

The Defeat of Death-Part 1
The Centrality of the Resurrection
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, if you've ever had the experience of working hard to earn and save and sacrifice to buy a house, you know how good it feels the day you close escrow. That's a good day. Feels great. And when the realtor hands you those keys to the house that's a good feeling. In a way that's what we get to witness here in the last chapter of Luke, Luke 24. We see Christ closing escrow, if you will, on the redemptive plan that he set out with in the beginning of this book. We recognize, as it comes to a close, that Christ had finished all that he set out to do when it came to fulfilling all righteousness, everything that I need as a human being he fulfilled in his human life as he lived before his Father, the judge. And speaking of that judge, everything that I've ever done in terms of the rebellion and the sin and the falling short, the transgressions of my life, all of that then, he said that ransom that was racked up because of that, all of that now had been paid in full. That last breath on the cross done.

Now, in Luke 24 he has the keys and that's not just my illustration and analogy here, that's his own illustration and analogy. It doesn't have to do with closing escrow, but he certainly is closing escrow and he says in the last book of the Bible, after it's all said and done, the last book of the New Testament canon, he says in Revelation 1:18, he says, "I now have the keys to Death and Hell." "I've got them both. I've got the key, I can unlock it." He says, "I was dead and now I'm alive forevermore. I'm the first, I'm the last. I have the keys to Death and Hades." That is how Jesus introduces himself. It is a key to a lock that is terrifying, it's fear-inducing. It's a lock that you and I can't open, it's a lock that has touched, I'm sure, everyone in this room, some of you recently. It is a painful and enslaving harsh and brutal lock. And Christ said, I got the key. Escrow is closed. I have all rights and one day for every Christian, the Bible says, he will take that key, he will turn the lock. Now here's a good 8-word verse to summarize the entire 24th chapter of Luke that we're going to study for the next five weeks. It says in First Corinthians 15 that, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." And he turns that key at one point in our future and it's done. Why? Because he's already got them. When did he get them? He got them in Luke Chapter 24. The keys to Death and Hell.

If you haven't turned them yet turn there now. Get to Luke Chapter 24. We're going to try and tackle the first 12 verses this morning. For us to understand this in the way that the Bible would have us understand this, I'm quite certain it's going to shift our thinking in a direction that most of us are not accustomed to thinking. This sermon and this focus that we're going to try to uncover here may get you to think a little differently about death, think a little differently about the resurrection, and to move you to think more biblically this week, this month and I hope for the rest of your Christian life regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Let's look at how the disciples discovered this starting with those Galilean disciples of Christ, those female disciples who had come on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem with Jesus. They had witnessed all of this. They prepared their spices, which was part of this embalming process, if you will, this packing of this body in the inevitable expectation of the decay and putrid nature, the stench of a dead body in a crypt. That's what they were preparing for to do their best to again put spices around that body as they did in the ancient world.

And it says in verse 1 of Luke Chapter 24, "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from

the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel." Now these aren't just men, normal men. The other Gospel writers make it clear, just as Jesus' ministry started with angelic announcements, here we have the end of the ministry in Chapter 24 coming with an angelic announcement. These two angels in dazzling apparel, they had some kind of appearance as we've looked at just a few weeks ago that somehow, as is often the case, "frighten" those who saw it. They "bowed their faces to the ground," and these men, these messengers said to them, "'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He's not here but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise?' And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to the rest." That was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary, the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. "But these words seemed like an idle tale and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and he ran to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened."

We could start our study here today with verse 1 with just the simple expectation of what all of us would expect if you just watched professional executioners kill your rabbi, your leader, even if you thought he was the king of Israel. He died. He died surely, you watched Joseph of Arimathea along with Nicodemus go and take this body after getting permission from Pilate and put it in this very fancy, rich man's tomb, this mausoleum, this crypt. And you go back after the Sabbath rest and you're going to bring your own spices just like Nicodemus and Joseph had done and you're going to add to that out of great respect for Jesus to give him a proper burial. And you would expect that dead people stay dead. That's your expectation because that's the expectation of everyone. That's what you expect. You go to a mortuary, a funeral home, you go to a gravesite, you go to a memorial service, you expect the dead to stay dead. We get used to that fact.

Now I just want to start this by having us rethink this thing that we call death. As unpleasant as it is just allow me, if you would, indulge me in just giving a few moments to think about this thing we call death. To reconsider it. Number one, if you're taking notes, let's just state it that way and just spend some time thinking about this philosophically, theologically. Number one, we need to "Reconsider the Problem of Death." It's a problem that we've kind of learned to cope with and they cope with it in this passage the same way we cope with it. We do our best to give a proper burial. We grieve, we mourn. We suffer the loss of people we love.

But, I don't want us to ever fall to the thinking of our world, which creeps into a lot of sermons by the way. I mean, I don't like going to funerals because they're sad events, but I certainly don't like going to funerals that I'm not preaching at. Let me just say that up front. Because most of them, with some exceptions, but most of them, I hear a lot of platitudes and ethereal statements from the front that just absolutely nauseate me because what I find people doing, even though they speak and try to speak in the name of God and they tack some verses on, they're trying to normalize something that should never be normalized. They're trying to make normal this thing called death. They use words like this: "it's natural." I mean, come on, "it's normal." Then they say this, the most absurd statement I've ever heard at a funeral, they say, "You know, death is just a part of life."

You know eating and drinking and sleeping and laughing and telling jokes and hanging out, that's a part of life. You know what's not a part of life? Dying is not a part of life. It's just not a part of life. Matter of fact, you want to pick something that is antithetical to life, I pick Death. Death is antithetical to life. I mean, I'm at the place now and I'm at the place in my life now, I'm ready to

stand up and object in the middle of these. "I object. Death is not a part of life! Death is the END of life." Now, not wanting to get escorted out of these funerals, I try to maintain and just bite my lip, but I'm thinking what a stupid statement that is.

