

# God's Easter Surprise

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[0:00] And if you would open up your Bibles to Matthew 28, 1 through 10, it's in your pew Bible, it's on page 992. And what we're going to find out is that this passage is full of surprises.

Speaking of surprises. Life is full of surprises.

Some unpleasant, some pleasant. Pink slips. Divorce papers. Blue and red flashing lights in your rearview mirror.

Hypothetically speaking. Cancer diagnosis. Betrayal. And then of course, stepping barefoot on a Lego in the dead of night.

Unpleasant surprises. Do I have an amen on that last one? You know it. Then there are the pleasant surprises. The unexpected bonus from work.

[1:09] Then there's this out of the blue encouraging phone call from a friend who had no idea what you're going through, but the timing was impeccable. That's a pleasant surprise.

You bring your car into the mechanic. It's making a weird noise. He says to you, it's just five bucks. That's a pleasant surprise. Miracle. It's a pleasant surprise. Miracle. Miracle is right.

Parents of teenagers. Your teenager cleans up after themselves without being asked. It's a pleasant surprise. Teens, I got you. When your parent gives you \$20 just because.

Pleasant surprise. Life's full of surprises of all kinds. But how would you classify Jesus Christ?

Would you classify him as an unpleasant surprise or a pleasant surprise?

Maybe if you're like, well, I gave him a shot. And he didn't do what I wanted him to do.

[2:23] And so you might not classify him as an unpleasant surprise. It might just be disappointment. Maybe in your mind, Jesus represents some kind of oppressive structure.

It's not a pleasant surprise. Maybe you're not disappointed with Jesus. You're just undecided. You don't quite know what to think about him yet.

You're curious. But to say that you're surprised either way, you're not there yet. So whether you're disappointed with Jesus or undecided about Jesus, I am really glad that you're here this morning. Because what we're about to see in this historical account of the resurrection of Jesus is a surprise for you. And you're going to need to make a decision of what we see in the pages of this book is true or false.

There's some in the room, many in the room, who have been pleasantly surprised by Jesus. More like shocked that God would become a man, pay the sin debt we owed with his own death, and then be raised from the dead as Lord of all.

[3:49] And we get to live for him now. That's shockingly good news for us.

And so when we hear he is risen and we say he is risen indeed, we say it from our toes because we believe it to be true. It informs our entire life.

You've been rescued. And now you live for him. And it has been a surprisingly good thing. In fact, you'd say Jesus is God's most pleasant surprise.

With all these said, let's look at now Matthew 28, 1-10. I'll read it. And after I read it, I'm going to walk us through it.

And then I'm going to kind of bring it to a point and say, hey, what is this claiming and what does that mean for us? Hear God's word. Chapter 28, 1-10.

[4:50] Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold,

there was a great earthquake.

For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen.

As he said, come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead. And behold, he's going before you to Galilee.

There you will see him. See, I have told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, greetings.

[5:53] And they came up and took hold of him, his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee.

And there they will see me. May God bless the reading of his word. So let's walk through this historic account. If you're not familiar with the Bible, we're looking at a gospel.

And what a gospel is, it's basically a New Testament biography of Jesus. It's historical. It's accurate. It's reliable. And it's written by an eyewitness.

Matthew, who wrote this, would witness the resurrected Jesus himself. And so let's start in this account in the setting of the scene in verse 1.

Now, after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. Matthew, who wrote this, is being very clear. He's adamant that he wants you and me to know as readers what day of the week this is.

[7:00] And the reason why is because of something Jesus said. Now, if you're not familiar with the kind of Jewish tradition and understanding of a week, the Sabbath was their Saturday.

So if you remember Genesis chapter 1, God created all things in six days and on the seventh he rested. And so from there, the Jewish people would observe that seventh day as the last day of the week in which they would rest from their labor.

But why is Matthew telling us this? Why does he want us to know that it's now the first day of the week? It's Sunday, not Saturday. Well, it's something that Jesus had said repeatedly.

In fact, he predicted something. More like prophesied something. So in Matthew 16, 17 and 20, Jesus tells his disciples, he says to them, when we get to Jerusalem, I'm going to be handed over to the elders and chief priests of the Jews.

