



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 27:62-28:15

"The Life of Christ: The Resurrection of Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our Scripture reading this morning is in Matthew chapter 27 and verse 62 through chapter 28, verse 15. While you are finding the place, may I make a needed correction in the last message? One of the seminary students called my attention, rightfully, to the fact that in the midst of the message, I commented upon the fact that Jesus Christ was on the cross until 6 o'clock on the Friday afternoon. That was an error. I think the preceding message I had mentioned that he had been six hours on the cross from nine in the morning until three in the afternoon. But those were the hours in which our Lord was on the cross, from nine in the morning until three in the afternoon, and I don't know why I said that. I just wasn't thinking, but I want you to be sure to not confuse what I had said.

He was on the cross until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Then Joseph and Nicodemus went to Pilate, then went back out, took him down from the cross. For they had to get him in the sepulchre before sundown, which is the beginning of the next day according to Jewish time and if he had been upon the cross when the next day began, according to Deuteronomy that would bring a curse upon the land. So now, I hope that goes on the tape in case some who are listening to the tape are confused by that. That's why I'm saying it right now, by the way, for you in the audience. All these messages are taped

and they go who knows where, so we want to try to correct them. Chapter 27 and verse 62 and our subject today, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ,"

"Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, 'Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, 'He is risen from the dead': so that the last error shall be worse than the first.' Pilate said unto them, 'Ye have a watch (or a guard): go your way, make it as sure as ye can.' So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch. In the end of the Sabbath (I think the Greek expression, *Opser Sabbaton*, here should be translated "after") And after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, 'Fear not ye: (There's a great deal of emphasis on that in the original text. Don't be like the watch or the keepers, "Fear not ye") for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.' And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, 'All hail.' And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, 'Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.' Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came

into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, 'Say ye, 'His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.' And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.' So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

May the Lord bless this reading from his inspired word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee that we are able to gather on the first day of the week after the Sabbath, in unconscious and yet conscious, for the Christian, recognition of the fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead as is alive. We thank Thee, Lord, for the experience of the resurrection also. We know from our own acquaintance with him and our own experiences that he has been raised.

We thank Thee that the experience that believers have confirms the word of God and we thank Thee, Lord, for this privilege of meeting in his name. We thank Thee for Thy word that it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths and that we can count upon it even in spite of our experiences. We know that this word is true. And so, Lord, we thank Thee for the privilege that is given us this morning to listen to the word of God and to reflect and ponder upon him who is the Living Word. And we pray, O God, that as we listen to the word, our hearts may be lifted up. We may come to know Thee better and come also, Lord, to walk in closer relationship and fellowship with Thee.

We thank Thee for each one gathered here and pray Thy blessing upon them. We realize, Lord, how often it is that we gather with Christians little realizing the difficulties of life that face each one of us, the problems of life, the concerns of life, and the anxieties

that come. And we pray, O God, that Thou wilt enable us to look off to Thee and rest our case in Thy hands.

We thank Thee for the love of Calvary. We thank Thee for all that it means and that in the deep and dark experiences of life, we know that Thy hand is underneath us and Thy love strengthens and under girds us. And so, Lord, we pray for spiritual blessing upon each one present, and especially, Lord, if there are any here this morning who have not yet believed in Jesus Christ in a personal way, may this morning be the morning in which they put their trust in him as they see him as the one who has died for them.

Again, we commit the affairs of our nation into Thy hands. We commit the affairs of the true church of Jesus Christ into Thy hands. We pray, O God, for each member of the body of Christ and all of the many worthwhile things that are going on today from the spiritual standpoint. May Thy hand be upon them for good.

And, Lord, we pray for Believers Chapel, the saints who meet here and fellowship in the name of Jesus Christ. May Thy blessing be upon them. May the ministry that comes from this place be acceptable in Thy hands. And also, Lord, we pray that Thou wilt give us a widening outreach, a deeper vision, and may, above all, Jesus Christ be honored and glorified in our lives.

We commit our meeting to Thee with anticipation and with thanksgiving. In the name of our Savior who has loves us and who has loosed us from our sins in his own precious blood. In his name. Amen.

