

Logan Smith  
Bread of Life Baptist Church  
Oct. 31st, 2021

**Matthew 27:57 - 28:15**  
**The Resurrection of Christ**

As I'm sure you're all very well aware, today, October 31st, is a holiday. Actually, it's more than one. Everyone knows that today is Halloween. YOU may or may not know that it is also *Reformation Day* - the anniversary of when Martin Luther famously nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31st, 1517, sparking off the Protestant Reformation that changed the world - God used it to bring back the gospel, reform the church, and bring His people back to rightly understanding and practicing Biblical Christianity. It is definitely a day worth remembering.

Well, our sermon text today is widely considered a holiday sermon passage, but it's not about Halloween or Reformation day - obviously, this text is associated with the holiday of Easter. Every year, we celebrate Easter in order to celebrate that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, rose from the grave - that He defeated death and He is alive! So it makes sense, then, that many people associate this text - a text about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, of God raising him from the grave back to life - it makes sense why we associate this as an "Easter" passage. I'm sure many of you have heard many Easter sermons on this very passage. And so, you might ask, "It's the middle of Fall; it's Halloween day! Why are we talking about Easter, which is still have a year away from now?"

Well, for starters, because we're working our way through the Bible, one book at a time, and as we're finishing up Matthew, this is our next section. But we can also say more than that. YOU see, it is *always* appropriate for us to talk about and even celebrate Easter, even every Sunday - in fact, *especially* every Sunday! That's actually the very reason the early church began gathering together on Sundays in the first place, back in the first century. Jewish religious services were always held on the Sabbath, on Saturday. But when Jesus Christ came, lived, died, and rose from the grave, *everything changed*. Many Jews believed in Christ as the Messiah - and so did many non-Jews, all throughout the world! But these non-Jews didn't become Jews in order to be saved and follow Christ; and neither did these believing Jews simply keep observing the law and going to their synagogue like normal, without any changes. No, they all became *Christians* - a new people, a new community. And they began to gather together on a new day -

the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, Sunday. But why Sunday? WHY did Sunday become the "Lord's Day"? It's because Sunday is the day that Christ *rose from the grave!* Every Sunday is the Lord's Day! Every Sunday is "resurrection day," Easter Sunday!

We gather here, week after week, because *we believe that Jesus is alive!* And this truth - that Jesus physically rose from the grave, defeating sin, satan, and death in the power of his resurrection, so that all who believe in Him are also raised to eternal life - this is *central* to our faith, to our very salvation. It is just as central to the heart of the gospel as Christ's death; apart from the resurrection, the cross has no power.

So our text this morning, Matthew 27:57 - 28:15 reminds us of the truth and power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. And it also shows us the right for for us to *respond* to this glorious reality: in faith and worship.

So let's walk through the story of this text, beginning with point number one:

### **I. The Resurrection of Christ Was the Historical, Miraculous Work of God (27:57-66)**

Over the last few weeks, we have seen that Matthew is making it very plain and clear that *God was sovereignly in control of the events that took place in the passion week;* Christ's betrayal, arrest, trial, suffering, and death all took place to fulfill the will of the Father and accomplish His purposes of salvation for His people - for us. And that is no less true for CHrist's burial and resurrection. We need to see here, plain and clear, that God was sovereignly orchestrating all of these events in such a way that there would be *no other possible explanation* other than to say that *God miraculously raised Jesus Christ up from the grave.* IN fact, that's why I believe chapter 27, verses 57-66 are so important for us. They strip away in other possible explanation that someone might give to try and deny the literal death or physical resurrection of Christ, so that the work, power, and glory of God may be plainly seen.

First, we see this in the story of Jesus's burial. Now, Jesus had just been executed by the Romans on a cross - that is, he was condemned to death under high treason, under the charge of trying to usurp Roman authority as a rebellious King of the Jews. Such criminals convicted of high treason (like Jesus was) were not allowed to be buried under Roman Law. Burial customs inevitably involve showing honor to the deceased, especially in the Jewish customs of burial. But Rome wanted it to be very clear that treasonous criminals had no such honor - they were

typically left on the cross for a very long time, and never buried. So this lets us know that what we see Joseph doing here is a big deal: Joseph of Arimathea is a rich man, but also a disciple, a follower of Christ. In verses 57-60 he goes to Pilate, the Roman governor, and asks permission to bury Jesus in his own tomb; this required great courage for Joseph to ask permission for, not to mention came at the personal monetary costs of providing an expensive tomb and proper burial services. This is a costly and risky move. But the Lord sovereignly orchestrated it so that Joseph would courageously do this, and that Pilate would let him. Even here, we see God working to carry out His plan of redemption - because it was integral to the gospel mission for Jesus to be buried.

