

Chapter Twenty-four (24:1-53)

THE SON OF MAN RISEN FROM THE DEAD

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Is there an alternative explanation for the empty tomb of Jesus besides the actual, bodily resurrection of Jesus from death?
2. Why did the angels have to remind the women of His prediction of resurrection?
3. Why did the apostles look upon the women's report as "an idle tale"?
4. Why didn't the two disciples on the road to Emmaus recognize Jesus?
5. Since the women and others had already reported an empty tomb, why were these two disciples so despondent?
6. Where do the Old Testament prophets write about the Messiah's death and resurrection? Why didn't the Jews believe what the prophets wrote?
7. How were the eyes of the two disciples "opened"?
8. When did the Lord appear to Simon?
9. Why were the disciples startled when Jesus appeared among them?
10. How is it possible to "disbelieve for joy"?
11. What was the promise of the Father yet to come upon the apostles?

SECTION 1

The Empty Crypt (24:1-12)

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices which they had prepared. ²And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; ⁵and 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?" ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise." ⁸And they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles; ¹¹but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

24:1-7 Dramatic Decree: More authentic detail is available on the death and burial of Jesus than of any other great man of the ancient world. There was no doubt in the minds of both His associates and His enemies that He had died and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. And the women who had watched where He had been buried came, very

early, on the first day of the week (Sunday), after the Sabbath was over, to anoint His body in the tomb. We now summarize a chronological order of the preliminary "watching" of the tomb by the women:

- a. Friday afternoon, "the sabbath was beginning" Lk. 23:54
Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Joses saw the tomb and "how His body was laid."
- b. Friday evening
Lk. 23:56a
They returned and prepared spices for embalming His body
- c. Friday after sunset and up to sunrise Saturday, Lk. 23:56b
They rested "according to the commandment"
- d. Saturday before noon
Mt. 27:62-66
Jewish rulers and soldiers secured the tomb—sealed it and set a guard.
- e. Saturday night, before sunset, Mt. 28:1
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went *to see* the tomb (Wieand says the Greek word *opse*, (translated "after" in RSV), may be translated "late," (Arndt and Gingrich say the same).
- f. Saturday, after sunset
Mk. 16:1
They purchased additional spices (after sunset on Saturday, sabbath restrictions are lifted since it is no longer the Sabbath). They went home for the night (not definitely stated but necessarily implied).
- g. Sunday, before sunup
Lk. 24:1; Mk. 16:2; Jn. 20:1
The women *started* for the tomb
Before sunup the women started for the tomb. Lk. 24:1 reads literally, "And on the one of the week, deeply early (very early) in the morning." Mk. 16:2 reads, "and extremely early." Jn. 20:1 reads, "early darkness."
- h. Sunday morning, sunrise
Mt. 28:2-4
Nisan (April) 17, A.D. 30
At sunrise a great earthquake; Jesus raised from the dead; an angel rolled back the stone; the soldiers fell down as if dead, then they ran off to report to their superiors.
- i. Sunday morning, just after sunrise, Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1a
John 20:1 says, "while . . . still dark" but the Greek verb *erchomai* may be translated either "came" or "went."

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- The women *arrived* at the tomb. Wieand suggests *switching* John's usage to "went" (while still dark) and Mark's usage to "came" (when the sun had risen). The original authors, for all we know, may very well have intended such usage. And, after all, it is a matter of English translation as to which word should be used—and that should be determined according to parallels and harmonization.
- j. Sunday morning, Mk. 16:3-4,
Lk. 24:2; Jn. 20:1b
The women saw the tomb already opened.
- k. Sunday morning, still early,
John 20:2
Mary Magdalene is shocked; believing someone has taken Jesus' body from the tomb, she runs to tell Peter and John. John 20:1a mentions only Mary Magdalene as going to the tomb. This is *not* a contradiction since John does not *say* she was the *only* woman who went. John mentions her specifically because she is the one who ran to him and Peter with the report of the empty tomb. The Synoptic gospels were already in existence when John wrote (95 A.D.) so he simply supplies material the Synoptics omitted.
- l. Sunday morning, Mt. 28:5-8
An angel appears to the other women; calms their fear; announces Jesus' resurrection from the dead; invites them into the tomb to see for themselves; tells them, after they have seen, to go tell His disciples they will see Him in Galilee.
- m. Sunday morning, Mk. 16:5-8
Lk. 24:3-8
They entered the tomb and another angel was there. They looked at the empty burial clothes, were exceedingly frightened, and hurried away with fear, and yet with great expectancy of joy. There appears to be some lapse of time before they told the disciples. They were afraid to tell

anyone at first (cf. Lk. 24:8 as it qualifies Mt. 28:8). This lapse of time would explain how Mary Magdalene could run away to tell Peter and John, run back to the tomb with them, have Jesus appear to her there, and still be found with the group of women later when Jesus appeared to the group. (This will be discussed further in the chronology of appearances).

n. Sunday morning, Lk. 24:9-12
Jn. 20:3-10

Peter and John, having been told by Mary that Jesus' body was missing from the tomb, ran to the tomb. Peter entered, found the facial cloth rolled up neatly apart from the rest of the burial wrappings. John then entered, saw, and confirmed for himself that the body was gone. As yet they are *not* convinced Jesus is raised from the dead.

Luke reports the women found the stone rolled away upon their arrival at the tomb. It is probable that Christ arose from the dead at the moment the earthquake occurred (Mt. 28:2). Often in Scripture the earthquake signifies a divine visitation (Mt. 27:51, 54). But we cannot be dogmatic about the exact time of His resurrection. No one saw it or recorded it. The angel came to roll away the stone, not to allow Jesus to leave the tomb, but to let men and women see with their own eyes the empty tomb. Jesus did not need the stone rolled away or doors opened for Him to leave or enter any place (Jn. 20:19) after His resurrection. There was no need for anyone to be present at the exact moment of His resurrection, either, since He appeared afterward in His glorified body to many eyewitnesses. That is the proof of His resurrection.

The women entered the tomb and found the body of Jesus gone. They had seen, themselves, His body placed in that very tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. They were perplexed; Luke uses the Greek word *diaporeisthai*, which means literally, they were "searching for a way through" their confusion. They could think of no explanation at this moment for the body being gone. There are really only four possible explanations: (a) Jesus did not die and was not buried; that has already been disavowed by enemies and associates alike, if the records are authentic; (b) the women went to the wrong tomb; but the gospel accounts document

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the meticulous efforts of the women to determine exactly where He was interred, even to going to the tomb at the moment of burial and returning once again; (c) either friends or enemies stole His body and placed it elsewhere; we will deal with the allegation that His friends stole His body, later, but most assuredly the enemies of Jesus were *not* interested in seeing His body stolen from that tomb and letting anyone get the idea that He had risen from the dead—they took every human precaution they could to preclude that possibility; (d) He actually arose from the dead, in His crucified and buried body, and came forth from the tomb by His glorified, supernatural power, as the gospel accounts declare. If the gospel accounts are authentic and credible (and they certainly are that), the last possibility is the only one acceptable.