Death is not a part of life. It is abnormal. It is contradictory. It's incompatible with everything I know about life. And because of that it is repulsive. It is repellent. I hate it. And the minute we try to normalize it, as people naturalistically do, "Well, you know, now I just believe there's no supernatural, there are no gods, there's nothing beyond what we can see, whatever I can see with my senses, so I kind of naturalistically try to explain it." Well all the naturalistic explanations, even if they say, "Oh, this is part of a progressive plan of evolution and all this is moving forward, death is a part of life and if we don't have death..." You know what? All of that is simply a quest to normalize the abnormal. And let me go back to something just in terms of how we were made. And I know you're going to say, "Well, this is a biblical argument and I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about just normal people who don't believe in your fairy tale of the Bible." Listen, everybody has to deal with something that is inherent in who they are. Because here's the thing about human beings, we are used to, the normal part of what we experience is we're used to BEING.

That's a weird way to put it. I don't want to be too philosophical but we're used to being. Here's the word when you take that word into philosophy or theology, "ontos." It's the word "to be" the verb "to be." We call it ontology or an ontological argument. From that ontological argument we can start to think about what is ontologically a reality for us. And here's the ontological part of thinking about life and death and that is I desire, by the nature of me being a human being, I desire to BE. I don't desire NOT TO BE. I may have bad days when I think, "Oh, it would be better if I were dead, like Job I might think that. But that's not really what I want. I will fight to BE, I fight to BE, I fight to live, I am made to live. Now, biblically let's put a layer of clear biblical revelation on top of it, God is a god, an immortal God, the giver of life, he grants life to beings and he makes these creatures called human beings in his own image. Those individual beings all desire to live. That's what we are designed to do. Ontologically what we desire and what we expect is to live and to be and to exist. What I don't want and don't expect and I see as a terrible, awful intrusion into my reality, is this thing called death.

That's important. It's important for me to realize. Because even atheists and agnostics, are you ready for this stat? 32% of agnostics and atheists say, "Well, I don't even know, I certainly don't buy Christianity. I don't even think it's real." Or I know it's not real, which is an arrogant statement, but they know it's not real. Do you know that 32% believe that they're going to live after they die? I mean that's an odd statement. Right? They don't believe in your hocus pocus, fairy tale and Jesus resurrected, and this god you can't see, "But you know what, I certainly know I'm going to be somewhere when I die." They will even get down to the place of believing in things like heaven and hell, even though they say, "Well, I don't even know... there's no God." Why? Because in the fabric of who they are they are designed to want to BE, and to NOT BE doesn't make any sense. That doesn't make any sense.

You can sit there with naturalistic explanations and say, "Well, you know, just get used to it. Just know it's natural, it's normal, death, it's just a part of life." It's not. It grates against me. Matter of fact, Ecclesiastes 3:11 puts it this way, that "God has placed eternity in their hearts." Now that statement, it's an interesting and very baffling, perplexing statement. But if I take anything from that statement I take this: that God has done something in the software of who I am that I am not supposed to stop. I'm supposed to keep going. I want that immortality and it doesn't seem like that should cease to be. And what I don't like about death in this world is that people who are BEING

with me in my world all of a sudden stop being, it's called death, at least being with me, and they're no longer with me. They're separated from me. And I don't like that. It grates against me.

It doesn't help to say, "Granny lived a great 80 years," the octogenarian who just died. "She lived a full life." That's another one I want to stand up at funerals and object. So when I'm 80 you're ready for me to go? Right? Is that it? You want me to be done with this now after 80 years. "She lived a full life." Does that help you at all? It doesn't help me. Not when I'm 80 it doesn't help me. The only reason you want Granny to die, if you're a sympathetic loving person, "She's in so much pain, she can't even get out of her recliner, she's in a lot of pain." That's why you think about, "Well, it would be great if her suffering was over." But what if Granny is healthy? "Well, you've lived a full life, let's just end this now." It doesn't make any sense. Granny wants to live. And if you love your Granny you want your Granny to live. It doesn't make sense. We have within us a crafted desire to live.

I've done this before but let me summarize the whole Bible for you in five points or less. Are you ready? Genesis 1. Let me outline it for you. Genesis 1: "It's all good." Genesis 1. It's all good. God creates people and he says it's good. Creates creation, it's good. Good, good, good, good, good, good. God creates, the giver of life, people. They have life now granted to them, it's derivative life but they have life and everything is good. Everyday, life, living God, living creatures, everything's good. It's good. Chapter 2: "Obey me and you can keep living. Don't obey me. You rebel against this order. I'm the giver of life. You're the derivative recipient of life. If you don't keep that straight in your mind and don't recognize I'm the boss here, then you die. In the day you eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die." So there's the warning. Everything will be copacetic, let's just let's keep first things first. I am God. You are my creatures. I will give you life, I will give you joy at my right hand, there are pleasures forever, everything will be great. Just do what I ask. My rules are not burdensome, they're fine, they're for your own good, they're for my glory. Just do the right thing. Everything will be great. But if not - death. "All's good," "the rules."

Then Chapter 3: "rebellion and death." Rebellion is sin. They look to God and said, "I want to make my own rules." Now they had help there with the tempter. "I want to make my own rules," and God said, "Great. Then here's the penalty. You will die." Now wait a minute, I thought you said, "In the day that you eat of the fruit you will surely die." No, he did. Here are the two parts to death that we experience as human beings. There is the relational part that happened the day he ate the fruit. "You eat that fruit and you are relationally now dead to me." And that's true. You can't get away from God, not in the Garden, this perfect situation. God shows up and then Adam hides. Why? Because everything's messed up. I'm in a relationally messed up, dead relationship. There's a separation between me and God. That sounds like Isaiah 59:2, which we quoted a few times in the last few months. That is a great passage, it's a clarifying passage. It's a bad passage, but it's a great passage to clarify: your sins have made a separation between you and your God. I'm separate. There's a death to the relationship. We're at enmity with one another.