And there's more: Joseph and Pilate here are also testifying to the fact that *Jesus actually died; he physically died and was literally buried in a sealed tomb*. Verse 61 also tells us of the faithful women, "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary," who are faithful witnesses all through these accounts: they were present at the cross and death of Christ, are now present at His burial, and will be present at His resurrection. Matthew is telling us that there were undeniable eyewitness accounts of these things taking place.

Christ's death is a historical fact - he truly did die; his death was attested by many witnesses - the women, Joseph Arimathea who bought the tomb, the chief priests and Pharisees, even Pontius Pilate and the Roman authorities. (27:57-61). Jesus was definitely dead. There are some who want to deny the resurrection and claim that he wasn't truly dead - just "mostly dead" (like Wesley, on the Princess bride), and then regained consciousness and somehow survived. But the scriptures won't allow such a view - and neither will the witnesses of history. Jesus definitively died on the cross, as many witnesses testified to, and was laid to rest in a sealed tomb for three days. No one can deny Jesus's actual death. GOD sovereignly orchestrated the events so that Jesus's death and burial could not be denied, and provided witnesses.

Then, in verses 62-66, we see another possible argument for denying the death and resurrection of Christ cut off from being possible. In these verses, the tomb is secured, both by the Jewish religious authorities and the Roman authorities - not only is a large, heavy stone rolled in front of the tomb, but then Jewish leaders get permission to actually seal the stone and place guards outside the tomb. They do to intentionally make sure that the disciples do not come and steal the body, saying, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest

his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first.'" (27:62-64).

We can't dismiss the reality of the resurrection by saying he didn't really die, or that someone just stole his body. We can't deny the historicity of the cross, Jesus's death, or His resurrection. This is a non-negotiable part of the Christian faith. Some people want to object and say, "Come on, are you really saying that I have to believe that Jesus came back from the dead in order to be a Christian? It's physically impossible to come back to life! Science won't allow it! There has to be some other explanation!" But that's exactly the point - there is no earthly explanation for the resurrection - *because it wasn't an earthly act!* It was an act of God - a miracle! And that is a *perfectly reasonable, logical explanation for why the resurrection can happen even though it defies the way the physical world typically works!* All science can do is tell us about this *physical world, from our perspective and observations, based on the way it normally works.* There's nothing wrong with that - science is a wonderfully good and helpful study! But science *cannot study or explain miracles* - because miracles, *by definition, are not part of how the physical world normally works!* They are exceptions! Why? Because God, the one who created the world, is free to step in and do whatever He wants at any moment! There's no scientific reason to deny the resurrection - science isn't our ultimate authority, especially not about spiritual matters (it can't study those); God is our ultimate authority. God is the all-powerful creator.

After the resurrection, the chief priests and elders paid off the guards and spread the rumor that the disciples were lying and stole Jesus's body - but Matthew exposes the lie for what it is, showing the truth and how the rumor started. Rome provided guards to secure the tomb; the tomb itself was sealed; the chief priests and elders themselves oversaw it! There's no possible way that Christ's body was stolen, so no one can claim that.

And that is, I think, the important point for us to take away from verses 11-15: the reason the chief priests and elders rejected the resurrection of Jesus wasn't because of *intellectual unbelief* - they didn't have another explanation for why Jesus was not in the tomb anymore; they had personally seen to it that He truly died, and that no one would have been able to steal His body. They even had to *pay off the guards* who were securing the tomb to *tell a false story and give a fake explanation!* No, it wasn't intellectual unbelief - they had every reason they needed to believe; instead, it was because they *didn't want to believe.* YOU see, if Christ really rose from

the grave, well that means that *everything He said is true, that He really is who He claimed to be - God, the King the Savior of the world!* And that means we have to *believe, obey, and worship Him*. But if we don't believe, then that means *we have no hope for salvation or eternal life*.

God Has made it very clear that *He is the one who raised Christ Jesus up from the grave!* That's what's going on in verses 57-66: God is making it very clear that the *only* explanation for what's about to happen is *God's miraculous work of raising Christ Jesus from the dead in order to complete His sovereign plan of redemption for His people - for all who believe in this life-giving resurrection!*

And that's because...

## **II. The Resurrection of Christ Powerfully Fulfills God's Work of Redemption (28:1-7)**

In chapter 28, verses 1-7, we see the power of the resurrection displayed as the climactic moment of Christ's work of redemption. We read that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb, and we know from Mark's gospel that they were coming to the tomb in hopes of anointing Jesus' body with some spices. And in all the other gospel accounts we simply read that they show up, the stone is rolled away, and Jesus' body is gone. But Matthew gives us a glimpse of the dramatic way in which this had happened in verses 2-4, which I think is given to us as a bit of a flashback.