And they will kill me. And then on the third day, I'll be raised. Repeatedly. And so what Matthew is doing here is he's saying, it's that day.

[8:19] It's the third day. It's the day that he was talking about. Now, the chief priests and the elders who were enemies of Jesus, they knew of these prophecies as well.

That's why in Matthew 27, 62 through 66, they deploy a unit of soldiers to the grave to seal the stone on the tomb and say, off limits to everybody.

They're trying to keep people out of the tomb from the disciples from stealing the body. So they knew about these prophecies. If you're not familiar with this account, three days earlier, Jesus Christ was crucified on a Roman cross.

He was dead and his corpse was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. And if you're familiar with the story, you know that all of his male disciples, they either betrayed him, denied him, or deserted him.

But there was a handful of female followers of Jesus that were at the crucifixion that they saw where his body was laid. And two of them, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, are spoken of in verse 1.

[9:38] They are on their way to the tomb. We know from other gospel accounts that they're on their way to the tomb in order to finish anointing Jesus' body for burial.

So let me ask you this. If you were in the minds of these two Marys, what were you expecting to find when you reached the tomb?

You would be expecting to find the corpse of Jesus Christ. Do you know why? Because we all know that dead people who've been dead for days stay dead.

They're expecting to find the corpse of Jesus. But what they were expecting, what actually happened, was a surprise.

It's something else actually happened. And we start picking it up in verses 2 through 7. There's this surprise. Mary, Mary, we're not expecting this.

[10:52] An angelic surprise. And there's a number of things I want you to see that make this so surprising. The first is the entrance. It is a seismic entrance by this angel.

And behold, there was a great earthquake. An earthquake precedes the arrival of this angel.

That's a big deal. I didn't walk into this building and there was an earthquake this morning. But let's not miss why this angel is here.

He's there to make the most surprising announcement in the history of the world. You know, any kind of human event with seismic activity around it is going to be extraordinary and memorable.

Wouldn't you agree? Three days earlier, remember Jesus is hanging on the cross. He says, Eloi, Eloi, Lameis Epictone. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[11:58] He gives up his spirit. The temple, the curtain is torn in two from top to bottom. And then there's an earthquake. He breathes his last.

And there's an earthquake. Could it be that here in Matthew chapter 28 verse 2, that that earthquake is at the breathing of his first?

And with that comes the attending of an angel to announce that he, well, something surprising has happened.

This angel arrives with seismic fanfare. And he rolls away the stone, just blows through the seal. He doesn't care who seals on this.

And then he sits on the top of the stone, which was massive. No man or men in this room could have moved it on their own. It's kind of...

[13:11] Sitting on the stone? Does anybody else experience kind of like, boy, that seems kind of playful. That's kind of lighthearted.

He knows something. He knows something. In verse 3, we see his shocking appearance.

His appearance like lightning. His clothing was like white like snow. He's obviously not from around those parts. He is adorned in even emitting a heavenly brilliance.

This is a visitor from heaven. I'm guessing Mary and Mary, when they were looking at him, seated on that rock, they were kind of squinting.

It's that kind of brilliance. Notice the stunning effect in verse 4. Remember, the guards who were there.

[14:09] Remember, it was the elders and the chief priests who sent those guards there to protect the tomb from being entered. Well, they see the angel. They tremble in fear and they fall down as though dead.

Stunned. Has anybody seen the videos of the goats? Some kind of goat gets kind of all excited or afraid. It kind of freezes up and falls over, stunned as though dead.

These guards had been in the presence of a brilliant angel and they are stunned and fall over dead. These guards will later in verses 11 through 15 go to the elders and chief priests and they will bear eyewitness to what they have seen and the chief priest will pay them off and then they'll give them another story to spread.

It's a seismic entrance. It's striking appearance, stunning effect, but this is all serving a spectacular announcement.

[15:24] This angel speaks and he just ignores the guards and speaks to the women. And the first thing that he says, he speaks calm to them because surely they were terrified too.

He says, do not be afraid. He knows why they're there. He knows that they have come to see the crucified corpse of Jesus.

He tells them, I know why you're here. You're here to see Jesus, him who was crucified. All heaven knows he was crucified. But in verse 6, he moves from calming them to this spectacular claim.