[Message] The subject this morning is, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ" as we draw near to the end of our series, "Highlights in the Greatest Life" in the Gospel of Matthew. When we speak of the term "resurrection", we speak of our Lord's bodily resurrection.

As Professor Denney said many years ago, "If we cannot speak of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, we should not speak of resurrection at all." The bodily

resurrection of the Lord Jesus is peculiar to Christianity. Abraham, the father of Judaism, died somewhere around nineteen hundred B.C. No resurrection has ever been claimed for Abraham. In fact, his tomb has been most carefully preserved for almost four thousand years and today in Hebron, you can visit the tomb of Abraham, a tomb which most scholars believe is perhaps the genuine place where he was buried.

The original accounts of the life of Buddha make no claim for resurrection. As a matter of fact, today if you were to go to India, you can be shown the tooth of Buddha. We read in one of the basic texts of Buddhism that when Buddha died it was with "that utter passing away in which nothing whatever remains behind." No resurrection has ever been claimed for Buddha.

Mohammed died June the 8th, six hundred and thirty-two A.D. and no resurrection has ever been claimed for him. The dust of Mohammed's bones rests today at Medina and it is annually visited by thousands of the worshippers of Mohammedanism. So the bodily resurrection is something that is peculiar to Christianity.

There is an old story about Talleyrand, the bishop turned skeptic during the time of the French Revolution. You remember, if you remember your history, that at about that time, quite an attempt was made to establish a new religion, which would take the place of Christianity. And one of those who had been attempting to do this spoke to Talleyrand one day and said he was finding it awfully difficult to establish a new religion even though it was based upon the tenet of good works. And Talleyrand looked at him with a fine smile and said, "Surely it's not so difficult as that." The man said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, all you have to do is to get yourself killed or crucified, announcing that you will rise on the third day. And if you do that, you'll have no difficulty whatsoever in establishing a new religion." So this is something that is peculiar to Christianity and, furthermore, it is something that is essential to Christianity.

We cannot have an Easter faith without an Easter fact. When Easter rolls around in the spring, you frequently hear messages along this line, "We are here today to

celebrate the resurrection and we see the illustration of the resurrection in the new life that is springing up all about us. The trees are beginning to bud, the grass is beginning to turn green, the flowers are beginning to bloom, and this is the illustration of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."

This, of course, is a travesty upon the biblical teaching. We forget, it seems, that every spring also has its autumn and it's not long before the trees that were budding are not budding. The leaves are dying and being blown away by the wind. The flowers that had bloomed are gone and soon the plants enter into their death like winter experience. And so, when we speak of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we do not really have any kind of illustration of it at all so far as nature is concerned.

The bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus is unique and it is essential to the Christian faith for when Jesus was raised from the dead, he was raised from the dead to die no more. But bodily resurrection is misunderstood not only by the enemies of the faith, but also by some of the friends of the faith. We're not surprised, for example, when a man like H. G. Wells says, "The resurrection account has always seemed to him as if it were a kind of happy ending tacked onto an essentially tragic story." We're not surprised at that because Mr. Wells was not known as a Christian.

We are a little surprised, however, when A. M. Ramsey, who is now the Archbishop of Canterbury, says with reference to the resurrection accounts that, "It's obvious these accounts were embellished due to the oral transmission of the documents. We have truth that has been embroidered by the editor and what we see now in the New Testament is the reflection of a great deal of change and also is simply the faith of the church. And we're not to believe these accounts." Now this, mind you, is a man who stands as the head of the representative of a Christian church which commands the allegiance of millions of Britishers and others as well.

And we're also a little bit surprised when, for example, Eugene Carson Blake, very prominent in our Protestant circles today can say with reference to the resurrection that,

"He half believes it and he half doesn't believe it." Well this, of course, is a way to stand in the middle and on the fence, but surely it's not the biblical truth. The bodily resurrection is peculiar to Christianity. It is tremendously important. It is essential and, in fact, it seems to me it is very difficult for us to call ourselves Christians at all, if we do not accept the bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Matthean account, the one that we shall look at, is, of course, unique as most of the resurrection accounts are. They are accounts which were written by men who did not consult others in order to give us an account that agrees harmoniously, on the surface, with all of the others without any possible questions at all. In fact, it seems to me that the writers of the New Testament, when they described the resurrection, obviously described that which was their personal experience. And they write in such a way that as we compare the accounts, we seem to notice an apparent contradiction here, and an apparent contradiction there, and another apparent contradiction. But upon further study, we discover that there is a marvelous unity and harmony in these accounts.