That statement starts the process of the first phase of death. And then he says, "Now you can't go and eat of the tree of life that's in the Garden. I'm going to curse the fabric with which you were made, so every cell in your body, there's this new thing, entropy, second law of thermodynamics, all the messing up of the fabric of who you are, you are going to begin to decay to the place where biologically you will cease to exist as a human being encapsulated and enmeshed in a biological unit. You will die and I'm not going to let you eat of the tree of life. Therefore, we're going to bar that from you and you will biologically die." Death number 1, Death Category 1, Phase 1: relational death. Phase 2: biological death. "Eve will mourn your passing and you'll be separated from her

now, and you'll be separated from all that I've created here." Separation of relationship with God, separation from everything else, that's relational death, biological death, death number 1. That happened in Genesis Chapter 3.

Genesis Chapter 4 through Revelation 19. You thought it could take a long time to get through this outline. That's a big chunk of the Bible right there. Genesis 4 through Revelation Chapter 19. You have two things taking place. One is a record of all that we experience now, and that is life with sin and death. We have life with sin and death. People continue to sin and people continue to die. The sentence of death relationally, the sentence of death biologically. We've all been to funerals, we've all had people we love die, and we continue in that continuum.

But the good news is it ends in Revelation Chapter 20, 21 and 22, God says, "Here's what I'm going to do. There shall no longer be any death, no longer. It's done." As I said, the summary from First Corinthians 15, when Christ gets the keys, he then says, "I'm going to turn the key of this enslaving, terrorizing, fearful lock and I will at the end defeat the final enemy, and the final enemy is death. There will no longer be any death, no mourning, no crying, no pain, no suffering." All of it's gone.

And then we start something that's a lot longer than everything between Genesis 4 and Revelation 19, you have eternity, it's called the eternal state, where there is no death. Now you put that all together on a theological spectrum, you have God creating creatures, giving them life and they are in that sense immortal. Not like God, it's not that they didn't have a beginning. No, they have a beginning but they are meant to live forever. But then sin and then they die. And we have all of this experience between Genesis 4 and Revelation 19. But then one day, which we still look to the future, there will be no death. And then guess what happens. We're back to immortality and life with no death. Therefore, I just want you to look at this. Between these two bookends, Genesis 4 and Revelation 19, what you have is the exception, not the rule.

Now if I get up at a funeral and say that, which sometimes I try to say without going too deeply in a homily at a funeral, I'm trying to make very clear to you, not only do I think death is horrible, it stinks, it's awful, it's rotten, it's an enemy, I'm never going to stand up and say, "Hey, get used to it, it's fine. It's a part of life." I do try to say from time to time, "Can you remember that this is the exception, not the rule?" It is the exception. Death is the exception. I can't normalize the abnormal. It is abnormal, it grates against everything in my ontology, in who I am as a human being. And guess what? Theologically, it's an aberrant thing that only reins for a time and then it's gone.

Man's attempts to try to normalize the abnormal will never work. In the big picture, death is the exception not the rule. But when you live on this timeline, it's easy for us to think that it is normal. But I can prove to you, I think, at least if you just imagine with me for a minute what was going on in John 11, you can maybe imagine with me that maybe this is right: this is evidence in favor of what you're saying. I just want you to put yourself in the sandals of Martha and Mary. Martha and Mary have a brother named Lazarus. Lazarus dies, he's in the tomb for four days. That's four days of grieving your brother, who you love and you had a great relationship with him, then he dies. You are going to mourn hard for four days. Then Jesus shows up. You wanted Jesus to show up a long time ago when Lazarus was sick but he didn't show up and now he shows up and he starts pontificating about being the resurrection and the life. That's not helping right now. "No, I am. I'm the resurrection and the life. If you believe in me, even if you die, yet shall you live." You know the resurrection is coming. The last enemy to be defeated is death. "I'm crying at a funeral right now, Jesus. What are you talking about? I know on the last day everyone's going to be resurrected. I've learned that, I know that, the Bible says that." Jesus says, "No, no, no, no. I am the resurrection and

the life. You believe in me, even if you die, you will live. And if you live and believe in me, you will never die." You need to get past this.

"Well, just as an example, an illustration of the power that I have and who I am, I'm now going to not turn the mortal into immortality, I'm not going to turn the perishable into the imperishable. But let's take the perishable and let's breathe life back into him and make him again a living being and restore your brother to you. Hey, Lazarus come forth," and Lazarus comes out. And Jesus is like, "Well let's have a sandwich. Feed him. He's been dead for four days now. I'm sure he's hungry." And you are Martha and Mary. Put yourself in their sandals. I just want to know 5 minutes into this new life that Lazarus has, what's that like as you're serving up a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. That's weird isn't it? That is really weird. "I mean, we've been crying, our eyes are puffy because you've been dead for four days." It's weird. How about 5 hours later. The sun's about to go down on the day that Lazarus was raised from the dead, and now you're sitting around, his feet are up, you're like, "Can I get you anything? You've been dead for four days." I mean, it's a weird experience.

Then I want you to think, five days go by, five days later. Now what's it like? "Yeah, you were dead last week. That was really weird. What are we going to do today? We need to get back to work." He's got a job. He's got things to do. Run it forward five months. Five months. How about 15 months? When you're hanging out with Lazarus, your brother, your beloved brother, who you really love, you're going about your work, you're going about your job, it's, you know, time to worship, it's time to read the Scriptures, it's time to go build tents or whatever they did in Bethany there. Is it weird that he's alive? And the answer would be "no." The weird thing, and it probably doesn't take five months, it probably doesn't take five hours, the weird thing is that you were dead. It's not that you're alive. That's the weird thing. The abnormality for us as human beings is that death would be a reality at all. And you need to understand that from a biblical perspective. When you take the whole Scripture and you expand it, you realize that is the weird part, that people would ever die. Now it makes perfect sense because God said, "If you sin you will die." The wages of sin is death, Romans 6, you all learned it as kids, I hope, that is the equation. We see the world filled with sin and so we all die. That is what God sentenced upon humanity. But it's not how we're made. It's not how we're made.

