

The King of the Kingdom is Alive!

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[0:00] Well, there are certain things in history that have changed life as we know it. For example, on that next slide is the picture of a printing press.

That changed life as we knew it. Suddenly education exploded through books and printed material. And we are still living with the positive outcome of the printing press today.

The Bible, yeah, obviously. Or the next slide, which may undo the printing press, is the computer and the internet. That also changed life as we knew it. From the way we use credit cards to pay for shopping at Coles or Woolies, to computers in cars and phones and homes.

For many businesses and even families, we've become reliant on computers and the internet. In fact, a while ago, we told the children that we were going camping, and their very first question was, is there internet?

And when we said no, they said, well, what's the point of camping? They made my point. Of course, it's not just inventions that have changed life as we know it.

[1:09] It's also events in history that have changed life as we know it. Sad events sometimes. So on the next slide, take the bombings of the atomic bombs, bombs at the end of World War II in Japan.

That ushered in a new age of nuclear warfare, an age that we are still living in today. Just look at the news and North Korea. Or on the next slide, take September 11 with the Twin Towers.

Pretty much from that event onwards, ushered in a new age of terrorism in the West that we are still dealing with today. But today, we remember another event in history that also changed life as we know it, but for the better.

And that event, of course, is the resurrection of Jesus. But before we consider how this resurrection changes life as we know it, Matthew actually begins with the reality of the resurrection.

So point one on your outlines and the end of chapter 27 in your Bibles, verse 62. The next day, the one after preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.

[2:19] Sir, they said, we remember that while he was still alive, the 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 the people that he has been raised from the dead. And this last deception will be worse than the first. I notice here that even the chief priests and the Pharisees realize that news of a resurrection, even a fake resurrection, will change everything.

They say this last deception, a resurrection, will be worse than the first deception, that Jesus is the Christ or the King. In other words, they know that the news of a resurrection will have a greater impact than Jesus' miracles and teaching even had.

And so they plot to prevent a resurrection by ensuring the disciples cannot steal the body and claim that he rose from the dead. But there's also a sad irony here. The very day they go to Pilate is actually the Sabbath day.

If you look at verse 62, it says, After preparation day. Preparation day was a Friday. So after Friday came, well, Saturday.

[3 : 36] And that was the Sabbath. The day they rested from work. And this Sabbath day was also the Passover. That they celebrated once a year. 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 work of plotting to prevent God's salvation for them.

It's a sad irony, you see. And at first glance, it seems to have worked because we read in verse 65, Pilate answered, Take a guard. Go and make the tomb as secure as you know how.

So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard. And so no doubt these Jewish leaders went to bed that Saturday night feeling satisfied.

And they had a big roast lamb dinner for, roast lamb for dinner with some wine, no doubt. And they'd secured the tomb. Sealed it shut. Even posted a guard.

[4 : 43] There's no way those disciples were going to steal that body now. There's no way there's going to be a resurrection. Of course, it's a pathetic plot. Because look what happens in a few verses at a time.

Verse 1, chapter 28. After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, 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, going to the tomb and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

His appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow. And the guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. Notice Matthew begins verse 1, this paragraph, with a reference to the day of the week, just like he did in verse 62.

And so I suspect we're meant to see a contrast here. We're meant to read these paragraphs together. And here in this paragraph, it's less than 24 hours since the Pharisees have secured the tomb.

And what happens? An angel of the Lord simply cracks it open with an earthquake, rolls it back 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 these guards to literally quake too.

[6 : 04] And so they faint and fall as though dead. So much for this plot to prevent a resurrection. Of course, the real reason it's a pathetic plot is because Jesus has already risen from the dead.

Have a look at verses 5 to 7. The angel said to the women, 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 he's going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. Now I have told you.

Jesus rose even before the stone is rolled away. I take it he rose as soon as it kind of clicked over to the third day. Just as he said he would.

I mean, if Jesus paid for our sins at the cross, then death could no longer hold him down any longer. You see, sin leads to death both physically and spiritually, and then eternally in hell.

