

Main Idea: In order to respond rightly to Easter, we need three things. We need to know the story, so we need the gospels. We need to know the implications of the story, so we need the epistles. We need to appropriate the implications of the story, so we need Jesus.

- I. We need to know the story, so we need the gospels.
 - A. Luke tells us how the empty tomb affected the women (24:1-10).
 1. Surprise #1: The tomb was open (1-2).
 2. Surprise #2: The body was gone (3).
 3. Surprise #3: Two strange messengers appeared (4-7).
 4. Surprise #4: The women became the first witnesses (8-10).
 - B. Luke tells us how the empty tomb affected the disciples (24:11).
 1. They didn’t believe the witness.
 2. They couldn’t make sense of it.
 - C. Luke tells us how the empty tomb affected Peter (24:12).
 1. He inspected the evidence.
 2. He reflected on the event.
- II. We need to know the implications of the story, so we need the epistles.

According to Romans 4:25...

 - A. Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins.
 - B. Jesus was raised to life for our justification.
- III. We need to appropriate the implications of the story, so we need Jesus.
 - A. Since Jesus is alive, put your total trust in Him and what He accomplished.
 - B. Make it your life’s purpose to know Him better and make Him better known.

Scripture Reading: Romans 4:25

This is a wonderful day. Christ the Lord is risen! Hallelujah! But I have a great burden. It’s the demonic danger of thinking we’re okay because we know the story.

The demons know the story. They know what Jesus did. They know that He died on the cross. They know that He was raised from the dead and saw Him appear to over five hundred people. They know the story, and they will spend an eternal future in torment.

They will not be alone. There are thousands, perhaps millions of people today who know the story, who will be with them. Did not Jesus Himself reveal that in the judgment day, in response to the many who say, “Lord, Lord!”, He will say, “I never knew you. Depart from me.”

So this is my burden. Thankfully, in the Bible God gives us exactly what we need to help us today. Just think about how the New Testament unfolds. It shows us that in order to respond rightly to Easter, we need three things. We need to know the story, so we need the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which each tell us the story. But we also need to know the implications of the story, so we need the epistles. They tell us why Jesus died and rose again, and today we’ll be looking at a clear explanation from a verse in Romans. But even knowing the story and the implications of the story are not enough. We need to appropriate the implications of the story, so we need Jesus, which is the point of both the gospels and the epistles.

That’s today’s message. Know the story. Know the implications of the story. Appropriate the implications.

When my daughters were little they used to beg me to tell a particular story. “Tell us the centipede story again, Daddy!” they would plead. It wasn’t because they forgot the story—their ears had heard it countless times. They knew the ending, but they loved to hear the punch-line.

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at Luke 24, see WBC 3/31/02.

There's more than one reason to tell a story. Just like there's more than one reason to study the Bible. Sometimes we study God's Word to learn new information—and that's good. But sometimes we come to the Scriptures to be reminded of what we already know. To hear the punch-line again.

Is the resurrection of Jesus important? Many in society today have a low view of history. "Truth is relative," we're told. "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere and as long as you think it's good for you."

It doesn't matter whether something is true or not. Believe in Mohammad, or Joseph Smith, or Jesus, or the Easter bunny for that matter. Faith is a personal thing, and you're entitled to believe in whomever or whatever you want. So we're told.

But the fact is, the *facts do matter*. I'm not interested in a doctor saying to me, "Oh, take whatever medicine you want. It's all legitimate, as long as you *believe it's good for you*." No, faith is only as good as its object.

This is why we must begin where the New Testament begins, with the story.

I. We need to know the story, so we need the gospels.

The four gospels are basically biographies. They tell the story of Jesus' life, focusing particularly on what happened during His final week, which is often called His passion week. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each tell us what happened at the cross and empty tomb. Our focus in this message will be on Luke's account in Luke 24.

As far as we know, Luke never saw Jesus personally. Luke became a Christian several years after Jesus had returned to heaven. Luke was a doctor, a man very interested in research and given to detail. About thirty or so years after Jesus' resurrection, Luke conducted an investigation of the life of Jesus. He did so to help a friend named Theophilus come to know Jesus. That's what he said in his prologue to this biography (1:3-4), "Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

Luke was far from a post-modernist. The facts mattered to him. Before you believe in something or someone, you'd better do your homework. And He did. He wrote this account so Theophilus—and each of us—would know the certainty of the story of Jesus.