While the women were in a state of confusion, two men (Gr. *andres*) stood beside them. These “men” were angels (Mt. 28:2, 5). Luke describes them as clothed in “dazzling apparel” (Gr. *astraptousais*, the same word used to describe the appearance of Jesus at His transfiguration, Lk. 9:30). These were heavenly beings who looked like men. Matthew and Mark mention only one—they do not say there is just one. The women were terrified. This is the normal human reaction when confronted by angels (cf. Dan. 10:7-9; Rev. 22:8-9). But these men said to the women, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” More literally, the angels said, “Why are you seeking the living *one* among the dead ones?” The phrase “he is not here, but has risen” should, we think, be a part of the text. Most of the earliest and most significant ancient manuscripts contain the phrase. Only a few manuscripts omit it. The women still did not understand. Finally, the angels said, “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.*” Jesus made this prediction a number of times in Galilee (Mt. 16:21; 17:23) and in Judea (Mt. 20:19). When Jesus had said it before, those who heard it, because of prejudice and because of its non-experiential nature, did not let it register. They could not conceive of such a thing so they did not believe it. But now, the drama of the angelic presence and the empty tomb and the message of the angels force them to remember and accept the predictions of Jesus as the possible answer to the empty tomb.

24:8-12 Doubling Disciples: Jesus never referred to His cross without declaring also that He would rise again. The angels remembered; men and women did not! Human beings heard, but they did not comprehend—because they did not believe. It was not until Jesus appeared, bodily—in the same body laid in the tomb with nail prints and all—that His own followers believed:

- a. Sunday morning (John 20:11-17): *First appearance:* All the women, except Mary Magdalene (who had gone to tell Peter and John), left

the tomb and started back to Jerusalem. Peter and John, and probably Mary Magdalene following them, must have gone to the tomb by another way. Mary Magdalene stood near the tomb weeping, after Peter and John had returned to the city. Jesus appeared, there in the garden, some distance from Mary. In the early morning she could not distinguish who the person was. Jesus spoke her name and she recognized Him and grabbed Him. Jesus informs her that she cannot keep Him on earth any more—she must prepare herself for His return to Heaven.

b. Sunday (Mt. 28:9-10; Lk. 24:9-11; Mk. 16:10-11; Jn. 20:18): *Second appearance*: Mary Magdalene apparently caught up with the group of women as they were returning to the city. Jesus then appeared to the whole group of women, Mary Magdalene included (Lk. 24:10), as they were on their way to tell the disciples gathered in a secret place in Jerusalem. The women finally arrived (Mary Magdalene appears to be the spokeswoman) and told the apostles they had seen the risen Lord. Mark tells us the apostles were mourning and weeping (Mk. 16:10). When the women (led by Mary Magdalene, John 20:18) told the apostles their story, the apostles would not believe (Mk. 16:11) and thought that the women were making up some fairy story! (Gr. *leros*, a medical term describing giddiness, delirium or hysteria). These apostles were hard-headed, logically-thinking men who insisted on a world of reality. That is the way they had lived their whole lives as fisherman and tax-collectors. They knew Jesus had died; they knew He had been buried; they would not believe He was alive again unless they could see Him up, walking and talking and eating in that same body (as they had seen Lazarus, earlier).

Sometime that same Sunday the guards who fled from the tomb reported to the officials of the Sanhedrin *all* that had taken place (cf. Mt. 28:11-15). What the "all" includes we may only speculate. We wonder if the guards knew more about the resurrection than that an earthquake had taken place. We wonder what they thought about the stone being rolled away—perhaps they, too, saw the angel. They knew enough that they had to be bribed. Not only so, but a story was fabricated for them in order to *explain away* the truth. The "stolen body theory" is as ludicrous now as it was then!

c. Sunday (I Cor. 15:5): *Third appearance*: Jesus appeared to Peter alone somewhere in Jerusalem. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus mention it (Lk. 24:34) as having already happened when Jesus walks with them. Peter was the acknowledged "leader" of the apostolic band. Jesus had already exhorted Peter to strengthen his brethren when he should repent of his denial. Peter would welcome special indication from Jesus that he had been forgiven and was still trusted to be an apostle. Peter would be one of the first to proclaim the resurrection (Acts 2) and one of the first to defend it before Jewish enemies—he must be *certain* of it!

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SECTION 2

The Emmaus Conversation (24:13-32)

13 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened. ²²Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning ²³and did not find his body; and they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said; but him they did not see." ²⁵And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, ²⁹but they constrained him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. ³²They 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?"

24:13-24 Dark Despondency: Luke gives a very condensed account of the first day (Sunday) of the resurrection. He mentions the empty tomb, two appearances of Jesus, and then, omitting all the intervening thirty-nine days, describes the ascension (Lk. 24:44-53; Acts 1:6-11). But Luke's account is of great significance. He was a physician. All his scientific

training would have prejudiced him against a bodily resurrection. The two appearances he records are uniquely suited to supply evidence to this physician (and any other scientist) of the reality of a phenomenon outside his human experience! Luke traced all things accurately. He has the facts. Here they are:

d. Sunday afternoon ("that very day . . .") (Mk. 16:12; Lk. 24:13-35): *Fourth appearance*: Two disciples of Jesus had left Jerusalem and were headed for the little village of Emmaus. Emmaus may be derived from an Aramaic name meaning, "bath" or "wells"; it was about seven miles northwest of Jerusalem. One of the disciples was named *Cleopas*. Lightfoot believes Cleopas to be Alpheus, the father of the apostle James (cf. Mt. 10:3). It is not the same person as Clopas, the husband of Mary (Jn. 19:25), in Greek the two names are spelled differently—*Kleopas* and *Klopa*, respectively. Some think the "other" disciple might have been Luke, but that is highly improbable; other commentators think it may have been the wife of *Cleopas*. We do not know.

These two disciples were walking along the dusty road sermonizing to one another. Luke uses the Greek word *homilein* to describe their conversation—it is the word from which we get the English, *homiletics*, or sermonizing. They were analyzing all the things that had happened in Jerusalem concerning Jesus the last few days. The Greek word *suzetein* is translated "discussing" in verse 15, and means "debate, argue, reason, dispute." This was not a casual conversation! They were so engrossed in their discussion they did not even notice when Jesus joined them in their journey, nor did they notice who He was. There was nothing miraculous about their "eyes being kept from recognizing Him." Jesus certainly had no purpose in keeping them from knowing who He was—in fact, His purpose was to *get* them to recognize Him. They were depressed. They had no more anticipation of a bodily resurrection than the apostles back in Jerusalem. Jesus asked about their discussion. The Greek literally reads, "What are these *words (logoi)* which you are *throwing* back and forth (*antiballete*) toward one another?" It was an animated conversation! They stopped and looked out of their eyes sadly (Gr. *skuthropos*)—probably looking toward the ground. Perhaps without even looking up, Cleopas answered, "Are you the only *stranger* (Gr. *paroikeis*, lit. "one who dwells parallel to; or, alien") to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" They thought it incredible that anyone, even an outsider or a visitor, should not have heard something of what had transpired recently. So they related to this fellow traveler all the information they had, adding their interpretation. Their information was:

- a. Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet; mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.
- b. The chief priests and rulers delivered Jesus up to death by crucifixion.

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- c. Three days had gone by since that had taken place.
- d. Some women disciples of Jesus, gone to the tomb, found the body of Jesus gone, reported back that angels told them He was alive.
- e. Other disciples they knew personally had gone to the tomb and found it just as the women had said—empty.
- f. But no one had seen Jesus.