[7 : 11] But if you deal with sin, well, then you deal with the consequence of death. And so if Jesus paid for sins at the cross that very first Good Friday, well, then death no longer has any reason or power to hold him down on Easter Sunday.

If you deal with sin, then you deal with death. Now I realize it's a bit hard to understand. It's a bit conceptual. So I did this little video to try and represent it visually. And so if we click next slide, here is my arm, and it's going to represent sin.

So I just write sin on my arm. Here we are. And sin leads to death. Okay. And there's the hand of death. Evil hand. Now here is Jesus, represented by the ping pong ball.

Now he dies for our sins and pays for them at the cross, which means he has to die. And as we say in our creed, he descended to the dead. But you see, because he paid for our sins at the cross, he kind of washes them away more easily than I can do it on my arm.

There we are. And it's clear, sins paid for. That means death can no longer hold him down. Death no longer has power to hold him down. And so logically he must, two, three, rise from the dead.

[8 : 24] You see the logic of the resurrection? If he's paid for sins, then he has to rise. And so sealing the tomb and placing a guard on it was really a pathetic attempt to stop the resurrection.

God was going to make sure it happened in Christ's death on the cross, logically meant it had to happen, whether they sealed it or not. But if Jesus rose before the stone was rolled away, then why did the angel bother rolling it away?

Well, to help prove that he had risen from the dead. Do you notice verse six? How the angel tells the women to come and see the place where he lay.

In other words, look at the evidence, he says. Just in case an earthquake and an angel rolling a stone away, in front of you are not enough evidence, then check out the tomb itself and see that it's empty.

And the tomb was evidence, you see, of the resurrection for those women back then, just as it is still evidence for us today. Of course, despite the evidence, there are different reactions to the resurrection, which brings us to point two in your outline and verse eight in your Bibles.

[9 : 35] Have a look at verse eight. So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid, yet filled with joy and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them.

Greetings. He said, and they came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There, they will see me.

Now, before we look at the women's reactions here, notice some more evidence that Matthew gives us. And this time it's a physical appearance of Jesus.

Notice how the women, when they see Jesus, can also hold his feet. In other words, he has a physical body that can be touched. This is no ghost or hallucination.

And for us who cannot grasp his physical feet, we have these eyewitness accounts in the Bible. And not only do we read of the women who saw Jesus, but in verse 10, we know that the disciples will see Jesus.

[10 : 35] And we read they did later in verse 16. And these eyewitness accounts, well, eyewitness testimony is still counted as good evidence in law courts today.

What's more, the fact that these very first eyewitnesses were women makes this evidence even more, well, more real, more supportive. Why? Well, because in ancient Judaism, sadly, women did not count as witnesses.

You needed two men. And so if Matthew, the Jew, was making this up, he would have used two men in this part of the story. So that people in his day would have believed him.

But the very fact that two women were the first witnesses, not only shows us that God considers women important, but that Matthew was not making this up. Or take verse 17.

If you just look ahead for a moment, where Matthew says that the disciples worship Jesus, but some doubted, doubted it was Jesus. Again, if you're making this up, would you really include that line?

[11:38] I mean, if you're trying to sell something, you don't point out all the problems with it, do you? I heard a true story of a man who went with his wife to buy a house in Sydney, near the airport.

And on the website, it was advertised as a beautiful bargain. So the man thought, oh, well, we'll check this out. The photos look good. And it was, it was a beautiful four bedroom home. And it was a bargain price.

And so the man thought, there's got to be a catch here. So he asked the real estate agent, what was wrong with it? And just then a huge Boeing 747 screamed across the top. Wheels nearly touching tiles.

That was what was wrong with it. Now, the real estate agent who was trying to sell the house, he could have put on the website, four bedroom home plus flight path. But he didn't, because if you're trying to sell something, you don't point out the problems.

And if Matthew was trying to sell this made up account, then he wouldn't point out the problems, would he? But he did. Why? Well, because he's not trying to sell a story he's invented.