In Luke 24 the good doctor takes us on a trip to the tomb. In Luke 24:1-12, he puts the spotlight on three different responses to the empty tomb.

A. Luke tells us how the empty tomb affected the women (24:1-10).

To begin, take a look at verses 1-3, "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."

The event occurred, says Luke, on the *first day* of the week. That's Sunday. What a week had just passed. It began with a bang when on Sunday Jesus entered the city to the wild applause and palm-branch-waving of the crowd. But by the end of the week, the city did a 180 and nailed their Messiah to a cross.

Luke says that very early on the following Sunday morning "the women" headed for the tomb. He names some of them in verse 10. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the

mother of James, and some others. Luke just mentioned the same women at the end of chapter 23, saying in verse 55 that they were from Galilee.²

Some have tried to explain away the resurrection by saying, “Jesus didn’t come back to life. The women went to the *wrong* tomb. That’s why they didn’t find the body.”

This objection holds no weight in light of a very important detail Luke provides in 23:55-56, “The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and *saw the tomb* and how his body was laid in it. ⁵⁶ Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.”

Notice that. They *saw* the tomb on Friday. In fact, they not only saw the tomb but also *how his body was laid in it*. What’s more, they left that day with the intention of returning, to anoint the body with spices and perfumes (56).

Why didn’t they prepare the body that day? There wasn’t time. Jesus died at 3:00 in the afternoon on Friday. By the time Joseph of Arimathea obtained permission from Pilate, took down the body from Golgotha, wrapped it, and moved it to the tomb he owned, it was near sundown. The Sabbath began when the sun went down on Friday evening. Work was forbidden until sundown on Saturday evening. The women, then, went home on Friday, prepared the spices, and then began their Sabbath rest. They’d have to wait to finish their work until Sunday morning.³

These women are certainly to be commended. They wanted to make sure Jesus received a proper burial. They were devoted. They didn’t follow Him merely to get something out of Him—like many often do. They were eternally grateful for how He had changed their lives and were willing to do anything they could to show their appreciation.

When Sunday arrived, the women headed for the tomb. Luke tells us that once there they experienced four surprises.

1. *Surprise #1: The tomb was open (1-2)*. “They found the stone rolled away.” That was odd. Stones don’t move on their own, especially huge grave-stones. And this particular stone, according to Matthew’s account, had been sealed by the authorization of Pilate (27:66).

The ladies moved forward for a closer look. In fact, Luke says they “entered the tomb (3).” Then they discovered surprise #2.

2. *Surprise #2: The body was gone (3)*. It wasn’t there! When the women went to the tomb that Sunday morning, they expected to find something. A *body*. That’s why they were carrying these spices. When a body is placed in a tomb, it stays there. A dead body doesn’t get up and walk away, does it?

3. *Surprise #3: Two strange messengers appeared (4-7)*. Verse 4, “While they were wondering about this [the KJV says they were “much perplexed”; the Greek term *aporeo* means “to doubt;” what they saw didn’t make sense to them], suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.”

² According to Luke 8:2 Mary Magdalene had once been controlled by seven demons until Jesus set her free, which He also did with some other women, including Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household. Out of gratitude these women began to follow Jesus and helped to support Him and His disciples out of their means, as Luke explains in 8:3.

³ Matthew Henry helps us visualize the women’s actions. “As soon as ever they could, after the sabbath was over, they came to the sepulchre, to embalm his body, not to take it out of the linen in which Joseph had wrapped it, but to anoint the head and face, and perhaps the wounded hands and feet, and to scatter sweet spices upon and about the body; as it is usual with us to strew flowers about the dead bodies and graves of our friends, only to show our good-will towards the taking off the deformity of death if we could, and to make them somewhat the less loathsome to those that are about them. Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

The other gospel writers refer to these unique messengers as “angels,” as Luke himself does in verse 23. John says there were “two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot (John 20:12).” Our text emphasizes that the brilliance of their clothing caught the women’s attention—it “gleamed like lightning.” This petrified them, so much so that they bowed down with their faces to the ground (as the beginning of verse 5 states).

