

Reasons for Rejecting the Resurrection

Selected Scriptures - John MacArthur

I've entitled the message "Reasons for Rejecting the Resurrection." Easter, for most people, brings up a very difficult issue, and that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I'm sure that most people would rather just avoid the issue and color eggs and talk about bunnies and just really not get into the issue of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the reason is simple. If Jesus Christ rose from the dead,

as the Bible claims He did, and as He promised He would, then He is God. And if He is God, then He makes some very serious claims on the life of every individual...

Now some people believe that He did rise from the dead. I do, and many of you do, and millions more throughout history believed that Jesus physically, literally died and rose again. But there are some people who don't believe that. They don't believe that Jesus rose from the dead at all. They have to admit that Jesus existed, because history is very clear on that. And secular historians established the fact that Jesus lived. They also have to admit that Jesus died, because that's historical fact. And they also have to admit that the tomb is empty and that it has been empty since three days after He was put in it...The question then becomes: How did He get out of it. Because if you don't believe that He rose, then there's got to be some explanation for an empty tomb, and history establishes very clearly, even extra-Biblical history, that the tomb was empty.

Now if you reject resurrection, then you've got to come up with another theory, and there are many of them.

There's one theory called the swoon theory. It says basically this. Christ never died on the cross... He appeared to be dead. He went into a semi-coma and, due to shock and loss of blood, He stayed in this semi-coma with such a low rate of heartbeat and so forth that He appeared visibly to be dead. Since they assumed that He was dead, they removed Him and put Him in a tomb. But due to the reviving effect of the spices, the coolness of the tomb, He came to...And when He walked out and met the disciples, they assumed that He rose from the dead, and that's how the myth got started. That theory doesn't work very well. In the first place, it was introduced 1600 years after the resurrection. It certainly took somebody a long time to think it up...Not only that, all of the early records are emphatic that Jesus died. Everyone knew that the Romans were proficient at execution...

Now, if it is true that Jesus just went into a semi-coma, that means that He successfully survived scourging, which was to be beaten till His back was raw. He successfully survived crucifixion, a spear thrust into His side, entombment with 80 pounds of spices wrapped in cloth around His body. After three days, He woke up with no food, no water, and no medical assistance, having lost most of His blood, walked out and convinced the world that He was the resurrected Son of God. He must have unwrapped Himself, rolled the stone away, overpowered the Roman guard, and then took a seven-mile walk to Emmaus on feet that had just had nails driven through them...

There are other people who say, "Well, that won't work. It was the theft theory." The disciples or somebody stole His body." Now even if they could've stolen the body by overcoming the barriers of the stone, the guard, the Roman's seal, they wouldn't have stolen His body, because they never really believed He's rise from the dead anyway. *John 20 verse 9 says, "For as yet they knew not the Scripture that He must rise from the dead."* They had no idea to do that. And why steal a body to make people believe in something you know is a hoax?... Or even more significant than that, why die as a martyr for a lie? I mean give them more credit than that. We know at least ten or eleven of the twelve died as martyrs. Would they have done so for a hoax?

Others say that the disciples didn't steal the body, for that reason, but the Romans did. The Romans certainly wouldn't have had any reason to steal the body. They had a guard there to make sure nobody did steal it. And Pilate wouldn't have stolen the body and created the myth of the resurrection, because that would've incited the Jews all the more, and he was already on the outs with them. Others have suggested that the Jews stole the body. If you remember carefully, the Jews are the ones that requested the guard to keep the disciples from stealing it...

There are other theories. One other theory states that Jesus was never put in the tomb, that they threw Him into a pit where they threw all the criminals. And that when everybody came to the tomb the third day, it was empty because He never was put there. Well, that's interesting. I wonder why the Romans sealed it and guarded it if it was empty. And why, then, did the Jews and the Romans concoct the story that somebody stole the body when they could've gone over to the pile where they threw the body if it was there and picked it right off and said, "Here it is, look." That doesn't work either.

Then there's the hallucination theory that says that Jesus did not rise, but people hallucinated. They wanted Him so badly to be resurrected that they had hallucinations that He was alive. Well, that's fine, but it still doesn't explain the empty tomb...The Christian church, then, is founded on the pathological experiences of certain fanatical people who had abnormal experiences 1900 years ago? And it's amazing, too, that all 500 people had the same hallucination the same time. If you know anything about hallucinations, you know they're very individualized. No two people have the same hallucination. And since they weren't looking for the resurrection, and since they weren't trying to project the resurrection, it's unlikely that they could've done that pathologically or psychologically.