Luke's Greek is interesting as he reports their statement: "*But* (Gr. *de*) we were hoping that He is the one going to redeem Israel." "*Yes, and* (Gr. *alla ge*) besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened." "*Moreover* (Gr. *alla kai*) some women amazed us. . . ." These hesitating, vacillating words imply emotional confusion. "We wanted to believe . . . but then He has been dead three days . . . but on the other hand we have this incredible story by the women. . . ." They had seen His mighty deeds and heard Him prophesy; they knew what the Old Testament prophets had written about the Messiah; they had heard the accounts of the empty tomb and the angelic announcements; still they did not believe! One of the greatest proofs of the resurrection of Jesus is that none of His followers expected it to happen!

24:25-32 Delirious Delight: Jesus rebuked them for their absence of understanding (Gr. *anoetoi*, "without comprehension"). He told them they were too hesitant (Gr. *bradeis*)—they should believe the facts testified to by the women as the fulfillment of what their prophets predicted and not let their human rationalizations hinder them from faith. Jesus asked the rhetorical question, "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" He expected them to answer, "Yes!" But they did not answer. So He began with Moses (the Pentateuch) and went through all the prophets, interpreting to them in all the scriptures (including the books of poetry too) the things concerning Himself. This would involve instruction in all the *types* and *prophecies* and *symbols* in the Old Testament which point directly or indirectly to the Messiah's redemptive suffering (Gr. *pathein*, "pathos"). The limitation of space does not permit us here to list all the types and symbolisms of the Messiah's suffering and glorification. We trust the following references to prophecies will suffice to explain Jesus' exhortation:

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

Zechariah 11:7-14

Zechariah 13:1-9

Psalms 110:1-7

II Sam. 7:12

Daniel 9:24-27

Zechariah 12:10-14

Psa. 16:1-11

Psalms 22:1-31

Psalms 89:3-4

The tenth verse of Psalm 96, according to some ancient Christian scholars, has been corrupted. Jerome, Augustine, Tertullian and others

make this charge. Justin Martyr, 100-167 A.D., stated his belief that the Jews, out of hatred for Christ, tampered with the text because it prophesied the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom by means of His suffering and death upon the cross. Our modern versions read; "Say unto the peoples: the Lord reigneth." In the version called *Italica Antiqua*, which was in use during the first centuries of the Church, and also in the *Psalterio Romano*, the verse is rendered: "Say unto the peoples: the Lord reigneth *from the tree*" or *a ligno*, as it is in the Latin. For the Psalmist to say that the Lord God Himself—the Almighty—was to establish His government in the hearts of men on the basis of a cursed cross was something so horrifying, so unthinkable and so repulsive to the human rationalizations of the Jews they simply refused to accept the idea. The cross of Christ became a stumbling block to the majority of them (cf. I Cor. 1:23).

Jesus did not merely recount all the Old Testament predictions of the Messiah, He "interpreted" (Gr. *diermeneuen*, the word from which we get "hermeneutics") to them the things concerning Himself. What a lesson that must have been! Beginning with the "seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15) He would proceed through the types and shadows of the Mosaic covenant, into the monarchy and David's throne, and concluding with all the prophets. Still mastered by their despondency more than His teaching, they do not yet recognize Him. He has done nothing yet to give them evidence He is Jesus, risen bodily from the dead.

When they drew near to Emmaus Jesus gave some indication that He was going to travel on. Perhaps they were intrigued and deeply interested in what He was saying, perhaps they were simply exercising the importance placed on hospitality to strangers, so they "constrained" Him to stay with them. So He went in to abide (Gr. *meinai*) with them. When it came time for the evening meal, they all reclined (Gr. *kataklithenai*) on their couches about the table and Jesus took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Here, as a guest, Jesus takes the part of the host or the "Master" of the meal. The Greek phrase would read literally, "And it was, in the reclining of Him with them, taking the loaf He blessed, and having broken He gave to them." This was just the way He had acted with them so many times before. As He broke the bread, they may have seen the nail prints in His hands; as He prayed, they may have recognized familiar phrases or urgency of voice. Whatever the evidence they now had, it was enough to make them recognize Him (Gr. *epegnosan*, "fully perceive, discern, recognize"—from the Greek verb, "to know"). No sooner did they discover it was Jesus, risen bodily from the dead, eating supper with them, than He vanished out of their sight. The Greek phrase is, *autos aphantos egeneto*, "He, non-visible, became." Barnes thinks there was nothing miraculous in this, but He simply withdrew from their presence while they were still stunned by the surprise. On the other hand,

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it is possible that it was a miraculous disappearance to give them evidence of His glorified state. All the disciples must understand that He is not risen bodily for the purpose of remaining on earth. He told Mary she must not "hold onto Him" as if to keep Him on earth (cf. our comments, *Gospel of John*, pg. 426, College Press). Later, He will appear suddenly to the apostles in the room where they had closed all the doors for fear of the Jews (cf. Mk. 16:13-14; Lk. 24:36-42; Jn. 20:19-20). In His glorified body He was able to appear and disappear, to materialize and dematerialize, to go through closed doors or walls—and why shouldn't He if He was earlier able to walk on water, read minds, predict the future, raise the dead, cast out demons and be transfigured to talk with Moses and Elijah!

Whatever happened, it so excited these two disciples, they exclaimed, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?" The Greek word for "burned" is *kaiomene* and is often used metaphorically of spiritual light (cf. Lk. 12:35; Jn. 5:35). Jesus had turned on the light of truth about the Messiah's death and resurrection in their hearts that day. Their gloom was gone. They were no longer despondent and without hope. Now they were filled with faith and joy. They could not contain themselves.

SECTION 3

The Eleven Confronted (24:33-43)

³³And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them,

³⁴who said, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"

³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

³⁶As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them. ³⁷But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit.

³⁸And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questions rise in your hearts? ³⁹See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴¹And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate before them.

24:33-40 Disconcerting Demonstration: The two disciples in Emmaus rose from the supper table and returned (rapidly, no doubt) the seven miles back to Jerusalem. It took them about an hour to walk the road back.

e. Sunday evening, late (Jn. 20:19-20; Mk. 16:13-14; Lk. 24:33-43):
Fifth appearance: To the apostles and disciples in Jerusalem, Thomas

absent. The Emmaus disciples arrived in Jerusalem and found where the apostles were hiding. John tells us the doors were shut where the apostles were for fear of the Jews (Jn. 20:19). They are now called by the title "the eleven" instead of "the twelve" since Judas had hanged himself. But there were not eleven of the apostles present—Thomas had absented himself for some reason (see Jn. 20:24). This also shows that the two Emmaus disciples were not apostles. There were others present with the apostles and some of them said, "The Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon!" The Greek word translated "appeared" is *ophthe* and is a derivative of the words *horao* and *ophthalmos* and carries with it the definite connotation of something seen with the eyes. The Lord's "appearance" to Peter was objective, not subjective. The two disciples from Emmaus then related to the group their experience of seeing the risen Lord and gave the objective evidences which convinced them it was Jesus. The apostles did not believe even then (Mk. 16:13).