Can I get used to the passing of people in my life? Well, I guess so. Kind of like if I had my arm amputated I guess I could get used to having one arm, but I'm never going to say, "Yeah, that's a good thing and this is the way I was designed to be." You have someone in your family who you love die, you have someone in your circle who you love who dies, you're not going to ever go, "Yeah, yeah, no big deal." It is a big deal. Have you gotten used to not having that relationship? Yeah you did. But that's not normal and when you consider your own death, the only reason you would wish for it is if you were really majorly bummed out or whether you're suffering in some kind of chronic terminal illness. But to say I don't want to be anymore is not a normal part of who we are. When we have life we don't think it's weird, what we think is weird is death. Reconsider the problem of death as an intrusion, as an incompatible, contradictory, abnormal, repulsive, repugnant intrusion into God's plan. That I think is the first step.

And if you take this out and you say, "Well, let's have a Christianity that doesn't have this weird little fairy tale about a come-to-life Jesus and all of us going to be resurrected one day and live forever. Can we have a Christianity like Thomas Jefferson said we should have? Let's just have it without all the miracle stuff. Like Robert Funk and the Jesus Seminar or whatever liberal preacher you might listen to out there. This is, "Can we have Jesus and all the ethics and all the morals? We'll just have better lives and more purpose and more meaning and we won't be lonely. We can be

Christian but let's not talk about resurrected, bodily resurrected Jesus and our future resurrection, because all that, I just believe what the world tells me about naturalism, and we're just here for a while and part of the evolutionary process. No big deal."

You take that out, what does the Apostle Paul say in the longest recorded passage in the New Testament regarding the resurrection? He says you've lost everything. You pull that one piece out of Christianity, you've lost everything. You take this out and you say I'm not going to live after I die, there is no resurrection of the body. Christ didn't rise from the dead. All this preaching about is just, kind of, I don't know, it's wrong, it's misguided, it's lies, it's fairytales, he said then you ought to look at our religion and say, this makes no sense at all. None. I quote it all the time, but First Corinthians Chapter 15 verse 19, "If in Christ we've hoped in this life only," if we're just hoping about better lives, less loneliness, more purpose, "we are of all people most to be pitied." You ought to look at us and go, "Wow, that's a bummer. You could do better things with your Sunday morning than that." You're absolutely right. We could, with our money and our giving and our effort and our resources and our time and service and many... What are we doing if this isn't the whole point, to take this sin and death problem and extract it?

They went to the tomb as we all would to our beloved loved one's tomb and expect the dead to stay dead. But, verse 2, Luke 24, they found the stone rolled away. Well, when they went in that didn't find the body of Jesus and they were, as you would be, perplexed. "We saw it happen. We know he was here. He was dead. We watched him die." But these two agents from God show up. They scared them, and these angels, these messengers, verse 5, said this. Now, note this carefully, get your highlighters ready. Here's what they said in the middle of verse 5, "Dude, I totally understand your perplexed nature. I get it. I would be shocked too. This doesn't make sense, you're right. I understand."

Correct me if I ever read this wrong by the way. That's not there, right? They never said that. Why? The angels cut them no slack, am I right? No slack. "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" The women said, "Because that's where we go when we watch people die and they put them in a tomb I come back to... I mean that's where we go." The angels said, "No, no, no, no. Why would you come here? You're talking about Jesus, right? You're looking for Jesus. Why would you come here?" I mean here's what the angels say: "Dah... What are you doing? Why would you come here? This doesn't make any sense. He's not here, he's risen. Can you ladies just think back to everything Jesus said? Remember now ladies, even back when he was in Galilee, how many times did he tell you, "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men. He must be crucified. He must rise on the third day." And they went "Hmmm. You're right. But since that's not our experience with all of our friends who normally die, one of my grandpas died, my grandma died," maybe their mothers have died, their father... "You know what, you're right, he did say that but I didn't expect it."

"But they remembered his words," and apparently they were convinced because in verse 9, "They went and returned from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and everyone else," and they said, "he's risen from the dead," and they probably said exactly what the angels said and that is, "Don't you remember that's what he told us. You should have known this." Here's the paraphrase of this section, verses 2 through 9. "You should have known it. You should not be perplexed at this."

God has been on a campaign to fix this problem. They should have known this because it went way back. How far did it go back? I'm glad you asked me that. Turn to Genesis Chapter 3. Genesis Chapter 3 is when I said in my whole Bible outline that God said, "You are now going to suffer the

penalty of death." And here in the middle of all that about all the fabric of nature being corrupted with you'll work by the sweat of your brow and eat your food and relational conflict in marriage and pain in childbirth, all of that, in the middle of all that, verse 15, look at this with me. Genesis Chapter 3 verse 15, God starts to say, "I've got a plan though. Here's my plan and I've planned this out and here's how it goes."

Look at it with me. Genesis 3:15. "I'm going to put enmity between you..." Who is "you" in this passage? He's referring to the enemy, the tempter, Satan. "...and the woman." All that you are, all that she is, enmity, and again she, Eve, is the mother of the living representing all of humanity. There's going to be enmity between you two. "And," let's get specific, "between your offspring..." Now, what's the offspring of the enemy. Well, let's think about it contextually, at least. The offspring of the enemy contextually here, as the tempter comes, tempters are trying to get the people who are being tempted to sin, and sin comes with consequences. And this may be a stretch, but let's look at this now. The offspring of the enemy in this context is sin and death. That offspring is going to be pitted against her offspring. And Paul goes to great lengths to try and remind us that, at least in the original, this is a singular word. The offspring. There's going to be one offspring who they're going to now be pitted between.

