

The Resurrection

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[0 : 00] We're going to do, as you make children, if you have your Bibles or your parents have your Bibles, we're going to do the sword and the sheath, I think. So actually, let me look at what Bible passage we're, we'll give them one verse, shall we?

Rather than many. So Matthew chapter 28, close your Bibles, children. So, hold your swords up, this is the word of God, the swords, okay?

Are you ready? See how long we can hold them, my arm's aching already, okay. Okay, so sword and sheath, this sword and sheath, then it's swords drawn, and then it's charge, okay?

So sword and sheath, okay, there we go, you ready? Swords drawn, Matthew 28, verse 1 to 20. Oh, is that what we do? Okay, okay, just so you've got to get Matthew 28, verse 1 to 20. Matthew 28, verse 1 to 20. Sophie's cheating.

[1 : 11] You got, you got your Bible open, Sophie. Charge. Okay, remember, it's completion, not competition. Okay, I want you to complete, not compete.

So Matthew chapter 28, doesn't matter who gets there first, as long as you all get there. Matthew 28. All you have to do is find verse 1, we're going to, just verse 1, we're going to read a few more, but just verse 1.

Are you all there? Well done. Let me read for you this morning then. Now hear God's word. Now, after the Sabbath, towards 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 the 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 was 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.

[2 : 37] He is not here, for he has risen. And he has said, come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead.

And behold, he is 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. And they came up and took hold of 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. While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had happened, all that had taken place.

And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, tell people his disciples came by night and stole him away while you were asleep.

[3 : 49] And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So they took the money and did as they were directed.

And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Well, we thank God. Well, if you have your Bibles with you, please keep them open to Matthew 28.

[4 : 52] For the purpose of the sword drill, we started in chapter 8, verse 1. But if you were to cast your eyes back a few verses back into chapter 27, from verse 62 onwards, you'll see that a guard is placed in a tomb.

And just to be clear, you know, as a child I was growing up thinking, well, you know, one man stood out of a tomb. You know, that sounds pretty secure.

You know, then I got older and read the story again and again. And it says that some of the guard went to the elders and to the officials. And what that means is, is that a guard is not just one person. But it has to be more than one person. Because if only some went back, then some didn't. It's quite interesting to think that, imagine this, that Jesus' body was guarded while it was in the tomb.

You know, for fear of, well, whatever the fears might have been. Well, we come this morning to the account of the resurrection.

[5 : 55] And I've always said that believing in the resurrection is one thing. Understanding the meaning of the resurrection is another thing. You know, if I ask you this morning, do you believe in the resurrection?

Yes, you know, I believe in it. What is the meaning of the resurrection? Well, it's hard to answer that with sort of one answer. But the answer that is absolutely apparent is the one thing that Jesus gives the church to do after he is raised from the dead.

Go and tell the message. The resurrection means, even though it means so much more, it means that you have a message to tell to those who don't know about it.

You have a message to tell about the life and death of resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yeah, that's one of the great privileges that we have as a church.

You know, that Jesus Christ has come into a dark room and has turned the light on for us. And now we see the truth. We see how wonderful it is for Jesus to have lived and died and done everything that he did for you.

[7 : 09] You know, totally unselfish. He had you on his mind all the time. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ, you know, I said on Friday night as we took communion in the communion service, this image has been put into my head and I've not been able to shift it ever since I read the book, Donna MacLeod's book, Christ Crucified.

You know, we're saved by a homeless man. You know, had nowhere to lay his head. You know, he had nothing and kept hold of nothing, but gave everything away and gave his life away to the cross for each and every one of us here this morning.

You know, it's a wonderful privilege to be able to come and recognize what Jesus has done for us. Well, what you notice here is that the moment Jesus raises from the dead, he doesn't hang around his tomb, but he goes straight to Galilee.

You know, he tells, you know, the angel and he tells, you know, where he's going, that that is where he's going and everybody else is to meet him there. Why?

Well, because there's the Great Commission. The resurrection of Jesus means that, right, we move on. We don't stay at the grave. The grave was not a full stop, but a comma, if you want to put it that way.

[8 : 35] We move on and now we come to the Great Commission. Go and tell people that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. You know, believe in your own heart. Don't doubt that God raised him from the dead, just like the Scripture says, and that you are now saved and forgiven.

And other people, too, who come to Jesus can experience the same salvation, can know the same salvation. Go and tell that message. You know, that's the resurrection.