As they were talking, Jesus appeared suddenly in the room with them. They were terrified (Gr. *ptoethentes*, "in consternation, in paralyzed fear") and filled with fear (Gr. *emphoboi*, phobia). Apparently He did not come through a door as normally expected, but "materialized" right through the closed door. They thought (Gr. *edokoun*, stronger than "supposed") they were seeing a spirit (Gr. *pneuma*). Jesus chides them for having troubled minds and doubts and suspicions. They have the testimony of the women, the testimony of Peter and the testimony of the two Emmaus disciples—why do they still doubt? But with the patience and love He had always shown, Jesus offers further evidence. It is very important to note here that Jesus presented proof to three of the sensory perceptors of man—sight, hearing, touch. This is *scientific* evidence; it is what is called *experiential* and meets the demands of any honest-minded scientist to prove the fact beyond any reasonable doubt. The apostles appeal to this sensate evidence later as the very center of their gospel proclamation (Acts 10:41). The apostles did not seek to persuade men on the basis of their own faith, but on the basis of scientific, eyewitnessed evidence. Jesus invited them to "see and touch" the hands and feet which had the nail scars in them (as well as His side, Jn. 20:20).

"A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have," said Jesus, and then He showed them His hands and His feet. That last phrase is omitted from our printed text (v. 40), but many ancient manuscripts include it (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, et al.). We believe it to be textually verified.

24:41-43 Dazzled Disciples: They "disbelieved for joy." That is not an unusual reaction when surprised by a visit from someone one thinks is dead. Many people have had the same experience with returned prisoners-of-war or with "miraculously escaped" victims of natural disasters and

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have said, "I see you, but I just can't believe you're alive—is it really you—say something or do something so I will know it is you!" The apostles were wondering and Jesus asked for something to eat to prove to them "He was Himself" (Gr. *ego eimi autos*, 24:39). They gave Him a piece of broiled fish (some manuscripts add, "and honeycomb") and He ate it. Once again, Luke the physician has traced accurately all things and documented evidence of the bodily resurrection of Jesus experiential enough to satisfy his own scientific mind and any other fair-minded person who will investigate the authenticity and credibility of Luke's record.

- f. One week later—Sunday (Jn. 20:26-29): *Sixth appearance*: Jesus appeared to the apostles again in Jerusalem. This time Thomas was present. Thomas was invited to touch the nail prints in Jesus' body. Thomas was convinced. The only way to call this an hallucination is to call John a liar. The gospel account plainly states it as an *empirical event*.
- g. Sometime later—unknown time (Jn. 21:1-25): *Seventh appearance*: Jesus appeared to seven of the apostles while they were fishing. They did not recognize Him at first. He worked a miracle and invited them to breakfast. John then recognized Him. Peter jumped out of the boat and hurried to shore ahead of the others. This is the *third* revelation of Himself to the apostles. After breakfast, Jesus challenges Peter's concept of "love."
- h. Still later—unknown time (Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-18): *Eighth appearance*: Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles on a mountain in Galilee and gave them the Great Commission. Some make this the same as the appearance to the "five hundred brethren at once" in I Cor. 15:6. The text seems to imply this appearance was restricted to the eleven apostles.
- i. Still later—unknown time (I Cor. 15:6): *Ninth appearance*: Jesus appeared to over "five hundred brethren at once" in a place unknown, but testified to by the apostle Paul. Many of those people were still alive when Paul wrote to the Corinthians.
- j. Still later—unknown time, at Jerusalem (I Cor. 15:7): *Tenth appearance*: Jesus appeared to James. We are not certain which James, but probably Jesus' half-brother—the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15).

SECTION 4

Eleven Commissioned, Again (24:44-53)

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words which 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.”

⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³and were continually in the temple blessing God.

24:44-49 Divine Declaration: In Jerusalem, at some time between His appearance to James and His ascension, Jesus met with His apostles and reiterated His commission to them. We do not know how much time elapsed. We do know it was forty days between His resurrection and His ascension.

k. Still later—unknown time, at Jerusalem (Lk. 24:44-49): *Eleventh appearance:* Both Wieand in his, *A New Harmony of The Gospels*, and Shephard, in his, *The Christ of the Gospels*, place this appearance separate from fifth appearance (Lk. 24:36-43). The same appearance is described in Acts 1:3-8. Evidently Jesus spent many hours during these forty days in intense instruction to the apostles and disciples concerning the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in His redemptive incarnation. The two great lines of evidence appealed to in apostolic preaching (Acts) and apostolic writing (Epistles) are the empirical facts witnessed in His death, burial and resurrection, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in His deeds and teachings.

It is interesting to note that Jesus summarized the entire message of the Old Testament as a prediction that the Messiah should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Yes, that was what God was saying in the Old Testament—redemption and evangelism. There is little doubt that the Old Testament is filled with predictions that God’s redemptive deeds will be to all people when one reads the prophets—especially Isaiah (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 19:16-24; 25:6-9; 42:1-4; 49:5-7; 51:4-6; 60:1-3; 61:1-9, etc.). All this God chose Israel to do. It was Israel’s destiny to give birth to the Redeemer and to be a kingdom of priests in order to take the message of redemption to the whole world. The majority of the Israelites defaulted on that destiny. But God’s redemptive program was not thwarted. He called upon a small minority, a remnant, eleven apostles and a few disciples, and they answered.

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He sent them to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all the nations. And that message of repentance and forgiveness was validated by the testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (cf. Acts 2:22-42; 3:12-26; 17:30-31, etc.). There is no reason for men to repent if Christ is not raised; there is no hope for forgiveness if Christ is not raised. So Jesus said, "You are witnesses of these things." They witnessed only His death, burial and resurrection. They preached repentance and forgiveness because He promises it and His promises are absolutely trustworthy *because* of His resurrection. Repentance (a change of direction, both in mind and deed) and forgiveness of sin (release from guilt and reconciliation to God) is man's most fundamental need. Jesus says it is available "in His name"—that is, by His authority, and in His way of life.

Jesus said to the apostles He would send the "promise of the Father" upon them. That "promise" was, of course, the supernatural powers and privileges enumerated by Jesus at various times (Mt. 16:17-20; 19:28-30; John 14-17; Jn. 20:20-23, etc.). These eleven apostles (and one to be added) would open the doors to the kingdom, establish it, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, and leave with the infant church an infallibly inspired set of documents known as the New Testament. To these apostles would be granted great privilege, great responsibility and great persecutions (Mk. 10:30). All those were promises of the Father.

This same conversation in the book of Acts reveals to us that the apostles were still clinging to the materialistic view of the kingdom of God. They asked Jesus if He were, at this time, about to restore the kingdom to Israel, (Acts 1:6). They must, therefore, have the power of the Holy Spirit to accompany their preaching. The Holy Spirit's miraculous powers working through the apostles would be necessary not only to keep them aware that the kingdom was spiritual and to guide them inerrantly in their teaching, but also to verify their message of the spirituality of the kingdom for the whole world. The spiritual nature of the kingdom of God is foreign to the carnal mind of man. Without the inspired revelation of the Holy Spirit, men would not believe it!

24:50-53 Dedicated Devotees: After admonishing them to stay in the city of Jerusalem until they were "clothed" with power from on high, He led them out as far as Bethany (on the Mount of Olives, cf. Acts 1:12), and lifting up His hands He blessed them.

