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**Teaching: Carlon Tschetter**  
**Series: Resurrection Easter**  
**Message: Conspiracy, Mystery, Gospel Truth**

**Transcribed Message**  
**April 20, 2025**  
**1 Timothy 3:16**

A man named Ryan Burge is a professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University. He does a lot of work in the area of statistics and religion and culture and just things going on in our world today. I always enjoy reading his articles. He did a recent one that was based off the Chapman questionnaire about what it is that Americans fear, and in this list of things that people fear, he asked this question: please give your level of agreement with the following statement. The government is concealing what it knows about, and then listed out these nine different things that people have suspicions about.

Well, you look at that list, and honestly, you could strongly agree, you could agree, you could disagree, or you could strongly disagree. There were four categories. And then as he put the data in and the numbers, they came out like this, and I would have never guessed that that many people had questions about the moon landing. I just never thought that would be at the top of the list. Here's what's interesting. The 68% people who wonder about the South Dakota crash, we need to talk with them further, because they just made that up and put it into the survey just to kind of get a sense of how people react to things about which never even happened. But 68% of our fellow Americans are deeply distressed about the information that is being withheld about an event that never in fact took place. When you look at that list, I mean, you conclude a couple things, don't you? We live in a time of great skepticism, and we live in a time, I think, in which people are drawn to some extent to conspiracies and to explanations about things that they feel we don't have the full information about.

It's kind of like Jim at The Office, right? He had to get a whole new set of conspiracies because all his came true. Well, on July the 20<sup>th</sup> of 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon. I remember that night. I was walking with a friend from my house to his, and we were going up the back alley behind our house. The moon was huge that night. It was shining bright. This was 1969 about 11:30 at night. It's amazing what parents would let their small

children do at that point. Don't try to do the math. But we're walking to his house, and we both thought we saw something. We weren't sure what it was, but it's about 245,000 miles away, but we know they walked on the moon because obviously it was on live TV. We have photos. We have videos. We have all of NASA's intricate records and all the details about what happened. For crying out loud, we have moon rocks that they brought back, and we have eyewitnesses. Those guys were there, right? We know this to be true, or do we? I mean, there are some questions that could be raised, right? These guys were no doubt going to become very famous. There was probably going to be a certain amount of financial benefit from what happened. What about that rippling flag on the surface of the moon when there isn't any wind, and what about that supposed appearance of something on Buzz Aldrin's visor that we just never could quite get an explanation of? And after all, you can make a video, can't you, in a studio and make some pictures. You've never seen a moon rock. How do you know that moon rock came from the moon? And so, there's all kinds of things like that that enter into this.

Here's what I want to ask you. Is there incontrovertible evidence and proof whereby we can once and for all determine and decide that men walked on the moon? And I'm going to come back and answer that question for you, but I want to do something else first. I want to talk for a little bit about another event that happened in human history, and that event is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It, after all, is the single most important event within the Christian faith. You disprove the resurrection of Jesus, you find a way to say His body's still in the tomb, a grave somewhere, and Christianity literally falls apart and disappears. It's the foundation of our entire faith and belief.

Someone said, if Christ is risen, then nothing else matters. He also said, if Christ is not risen, nothing else matters. So, if you were living in the first century and you googled resurrection, Al Gore's got some explaining to do if you did that, but if you googled resurrection in the first century, I can assure you all kinds of explanations and conspiracy theories would have been offered as to how do you explain this? I mean, there was a whole line of arguments that said his body was stolen. The disciples somehow got his body out of that grave. I don't know how they did that because the Roman government and the Jewish leaders wanted to make sure his body stayed in that grave.

There's another conspiracy theory that says he didn't really die. It was the swoon theory, and he didn't really die. He was unconscious, and he passed out, and when he got placed in the tomb, the coolness of the tomb revived him, and somehow after he'd gone through everything he did, he moved that stone out of the way and walked out. You know, it's not even credible, is it?

