

Follow the Money

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Bible Text: Matthew 28:1-5; Luke 16

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Beginning at verse 1, and we will skip over part of this. That's page 1,549, if you're using the Bibles in the pews.

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you.'

Skipping down to verse 11.

11 While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. 12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, 13 telling them, 'You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' 15 So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

The word of the Lord. [“Thanks be to God.”]

May we pray.

Lord, help me clearly and concisely and compellingly to tell the old, old story, a story of greed, of murder, a story of defeat, and of triumph. Help me by the power of the Holy Spirit to prove to everyone who hears this sermon today that Jesus actually did rise from the dead and as people hear that proof, they will be convinced and convicted and put their trust in him. For Jesus' sake, amen.

Now I've entitled this sermon, “Follow the Money,” and that's an interesting thing. Follow the money. Notice that these soldiers are terrified. You know, it takes something really powerful to terrify somebody who's been in battle, somebody who's taken human life, someone who's had friends killed in battle, and someone who's determined to fight. What was it that terrified these men? If you could see an angel of God here in this room this morning, you and I would be overwhelmed with fear initially, because an angel of God is powerful and visible.

Remember that one angel of God destroyed 186,000 Assyrian soldiers when Sennacherib's army was surrounding Jerusalem. One angel did that. And here is this angel, and he comes and he rolls the stone away, and then he sits on the stone. Wow. And he tells the women, “Don't be afraid.” He doesn't tell the soldiers that. The soldiers should be afraid. This angel had the power not only to annihilate them, but he had the power to send them into the abyss. And they were terrified.

And so the women leave, and the soldiers then beginning to come to themselves realize, “We're in difficulty here because Jesus has risen from the dead. What are we going to do?” I want you to turn with me, if you would now, to the gospel of Luke, because I think it has a compelling answer to our questions. If you look at Luke chapter 16 and the very last verse, that's on page 1,626, and these words, verse 31:

31 He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead. (Luke 16:31)

That's an interesting statement. Let's get it in its context. The parable here is the parable of the wealthy man and Lazarus and it says so much about money, doesn't it? It says so much about power, doesn't it? And here's a man, if we go back to the beginning of this parable in verse 19:

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. (20) At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores (21) and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. (Luke 16:19-21)

Think of the contrast. Here is a man full of wealth, and along with wealth comes great power. A man of wealth and power and dignity, well dressed, always meticulously attired, and here is a beggar at his gate, and it doesn't seem to me that the man notices the beggar at all. He's just another example of a poor person that we ignore. Think of the people that in certain streets you drive down here in Texarkana, you'll see people out there looking for this, looking for that, and we tend to ignore those people.

Well, here is Lazarus, this poor man who was a beggar, who had nothing, and his only comfort was a lick of a dog. Wow. And he's laid there at the rich man's door and the rich man is oblivious to this. Isn't this an example of human nature? We ignore the poor.

Why? Because if we let ourselves get in tune with the poor, we'll be convicted about our own greed. That's true for me, and that's true for you. So here is the rich man, faring sumptuously, and poor Lazarus at his gate and he doesn't even notice the man. It's like, "What?" And notice what happens in verse 22:

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. (Luke 16:22)

That's interesting. Abraham, the father of the faithful. Abraham, the founder of the Jews and the Arabs. Abraham, the great example of faith in following God.

And Lazarus—get this—at this heavenly banquet, which is actually in Sheol, that is, it's in the compartment for the righteous and unrighteous dead before the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

In Sheol, there's a section called Paradise, that's where the righteous dead are, and there's a section that's not called Paradise, that's where the unrighteous dead are, and they experience torment.

And notice here is Lazarus. At the banquet of all banquets where Abraham is there, who gets to lie at his side in this place of honor? It's that beggar, Lazarus, who laid at the door of the rich man and who was totally ignored by everybody. Nobody knew who the man was.

Notice he's named, but the rich man is an anonymous man. The rich may build monuments and put their names on it in this world, in this life, but you remember what Ecclesiastes says, "Better is a living dog than a dead lion" (Ecclesiastes 9:4). And so here is the rich man and he's in hell. He's in that compartment of Sheol where they're tormented until the final day and so:

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell ... Luke 16:22-23)

Notice in hell (Sheol, לַאֲשׁוּרַי/Hades, ᾗδης), that's not Gehenna. Gehenna is the Greek word taken from a Hebrew word, the valley of the sons of Hinnom (בְּרֵךְ-הַהִימָוִת). That's the lake of fire (Gehenna (gέεννα, γέεννα).

