

The Resurrection

By John Montgomery

[Audience applauds]

John Montgomery:

Thank you very much. Uh, every uh good entertainment begins with a commercial, and therefore it seems only appropriate that that should be the case here, uh because it seems to me that uh chapel, whatever else it is, should not be dull. And we're going to try to eliminate that this morning, if that happens to be any problem. Well, hopefully, everyone here has received two pieces of literature, uh a blue uh single sheet, a flyer, and then a green booklet. If you have not received those, you'll be able to get them as you go out. Uh those two pieces of material have to do with the unique Christian law school, which exists in Orange County, located in the city of Orange. And we want to bring that to your attention this morning. Uh I will be staying here after chapel. I'll be in the student union building just across the road to meet with you, to answer questions, to talk with you about the possibilities of the school, uh if they should interest you. We have a regular law program leading to--of our preparation and to licensing as an attorney.

The unique thing about that program is that the Bible and the law are integrated through the entire curriculum, uh from a basic course in the Christian philosophy of law in the first semester through courses in legal history, international and comparative law, and legal literature, and legal ethics. And in all of the substantive law courses, uh the scriptures and the theological approach to the law is emphasized. Now what we want to do is to produce integrated Christian attorneys who are able to deal with the grave social legal problems of our time from a biblical standpoint. Our great friend Francis Schaefer, in his uh lecture for us in France this last summer, said that in his

opinion, unless Christians conquer the field of law for Jesus Christ, it may not be possible for effective evangelism to take place on a national scale in the next generation. This is a crucial area. Martin Luther said that if we preach the gospel in all respects, except in that respect which is needed in our time, we don't preach the gospel at all. And in our time, the law needs to be conquered for Jesus Christ.

Uh then we also have a Master of Arts program in Christian apologetics. Uh the green booklet is on that subject, and you will see there that we offer the widest range of courses in apologetics that can be obtained at any institution. This program uses the techniques of legal reasoning in order to support and defend the Christian faith. The chairman of that division is Professor Walter R. Margin, uh the world's authority on the sex and cults, and Dr. Harold Lenzelle is a full-time faculty member in our program. Josh McDowell is a regular visiting professor. And then thirdly, we have a summer program in Human Rights in France. This program is open to students who are not taking degrees at Simon Greenly. It's incredibly inexpensive because it's subsidized by the French government. It costs only eight hundred dollars for tuition, board and room for one month in France during the month of July at the International Institute of Human Rights. You do not have to have a knowledge of the French language.

You take half of your program with professors of human rights and the other half uh with your humble servant who gives basic courses in the Bible and the law, on human rights, and Christianity, uh and introduction to apologetics. It's a marvelous opportunity to witness to some 300 students who come from third world countries, from behind the Iron Curtain, uh whose opportunity to hear the gospel may only take place there. They return to their countries and they

become political leaders, they begin the teaching of human rights in universities. Uh there have already been a number of conversions through our parallel program at the International Institute of Human Rights. That uh program gives eight semester hours of college credit, uh transferrable to programs that people are taking elsewhere. If you're interested in that, we have leaflets on it across the way. You can talk with me about it afterwards.

Also, on Good Friday, this next Friday, April the 1st, there is a special lecture coming to Simon Greenleaf, and you may be interested in coming to hear him. That lecture is without charge. The gentleman is Professor Rushdoony. Professor Rushdoony, the author of *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, a massive volume on the subject of integrating theology and law. Professor Rushdoony is dealing with an exciting subject, it is a battle plan for evangelicals. A battle plan for evangelicals. He's going to set forth uh the approach that, in his opinion, can be used to make an impact on the society that is so secular at the present time for Jesus Christ. The lecture is on Friday, Good Friday, April 1st at 7:30 p.m. at the Simon Greenleaf School of Law. We are located uh at the Trinity Lutheran Church, Trinity Lutheran Church, in Orange. That's on Knoll Ranch Road. You just get on ninety-one, you zoom up ninety-one to fifty-five, and the first exit off of fifty-five is Knoll Ranch. Uh and you just go up the hill, it's the only church there. We have our own building, our own the library administrative building built on the property of that church. So you're all welcome to come to that lecture.

Very soon, again, we celebrate the greatest festival of the Christian year, the Festival of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We're told by Saint Peter that as Christians, we are to be ready always to give a reason for the hope that is within us. And the great hope that

Christians have is the hope of the resurrection. There is a difference between hope and credulity. Hope is based on fact, credulity is based upon nothing at all. Our hope of resurrection is based upon the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. And at this season of the year, it seems to me, we ought to refocus on the case for the resurrection, because as we present the gospel in a secular age, presumably we're going to be zeroing in on the fact of the resurrection, since that's an essential element of the gospel itself. And we're going to be offering evidence for the resurrection, so that non-Christians will see that the Christian hope is indeed well-founded.

