

The King of the Kingdom is Alive!

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[0 : 0 0] Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for your word which points us to your son and particularly today to his resurrection. And Father, we ask now that you would help us to understand your word, but more than that, to live in light of it.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, there are some inventions and events in history which have changed lives. For example, the day that my son got this thing on the next slide, it changed his life forever.

It's changed our lives somewhat as well. But more seriously, that was the amendment to the sermon this morning. For those eight people who've heard it, that was it. That's the change. But there are more serious inventions in history that have changed life as we know. For the next slide, the printing press, explosion in education, in the Bible. We still have books today because of that invention. It changed life as we knew it.

Or the next slide, which could do away with the printing press altogether, the computer and the internet. It changed life as we knew it. From the way we use credit cards to get money out or pay for shopping, to pay pass and all the rest of it, to computers in our cars, our phones and our homes.

[1 : 1 9] For many families and businesses, we've become reliant on these computers and internet. In fact, I said to the kids we were going camping a little while ago and their first question was, is there going to be internet?

For their iPods, the answer was no. Of course, it's not just inventions that have changed life as we know. It's also events in history, sometimes for the worse. So on the next slide, the atomic bombs that dropped on Japan in the end of World War II changed life as we knew it.

It led to the creation of the United Nations, among other things, and ushered in the nuclear age, which we still live in today. If you don't believe it, just turn on the news and see what's happening in North Korea.

Or on the next slide, take September 11, when the planes crashed onto the Twin Towers. That ushered in a new age of terrorism, in the West at least. I think there was already terrorism in the East.

But in the West, and we're still seeing the effects today, London, Paris, and so on. But today we remember another event in history that also changed life, as we know it, for the better, which of course is the resurrection of Jesus.

[2 : 2 7] It has changed life as we know it, not just by giving us a day, a year, where we can pig out on chocolate, of course, but it's changed life and brings us comfort and a challenge, as we'll see.

But first, let's consider how the resurrection changes, sorry, Matthew's look at the reality of the resurrection, which is point one in your outlines and chapter 27, verse 62 in your Bibles.

Have a look there. And 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 alive, Jesus that is, that deceiver said, after three days I will rise again. And 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 people that he has been raised from the dead. And this last deception will be worse than the first. Notice here that even the Pharisees and the chief priests realized that news of a resurrection, even a fake resurrection, will change everything.

[3 : 3 1] They say this last deception, a resurrection, will be worse than the first, that Jesus was the Christ or the King. In other words, they know that news of a resurrection will have a greater impact than even Jesus's miracles and teaching.

And so they plot to prevent a resurrection by ensuring the disciples cannot steal the body and claim that he's risen from the dead. There is a sad irony here, though, I think.

The very day they go to Pilate is actually the Sabbath day, a day of rest for the Jews. You see, in verse 62, it says the day after preparation day. Preparation day was Friday.

So the day after is, of course, Saturday, which was the Sabbath for the Jews, where they rested from work. And this Sabbath day here, this time of the year, was also the Passover, where they remembered God's work of salvation for them from Egypt.

And so on the very day when they were to rest from work and remember God's salvation of them, they actually did the work of plotting to prevent God's salvation for them.

[4 : 39] See the irony? And at first glance, it seems to have worked. Just look at how Pilate responds in verse number 65. Take a guard, Pilate answered.

Go make the tomb as secure as you know how. So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on it, a stone, and posting the guard, it says.

So no doubt these Jewish leaders went to bed that Saturday night feeling rather satisfied with themselves. You know, they'd had a big lamb roast for dinner, for Passover dinner, a bit of wine.

They'd secured the tomb, sealed it shut, even placed some guards there.

In their minds, there's no way those disciples are getting to that body. There's no way there's going to be a resurrection. Of course, it's a rather pathetic plot because look at what happens next.

Chapter 28, verse 1. I notice here that Matthew begins in verse 16.

[6 : 01] This one with a reference to the day of the week, just like he did in verse 62. And so I suspect we're meant to read these two paragraphs particularly together. And here it's dawn on Sunday, so it's less than 24 hours since the Pharisees went to Pilate yesterday to secure the tomb.

And what happens? Well, an angel of the Lord simply cracks open the seal, rolls back the stone, and sits on it as though it's all a piece of cake. And the guards?

Well, not only does the angel of the Lord cause the earth to quake, he also causes the guards to quake. Literally, a similar word. And so they faint and fall as though dead.

So much for a plot to prevent a resurrection. Of course, the real reason it's a pathetic plot is because Jesus has actually already risen. Have a look at verse 5 to 7.

You see, Jesus rose even before the stone was rolled away.