This is not the lake of fire. This is a psychic torture here. This is a torment for the soul, not of the body, because these are disembodied spirits. And it says here:

In hell [or in Hades], where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. (Luke 16:23)

You see, they're in this great compartment of the dead, the blessed and the non-blessed. And he sees Lazarus at his side.

So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' (Luke 16:24)

I want you to understand this is not his body. His body is buried in the earth. This is his soul.

And let me say that the torments of a soul, of your mind, of your psyche can be greater than any torment the body experiences. And so, he's in torment. He's thinking about regret, "O God, if I'd not done that! O God, if only I'd done this!" Verse 25, listen to what Abraham replies, and this is a parable that Jesus is telling.

But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. (26) And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, (Luke 16:25-26)

That's not a chasm between hell and heaven, that's a chasm within Sheol of the Old Testament, the Hebrew word, or Hades in the New Testament, and it's this chasm where people can see one another. They can see the righteous, the righteous can see the unrighteous. And he says here there that it has been fixed. So he says...

'So that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' (Luke 16:26)

Now notice in verse 27:

He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, (28) for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Luke 16:27-28)

Now look at what Abraham says in verse 29:

Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' (30) 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' (Luke 16:29-30)

Now notice what Jesus says here in this parable that he has Abraham saying to the rich man, because this is very poignant and very striking. And he says:

‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ (Luke 16:31)

Now, turning the page back to page 1,625, I want you to see how this whole chapter is about “following the money” and why they bribed the guards.

How could people who heard a testimony from soldiers, calloused, hardened soldiers who had faced all kinds of things in life and have become terrified and have said he rose from the dead, how can they ignore that and end up bribing? Well, there are things we see here and look at verse 14 at the bottom of page 1,625.

The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. (Luke 16:14)

You know that St. Paul says that the love of money, not money, the love of money is the root of all evil.

Now the word can refer to all kinds, but we often say, “All kinds of things were going on downtown in Texarkana last night.” It’s a way we use that word and it’s an unfortunate translation when our translator has it that way, “all kinds.”

It means **every kind** of evil. In other words, there are no exceptions. The love of mammon. What is mammon?

Mammon is money and what money buys. The love of mammon is the root of every kind of evil. If you find evil, you can trace it back. You can follow the money. There it is. And notice the Pharisees who loved money heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. Now, what have they heard?

Look, you can see here in verse 1 of chapter 16, this is a series of parables about—you better watch out because money is the most dangerous thing. Money is more dangerous than heroin, it’s more dangerous than crack cocaine because money is a seductress that will seduce you and take you down to the netherworld. Look starting in verse 1.

Jesus told his disciples: ‘There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. (2) So he called him in and asked him, “What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.” (3) The manager said to himself, “What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg—(4) I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.”’ (Luke 16:1-4)

Now you need to know something about how people got around not charging interest in those days because Jewish people were not allowed to charge interest to fellow Jews (Exodus 22:24–26; Leviticus 25:36–37; Deuteronomy 23:20–21), and so here’s how they got around it.

It’s kind of like a “payday loan.” You write a check for an amount more than you’re borrowing. You write a check for more than you’re borrowing, and you give it to them as a deposit. And then they give you cash money and then you need to come back and redeem that check and that check is for more than the amount that you’re borrowing. And if you don’t return it—remember this, you can default on a credit card but if you write a hot check, off to the hoosegow.

So here you go and what the man did was he had people who borrowed from him, he inflated the amount that they were borrowing so he really didn’t loan them that amount, but he put a larger amount there. And so his steward knew the books. He was as if he were his CPA, and so he knows what’s going on and this is what he does. In verse 4:

‘I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses. (5) So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ (6) ‘Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied. The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.’ (7) Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’ A thousand bushels of wheat,’ he replied. ‘He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’ (Luke 16:4-7)

Now notice verse 8, “The master commended the dishonest” ...