He's not here. For he has risen. What you need to understand is that this angel is God's explanation for the empty tomb.

This angel is a messenger from God to make this announcement. That's why at the end of verse 7 you see him say, see, I've told you. He's delivered the mail. But the reason for the empty tomb, according to this angel from God, is that Jesus has been risen.

[16:45] Just as he said. And that just as he said is to stir our thoughts and memories to those prophecies that Jesus had spoken of.

Of him being handed over, killed, and on the third day raised from the dead. You see, what's going on here, according to this angel, is that Jesus has died.

And that he's been raised in fulfillment of his own prophetic claims. It demonstrates that Jesus is quite unique, to say the least.

And so what's going on here is this surprise. Go and see him for yourself. It's an empty grave. It's an empty tomb.

There's one scholar that, I'm going to paraphrase him. He says, the angel didn't roll away the stone to let Jesus out. The angel rolled away the stone to let the eyewitnesses in.

[18:02] And he gives them the explanation. This is unbelievable. It's a surprise. Dead people who've been dead for days are supposed to stay dead.

And so here we have this claim, which is at the very center of Christianity. That Jesus, who was crucified, was raised supernaturally, miraculously, bodily from the dead.

It is the core center of the Christian faith. Which means this. If you do not believe that, you're not a follower of Jesus. It's central.

You take that out of the Christian faith and you no longer have a Christian faith. It's critical. Now, for those of you who are disappointed with Jesus, if Jesus is alive, it means he's bigger than your disappointments.

That's what that means. And if you're undecided about Jesus, you're going to need to decide whether or not this angelic explanation of the empty tomb is actually true or not.

[19:14] Of whether Jesus has been raised from the dead. But if you are like, you hear this and you're like, yes and amen, he has risen.

This for us who are followers of Jesus, it like satisfying confirms, like it's all true. This isn't made up. He is who he claimed to be.

In verse 7, this angel then tells Mary and Mary to go and tell. Go. Tell. Go tell the disciples.

He has risen from the dead. And go tell them to go to Galilee where they shall see him. Where you shall see him.

One of the things that we're kind of leaving this scene realizing is, at this point, what do you think Mary and Mary were expecting?

[20:16] What do you think, having encountered this angel who says Jesus has been raised from the dead, now go, tell his disciples he's been risen from the dead, and you all will see him in Galilee.

What do you think they're thinking at this point? They're thinking, no way is he raised from the dead. We're going to see him in Galilee? We've got to go tell the disciples. And so right at this point, they're expecting something.

But here comes another surprise. The Jesus surprise. In verses 8 through 10, these women actually encounter the risen Jesus.

So they departed quickly from the tomb in verse 8. With fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. They are not expecting what is about to happen.

They hightail it out of the tomb. And Matthew tells us it's with fear and great joy. What's the fear all about? The fear is having been in the presence in a spectacular angel making this declaration that Jesus has risen from the dead.

[21:33] If that was us, it would have been a seismic rattling of our worlds. It would have been overwhelming processing all that. Well, this is new.

What does this mean? But greater than their fear is their joy. Could it be that Jesus is actually alive? Could it be that all these things that he said are actually true?

That it's all coming together? This great joy in anticipating, seeing Jesus is the stuff of hope. Real hope.

Real hope. He did say that. And then it happens.

Verse 9. They're running to tell the disciples and Jesus meets them on the way. The very first eyewitnesses, human eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matthew are these two women.

[22:45] Now look at their response in verse 9. Seeing the risen Jesus, they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.

They draw near and they must have fallen down because they are seizing his feet and they're not imagined feet. They're not hallucinated feet.

They're not visions of feet. They grabbed onto the real bodily resurrected feet of the risen Jesus and the reason why they are at his feet is to worship him.

God in the flesh, risen from the dead. His resurrection means that he's greater than death.

He's bigger than death. His resurrection means the death of death. It's what we were singing about moments ago. His resurrection demonstrates he is the demolition man of death.

[23:52] Blows up death. In Revelation chapter 1, there's this portrayal of the risen, reigning, and radiant Jesus. And he's got a key chain.

