than the reality of the thing behind it.

So I don't know of many people that really follow the hallucination theory anymore. But now what is often proposed is that, well, yeah, Jesus did die on the cross and the tomb really was empty. But what obviously happened was That's what we read about in the gospel accounts is when they say that the Jews went and gave money to say, hey, they stole the body.

And so that's the thing now is that the body obviously has been stolen. The grave robbers came and have taken the body and now the, the women come, they don't see the body. And from that, the church now built this doctrine that Jesus actually rose. Well that's a pretty good stretch as well. And our text right now is going to help us think through that because the first thing that we would see is Well, if the grave had been robbed, if there were grave robbers that took the body, why on earth would they take the time to unwrap the body from the bed clothes?

Because you can imagine this thing's happening at night. The tomb, remember, is being guarded by Roman soldiers. So why in the world would they take the time to unwrap the body from the bed clothes or from the grave, not bed clothes, the grave clothes? Why would they take the time and effort to do that?

Not to mention the problem that we mentioned earlier. was indeed some form of treachery, the disciples took the body and now they're claiming that he's been resurrected. Well, if that were the case, the apostles We're in a position to know that it was a fabrication and the fact that all of the apostles will suffer Deeply eleven of the twelve will suffer in by giving their life And as we said earlier, you might give your life for a greater cause and you might give your life for a greater cause That's false, but you won't give your life for a greater cause that you know is false unless you know You're insane.

No sane person will give their life for a fabrication. No sane person is going to give their life for a concoction. And so are we really going to believe you say, well, okay, maybe a person who doesn't have all the sanity, all their normal sanity, maybe they would do that. Okay. One or two of them, maybe 12 to what you're saying.

12 apostles are going to give their life for what they know they're in a position to know is a fabrication. Not to mention the 500 plus witnesses that Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 15. So really the whole grave robbing thing kind of falls apart too. You see, what we're facing here, what we're looking at, is the reality that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest attested fact in all of antiquity.

Now, that may sound like a bold statement. It may sound like a far reaching statement. Recently, we took a look at the fact that Scripture, the attestation of Scripture, we talked about the 5,000 ancient manuscripts that we have and how well attested Scripture is. Well, in a similar vein, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is without a doubt, far and away, the greatest, the most attested, Fact in all of antiquity, it is a undisputable fact that if you choose to not believe in the veracity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then you have no cause whatsoever to believe that Julius Caesar existed or that Genghis Khan existed.

Or that anyone else from antiquity existed, or that Aristotle wrote poetics, or that anybody said any of the quotes that we attribute to them now. If you choose to disbelieve the truth of the resurrection because you would claim it's not well attested enough, then you are refusing to believe by far the best attested truth in all of antiquity.

And that's just a simple fact. But this truth claim of the resurrection is something that is disbelieved. With great, I guess you could say great regularity. I read a read a poll recently a new poll came out And you know how we feel about polls Everybody's always anxious to read what the latest poll says that everybody else believes and everybody else thinks Well the latest poll that came out I think this was Gallup says that 70 percent of Americans believe in the resurrection and that might sound encouraging 70 percent But you know what?

I don't I don't think I buy that. I don't think I buy that I think that that means 7 out of 10 people answered the poll In a way that they thought the questioner wanted them to answer the poll. But I don't really think that there's that much belief in the resurrection. I think the disbelief and unbelief in the resurrection is greater than that.

Who would you say Can somebody name an atheist? Name an atheist. Somebody. Richard Dawkins. That's the name that comes to the top of the list, right? Because he is the world's most famous, most well known atheist. Richard Dawkins in 2006 wrote a book called The God Delusion. You probably have heard of it.

Maybe somebody has read it. But The God Delusion was supposed to be Dawkins premier end all work that refuted The claims of scripture that refuted the supernatural claims of scripture that proved once and for all that those who believe in God are, as the title of the book says, delusional. And so in this book, Dawkins spins chapter after chapter.

I think he's a evolutionary biologist. I think he was what he is designated as. So he spends chapter after chapter refuting the truth claims of scripture with microbiology and with evolutionary biology and DNA and all these sorts of things. And when he comes to the resurrection, do you know what he says about the resurrection?

I'm gonna quote you the entirety of what he says about the resurrection. You ready? Jesus probably really did live. But this business about him coming back from the dead is absurd. Period. And that's the entirety of everything that he says about the resurrection. Now, I trust that we are critical enough thinkers that all of us would collectively say, hang on.

Wait just one minute. You're going to write an entire book refuting the existence of God, refuting the truth claims of Scripture. And Scripture itself says this is the linchpin. Disprove this one truth claim and everything else falls. Scripture itself says that. Nothing stands if the resurrection is false.