Notice, **dishonest manager**. The manager's a crook. Let's never forget it. The manager's a crook, but he was able to use his boss's crookedness against his boss. And he says, look at what he says, "because he acted shrewdly."

And the big boss realizes he can't really touch him. He's gotten off, in a sense, scot-free. He commends that aspect. Does that mean that God is commending what he's done? Absolutely not. Notice the very next sentence. This is the key to understanding this parable.

For the people of this world. (Luke 16:8)

Who are the people of this world? Worldly people, people who understand how to make money and how to profit off of the hurts of others, people who make money and know how to profiteer off of the needs of others. He says:

The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind. (Luke 16:8)

Worldly people dealing with worldly people are shrewder than whom?

Than are the people of the light. (Luke 16:8)

Who are the people of the light? I pray to God that everyone hearing my voice this day may be a person of the light. A person of the light is a person who knows the light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. A person of the light is a person who walks in the light of God's word because God's word is a light on our path and a lamp on our pathway (Psalm 119:105).

The people of the light—are you a child of the light or are you a child of this world?

Is Jesus your Savior? Do you know the Lord Jesus? Do you seek to follow him in all the things that he wants you to do? He says, this is so striking. He says, the people of this world, that's the people out there that love money, that lust for money, that have to have more money, more and more and more money, because money never satisfies (Ecclesiastes 5:10). The more you get, the more you want. That's the nature of money. And he says, the

children of this world, he says, that's their goal, that's what they feed on. And then he says, but then the children of light.

And then he says something here and you have to understand the sarcasm and humor of Jesus because it's striking.

I tell you [he says], use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. (Luke 16:9)

What are the eternal dwellings?

It's the place where the rich man went.

It's the place where Lazarus did not go.

So he says, use your money to make friends in this world so that when your money runs out, they'll welcome you down into Hades. That's really what he's saying. That's the point. And then he says, look at verse 10,

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. (Luke 16:10)

If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?

What is what you've got in your pocket? I left my wallet in my office, so it's not in my pocket. What is it you have in your pocket? That's worldly wealth, money.

Money, those dollars that are worth less and less and less ever since Mr. Nixon took us off the gold standard in 1971, and the printing presses print more and more and more worth less and less and less. What's in your wallet, what's in your pocket, is what? He says that is worldly wealth.

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches [he says]? (12) And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property. (Luke 16:11-12)

What's this? Ties right in with the parable he's just told. In other words, here's the wealthy man at the top, and he's got his accountant underneath him, and the accountant has not been trustworthy in dealing with his master's money, and he says if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? Now look at verse 13. This is the crux of it right here.

No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. [Notice the last sentence] You cannot serve both God and Money. (Luke 16:13)

Who wants to hear that? We're all rich here, you know that. The poorest among us are rich. Compare what we have in this country with other countries, Third World countries.

Not Pakistan. I had the privilege of installing a Pakistani pastor in our church in Monroe eight days ago. Not the Pakistanis.

Think of the other side, Bangladesh, which is the other, when India was partitioned when the British withdrew, the Muslims went left and right. Pakistan is relatively prosperous compared to Bangladesh where people are dirt poor. Have you any idea what people live like? Think of what it's like to be a Dalit in India itself, the untouchables, the poorest of the poor, groveling.

(This is a gloss as an illustration, not an exhaustive treatment. I am not an expert of the history of South-Central Asia)

Wow. I remember taking our church youth group twice to the garbage dumps of Mexico City, and it was amazing. We rebuilt a house for a lady, and I remember when we dug out to rebuild this house, suddenly, we're using post hole diggers and shovels, we discovered a nest of rats down there living in her house.

Her animals lived in the house with her in order to keep people from stealing them. Do you know the government of Mexico did not provide birth certificates to those people? Why? Because if they had had birth certificates, they would be legal citizens and entitled to certain protections under the law.

They lived on the garbage dumps. Think of it. Compare yourself. I don't care how poor you are. I don't care how much you struggle to make ends meet. You're far richer than most people in the rest of the world.

And so, this hits us hard and what it says is, who do you serve? Not that you have money. It's okay to have money. But who are you serving? Are you serving money or are you serving Christ? You can't serve both.