[12:45] He's recording history he witnessed. There's actually bags of evidence for the resurrection, bags of it. But here Matthew lists all these reactions to the resurrection.

This is what he wants us to focus on. So in verse 8, the women are afraid yet filled with joy. Jesus is alive, back with them. Verse 9, they also worshipped Jesus.

Big deal for a Jew. Jews were famous for worshipping only one God. But it seems they're beginning to grasp that somehow Jesus was God, the Son.

And so in verses 10 to 11, they obey Jesus. Another response. By going to bring this joyous news to his disciples in Galilee. 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 some negative reactions of denial and destruction. Have a look at verse 11.

[13:44] 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, 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 you were sleeping.

If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. And 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 again in verse 11 by referring to the women as they were on their way. And this reference again, I think is meant to help us read these two paragraphs together.

The women's reaction contrasted to the Jewish leader's reaction. And what do they do? Well, they have two non-Christian guards, you know, two guards who've got nothing to gain by telling the truth, but they come and tell the Jewish leaders what happened, what they saw.

And you'd think that at least check it out for themselves, wouldn't you? But they don't. They just flat out deny it. It's sheer stubborn denial of the truth in the face of eyewitness testimony from the guards.

[15:02] And yet this still happens today, does it not? Despite bags of evidence for the resurrection, people simply refuse to accept the truth, don't they? They prefer to stubbornly deny it. But the Pharisees do more than just deny the truth.

They then seek to destroy the truth because they come up with another plot, don't they? And this time to bribe the guards to say that the disciples stole the body while they were sleeping, which is a bit silly, really, because if you're asleep, how do you know who stole the body?

What's more, this plot involves the guards telling everyone that they're hopeless at their job. And so no wonder the Pharisees have to come up with a large amount of money to make it worth their while.

And these Jewish leaders who are supposed to teach God's truth are sadly the very ones who not only deny God's truth, 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 and sought to change the Discrimination Act to work against Christians only, to those in Egypt who bombed two churches last Sunday as Christians gathered to remember Jesus' writing into Jerusalem.

[16:15] There will always be people who not only deny the truth, despite the evidence, but will also seek to destroy the truth. Yet the truth will prevail.

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

And that brings us to point three and the declarations of the resurrection. Verse 16. Then the eleven 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 of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

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

[17:25] You see, the very fact that Jesus is risen and meets them in Galilee declares there is now certain hope beyond death. I don't know if you noticed, but Galilee is mentioned three times in our passage.

Why? Why go there? What's the significance of Galilee? Well, it's because Jesus began his ministry in Galilee in chapter 4. And he began there to fulfill an Old Testament prophecy about bringing light or hope to those living under the shadow of death.

And here he meets the disciples in Galilee again, as though to declare, there is now hope for those living under the shadow of death. For by his death and resurrection, Jesus can spiritually free us from death's hand now, so that we can have new spiritual life with God now.

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

And this changes life as we know it. 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 comfort of knowing we will see them again if we believe.

[18:48] 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 in this world for Christ because in a world to come, it will more than make up for it.

A friend of our family, whom I used to teach with actually, 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.

Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. You see, the resurrection declares to her that there is hope beyond death. That she can persevere in suffering, continuing to trust in Jesus, even with joy, because she knows there is something better to come.

This is how the historical event of the resurrection changes life as we know it, how we live. For us who believe. Second, though, the resurrection declares that Jesus is Lord.

Look at verse 18. Jesus himself says that all authority in heaven and earth is given to him. Now, he claimed throughout the gospel to have all authority to forgive sins.

[20:05] He said that all things have been given to him by the Father. He calls himself the Son of Man, who we read in the first reading, approaches the ancient of days and is given all authority and so on.

But it's one thing to claim something. It's another to back it up, isn't it? I mean, my son said to me not long ago, he claimed he could beat me at basketball, one-on-one.

I said, prove it. And the little rotter did. But that's what Jesus' resurrection does. It backs up or proves his claim to be the king.