That's the meaning of the resurrection here in Matthew. Go and tell everybody what has happened. Go and make disciples. Teach them everything that Jesus commanded.

Go and do it. Well, the resurrection means that we have a message to tell. That's what it means in Matthew. But let's have a look at the resurrection, and especially with who comes to the grave. You know, who's the first one at the grave? It's going to be the cheeky angel that sat on the rolled away stone. You know, that's where it happens.

[9 : 45] He rolled the stone away. What's interesting, he rolled the stone away, encouraged people to go in and look, but we never have any account here of what was actually happening.

All we know is that there's an empty grave. Go in and take a look for yourself. You know, they stick their head in, and they want to see with their own eyes whether or not Jesus is there or not.

The stone is rolled away. Well, these two Marys come to the tomb. I don't know. You know, I've been to a few graveyards in my time.

Why do you go to a grave? You know, perhaps it's to lay flowers. You know, perhaps it's to have your memories stirred. And there's nothing wrong with having something to stir your memories. Perhaps it's just to go and sit and contemplate the issues of life and death. You know, remembering someone that you loved and spent so many years with.

[10:48] You know, the two Marys went to the tomb. Why? You know, what was going through their heart and mind as they were walking to the tomb of Jesus Christ?

You know, several years ago, and it really is several years ago now, when I was growing up with my brothers. Summertime would come. Well, you know, we would start going to the beach around about this time of year and stop at about December because, you know, it was still, the water was still fairly warm.

The interesting thing is, is that we lived a couple of miles away from the beach, you know, and we grew up without a car. And it was a case where you walk everywhere. So we decided that, you know, come summertime, we would walk down to Charlestown Harbor, down to the beach, and we could see the sea from a long way off because it was a long straight road once you got to a certain area.

And we would hope, as we walked, we would hope all the way that the tide was in. You know, we weren't too interested in swimming. We were only interested in jumping off the harbour into the water.

And that's what we spent our whole summer doing, walking down, hoping, as we saw the sea, that the tide was in. It was impossible to tower as you were walking. You could see that the sea was there, but you couldn't tell whether or not the tide was in or was out.

[12:12] Until you got down there. And so all your hopes were either lived or they were just dismantled immediately the moment you saw the tide was out. You know, it's very dangerous to jump off a harbour with no water in.

I don't recommend you do it. It's also very dangerous to jump off a harbour when there's very little water in. You know, we always used to pick the tallest guy to jump first. We liked him.

It's just that if he touched, we knew that not quite yet. And if he didn't touch, we knew that it was fine to go. Cambo, his name was. That wasn't his real name, but that was his nickname.

Do you know, even when we were told by a nan, no, the tide's definitely in. It was interesting that even having been told that it was in, you would still walk with hope and a mixture of uncertainty until you got there.

And I think in many ways that the two Marys came to the tomb like that. Faithful enough in many ways to believe in the resurrection. But at the same time, you have this mixture of both hope and I'm not quite sure.

[13:22] But you go out of curiosity. Perhaps you even go out of scepticism. But you go because you want to know. You want to find out.

You know, and in the same way the disciples are told to go on to Galilee. Jesus will be there. Well, that's... Will he? And the only way you're going to be able to find out is whether or not you go.

And you go to Galilee and you find out for yourself, is he there? There. And sure enough, he's there. You know, Thomas is the famous disciple for not believing.

You know, he's often been dubbed doubting Thomas. Why? Well, because Thomas came up with the excuse, and it really is an excuse to say, I'm not going to believe unless I see.

I'm not going to believe unless I can touch. I'm not going to believe until I'm, like I was as a child, getting to the harbour and to see that the water was in. Fine, you've told me that it's in, but I'm still not quite there until I see it for myself.

[14:33] You know, Jesus had some very strong words to say to Thomas at that point. Really strong words. He said this, Have you believed because you have seen me?

Well, it's obvious. Yeah, of course he's believed because he's seen you. But Jesus was telling him off. Have you believed because you have seen me? Then he says this, Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

Many of us find it very, very difficult to understand that there is greater blessing in believing and not seeing than there is to actually touch Jesus ourselves.

You think, well, that's not what Jesus is saying. That's exactly what Jesus is saying to Thomas. Exactly what Jesus is saying to Thomas. It's easy for us to miss out on just how careful that Jesus is being here.

What Jesus is saying is this, that to believe God's word, blessed are those who believe and have not seen.