That's the key. What does it mean to serve Christ with your money? It means that you lay it at his feet, and you say, "Lord, I don't deserve this. This is lagniappe, as we say in Louisiana. This is a gift. This is something extra. I don't deserve this. I didn't earn this. Lord, I'm no better than that beggar out there. What do you want me to do with your money?"

That's the key. "What do you want me to do with your money?" As long as you can remember and say, "Lord, this is your money. It's not my money, and you have the right to tell me every moment of every day what to do with your money," then you're not serving money, you're serving God.

That's the key. But you see this, the Pharisees. who loved money (Luke 16:14), heard all this, and were sneering at Jesus. Sneering—he said to them, turning the page:

You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight. (Luke 16:15)

Wow, what's highly valued among men?

A nice suit of clothes, a beautiful dress, fine jewelry, a gold ring. What's valued among men? What does God value? You know what God values? He values your heart. He values your heart. "Give me your heart," says the author of Proverbs. "My son, give me your heart" (Proverbs 4:20-23).

Because when you give your heart to the Lord, everything else falls into place. But when you hold your heart back, when you're doing things you know are wrong, when you're being stingy, when God's saying, give to this poor man, your heart's not right and you're mentally ill.

Everyone's a little mentally ill. But those who defile their consciences go on, become increasingly mentally ill.

Now, if we take this all back to the story that we've read in Matthew, what's very clear is this: Those Roman soldiers who were promised protection by the leadership of the Jewish nation, were promised protection, "We'll make sure the governor, if he hears about it, doesn't mess with you," (Matthew 28:14)

And Pontius Pilate, remember, was the consummately gifted politician who could wash his hands and say, "I'm not responsible," when he really was. "We'll take care of it." And he didn't want a riot (Matthew 27:24).

And the Sanhedrin, they want to get rid of this rumor. Now ask yourself one question, is the story that Matthew tells us about the guards being bribed by these lovers of money (Luke 16:14), by these lovers of power, and by these soldiers who wanted more money (Luke 3:14), is the story that Matthew records true?

And the answer to that is, I can prove it to you. You know why? Because as you read in the book of Acts, over and over and over again, the followers of Jesus are tortured. They're tortured. They tell them, "Don't talk about this anymore. We forbid you strictly to say anything about this name Jesus ever again." (Acts 5:40-42)

What did they **never ask** the followers of Christ? The answer to that question is very obvious, **where's his body?**

They knew that Jesus had risen from the dead. They knew it absolutely. The body of Jesus rose from the dead and the high priestly family, the Sadducees, the Pharisees who were part of that, the Herodians and others who were part of that, they knew that Jesus rose from the dead. They knew it.

That's why they never, never, never ask the disciples when they're torturing them, "Where's his body," because if they could have found his body, they could have killed off Christianity immediately.

Instead, Jesus walks this earth, and for 40 days he shows himself alive to many people, including on one occasion more than 500 at once (1

Corinthians 15:6), and people encountered the living Christ supernaturally during that time. And then he ascends to heaven, he sends the Spirit, and that reminds me of that song written by a Presbyterian minister who was listening to the radio when a Rockefeller-funded modernist preacher who denied the Bible, Harry Emerson Fosdick, said that it wouldn't make any difference to his faith if they found the bones of Jesus.

And that Presbyterian preacher almost cut his throat as he's shaving that morning and he sat down and he wrote this song, "I serve a risen Savior. He's in the world today. I know that he is living whatever men may say. You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart." (Alfred Henry Ackley)

So the first proof is this: never, never, never did the Roman or Jewish officials ever ask, where is his body? They knew he rose from the dead.

The second proof is this, that anyone who's ever experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit has a supernatural witness within himself that Jesus lives because of a changed heart.

What's the third proof? Very quickly, turn back with me in the gospel of Matthew a couple of chapters to the end of Matthew chapter 23. The end of Matthew chapter 23 and listen to what he says there as he castigates these leaders, and he says there, beginning on page 1,538, and he's talking about God's sending prophets, wise men, and teachers. Some you will kill and crucify, others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. Verse 35:

And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. (Matthew 23:35)

Look at verse 36:

I tell you, the truth, all this will come upon this generation.
(Matthew 23:36)

And he says:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. (Matthew 23:37-38)

What? He's talking about the temple of God. The temple that had been built by Solomon had been destroyed in 586 BC. It had been rebuilt and consecrated in 516 BC. And then it had undergone a massive rebuilding program in 19 BC under Herod the Great. And he's saying, your house has left you desolate.