At that point the angelic messengers broke the silence and spoke to the women (5-7). According to the Law it took at least two witnesses to substantiate a legal matter (Deut 19:15). That seems to be the purpose here. Their message was twofold.

First, they revealed what Jesus did. In verse 5, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Now there’s a great question! What would you expect to see in a tomb? A dead body. What would you *not* expect to see? A living person. Why are you looking for someone who is alive in a cemetery?

Verse 6, “He is not here; he has risen!” In the Greek the verb “has risen” is passive (“has been raised”), implying that God is responsible for this event. God intervened. God raised His Son.⁴

Jesus had raised others from the dead—like Lazarus and the daughter of Jairus—but in time they would die again. This was different. In raising His Son from the dead, God was conquering death. Jesus was conquering death, becoming the first-fruits of a new humanity.

1 Corinthians 15:20-24 explains, “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.”

By the way, the stone wasn’t rolled away to let Jesus out, rather to let the witnesses in. You don’t need help moving a grave-stone if you can defeat death, which Jesus did. “He has risen,” the messengers reported. This is what Jesus did.

Next, the angels reminded the ladies of what Jesus said. In verse 6, “Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”

Camp on that word *remember* for a moment. I get the sense that the angels expected Jesus’ followers to know this was going to happen. “Don’t you remember what the Lord told you? He told you what would happen on the third day. Why didn’t you believe?”

According to Matthew 27:63 the chief priests and Pharisees knew what Jesus had claimed. That’s why they went to Pilate and asked for a guard to keep watch at the tomb. “Sir,” they said to Pilate, “we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day.”

So Jesus’ enemies remembered. “Now *you* remember,” the messengers said to the women. Remember His two predictions, verse 7, “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.”

⁴ Paul said the same thing in Ephesians 1:19-20, “That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when *he raised him from the dead* and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.”

Yes, Jesus predicted His crucifixion. He didn't die by accident, or because He misread the crowd. He revealed ahead of time that He *must* be delivered. He *must* be crucified. That's why He came to earth.

Friends, this is the story, that He died having predicted He was going to die. But to know the reason for His death we must go back, all the way back.

Do you remember what God did after Adam and Eve sinned? As the guilty couple stood there in their shame, God provided them with something. What was it? Genesis 3:21 says He made garments of skin for them and clothed them. In doing this God was giving them an object lesson. To remove their shame and the cause of it, a death had to occur. An animal had to die. But this was only a temporary covering.

Turn to the next book, Exodus, and you start seeing other animals die, eventually the Israelites offered thousands of lambs over the centuries. Why? To cover sin. But the animals were just a temporary provision, designed by God in eternity past when He purposed to rescue a sinful people for His glory. How? A death would occur. Not merely the death of an animal in the garden, nor lambs slain on the altar in the temple. Those death merely fore-shadowed the ultimate, final death.

The Son of man MUST be crucified, Jesus had said. Why? Because He had come to make a payment.

He told His disciples that over and over during His three years with them. He was going to die. But He told them something else, as the angels reminded the women.

He predicted His resurrection. For instance consider Matthew 16:21, "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

This is the story. God wrote the story, then He entered history and accomplished it.

4. *Surprise #4: The women became the first witnesses (8-10)*. "Then they remembered his words.⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others.¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles."

Having heard the messengers, what did the women do? Two things. First, they *remembered* (8). That is, they remembered what Jesus said. Oh, they knew it before, but they had forgotten and needed these messengers to prompt their recall.

We're no different. We tend to forget God's Word, especially when life gets hard and doesn't make sense. We need reminders. That's one of the main reasons why we need a Bible-teaching church. We need regular reminders of what He said. When we miss church, we miss opportunities to receive what we desperately need, not to mention opportunities to give God what He rightfully deserves.

They remembered. And then, they *spread the word* (9-10). The ladies took off from the tomb and headed to find the apostles. They had to tell someone!

It's ironic that God chose women to be the first witnesses of the resurrected Savior. I say that because in the male-dominated world of the first century, the testimony of women was not given much weight legally. And that's one of the great proofs of the resurrection story. If the church had made up the whole thing, they certainly wouldn't have created a story whose first witnesses were women.

But the Bible merely tells it like it is. It has nothing to hide. The reason Luke says that women were the first witnesses is because they were, by God's design.

