

Matthew 27:62-28:20

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

I want us to finish our series in Matthew 28. In Matthew's gospel, I've loved it. I hope you've benefited from it.

But Matthew 28, if you've got a Bible, do open it up. You may have come across, I've told you before, the story from Russia before the end of the Cold War. A Baptist pastor is reading his New Testament on the train.

And he gets up from his seat to stretch his leg on the train and he leaves the New Testament on the seat. While he's away, a guard comes along, picks it up, reads what it is, opens the window, and throws it out of the window.

A month later, a farmer comes to see the pastor and he asks the pastor wonderfully to lead him in becoming a Christian. The pastor was delighted to do so. And when he'd finished, the farmer reached into his pocket and pulled out the pastor's New Testament.

[1 : 28] And he said, you'll never believe it. I was working in my field a month ago by the railway track and a train went past and this hit me on the head. And I want to say, as I've looked at the resurrection passages and studied them, it's been a little bit like that for me.

I've been working away at it and suddenly the reality of what God has done in raising the Lord Jesus from the dead has hit me on the head. And I hope it'll do the same for you. Because the resurrection of Jesus is the center of our faith.

The early Christians in Acts called the gospel the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. It was the resurrection of Jesus that created the early church and gave it life and fire.

And in Matthew 28, Matthew's point is that what the resurrection of Jesus has done is turn everything upside down. The resurrection acts as a huge reversal in the world.

And how Matthew does that is he skillfully shows us that it shows this reversal in the life of everyone it touches. The resurrection of Jesus shatters for all time, for all people, the matter of going back to business as usual.

[2 : 42] The resurrection of Jesus literally creates a new normal. And Matthew's interest is not so much in the kind of mechanics of the actual resurrection, who moved the stone and giving us the evidence and that sort of thing.

But Matthew's interest is the massive impact it makes on four different parties. And so the first group that there's this huge reversal in is the women. Can you look at verse 1 with me?

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 they don't know that a guard has been posted in front of the tomb.

They don't know how they're going to roll away the massive stone to get access to the body. But they're in for a huge surprise, aren't they, when they arrive? They discover the guards lying on the ground trembling.

The stone is rolled away. And even worse, there is an angel sitting on the stone. And he is no ordinary messenger boy. He is an angel who's come from the presence of God. So look at verses 5 to 7.

[3 : 47] You see, the angel says, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. Matthew is very deliberately telling us again and again, he was crucified. But he's not here if he's risen.

As he said, come see the place where he laid. And then go quickly and tell his disciples he's risen from the dead. The stone has been rolled away, not to let Jesus get out, but to let the women see in.

We're not left to guess what it means. The angel explains it exactly. He says Jesus, who was crucified, is now risen. He says it twice. He's saying to you and I, they were at the right tomb. He was dead, but he is no longer dead. He is risen from the dead. And it's not reincarnation. Jesus has risen from the dead. And it's impossible for you and I to capture in those simple words the enormous transformation that's taken place.

Because for the first time in history, the iron grip of death has been broken from the inside out. Somebody has gone through death to show that he's stronger than death.

[4 : 57] And the angel says Jesus defeated death. I read of a Muslim student in Africa who became a Christian. And when his friends asked him, why is that?

He said, well, it's like this. Suppose you're going down a road and the road forks in two directions. And you don't know which way to go. And there at the fork, there are two men.

One dead and one alive. Who would you ask for directions? Well, as the women race off to tell the disciples their imaginations running on ahead of them, they meet the risen Jesus.

Verse 9. And he says to them, Greetings. Hi. And they came up and took hold of his feet and they worshipped him. And then Jesus said, Don't be afraid.

Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me. Jesus gives them the most normal and natural hello. If you're in Australia, it would be G'day.

[6 : 03] If you're in Wales, it would be Shammai. The women, they fall on his feet and they take hold of his feet. And so it's not a vision. It's not a hallucination.

It's not an apparition. It is a bodily and physical resurrection. And it's not merely a resuscitation back to life because they didn't worship Lazarus.