The offspring of the enemy, his temptation, gives rise to sin, gives consequence to death, you're going to have now the offspring of the woman, one offspring who is going to come as a victor, they're going to battle against each other, and here's how the battle is going to go. "He," the offspring, singular, of Eve "is going to bruise your head." There's going to be blood from your head. Now, he's going to go on now to compare it to bruise on a heel. Now, if I'm going to have a bloody mess today, I want it coming from my heel and not my head. I'd rather have neither, but if I'm going to have an injury, I'd rather have it to my foot than to have some massive bleeding bruise to my head.

The picture here is that Christ is going to somehow bring this arresting, as Paul would put it to the Romans, a crushing blow to the head of the enemy. God is going to crush him. And you, Satan, oh, you're going to take a swipe here and it's going to hurt, you were going to bruise his heel. You were going to trip him up. You were going to have the pain of suffering of Christ. And Christ died as a ransom, the Bible says. A payment for sin but that sin, as it says in Hebrews, was an enslavement of death that Satan himself was a part of and instrumental in. Satan and the offspring of sin and death and Christ the victor who comes from the woman is going to now, in human form, to be this representative of humanity, going to fight against the offspring of the enemy's temptation and you are going to have a battle. But the battle is going to be a crushing of the enemy and all the consequences of that, and sin and death are going to be defeated and life and immortality are going to be brought to light in this work of this victor. And though there will be wounds, and though it will hurt, and though there will be suffering, there's going to be a victory here.

I don't know what the reference Bible you've got says in the margin, but there's got to be some kind of commentary here by anyone who knows the whole story of the Bible that this is the first picture of the good news that God is going to fix the problem. This is the beginning of the campaign. The rest of the Bible, I said between Genesis Chapter 4 to all the way to Revelation Chapter 19, you have not only sin and death but you have God unfolding his redemptive plan to fix the problem. That is something you and I should get excited about. Much more excited about this than many other things people get excited about at church. I'm all for, you know, looking at the garnish on the plate and go, isn't it great, there's some, you know, garnish on the plate. But the main dish is God fixing this problem.

Number two in your outline, let's put it this way, we need to "Celebrate God's Campaign for Life." When the angels say, "Hey ladies, you should have known this." Why? Well, he goes back to Jesus' teaching in Galilee which was many, many months ago. Matter of fact, it spanned years in Jesus' ministry. And he said, "Go back and think this through." But you can go all the way back to the beginning of the Bible and start to see God was on a campaign to fix the problem. It should not be a surprise to you that if the wages of sin is death and he paid all the penalty for sin in his ministry and on the cross, then you should expect him to solve the death problem. And in this scene you're seeing these women being chided and exhorted by angelic messengers. "You should have known." Why? Because this has been the campaign from the beginning.

Just nine chapters later in Genesis 12, we read it not long ago on our Daily Bible Reading, God then picks a man named Abraham and he says, "Through you all the families of the Earth will be blessed." I'm going to build a nation and through that nation, that offspring of the woman, is going to come and that offspring of the woman is going to be the victor. and in that one descendant, ultimately, we'll see it, we'll read in tomorrow's Daily Bible Reading, Genesis 49 and 50, you're going to see it again. The picture of redemption coming through the nation of Israel. That salvation comes with that great victor through the king, that kingly line, David being a prototype of it, Christ being the ultimate of it, and the king of the kingdom will solve the problem and death will be reversed. That's the expectation and it always has been.

Luke unfolds the ministry. It ends with a bang, if you will. It ends with escrow closing and then the keys are now firmly in the hands of Christ. And then volume 2 of Luke is what? Volume 2 of Luke is what? What's the next book? Acts. Right? He writes two books. Both dedicated to the Theophilus and he's saying to Theophilus, "Listen, I'm going to tell you about, not only the life and ministry of Christ, here's volume 2. Now the Church takes the message and proclaims it." Turned to Acts real quick, if you would. Let's just get a quick preview of volume 2. Are you ready to be nimble in your Bibles? Let's go through a few passages just to show you the emphasis. This is the emphasis of the message. Now that Christ the victor has come and he has the keys of the kingdom, he has the keys of death and hell, now how has he preached how is he presented?

After the resurrection, Luke kicks into high gear to explain how the early Church presented this. He starts with Christ himself in verse 3 of Acts 1. "And he," that is Christ, look at the context, "presented himself," well here's the whole point, "alive." "He presented himself alive, alive to them after his suffering," and he made it really clear. You're not seeing things. Don't be perplexed. He proved it "with many proofs, appearing to them for forty days and speaking about..." What? "The kingdom of God." What's that? "Have a really cool life now?" No. "You won't be lonely?" No. "Do you lack purpose? I'll give it to you." No. "Lose weight? Clearer skin, no cavities?" That's not the point. The point is what? The kingdom. And in the kingdom when the king comes and sits upon the throne and all the kings of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and "every enemy is put under his feet," as 1 Corinthians 15 says, "and he'll rule until that day and the last enemy to be put under his feet when the kingdom is realized is death itself." It is the last enemy. And when he does that we will know he was the alpha, the omega, the beginning, the end, the first, the last, he died, he's alive for evermore, he has the keys and he's turned the keys for us, and death is a distant memory. It starts with a living Christ. And he talks about the kingdom and the connection between the two. I would love to sit at his feet during those 40 days and hear those sermons.

Well, we hear some sermons in Acts of the apostles. Look across the page, scroll down to Acts Chapter 2 verse 23. Peter's preaching, the day of Pentecost, here's what he says: "This Jesus,

delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God..." Sounds like a campaign, God's on a mission. Yes, and part of the mission was to have you crucify and kill him. "You killed him by the hands of these lawless Roman executioners." But look at this, verse 24, underline it, highlighted it. "God raised him up, loosening the pangs of death," the pangs of death. Not just on him, as it says in the next phrase, "because of course it's impossible for him to be held by it," but he'd loosen them for us, as Hebrews says, we now are recipients of no longer having to be enslaved by this fearful, terrorizing lock of death. "He loosened the pangs of death."