[15:39] In other words, the only way you can find out about it is to believe the word, is to be blessed by God. And that's what Jesus is saying to Thomas.

Blessed are those who believe and have never seen. And yet, how often do we put what we see above what we hear? You know, we have to see it rather than touch it, rather than hear it.

We need to know for ourselves what it is to believe. Just believe what you hear.

Don't be distracted. Easy to be distracted, isn't it? Why? Because you're not always used to hearing God speak.

It's just the Bible being read. It's just someone preaching. Not really. It is the very word of God being explained to your hearts and your ears and to your spirit.

[16:42] You know, reminding you what God has actually done. You know, Jesus rises from the dead. Many hundreds of people see him to make the point, you know, that it has actually happened.

But don't overlook what he says to Thomas. You know, have you believed because you've seen? In other words, blessed are those who believe and have never seen. That's the point.

The fact that you believe this to be true, simply because God has told you so, is where the blessing is to be found for us this morning. You know, we don't have the privilege of being able to go out of our house in the morning and walk down to the tomb.

And to be able to see for ourselves that it is actually empty. Do you know what? And many of us, even if we did, we would still probably come up with a half a dozen reasons for another explanation. Well, it could be this, or it could be that, or it could be something else. No, there's a blessing, Jesus says, to Thomas in believing what you hear, rather than what you see or don't see.

[17:50] And how important is that for us this morning? Who don't have the privilege of being able to walk down to that grave for ourselves.

You know, the Bible is very good at describing what doubt is. Doubt is simply not believing what you see or not believing what you hear.

Not believing, in other words. That's doubt. You know, God says, don't worry. You worry. It's not that you're doubting.

Yeah, you're doubting, but you're not believing. You're not believing what God has said. Jesus said that he would rise from the grave, and you go wanting to believe with your whole heart, but you go not believing as well, because you really want to know for yourselves.

I find it interesting, as we come to the next section, of the guards. You know, these guards are put outside the tomb to guard it so that, precisely, so that the disciples do not steal the body at night.

[19:04] They come back, in verses 11 through to 15, and they say exactly what's happened. They've been stood outside. All of a sudden, there's this earthquake.

There's this angel. The body of Jesus is not there. And as the guards are explaining this to the officials, to the elders, they say, how about some money to keep it quiet?

You know, how about I, you know, give you a year's wages, or two years wages, whatever it is. We don't know the amount, but here's some money, and let's keep this whole thing quiet.

I mean, how on earth do you expect to keep someone risen from the dead quiet? Do you know, my favorite, one of my favorite passages in John is that Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead, and then the religious officials plot to kill Jesus.

Now, what can you do to a man who can raise people from the dead? You know, there's not a lot. It doesn't make any sense.

[20:12] So anyway, these soldiers come back, some of the guard come back, not all of them, and they give, are given money, and they're told this in verse 13. Tell the people, do this for money, tell the people, his disciples came by night and stole him away while you were asleep.

And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. Well, the second bit's not true. You see, any guard caught asleep is going to be in a lot of trouble.

A huge amount of trouble trouble. You can understand why some of the guard ran away rather than coming back. But listen to the first bit. His disciples came by night and stole him away while you were asleep.

So here we have these guards asleep on the job and the disciples allegedly came at night and stole the body away. Now, several years ago, I took a what lesson.

A what is a group here on a Tuesday night for primary age children. You know, they learn, you know, good songs, they learn Bible passages and memory verses and they hear Bible stories.

[21 : 27] I actually told this story to some of the what children and I tried to act it out as best that I could and got them to do different things. It didn't work exactly the way that I wanted it. But I told this story and there was a boy there, I can remember his face but I can't remember his name and I told him this story, well, I told them all this story and he said this.

I was trying to prime the answer out and it came out of a seven-year-old and he said, well, if the guards were asleep, how did they know what happened? Well, think about it.

It's a pretty poor, right? Some of you are, right, actually, that's true. Think about it. Imagine a security guard, you know, and he's guarding something really quite precious and the owner comes by in the morning and he finds that all of his jewelry or whatever has disappeared and his answer to the owner is, well, while I was asleep, three masked men came in and stole everything and how did you know that?

You see the problem. It's not a very good excuse or reason, is it? Tell the people that you were asleep and while you were asleep, you were able to figure out that the disciples came and stole the body.

Do you know what I think is really going on here? I think it is that people will always find a reason not to believe. They'll always find a reason for whatever reason they have personally to reject the truth, to say, you know, I don't want any of that.