In other words, what he's saying of the Jewish temple, it is a windswept house. God is abandoning that temple just as he did Solomon's temple in the days of Ezekiel, he's abandoning (Ezekiel 9:3-10:19). Now it's left desolate. It's a windswept house.

For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' (Matthew 23:39)

What is he saying? How long is the generation? A generation is 40 years. The Lord Jesus spoke these words in the year 30 AD, AD 30. And 40 years later, in AD 70, the Lord Jesus Christ himself authorized the armies of Rome to destroy the Jewish temple. Why?

Because the day that Jesus died on that cross, in April of AD 30, at that point, the veil of the temple was ripped from top to bottom and eyewitnesses tell us about this (Matthew 27:51).

Josephus, who had been a Jewish general commanding the armies of the Galilee, who surrendered to Rome when he realized it was futile, recorded all of the strange sights that people saw and heard. They saw horses before it was destroyed, chariots marching in the sky. They had all of these incredible signs before the Romans destroyed that temple on the ninth day of Av, that is the same day of the same month that the temple of Solomon had been destroyed in 586 it was destroyed in AD 70.

War 6:288 (6.5.3) Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend, nor give credit, to the signs that were so evident

and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. 289 (6.5.3) **Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year.** 290 (6.5.3) Thus also, before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan], and **at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour.** 291 (6.5.3) This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. 292 (6.5.3) **At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple.** 293 (6.5.3) Moreover, **the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple**, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, **was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night.** 294 (6.5.3) Now, those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it: who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty, was able to shut the gate again. 295 (6.5.3) This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. **But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies.** 296 (6.5.3) So these publicly declared, that this signal foreshowed the desolation that was coming upon them. Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the twenty-first day of the month Artemisius [Jyar], 297 (6.5.3) a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, 298 (6.5.3) and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, **before**

sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen 299 (6.5.3) running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, 300 (6.5.3) and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, “Let us remove hence.” But, what is still more terrible there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husbandman, who, four years before the war began, and at a time when the city was in very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereon it is our custom for everyone to make tabernacles to God in the temple, 301 (6.5.3) began on a sudden cry aloud, **“A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!”** This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city. 302 (6.5.3) However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation at this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say anything for himself, or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but still he went on with the same words which he cried before. 303 (6.5.3) Hereupon our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator; 304 (6.5.3) where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, “Woe, woe to Jerusalem!” 305 (6.5.3) And when Albinus (for he was then our procurator) asked him who he was, and whence he came, and why he uttered such words; he made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off his melancholy ditty, till Albinus took him to be a madman, and dismissed him. 306 (6.5.3) Now, during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, “Woe,

woe, to Jerusalem!” 307 (6.5.3) Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a melancholy presage of what was to come. 308

(6.5.3) This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, without growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege, when it ceased; 309 (6.5.3) for as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, “Woe, woe, to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!” And just as he added at the last,—“Woe, woe, to myself also!” there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost.

War 6:310 (6.5.4) Now, if any one consider these things, he will find that God takes care of mankind, and by all ways possible foreshows to our race what is for their preservation; but that men perish by those miseries which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves; 311 (6.5.4) for the Jews by demolishing the tower of Antonia, had made their temple foursquare, while at the same time they had it written in their sacred oracles,—“That then should their city be taken, as well as their holy house, when once their temple should become foursquare.” 312 (6.5.4) But now, what did most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, “about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth.” 313 (6.5.4) The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now, this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea. 314 (6.5.4) However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate, although they see it beforehand. 315 (6.5.4) But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure; and some of them they utterly despised, until their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city, and their own destruction. (Flavius Josephus (1970), *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 5,

Complete Works, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications), pp. 582-83, emphases mine)

What is the third proof that I would offer?

We've got the soldiers and the people who bribe them, and **they never ask, where did you take his body?**

We have **the proof of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit** to those who've experienced the power of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit.