In other words, Matthew is telling us what happened *right before* the women arrive. And what he tells us is dramatic. Earlier that morning, on Easter Sunday, there had been a great earthquake as an angel from heaven came down and rolled away the stone in front of Jesus's tomb. The angel's appearance was so majestic that he shone "like lightning," and his clothes "were white as snow" (v.3). There were guards posted around the tomb, guarding it; but when they saw the angel, they were overwhelmed with fear; they "trembled" and "became like dead men" (v. 4) - that is, they passed out on the ground.

Now, when the women arrived, they expected to find the tomb still sealed up, with Jesus's dead body still inside. But what they saw when they arrived was nothing like what they expected. The stone was already rolled away and sitting on top of it was this glorious angel, saying, "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" (vv. 5-6).

And in that moment, everything was changed. Before this moment, we'd seen Jesus submitting himself to the Jewish leader and Roman authorities, quietly going like a lamb to the slaughter, willfully allowing himself to suffer. He allowed himself to be mocked, to have the truth veiled, to appear weak, and be given over into the hands of the wicked - but no longer. The time for that is over. Now, Jesus's full identity is being unveiled as His work of redemption is finished.

God was giving us a glimpse of his power in the resurrection. Just one angel of God had descended in such glory that it overwhelmed guards and caused them to faint in terror; it made the earth quake, and had moved the stone so that it might be made clear to all that the tomb was empty. And then, almost as if to underscore how easy and effortless all of this is for the angel, Matthew tells us that he decided to sit on the stone as he waited for these ladies to show up (v. 2)

But the power and majesty of the angel and his work is simply to highlight the power and majesty of God, revealed in what He had done —*Jesus had risen from the dead*. And, as I mentioned, this changed everything. The Easter morning, as Christ rose from the grave, He was *vindicating His Son, Jesus Christ*. Christ had been pronounced a cursed blasphemer, executed as a criminal, a false King and Messiah; God Himself had even poured out His own wrath upon Christ on the cross! But now, when God raises Him from the grave, God *vindicates* Jesus and declares Him to be His righteous, blameless Son, the God-Man, the True King, Messiah, and Savior! He proclaims that Christ's sacrificial death has been accepted, atonement made, and that Sin, Satan, and *even death* have been defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ!

Because when Christ rose again, He was declaring that *death will not have the last word*. He was raised to new life, a new creation. He rose Lazarus and others to life - but they were still brought back to *this life*, with bodies that would still grow old, get sick, and eventually die again. But this is not true of Jesus's glorified, resurrected body - He was raised with a new, perfectly glorified body! He defeated death and overturned the grave once and for all!

And here's the glorious news of what that means for you and me - for those of us who are trusting in Christ this morning, as believers: *death will not be the last word for you either!* There is coming a day when every pain you're experience, every sickness or disease you battle, every sorrow you bear, every tear you cry, every fear you fear - one day *it will be no more!* Death will not be the last word - *you will be raise to eternal life in Christ*, to live with God forever, with a glorified, resurrected body! You'll no longer grow old, get sick, go hungry, feel pain, or sadness;

you'll no longer be mocked or suffer, or experience the heartbreak of your rebellious children, your loved ones who keep making all the wrong decisions. There's coming a day when you'll no longer have that persistent pain in your back, no longer need hip replacements or surgeries, no longer need medication or help of any kind, no longer need crutches or rods in your legs. There's coming a day when you'll never say goodbye to another friend or loved one who dies. There's even coming a day when *you and I will never sin or be tempted again!*

And that's because the resurrection of Christ secured *our resurrection!* The same power of God that raised Jesus from the grave will raise us up to live with Him in paradise forever!

But only if we respond rightly - in *faith*. Which leads us to our final point.

### **III. The Resurrection of Christ Demands that We Believe and Worship Him (28:8-10)**

Christ's resurrection accomplished salvation for us - but we only receive it if we *come to Christ in faith*. In other words, Christ's resurrection demands that we respond by *believing in Christ* - who He is and what He has done - *and worshipping Him*. That's the right response of faith. The rest of chapter 28 makes that very clear by giving us two contrasting responses to the resurrection: one of faith, the other of unbelief.

We've already seen the negative response of unbelief in verses 11-15: we saw how the religious leaders denied the resurrection of Christ; they refused to believe. They heard that the tomb was empty from the guards themselves, that the sealed tomb had been removed and Jesus was gone. They knew there was only one possible explanation: Jesus, the man they killed, really was the God-Man, the Messiah, the Savior and King! But they didn't want that to be true. So they rejected the resurrection in unbelief, paying off the guards to spread lies instead. Matthew shows us *how not to respond*.

But right before that, in verses 8-10, Matthew gives us an example of the *right way to respond*. We see this as Jesus shows up, revealing himself to the women, and takes center stage of this text, putting the spotlight squarely on him.