Then there are others who offer the telepathy or telegram theory. It says there was no physical resurrection, but God sent back a mental image to the disciples so they would think Jesus rose in the flesh. Which is an interesting theory because it makes God a deceiver. God sent back a telepathic message to their brains and made them think Jesus rose physically. Then Christianity is built on deceit, and God is a liar. And, incidentally, the disciples are liars, too, because the disciples announced that they had touched and held Jesus. And if it was a telepathic message, they, too, were deceivers. And it must have been some kind of telepathy, because...in fact, it must have been 16 millimeter film telepathy, because Jesus walked seven miles to Emmaus with some people. That's a running telepathy. And, incidentally, held a conversation all the while and then ate. Also interesting to me is the fact the disciples didn't recognize Jesus. And you would think that if God wanted to send a mental image to them so that they would think Jesus was alive, at least He could do it well enough so they'd know who it was.

This is a rather modern one. Those who take the contemporary seance theory. They're just like all apparitions. They went to a medium, and the medium conjured up the Spirit of the dead Jesus, and they had a seance. Jesus appeared through the medium's avenue. But that doesn't work, either. Still doesn't explain the empty tomb. And those disciples who were godly and knew the Old Testament would never have consulted a medium, because that was forbidden to the point of death.

The Passover plot states that it was a mistaken identity theory. That somebody impersonated Jesus. Well, that's even more interesting, because He must have crucified Himself, rammed a spear into His side, and thorns into His brow, and that's a rather high price to pay for impersonation. Because when He appeared to Thomas, He said, "*Look, and see My wounds.*"

Renan, the French atheist, tried to destroy the resurrection on the basis of the fact that the...that the foundation of the Christian faith was based on the testimony of Mary Magdalene. And everybody knows Mary Magdalene was a prostitute who had seven demons. She was a highly eccentric woman. She was crying. She was delirious. She was frightened and hysterical to the point of insanity, says Renan. Therefore, we cannot believe her testimony. Fine. What does he say about the other 500 witnesses?... And what does he say about the Apostle Paul? And what does he say about the empty tomb? Where's the body?

G.D. Arnold, in his book, which I would never recommend, don't waste your time, called *Risen Indeed*, suggests that the body of Jesus evaporated. To assume that the body of Jesus evaporated into gases within three days would take a greater miracle than the resurrection...But this is the extent to which people go to try to explain away the truth of the resurrection. The theories come and go.

And, you know, as I was thinking about these in my mind this week, I was saying to myself, "But why? Why do people concoct these theories which are against the facts, that are blinded to the truth?"

Why do they do this?" And I came up with several reasons for rejecting the resurrection, and those are the things that I want to show you this morning.

Number one, the first reason that I think people concoct these things in rejecting the resurrection is rationalism. Now, rationalism is just a philosophical term for making your mind and your reason the absolute judge of all truth. The German rationalists, for example, a few centuries back, approached the Bible, and they said, "Well, we've got to get all the miracles out of the Bible, because they just don't accommodate our logic. I mean we can't reason miracles." And they decided that the mind was ultimate, and if you couldn't reason it, it wasn't true. So they said, "We've got to get rid of all miracles." So they just took their theological vacuum cleaner and sucked the miracles out of the Bible. One theologian came up with 27 verses that were really true out of the whole Bible. They had to get rid of the miracles. That's rationalism. Rationalism allows for no supernatural involvement. But everything must be reasonable. It must be within the framework of the logical process of the human mind. That's rationalism.

Now, there have been rationalists throughout history who will not accept the resurrection, because they will not accept the supernatural. But the first group that I call your attention to is a group of rationalists in Jesus' time who were called Sadducees. There were two dominant groups within Judaism, at least the most prominent in the Gospels and the *Book of Acts*, the leading group in the Gospels is the Pharisees. The leading group in the *Book of Acts*, the Sadducees. But these two sects of Judaism really kind of dominate the New Testament. But the Sadducees were the rationalists. And, incidentally, at the time of Christ, they were the powerful ones, because it was normally, the Sadducees who were the high priests, so they were tremendously powerful. They were the collaborationist party that worked with Rome, and they were very wealthy.