And on that key chain are the keys to death and Hades. He has authority over death. It doesn't have authority over him, which means he has authority over our deaths.

Now you can't help but notice that Mary and Mary respond quite differently to the risen Jesus than to that brilliant angel. They didn't fall down and worship the angel.

They did fall down and worship the risen Christ. It's very instructive for us.

What is the most appropriate response to encountering the risen Christ? It's to fall down and worship him.

[25:05] In verse 10, Jesus speaks and these four words, just like the angel who speaks a word of calm, Jesus speaks a word of calm, do not be afraid.

These four words coming from the mouth of the resurrected Jesus Christ are probably the four greatest words any sinner could ever hear.

Don't be afraid. Do not be afraid. He's speaking these words to Mary and Mary. Why shouldn't they be afraid? afraid. Because He's not a threat.

This Jesus, risen Jesus standing before them had died the death they had deserved for their sin guilt before God.

They don't need to be afraid. They don't need to fear Him. They don't need to fear their Savior in His resurrected glory. He gave His life for theirs.

[26:22] Do you remember that book by C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*? After Aslan, the lion, who is a Christ type. After He's raised from the dead and that great stone table is put asunder.

Do you remember who He appears to? Two female witnesses, Susan and Lucy. And do you remember what He does?

In His resurrected glory? He gently invites them near. This risen Jesus, speaking, do not be afraid, to these two female disciples, this is the same Jesus who in Matthew 11 says, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, who are burdened with sin.

Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Rest for your soul.

And then He gives a reason. For I am gentle and lowly of heart. This Jesus who is speaking gently, do not be afraid, is this gentle and lowly Savior now risen from the dead.

[27:58] And that claim, that invitation stands. Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

I will give you peace. Peace. There's this speaking of calm, but He also made a claim.

It's maybe not the claim that the angel made. Did you notice, I skipped over it, verse 9. And behold, Jesus met them and said, greetings.

It's a surprising greeting because it's basically like this. It's like seeing a friend you've seen two days ago and you're like, hey, good to see you. Hey, good to see you again.

It's almost shockingly kind of like underwhelming. Because you're thinking Jesus at this point would be like, surprise! Or boo!

[29:04] And He's like, good to see you again. These two women were not expecting to see Jesus again, but Jesus was fully expectant to see these two women again, and that's why there's the leisurely greetings.

Good to see you. greetings. And with that greetings is a claim. I'm alive. I'm here. I'm present. I'm not dead. I've won. Greetings. It's the claim that that He's alive. And then He too gives a charge. In verse 10, He says, go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and they will see me there. Go and tell my brothers. Hmm, interesting. I'm not sure if I would at this point want to call the men that had denied me and deserted me, I'm not sure if I'd want to call them brothers. But Jesus does. [30:22] Do you know why? Because He too had died for their desertion and their denials. And He's gentle and lowly.

And He's telling Mary, Mary, go tell my brothers, these men I love, these men I've I've paid for their sins. Tell them they don't need to fear. Tell my brothers, the family of faith that I have purchased with my blood, go tell them to go to Galilee.

What's up with Galilee? Galilee was where it all started three years earlier. Galilee is where Jesus had called these disciples to Himself.

And now, it's a restart. Jesus is going to meet them in Galilee and He is in His risen glory going to recommission them as His witnesses to go make disciples.

And the witnesses are witnesses of His resurrection. because in verses 17, 16 and 17 of chapter 28, the 11 see the resurrected Jesus too and worship Him.

[31:45] Some took a little longer than others. But they now witness the resurrection of Jesus Christ crucified, buried, raised, and now they're going to go and tell, make disciples of the nations.

His calm, claim, charge, Jesus standing in their midst. This is the Jesus surprise.

How about that for an encounter on the way? This passage is full of surprises. There's an angelic surprise, there's a surprise announcement, and then there's the surprise of Jesus Himself.

The claim is very simple. The claim of this passage it's making is Jesus is alive. And for us today, this is what it means. Jesus is still alive, and that needs to change our lives.

Jesus went into the tomb dead and came out of the tomb alive as God's most pleasant surprise to all of humankind weighed down and burdened by sin.

[32:55] surprise. Jesus is alive, and He is your only salvation.