Just the kind of thing that you'd expect if men wrote without any collaboration and that's what we find. And I do not have any question myself, and I've studied these accounts for a number of years, but I do not have any question myself but that if we knew all of the facts, every single piece, not only could be accounted for, but can be accounted for and documented if we just had the witnesses. As it is now, we have some apparent contradictions, but they are not, I do not believe, genuine contradictions and can be explained.

But let's look at the account; I think it's its own best testimony. In the 62nd verse of the 27th chapter, Matthew records the sealing of the sepulchre. He says that some of the chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate and they said to Pilate, "Sir, now this deceiver said that he was going to rise again on the third day. And so, you command that the sepulchre be made sure in order that he may not do that. Because, you see, his disciples may come and they will come and take away the body and then they'll go

around saying that Jesus arose from the dead as he said. And then the last error will be worse than the first."

Well, now the first error was the Sonship and Messiahship of the Lord Jesus; that which he claimed. The last error would be the resurrection. I've always thought this was very interesting because, you see, actually we would not have had near the testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ if the Jews had said nothing and let the matter drop. Because as a result of what they did, we now have not only the testimony of the disciples, but the testimony of the keepers as well, because, of course, they were there and they saw the miracle of the stone that was rolled away themselves and they saw the testimony of the empty tomb. They never would have seen it otherwise. And so, as a result of this, the Jews merely increased the testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and the soldiers know now also; although, they're willing to take a bribe to say nothing about it.

Well, we move on to the 28th chapter and we read, "In the end of the Sabbath (or after the Sabbath), as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." Now when, I want you, as we read through this account and try to explain it, I want you to notice how this account is a kind of model of the indirect and discreet way in which the Bible describes an event which cannot really be described.

You will notice that there is no sensationalism whatsoever in it. "Where are the disciples?" you might ask. Well, the disciples, of course, had fled when Jesus Christ was crucified and now they are like disappointed men or animals who have gone into hiding because they've been wounded. And at the time in which they ought to be expecting the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, they themselves are disappointed and defeated and so discouraged that they do not even come out to the sepulchre on the third day until the women have made their journey there. Have you ever wondered why this is? Why men like Peter were not expectant? Why men like John did not hasten out to the sepulchre before the women?

I think that what had happened to them was something like this, they had been told by Jesus and somehow they believed this, that he was the answer to the needs of men. They had listened to him as he taught marvelously and as he confirmed his teaching by the miracles that he performed and they had somehow or other sensed that he was the Messiah. Their faith was very weak. It was very faulty. They didn't believe in the resurrection. They believed in a general resurrection, but they did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They somehow or other were impervious to the direct teaching that Jesus had given on his death and resurrection. And as they reflected upon this terrible turn which the events had taken, they began, apparently within themselves, to question whether what they had believed was really the truth.

Jesus had said that he could authoritatively close the gap between God and men. He had claimed to be the mediator. He had claimed to be the one if we put our trust in him, who would give us peace of heart and mind, would give us the forgiveness of sins, and we had put our trust in him. But now it seems, at the last moment, when he should have manifested his Messianic might and power, he was slain by the Romans and the Jews and was placed in a sepulchre and his body is out now in the garden of Joseph of Arimathaea. In other words, their Christian view of things had been absolutely shattered. Now instead of having the hope that they had before in Jesus Christ, faulty and wavering though it was, apparently their hope was gone.

Now it would have been different if Jesus had simply been a man who claimed to be a teacher like Socrates. If he had just said, "I want to give you some teaching about God," the fact that his body was now in the grave would have made no difference for his teaching would have abided. But you see, Jesus is not like a Plato, he's not like a Socrates, he's not like a Buddha, he's not like a Confucius. He is a person who claimed not only to give authoritative teaching, but he also claimed by his own ministry to close the gap between man and God.