I admire these women, don't you? They took great personal risk to be there, first at the cross, and later at the tomb. In a man's world, they made themselves vulnerable, and they did it because they loved their Master.

There's something I wonder about. Where were the men? On resurrection morning, where were the *men*? We'll see in a moment, but first a follow-up question. Where *are* the men? Today, that is. God calls us, men, to lead our families, to be spiritual pacesetters. The women in Luke 24 wanted to be where Jesus was, and took action. We can say we want to be near Jesus all we want, but the proof is in our actions. In many churches you'll look in vain to find *men*. I'm grateful that's not the case here. I'm thankful God has raised up a solid core of committed men at WBV who have a passion to know and live for their Loving Master.

But how about you? Just how important is Jesus to you? Do you make His worship at church a high priority in your life? How about spending time in His Word? Giving honor to Jesus was the most important thing in the lives of the women in Luke 24. That's why they took the trip to the tomb.

In verse 11, Luke puts the spotlight on a second response to the empty tomb.

B. Luke tells us how the empty tomb affected the disciples (24:11). According to verse 9 the women shared their discovery with “the Eleven” (the remaining apostles) and “all the others” (which I'm assuming would include people like Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, perhaps Lazarus, and others).⁵ What effect did their report have?

Luke says, “But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.” They heard the message, but the result was twofold.

1. *They didn't believe the witness.* They'd seen their hopes dashed in Gethsemane on Thursday night, and they'd spent the past three days in despair. They heard the words, but they didn't believe them. Luke, in fact, tells us why.

2. *They couldn't make sense of it.* They called it “nonsense” [‘idle tales’ in the KJV]. This word is one the Greek medical writers used to describe the babbling of a fevered and insane mind.⁶

The whole thing seemed far-fetched to them. Why hadn't Jesus done something? He just let the mob arrest Him, the jealous leaders frame Him, and a self-seeking ruler condemn Him. Why? They knew He had the power to stop it all, but He didn't. In fact, it seemed like He wanted to die. But why would He die if He was going to turn right around three days later and live again? This just didn't make sense to them, so they refused to believe it.

Wiersbe is right, “Had they remembered His words, they would have saved themselves a great deal of sorrow.”⁷ But as Matthew Henry suggested, “Good Christians often perplex themselves about that with which they should comfort and encourage themselves.”⁸

Most of us have a lot in common with these disciples. We too are slow to believe the truth about Jesus. Ironically, I think we can gain a couple of helpful lessons from the disciples' response of unbelief.

This gives us proof for the resurrection. That's right. The disciples' initial unbelief is actually proof for the resurrection, and here's how.

⁵ “It does not appear that they were together in a body; they were *scattered every one to his own*, perhaps scarcely two or three of them together in the same lodgings, but one went to some of them and another to others of them, so that in a little time, that morning, they all had notice of it.” Matthew Henry

⁶ Barclay, p. 292.

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.

⁸ Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

One theory critics propose to explain the resurrection is that Jesus' followers had hallucinations and merely *thought* they saw Jesus. But that flies in the face of the evidence. Remember, the women didn't expect to see Jesus alive. And the disciples certainly didn't, even when the women passed on the angels' message. Would this many people hallucinate about the same thing at the same time?⁹

Others say, "The disciples stole the body and made up the resurrection story. It was just a hoax." That's ludicrous. Every one of these apostles would eventually die as a martyr for Christ, except for John who survived being thrown into a caldron of boiling oil. Can you imagine these eleven men being willing to die for a hoax they "made up?" Hardly. They wouldn't even believe the women.

Luke makes it clear that the first skeptics Jesus faced were His own disciples—yes, His *own*. The incredible change that took place in their lives between Luke 24 and Acts 2 is indeed one of the great proofs of the resurrection.

A second lesson from this... *This shows us why we need patience in working with people.* The resurrection is a hard doctrine to believe. We need to remember that as we witness to people.

The next time you share the good news with a friend, and he balks at it, don't give up on him. Don't write him off. Remember that the disciples struggled, too. You wouldn't be here had not the Spirit of God opened your eyes.

One of the disciples, however, decided to check things out for himself. It's not surprising who it was. In verse 12 Luke moves the spotlight on him. Peter.