1. Last of May (Hebrew month, Iyyar), A.D. 30: *Twelfth appearance:* While He blessed them, He parted from them. Greek manuscripts Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi, Washingtonius and Koridethi, et al, add, "and was carried into heaven." We do know that He ascended into heaven because this same gospel writer, Luke, records the event in his Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:9-11). The apostles saw Him go, bodily, up into the heavens and disappear from their sight. He appeared, once more, bodily, to Saul of Tarsus, near Damascus, Syria (I Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:3-9).

For a while the apostles remained, staring into heaven, awed, shocked, wondering and probably confused. But two angels appeared and directed them, "Why are you standing here staring into the heavens, this same Jesus who was received up from you into heaven, will come back from heaven in the same manner you saw Him go." This filled them with great joy, and they returned to Jerusalem in obedience to their Lord's word, worshipping in the Temple as they awaited the beginning of their great task to preach His name to the whole world.

The record of God's redemption according to Luke does not really end here. It continues through the Acts of the Apostles, for the good news resulted in the establishment of Christ's church first at Jerusalem, and then in the uttermost parts of the civilized world. The Holy Spirit did empower the apostles; He did validate their message with miracles and signs (cf. Heb. 2:3-4; Acts 2:1ff.). The Holy Spirit did call to their remembrance all Jesus taught them as recorded in this Gospel and the others; He did lead them into all the truth necessary for the establishment and satisfaction of the church. And the apostles (and thousands of other believers) did go and bear witness to the redemptive plan of God as it was accomplished in Christ.

Jesus did and said many other things than those recorded in Luke's gospel or John's gospel or in the other two (cf. Jn. 20:30-31; 21:25), but all that is necessary for any man to believe and obey Christ unto salvation is recorded in the New Testament. What is recorded in the gospel accounts is sufficient to produce faith in Christ as the Son of God in the heart of any honest-minded individual. We will discuss the matter of believing the gospel accounts in the addendum to this chapter. You will want to read that next!

Tradition says that Luke lived until he was 84 years of age never marrying, and after his death he was buried in a city called Thebes, in Bithynia. We do not know the certainty of all that but we do know Luke's name will live on while this earth remains and his great faith and dedication to produce an "orderly and accurate" account after having "followed all things closely" has resulted in millions of people coming to believe Jesus is the Son of Man and the Son of God and may result in millions more believing also. We here express our gratitude to God for His divine providence that would call and empower such a man as Luke to put into writing the deeds and sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ. The uniqueness of Luke's record, compared to the other three records, is a classic example that God wishes to communicate His good news to all men, whatever their culture or whatever their inclinations.

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ADDENDUM ON THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the fundamental fact of Christianity. Without it there can be no Biblical Christianity. Without it there is no hope for mankind. Paul makes it the one absolute essential to faith, morals, brotherhood and proclamation (I Cor. 15:1-58). Without the bodily resurrection, in time, in space, in history, established on empirical evidence, the death of Christ is vain, the faith of the Christian is vain, the preaching of the church is vain, and Christians are, of all men, most to be pitied. So we here offer this study in the hope that believers will have their faith founded on this fact of history and that unbelievers will, in honesty and openness, be persuaded to believe in the living Christ.

I. BASIC ATTACKS ON THE RESURRECTION

- A. Denial of the authenticity of the gospel accounts, or a denial of their credibility.
- B. Explaining the gospel miracles as myths.
- C. Making faith in God a matter of subjective experiences or feelings and, therefore, declaring the factuality of miracles and the bodily resurrection irrelevant to being a Christian.

II. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE LAWS OF EVIDENCE APPLIED TO THE QUESTION OF THE FACTUAL TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY (excerpts from an article by John Warwick Montgomery, entitled, "Legal Reasoning and Christian Apologetics," *Christianity Today*, 2-14-75).

- A. The "ancient documents rule:"
 1. Ancient documents will be received as competent evidence if they are fair-on-their-face (i.e. if they offer no internal evidence of tampering) and have been maintained in reasonable custody (i.e. if their preservation has been consistent with their content).
 2. Applied to the gospel records, and reinforced by responsible lower (textual) criticism, this rule would establish their competency in any court of law.
- B. The "parol (i.e., oral, word of mouth) evidence rule:"
 1. External, oral testimony will not be received in evidence to add to, subtract from, vary, contradict an executed written instrument such as a will.
 2. Applied to the Biblical documents which expressly claim to be "executed" and complete (Heb. 9:15-17; Rev. 22:18-19), this rule insists that Scripture be allowed to interpret itself and not be twisted or contradicted by external, extra-biblical data (such as comparative New Eastern religious texts and practices, "new" hermeneutics, Form Criticism methods, etc., etc.).

- C. The "hearsay rule:"
1. A witness must testify of his own knowledge, not on the basis of what has come to him indirectly from others.
 2. This demand for primary—source evidence is fully vindicated in the New Testament documents by the constant claim of its authors to be setting forth that which they have "seen and heard and handled (touched) concerning the Word of Life. . ." (I Jn. 1:1-4).
 3. In the document of Luke, he nowhere claims for himself eye-witness primacy, but he does so for his sources, (Lk. 1:1-4).
- D. The related "cross-examination" principle:
1. All trials proceed upon the idea that some confidence is due to human testimony, and this confidence grows and becomes more steadfast in proportion as the witness has been subjected to a close and searching cross-examination.
 2. Applied to the New Testament message of the first century, this rule underscores the reliability of testimony to Christ's resurrection which was presented in the very teeth of opposition (in Jewish synagogues and among Greek and Roman philosophers and rulers) among hostile cross-examiners who would certainly have destroyed the case for Christianity had the *facts* been otherwise.

Just such rules of evidence sufficiently settle issues of life and death in human society—and always have—even in the most "primitive" societies. They are sufficient for believing in historically documented facts upon which to establish faith and action in religion (as they are for scientific and legal matters).

III. TREATISE ON THE LAW OF EVIDENCE (excerpts from the writings of Simon Greenleaf, 1783-1853, U.S. legal educator, head of Harvard Law School in 1846; drafted original constitution of Independent Republic of Liberia; classed with the world's greatest legal minds such as Kent and Blackstone; president of Massachusetts Bible Society for many years; wrote, *the Testimony of The Evangelists*).

- A. Principles
1. To establish the historicity of the facts of Christianity, nothing more is demanded than is readily conceded to every branch of human science!
 2. Christianity does not profess to convince the perverse and headstrong, to bring irresistible evidence to vanquish every question. All it professes is to propose such evidence as may satisfy the disciplined, teachable, honest, serious searcher for truth.
 3. The foundation of Christianity is based on facts. These facts are testified to as having occurred within the personal knowledge of

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the Gospel writers. Christianity, then, rests upon the credibility of these witnesses. Are they worthy of implicit belief? This is the question in all human tribunals in regard to persons testifying before them.

B. Precepts

1. Every document apparently ancient, coming from the proper custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise. We are entitled to assume the texts of the Gospels are genuine until the contrary is shown conclusively with empirical evidence.
2. If it be objected that the originals are lost, and that we have only copies, the principles of municipal law apply here also. For if any ancient document concerning our public rights (our Constitution, Bill of Rights, etc.) were lost, copies which had been as universally received and acted upon as the four Gospels have been, would have been received in evidence in any court of law without the slightest hesitation.
3. In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the proper inquiry is *not* whether it is possible that the testimony may be false (as critics approach it) *but* whether there is sufficient probability that it is true!
4. In weighing the evidence of any proposition of fact, the question to be determined is, *when* may it be said to be proved. A proposition of fact is *proved*, when its truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence beyond *reasonable* doubt.
 - a. Competent: Such as the nature of the thing to be proved requires. (seeing, hearing, touching, etc.).
 - b. Satisfactory: Amount of proof which ordinarily satisfied an unprejudiced mind beyond any reasonable doubt.
 - c. Sufficiency: Enough to satisfy the mind and conscience of an honest man and cause him to act upon that conviction.