In fact, he said that he was the resurrection and the life and he said that he was the one that, if we believed in him, would do away with death entirely, for the one who believes in him shall not see death, he had said. And now this one who put such a wonderful hope in our hearts is, himself, dead. I think I can understand why the men were not there. And so, the women go out and, of course, the women go out, not because they themselves believe in the resurrection. They go out to complete the anointing of the body for Jesus had been buried so hastily that that had not been completed. And so, they go out to complete it.

I think the women went out to the garden very much like people go to church on Good Friday. They go to church on Good Friday to mourn the fact that a good man died many, many hundreds of years ago. They go without any real hope often. I've been in Good Friday services and they're awfully solemn and awfully sad and, frequently, those who go to them do not have any hope whatsoever in the risen Christ. And that's the way in which the women went out. They went out. They were very much defeated, very much discouraged. They went out with simply, "Who's going to roll away the stone for us from the tomb?" They didn't expect to find the risen Savior.

In fact, when they found him, they were so excited, so shocked, became so fearful, that "They fled (Matthew says) in terror." But the women do go and Mary Magdalene and the other Mary are mentioned here by Matthew. I think last year when I was speaking on the resurrection, I mentioned the fact that three years ago I asked my wife, "Why do you think the Lord appeared to the women first (because he did)? And Mary suggested that perhaps he knew that they would broadcast it [Laughter].

I don't know whether that's the reason or not, but this morning in the light of my experience last night, I'm not inclined to criticize women at all anymore [Laughter]. But I do know that they themselves did not expect a resurrection. And as they drew near to the tomb, we read, "There was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it."

Now this is, I think, quite interesting, too, because you'll remember there was an earthquake when Jesus died and Matthew describes it in verse 54 of chapter 27, "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done." It almost seems as if the earth trembled with sorrow at the death of Jesus Christ, but now it leaps for joy at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The women must have felt the earthquake, because that would be why and how they knew that it had occurred. And when they come, they see the first witness to the resurrection. They see that the stone has been rolled from the door and the angel sitting upon it.

This witness of the displaced stone has sometimes been overlooked. A ton-size stone could not be removed before an armed guard by enemies. The apostles or disciples could not possibly have come and moved that ton-sized stone away while the Roman guard was standing there. Someone has said that stone was moved away not to let Jesus out, but to let the women in. At any rate, it was there and when they came, they also saw the angel.

Now the angel's appearance had created such fear in the heart of the Roman guard that they had become utterly unnerved, their hearts were heaving, and they had collapsed like a sack of meal, very much as Sonny Liston did in his last fight with Cassius Clay though not for the same reason. In fact, I'm not sure there was a reason at all in that last debacle.

The angel, we read then said to the women, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen." And this is the second witness, the witness of the empty tomb. The Gospels contain neither the first nor the last account of the empty tomb. This is not the first account of the empty tomb. We have accounts of the empty tomb in the Book of Acts. We have accounts of the empty tomb in the 1 Corinthians. When the Gospels were written, these were not the first accounts of the empty tomb.

As a matter of fact, there is historical evidence for the fact that the Sanhedrin did not deny the empty tomb. They just wanted to explain it in a different way and I want to stop here for just a moment and say something about this testimony, because I think it is the most important testimony of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. You see, the early church believed in the empty tomb and apparently it was acknowledged even by enemies that the tomb was empty. And so, we are forced, if we do not accept the testimony to the resurrection, to explain how they did come to believe in the empty tomb and how they accepted the teaching that Jesus arose from the dead.

It's not enough to say, "Well, I just don't believe it", because men did believe it, historically, and we must explain their belief. Either they believed it correctly or they believed it wrongly. And so, we must have an explanation. We cannot just say, "I just don't accept it." We are historically required to give an explanation of their wrong belief, if we do not think that that is right.

So many theories have been advanced; among them the most prominent that someone came and stole the body away. Now this theory will not stand the test of investigation. The first place, the enemies of Jesus would never have taken his body away. They wanted that body in the grave. If they could keep that body in the grave, that would settle the matter.