Drop down to verse 30. He starts quoting the Psalms, he quotes David. He says David, "Being therefore a prophet," verse 30 of Acts 2, "knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on the throne, he foresaw and spoke about the..." cool and nifty reign of Christ. No. "He spoke about the resurrection of Christ." That's the whole point. "He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption." He didn't rot in a grave. You didn't need the spices.

Look across the page. Acts Chapter 3 verse 15. Acts 3:15. "And you killed the author of life." Wow, what a crazy, paradoxical statement. "You killed the author of life." He has life in himself. He granted, he has the authority, he is the God-man. He's the author of life, "whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses." This is the point.

Ten verses later, verse 25, Acts 3:25. "You are sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'" Every tongue, tribe and nation, some people from every tongue, tribe and nation are going to be blessed. "God," verse 26, "having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness." and then the gospel "to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Romans Chapter 1. That's the picture. That's what Acts is all about. Getting the message of the resurrected Christ solving the problem of death.

Look at Acts Chapter 4 verse 1. "And they were speaking to the people and the priest and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came to them greatly annoyed." Why were they greatly annoyed? Because they kept talking about purpose and happiness and lack of loneliness. No. They were annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. Drop down to verse 10. Peter and John "let it be known to all of you and all of you of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," they had just healed this crippled guy "whom you crucified, God raised from the dead -- by him, this man is standing well before you." Drop down to verse 33, verse 33 of Acts 4. "With great power the apostles were giving their testimony." To what? "To the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all." I could go on and on and on and on.

Luke goes from quoting more specifically the actual words of the preaching, to start summarizing, until we hit Paul, we see plenty between Chapter 4 and Chapter 13. But when Paul's sermons start to get recorded guess what he starts talking about? The resurrection. Acts 13:30, "God raised him from the dead, and he appeared to those who had come up from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now witnesses to the people. We bring you this good news that God promised to the fathers, he's fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus." A resurrected Christ.

Listen, if you get nothing else out of this sermon... Whenever the preacher says that it's a good time, this is it. If you slept through it all, wake up now, here's the one thing you should take out of it, if nothing else. Ready? We don't talk enough about the resurrection. It's not in the forefront of our

minds. Our evangelism isn't to the place where people say, "I'm annoyed he keeps talking about the resurrection of the dead. I'm annoyed he keeps talking about the Bible and I'm annoyed he keeps talking about God, I'm annoyed he keeps talking about repentance." All of that should be talked about, I get that.

But I remember doing a study, every single verse, every single word of Acts, I went through the whole book. This wasn't on my own because I was some godly person, but it was assigned in an assignment. I took it and the way I worked out this assignment in school is I took everything in the book of Acts that was discussed. I shared this with staff this week at a staff meeting. The idea of looking at every element that was preached about in the book of Acts. I made buckets. What are the different topics they talk about? Well, God being Creator, God being holy, just, loving, all that, talking about Christ and who he was, his credentials, talking about his death on a cross, talking about repentance, talking about faith. Oh yeah, and talking about the resurrection. I put all those buckets out and I went through every section of Acts and I just started putting things in those buckets, so to speak. And I started piling up how many times they talk about repentance. How many times they talk about the deity of Christ, how many times they talk about faith, how many times they talk about creation, how many times they talk about God's holiness. And I packed them all up and guess which bucket was overflowing the first. Resurrection. These guys talk about the resurrection all the time. Why? It's the point.

Now you and I, unfortunately, trapped in time, we think death is a normal thing, so I just want to make everything good in my life before I die. Can I have a Christianity that kind of clean things up before I die? Can I make it to where I can look at all the things that I want now in this life and focus on that? If you've learned one thing from this pastor on this platform, I'm constantly trying to get you to think, here's what the biblical messages is. It's not about the here and now, it's about the then and there. Our focus is to get our mind set on things above, not on things of this earth. I'm all about storing up treasure in heaven, not treasure here. The point of this all is I'm not just trying to get a comfortable life where I can walk hand in hand with Christ down the beach and we can have a great Christian life together.

Now I would like a great Christian life. I'd like to have times of joy and peace and worship and study and all that. It's great. But it's not about this life and every preacher who tells you it's about this life is a heretic. Every single one of them. Because it's not about this life. It's about the preaching of the early Church that said this is about the resurrection of Christ from the dead so that we will be resurrected. Even the Apostle Paul talking about the resurrection of the just and the unjust. God is going to raise up people so they will no longer be any death. That's the point. And God has been on that campaign from the beginning and as soon as he unleashes that and escrow closes and the keys are in his hand the preaching of the early Church, which unlike our preaching now, is fixated on that. Can we get back to that? When you share the gospel with your neighbor can you bring it back to the resurrection of the dead? That's the point. That I'm going to live in eternity in a resurrected body. That's the point.

The campaign that the perishable body must put on imperishable, the mortal body must put on immortality. And when that happens, when the imperishable comes to be, when the immortal body comes to be, then shall come to pass the saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory." I don't think there's enough of that in our evangelism. I don't think there's enough of that in our personal Bible study. I don't think there's enough of that in our brains every week. The whole point of Christianity, ultimately, in glorifying God as redeemed people, is that death will be swallowed up in victory and we will say with a great throng, "O death, where is your victory? Oh death, where is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, the power of sin is the law." The law, which says that sinners should die, is reversed. "Thanks be to God, who gives us victory." Victory over what? Sin and the consequences of sin -- death. "Through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Verses 10 through 12. These gals take this message back to the apostles. "But these words seemed to them..." If you got your Greek New Testament out take a look at that word. I bet you don't know that vocabulary word right there. If you got your iPad and you're working on your Bible software, your Olive Tree or your Logos, click on that "idle tale." You know what you are going to get on that? Well, you'll get something if you got a good lexicon but you're not going to get much. Look at another place where that Greek word is used and you're not going to find it.