When one has this degree of certainty, it is unreasonable to require more.

5. In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed to be credible, until the contrary is shown. The burden of impeaching his credibility lies upon the objector.
6. Honesty: All witnesses are entitled to the benefit of the axiom that men ordinarily speak the truth, when they have no prevailing motive or inducement to the contrary. If the testimony of the gospel writers is false why would they have lied to bring

upon themselves all the misery and persecution of Christianity's enemies?

7. Ability: The ability of a witness to speak the truth depends on the opportunities he has had for observing the fact, the accuracy of his powers of observing and discerning, and the faithfulness of his memory in recalling the facts. We can at least grant to the gospel writers the abilities of most human beings until the contrary is shown. This is the procedure of legal justice. Matthew was a tax-collector; Luke was a physician; both were trained in such abilities to remember and record facts.
8. Number and consistency of witnesses: Enough disparity is needed in the witnesses (as to time separations, geographical separations, etc.) to show there was no collusion. Enough agreement in the documents of the witnesses is needed to show they were independent recorders of the *same* great events.
9. Conformity of testimony with experience: What the gospel writers witnessed and testified to was experienced or seen and heard by others (cf. Acts 2:22, etc.).
10. Coincidence of testimony with collateral and contemporaneous facts and circumstances:
 - a. Had the evangelists been false historians, they would not have *committed* themselves on so many *particulars*.
 - b. Had the evangelists been false historians, they would not have furnished their enemies with such documents for bringing them into discredit with their audiences.
 - c. It is not possible for the wit of man to *invent* a story, which if closely compared to the actual occurrences of the *same* time and place, may not be shown to be false.
 - d. Comparing the gospels to the histories of that era proves their authenticity.
 - e. False witnesses will not willingly or *consciously* detail any circumstances in which their testimony may be open to contradiction. Nor will they *multiply* circumstances where there is danger of comparisons that could be made and exposure made.
 - f. False witnesses deal in *general* statements and broad assertions. When forced to use names and particular circumstances they will try to invent such as will be out of reach of all investigation and opposing proof. THIS IS NOT SO WITH THE THE GOSPELS!

It should be clearly settled in the mind of honest investigators that the Biblical documents known as the Gospels meet all the principles and rules of legal and scientific evidence herein proposed.

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IV. THE GOSPELS ARE NOT MYTHS

- A. Rudolph Bultmann, celebrated theologian, says, the message of Christ provides religious truth, but *not* historical facts.
1. Jesus of Nazareth, according to Bultmann, was merely a man about whom we know very little.
 2. Whatever the Gospels say about Jesus cannot be taken as historically true except for a few facts such as his life in first century Palestine, his trial under Pontius Pilate, and his death by crucifixion. The rest must be myth and fable *created* and compiled by the early Christian believers.
 3. These early believers used the "religious myths" of the virgin birth and the resurrection to ascribe divinity to Jesus. The "myth" concept is popularized in books like *The Passover Plot*.
- B. Myths compared to the Gospels
1. In Homer's *Odyssey* there is the myth of Circe, an evil enchantress who lured men into her garden and then changed them into pigs. In the same Greek mythology is the myth of Polyphemus, the one-eyed Cyclops who killed and ate some of Odysseus' men who hid in his cave. Aesop's Fables are a form of myth.
 2. But the gospel accounts are factual documents describing a man named Jesus who lived and died and was resurrected completely and *bodily within the realm of history*.
 3. Mythological gods lived in the imaginary realm of the unseen on Mount Olympus or some other unknown and unseen place, and never performed their alleged deaths or resurrections in real life as real-bodied beings. They could never be verified historically.
 4. Christ's resurrection happened only once! Mythological gods were resurrected constantly, according to the annual changes in seasons.
 5. J. Gresham Machen in *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, says, most of these mystery religions did not exist in the form which the critics say is like Christianity.
 6. Only some forty days after the death of the historical person Jesus, His disciples were proclaiming to their contemporaries the detailed facts of His return to life in the same body buried in the tomb. Mythological characters took many generations and often, centuries, to develop and gain followers.
 7. Even if the disciples of Jesus had borrowed (which no evidence shows they did) from the myths prevalent in their day it would have taken longer than forty days to establish the "Jesus-myth." Extant portions of copies of manuscripts of the Gospel accounts date back to within 50 years of the eyewitnesses of Christ's life!

8. The history of the Jews (and Jesus' apostles were Jews) during the first century A.D. and before shows they were *violently opposed* to Greek and Roman religious mythology. So Jesus' apostles would have been seriously anti-mythology.
9. If the resurrection of Christ was a myth, why encumber it with the details of a common human existence which made it open to investigation by its enemies! Placing the hero of this alleged "Christ-myth" in their own time, instead of saying it happened centuries before their time, these apostles would have robbed their story of the enormous prestige of antiquity. Surely, they would have been as intelligent as other myth-makers.
10. If the resurrection of Christ had been nothing more than a myth, the witness to it would have been just as *palatable* as the hundred other myths were to the pagan civilization of their day. Myths required no sacrifice to believe, hardly ever did they involve persecution, and they usually permitted gross indulgences of the flesh. History shows that the message of Christ's atonement and resurrection was *not* palatable to those devotees of contemporary mystery religions and the same is still true today!
CHRIST'S RESURRECTION IS NO MYTH!

V. SUBJECTIVE OR "FEELING" RESURRECTION IS ALL THAT IS NEEDED

- A. "We cannot prove the resurrection as an historical fact and we do not need to . . . what the church needs . . . is the testimony of persons who . . . say that Christ has appeared to them . . . and that they have experienced his presence in some of the crises of meaningful experiences of their lives." by Dr. J. Daniel Joyce, dean of the Graduate Seminary, Phillips University, in *The Christian*, 3-30-1969.

"Christians need not affirm that Christ rose from the dead at all . . . so far as its having literal historical significance, it has become excess baggage for most of us . . ." Dr. D. W. Ferm, Presbyterian minister in *Newsweek*, 3-3-1972.

Rev. John Burke, P.O., executive director of the Word of God Institute, a Catholic organization, quoted in the Los Angeles Times, 9-5-1977: "said he did not know of 'any credible biblical scholar who would hold for a bodily Resurrection.'"

Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume, article by F. W. Saunders says the earliest form of Resurrection accounts among the first Christians "may have been the experience of Peter and his brethren in coming to faith, 'seeing' that Jesus was not a martyred prophet but in very fact Lord and Christ

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enthroned in glory. The mystery of that conviction is the mystery of faith.”

ALL SUBJECTIVE! NOW CONTRAST THESE STATEMENTS . . . WHICH DO YOU THINK REPRESENTS WHAT, USING THE NORMAL RULES OF UNDERSTANDING HUMAN LANGUAGE, THE GOSPEL WRITERS INTENDED THEIR READERS TO UNDERSTAND?