The friends of Jesus, you might have thought, would have wanted to take the body away, but they didn't accept the resurrection. They had no idea that the resurrection was going to take place. The men did not believe in it. The women did not believe in it and, hence, they would not have come and taken the body away. Furthermore, if they had come and hastily taken the body away, how can you account for the Roman soldiers there, the ton-sized stone, and how could you account for the appearance of the grave clothes as found in the sepulchre later?

Even Joseph Klausner rejects this view, because, you see, it would make all of the apostles imposters. And here, we would have this horrible moral anomaly that men who

are imposters have given us the greatest moral teaching that the human race has ever discovered. And, in addition, every one of them lived out their lives, went to their death, without once denying the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of the theories of the critics strain my faith to follow them, much less believe them.

Others have said, "Well, they went to the wrong tomb." I mentioned this in the last time I spoke on the resurrection in this audience. Professor Kirsopp Lake, an outstanding New Testament scholar from Harvard University said a few years ago, "It's obvious that the women went to the wrong tomb, the wrong sepulchre. Their eyes were dimmed with tears. It was relatively dark in the morning and they just went to the wrong place and they saw an empty tomb and that accounts for the theory of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."

Now do you think that the angel was wrong, too, when he said, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay"? I might even believe that they manufactured that in order to support their faith, but I can hardly believe that the Apostle Peter, the Apostle John, and the others who went out to the sepulchre to confirm it, would have also made the same mistake.

Others have said, "Well, Jesus just swooned, he wasn't really dead." Now I do not believe that either. It seems to me a most incredible thing that a person who did not die, but only swooned, who was placed in a tomb and somehow or other managed to get out with that ton-sized stone there and came forth and then convinced his apostles that he had conquered death, when all that he had done was swoon, and then had been revived.

Now I know that this can happen. Some of you in the Bible classes will remember that occasionally I referred to a quotation from *Time Magazine* in 1958 in which a man Hochi Mustaffif, a hundred and seven years old had supposedly died in Turkey. And they were having the funeral service and in the midst of the funeral service, they were all shocked and seven of his relatives fainted when he came out of the tomb and denounced his family for, as he said, "Burying me before my time." [Laughter]

But I don't think, so far as I know that Mustaffif has ever convinced anybody that he was able to conquer death. You see, a weak emaciated person, staggering forth from a grave could hardly convince someone that he had been raised from the dead. No, I do not think it is possible to explain the witness of the empty tomb other than through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

But, furthermore, did you notice the 6th verse, the angel said, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay"? Now why do they point to a particular place? What point does it make to come and look at the sepulchre itself? That wouldn't tell us anything. It is obvious that there is more in this statement than meets the eye. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay" is an evidence that John expounds in detail. It is the witness of the grave clothes of the Lord Jesus. What they are saying is, "Come, take a look at the grave clothes and see the message that they bring."

Now I don't have time to turn to John chapter 20, verses 5 through 8 and tell that story. I merely want to point out that those grave clothes, John says, were arranged in such a way that you could not explain the facts other than on the basis of the testimony that Jesus arose from the dead.

In fact, the witness of the grave clothes is so strong that the Apostle John says "that my faith in the resurrection is related to the facts of those grave clothes." For he came into that sepulchre and he discovered that the napkin which had been about our Lord's place was lying on the ledge at the back of the sepulchre and there it was rolled around, still had retained its annular or circular shape. And the body was not in it and the evidence that it had been unrolled or unwrapped and the body taken out, it was impossible to come to that conclusion.

Furthermore, the way in which the body had been wrapped, the wrappings were still as they had been about the body of the Lord Jesus except that apparently because of the weight of them and the spices within the folds, and the powdery spices about the body, they had collapses so that that which was about his head was in the annular or

circular shape, whereas the other grave clothes had collapsed, but were still in the place where his body had been. The only explanation is the explanation that John surmises. That is, that somehow or other that body had been swiftly dematerialized, had passed through the folds that had been about his body, and the body had gone out of the tomb in spite of the fact that the stone was there.