First, Jesus shows up very casually, saying, "Greetings!" The last time these women, his faithful followers, had seen Jesus, he had died on the cross and was buried in the tomb. And now, having just miraculously arisen from the grave, he shows and says, "Hey!" It's almost a little

anticlimactic, isn't it? Maybe not as dramatic as we expect. Yet, He did tell them beforehand that all of these things were going to happen - this should have been *expected*.

Second, we are reminded again that Jesus is truly a man, but he is also more than that - He is God. In Matthew 4, when Satan was tempting him, Jesus made clear to Satan that God alone was worthy of being worshiped. But here, as the ladies see him, we're told, "And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him" (v. 9), and he didn't rebuke them. That is, he is not just a man, but he is the God-man, God the Son incarnate, and he knows He is - He is worthy of worship and He knows it! So He does not forbid them to worship Him; this is the right thing for them to do - and the right thing for *us to do*. We rightly respond to Jesus by *worshipping Him*.

But third, we see the amazing grace of our Lord Jesus. Jesus reiterates the same command the angel gave to the women: go and tell the disciples to meet the risen Jesus in Galilee. Now, the last time the disciples interacted with Jesus, they *abandoned him*; Peter even denied knowing Jesus three different times. Talk about ending on a low note; a moment full of shame, regret, embarrassment, and guilt for the disciples. Talk about beating yourself up. THIS group of disciples would have known full well at that moment that *they were not worthy of Jesus's acceptance*. They would have known very well that they blew it. Yet Jesus speaks of word of *grace* for them here.

The angel's command to the women had been, "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" (v. 7). The first instructions after the resurrection were words of comfort and acceptance to a group that had proven themselves unworthy of such acceptance.

But that's not enough for Jesus. He wants to assure. So, yes, the women are obeying, as they depart quickly and are running to tell his disciples, filled with "fear and great joy," but Jesus wants more for them than that. He wants them to realize that they don't have to be filled with fear, so he appears to them on their way, saying to them, "Do not be afraid" (v. 10). And he wants his disciples to know that he doesn't just think of them as his followers but as his very own brothers, saying, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me" (v. 10).

Brothers and sisters, that's our Lord. That's how loving and gracious and merciful he is. That's how much he loves us. He doesn't just forgive and accept us, he wants us to know that



and then hear, “And you’re mine. You’re my brother (or sister).” He has more kindness and gentleness and graciousness and love and mercy toward us than we can comprehend. And here he is, giving himself to (not removing himself from) his disciples, in all his kindness and love and grace.

As Jesus reveals Himself to the women, His faithful followers who believe in Him, they respond rightly: they grab His feet and worship Him in faith. And that’s *exactly how each one of us should respond as well*. Christ has risen from the grave! Jesus is alive - proving that He is who He said He is! He is the GOd-Man, the Son of GOd; the true King, Lord, and Savior of all! He is worthy of all worship, honor, and glory! His resurrection demands that we repent from sin, turn to Him in faith, believe in who He is and what He has done - and live our lives *following, obeying, trusting, and worshipping Him!*

And we are compelled to do by His wondrous power, salvation, and grace. The glorious power of His resurrection tells us that if we turn and believe in this gospel, trusting in the power of Christ alone to save us, then *you, no matter who you are, will be saved - forgiven of all your sins and raise to eternal life!* THAT’s the good news of the resurrection - the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

So that’s exactly how we need to respond to the glorious good news of this passage this morning. We should repent, trust in Christ, and worship Him every day, with all of our lives! BUT it’s all appropriate for us to do this *corporately*, together, as a church. THIS is why we gather, every Sunday - to celebrate Easter, that Christ is risen, and he’s coming again to raise us up with Him! And this is also why we celebrate the Lord’s Supper - it’s a way for us to publicly and visibly proclaim our faith in this glorious gospel!

So that’s exactly what we’re going to do in a few moments. We’re going to have a brief moment of silence, where I invite you all to pray silently to the Lord, before I lead us in prayer. And then, I’ll call up each section to come, starting with the outsides, and then working our way from the front to the back. YOU can just walk from the outside down to the front, where we have two cups stacked - one with juice, one with bread, and then walk back down the inside aisle to your seat.

If you’re a baptized believer and a member of a gospel-preaching church in good standing, then we invite you to come to the table with us as we celebrate the glorious good news of Christ’s resurrection and it’s power to raise us to eternal life with Him!

But if that doesn't describe you this morning, then we ask for you to just remain seated, because there is a *different* way for you to respond: the next step for you is to *believe in the good news you've just heard*, to trust that Christ's life, death, and resurrection really is sufficient to save you from your sins and bring you to eternal life! And then, make your faith public by being baptized and joining a local church as you follow Christ, learn to obey Him, and worship Him with your life! If you have any questions about that, I would love to speak with you. YOU can come sit on the front row or find me after the service.

Let us have a moment of silence before we pray.