B. “The greatest derangement of the human mind is to believe because one wishes it to be so.” Louis Pasteur

“The heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false. . . . The beauty of the gospel in the avalanche of competing religious claims is precisely the possibility we have of checking it out historically and factually.” Clark Pinnock, in, *Set Forth Your Case*.

“The gospel is good news of God, not news of man . . . it has as its first concern not what man must do, but what God has done. It asks, Since God has so acted, what ought we men do? The Christian message demands attention not because it may be helpful, but because it is true. . . .” Sidney Cave, in, *The Christian Way*.

C. Facts → Testimony → Faith → Feeling, in that order and none other! “Because the power of faith (like prayer) rests not in the faith (or in prayer) itself but in the *object* (God and Christ) of the faith.

“It is not choosing nor refusing; it is not loving, hating, fearing, desiring or hoping; it is not the nature of any power or faculty or capacity of our being, nor the exercise of them but the *objects* or *things* upon which they are exercised which give us pleasure or pain; which induce us to action, or influence our behavior.

“The nature of God, demonstrated by the deeds of God, transmitted to us and imprinted upon our nature through the testimony of language transforms us into His image.” Alexander Campbell, in, *The Christian System*.

D. “The validity of Jesus rests *not* on how he makes us feel but on the historical facts of the first century. Getting high on Jesus is a dangerous step toward emotional insecurity. Christianity is not limited to our subjective feelings . . . else whenever we are depressed or frustrated, our faith is almost worthless. Christianity is sure no matter how many times we fail because it is factual. Christianity is not invalidated by our lack of success.” Dr. James North in San Jose Bible College *Broadcaster*, March 1974.

E. Our hope in the resurrection is not based on subjective feelings.
1. Christianity based on subjectivism or existentialism is like impressionistic art—its beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Such Christianity is validated by feelings, not by facts.

2. Any outlook which over emphasizes the subjective in religion and disregards rational objectivity can neither invalidate a false revelation nor validate a true one. If you are sincere in your search for the Real, you must not repudiate the Rational.
 3. Man trusts, has assurance, loves, acts morally, and hopes on the basis of what God has done, historically, in the past. God has given man a trustworthy record of His redemptive action.
 4. Validating one's religion primarily by one's subjective feelings makes one his own god and that is no better than any other form of idolatry.
- F. The Gospels (and the whole New Testament) are authentic, trustworthy historical records by eyewitnesses that God entered history in the Person of Jesus Christ, died to atone for sin, arose from the dead bodily, and ascended into heaven. The Bible does not ask us how we feel about that, but rather, do we believe it and are we willing to obey it! Redemption does not depend on what one feels about these things, but on what one believes and does about them. This is objective faith.
- G. The difficulty many people face is that subjective faith is almost like objective faith in what it professes. But subjective faith shifts faith to feeling and says we really don't have to concern ourselves with the historical details of the gospel so long as we *feel* all right inside. It shifts faith from what God *has* done, as its focus, to what God *is* doing now inwardly. Salvation has changed focus, here, from the cross and the resurrection to the emotional experience of the person. This is the "existential leap in the dark" whether preached by Barth or Graham!

VI. REFUTATIONS OF ATTACKS ON THE HISTORICITY OF THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD

A. The Empty Tomb

1. *Attack:* The earliest attempt to explain away the empty tomb was that of the Jewish leaders giving money to the guards to say the apostles had come and stolen His body while they slept (Mt. 28:11-15).

Refutation: To imagine that the disciples could have done that without waking the guards is incredible. To imagine the guards could verify the disciples had stolen the body "while they slept" is unacceptable. To imagine the disciples did steal the body and then laid their necks on the block for what they knew was a hoax is posterous!

2. *Attack:* Another attempt to explain the empty tomb is that Jesus' enemies (the Jewish rulers) or Roman officials removed His body.

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Refutation: Seven short weeks after His death Jerusalem was seething with the preaching of the resurrection. If the Jews or Romans had known where His body was it was rather stupid of them to keep it hidden and allow credence to this uproar. And the Jews were *upset* about this preaching! Why didn't they produce His body and squelch that preaching once for all? Quite clearly, they could not because His body was not in the tomb and they did not know where it was!

3. *Attack:* Another theory is that the women, strangers in Jerusalem, half awake, half scared, blinded by tears, went to the wrong tomb. A young man was hanging around there, and guessing what they wanted, said, "You seek Jesus . . . He is not here (pointing to the tomb they were looking at) . . . Behold the place where they laid Him (pointing to another tomb). The women became frightened and ran away. Subsequently they decided that the young man was an angel proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus.

Refutation: First, this attack is a dishonest statement of what the gospel record says—it leaves out the statement of the angel, "He is risen!" As we see from the gospel records the women were at the tomb more than once and knew precisely where it was. They witnessed the burial. Joseph knew where his own tomb was. Why did he not come forth and correct the women if the resurrection story was built on a simple mistake about the place of burial?!

4. *Attack:* Finally, there is the theory that Jesus did not die, but fainted. They thought He was dead so they allowed Him to be taken down, placed in a cool tomb where He revived and was able to come out of the tomb and appear to His disciples. They, being the ignorant men they were, could not believe that He had just fainted and gotten over it so they went out preaching that He was raised from the dead.

Refutation: If Jesus had not died on the cross He would have to have died eventually of some cause, so the enemies of Christianity merely had to take note and point out the dead body to stop the story of a bodily resurrection. Furthermore, a man already physically exhausted, hanged on a cross for 6 hours, run through with a spear, allegedly gets up after three days and nights in a tomb and rolls back a huge stone that several women could not handle—again it is incredible! The crucifying soldiers declared Jesus dead. How could men whose business was execution make such a mistake—when their own reputation, and perhaps their lives were at stake with their superiors. Pilate

checked their report and was satisfied Jesus was dead. The Jews were satisfied He was dead and not merely swooned when the soldiers reported all that had happened.

The record says there was an empty tomb. Either it was or the documents are false. The record says the reason the tomb was empty was that its occupant arose from the dead and was seen alive after dying. This is the record of eyewitnesses. Some have *theorized* explanations for an empty tomb other than a resurrected occupant. The gospel writers claim to be writing eyewitnessed accounts—which are most believable to you? In the public preaching to non-believers in the book of Acts there is enormous emphasis on the resurrection but *not one reference* to the empty tomb. Why? Because there was no point in proving the empty tomb since everyone, friend and foe alike of the first century, *knew it was empty*.

B. The Appearances of Jesus After His Resurrection.

1. *Attack*: Unbelieving critics explain the gospel accounts of Christ's appearances as hallucinations or some form of psychological or pathological experience.

Refutation:

- a. Hallucinatory experiences commonly conform to certain rules which do not apply in the case of Jesus' appearances:
 - (1) Only certain types of persons have experiences called hallucinatory (the type we call "high-strung"—highly emotional, nervous). Do all the hundreds of eyewitnesses to the appearances of Jesus (over 500 at once) fit into this category?
 - (2) Hallucinatory experiences are highly individualistic (that is, "private") because they are linked to the subconscious and the peculiar past of individuals. Two different people, with different pasts, will not have the same hallucination. Yet over 500 plus the eleven, plus the ten (Thomas absent), plus the seven, plus three or four women, plus Peter, had the *same* hallucination, all within forty days, and over 500 all at the *same* time! More difficult to believe than the actual bodily resurrection!
 - (3) Hallucinations commonly concern some expected or eagerly anticipated experience. Yet the gospel's are emphatic in declaring the witnesses did *not* expect a resurrection.
 - (4) Hallucinations usually occur in suitable surroundings and circumstances. But look at the resurrection appearances: one at the empty tomb, very early in the morning; one during an afternoon walk in the countryside; one or two in the full light of day.