The stone was not removed to let Jesus out, but to let others in to see the testimony. And the fact that this is John's meaning is evident, because twice later in the chapter when he describes the appearances of the Lord Jesus, he makes a special note of the fact that when the apostles were together, Jesus came to meet them, the doors being shut; the doors being shut. In other words, John had sensed from the testimony in the tomb, and confirmed by the appearances by the Lord Jesus, that the resurrection body of Jesus possessed capacities and capabilities which enabled him to pass through that which is material.

Now our nuclear physicists are attempting to discover how this is possible and we know, of course, due to the make up of matter now, that such would be possible if we just knew how to arrange the atoms, but God knows how to arrange the atoms. And so, as a result of this, Jesus had been able to leave the tomb and the witness of the empty tomb is a witness addressed to others and is opened up in order that they might see it. And John, when he says that he looked at those grave clothes, he said, "He saw and he believed." In other words, there came spiritual perception to him that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead.

Well, in the remainder of this account in Matthew, we have the appearance of the Lord and here is the next testimony. The witness of the personal appearances, we read, "As the women departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; they ran to bring the disciples word and as they went Jesus met them." Do you know that there are approximately ten personal appearances of the Lord Jesus over the forty day period of his post resurrection ministry? They saw him. They touched him. They heard him.

Now Joseph Klausner says it is obvious that they had hallucinations. It's a strange thing. Their minds were not prepared for hallucinations. They didn't believe in any resurrection. Furthermore, did all five hundred who saw him, did they have hallucinations? And in addition, these hallucinations which took place at least ten times did they suddenly after the six weeks period, after the forty days, did they suddenly stop and no one else ever had another hallucination? Again, such a theory strains my faith. I cannot accept it. I do not think it squares with the facts of experience and it surely does not account or square with the facts of the word of God.

I have a very good friend in South Carolina, he's a state senator. He and I grew up together. We were very close friends. I was a member of the First Presbyterian Church. He was a second class Christian; he was a member of the Second Presbyterian Church [Laughter]. And together, we used to play and we had a lot of fun together and I can still remember when night came, Allen would get down by his bed and have a few moments of prayer. And I can still remember lying in my bed and looking at him praying and wondering, "What in the world was going on in his mind?"

Occasionally, I would ask him, "Why in the world do you pray?" He would rebuke me and chide me a little bit. He didn't know too much about the gospel, but he did believe in Jesus Christ. Last summer, I went back and he's a very prominent businessman now, a lawyer in Charleston, serves as state senator, and has for a number of years. And so, he said, "I want you to come down to my office and I'm gonna cancel all of my appointments and we're gonna talk about the Lord for about three hours." And so, he did.

I went down to the office and in the morning, he had the secretaries bring in coffee and we just had a Bible conference for about three hours [Laughter] for about three hours. You're awake! [Laughter] Good! So in the midst of our conversation, we began to talk about the resurrection. Now Allen doesn't believe in the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture. I gathered that from talking with him and so, I chided him a little about that

too. Gave him some things to think about, but suddenly, our conversation turned on the resurrection and he said, "You know, T. Austin Smythe (who was a lawyer in Charleston and also lived on our street Legare Street in Charleston, was a very prominent lawyer in the city) Austin Smythe used to teach the resurrection, Allen said, and I can still remember him teaching the resurrection in our church and he said it was most effective. He said, Mr. Smythe, who had many years experience as a lawyer, decided that the best way to teach the resurrection was to call in the witnesses. And he said, "I can still remember him giving a lesson on the resurrection in which he called all of the witnesses in: Mary Magdalene. He quizzed her just as he would quiz someone on the stand. He quizzed Mary the mother of our Lord. He quizzed Mary the mother of James and Joses. He quizzed Mary the mother of the sons of Zebedee. He quizzed Peter. He quizzed John. He quizzed them all just as he would in a court trial. He was trying to get over the fact, you see, that the Bible is not one witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but many.

Now Madalyn Murray O'Hair, just a few days ago in San Francisco, on a radio station on which there is a discussion of spiritual things, Madalyn Murray O'Hair made the astounding statement that, "There is no testimony to the existence of Jesus Christ outside of the Bible." That is wrong, of course. That overlooks the fact of the testimony of Tacitus and Pliny and so on. But, furthermore, it manifests an abysmal ignorance of the nature of the Bible. The Bible is not a testimony of one person. It should always be remembered that the Bible is a collection of testimonies and that all of these testimonies are independent testimonies.