You're going to take Scripture's greatest truth claim. And give it one sentence? And you think you've treated the question properly. Oh, and you say, this idea, this business about Jesus coming back from the dead is absurd. Again, I hope that we're all critical enough thinkers to say, Really? By whose definition?

I mean, what proof are you offering that this is absurd? How are you saying that this is absurd? Are you saying this is absurd because you just think it's absurd? Or, actually, here's why he's saying it's absurd. He's saying it's absurd because he's never seen one. Because nobody he knows has ever seen a resurrection.

He says it's absurd because, as we all know, when people die, they, they stay dead. Don't they? When people die, they stay dead. That has been human experience time and time again for centuries and millennia. And so, based upon that, Dawkins, the world's leading atheist, in his ultimate book, so to speak, on the definition, the final putting away of all the rationality of belief in a higher being, handles the premier doctrine of scripture, the one upon which everything else rests.

He handles it with one sentence by calling it absurd. It's absurd because people just don't come back from the dead anymore. Okay. I would hope that all of us, if he were here in the room, all of us could say the same thing to him. Mr. Dawkins, that's the point. That's the whole point. The whole point is that people don't come back from the dead.

Because if they did, the resurrection wouldn't be what it is. And so, Mr. Dawkins, you missed the entire point. Scripture handed it to you on a silver platter and said, Come on, disprove this one truth claim and you win the whole game. And you took it and punted. You didn't even address it. Because the resurrection is the foundational truth claim.

And those who choose to disbelieve it, choose to disbelieve it simply because we don't see it. Who's ever heard of somebody coming back from the dead? Have you ever heard outside of scripture? Have you ever heard of that? It doesn't happen exactly. It doesn't happen, which is why scripture says to us, this is what it is.

This is the radical truth claim that it is because this violates all of the laws and the rules of life with which you're familiar. All of those rules that govern life, this valid, this violates those. And that's why this is so plainly the hand of God, that an act of God, because you see, I think that's why most people, I want to say most, I'll say many people have disbelieved the truth claim of the resurrection.

This is simply because this violates the rules of the world in which we live. And so this world in which I live, I know people, they're born, they live, sometimes they get sick, and then sometimes that sickness leads to death. If not, then they grow old to an elderly age, and then natural causes takes them, and then they die, and then all that's left is their memory.

And according to those natural laws, this is a violation of that, so I choose to disbelieve it. Meanwhile, the disciples enter into the tomb, and they see the linen cloths. And what are the linen cloths saying to them? They're saying this body was not stolen. Someone did not sneak in here and take this body, because no one would have unwrapped the body like this.

What they're seeing is evidence that Jesus has been resurrected in a body that is like his pre resurrection body, but also unlike his pre resurrection body. In such a way that the grave clothes no longer clung to him, but he simply came out of them. Just like he, in the same chapter, will go through locked doors, but also eat fish.

You see, I think the linen cloths are saying to us, among other things, perhaps, they're saying to us at least this. I think that the linen cloths are there as a contradiction. As a contrast, I shouldn't say contradiction, a contrast. I think they are there as a contrast to chapter 11. Remember what happens in chapter 11?

Lazarus. Lazarus is raised from the dead. And there are certain distinguishing factors that tell us Lazarus resurrection is distinctly different from Jesus resurrection. First of all, Lazarus was there four days, not three. So there's a distinction there. But then you remember when Jesus called out to Lazarus with the loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

Do you remember? He sort of stumbles out. And the first thing Jesus says is unbind him, unbind him because his grave clothes were still tightly bound about him. And so they had to come and take those grave clothes off. Jesus's resurrected body did not need to be unbound. Like the locked door, he could just pass through the grave clothes, but also like eating the broiled fish, he had the stone rolled away.

You see, his new body is both like his old body and unlike his old body. So the disciples immediately begin realizing we are seeing something here. We are seeing something that's different. We're seeing these linen cloths lying here. And what that's saying to us is that the body that came out of those linen cloths is not like ours.

Now the unbelief that they experience as they're looking in, but then they enter and then they believe. And we talked just briefly a bit ago, just about the unbelief in the resurrection. But you know, there are really two kinds of unbelief in the resurrection. There is the unbelief that we mentioned earlier, the unbelief that just stems from the one who says, listen, I live in a world with rules and laws and the idea of a resurrection violates all those rules and those laws.

And so therefore, because it's a violation of the rules that govern our world, I will reject it. And many people have rejected the resurrection based on those reasons that it just violates the laws of our world. But there's another kind of unbelief that stems not from a Rejection of the resurrection because it violates the laws of the world that we live in, but because it violates their own laws, their own rules, because there are many people, and I think this is perhaps far more prominent today.