Now, you may be asking, wait, Jesus is alive? Where is He now? Well, according to the Bible, He's at the right hand of God enthroned on high in heaven.

That's where He is. Well, okay. You might ask, well, what is He doing? Well, the risen Christ, seated at the right hand of God enthroned, He's building His church.

Right now, all around the globe, the risen Christ is saving sinners from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Based upon His death and resurrection, He's calling them to Himself, and He is gathering together a new holy people called the church.

And He's interceding for us. He's strengthening us. He's opening doors for us to witness. That's what He's doing right now.

[34:05] Oh, by the way, He's also being worshipped by myriads of angels in His glory. And He's waiting.

Waiting for what? He's waiting for the next thing. What's the next thing? The next thing is His return. The next thing is when He comes back, it's His final surprise.

He talked about it as a day has been set by the Father in which He will return like a thief in the night. Nobody knows. He's going to come back and when He comes back, He's going to make all wrongs right.

He's going to judge all and He's going to recreate the heavens and the earth as far as the curse is found. He's alive today and He's our only salvation.

In this invitation stands, come to me. All you who are weary and heavy laden with sin, I'll give you rest.

[35:24] The real question is what's the next thing for you? For those of you who have never responded to the risen Jesus, maybe you've been disappointed with Him or you're undecided about Him.

What's next for you is if this is true and you're like, yes, that's the best explanation. It's true. I believe.

Fall at His feet and worship Him. That's what's next. Romans 10, 9 says this, if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, you will be

saved.

And so, if Jesus is alive, call out to Him. Confess Him as your Lord. Receive the salvation He alone gives.

And just to be clear, when you become a Christian, you sign over the deed of your entire life. Gloriously, wonderfully signing over the deed of your life.

[36:38] So, if He's alive, call upon Him and be saved. and then join us, this ragtag group of people, Christ the King Church, as we together follow Jesus.

Come follow Him with us. For those of you who may have initially responded to Jesus Christ, but have lost sight of Him, maybe you have gotten caught up with the temporary things of this age, distracted by the timeless treasure of Christ from Him.

Jesus went into the tomb dead and came out alive to claim all of you for Himself. To give all of yourself to Him in response to His glorious sacrifice and resurrection.

salvation. So the call on you is to turn back to Jesus fully. Join us as we follow Him.

You know what your next step is? Come back! It's next Sunday. Gather with us. Journey with us as we seek to follow Jesus with all that we are. Now for those of you in the room, which are many, when I say He is risen, you say, He is risen indeed, and you're like, yes.

[38:14] You're trying to treasure Jesus with all you got. You're trying to obey Jesus and all that He commands. You're seeking to magnify Him among all people. You're wanting to belong to Jesus with all of His blood-bought beloved.

You're seeking to love other people. You're trying to be a faithful follower of Jesus. well, I've got a couple things to say to you in light of this surprise. This risen Jesus is worth all of who you are. He's worth your everything. Don't give up. Give Him everything. everything. He's alive.

And His resurrection is a declaration that all of your sins have been forgiven. Live for Him. For those of you who are experiencing some frustration and trying to help other people live for Jesus, your labor is not in vain.

The risen one is at work in your labor. Don't give up. And then there's this one last surprise.

[39:35] Just as the first Easter was a surprise revelation of the risen Christ that was prophesied of, there's another revelation salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is a surprise, will be a surprise fulfillment, and that is His second coming. When He comes back, the Apostle Paul talks about it as this.

We wait for our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He's alive, brothers and sisters.

sinner. And we are one day closer to seeing Him face to face, our risen King. Press on.

Don't give up. It's all true. Life is full of surprises. Some unpleasant, some pleasant.

[40:40] The resurrection of Jesus is God's most pleasant surprise of all time. He is risen. Let me pray.

Risen Jesus, you are risen and reigning, and you are at work all around the world gathering for yourself, the people that you have purchased with your blood.

We are so grateful that you have come for us. It's our joy to follow you, to know that you are alive, to know that you are at work, to know that you see us, to know that you're interceding for us, strengthening us, giving us hope.

You are our hope. There's no one like you, and we entrust ourselves to you. In your name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.