C. Luke tells us how the empty tomb affected Peter (24:12). "Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened." According to Luke, Peter did two things...

1. *He inspected the evidence.* When he got to the tomb, he saw an open door, the strips of cloth, and no body. What struck Peter was the orderliness of the linen strips. If someone stole the body, would they first unwrap it and leave the cloth behind? No. To Peter it looked like Jesus' body simply evaporated and left the strips neatly behind.

The evidence made him believe, right? Wrong. Luke says he left "wondering." In other words...

2. *He reflected on the event.* You might be thinking, "Why didn't Peter believe? He saw the evidence, didn't he?" I, too, saw the evidence when I was in Jerusalem in 1980. Thousands of people have seen it. The evidence is still there. The tomb is still *empty*. That's pretty strong evidence.

But you need more than evidence to become a believer. Why? Because you can reinterpret evidence. Maybe the tomb is empty because they stole the body. Or maybe it was the wrong tomb. Apart from the sovereign, gracious working of the Holy Spirit, no amount of evidence will convince a person.

I'm so thankful I can say that's what happened in my life. When I was eleven, God's Spirit opened my eyes to the truth of what Christ did for me, and gave me a heart to believe it, to believe in *Him*. Do you remember when He did that for you? For some of you it's happening right now. That's my prayer.

So it begins with knowing the story. To be saved you must know the good news about Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection. There are millions of people on this planet who don't know what we've just discussed. They need the gospels.

⁹ Wiersbe, p. 278.

However, here's where the demonic danger enters. Most people you and I know in this community know the story. We all have friends and family members and neighbors who know the story. But something else is needed.

II. We need to know the implications of the story, so we need the epistles.

The epistles, those New Testament letters from Romans to Jude, answer the why question. Why did He die? Why was He raised from the dead? What's the point of it all?

Sadly, many people don't know, including church-goers. The purpose of the Easter account? Many say it's to inspire us. *You can be an overcomer like Jesus. He came out of His tomb. Now believe in yourself and you can leave your tomb of doubt and despair and have a prosperous life!*

Where did that kind of fuzzy thinking about the resurrection come from? From the mind of someone who didn't pay much attention to the epistles.

You want to know why Jesus died and rose again? Read the letters in the New Testament. They were written to local churches and people, not so much to tell the story as the implications of the story.

If you want to know about the cross, read passages like Romans 3, 2 Corinthians 5, Galatians 2, and Hebrews 9.

If you want to know about Jesus' resurrection, read passages like Romans 6, 1 Corinthians 15 (which is the classic resurrection text), or here's a great one, 1 Peter 1:3. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy He has given us new birth through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." What's the point of His resurrection? So sinners like you and me can experience a new birth!

Frankly, many of the hymns we sing do this well. They take the story and give a biblical implication.

Because he lives I can face tomorrow. Because he lives all fear is gone. there's the fact from the story, because he lives, and there are two implications, I can face tomorrow, and all fear is gone.

Up from the grave he arose (there's the fact from the story) *with a mighty triumph over his foes* (there's the implication).

I want us to see one very clear, short, straightforward example found in Romans 4:25. "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."¹⁰

What's the purpose of the crucifixion and resurrection? Here's the answer. According to Romans 4:25 Jesus accomplished two things for sinners like us.

A. Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins. The verb is passive. He *was delivered*. It happened to Him.

Who delivered Him? Judas did, didn't he? But so did the Jewish leaders. They had a part in His death. As did Pilate and Herod and the Roman soldiers.

Did anyone else deliver Jesus over to death? Listen to Peter in Acts 2:23, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross."

Ultimately, it was the Father's will deliver His own Son to death.

¹⁰ Romans is a letter Paul wrote to Christians living in the capital city of Rome. The letter is all about *righteousness*—that is, how to be right with God. Romans answers questions like, "Who needs righteousness?" and "How do you get righteousness."

But why? Our text says, “He was delivered over to death *for our sins*.” There’s why. The word “sins” [or “offenses”] means “false steps, trespasses.” Man’s problem is that he went his “own way (Isa 53:6).” We were guilty of trespassing on God’s earth. And what was the penalty for our crime? Death, eternal death. That’s what we deserve.

But here’s what Jesus did. He was delivered over to death “for our sins.” Jesus went to the cross to take the penalty for the sins of every person who would ever believe on Him.