Far more common today. There are many people that would say, you know, I have laws that I live by. They're my own rules. I live by my own rules. I'm my own person. And the resurrection violates my rules. And so therefore I reject it. I think that's a far more common unbelief found today, much like if you could make a comparison, much like belief or unbelief in life on other planets.

You know, we've talked about that, and there's people that believe emphatically there's got to be life and other planets and whatever. But it's the idea that there is some planet. That's an Earth like planet with an environment similar to ours that's orbiting around a star a hundred trillion billion light years away.

And that idea is the same kind of idea because people would hear that and what would you say to that? You would say, I have no way to prove or disprove that. There's no way that we can prove or disprove if there is life on some theoretical planet a hundred billion light years away. And furthermore It impacts my life in no way.

There is absolutely no way in which the potential life on a planet a hundred billion light years away affects my life. And so therefore, I don't know, I can't prove it, I can't disprove it, but you know what, I'm not going to worry about it and I'm going to keep on living my life. If you can make that comparison, I think that is the prominent unbelief in the resurrection today.

We don't know. I mean, this was 2000 years ago. Who knows what happened 2000 years ago? There's people who make a good case that the resurrection is false. There's people who make a good case that the resurrection is true, but we don't know. But you know what? It doesn't affect my life. And so I'm just going to move on with my life.

That is the other kind of unbelief. And I think that's the more prominent kind of unbelief today. But it's not new today because that's the kind of unbelief that Paul was addressing in Corinthians, as he says to the Christians in Corinth, he says, you know, this gospel that I preached to you, but you've departed from this gospel, yet you want to continue as a Christian.

You want to continue as one belonging to Christ while claiming, well, if he didn't really rise, then what does it matter? Maybe it's a spiritual resurrection. You see, the linen cloths prove it was no spiritual resurrection. The linen cloths are screaming to us. This was physical. This was real. He rose with a real body, a real body that they will see in just a few verses.

A real body that Luke will tell us ate fish. A real body that chapter 21 will tell us builds a fire and cooks breakfast and then is visibly taken unto heaven. You see? And so this is the type of unbelief we face an unbelief by those who would say that is impossible. And we also face an unbelief by those who would say it's impossible to verify or deny that.

And it doesn't matter to me anyway, because I have my own life to live. Both of those types of unbelief are a denial of the most basic fundamental reality of Christianity. So now. Now, here's kind of where we want to end. I want to end by saying both of those types of unbelief, the scriptures address. So the one who would say in his heart, listen, this physical bodily resurrection, I don't know.

We can't confirm it or we can't deny it. And really, I don't see how it really impacts my life. Scripture has something very profound to say to that one. And it comes to us in Acts chapter 17. It comes to us by way of Paul's unanticipated ending to one of his messages. You know, if you read through the book of Acts, the second half of Acts, you find that Paul oftentimes was delivering a sermon.

You would imagine a well prepared, well thought out sermon and he gets interrupted before he can finish. It happens quite frequently. It happens as he's in Jerusalem and the centurion takes him and he begins preaching in Hebrew and the people just become silent and he's proclaiming how he sat at the feet of Gamaliel and he's the Pharisee of Pharisees and all is going well up until the time he says, and God told me to take this gospel to the Gentiles.

And then chaos erupts and they, and Paul can't even finish his sermon. Happens again. As Paul is standing before the council, the Sanhedrin council, and Paul says, You know what? I'm on trial because of the resurrection. And then chaos erupts. Right? Another time that Paul was interrupted and didn't finish his sermon happens in Athens at a place called Mars Hill, as Paul was addressing another group of people who were highly intellectual and were interested in hearing new things.

As Paul is speaking to them, he takes the angle of the unknown God. You remember this? He says to them, you know, I noticed that you've got this, this idol, the statue to the unknown God, in case you ever forgot one. Let me tell you about the God that you don't know about. He is the one true God. He is the maker.

And the creator and the sustainer of the universe. And he does not need human hands to serve him. And then Paul says this, he says, the times of ignorance, this God that I'm telling you about, overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. Because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness.

How will he judge the world? By a man. He will judge the world by a man. Jesus Christ, the perfect, sinless man, will be the judge, because God will judge by a man whom He has appointed. So Paul says, You are called, people everywhere are called to repent. You know in your heart, you have a sense of justice.

guilt. And you have a sense of guilt because you are guilty. You feel guilty precisely because you are guilty. And so God is calling you to repent. And he's calling you to repent because there is coming a day of judgment. And that day of judgment is coming. You can be assured of this. Notice how Paul tells them that they can be assured of this.