But the Sadducees had this kind of theology: They denied angels. They denied that they existed. They denied that demons existed. They denied the immortality of the soul. Consequently, they denied hell. They denied heaven. They denied all punishment, all reward. They denied all miracles. And most of all, they denied the resurrection. They were rationalists. You see, nothing miraculous would fit into their little box. The little human mind couldn't handle it, so they threw it out...They were anti-supernaturalists.

Now, let's look at them. *Matthew chapter 22*, and let's see how they approach resurrection. *Matthew chapter 22 verse 23*. "The same day came to Him the Sadducees, who say that there is no resurrection, and asked Him, saying, 'Master, Moses said, 'If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up seed unto his brother.'" In other words, if...if, as it's obviously stated there, "If a man dies not having left children, the man's brother...if she's still single...can marry the wife and raise up seed for him. Now there were with us seven brothers. And the first, when he had married a wife, died; and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother. Likewise the second also, the third, unto the seventh. And last of all, the woman died also." The point being that seven brothers married the same woman, and all seven died. I think if I was about the fourth brother, I'd begin to think that through...But that's what happened. "And last of all, the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her." And you can see them going, "Hum, hum, hum, see if you can handle this one, Satan." Because, you see, the reason they asked the question was to make a mockery out of resurrection. They were trying to mock resurrection.

Twenty-nine, "Jesus answered and said unto them, 'You do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.'" Notice the word "know." That isn't the word for recognition. That's *gnosco*, which suggests a progressive kind of information. That's *oida*, which means fullness of knowledge. Sure, they knew what the Scripture said. They just didn't know what it meant. They never knew the depths of the truth of the Scripture. Superficial knowledge. "You don't know the fullness of the Scripture, and you don't know the power of God, for in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in Heaven."...And so Jesus shoots down their question by hitting them right where they hurt, at the point of their ignorance...Well, what would you expect them to do when Jesus rose from the dead, if that was their view of resurrection. They just asked that question of Jesus to make a joke out of resurrection. And Jesus said, "All you do is show your stupidity. You don't know God's power."

In *Acts chapter 4*, let's look at their reaction to the resurrection. The same group, the Sadducees... Now, here we have the early church being founded, chapter 2, they're preaching. God is blessing. The man at the gate called beautiful has been healed. Peter has preached a second sermon in chapter 3. Now, chapter 4, the reaction. *"As they spoke unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them."* The apostles were preaching and here comes these people and the Sadducees. *"Now the Sadducees were aggrieved."* Verse 2, the word means thoroughly pained. It's a very strong word. They were in anguish. They were torn up. *"That they taught the people and preached through Jesus... what?... the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was now eventide."*

Now, there you have the reaction of the Sadducees to the resurrection. You see, they weren't even interested in considering the facts. Why? Because they already were committed to a rationalistic position. They were totally subjective. "Whatever occurs, we impose our system on it. We don't objectively look at the facts. We're not interested in the claims of Christ. We're not interested in the miracles of Christ... which they must have seen over and over again... We're not interested in considering the fact of resurrection. This is what we believe. Don't confuse us with the facts, our minds are made up." And rationalism, then, imposes on its objective its own view. This is taking your presupposition and putting everything into it rather than being open.

And in *Acts 5:17*, same thing. They started preaching again, and, *"The high priest rose up and all that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees) and were filled with indignation."* You see, they had just seen miracles, and that's the point I want to make in chapter 5 verse 12, they saw miracle after miracle after miracle. Verse 15, *"They brought forth the sick into the streets, laid them on beds and couches. The shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."* And people believed that would heal them. Verse 16 says, *"Sick folks and them vexed with unclean spirits, and were healed, every one."* Now, what did the rationalists do? Say, "Ohhhhhh, guys, we ought to think this one through. Look what's going on." No. They got mad and again imposed their already established system on those miracles and just rejected them, blindly. They weren't interested in the facts.

Now, these miracles went on, and the preaching went on. By the time you come to the *23rd chapter of Acts*, you see something very interesting. *Twenty-third chapter of Acts verse 1*, *"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council...that means he was staring 'em eyeball to eyeball...said, 'Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.' And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. And then said Paul unto him, 'God shall smite thee, thou whited wall!... You know, Paul shouldn't have said that. Lost his cool there...For sittest though to judge me after the law and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?' And they that stood by said, 'Revilest thou God's high priest?' Then said Paul, 'Oh, I knew not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'...Paul felt badly...But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council."* Boy, he had a natural problem, because these two were at each other's throat. The Pharisees were the supernaturalists. They believed in miracles. They believed in resurrection, though not the resurrection of Christ. But they believed in the divine intervention. The Sadducees didn't. They were opposites, so Paul decided he could create a problem. So he says, *"Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called into question!"*...And, man, that set that place off...*"And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the multitude was divided."*

Paul thought, possibly, that if he could get enough chaos going, they'd let him out, being preoccupied with what they were doing. And verse 8 says, *"For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. And there rose a great cry, and the scribes who were of the Pharisee's party arose and contended sharply, 'We find no evil in this man.'" See, Paul just sided with the Pharisees. "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and I believe in the hope of the resurrection."* And all the Pharisees were going, "Yea!" see...