Paul defines the gospel in First Corinthians 15. He says, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I received, by which you are being saved if you continue in it, uh, namely that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." That definition of the Gospel tells us that Jesus' death for our sins and His resurrection for our justification are the very defining marks of the Christian faith. And interestingly enough, without even a grammatical pause in the very same sentence in the Greek, Paul goes on to give evidence in behalf of the resurrection, talks about the people who saw the resurrected Christ. And after listing a number of them, he says, "and to over 500 others, most of whom remain alive to the present." Well, that was written in A.D. 56 to the Corinthians. That means it was written in the same generation as the event of the resurrection. So Paul is saying, in effect, if you don't like my list of witnesses, just uh grab any one of the five hundred, talk with any of those people and you'll see that the resurrection happened, as a matter of fact.

What light can lawyers shed on the resurrection of Christ? You might think very little. Uh, an aphorism of a very famous spread--uh, famous English judge of the last generation went like this. He said, um, "A lawyer is a person who keeps your estate from falling into the hands of your enemies, only to have it fall into his hands."

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

Uh, lawyers are not looked at very positively when it comes to matters of morality and religion often, but as a matter of fact, lawyers have been very interested in the evidence for religious claims because they've been very interested in evidence as such. Lawyers work with evidence all the time. Some years ago, a lawyer by the name of Frank Morrison decided to refute the Christian faith once and for all. He was a non-Christian, and he decided to polish it off. And of course, he focused on the resurrection, because by showing that the resurrection never took place, he would destroy the Christian faith. Paul says in First Corinthians, if Christ is not risen from the dead, we are of all men most miserable. We are yet in our sins. We are deceiving others and deceiving ourselves. So, Frank Morrison went to work on the Resurrection. He spent two years and he wrote a book. Just one unfortunate thing happened. As a result of his research, he became a Christian.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

And the book is a classic. The book is entitled "Who Moved the Stone?" Who Moved the Stone? It's in print. You can get it. It's a small book, very easy to read. And the essence of the argument

is this. It's uh, find the body argument, who stole the body argument, in essence. Says Morrison, "If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, you're going to have to explain the missing body on Easter morning." You would have to do something with the fact that the body was not there. "Now," says Morrison, "There are only three groups of people who had any interest in this event. And therefore, if the body had been stolen, one of those three interest groups would have been responsible. They were the Romans, the Jewish religious leaders, and the disciples. The Romans, the Jewish religious leaders, and the disciples." Now, would the Romans have stolen the body? Are you kidding? The Romans were not out in the provinces body snatching, for goodness sake. The Romans were out in the provinces collecting taxes. That's what they were interested in.

The idea was, and the provincial administrative policy was, keep things quiet and collect the taxes. And you can see this in Pilot's approach to the problem of Jesus. What he wanted was quiet. And he sent an innocent man to the gallows, knowingly, in order to quiet the crowd. Surely, the Romans would not have stolen the body. Had they done that, it would have caused this whole thing to flare up again. Would the Jewish religious leaders have stolen the body? Good grief, to quote Snoopy.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

The, uh if the Romans, if the Romans had no interest in stealing the body, surely the Jewish religious leaders had even less interest in it. The Jewish religious leaders were threatened by Jesus and by His message. They were the ones who had chiefly brought about His-His trial and His execution. Uh, and according to the firsthand accounts, they even asked the Romans to have

a guard put at the tomb to make sure that not even any rumors would get started concerning the body being stolen. They were the last ones to want to do anything with the body. How about the disciples? Ah, the disciples. Wouldn't they have had an interest in stealing the body? But Morrison, in thinking this over, realized that they also would not have done this, surely. Why? Because if they had stolen the body, then they would have gone out and preached the resurrection of Christ knowing it wasn't true, and would have ended up dying for what they knew to be untrue.

Now, of course, people have died for many things that, as a matter of fact, are untrue through history, people have died for an incredible number of lame-brained causes which have not been true. But it's one thing to die for something you think is true and it isn't, and a completely different thing to die for something you know to be untrue. It goes against human psychology that they would have gone out and died for what they knew was false. Now, if you eliminate the Romans, the Jewish religious leaders, and the disciples, you don't have any people to account for the missing body. "And so," said Morrison, "It's going to be necessary to go with the primary witnesses." In courts of law, a tremendous distinction is made between hearsay and primary testimony. Hearsay consists of somebody saying that somebody said something. Hm? It's second or third hand information. Hearsay is not admissible. It's necessary for the testimony to be from the horse's mouth. It needs to be from the people who actually are in contact with the events.