[7 : 25] I take it as soon as it clicked over to the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, just as he said he would rise on the third day. You see, if Jesus had paid for sins at the cross, then death could no longer hold him down.

Now, I realize it's a bit hard to kind of understand this conceptually. So I did this little video to try and represent it visually. So on the next slide, here's my arm. This is going to represent sin.

So here we are. And sin leads to death. Here we are, leading to the hand of death. All right. Now, here's Jesus.

He takes our sin upon himself, which means he has to die. And so there is Jesus in the hand of death. And he descended to the dead, as we said in the creed a moment ago.

But the thing is, if Jesus paid for our sins at the cross, then he's dealt with them. I had to skip it over there. And that means death has no longer got any hold over him.

[8 : 25] Death has no power. And so one, two, three, four. Ah, there we are. He rose from the dead. Now, it's a bit cheesy, I realize.

But the point is, if you deal with sin at the cross on that Good Friday, then death no longer has any power over him. So he had to rise from the dead.

You see, you deal with sin, then you deal with death. So sealing a tomb and placing a guard on it really was a pathetic attempt to stop the resurrection.

For if Jesus paid for our sins at the cross, then he was rising no matter what. And God would make sure it happened, whether they sealed the tomb or not. But if Jesus rose before the stone was rolled away, then why did the angel still roll the stone away?

Well, to help prove that he'd risen from the dead. Notice verse 6 in your Bibles again, how the angel tells the woman to come and see the place where he lay.

[9 : 36] In other words, the angel says, look at the evidence. Just in case an earthquake and an angel rolling away a stone in front of you are not enough, check out the tomb as well.

It's empty. The empty tomb was evidence of the resurrection for those women back then, just as it still is evidence for us here today.

Of course, despite the evidence, there are different reactions to the resurrection. Which brings us to point 2 in your outlines and verse number 8 in your Bibles. Have a look at verse 8. Now, before we look at the reactions of the women, notice another piece of evidence that Matthew gives us.

It's the physical appearance of Jesus. And notice how the women not only see Jesus, but can also grasp his feet. In other words, this is a physical body that he has.

This is not a ghost or a hallucination. And for us who cannot grasp his physical feet, we have these eyewitness accounts. Not just of the women, but of the disciples.

[11:05] Because in verse 10, we're told that Jesus will meet the disciples and they will see him. And then at the end of the chapter, that happens. And one of those disciples was Matthew, who wrote the book we're reading tonight.

What's more, an eyewitness testimony is still counted as good evidence, even in law courts today. And so we have these eyewitness accounts of the resurrection.

What's more, the very fact that the first eyewitnesses were women makes it even better evidence, actually. Because in ancient Judaism, sadly, women did not count as witnesses.

You needed two men in ancient Judaism. So if Matthew the Jew was making all this up, he definitely would have used two men.

So that people in his day would have believed his story. But the very fact that two women were the first witnesses, it not only shows us that God thinks women are important, but that Matthew was not making this up.

[12:12] Or take verse 17, just skip ahead for a moment to verse 17. When Matthew says the disciples worshipped Jesus, but some doubted it was Jesus. Again, if you were making this story up, would you really include that fact?

I mean, if you're trying to sell something, you don't point out the problems, do you? I heard a true story of a man and his wife who were trying to buy a house in Sydney, near the airport.

And on a website, they saw a house advertised. And the catchphrase or the title was, A Beautiful Bargain. And so they looked at the picture. It looked pretty good. So they went and checked it out. And they had a look around the house. And it was a beautiful four-bedroom house in Sydney. And it was a bargain price. And so the man and his wife said, There's got to be something wrong with this. And so they asked the real estate agent what was wrong with it. And just as the real estate agent was about to speak, a huge Boeing 747 came screaming across the top of the roof. And then minutes later, another one and another.

[13:16] That was what was wrong with the house. Now, the real estate agent who was trying to sell the house could have put on his website as the title, Four Bedrooms Plus Flight Path.

But you don't point out the problems if you're trying to sell something, do you? And if Matthew was trying to sell this, he wouldn't point out all the problems, would he? But he did. Why?

Well, because he's not trying to sell a story he's invented. He's recording history he has witnessed. And there's actually bags more historical evidence for the resurrection.

Bags of it. But here Matthew lists all these reactions to the resurrection as though this is what he now wants us to focus on. So in verse 8, the women are afraid yet also filled with joy.

For Jesus is alive. It's good news. Or in verse 9, they worshipped Jesus, which is a big deal for Jews. Jews were famous for worshipping only one God.

[14:18] But it seems they're beginning to grasp that somehow Jesus was God, the Son. And in verses 10 to 11, they obey Jesus. Jesus by going to bring this joyous news to his disciples.