Well, here is, then, the attitude of the rationalists. They just didn't believe in the resurrection. Didn't matter who preached it or for how long or how many miracles. They didn't believe it. And, finally, Paul was brought before Felix in chapter 24, and just to show you down in verse 18 of chapter 24, he said, *"Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude nor with tumult, who ought to have been here before thee and object if they had anything against me."* I mean, "Where are my accusers?" is what he's saying. *"Or else let these same here say if they have found any evildoing in me while I stood before the council."* The only thing they could find was this one thing, verse 21, *"That I cried standing among them: 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead.'"* That was the chaotic issue, because the rationalists couldn't take it. They couldn't handle it.

You know something interesting? There is no record at all here of a Sadducee ever being saved. Pharisees, yes. Paul was one. Sadducees, no. Now, maybe some Sadducees were saved. There's no record of it. And the reason is this. As long as a man is going to be dominated by his own mind, he's going to be damned by his own mind...There are Sadducees today. They look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and rather than objectively consider the facts, and rather than honestly study whether it's true or not, they've already made up their minds that it can't fit their system, and, therefore, they impose their system on it without ever really examining the truth.

Simon Greenleaf is a Harvard professor of law, wrote in a book in 1965 these words, *"All that Christianity asks of men is that they would be consistent with themselves, that they would treat the resurrection evidences as they treat the evidence of other things, and that they would try and judge its actors and witnesses as they deal with their fellow men when testifying in human courts or human tribunals. The result will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth."* End quote.

Now, there's a second reason for rejecting the resurrection in addition to rationalism, and that is unbelief. Look at *John chapter 20*, and I'll show you an illustration of this. Unbelief. *John 20 verse 1. "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher and seized the stone taken away from the sepulcher. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved...that's John...and saith to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid Him.'"* Now, isn't this interesting? She arrives at the tomb. The body is gone. Immediately, she assumes it was what? Stolen. Now, didn't she know that Jesus had said that in three days He would rise? Yes. That was a common statement that, at least there was knowledge of that statement. The two on the road to Emmaus knew there was something supposed to happen on the third day. But there was so much unbelief in their hearts that they could never allow themselves to accept it, even though they had heard it...So she assumes that He's got to be stolen. That's unbelief.

Now, nobody can question Mary Magdalene's love for Christ. All we can do is question her faith. Well, further on down, verse 11, *"Mary stood outside of the sepulcher weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher and sees two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."* She looks in, and there's two angels there. "And they say unto her, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' She saith unto them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.'" Now, you've got to be pretty unbelieving to have a conversation with two angels sitting in an empty tomb and be explaining to them what happened.

The word for weeping in verse 11 is a constant, unrestrained sobbing. She was like Hagar in the wilderness who had a well of water right by her side and didn't have eyes to see it. And even after verse 7, it's amazing. Inside the tomb, it says in verse 7, *"The cloth that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes."* In other words, it wasn't thrown in the corner like it had been a hasty removal, but wrapped together in a place by itself. When He rose, all the clothes were left in an orderly place. The empty tomb, the open sepulcher, the clothes lying that way were enough to convince somebody. Look at verse 8. *"Then went in also that other disciple...that's John...who came first to the sepulcher, and he saw...and what?...and believed."* And he fired out of that place. Mary had seen the same thing, with the addition of

two angels, with whom she has a conversation. They ask her a question in verse 13, implying, "What are you crying about, Mary?"... "Cause they've stolen my Lord."

Well, in addition to that, her unbelief was so deep, she turned around in verse 14, "And saw Jesus standing, and knew not it was Jesus." Still unbelieving. She doesn't recognize Him. Now there's a sense in which recognition had to be a revelation. But she wasn't even looking to recognize Him. And as if that isn't bad enough, "Jesus saith unto her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?'" And she had heard that voice a lot for three years, or at least a good part of that. "She's supposing Him to be the gardener." That's unbelief. She is stuck in unbelief.

