

Matthew Ch27v55-Ch28v15 - Jesus Lives

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[0 : 0 0] 55. Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb, and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb. The next day, the one after preparation day, the chief priests and the

Pharisees went to Pilate. Sir, they said, we remember that while he was still alive, that deceiver said, after three days I will rise again. So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day, otherwise his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he had been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first. Take a guard, Pilate answered. Go make the tomb as secure as you know how. So they went and they made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard. After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, so it's a Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 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.

His appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the woman, do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 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.

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell the disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. Greetings, he said. They came to him, clasped his feet, and worshipped him.

Then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me. While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city to report to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, you are to say, his disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.

[4 : 0 4] If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. 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. Well, over the month of April, we've been looking together at the Easter account.

That is, the events surrounding the death and the resurrection of Jesus. We've been looking at his trial, his crucifixion, and last week his death. And today, we're going to see the resurrection.

And in particular, we're going to look at the resurrection account from the perspective of the women. Because throughout Matthew's Gospel, and particularly in this instance, the women play a central role.

So we're going to look at three simple things. We're going to look at the witness to the resurrection, the challenge to the resurrection, and the meaning of the resurrection.

[5 : 23] So three things. Witness, meaning, and challenge. Here's the first. The witness to the resurrection. Now this is really important because Christianity is built on the foundation of the resurrection.

If there is no risen Jesus, there is no Christianity. We're simply living a lie. We might as well all pack our bags right now and go home because we're wasting our time.

So it's crucial that we know that the resurrection is actually true. And Matthew's account provides us with the first eyewitnesses to the resurrection.

We're introduced to them in verse 55. Many women were there watching from a distance.

Verse 56. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Sebedee's sons. Now we don't know a lot about them.

[6 : 34] We're not given much information, but we're given a little bit, which obviously suggests that their identities are known by the people who first read this account.

They knew who Mary was, and the other Mary, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. And at least two of these women, the two Marys, were eyewitnesses to all that had happened.

They're present throughout this account. Now the fact that Matthew records women as the first eyewitnesses is really significant.

Because at that time, back in the first century, a woman's testimony was not considered trustworthy. In the court of law, their words were not counted as credible.

You never had a woman stand up and give witness. It just simply wasn't counted. So if Matthew was making up a story of the risen Jesus, you would never include women in your account.

[7 : 42] Because it would be counterintuitive. It would undermine your purpose for what you're writing. The only reason why Matthew would include women and have as his eyewitnesses would be if it was true.

So what did these women see as the first eyewitnesses? First, they saw Jesus die.

Again, look at verse 55. Many women were there watching. Well, what were they watching? Well, Matthew's just recorded for us the events surrounding the death of Jesus.

So they were present as Jesus died. They were witnesses to his beatings, to his torture, to his crucifixion. They saw Jesus' physical body get weaker and weaker as he struggled to draw in breath.

They heard his cry of agony and they saw as he breathed out his last. Now, lots of people today will claim that Jesus didn't die.

[8 : 54] That while he was on the cross, he only passed out or he fainted. Is it true? Well, let's remember that these soldiers were experienced, expert, executioners.

It was their job to ensure people died. And if people didn't die, well, more than likely, they would die themselves. So there's no reason for us to think that Jesus did not die.

According to the women who are present and watching, well, Jesus died. And second, they saw Jesus buried.

Joseph, a disciple of Jesus, verse 57, went and asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. It was important in Jewish tradition that the body would be buried before Sabbath the following day, before sundown.

So he goes to Pilate and asks for the body, verse 59. Joseph took the body and wrapped it in clean linen cloth.

[10 : 07] So the burial clothes, wrapped from toe to head all the way around. So if there was any notion of Jesus still being alive, he would surely be suffocated.

Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, placed it in his own new tomb, so people weren't buried underground. It was a hole in the rock and inside the rock they would chisel out or cut out a shelf into the rock area.

And then a big stone was rolled in the front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. And usually they put the stone in front to stop any wild animals getting in.

But look who's present. Matthew gives us this information. But look who's there. Verse 61. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

The two Marys who had witnessed the death of Jesus now witness the burial of Jesus. They see him being placed into the tomb and it all being sealed up.