Do you remember when Lazarus came out of the tomb? They didn't worship him. No, this is a risen Jesus, physically raised from the dead with feet that you can hold on to.

And Jesus encourages the women, Do not fear. And he gives them the same job that the angel gave them to do. Go and tell the other disciples. And because of that, their world is upside down.

So just look with me at the women over the last couple of weeks. Look at verse 56 of chapter 27. Jesus being crucified.

[7 : 01] And there are the women, verse 55, following, looking on at a distance. They can't get too close. But they are looking on at a distance, aren't they? And then Jesus is buried.

And verse 61, you have this little incident where Mary, Magdalene, and the other Mary, are sitting there, sitting down opposite to the tomb. Verse 55 and verse 61 of Matthew 27, they're on the edge of the action.

They're on the periphery. They're helpless. They're forlorn. They're the most powerless. And then you come to Matthew 28, verse 1, and they go, don't they? Mary and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

They don't know what to do. Their hopes have been shattered. The bottom has fallen out of their world. But by verse 10 of chapter 28, the women who were on the fringes are now at the center.

And their hopes, which have been shattered, are literally raised to life. Their fears have been transformed into joyful confidence. And now they become the first tellers of the good news.

[8 : 07] Because they are the first witnesses of the resurrection to the risen Christ. It's a complete reversal, isn't it? A total reversal. Their lives have been turned upside down.

And it's all based on the fact that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. The second group are the guards. I think you've got a sympathy with the guards. They were told, weren't they, it's a very routine exercise.

All they had to do was guard a dead body. If you were a policeman, I'm sure it would be a pretty boring job for the evening, wouldn't it? To keep a dead body dead. A massive rock is put in front of the entrance.

They seal it with whatever they could find. They are a picture, aren't they? These guards, they are a picture of human authority and power. They are the winners. They are the rulers.

They are the ones with the weapons. They are the ones with the capability. And they are the ones that are in command. They are the figures of authority. And they are in control. Then verse 2.

Behold, there's a great earthquake.

[9 : 11] For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning. And his clothing is white as snow. Angels in our culture are seen as wonderfully reassuring, aren't they?

Kind of lightness and, oh, you're an angel. Some of us eat angel delight. We think of angels as reassuring.

People talk about guardian angels. Sophie Burnham in a terrible book called *A Book on Angels, A Book of Angels*, says this, Angels always bring us a calm and peaceful serenity that descends sweetly upon over you.

Their message is always, don't worry, things are working out perfectly. You're going to like this. Well, look at verse 2. This angel comes and he brings with him a splintering earthquake.

He tosses the stone to one side and then when he comes, he sits on it. It's a lovely picture, isn't it? I grew up in a family of four and there would be fights and how do you know, how do you know those of your own families, how do you know who was the winner of the fight?

[10:25] Well, it was whoever ended up sitting on the other one, wasn't it? That's how you knew the victor. What was the great sign of victory in a fight? That you would sit on your sibling and they would kind of lie there trying to get up but you sat on them because you'd won.

Look at the angel here. The only respect he shows is a lovely little picture. He sits on death. Here's a symbol of the closed door of death. The security of the sepulchre and the only respect he pays to it is to sit on it.

It's a wonderful picture. And the word for tremble. The word for tremble in verse 4 is the same word for earthquake in verse 2. Isn't that amazing?

Isn't that amazing? The guards are experiencing a quaking of themselves they have their own private earthquake as they see the angel and the angel comes to announce that Jesus is risen and the rocks quake before the angel and those whose job it is to keep Jesus from rising they quake as well.

All they had to do do you remember was to keep a dead man dead and with all their power and with all their skill they couldn't do it and instead Matthew says do you see the little detail at the end of verse 4?

[11:38] They became like dead men. The living and the powerful ones become like dead men because the dead man has been raised to life.

The living and the powerful ones become like dead men because the dead man has been raised to life. And the resurrection doesn't it? It brings a complete reversal in the values of our world.

What we think of ultimately as human power is actually utterly powerless in the face of Jesus Christ. Death is now transformed into life.