"Sir, if Thou have borne Him from here, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." She still believes His body has been removed for...to be placed somewhere else. And now she assumes that maybe the gardener did it. "Jesus said unto her in the Aramaic, 'Merriam.'" Which was her family name and the name friends called her. "And she turned herself and said to Him in Aramaic, 'Rabonai,' which is to say Master." There was recognition. But before Mary recognized Jesus, Jesus had to give her a direct revelation. Unbelief. Her unbelief was shattered when Jesus called her name.

Now, here was a lady who had overwhelming evidence: an empty tomb, a stone rolled away, linen clothes lying folded neatly, unhurried was Jesus when He left, two angels sitting there holding a conversation with her. She faces Jesus to the face. Has a conversation with Him. All of that before she ever believes. Unbelief is no excuse with the overwhelming evidence available for the resurrection. But it's a beautiful thing to know this. That Mary did believe and, mark it, the Lord did what He needed to do in her case to bring her to that point. If there is an honest heart who truly desires the truth, he'll know the truth.

Now, some reject the resurrection, then, on the basis of rationalism. Others on the basis of unbelief. Thirdly, some on the basis of doubt. Stay right in the same chapter, and we'll go right to verse 19. Some just reject the resurrection because they just doubt that it could happen. They're not rationalistic. They don't have a closed system that they impose on the resurrection. And they're not totally unbelieving. Just blatantly unbelieving. They just say, "Ohhhhh, I don't know." You know, maybe a lot of people fit into this category. They just really don't know whether it happened or not. They're not locked into a subjective system, and they're not absolutely unbelieving. They're just, "Well, I'd like to be convinced. I'd like to know, but I don't know."

Verse 19, "The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews." They shut the doors because they were afraid the Jews were going to come and get them. They're afraid of the temple police, and so they were cowering in there, shaking in their boots, expecting the next knock would be the temple police to arrest them. But the next one who came was Jesus, and He didn't bother to knock. Probably, if He had, they'd have panicked. But instead of knocking, He just went through the wall, and they panicked anyway...It says, "Came Jesus, stood in the midst, and says unto...said unto them, 'Peace be unto you.'... Jesus arrived, "And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hand and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, 'Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.'" And so Jesus appears, physically alive, literally, and He showed them His hands and His side, and they were glad. Look at verse 24, "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus... which means the twin. Apparently had a twin brother...was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciple, therefore, had said unto him, 'We have seen the Lord.'...What did Thomas do?... He said unto them, 'Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, put my finger into the print of the nails?'" In other words, it wasn't enough to just to see the print of the nails, "I want to put my finger in there and thrust my hand into His side. Then I will believe."

Now, that is an amazing thing. Here is Thomas. He has spent three years with eleven guys. Well, ten now, with the addition of Matthias, he'd only spent a little time. So there's ten. Judas being absent at this point. So Thomas, it's not as if he doesn't know the credibility of the witnesses, right? But it is so incredible for him

to believe the resurrection that he discounts the integrity of these ten people that he knows so well. Says, "I'll never believe unless I can touch," and so forth and so on. He demands visible evidence. Now this is doubt. "I'll believe, but I'll make my terms. And if God wants to accommodate my terms, then I'll believe."...

Well, verse 26, "After eight days"...I like that. I like that so much. Thomas doubted. You say, "Why didn't God appear then?" Oh, I think that maybe a little bit of chastisement for his doubt, He made him endure eight days of agony. Can you imagine waiting and waiting and waiting? "But after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you.' Then saith He to Thomas... He just zeroed right in on Thomas...'Reach here thy finger, and behold My hands. Reach here thy hand. Thrust it into My side. Be not faithless, but believing.'" He says, "Do what you said you needed to do to believe. Go ahead. Here's My hand. Here's My side. Place your hand in it."

"And Thomas answered and said unto Him, 'My Lord and my God.'" Did Thomas touch His hand? Did he thrust his hand into His side? No. Thomas exaggerated a lot. He didn't need as much proof as he thought he did...He'll believe on certain terms. "I'll make the grounds. When that happens, I'll believe." But Thomas never touched Him. He wasn't such a skeptic as he thought he was. What a confession, "My Lord and my God." Verse 29, "Jesus said unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou has believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Are you a doubter? Many people are doubters. You know, the best thing to do if you're a doubter? Do what Thomas did. Say, "Lord, I want to believe...if You'll show me the truth." I think that's a fair prayer...because I believe this: *John 7:17, Jesus said, "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether I speak of Myself or another, said Jesus."* In other words, God never turns down a seeking heart. You remember the man who said, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief." This was an airtight situation, people. Nobody in the world needs to exist in ignorance about the truth, because if you want to believe, and you're open to the truth, God will meet you with the truth. God never turns down a seeking heart. "If you seek Me with all your heart, you shall surely...what?...find Me."