You see, every verse here shows us a reaction to the resurrection. And these positive reactions of joy, worship and obedience are now contrasted with the negative reactions of denial and destruction.

Have a look at 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. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, here they go again, 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.

If this report gets the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble because guards could lose their lives for not guarding properly. 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. Here Matthew begins by referring to the women again, as though we're meant to read this scene in light of the one just before, to see the contrast in reaction.

[15:44] And here the two guards, they're not Christians by any stretch of the imagination. They go to the Jewish leaders and they give their eyewitness testimony about what happened.

And yet the Jewish leaders don't even check it out for themselves, do they? Instead, they just flat out deny it. It's a sheer stubborn denial of the truth in face of eyewitness evidence.

And yet this still happens today, does it not? And despite bags of evidence for the resurrection, people simply refuse to accept the truth and prefer to deny it, or at least not think about it.

But these Pharisees do more than just deny the truth. They seek to destroy the truth because they come up with another plan. This time to bribe the guards to say the disciples stole the body while they were sleeping.

Of course, it's a bit silly because if the guards were asleep, they've got no idea who stole the body. What's more, this plot involves the guards telling everyone that they're hopeless at their jobs. The guards were supposed to stay awake and guard.

[16:50] And so the Pharisees have to come up with a large amount of money to make it worth the guards' while. And sadly, these Jewish leaders who were supposed to teach God's truth are the very ones who not only deny it, but then seek to destroy it by bribery.

And again, people are doing this today. From those in the Victorian government who have sought to remove CRE from schools, sought to change the Discrimination Act last year to work against Christians only, no other religious group, just against Christians.

To those in Egypt last Sunday who bombed two churches as Christians gathered to remember Jesus' riding into Jerusalem as king. There will always be people who not only deny the truth despite the evidence, but will also seek to destroy the truth, oppose it.

And yet, the truth will prevail. Why? Well, because the resurrection declares Jesus is Lord, who will be with us and will ensure the truth continues through us.

And that brings us to our final point, point three in your outlines in verse 16 in your Bibles. Then the 11 disciples, Judas has hung himself by now.

[18:09] Then the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. Now, before we get to the obvious declarations by Jesus himself, there is a subtle one worth noticing in verse 16 and 17, I think.

You see, the very fact that Jesus is risen and then meets them in Galilee declares, I think, that there is now certain hope beyond death.

You see, Galilee is mentioned three times in our passage. The angels tell him to go there. Jesus says to go there. Then they meet there. What's so big about Galilee? Well, it's the place that Jesus began his ministry back in chapter four of Matthew.

[19:13] And he began deliberately in Galilee because there was this Old Testament prophecy that said someone would come from Galilee to bring hope to those living under the shadow of death, to bring light to those living under the shadow of death.

And here is Jesus risen from the dead, defeating death and meeting in Galilee. And it's as though it declares there is now hope and light for all who live under the shadow of death.

You see. For by his death and resurrection, Jesus can give us hope beyond death. In fact, Jesus can spiritually free us from death's hand now so that we have new spiritual life with God now.

And Jesus can free us physically from death's hand later with a new physical body to enjoy life eternal. You see, there's now certain hope secured by his death on the cross and now declared to us by his resurrection.

And this changes life as we know it. And for it means we no longer need to live under the shadow of death without hope. It means that while we mourn over our loved ones who have died in the faith, we have the comfort of knowing that we will see them again if we trust in Jesus too.

[20:40] It means we can endure physical suffering even with some joy because we know there is something better to come. It means that we can live for Christ and even suffer for Christ at uni, at

school, at work because we know there is a world to come that will more than make up for it.

A friend of our family's whom I actually used to teach with has just found out that she has breast cancer for the second time. And yet on the next slide, this is the picture she put on her Facebook page yesterday.

He says, because he lives, I can face tomorrow. You see, for her, the resurrection declares that there is hope beyond death and that helps her to persevere through her suffering.

Continuing to trust in Jesus even with joy because she knows there is something better to come. This is the first way that the historical event of the resurrection changes life as we know it and brings us who believe great comfort.

But the second way is that it declares Jesus is Lord. I mean, Jesus himself says in verse 18, if you've got your Bibles there, that all authority in heaven on earth is given to him.

[21 : 58] Now, Jesus already claimed to be given authority over all things, to be the son of man from our first reading. But anyone can claim things for themselves, can't they?

Not long ago, my son claimed that he could beat me in a game of one-on-one basketball. So I said, prove it. And the little rotter did. But that's what Jesus' resurrection does for us.

It proves or backs up his claim. Jesus said he is the king who would die and rise again and he did it. Showing that he is the king who has all authority even over death.

