What is the Meaning of Life?
Program 64
Leslie's Laws Applied to the Fact of the Resurrection
by Ernest O'Neill

What is the point of living? Have you an answer that satisfies you? I mean, why are you here? What is the purpose of your living at all? You probably say to me, "Well, what's the purpose of your living? I mean, none of us know why we're here."

That's the subject we're discussing on this program each day -- the fact that so few of us have any idea of an answer to what is undoubtedly the most important question in the world: What's the point of the world? What's the purpose of this life? Why are we here? What is the meaning of it all?

You may remember a song sung by one of our famous American jazz singers. It constantly had the recurring refrain, "Is that all there is? Is that all there is?" You go to the circus and you go to the show and you go to work. Constantly you ask the question, "Is that all there is?" We all feel there has to be something more to it than this.

Then the horrible thought comes to us, when we see yet another one of our loved ones die, maybe there isn't any more than this. So that question has become a rod that has beaten many of us over the head and increasingly has. That is the question: "What is the point of it? What's the purpose of it all? Why are we here?"

What we have been saying is that in order to get an answer to that question, we have to find somebody who knows a little more about the whole thing than we do. It has to be somebody even greater than Einstein. It has to be somebody that knows more about what is beyond the sky that we see above us than we ourselves know.

It has to be somebody who has gone beyond where our satellites have gone, beyond where our space probes have gone. It has to be somebody that can explain why the planets and the stars go on wave after wave, after wave, so far that our radio telescopes can't get to the end of them. It has to be somebody that has lived some life beyond this present world.

Of course, most of us say, "Well, there's nobody like that! I mean, there are all kinds of gurus that have pretended that they've left the earth! There are all kinds of so-called mystics that have said they were this son of the Maker or this person or that person. There have been people even that have said they are the creator of the world. But, it's hard to find anybody that has actually left the earth."

This is because there is only one such human being that has done that. That's this man, Jesus of Nazareth. He, in fact, did die, and after three days came back, and lived on this earth for more than a month, and then he disappeared from the earth completely.

He actually explained to his followers, "Now, I am the Son of the Maker of this world, and to show you that I am, I'm going to be crucified; I'm going to be killed and executed. I'm going to be dead. Then, I'm going to rise from the dead and break the death barrier. I'm going to come back to you, and spend time with you, and eat with you, and talk with you, and walk with you, so you know it's really me, and you'll know that I have actually been away to see my Father, who is the Maker of this world, and I'll come back and tell you." Of course, he did that. He did exactly that. Then, he disappeared from the earth completely.

What comes into most of our minds is,"Big deal! It's not possible. It's not true! It's a lie! It's a fantasy! It's a myth! There's no such

thing as people rising from the dead. It's always pretence or fake, or some trick of spiritualism." How do you establish that such a fact as a man rising from the dead is actually a fact?

Well, we have been examining this fact of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth under four headings that an old philosopher called Leslie formulated. They appeal to your common sense. He says, first of all, to establish that a historical fact is, in fact, a matter of fact, it must be such that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be the judges of it.

In other words, it can't be some mystical, mental, psychic experience. It has to be something that ordinary men can see with their eyes and ears. Such was the resurrection from the dead. Ordinary men like Peter, ordinary fishermen like James, ordinary people like John, skeptics and cynics like Paul, shrewd people that were not easily deceived; they actually saw this thing with their eyes and their ears.

They said, "We were eye witnesses of these things." The then-known world has all kinds of references to these men showing that they were their contemporaries, and they did actually live at that time. So, in fact, this resurrection of the dead meets that criterion.

The second criterion that Leslie formulated was that the fact be done publicly in the face of the world, not done in some little corner. This was the problem with the resurrection. The Roman emperor was troubled about it because "it was not done in a corner" as they said. It was done so that the whole world knew about it. In fact, they said, "These men are turning the world upside down with this. Everybody knows about the resurrection from the dead of Jesus of Nazareth."

The third criterion that Leslie formulated was that not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but that some outward actions be performed. This was, of course, to ensure that the original fact is remembered as it actually happened, and that the record is passed down from generation to generation accurately without any alterations or exaggerations.

That is exactly what happened. There are manuscripts that are present in the British Museum today that are clear monuments to the truth of this resurrection from the dead of this man, Jesus of Nazareth. These manuscripts date from 350 A.D.

And there's another manuscript in the Manchester University Library which dates to 130 A.D. So, there's barely 30 years elapsing from the death of the last eye-witness to these events. There are monuments right down through the years. Indeed, in those intervening few years, there's a clear monument known as "Sunday".

Ever since this man rose from the dead, Sunday has been observed as an obvious monument to the fact that this actually did take place. In other words, you have to ask yourself, why are we observing Sunday? If, in fact, something remarkable didn't happen on Sunday, why on earth are we doing it?

You certainly can't attribute it to the fame and success and popularity of the early disciples. They weren't famous. They weren't popular. They were persecuted and despised. Why, then, is Sunday observed? Well, because something incredible happened on that first Sunday.

The fourth criterion that Leslie states is that "such monuments and such actions and such observances be instituted and do commence from that time of the matter of fact was done." In other words, in order to be sure that the thing is a matter of fact,

whatever monuments you have that exist today in relationship to it, they must have started at the time the matter of fact was done.

In other words, they can't be like the lives you get of Buddha which were written 500 years after Buddha died. They have to be instituted at the actual time the fact was done. This is to ensure that there's no time gap between the event and the record of it.

Now, the amazing thing is that the written records we have in the Bible were written during the lifetime of hundreds of eye-witnesses of the resurrection itself. For instance, the book of Galatians, a letter written to the people in Galatia, was written in 48 A.D. Now all that the eye-witnesses had to do was to contradict the resurrection account as it circulated throughout the ancient world from church to church.

They never did. All they had to do was say, "Listen, this that was written in this book in 48 A.D., I'm alive now; I saw this resurrection. I saw this death. It took place this way. It didn't take place that way." In other words, the monuments, that is the written records, existed in the then-known world from the very time the deed was done.

Of course, there's another event that is observed by hundreds of us and thousands of us today that began at the actual moment when that death occurred. Here's the first record of it. In Acts, Chapter 20, verse 7: "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the morrow." In other words, the Communion, the Lord's Supper, has been observed without a break from the very first night that Jesus, Himself, celebrated it with the disciples.

Did this man really rise from the dead? All the arguments of logic and of historical criticism tell us, yes, he did actually rise from the dead.