We don't have time to look at verses 11 to 15 but there's a remarkable contrast there. There's a contrast between the joy and the obedience of the women in going to tell and then there's the reluctance of the guards going to the chief priests and telling them what happened.

And the response of the priests is to cover up, isn't it? To do whatever they can to cover up. I think it's a wonderful story. Because it tells you and I that the resurrection also faces you and I with a fundamental choice.

[12:55] Like the women. Will we be like the women who fall at his feet and worship him or will we hold on to the illusion of our own power and our own control?

And one way is the way of deception and death and the other is the way of life. The resurrection of Jesus turns everything upside down. And not only for the women but for the guards but thirdly, most important of all, for Jesus.

Do you notice twice the angel says Jesus has been raised. It's a divine passive. The will of God will not leave him in the grave. But that is not all Matthew wants you to know.

So when we look at verse 18, can you see how Jesus speaks after he's been raised from the dead? He says, doesn't he, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. I think that's difficult for us to kind of register the scope of that statement.

The word of authority is not just naked power. It is the right to decide. And it's the freedom to act. It is God's own authority. And God's own authority is now Jesus' authority because God has given it to him.

[14:11] And Jesus is saying, isn't he, my authority is unrestricted and it's unqualified and it's unconditional. My authority extends from the farthest reaches of space into the smallest subatomic particle of matter.

And it draws under its canopy all men and all women and all places who've ever lived. And it does not diminish over time and it doesn't weaken in the different circumstances of life.

And he says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me over angels, over archangels, over demons, over principalities, over might, over thrones, over the natural world, over the supernatural world.

world, Jesus now has the ability and the freedom and the right and that's very important to us. Because there's no area and there's no people and there's no culture and there's no single being in the universe that's outside the authority of Jesus Christ.

And Jesus could not assert with any more clarity his absolute faultless, consummate sovereignty and dominion and rule and command over all things.

[15:28] And so here is a man who three days before had been crucified. And now he's risen from the dead and he says, all authority is mine. And I think in many ways that's the key point of the chapter.

It's no wonder that in verse 9 Jesus accepted their worship. And in verse 17 they recognize him as Lord and God and he accepts their worship.

And he is conscious that the resurrection is the beginning of a new moment. And that new moment is marked by his universal lordship. And if there was any doubt then you come to verse 19 and you'll see that he includes himself in the name, not the names, in the name of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And that is how God comes to be known from now on. And I think when we come to this point we come to the very heart of the gospel. And so when you look at how did the early church in the book of Acts, how did they tell people about Christianity?

How did they teach the gospel? The heart of the Christian message was this. You rejected Jesus as worthless and irrelevant. You thought he was nothing.

[16:47] But God has raised him from the dead and enthroned him from heaven where he is Lord and Christ. Let me show you that. Come with me to Acts chapter 2.

Come with me to Acts chapter 2 if you've got a Bible with you. Acts chapter 2 and in verses 22 to 24 Peter is preaching. And he says this.

He says, Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst and you yourselves know.

And this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Then he speaks about how the resurrection fulfills the Old Testament. And do you see what he's doing? He's saying, you thought Jesus was nothing more than a common criminal or swear words. But God's assessment is very different and the proof of that is the resurrection.

[17:54] Verse 32 to 33 comes to his conclusion. And he says, this Jesus God raised up and of all that were witnesses being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Spirit he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

And his conclusion verse 36 that all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified. It's a really interesting sermon.

You could go to Acts 4 and see the same thing. You could go to many of the sermons and Acts but notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say let all the house of Israel know that because Jesus is risen from the dead you can have eternal life and go to heaven.

He doesn't say that. It's true but that isn't what Jesus says. That isn't what the preaching and Acts says. He doesn't say this. He doesn't say God loves you very very much and you are really important to God.

And God wants the very best for you and that is true. You may hear that. But that isn't how they preached the gospel and Acts.

[19:06] Or you might hear this Jesus died an atoning death for our sins. Please come to the Lord Jesus. And again that is true. But it's not how they preached the gospel and Acts.