It's what we call a hapax legomenon. Hapax legomenon. It's only used once in the New Testament. And if you look outside of the New Testament, you look at good ancient literature lexicons, you're going to find it's even hard to find it outside. It's a very interesting word. And you know where they do find this word, they find it in papyri that describe medical conditions. And you can see some good lexicons, they will talk about how this was a word to describe someone who was delusional. Who was in delirium, who was delirious. And you'd say, "Wow, he's saying things that are just crazy. The Bible says that when these guys heard it they thought... I don't know, English Standard Version. I mean, I don't want to trash on these guys because I know a lot of them, but "idle tale" is kind of a weird way to translate this. A lot of translations translate this "nonsense." It's like they were delirious. This was crazy talk. "And they did not believe them."

But of course, the Gospels say John and Peter, particularly, they ran quickly. This passage only tells us about Peter. John gets there first, Peter gets into the tomb first, he stoops in, looks in. "He saw the linen cloths by themselves; he went home," here's another word I'd like you to underline, "marveling." Well, you have a hapax legomenon with the word translated "an idle tale." But the word marveling is used a lot. This word is used 43 times in the Greek New Testament. It's a word used when people are surprised and astonished. This is amazing, this is crazy. Crazy not in the sense that it just actually doesn't make any sense, but wow, that's an amazing thing. It seems like now that they've seen it for themselves they're marveling at it. I want to show you another passage that's going to help us.

What I want us to do is to grapple with this the way the apostles grappled with it and the way a lot of people since have grappled with. You need to grapple with the phenomenon of the resurrection. I put it this way, number three, "Grapple with Christ's Resurrection." If you have enough room, put that word, it's a phenomenon, it doesn't seem to be the normal practice of what we experience. And yet I'm telling you it makes theological sense, it makes ontological sense, it makes sense in every sense of the word. It makes sense except for the fact it's not what I experience. And here are these guys who first heard it and thought, this is crazy talk. And then they sat back and marveled at it.

Now, I want to show you a passage in John Chapter 5. Please turn there where this is all of the time I got. But in John Chapter 5 we get two more usages of this word. This word that's translated "to marvel." And I think in these passages it's translated that way both times. In one sense you'll see Jesus saying, "I'm going to do something and you'll marvel at it." And then at the end he says, "Now stop marveling about it." I love that. Just kind of a lexical great word study to see how they marveled at the tomb. And then, guess what, by the Book of Acts, I've already proved to you, they're not marveling at it anymore. They're saying this is the whole point. Jesus kind of forecast that in this passage. If you followed all that it's a great connection. We see them marveling at the tomb, "This is amazing. I see it. I'm still struggling and grappling with it. But now let's go preach

it," because it makes perfect theological sense, it makes perfect philosophical sense, it makes perfect ontological sense. And Jesus says the same thing here in a short passage.

Let's get the context to know it wasn't a good day for Jesus' fan club, verse 18. "This is why the Jews," this is John 5:18, "they were seeking to kill him all the more they were seeking to kill him." They wanted to kill him. Not because he's breaking the Sabbath. Right? But he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. Now he wasn't actually breaking the Sabbath, not according to God's rules, but to their traditions he was. And so here he was making people mad and then they realized it's because you make yourself out to be equal. Not just because you use the word of endearment to the Father. It's you really are talking like you and God are one. And Jesus says, verse 19, "Truly, truly, I say to you the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees his Father doing. Whatever the Father does that's what the Son does likewise." If I'm a consultant for him, I'm saying, that's not helping your case right now. Right? They think you're equal with God, they think you're making yourself equal with God, and you're saying everything he's about I'm about, everything he does I do, everything he values, I value. I'm just like him.

Verse 20. "For the Father loves the Son and shows him ALL that he himself is doing." You got an inside track with God? Yes. "And greater works than these will he show him." You're going to see things in me that you're going to go, "Wow, that is crazy," not just that I know the will of God, not just I can teach the wisdom of God. "So that you may," here's the same word in Acts 24, "marvel."

He says this, "I know I'm going to do something that's going to make your head spin. It will be astonishing. It will be surprising. It will be amazing." John 5:21 says, "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life," which certainly is an illusion of what's coming. He's going to give the Son life, "So also," now here's the amazing thing, "the Son gives life to whom he will." I'm going to pick people from every tongue, tribe and nation, draw them to myself. "For the Father," by the way, speaking of what's beyond this life, "judges no one." Now he's called the judge throughout the Bible, but this judgment is now delegated. "He's given all judgment to the Son," because the Son has put on humanity, he's experienced temptation, he's experienced all the things that we have. He's a perfect, sympathetic, high priest and he's a perfectly reasonable judge. And so the Son is going to be the judge at the end of time. "So that all may honor this Son," respect the Son, defer to the Son, exalt the Son in their mind, "just as they honor the Father."

Again, I going to go back to verse 18 and think, if you're trying to make friends with these Jews who think you're making too much of yourself, that's a problem passage right there. Unless, of course, you are God incarnate, which of course he is. And he says, "I'm going to have the same honor that the Father has." That would be complete and utter blasphemy, you understand, were it not true. Matter of fact, "Whoever does not honor the Son..." Here's what the Father thinks of people who don't honor the Son just like they honor the Father. They're "not honoring the Father who sent him."

"Truly, truly I say to you, whoever hears these words and believes in him who sent me has eternal life." The death problem. "You're going to marvel at my bodily resurrection and then I'm telling you this: I'm going to give life to people and I'm going to give life to them, eternal life, there we're going to have the death problem solved and "he will not come to judgment." He's going to pass from the line that leads to the Great White Throne judgment, he's going to pass from that line to a life that says, "Enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And here's the last enemy we just destroyed, death. You won't have it anymore.

Verse 25, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and is now here," it's right now, "when the 'dead' will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." Now think with me again if you can follow this. Think now, think, think. Death Category 1 has two phases. Relational death in the Garden. The day you eat of it you're going to hide from me, we got a relationship problem. And biological death, you're going to die, physically, biologically die. There's another death coming and that death is the death when you stand in the line for judgment and you now have to answer for and respond to and be punished for and receive the consequences for every rebellious and sinful act you've done. Death 1, Death 2. As a matter of fact, the Bible calls it death, which is a package deal of relational and biological, and the Second Death: standing in line and receiving the judgment you deserve.