And we have this other proof, **the veil of the temple was ripped from top to bottom.**

And then what's left, once it's ripped from top to bottom, the way into the Holy of Holies is wide open. The temple had no further use. It was therefore a windswept house. And here we are, not quite 2,000 years later and will the temple ever be rebuilt? I can tell you no.

If there's an attempt to rebuild that temple, it will ignite a nuclear war in the Middle East. Why? Because the third holiest site in Islam, Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. Because the Dome of the Rock, built by the Muslims, is celebrating where Muhammad's horse, al-Baruq, put his hoof print when he flew Muhammad to heaven.

Now that's a Muslim story. The point is whether that story is true. I don't believe it is having studied Islam, before I ever became a Christian, I can tell you that's totally a fabrication.

But there evidently is a mark in the rock, the Dome of the Rock, Muslims regard it as the third holiest site. They will fight to the death, utterly disregarding their own lives, **if they're true Muslims**, in order to prevent the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of Omar from being destroyed.

You will set off a nuclear conflagration the likes of which this world cannot imagine because it's holy. The temple of God will never be rebuilt.

And the third and final proof I offer you of the resurrection of Jesus is that **the religion of the Old Testament ended in AD 70**. It ended. People today who practice Judaism don't practice the religion of the Old Testament at all.

What is Judaism? Judaism is ethical monotheism.

Yes, Jewish people are good people, they're honest people, and they are trustworthy people, but they do not follow the Old Testament. They don't follow the Torah (תּוֹרָה), the Nevi'im (נְבִיאִים), the Ketuvim (כְּתוּבִים), the Tanakh. They follow traditions of the elders as recorded in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds.

Judaism is not the religion of the Old Testament. It is ethical monotheism, believe in one God and believe in following the 613 laws of the Torah, though if you're not Orthodox, you don't worry about most of those.

The point I'm making is this, three proofs, and with this I close as we move to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Three proofs.

The soldiers were bribed, we know that, because those who bribed them, who love money, power, and position, thought that money was the answer to everything. And so, as they had bribed Judas to betray Jesus, and in their legalism, when Judas threw the blood money on the floor, they said, "Well, we can't use it for real purposes because it's blood money," so they bought a field to bury beggars in. They never asked where is his body? Why did they never ask where is his body? Because they knew that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Secondly, if you have ever experienced the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in your life, you know that you serve a risen Savior, and he's in the world today, and you know that he is living whatever men may say.

And the third proof I give you that Jesus rose from the dead, where is the temple?

God allowed a bizarre political movement with a religious root, Islam, to create structures that prevent the temple from ever being rebuilt again. When the veil was ripped, AD 30, it became useless. It became a windswept house. And God ordained it be destroyed.

Do you know the Lord? I speak to anyone on the Internet today. Do you know the Lord?

I swear to God, I know that Christ has risen. I know that he's living. I've experienced his supernatural power (Romans 8:11; Ephesians 1:18-20).

You know the unpardonable sin was that the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead and these leaders who knew better, lied, and denied the power of the Holy Spirit raising Jesus from the dead and that was for them the unpardonable sin, to deny the work of the Holy Spirit testifying to the resurrection of Jesus.

Do you know Jesus? Because the resurrection of Jesus is the most important fact in all of history because history changes on that event. Before, after it.

Before it, the righteous dead went into a place called Sheol with compartments of the righteous and the unrighteous where they could see each other.

After Jesus rose from the dead, he led captivity captive. He took a host of men with him to heaven from Sheol. That's amazing, isn't it? No longer, when people die, do they go to Sheol. If you know the Lord, if you know the Lord, the moment you die, as we prayed for Mrs. Patsy Kemp today, the moment that she dies, her body may be in ICU.

["She's in heaven now."]

She is in heaven now? You just got a text?

May we pray.

Lord, I came to love Mrs. Patsy. I remember when we celebrated their wedding anniversary and her husband's birthday and getting to know her three daughters and sons-in-law and grandchildren.

Lord, we thank you we don't have to pray for her because absent from the body, she's present with the Lord. We thank you that on this day, when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, we know that Mrs. Patsy is out of suffering. She is in the presence of the Lord in heaven above, Lord, because you closed the yawning gates of hell, and flung heaven's portals wide.

Lord, bless us as we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus in this sacred meal. For Jesus' sake, amen.