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(5) Hallucinations usually keep appearing to individuals over and over until some crisis occurs. At the end of forty days not one of these men or women claims to have had such an experience again, until we come to the one-time appearance of the risen Christ to Saul of Tarsus.

2. *Attack:* Unbelieving critics try to explain the gospel accounts of Christ's appearances as the practice of spiritism, seances, etc.

Refutation: There is not one "medium" mentioned or anything resembling a "seance." Jews were strictly forbidden to practice necromancy. When Jesus appeared, according to the record, He was not some ghost-like apparatus like smoke or a sheet, but a real-life person in a body who ate with them and showed them the scars in His hands and side and feet. Such an attempt to explain away the bodily resurrection of Jesus as it is recorded in the gospels is desperate grasping at straws.

3. *Attack:* The Telegram Theory which says "The ascended Lord (ascended in His spirit, not in his body) telegraphed back pictures of Himself to the minds of the apostles in such a vivid way they were led to believe they had seen the risen Lord in their midst."

Refutation: This is almost more miraculous than the actual resurrection. It makes Christ a deceiver of the apostles and the apostles deceivers of the whole world. Then the apostles and millions more of Jesus' followers gave up their lives gladly for such a deception.

Through the twenty centuries since Jesus arose, attacks upon the gospel records have come and gone. They keep repeating themselves. There is really nothing new under the sun from the unbelieving attacks upon the gospels. If an unbeliever says Jesus was not raised from the dead, bodily, I say, prove it! The burden of proof is with the doubter—he must produce evidence, historical, empirical, scientific evidence which, beyond any reasonable doubt, contradicts the eyewitnessed testimony of people who were there, who saw and heard. Theories, assumptions, speculations and philosophies will not be satisfactory. It is not a question of whether a resurrection could or could not occur. The question is, did it or didn't it. The question is not to be resolved theoretically or philosophically, but scientifically, empirically and legally—on the basis of evidence and testimony. The answer is, Yes, beyond any reasonable doubt, the resurrection, bodily, of Jesus Christ, did occur.

VII. RELEVANCY OF THE RESURRECTION

A. If Christ arose from the dead, then the Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His redemptive system for man and creation.

1. The Bible is the *only* direct revelation of God to man, and it is the final one.
 2. Both Old and New Testaments are confirmed, verified and fulfilled in Christ and His redemptive work.
 3. All of this is established on the basis of Christ's historical, bodily resurrection.
- B. If Christ arose from the dead, then the Church of the New Testament is God's divinely appointed institution on earth in which His redemption is to be appropriated.
1. Without the resurrection of Christ as its basis, the church becomes simply another social institution founded by unredeemed and dying men.
 2. There is only one church sanctioned in the New Testament—that is the one obeying the precepts and principles of the New Testament.
 3. Any man or woman in the world may become a member of that church by believing that Christ is who He claims to be and by being immersed in water in obedience to Christ's command.
 4. There is no promise of redemption to anyone not a member of Christ's church.
- C. All that men do as members of the church is relevant only because Jesus arose from the dead (I Cor. 15:58).
1. There is no psychological benefit to anyone in baptism, or the Lord's supper, or stewardship or prayer, if Christ is not alive and if His resurrection is not an historically provable event.
 2. His death on a cross in Palestine in the days of Pontius Pilate is not only tragic, but irrelevant to me or anyone else if He is still dead, and not bodily resurrected from the dead.
 3. There is no reason for me to be immersed in water, attend worship services, live a morally clean life, pray or read the Bible if He is not risen from the dead.
 4. In fact, there is no such thing as any moral absolute if He is not risen from the dead.
- D. Jesus is coming again, bodily, as the apostles saw Him go into heaven.
1. The only verification that He is coming again is His resurrection—not "signs of the times" (cf. Mt. 24:36, 42, 44; 25:13, etc., with Acts 17:30-31).
 2. Heaven *is* real, hell *is* real, justice *will be* done, men and women *are* lost, the world *is* doomed to destruction supernaturally.
 3. Evangelism *is* imperative.
 4. If Jesus had not risen bodily from the dead, none of the above would be worth believing or doing.

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5. The resurrection of Christ is the message, redemption is the result.
- E. Man has one alternative to the imperatives of the resurrection.
 1. That alternative is not stoicism—the “grin and bear it” way. There is too much trouble and injustice for that way.
 2. It is not Pharisaism—“the playing like I’m holy” way. That does not get rid of guilt, hopelessness or frustration—it only intensifies it.
 3. It is not humanism or altruism—believing in the prevailing goodness of man. Man is *not* prevailingly good. That is demonstrated every day of man’s existence. He is not creating any utopias for himself—only problems.

SO WHAT IS THE ONE ALTERNATIVE?

- F. The one alternative to believing and living in accordance with the way of the resurrected Jesus is:
 1. “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (I Cor. 15:32).
 2. If Christ is not raised, let’s not “play church” or “play good” or play anything but self-indulgence.
 3. Barbaric, animalistic hedonism is the only alternative to faith in Christ.

But in Christ, living by faith in the testimony of His bodily resurrection, and living in the hope of your own resurrection to eternal life, my friend, there is fulfillment, satisfaction, joy and accomplishment.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (I Cor. 15:58).

May God make this the blessing of your life for having studied and believed the gospel, according to Luke.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Name the four possibilities the women might have considered as an answer for the empty tomb. Are there any other possibilities? Which do you think you would have thought about had you been one of the women?
2. Why did the apostles and other disciples of Jesus not remember His predictions of His resurrection? Why do people not believe it today?
3. Why were the two disciples on the way to Emmaus so despondent?
4. Would you walk seven miles to tell someone you had evidence that Jesus was arisen from the dead? Why?
5. What do you think about the idea that Jesus “materialized” and/or became invisible instantaneously as He wished to after His resurrection?

6. What did Jesus spend His time doing during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension? Does this give us any clue how important such activity is?
7. What were the “powers” the Father promised the apostles? Are they promised to any other Christians?
8. When Jesus parted from the apostles, where did He go? Do you think of Jesus as alive now—as much alive as He was when He companied with the apostles in a fleshly body?
9. If someone said to you that religion’s faith is different than matters of proving something scientifically or legally, what would you answer?
10. What if your brother or sister, or your child, returned from college and told you he/she had been taught by a religion professor that Christianity is based on ancient myth—what would be your answer?
11. Has one of your neighbors ever told you that religion is all feeling and the facts do not really matter? How did you answer? What do you think now—is it important to answer that allegation?
12. If you were challenged with the proposition that the tomb where Jesus had been buried was never empty, but that the women went to the wrong tomb, how would you answer?
13. What would you say if someone said that what the disciples saw when they reported having seen Jesus, were hallucinations?
14. What about all these theologians, churches and “christians” who deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus but continue to go to church and consider themselves followers of Jesus? If you did not believe Christ actually arose from the dead, bodily, would you be a Christian? What would you live like if you didn’t believe it?