Don't tell me that...you can't believe because you cannot understand the facts, or God won't show you the truth. That's not so. If you doubt, it's because you have never approached God with an honest heart to know the truth. Jesus said in *John 5:39*, and here's the approach that you need to take, "Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me." If you want to know the truth, all you have to do is take your Bible and study it. The truth will be revealed to you if you have an honest heart. God never turns down a seeking heart. Listen, there is no reason for an honest doubter to be left in doubt. None at all. None at all. All He wants is an honest seeker.

Now, there are some people who aren't honest. In *Matthew 16*, listen to this. "The Pharisees with the Sadducees...verse 1, *Matthew 16...came and tested Jesus, and he said, 'Show us a sign from heaven. Do a trick. Do a miracle. Come on, do a miracle for us.'...Down in verse 3, skipping, He said this: "Oh, you hypocrites...you can discern the face of the sky, but can you not discern the signs of the times? You're real good at telling the weather, you phonies, can't you tell what the spiritual situation is? Don't you know when Messiah has arrived?"*

Verse 4, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. There shall be no sign given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah. He left them and departed." A wicked and adulterous generation - no sign...Well, you say, "What did you read that for, John?" Because of this. If you are a hypocrite and you're not honestly seeking the truth, God is under no obligation to reveal it to you. Did you get that? Because you wouldn't believe it if He did, right? Because you're a hypocrite. But if you're an honest doubter, God will reveal His truths.

Let me show you a *Psalm* that...that ought to really shake up some people. *Psalm 78*, if you are a seeker and an honest seeker...and God reveals the truth, then you're really in debt to that truth. And even if you're a hypocrite and you ask for the truth, and God chooses to reveal it, you're under tremendous obligation. Listen to *Psalm 78 verse 11*, and just jumping right in, "*They forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them.*" Now here is, you know, the people of Israel. God had shown them all His wonders. They had reason to believe. God had proven Himself again and again. "*Marvelous things...verse 12... did He in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; He made the waters to stand as a heap. In the daytime also He led them with a cloud. At night with a light of fire. He split the rocks in the wilderness, gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock and caused waters to run down like rivers.*"

You think God revealed Himself? You think God showed them who He was? The next verse, "*And they sinned...verse 17...yet more against Him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness...How?...They tested God in their hearts by asking food according to their desire.*" They said, "Well, if You're really God, don't keep giving us this crummy manna stuff. We'd like to have such and such and such and such, a fancy dish."...And in verse 19, "*Yea, they spoke against God. They said, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide flesh for His people?' Therefore, the Lord heard this, and was angry. So a fire was kindled against Jacob. Anger came up against Israel, because they believed not in God.*"

Now you see the point here? God says, "I have done enough to prove Myself. Now, if all you want is more signs, you're hypocritical. You don't need more signs to believe. You're hypocrites, and God just moved in, in judgment." Because they didn't believe...In verse 31 of the same *Psalm*, "*The wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them and smote down the chosen men of Israel. For all this they sinned still and believed not in His wondrous works.*" They were saying, "God, can You do this? God, can You do that?" They were phonies. They didn't really want God to be proven to them. He had been proven to them. They were hypocrites. They just wanted fleshly satisfaction. But once they had asked for God's revelation, and once they had seen the truth of God, they were tremendously responsible, weren't they?

Psalm 95 verse 8, "*Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, as in the day of the temptations in the wilderness: When your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My work. They saw enough to know. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, 'It is a people that do err in their heart.'*" They've got an internal problem. Hypocrites. "*And I swore in My wrath that they wouldn't enter the rest. They wouldn't enter the promised land.*" They died in the wilderness. God has revealed enough of Himself to fill an honest doubter's mind with revelation of truth. There's no reason for a person to say, "I would like to know, but I doubt." Here, friend, is the Word of God. There is enough revelation of God in this book along to convince any honest heart. Nobody who wants to know the truth of the resurrection need doubt... In *Luke 8:15*, *Jesus said, 'If you are fertile soil, it's because your heart is honest and good. And when you hear the Word, you will keep it and bear fruit.'*...Remember Cornelius? *Acts 10*. He was an honest and upright man. He sought to know God, and what happened? God went through all kinds of things to get Peter there with the Gospel, and God gave him the truth, and he believed it. So some people doubt. But if they honestly doubt, God will meet them with the truth. But once the truth is revealed, you become responsible. And it has been revealed, friend, in the Word of God.