There's the hallucination conspiracy theory that says his followers wanted so badly to believe that he was raised from the dead that they convinced themselves and each other that they actually saw him when they really, of course, didn't.

There's the wrong guy theory that says they took the wrong man, and yeah, somebody died on that cross between those two thieves, but it wasn't really Jesus. And then there's the wrong tomb view, and you know, I could believe the wrong tomb view if it was just the men going to the tomb because they wouldn't ask for directions. They wouldn't ask for help to find the right one, but we know that the women were the first to the tomb, and if they didn't know where to go, they would have asked somebody where to go.

But all of that to say, we have all these ideas, but I want to offer what I think is a better explanation for the empty tomb. I want to offer the explanation that Jesus, in fact, did rise from the dead, that he rose from the dead just as the Bible predicted and prophesied that he would, just as he himself said many times that he would, in fact, die, but that he would rise again. We've been singing about it. We've been singing about it.

We're going to sing about it again in just a few minutes, but we're not the only ones who have been singing about the resurrection because it is believed that one of the very first songs that the early Christians sang together had to do with the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In 1 Timothy, chapter 3 and verse 16, the apostle Paul writes to a young pastor by the name of Timothy, and in writing to Timothy, he wants to bring to him evidence and proof for who Jesus is and what Jesus did and the fact that he was raised from the dead. It's a confession that starts off this 16<sup>th</sup> verse. It's a declaration. It's saying to us, great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness.

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. That opening couple of words, great indeed, just simply means without question, without controversy. They were saying in

that first century, we all believe this. We're all united around this truth. None of us are questioning the reality that our Lord, who we saw die on the cross, was raised from the dead and we saw him with our own eyes. That's the declaration they're making in that statement.

We confess about this mystery of godliness. The word "mystery" in the Bible isn't a whodunit mystery. The word "mystery" in the Bible has to do with God making known what was before unknown. God revealing to us what we wouldn't have known if he hadn't made it known. So, their confession, their declaration is without question. This is what we believe because God himself has made this known to us.

Now, I say to you, that's one of the great things about the Bible. One of the great things about the Bible is the Bible is God's revelation to us of things that we need to know and things that we could not know if he didn't tell us. Things about himself, about who he is, about what he does. Things about us. Things about ourselves.

It's in the Bible that we realize and we read that we're made in the image and likeness of God. It's in the Bible that we read that we have great value in the eyes of our Creator. Everybody in this room and everybody listening is of great value to God. He loves you. He made you in his image and likeness. He wants to be in a relationship with you. He wants you to know him as he knows you already. That's the beauty of the Word of God. That's what it says to us. And then it's this mystery about godliness.

Now, godliness here just conveys the idea of wholeness. It would basically be saying, you know how to live life well. Now, who doesn't want to know how to live life well? In this world that we just sang about that is broken and battered and in which there are so many heartaches and burdens and struggles, who doesn't want to know how to navigate through those things and how to live life well? The hardest things that come to us. I believe God in his Word has given us ample reason to think we can navigate even those. Because great indeed we confess is the mystery of godliness.

Now, what happens in this 16<sup>th</sup> verse, in this third chapter of 1 Timothy 3, is that the Apostle Paul then in giving us this declaration is now just going to zero in on six statements about the Lord Jesus Christ. He's going to tell us six things that we need to know about this one who is the risen Savior. And the first one, he says, is he was manifested in the flesh. So, the first

word is manifestation. God steps into human history. God becomes one with us. That's what we celebrate at Christmas. It's Emmanuel, God with us. Well, here today we celebrate that he died but that he didn't stay dead. He rose from the grave. He was manifest in the flesh.

On Sunday mornings, we're reading and going through the Gospel of John together. And in John 1, the very first chapter, John says, and the Word, that's Jesus, became flesh, became like us. The Word became flesh, and he lived. He tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory. The glory is of the only one of God, full of grace and truth. And so that's what he's saying to us here.