[23 : 15] You know, I listened to those words that we heard last Sunday by Andrew and John read them out again on Wednesday evening. You know, don't hinder children from coming to Jesus.

And there we hear a seven-year-old boy heard this story at what and he's able to understand the ridiculousness of that excuse. You accept it.

You believe it because you've been told it. You know, we get older, we get a bit more skeptical. We have other reasons. Well, maybe it is, maybe it isn't.

I think what it comes down to at the end of the day is this. That if Jesus really has risen from the dead, which he has, we now have to deal with someone who has total authority.

That's the problem. I want to deny it because I want to deny the fact that I come under someone who has all authority. Yeah, think about it for a moment.

[24 : 15] living your life under the authority of Jesus. Yeah, that's another reality of the resurrection. Also, we come now to the Great Commission.

Remember this. It is a message to tell and remember Thomas who wouldn't believe unless he could see and touch for himself. But then remember the words of Jesus who said this, that blessed are those who have never seen yet believe.

You know, Jesus is saying something very important here and I want you to understand it. I want you to really take hold of it. And it's this, that confirmation comes from believing, not before believing.

You see, many of us are like Thomas. We want the confirmation, then we'll believe. Turn up, let me touch you, let me see you with my own eyes, then I'll believe.

And what Jesus is saying here to Thomas is that the normal order of things, the way God has planned it out, is that as you believe his word, blessed are you.

[25 : 32] As you believe the word of God about any part of the word of God, blessed are you. You know, too often we're trying to prove that Jesus had risen from the dead. And too often we're trying to prove this and that and the other.

Don't. None of it needs proving. It just needs telling. Hence why we have the Great Commission. Believe and the confirmation will come.

You know, God rewards those. Remember Hebrews 11, verse 6. He rewards those who seek him in faith. Believe his word and receive the word.

Receive the blessing, the confirmation that God gives as you believe. You know, don't be a Thomas. Don't look for a confirmation and then you'll believe.

Don't put God to the test in the way of prove yourself to me. You know, God doesn't have to prove anything to anybody. It's grace that he does it with Thomas.

[26 : 38] But for us, Jesus says, it's an equivalent blessing. To believe the word of God, Jesus says, is the equivalent of what Thomas did and that is to touch Jesus for yourself.

That's the type of confirmation God gives to those who believe his word. Well, let's wrap it up. Let's draw this to a close with a few considerations.

Here's the first one. You know, for us who are Christians, we need to show the world what it is to live under the authority of Jesus. We need to show what it is to live under the authority of Jesus, that Jesus really has risen from the dead and has been given all authority.

We need to show the world that we understand what the meaning of the resurrection is. that is to go and tell people about the resurrection of Jesus in his life and his death.

In other words, it is one thing to believe in the resurrection. It's another thing to follow out its meaning. When Jesus gives the great commission, he's saying, this is what my resurrection means, that all authority has been given to me, go and make disciples.

[27 : 57] disciples. That's what it means. It's a challenge to us as believers. You'll know how much you talk about Jesus to other people. I'll know how much I talk about Jesus to other people.

It's always a challenge to remember that the one reason why God has left us here and not brought us to himself is simply to tell this message. That's the meaning of the resurrection, as we see here in Matthew.

What is the message? Well, God has given you his son. To do for you what you can't do for yourself. To forgive you. To give you freedom.

To free you from guilt. To free you from sin. To make you his own. To bring you to himself. To give you eternal life. And to give you the type of security that you cannot find anywhere else.

Now, everything that Jesus did, he did for people. Everything that Jesus did, he did for you. everything. Not a selfless, selfish action committed even once.

[29 : 06] God is bringing people to himself in Jesus. So if you're here this morning and you think, well, I know I'm not there. I don't know where I am, but I know that I don't have that with Jesus.

Well, then you have to come. You have to believe Jesus when he says, follow me. You have to listen to him when he says, turn and repent and come unto me.

Do it and God will bless you. He blesses you with the eternal life and the salvation that Christ achieved at the cross and through the resurrection. So come to Jesus and know God's saving work. come to Jesus and know what it is to be truly his and forgiven and free. So believers and unbelievers here this morning both have to face the same challenge and it's this.

Listen to what Jesus says. Listen to what Jesus says and believe it. That's the challenge. That's the call here.

[30 : 16] And know God's work work within your life. Come to the one who has all authority rather than turning from the one who will hold you to that authority when the day comes.

Turn to Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.