There's a fourth reason that people do not accept the resurrection. That is indifference. And just a brief look at this one. *John 21*, and, you know, maybe this is where most people fit. I don't know. They are not against the resurrection. They're not for it. Oh, they don't know what they believe. They don't even think about it. They're the ones who are busy coloring eggs and playing with Easter bunnies. They don't care that much. Indifference. They don't fight it. They just go around fiddling with the world, doing their thing.

Like Bertrand Russell wrote an essay on "Why I'm Not a Christian," and in the entire essay never mentioned the resurrection. It's interesting that you could do a critique on Christianity without mentioning the one thing

that makes Christianity what it is. Just ignored it. Most people fit into this category I think. They're busy doing their own thing. They just really don't care whether He rose or didn't.

Verse 1 of John 21, "After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples of the sea of Tiberias in this manner." Now, this is after the resurrection. Jesus appears to them. Here it is. *"There were together Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others."* Likely Philip and Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee were James and John. So here was a whole group of guys who originally came from Galilee. They were the fishermen people with the addition of Thomas. They were told to wait in a mountain till Jesus came. But instead of that, they got very impatient, decided to forget the whole bit, and just go back to doing what they used to do. *"Simon Peter said unto them, 'I'm going fishing.'" And the implication of the Greek tenses here is that he was returning to his former profession. He was just saying goodbye to the ministry, going back to fishing.*

"They say unto him, 'We also go with thee.'" And, of course, he was the leader and everybody followed. "They went forth and entered into a boat." The definite article is there, which indicates that it probably was Peter's own boat. He was going back to his former profession. "And that night they caught nothing... And, of course, God took care of all that...When morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." Now, you say, "Well, you don't make a big point about that, do you?" No, just this, Jesus was on the shore. They didn't know it was Jesus. He asked them a question in verse 5, *"Do you have any food?" They said, "No." He says, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat."* They had this little dialogue and so forth and so on.

Finally, in verse 7, *"The disciple whom Jesus loved...who's John...said, 'It is the Lord.'" Now, the interesting thing about this is, is that it took time for them to recognize Jesus. Why? Because they just weren't that concerned. They had one purpose that the Lord had given them. "Go to Galilee, stay in that mountain, and wait for Me."* And they should've been looking for Him, but they went back to doing the everyday deal, the routine thing, and they just really had no eyes to even bother with a resurrected Christ. That's indifference. That's indifference. They were just doing their own thing, very unconcerned. **This is like the fool, you know, who just can't be bothered to examine the resurrection. He just doesn't care that much, and so damns his own soul because of indifference. Indifference.**

There's a fifth thing, and I think another reason why men reject the resurrection. That's ignorance. Look at *Luke 24* and just quickly we'll skip some thoughts here and pull together one area. *Luke 24...* let me read you *verse 13. "Behold, two of them...two disciples...went the same day to a village called Emmaus... This is on the day that Jesus arose...which was from Jerusalem threescore furlongs...about seven miles... They talked together of all the things that had happened. Came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near and walked with them."* Now can you imagine? Two disciples, and Jesus comes over and walks with them. *"But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him..."* They didn't recognize Him." Now, again, I say there's an area, there's an aspect of revelation here that was needed for them to recognize Him. But the point was they weren't expecting Him at all. They weren't even looking for Him. Why?

Well, *"He said to them, 'What manner of communication are...are these that you have one with another as you walk and are sad?'* What's going on, boys? And one of them answering, whose name was Cleopas, said unto Him, *'Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem and hast know the things with have come to pass in these days?'"* Here he is talking to the Lord Jesus Christ. *"He said unto him, 'What things?'* Jesus said. *They said unto Him, 'Oh, concerning Jesus of Nazareth who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.'" Notice how they undersell Jesus? See? They don't say the Son of God. They say He was a what? Prophet. You see, the props have been knocked out from under their theology, because He's dead, and He's not even the Messiah anymore. He's just a prophet. "And how the chief priests and rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him, and we hoped that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel."* Their whole theology was wiped out when He was killed. *"And besides all this today is the third day since these things were done."*

Now, they knew something was supposed to be happening on the third day, but they weren't committed to that. *"Yea, and certain women also of our company amazed us, who were early at the sepulcher. When they found not His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the sepulcher and found that, even as the women as said, but Him they saw not."* You see, they didn't believe either. Oh, they said, "Some women said He's alive. But, you know, what do women know? Because a couple of men went there, and they didn't see anything."