Alas and did my Savior bleed, and did my Sovereign die. Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I have done He groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity, grace unknown, and love beyond degree.

Dear friend, if you had been standing at the cross that day, you couldn’t have seen it with the naked eye, but it was happening. A substitution took place.

“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us (2 Cor 5:21).”

“The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:6).”

“Christ died for our sins (1 Cor 15:3).”

“For the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt 20:28).”

It’s true. Christ was delivered over to death *for our sins*. You see, a holy God cannot overlook sin. The penalty for sin must be paid. It must be. Either you will accept Christ’s payment in your stead, or you will pay sin’s penalty yourself.

Do you believe that? According to God’s Word, it’s true. At the Cross God demonstrated not only His *love*, but His *justice*. Since God is just, He cannot wink at sin, but must punish it. And that’s what He did. At the cross He punished His own Son for the crimes we have committed.

Yet to say that Jesus died for our sins is only half of the story. A dead Savior would do us no good, would He? Lots of religious leaders have come, made astounding claims, and then died. What sets Jesus apart? His second accomplishment mentioned in Romans 4:25. First He was delivered over to death for our sins...

B. Jesus was raised to life for our justification. Do you realize that more than 500 eyewitnesses saw Jesus after He came out of the tomb?

If Jesus died and remained dead, then you can write off the cross as a sentimental story, a tragic ending to good man. *But...* if He is alive, then we must come to grips with Him, with His claims, and with what happened on the cross.

It’s true. He was raised to life!

But why? The text says He was delivered over to death *for our sins* and was raised to life *for our justification*. This is unthinkable, but it’s the truth. As a result of Jesus’ resurrection, God justifies sinners.

Good people don’t go to heaven—but justified people do, and here’s why. In His death, Jesus took care of our sin. In His resurrection, Jesus took care of our need for righteousness.

Let me illustrate. Suppose there was a "righteousness checkbook." And suppose I got a letter from my bank that informed me that my "righteousness checkbook" was overdrawn, not a little overdrawn, but *a lot* overdrawn--I owed a million dollars. The letter said, "Either pay up, or you will go to prison until you do."

Now imagine that the next day the policemen came and took me to court. There I stood before the judge, guilty, indebted, and helpless. I waited to hear the sentence.

But then something amazing happened. The judge took out his pen and brought out a book. It was another "righteousness checkbook," not mine, but his son's. He nodded to

his son, and to my astonishment, the son wrote out a check, not for a million dollars, but for a billion dollars—far greater than my need! He took the money out of his own account, put my name on the check, and handed it to his father. When his father—the judge—saw the check he declared, “Your debt is gone. It has been paid in full.”

And so it is for you if you know Jesus as your Savior. The payment for every sin you have or ever will commit was made at the cross. Every bit of righteousness that you need to stand before a holy God was secured for you in Jesus’ resurrection.

*And when before the throne I stand in Him complete,
Jesus died my soul to save my lips shall still repeat.
Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.*

Listen carefully. It’s not our faith that saves us. The demons have a faith of sorts, but aren’t saved. Other religious groups promote faith. But faith doesn’t save us. What does? *Christ* saves us. Saving faith, that is, faith that makes a difference for eternity is faith that depends on Christ.

Don’t miss this. Faith is only as good as its object. Faith that saves is faith that depends on these two accomplishments of Jesus. Saving faith depends upon Jesus’ death and Jesus’ resurrection. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

So now I’m talking to people who know the story. You know that Jesus died and rose again. And now I’m talking to people who know the implications of the story. You know why Jesus died and rose again, for our sins, and for our justification. All good, yet something else is still needed.

III. We need to appropriate the implications of the story, so we need Jesus.

What does that mean? It means this.

A. Since Jesus is alive, put your total trust in Him and what He accomplished.

No matter who you are and what you’ve done, you can experience God’s forgiveness and salvation today if you will repent of your sins and believe in His Son. Put your total trust in the One who was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. But don’t stop there.

B. Make it your life’s purpose to know Him better and make Him better known.

Spread the news about Him. Tell the story. Share the message of the four gospels. But also share the implications of the story. Introduce them to the epistles. And if they know the story and the implications, urge them to appropriate what they know.