[11 : 25] Third, they saw Jesus raised. Chapter 28, verse 1. After the Sabbath. So, Jesus had died on Friday afternoon, was buried before sundown on Friday, so before 6pm.

he remains in the tomb all of Saturday, which is called the Sabbath. So, after the Sabbath, at dawn, on the first day of the week, which would be Sunday, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

So, here we have the two Marys again. And what they witnessed is incredible, isn't it? Earthquakes, an angel. Well, you say, that's just going a bit too far now.

I mean, one thing to claim a resurrection, but all this business of earthquakes and angels? Well, they weren't the only ones to witness what was going on, were they?

Look at verse 4. The guards, remember, there were guards posted to keep an eye in the tomb. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook.

[12 : 40] And literally, the same word there for shook is earthquake. They had their own little earthquake of fear. And they became like dead men as the angel appeared.

You see, the guards back up what the two Marys claim to have seen. Jump down to verse 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.

So, it wasn't just the women, but the guards also. This is no made-up story. Let's go back to the women. Seeing that there was no body in the tomb, the angel had said, come and see where he lay.

No body there. The angel then commands them to go and tell the disciples. Let's pick it up in verse 8. So, the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid, yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

Suddenly, Jesus met them. Greetings! Now, it's a funny phrase, this greetings. It's not how we kind of, when we meet people, say, we say, hi, hello, or if Jesus were from Cork, he'd probably say, how's it going?

[13 : 57] It's just a really natural, normal, kind of like, what are you so surprised at? How are you doing? Why are you surprised?

And they came to him, verse 9, and clasped his feet and worshipped him. Now, some say, again, that they got over-emotional and excited, that the women didn't really see Jesus, it was just a vision or something like that.

But this is no vision. This is the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus. They grasp a hold of his feet, they actually hold and touch a physical body, the real Jesus.

And in visions, or anything else, that doesn't happen, you can't grasp, you can't hold on to. So, Matthew is very, very clear to record the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection.

The women's testimony provides evidence and continuity. They were present at his death, at his burial, and resurrection.

[15 : 15] They see, hear, and touch the risen Jesus. Jesus. So, there's nothing in this account that suggests that we should not believe that this is true.

So, we have the witness to the resurrection. Second, the meaning of the resurrection. If this is all true, if this is a historical fact, that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, what does it all mean?

What difference does that make to you and me? Well, four things I think the resurrection teaches us here. Here's the first.

God does something for you. Now, most of the time we think of Christianity like this, that we do something for God, and God does something for me.

We come to church like this, we do something for God, in the hope that, well, we've done this, now he's going to bless me, he's going to do something for me.

[16 : 26] It's transactional. But what the resurrection shows us is, is that God has come to do something for us. Everything that happens tells us that this is a God intervention.

This is God's initiative. Look at chapter 28, verse 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.

Now, these aren't your normal everyday today events, are they? These things only happen when God is intervening and God has something to tell us.

Angels have already shown up in Matthew. Do you remember right back at the very beginning when God intervened and told Mary, you're going to have a son and his name will be called Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us.

It took an angel, an intervention to tell something really important. so God comes again through the angel and he's saying to us, I have come to do something for you.

[17 : 47] You see, the story of Christianity is not about what you can do for God, but it's all about what God has done for you. It's a story of grace.

It's not about our efforts or our works, but the wonderful story of God's intervention into our lives. So what has God done for you?

Well, first, God fulfills our need in the risen Jesus. God fulfills our need in the risen Jesus. Verse 5, the angel said to the woman, to these two Marys, do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.

Jesus, the women are looking for Jesus, but they're looking for a crucified Jesus. They're coming to remember a dead Jesus.

The best that they can hope for as they arrive at the tomb is to somehow keep his memory alive, reminders of things he had said and did and how they had served him.

[19 : 02] But now, instead of grieving over a dead Jesus, they received news of a living Jesus. Verse 6, he is not here. He has risen.

Now, let's think about that for a minute. You see, our problem is, our expectations are not high enough. They're far too low.