And in this passage here, look at this carefully, he says right now "there are dead people," because the Bible likes to talk about us being relationally dead right now, "who will hear his voice." God will wake us up from a spiritual death, from not being in relationship with God and we will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. So Category 1 is solved, at least the category of 1A, which is I'm no longer relationally at odds with God. The enemy that I had in God, natural enemies, I'm a sinner, he's holy, has now been done, it's been dealt with. I'm now reconciled to God. God now loves me perfectly as his own son. That's life, I have that. And, verse 27, "He's given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

I'm sorry, I skipped verse 26. Right? "Yes, you did, Pastor Mike?" Verse 26. I knew it was missing, here it comes. "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself." The authority of the life-giving authority and leadership of God, like the Son of Man he's about to quote from Daniel 7, "I have that." He's going to grant us life relationally, he's going to fix the problem of alienation from God, and "he's giving me authority to execute judgment." There's the parallel, also sit on that throne and be able to adjudicate and bring consequences for sinners. "I am the Son of Man. Everyone is accountable to me." "Do not marvel at this." Don't marvel that there is an accountability after this life. "For an hour is coming..." It's not now. This is the Second Death. "There's an hour coming," in that biological death "when all who are in the tombs," every biological unit, "will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who've done evil to the resurrection of judgment." Look at verse 28. "Do not," there's our word again, "marvel at this."

Here's the thing: "You're going to be seeing me rise from the dead and you're going to marvel at this." It's exactly what's going on in Luke 24. "And then I need you to get over that and stop marveling at this, because all of you should be absolutely 100% sure every single dead corpse will rise. Every single biological debris from the ash heap of every person who has ever lived is going to live. And every single one of those should be super clear to you because you're looking back at the authentication of redemption in a risen Christ, a bodily resurrection of Christ. Don't marvel at that. Get over that. And you know what we see in the Book of Acts? They got over that. They weren't marveling at that anymore. Matter of fact, they annoyed people they were preaching about it so much.

You've got to grapple with Christ's resurrection and get from one side of this to the other. And if you are so entrenched in the myopic philosophy of the world that to you, you're kind of embarrassed to talk about a resurrected Christ, get over that. Yes, you'll marvel at an empty tomb. You'll be perplexed at it. It'll be weird. It may even seem like an idle tale at first, but once you recognize this makes perfect, ontological sense, it makes perfect theological sense, it is historically verifiable, you're going to move to the place where you are going to be like a lot of people who



have started with this thinking this is crazy talk, guys like Simon Greenleaf. I think of good logical legal thinkers.

Simon Greenleaf, maybe you've heard of his voice, he became one of the most outspoken advocates in writing of the resurrection of Christ. He started out at Harvard saying, "I want to disprove all of this. I don't think it makes sense. Dead people stay dead." He became known as one of the greatest... Our modern-day example, friend of our church, Josh McDowell, did the same thing. He was a law student at the time as well, and saying, "I've got to disprove all this." Or maybe some of the books you've read from Lee Strobel. Right? He was another guy, a Yale Law grad, who said, "I need to make sure that we look at this, investigate it." He became an investigative reporter after that, and saying, "Let's look at the resurrection. The resurrection is the linchpin to all this. If I can disprove this, I can disprove it all."

That's one of many, many people, who have been perplexed at the claim. They've marveled at this theological concept of the dead coming to life and that becoming the prototype for all of our futures. And you know what, I think as you investigate this, as we'll do next week, and open up on this road to Emmaus how Jesus logically works through why this makes perfect sense, we come to the place of stopping to marvel at it, and we become preachers and teachers and writers and evangelists and representatives and ambassadors of a risen Christ. That is our mission. This makes perfect sense. It's sensible, it's expected, it's reasonable.

We have an enslaving enemy. I understand it. It has drastically assaulted and confined, about 150,000 people yesterday in this world. Even in our fit and very health-conscious Orange County, on average every single day 70 people die. 70 individuals in our county have crossed the threshold of this life into the next and 70 people likely, on statistical average, will die in our county today.

The good news is I'm here on a street corner not telling people that God is just going to make your life a little bit better, a little more fun, a little less lonely. I'm here to tell you that Christ, the risen Christ, the resurrected victor, holds the keys to that problem. And one day for his people, those who have confessed with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead, you start looking for it, you'll see it everywhere, you will be saved. He will one day defeat that enemy for you. That is the hope of the Gospel.

You don't want to get resurrected and get put into a line to face the Great White Throne and pay for your sins. You want to be the one who trusts, as Jesus said, at that funeral in John 11, "I am the resurrection and the life. If you trust in me," that's the word "pisteuo," you trust in me, "even if you die you're gonna live. And then if you live on the other side of that death, you will never die. It will be real life. That's the campaign of God from the beginning. Grapple with the resurrection, which we're going to do for the next four weeks, and deal with this in the weeks ahead to have the kind of living hope the Bible calls us to.

Let's pray. God, what an important and timely topic for us in a day and in a culture that doesn't want to talk about the miraculous. And while this is a phenomenon, it's a miraculous event, it's not all that phenomenal when we think about it. It's theologically expected. It's something that even in my own heart as eternity beats in my own heart, I exist to be, I want to live. I want the people around me to live. I don't want people to die. Death is such an intrusion. Thanks be to God that through Christ and his ministry, fulfilling all righteousness and absorbing all the punishment for my sins, I can have confidence, as they preached in the early Church, of a resurrected Christ who one day will grant me life in every way because of the finished work of Jesus. Thanks for that message and I



pray that we could get out there into the streets, our neighbors, our co-workers, and to be much more bold about that message, even if they have to say, "I'm annoyed, you keep talking about the resurrection." God, let's make us much more like that early Church, faithful to the message of a resurrected Christ.

In Jesus name I pray. Amen.