The storyline of the Bible is God sending his Son in pursuit of you. That's the storyline of the Bible. Here at Covenant, we like to say you can understand the whole Bible in five words. The Old Testament is the word "anticipation". The whole Old Testament, you work your way through and try to figure out what's going on sometimes in the Old Testament. It's a whole storyline about anticipating the coming one, the Messiah, the promised one. Well, then when you get to the Gospels, he's here and it is manifestation. That's what he's saying. He's manifest in the flesh.

And then look, the next line, there's vindication. He's vindicated by the Spirit. The same Paul writes in Romans, verse three and four of chapter one concerning his son, who was descended from David, according to the flesh. And he was declared to be his son, the son of God, according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ, our Lord. Peter wanted to get in on it. And he says in 1 Peter 3:18, he was put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. Jesus claimed to be God. Jesus did things that no human can do. There has to be another explanation. He said he was God. The Holy Spirit vindicated and proved that to be true, right? That's the second thing, this vindication of the Spirit. This is in fact my son.

The third one, verification. He was seen by angels. There were eyewitnesses to this one, right? How many men have walked on the moon? How many men have walked on the moon? Well, don't be shy. How many men have walked on the moon? You don't want to say because now you're not sure if any men did walk on the moon. No, twelve. Twelve. There were six missions to the moon in which we believe, almost certainly, pretty closely sure, that there were twelve guys that made that mission and walked on the face of the moon.

Now, you could believe that those twelve guys and others that were a part of this whole thing, you could believe that those twelve especially all had to sign off and say, we all know this is a hoax. We all know this is like the South Dakota crash, but we're going to work this thing out and this is all going to be put forward to the public as if it happened. So, there were supposedly, or I believe most assuredly, because I meant to say earlier, I'm not a conspiracy guy. Okay, that's not who I am. I believe what Paul says when he says avoid foolish controversies. That's me. Avoid those things. But here, twelve guys walked on the moon. They were eyewitnesses to what it is that they said.

There's a group of created beings who would never go along with the hoax. And those created beings are angels. That's what Paul says here. He was seen by angels. It's interesting, isn't it? Angels were a part of the life of our Lord while he was on the earth from the very beginning to the very end. I mean, after all, they announced his birth to Mary and Joseph. They announced his birth to the shepherds. They were with him in the temptation experience in the wilderness. They were with him in the Garden of Gethsemane when he faced the awful thought of the cross. And they are with him in declaring his resurrection. Look at Luke 24 verses 2 through 6. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee. So, the angels were the ones who verified that Jesus was raised from the dead.

Now look at the fourth thing. There's proclamation. There's proclamation. It was proclaimed among the nations. I mentioned earlier the possibility of the disciples stealing the body of our Lord. That was one of the earliest things that was put forward, that the disciples came and somehow they stole the body. And they did it because they wanted to keep the legend of Jesus going. That's the whole idea behind that theory. The legend of Jesus needed to be protected. And so, the disciples came up with this amazing scheme. They got his body out of that tomb. So, it was empty. And they kept the legend of Jesus going.

Now, if you could argue that becoming a part of something like that would lead to fame and fortune and notoriety and all kinds of possibilities, OK, I could maybe understand people being drawn into that kind of a hoax because there's a big payout at some point, some way, somehow for them if they're involved in that. But that's not what happened to the disciples. The disciples, when they went out and preached the fact that Jesus died on a cross and that he rose again, they didn't get any fame, any fortune, any notoriety. What they got was arrested, beat up, and they got martyrdom for it all. Tradition tells us that every one of the disciples, except for John who died on the island of Patmos in exile at the end of his old life, every other one of the disciples, because they were proclaimers of the gospel of Christ, were in fact arrested, beaten, and martyred for their faith. Now, who does that? Who would do that, knowing that they're putting out a lie? Why wouldn't they at some point have said, OK, OK, enough. I don't really believe it's true either. We made it all up, but none of them did it. Nobody backed away from their testimony. They all stayed true to the very end. And you know why they did? Because it was true. And they wanted everybody else to know that it was true.