The women never expected a risen Jesus. their expectations weren't high enough. They were too low. You see, unlike them in some ways, we invest in things and people.

But the problem is, death comes along and destroys our dreams and steals away the people that we love. We say to ourselves as we invest in things, if only I could have, what would you have?

If only I could have a mortgage free house. Is that what you hope for today? Or are you hoping for better health?

[20 : 13] Or maybe you're just looking for that true and special friend. Maybe life is hectic and the one thing you want is more time, more time to me.

if I had, now you fill in the blank, what you want this morning, then if I had it, my life would be content.

But here's the problem, death ruins everything. We either die or those we love die. And the things that we long for don't last.

You see, we set our expectations too low. But there is someone who is better and greater, who will fulfil our needs.

Rather than a dead Jesus, we're given a risen and living Jesus. One who's never going to disappoint you, and one who's never ever going to leave you.

[21 : 14] He can't be taken from you, and you can't be taken from him. Jesus will forever meet us in our needs.

well, how can we be so sure? Well, we must believe his promise. Look what the angel said in verse 6. He's not here, he has risen, just as he said.

Three times Matthew records for us that Jesus specifically told them that he was going to die and suffer and on the third day rise again.

Three times. The women heard it, but they never believed his words. And now as the angel comes to him and says, he's risen, he's not here, just as he said, it all begins to click and make sense.

His words are true. I can trust what he says. Jesus does what he says. He will not fail you or forsake you.

[22 : 18] He will provide sufficient grace in your weakness. He will strengthen you in every crisis. He will fill you with peace in every anxiety.

He will comfort you in your grief. He will be your rock in every fear. He will be your joy in your suffering. He will be your hope in death.

He will fulfill your need today, tomorrow, and into the future. Never settle for anything less.

Don't have your expectations down here in things and people. Set your expectations in the risen, living Jesus who has conquered death.

So what has God done for you? He fulfills your every need in the risen Jesus. Second, he secures your future in the risen Jesus.

[23 : 28] Listen to what God said to the angel. Verse 7. Then go quickly, tell his disciples, he has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee.

There you will see him. Again, another promise. Jesus is risen, go, you will see him. Can they trust the promise?

Well, again, look at verse 8. The women hurried away from the tomb, afraid, yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly, Jesus met them.

Greetings. They came to him, glass, clasped his feet, and worshipped him. Now, what happens at that moment?

What the women heard and experienced as they heard the angel's voice, and as they saw and touched the risen Jesus, shows us what we too can expect.

[24 : 38] You see, God is telling us the same thing. Jesus has gone ahead of you. He has died, he is risen, and you will see him.

It's what gives us sure and certain hope. The same words that are spoken to the women are spoken to us today. He's gone ahead of you.

He's risen. You will see him. How do we know? Well, have a look at 1 Peter with me in your Bibles.

1 Peter. Somebody's got a page number. I'm sorry I haven't been prepared there and got it ready.

1 Peter chapter 1, if anyone has it. 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 Peter chapter 1.

[25 : 44] Here the New Testament authors explain for us what the resurrection means, how they understood Jesus' promises of great hope.

Let's read it. 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 3. praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and look and into an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade this inheritance is kept in heaven for you who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation let's go back to chapter 28 Matthew you see the resurrection of Jesus secures our future did you see what it said we are kept for heaven and heaven is kept for us a double security by faith in the promises of Jesus his life becomes our life where Jesus is gone we will follow