And those people tell us, as we've already seen, that Jesus rose again from the dead and was in contact with them over a 40 day period, was seen by innumerable people. Fairly recently, a sophisticated atheistic philosopher by the name of Anthony Flu has attempted to refute the kind

of argument that Frank Morrison presented. Uh, in Anthony Flu's book, "God and Philosophy," there is an attempt to overturn that argument, and it's probably the most sophisticated attempt to do this that's come along in a long time. It's actually a variant on Hume's argument against miracles back in the 18th century. But even if you know nothing about Hume, you will see the cleverness of this. And it's worth saying something about it. Uh I've uh developed this in my book, "Faith Founded on Fact," but I'll summarize it here. This is the argument of Anthony Flu. He says, "Actually, what Christians are doing is this. Christians Prefer a biological miracle to a psychological miracle."

That is to say, if the disciples had gone out and preached something they knew to be untrue, that would be a psychological miracle. Christians prefer that miracle, the psychological miracle, to the biological miracle of a person uh, coming back from the--or they prefer the reverse. They prefer the biological miracle of somebody coming back from the dead to the psychological miracle of someone being willing to go out and preach something that he knows to be untrue. Says Flu, "Quite frankly, I prefer a psychological miracle here. And then I don't have to worry about anybody rising again from the dead." Clever! But, fallacious. Hm? Reminds me of uh, uh an exchange that took place at a philosophical conference a number of years ago, my professor of logic at Cornell was Max Black. We called him Black Max because he had a temperament like a wounded boar.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

And uh at a, at a philosophical conference, a young fellow got up and gave a paper, and it wasn't the best philosophical paper in the world. And after the fellow sat down, uh Black got up and he absolutely destroyed the paper. He was just as nasty and unpleasant, as he possibly could have been. And, and afterwards, the major professor of the fellow he had destroyed got up and said, "Professor Black, you are the most obnoxious person I have ever met." Black said, "True, but philosophically irrelevant."

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

Now, the argument of Anthony Flu, huh? The argument of Anthony Flu is clever. But as a matter of fact, it's nonetheless fallacious. Why? Because Christians aren't people who prefer biology to psychology, or biological miracles to psychological miracles. Whereas atheists are people who prefer psychological miracles. There-there are no rules in the universe saying whether it would be nicer to have biological miracles and psychological miracles. You don't find that written on the walls of the universe anywhere. How do you make a decision in a situation like this? You make the decision on evidence. There isn't any primary evidence of a psychological miracle, but there's plenty of primary evidence of a biological miracle. I mean, if in the records we had people saying, you know, those disciples certainly are screwballs. They're constantly going around dying for things that they know perfectly well to be untrue. And there are various illustrations given of this. So this is a community of lame-brains, huh? A community of psychological lamebrains.

If that were the primary evidence, I suppose we would have to go along with it. But there isn't any evidence of that. The disciples are not boneheads psychologically, their porch lights have not gone out. uh, the fact is that they are able to tell the difference between reality and unreality. And they are not the kind of people who would do that sort of thing. That's plain from the account of Thomas, for example, doubting Thomas. And the primary witnesses show that they're not ready to believe this uh just uh because it makes them feel good. When Jesus appears along the shore, the end of the gospel of Luke, uh and uh the account says they thought they were seeing a ghost. And Jesus said, "Give Me something to eat." And they gave Him some fish and He ate it before them. I did a book on the occult a number of years ago, and I never found a fish-eating ghost.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

Never. For some reason, for some reason, ghosts do not like cuisine o'poisson. Uh--

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

Maybe this is because they have no tummies. That could be a very good reason.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

The fact that Jesus ate fish subsequent to His resurrection convinced those disciples that He had indeed risen again from the dead. They would not have gone out and died for something that they knew to be untrue. But also, in the last few years, uh we've had uh some other attempts to deal

with the resurrection. We've had, what I call, the possibility attempts to deal with the resurrection, the possibility attempts. This is to be distinguished slightly from possibility thinking.

[John Montgomery and audience laugh]

John Montgomery:

Uh, uh the possibility attempts, uh at handling the resurrection. For example, we have Schoenfeld's Passover plot, where he says, "Isn't it possible that uh Jesus drugged Himself, uh and managed to survive the cross, and He remained alive for a short period of time, just long enough to convince those fuddled disciples uh, that He had risen again from the dead? Hm? If you can believe that, you shouldn't have any trouble with the resurrection at all.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

Well, uh. There is also, there is also the uh [unintelligible], chariot of the gods, approach to the resurrection. Isn't it possible that Jesus was a space man so cleverly disguised in a Jesus suit, that no one knew the difference?