And of this is He, meaning God, has given assurance by raising him from the dead. Paul says to the Athenians, You can be certain that you will stand before this God in judgment, and the reason you can be certain

So in Paul's way of thinking, these Athenians should be able to see the eyewitness testimony and have enough assurance that Paul can say emphatically, this is how God has told you assuredly that you will stand in judgment because of the eyewitnesses to the resurrection. Do you see how heavily Paul freights?

The eyewitness testimony, the new life testimony, Paul himself was an eyewitness. Damascus Road. He meets the risen Christ on the Damascus Road, and the change in Paul was so complete and so profound that he can say to the Athenians, I am your proof that you will stand in judgment before God. As we're reading in John's Gospel, if you're here with me in chapter 20, if you just look up a little bit, you'll notice in chapter 19 of that same chapter, That John is busy narrating the crucifixion of Jesus, but he interrupts himself in the narration of the crucifixion of Jesus to say this verse 33, but they came to Jesus and they saw that he was already dead and they did not break his legs, but one of the soldiers pierced his side with the spear and at once there came out blood and water.

Now notice what John says. He who saw it has borne witness His testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth that you may also believe. Do you see what John there believes? John fully believes that his eyewitness testimony is enough For you to believe you see that John plainly

has every estimation has every belief that his eyewitness testimony should be sufficient for you to believe.

Likewise, Paul says to the Athenians, you're witnessing of me because I'm an eyewitness. It's sufficient that you can absolutely be assured without a doubt these feelings of guilt that you experience. You're witnessing They're telling you the judgment's coming, and you can be assured of that because of the eyewitness testimony, you know, in a certain sort of way, all believers are that same type of testimony, or at least we should be, we should live lives that are so markedly different that in a similar but related way, we should also be able to say to the world, listen, my life is proof that there's judgment coming.

Why? Because the scriptures say so. Because the scriptures say God raised Christ from the dead and that is your assurance that judgment is coming So that's what applies to all people. But how do these eyewitnesses how do these eyewitness claims? What do they mean for us? How do they apply for us? So I wanted to just in the last minute or so here, notice in your notes here, I've got seven, seven truths that the scriptures specifically say, because of the resurrection, God has assured you of this, that you have unwavering assurance of this because of the resurrection.

And I don't, I'm not going to take the time to go through these. It's my hope that you'll take this and you'll sort of meditate on this. Maybe as we come back together for midweek. We've meditated on some of these, and we can explore some of these further. I just want to mention some of these. Scripture specifically says the resurrection is the assurance of these things.

First of all, it's the assurance that loved ones who have gone ahead in death and they are in Christ, that they're not lost to us. And the resurrection is the assurance of that. 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 14 and 15. For since we believe that Christ died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.

It's also the assurance that believers will experience a glorious physical existence for eternity. The assurance of your eternal physical existence and your glorious eternal physical existence. The assurance for that is the resurrection. 21. God, who raised Christ from the dead, will transform your lowly body to be like His glorious body.

It's also the assurance for us that our Redeemer King will certainly, assuredly return for His people. Amen. As the disciples were told this risen Christ whom you are now watching go up into the sky into the clouds, you'll see him come again for you. So his resurrection is our assurance that he's coming back for us.

It's also the assurance that his people will experience Christ's presence and Christ's power here in this life. Now, the assurance of that comes, as Jesus says, Matthew chapter 28 and verse 20. Make note that the risen Christ, the risen Christ says, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. It's our assurance that Jesus right now advocates for his people before the Father.

Romans 8 verse 34, Hebrews 7 verse 25. Since he always lives, he always lives because he's resurrected. He always lives to make intercession for us. It's the assurance that believers in Christ will inherit eternal life. The resurrection is our assurance of that. Christ could not have been more plain in John chapter 11, the Lazarus episode.

Amen. Amen. I am the resurrection in life, whoever believes in me, though we die, yet shall he live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. A few chapters later, chapter 14 in verse 19, Jesus says, because I live, you will also live. All of those and more are our assurance that the resurrection, the eyewitness testimony of the resurrection assures us of.

But the first one that I put here, and perhaps the one that's most worthy of note, is that the resurrection is the assurance. That the substitutionary payment that Christ made on behalf of his people was effective and accepted by God, God looked upon that and he said, done, received, paid for the resurrection is God's assurance that when we stand before him, we're not going to hear something like, you know, Christ, my son made a payment for you, he made a payment on your behalf and you believed upon him, but you know what?

After you believed upon him, you continue to sin. And you begged forgiveness for many of those sins, but you know, there's a couple that you, you just overlooked. The resurrection is the assurance that we will never hear those words. The resurrection is God's assurance. My son's payment. My son's righteous life lived in your place and his payment for your sin is accepted and stamped approved.