As a matter of fact, the books of the Bible were not even collected and circulated together completely until the latter part of the 2nd Century. And so, the Bible is not one testimony. The Bible is a testimony of many books and before these books were written, there is the testimony of many individuals.

And Mr. Smythe, as he concluded, he used to like to say something like this. He would say, "You know, I have quizzed witnesses of accidents and other events often." He

said, "For example, there is an accident on the street corner. The ambulance arrives. The police arrive and the people are taken to the hospital and then it's my necessity to quiz the people who are involved."

He says, "You know you can get frequently a number of apparent contradictions in the testimony, but almost always they agree on the main fact; that there was an accident, that somebody was hurt. The policemen arrived. The ambulance arrived. The victims were taken to the hospital. All of the major facts are pretty clear. Some of the details are not clear because the testimonies are given from the standpoint of individuals."

And then he went on to say, "You know, we believe that Caesar was assassinated. How many people saw Caesar assassinated? How many testimonies are there really to this assassination? Relatively few." And then he said, "Do you know the Bible, in its testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is one of the best attested books and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best attested facts that you can possibly find from a legal standpoint." And I think that is absolutely true. So the witness of the personal experience as well, the account concludes with a word about the bribing of the soldiers.

Isn't it rather disheartening to discover that it takes a great deal of money to bribe pagan soldiers to say that Jesus Christ did not arise from the dead when it only takes thirty pieces of silver for an apostle to betray the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, I want to conclude this morning by just saying a few things more about the importance of the resurrection. This is a fact not fancy, but is it important? Well, first of all, it is the proof of the defeat of death and of the forgiveness of sins. The Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 4 says that Jesus was delivered for our offenses and he was raised again on account of our justification. In other words, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the evidence from God that the cross of Jesus Christ is sufficient to pay for our sins. It is the proof of the forgiveness of sins. It is the proof of the defeat of death.

When we look at the cross of the Lord Jesus, we see atonement made. When we look at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we see atonement accepted. Jesus Christ united

our destiny with his. He not only survived death, but he conquered it when he came forth from the grave and it is the evidence that the Father has accepted the finished work of the Son that he raised Jesus from the dead. That is why the New Testament stresses the fact that it is not Jesus who raised himself. It is not the Holy Spirit who raised him. It is the Father who raised him, because the aim of this testimony is to get over to us the fact that the Father has accepted the work of the Son.

Secondly, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the principle and the pattern of the joyous life. We may today even though we are sinful human beings; we may enjoy life with one who can still the storms, with someone who can release the demons, with someone who can bind up our wounds, who can open the graves, who can cancel our guilt, who can comfort aching hearts, and who can convey peace.

In fact, he is the one who spoke to John the Apostle when he appeared to him and said, "Fear not, I am he that liveth and was dead and, behold, I am alive forevermore." The Apostle Paul said to young Timothy, "Timothy, I want you to remember Jesus Christ as one who has been raised from the dead. Think of him in this capacity. Think of him with this as the stress. Remember Jesus Christ as one who has been raised from the dead." The resurrection is the principle and the pattern of that life.

Now I know that when you look at me and when you look at other Christians, you do not see often the evidence outwardly of the thing that they claim is inward. It's very much like my flowers. I am a kind of an idealist; as you might expect, and I like to grow things which are really impossible grow well in Dallas. That is, I have a few camellia plants around. If you know anything about camellias, you know that they really should not be grown in Dallas. They should be grown in Houston, or Charleston, or Mobile. You shouldn't really try to grow oleanders because oleanders are really a kind of tropical plant not for Dallas. And every year, I see the same thing happen when February comes; my oleanders are killed back to the ground. And I'm sure that were it not for the

fact that I bring in my camellias, I wouldn't see any camellia flowers either. Because, you see, they're really not adapted to Dallas. They're adapted to a different climate.

This is very much like the Christian, you know. He has eternal life, but he's not really adapted to this particular climate. Take my oleanders to Houston and they bloom beautifully in spite of Houston [Laughter]. Take my camellias south and they do wonderfully, because you see, they're adapted to that environment.