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

Uh, and His ability to rise again from the dead uh was simply part of that extraterrestrial knowledge that He had? Isn't it possible? Well, this is often a problem for Christians, because

they can't say it's impossible. I mean, this is a contingent universe where anything is possible except squeezing toothpaste back into a tube.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

As one philosopher has said. I mean, theoretically, theoretically, anything could happen. So how do we deal with this when we're witnessing? Well, again, lawyers can come to our aid. Let me give you, very quickly, the classic uh murder incident. The sheriff's deputies break into the old mansion at Bofur Gulch, and their worst suspicions are justified. In a locked room, with snap locks on the door, no windows, no access, whatever they find, the victim divided into 18 equal sized pieces, and the accused holding a bloody ax. The trial takes place, it is a very uh short trial, because the evidence is so clean cut.

[John Montgomery and audience laugh]

John Montgomery:

And when-when the jury retires, the jury retires with the judge's instruction, which goes as follows, "Gentlemen of the jury, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you must not bring in a guilty verdict unless you are convinced to a moral certainty beyond reasonable doubt of the guilt of the accused." That means that you cannot, you cannot, bring in a guilty verdict unless you have been able to eliminate all other reasonable explanations of the crime, besides that, the accused did it. And when we say that you must eliminate all other reasonable explanations, we mean all other explanations in accord with the facts. You are to pay attention to the facts and evidence, and you are to bring in a verdict of not guilty unless you have been able to eliminate all other appropriate

factual explanations that would account for the crime. Now, the judge has already scheduled a golf game for that afternoon, because uh there are no other explanations uh-uh-b-uh in terms of the evidence.

Uh, the jury, however, is out for two hours. The judge is in a state of infuriation, uh the jury comes back [unintelligible] asks the foreman, "What is your verdict?" Foreman gets up, and he says, "Your Honor, we find the accused innocent of the charge." The judge is ready to have apoplexy.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

And he insists upon an explanation. Foreman says, "Your Honor, we know that the evidence is powerful against the accused. But, your honor, we are philosophical uh people. We are metaphysically orientated. We know that in this contingent universe, anything is possible." Actually, the judge majored in agriculture and was having a little difficulty with this.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

But uh, -he stays with it. Foreman says, "Since this is a contingent universe in which anything can happen, Your Honor, it's possible, isn't it, that invisible Martians came into the room, and the invisible Martians, with their invisible laser guns cut the victim into 18 equal sized pieces."

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

"And then, because of their nasty Martian temperaments, uh they uh made it seem as if the-the poor accused did it. Now, Your Honor, since that is a genuine metaphysical possibility, we have found the accused innocent." The judge would then have apoplexy. Let me tell you.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

A mistrial would be declared, why? Because the judge told these dunderheads that they were supposed to pay attention only to the evidence. In other words, their verdict had to reflect probability, not possibility. It had to reflect where the evidence lay. The only way that they could bring in a legitimate, innocent, uh-uh-l-uh legitimate guilty verdict would be if all other reasonable explanations were eliminated. But in this case, for goodness sake, they paid no attention to the evidence. They imported the notion of a Martian without any basis in fact, at all. No court of law would accept that kind of reasoning. Why, then, should that kind of reasoning be acceptable as an effort to explain away the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Actually, this is a technically nonsensical argument, because if Jesus can be explained away as a Martian so cleverly dressed in a Jesus suit that no one can tell the difference, maybe the judge is a Martian dressed in a judge's robe and no one can tell.

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

And what about your wife?

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

The whole universe crumbles when we start thinking in terms of possibilities--

[Audience laughs]

John Montgomery:

--instead of thinking about probabilities, and facts, and evidence. The resurrection of Jesus Christ remains at the pivotal point of human history. As John Updike says in a great poem, seven stanzas at Easter, "We cannot get out from under the materiality and the reality of it." It is not a fable. It isn't--uh the tomb is not a papier-mache tomb that has been created in the credulity of past ages. This happens to be actual fact. The Christian faith is founded on it, it's been founded on it for almost 2,000 years. And you can go out this Easter and you can present your hope of resurrection, not as a subjective wish fulfillment, but as actual fact. You can present the gospel of Jesus Christ as providing a suitable basis for every person facing the claims of Jesus Christ.

And that's exactly why the resurrection took place in the first place. Jesus said, "No other sign is going to be given to this generation but the resurrection." He said, "Tear down this temple and in three days I will build it again." He wanted people to see that He could conquer death. That's the proof of His deity, and that's the proof that when He was dying in agony on the cross, He was taking away your sins and mine, and indeed, the sins of the whole world. I pray that uh at this Easter time, we will go out with renewed vigor and confidence to present the Christian hope. And I pray also that as we present that Christian hope to others, we will give the reason for that hope so that they can see that this is a solid basis for time and eternity. Thank you.

[Audience applauds]