He said he'd die and rise again, and he did. He said that he has all authority, and he does, even over death. In other words, the resurrection declares Jesus is Lord over all.

He's Lord over all nations, including our nation. He's Lord over all people, including us people. He's Lord over everyone in this room, whether everyone in this room realizes it or not.

[21:04] And this changes life as we know it. For it means we are now to live our whole lives with Jesus as our Lord. We are to treat him as our Lord by willingly worshiping him, like the women and some of those disciples did.

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

Or have you done that full stop? Have you acknowledged that Jesus is your Lord? Because we're going to either do it willingly now and receive the certain hope beyond death, or we're going to do it unwillingly later when he returns, and then we'll have no hope beyond death.

So have you acknowledged Jesus as your Lord? Have you put your trust in him? And for us who have, then, will we continue to acknowledge him as our Lord in all life? Will we continue to trust in him and ensure our whole lives are directed by him?

Will we seek to please him by the way we drive, by the way we speak to one another, by how we use our time and money, our priorities in life, even trusting him through suffering in life?

[22 : 21] I mentioned to you a little while ago of a minister who used to work out at SAIL and passed away last year because of cancer. He was about my age. What I didn't tell you, though, was in his hospital room, at the end of his bed is a whiteboard.

And at the top of the whiteboard says, My goals. And most other patients put goals like, to get through chemo this week. His goal, written, the only thing he had was, to follow Jesus my Lord.

And he did, despite the hardship and suffering and eventually death. You see, the resurrection of Jesus proves or declares that Jesus is Lord, just as he said.

And so we had 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 here of making disciples. This is part of living for him, making disciples of him, so that more people will treat him as Lord.

That's the connection between verses 18 and 19. Verse 18, Jesus has all authority of all nations. Therefore, verse 19, make disciples of all nations, that they might live for Jesus as their Lord too.

[23 : 33] For that's who he is, whether they realize it or not. And this changes life as we know it as well, because we had to do what we can to see people become Christians and grow as Christians.

So some guys from 1030 Church, one of them invited a non-Christian to play basketball with them so that he might get to know Christians and hear the gospel. Another person last week organized a prayer meeting in the city for people from HTD to pray for their work colleagues.

Another couple from this service actually spoke to me about changing their will to include the church because they wanted to still make disciples for Christ after they'd gone home to be with Christ.

Or I don't know if you remember me talking about Florence from my old church. I visited her one time in hospital and she had her Bible out in the bedside, if you remember. I read it to her and she said, make sure you leave it out because I want to have conversations with it when people see it.

And then she said, in fact, I've already had talked to two people about Jesus in the beds next to me. And the best thing is, they can't run away. There are four quick ways of making disciples, speaking, inviting, praying, giving.

[24 : 45] Not to mention all the ways that we can encourage each other to keep growing. Of course, this is not always easy. We find it hard to talk to non-Christians and even Christians about God things.

What's more, as I said earlier, opposition to Christianity is growing. I mean, I heard, I haven't double-checked this, but I heard that we are actually officially the most persecuted group in the world.

And yet, the truth will prevail. Why? For Jesus is Lord. He is with us, as verse 20 says.

And so he will ensure the truth continues through us. We're not alone. And that changes everything, too. Easter is a day to rest and enjoy some chocolate later.

But more than that, it's a reminder of an event in history that changed life as we knew it. For the resurrection is a reality that no one could stop. And there is great evidence for it.

[25 : 43] The resurrection also demands a reaction, whether it's joy and worship or denial and opposition. And the resurrection declares hope beyond death and that Jesus is Lord.

Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father, we do thank you for this day. We thank you for the reminder it is of that very first Easter day where Jesus rose from the dead, where death could no longer keep him down for he had paid for our sins at the cross.

And Father, we thank you that by his resurrection he declares hope beyond death. He declares that he is Lord. And so we must worship him.

We must follow him. We must do what we can to make disciples of him. But we must do so knowing that he is with us to the very end of the age.

Father, we thank you that the resurrection changes life as we know it. We pray that you would help us now to live that life. In Jesus' name. Amen.