When the time comes that I'm in the presence of the Lord Jesus, there's going to be a great difference in me and a great difference in you, but the principle of life, which we receive when we believe in the Lord Jesus, we have really received. And we have that principle of eternal life and when we come into the presence of the Lord then, of course, it is to marvelously flower and bloom. But in the meantime, I still have it and I know that I have this life with this risen person who can care for me and keep me.

I told you, I think, a few years ago, the story of C.T. Studd who went out to the mission field a number of times and on one of his trips back, he went on a boat which had an unbelieving captain. And the captain had taken many a missionary out and he'd kind of made it his personal aim to take the missionaries and get them off by themselves and attack them for their faith and try to undermine their faith. And he had disturbed a number of missionaries by his activity and when he heard that Mr. Studd was a missionary, he waited for his opportunity and soon he got Mr. Studd by himself and he began to talk to him and try to undermine his faith. And he gave him all the standard reasons why it was impossible to be a Christian and finally, Mr. Studd didn't react as some of the other missionaries had in anger, but he just looked at the captain and he said, "Captain (he said), I want to tell you one thing." He said, "You may try to take my faith away from me and that's perfectly all right, as far as I'm concerned, if you're bent on doing that. But I want to tell you something, I have a peace that passes all understanding and I have a joy that is absolutely inexpressible and you cannot possibly take that from

me." The captain looked at him and said, "Mr. Studd, you're a lucky dog" and a few days later, C.T. Studd led him to Christ.

The resurrection is the pattern and principle of the life that Christians have. Isn't it wonderful to have this life? Isn't it wonderful to know that the same life that Jesus had is the life that flows through me? "I am the resurrection and the life and I have him." And, of course, it is also the pledge of judgment to come. And this is a very solemn thing, but in Acts chapter 17, the Apostle Paul, remember in Athens said, verse 31, that God has "Appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance, in that he hath raised him from the dead." In other words, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pledge of judgment to come.

A Madalyn Murray may shake her fist at Jesus Christ today. An A.M. Ramsey may say, "I do not accept the resurrection of Jesus Christ." An H.G. Wells may say this, but the time is coming when the men whose eyes have flashed hatred against the Lord Jesus, whose fists have been clenched against the atonement that he provided, whose knees have been unbent before the authority of God, shall kneel down before him, open their fists, and worship unwillingly, acknowledging that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

You see, there is another Easter coming. It is an Easter of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus and things will be different. It's not enough, however, for the resurrection to be fact. It should be personal fact. Is it personal with you? Have you really put your trust in the risen Christ and do you know him as the one who died for you?

There was a lawyer once who had a great deal of difficulty over the faith. He talked with a minister. He asked for some help. The preacher said, "Will you let me give you some books?" and he gave him some books. He took them home and he came back and he said, "Sir, (he said) you know, I was an unbeliever in the Lord Jesus Christ before I

took these books." And he said, "I thought that the trouble was in my head." He said, "I've discovered that the trouble is really in my heart."

The testimony to the faith that is found in the New Testament is as clear and is as unequivocal as you could ever expect ancient testimony to be. The testimony and witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ are testimony and witnesses that no other ancient event has. These testimonies are the best testimonies to any fact of ancient history.

The reason we do not believe is not because we do not have the evidence intellectually, it's because the trouble really is in our hearts. We don't want to accept him. May God help you to put your trust in him and then to sing, "Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph ore his foes. He arose a victor from the dark domain and he lives forever with his saints to reign." "He lives! He lives! Hallelujah! Christ arose and lives! Shall we stand for the benediction?"

[Prayer] And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the communion of the Holy Spirit, be in abide with all who know him in sincerity and who have received him. And, Father, for those who do not yet know him in this audience, we pray that at this moment their hearts may lift up toward Thee, recognizing that the blood was shed that sins might be forgiven. May they say, "O God, I thank Thee for Jesus Christ who gave himself for me. I take this risen Savior for my own."

Now may Thy blessing be with us throughout this day especially as we remember the Lord around his table and throughout the days of this week, may the testimony to the resurrection be seen not only on our lips, but in our lives as well. For Jesus' sake. Amen.