In other words, the resurrection declares that Jesus is Lord over all. He is Lord over all nations, including our nation. He is Lord over all people, including us people.

He is Lord over everyone in this room, whether everyone in this room realizes it or not. And this changes life as we know it. For it now means that we are to live for Jesus.

[23 : 07] This is the challenge part. Our whole lives are to live with Jesus as our Lord. We are to treat him as our Lord by willingly worshipping him like the women and some of the disciples did.

Not by bowing and grasping his feet, but by trusting and obeying him as king. And so can I ask you tonight, have you done that?

Have you, like Joe and Denise, acknowledged that Jesus is not just your saviour, but your Lord? Because we can either do it willingly now and receive certain hope beyond death, or we can do it unwillingly later when he returns and have no hope beyond death.

And so have you put your trust in him as your saviour and Lord? Do you believe in him? And for us who have, then we are to continue to acknowledge Jesus as Lord in all of life.

We are to continue to trust in him, to ensure our whole lives are directed by him. We are to seek to please him by the way we drive, by the way we speak, by the way we use our time and money, by what we watch on the computer screen or TV, by our priorities in life.

[24 : 22] And even trusting him with suffering through life. And so for a friend of mine, she is single, she'd love to be married, and she's even had non-Christians pursue her.

But because Jesus is her Lord, she did not pursue the relationship with this non-Christian guy. And basically said, I can't date you.

And that was hard for her, really hard. But because Jesus is Lord, she sought to please him and trust him, that this was for her best, even though it didn't feel like it at the time.

Or take another guy, he was a minister out at Sale, and he passed away of cancer late last year. About my age, so pretty young.

That's a joke. But he was actually a friend of Jeff's as well. And when he was at Melbourne Hospital battling cancer, at the end of his bed was a little whiteboard, and at the top of the whiteboard it says, my goal is, and then you kind of write what your goals are in whiteboard marker.

[25 : 38] And most patients would write things like, to get through chemo this week, or something like that. Do you know what he wrote? Just one goal, to follow Jesus as Lord.

And he did, despite his hardship, despite his suffering, and despite his death. See, the resurrection of Jesus proves or declares that he is Lord.

And so we're to live with him as our Lord. Trusting his way is good for us, even when it's hard. And that includes the third declaration of making disciples. You see, part of living for him is to make disciples of him, so that more people will treat him as Lord.

You see the connection of verse 18 and 19? Have a look there. Verse 18, Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. He is Lord of all nations. Therefore, verse 19, we are to make disciples of all nations, that they might live for Jesus as Lord too.

For that's who he is, whether they realize it or not. And this changes life again as we know it, because we are to do everything we can to see people become Christians and grow as Christians. [26 : 44] So for some guys at 1030 Church, one guy invites a non-Christian mate to his basketball game where there's other Christians to get to know them and hear the gospel in due course from them.

Another person from 1030 Church has organized a prayer meeting in the city for workers from HGD. I think even some from this congregation went last week. Or take another couple from Nine O'Clock Church.

They recently changed their will to include the church because they still wanted to make disciples for Christ even after they've gone home to be with Christ. Or a lady from my old church called Florence.

I remember visiting her in hospital one time and she had a Bible out on her bedside and she wanted it left there so that it would provoke conversations. And she said to me, I like leaving it out so people see it and ask about it.

I've already talked to two people about Jesus in the beds next to me and the best thing is they can't run away. So there's four quick ways speaking, inviting, praying, giving.

[27 : 49] Four ways that seek to make disciples for Christ. Not to mention all the ways we are to encourage one another to grow in Christ. Of course it's not always easy. It is hard.

What's more, opposition to Christians is growing. I said this this morning and someone backed me up. I think we are now, I'm pretty sure this is right, we are officially, Christians are officially the most persecuted group in the world, 2017.

And yet, the truth will prevail. For just as the Pharisees tried to stop the truth here in Matthew 28, God will ensure it will prevail.

What's more, Jesus is Lord. He is with us, so he will ensure the truth continues through us. We're not alone. Easter day is a day to rest and enjoy some chocolate and so on.

But more than that, it's a reminder of an event in history that has changed life as we know it. For the resurrection is a reality that no one could stop, for which we have evidence for. The resurrection demands a reaction, whether joy and worship or denial and opposition.

[29 : 04] And the resurrection also declares hope beyond death and that Jesus is Lord, both of which have changed life as we know it.

Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for the resurrection of Jesus. And we thank you that we particularly celebrate it and remember it with joy this day.

Father, we thank you that it declares hope beyond death for us who believe. And it declares that Jesus is Lord and that he will be with us and help us to keep following him.

And so Father, we do pray that you would help us to keep living in light of the resurrection, that we might continue to trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

We ask it in his name. Amen.