Then look with me at this fifth one, salvation. Believed on in the word. Believed on it. It's that simple. That's why we call it the good news. It's called the good news because these men who were a part of this early ministry of Jesus and these women, their lives were changed dramatically forever. I mean, they were cowering, fearful, running, hiding, betraying, all of that after the cross. There wasn't anybody out there boldly proclaiming that they were a follower of Jesus at the point of the resurrection. And yet somehow after the death and after the resurrection, they were emboldened in their faith. And that is because they believed. They believed, and their lives were dramatically changed.

I don't know every story. I don't know everybody here this morning, but I am confident that there are hundreds of stories in this audience this morning about people whose lives have been forever changed because they believed the simple truth of the gospel. Because that's what the gospel does. That's what the good news does. It changes people's lives forever. It changes people's destiny forever. It doesn't make your life easy. God never promised that if you become a Christ follower that everything's going to be wonderful and great and you're going to live your best life ever. That's not what the Bible says.

The Bible, in fact, says almost the opposite of that. There's going to be suffering and there's going to be difficulty, but you're going to have somebody who's going to walk with you through it all. So, they believe. Matthew 28, go into all the world and make disciples. Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Why? Because it's a life-changing message.

Now look at the last thing. There's exaltation. He's taken up in glory. He's taken up in glory. This is the ascension. So, 40 days from today will be Ascension Day. And the ascension is simply the visible physical promotion and exaltation of the risen Savior back into the glory of heaven. Notice very clearly, it doesn't say that he was taken up. It's not just he was taken up. And it doesn't say he was taken up into glory. It says he was taken up in glory. In glory. Paul says in Ephesians 1, he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. Paul says in Philippians, every knee is one day going to bow, and every tongue is one day going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord over all. You might say mission accomplished.

So let me go back to where I started. Is there incontrovertible evidence and proof that men walked on the moon? I have the answer for you this morning. The answer to the question, is there incontrovertible evidence that men walked on the moon? The answer is ... it does not matter. It does not matter because nobody's destiny depends on whether men walked on the moon or not.

But it does matter whether you believe that Jesus, as the Son of God, walked on this earth and lived a perfect life. It does matter whether you believe that Jesus died on a cross for your sins and mine. It does matter that you believe that he was raised again, verifying all that Paul said and all that the early Christians sang in this hymn about the risen Savior. It is that which will determine your eternal destiny. These other things are of no consequence, but this is of the ultimate consequence. If in fact Jesus was raised from the dead, everything matters because of this.

And it is simply the good news that we're called on to believe. And the good news starts off with bad news. And the bad news is two things. Everybody in this room, everybody in this



world has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And the bad news further is that sin always brings death, and it always brings separation from God. That's the consequence of sin. So that's the bad news.

And if you agree with me right now in your heart that you have sinned and that sin has caused death in terms of your separation from God, then you need to step into two things about the good news. And those two things are Jesus came, and he died on the cross, taking my place and yours. He did it for us so that our sins could be forgiven. And if you believe that he did that and he did that for you, all you have to do is agree with God that that is true. That's called believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

You don't have to do anything else. God's not asking you to go to church for the rest of your life for 52 Sundays out of the year. He's not asking you to give money to the poor and to the needy. He's not. You can do all those things. Those are good things. He's not asking you to keep the Ten Commandments for the rest of your life, even though those, again, are a wonderful moral code. All he's asking you to do is to believe that you've sinned, believe that sin brings death and believe that Jesus has done something about it.

Let's pray. Father God, we ask in these closing moments as we lift our voices again in praise to you that your Holy Spirit will work in each heart, verifying and affirming what it is that we believe about Jesus and what he did and his resurrection from the dead. Father God, we give all glory to you. In Jesus's name, amen.