Verse 25, *"He said unto them, 'O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses... that's the Pentateuch...and all the prophets ...that's the books of prophecy...He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures...that's the Hagiographer, all the rest of the writings...There's the three parts of the Hebrew Old Testament...He took them from the Pentateuch to the prophets to the writings and taught them everything concerning Himself."*

You know what their problem was? You know why they didn't believe in the resurrection? They didn't know their old Scriptures. That's why. Ignorance. *"They drew near unto the village to which they went. He made as though He would have gone further...He sort of just left a little bit...And they constrained Him and said, 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' He went in to tarry with them. It came to pass, as He sat eating with them, He took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them, and their eyes were opened. They recognized Him, and He vanished out of their sight."*

And I love this. *"And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us along the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?'"*...Beloved, the burning feeling that you get in your heart is not an emotional feeling. It comes from the Word of God, teaching the Scriptures. Well, they were ignorant. And you always hear people say, "Well, I don't believe the Bible." You know what I always say to somebody who says that? "Oh, that's such an astute statement. You must have studied it for years to come to that conclusion. You don't believe the Bible or the history and all the brilliant men of the ages who have believed it. And you don't believe it. What an astute conclusion. How did you arrive at that?"...Ignorance...and more people probably than we like to admit will spend forever in hell because of ignorance. The Word of God is available, my friend. No reason to be ignorant.

Lastly, I believe the last reason that people reject the resurrection, and the one that consummates everything, is because they willfully sin. I think that's just because they just don't want to believe, and I'm going to close by showing you one of the most unbelievable portions in Scripture...The real basic reason for rejection, and this covers all the other ones, is the will. They just don't want to believe. They love their sin. They love their rebellion against God. That's just how it is. Let me show you something absolutely amazing. *Matthew 27:62, "Now the next day, and following the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together to Pilate and said, 'Sir, we remember that the deceiver said, while He was yet alive, 'After three days, I'll rise again.' The Jews said, 'He said He'd rise.' Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He is risen from the dead.' The last error will be worse than the first...And listen, Pilate was under the thumb of the Jews, so he had to obey...Pilate said unto them, 'You have a watch. Go your way and make it as sure as you can.' They went and made the sepulcher sure, sealed the stone, set a watch."*

So the Jews thought, "Boy, everything's secure. Great." Now you go to chapter 28, and you can't believe what happened. Verse 2, *"Behold, there was a great earthquake."* You think the Roman soldiers felt that? Of course they did. *"An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, came, rolled back the stone from the door, sat on 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."* They saw that. They...they felt the earthquake. The stone rolled away, and a brilliant angel sits on the stone, and they're looking at all of it...

Well, they had to give a report. Verse 11, "*Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.* Said, 'You won't believe what happened. This angel came out of heaven. The ground began to shake...It was a localized earthquake. It happened in a Garden where the tomb was...And this angel rolled that thing, and sat, and the tomb was empty. Whoo!...See?...*And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave much money to the soldiers.*" You know what they did? They bribed 'em. "*Saying, 'Say ye, His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept.'*" And their natural reactions, "Are you kidding? We'd lose our heads if we admitted we were sleeping. Besides that, how could we tell them the disciples stole His body if we were asleep. We wouldn't know what happened."

And in verse 14, he says, "*If this comes to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and so secure you. We'll take care of Pilate.'* So they took the money and did as they were taught. And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." Can you believe that? Can you believe the blatant, willful rejection that just obviates the facts and bribes the soldiers? The Jews didn't want to know the facts. The soldiers didn't want to believe the facts. They took the money and lived a lie the rest of their life.

Now, friends, that's willful rejection. But that's where many people are...Jesus did rise...There are reasons to reject the revelation. They're not very good...But there's a reason to believe it apart from fact, and it's this: Jesus said these words, and they're for you, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.*" What a promise. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for the truth of the resurrection. We give You praise and glory for the resurrection life provided in Jesus Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.