Jesus is risen from the dead he's gone ahead of you you will see him that will be true for you and for me as we trust in him our death is not the end it is only a step through the door into his eternal kingdom forever and forever so he fulfills our need he secures our future and he gives us a purpose listen to what Jesus says to the women verse 10 Jesus said to them do not be afraid go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee there they will see me the women have been commissioned with the greatest news ever go tell the disciples they think I'm dead they don't think I'm going to rise but go tell them that they're going to see me tell them that I've been raised from the dead tell them that God has done something for you that he fulfills your need and secures your future you see rather than their serving coming to an end they've been given a new purpose in life to announce the sure and certain hope of the resurrection you see all of us here today so desperately want our lives to matter we want what we do to count that somehow when I die that what I gave my life to will mean something that we want to leave our children an inheritance or we want to be known to everybody as a good neighbour we want to leave the world a better place fairer and more equal and it's all very noble to want these things but the problem is within a few years of our death our life will be forgotten who we are and what we do will not be remembered we will be replaced by someone else or something else and in fact the Bible tells us this world that we live in today is all going to come to an end but the risen Jesus comes and he gives us a new purpose he calls us to invest our life in his resurrection to tell the story of the resurrection because what God has done in Jesus has an eternal effect it lasts forever and forever our life is not about becoming the best person or the best anything the greatest legacy that we could ever leave our family the greatest thing we could ever do for our neighbour anything that we could do is to share the certain hope of the resurrection and that's what the women have been called to do and if we are Christians today this is our purpose as we go to work as we go about our life to declare and proclaim that Jesus is risen so the resurrection tells us that God has done something for you he fulfills your needs he secures your future and he gives you a purpose so we look at the witness we've looked at the meaning but what about this whole business of the religious leaders and the guards that we read about in the text because it seems like that some people just don't want the resurrection to be true

look at the religious leaders here with me they remember what Jesus had said before his death of course they don't believe it they're just really concerned of what might happen if the body of Jesus goes missing so they go to Pilate don't they look at verse 63 chapter 27 verse 63 so they said we remember that while Jesus was still alive that deceiver said after three days I will rise again so give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day otherwise his disciples may come steal the body and tell the people that he's been raised from the dead this deception will be the worst than the first so Pilate gives the orders he sends some guards there's more than one guard here he sends their guard they seal up the tomb as best that they can everybody's in place case closed there can be no resurrection story but what happens

Jesus does rise and the guards as we saw in chapter 28 verse 4 are witnesses to the fact that it did happen and what do they do look at verse 11 while the women were on their way some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priest everything that had happened you wouldn't believe it we were on guard and an angel appeared and he rolled back this tomb and the body there was no body verse 12 when the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan because they couldn't have arisen Jesus could they they gave the soldiers a large sum of money telling them you are to say his disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep the thing is they know it's true so why do they tell the lies why the cover up why bribe the soldiers who are witnesses why do the religious leaders not want the resurrection to be true and why is it today that people do not want the resurrection to be true why do people come up with all crazy ideas he didn't die they went to the wrong tomb the body was stolen no it wasn't stolen they made it up why do people not want the resurrection to be true well let me give you one reason

[34 : 16] Jesus is God do you see what it says at the end of verse 64 they said the last deception will be worse than the first Jesus' claim all through his ministry was that he was God that he was God's Messiah God man and they can't cope with that they can't cope that Jesus is God so if the resurrection is true it proves that what Jesus claimed about himself is true that he is God his resurrection proves that he's the son of God with absolute power and supreme authority and we struggle with that just as the religious leaders does because it challenges our desire to rule our own lives you see we prefer a dead

Jesus who has no claim over our life than a living Jesus who commands our devotion and allegiance we much prefer a dead Jesus that has no claim over our life than a living Jesus who commands our devotion and allegiance you see if the resurrection is true then it confronts our challenge it confronts us and challenges us over our desire to rule my life that's why people don't want the resurrection to be true in contrast look at the women verse 9 suddenly Jesus met them and they clasped his feet and worshipped him their actions reflect what's in their heart they bow before

Jesus they grasp his feet it's an action of worship it's both one of submission they are saying to Jesus all my life belongs to you and one of devotion I will love you above all else I'll give my life to you and I will love you submission and devotion the resurrection proves Jesus is God and they worship him the challenge to us is do we worship the risen Jesus do we submit to him do we devote our lives to him do we bow before him and say my life is yours I will love you above all else he's the risen one let's worship let's pray our father god we thank you for this account in matthew this true story this true event of Jesus risen from the dead fulfilling our needs securing our future giving us life today purpose and meaning thank you for all that you have done and we pray and ask that we would be a people who worship you with all of our life in Jesus name amen we're going to sing together for some people it might be new what is our hope in life and death Christ alone Christ alone let's stand together as we sing to hear

Thank you.