How did they preach it? They said your view of Jesus is exactly the opposite of God's. And the proof of that is the resurrection. And what you think is wrong.

And what you've done is wrong. And the one whom you crucified do you realize now rules heaven and earth. We could pick half a dozen sermons in the book of Acts that Christ is the key to God's everything and the proof of that is the resurrection.

resurrection. And it's so confrontational isn't it? So, so very confrontational to say what you think of Jesus is wrong.

And you've misunderstood who he is. You've got to understand that he is God's king. He is God's enthroned ruler and he is Lord whether you like it or not. Matthew's point in Matthew 28 is that the resurrection is a great reversal.

[20 : 14] It's not just that Jesus is alive and stronger than death all that is true praise God. The key significance in Matthew's gospel is that Matthew is that Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and earth.

He is now Lord and Christ and that is the great reversal. So a reversal for the women for the guards and for Jesus and then finally let's come to the reversal for the disciples.

We think back to where the disciples were at the start of the Matthew 28 and they are scattered. They fled with their tails between their legs and through the words of the women they understand that Jesus is going back to Galilee.

And the point of verses 16 to 20 is that Jesus wants to spell out the implications of his resurrection to his disciples. And here's the central meaning of the resurrection if you're a follower of Christ. It's not just life after death. It is that but it's not just that. It's not just our resurrection. But in Matthew's gospel the key point of the resurrection is an occasion for Jesus to transfer his mission to his church's mission.

[21 : 29] That's why there's such an emphasis in Galilee. Galilee was the place where Jesus launched his first mission. And that's where he launches his continuing mission.

where his disciples will be the main players. Jesus will continue his ministry as the risen and ascended Lord. He will continue to rescue people but in a different way.

Just look at verse 18. When he says all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, what's the obvious question? All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

What's the obvious question? What are you going to do with it? And the answer is he doesn't say he is going to do anything at all, does he? So verse 18 he says all authority has been given to me, therefore you go, you go and make disciples.

The result and the consequences of Jesus' risen authority is spelt out on what his church will do on earth. In verses 19 to 20 in English we have four commands, go, make baptize, baptize and teach.

[22 : 40] But in the Greek there's one command and that command is make disciples. And the other three are all there to serve the one command. So Jesus' complete authority in heaven and earth is exercised as his people make disciples.

And so if you want to see Jesus in action and you want to see what Jesus' authority looks like, you see it most clearly when people make disciples. And the whole idea of making disciples is not kind of dreamt up in the 1970s by some American, it comes directly from the risen Jesus.

It's a really precious word, isn't it? It's the word to be used to describe Christians and it describes kind of two aspects, two ideas. A disciple is primarily a learner.

learner. And when you become a disciple of Jesus, you become a lifelong learner. You never reach a stage as a follower of Jesus where you've learned it all, there's nothing more to learn.

Following Jesus ought to make you more curious in every area of life. And the second part of being a disciple is that of being a follower. And that describes our personal attachment to Jesus.

[24 : 02] Jesus. We're not learning for the sake of learning. The life of the disciple is to be different from every kind of life precisely because of our love and allegiance for Jesus.

Basically, we love him and we want to know him. It's not primarily an intellectual assignment. It means that as we live our lives, we open up our lives, every area of our life to him and he opens every area of his life to us.

But Jesus here doesn't command us to be disciples, he commands us to make disciples. That's terribly important. There's loads of confusion, isn't there, as to what churches should be doing.

This chapter tells us our central purpose as disciples of Jesus is to make disciples of the nations, to call on people to change their allegiance, to call on them to recognize that the one they thought was irrelevant to life is actually the Lord and Christ.

To call on them to recognize that he has all authority in heaven and on earth. And Jesus doesn't spell that out in detail, but he does tell us three things it'll involve. He says it'll involve going. That means it will not come naturally to us as a church family.

[25 : 27] It will need to stir us up. to move us out of our comfort zone. It will be a bother that if you're going to make making disciples a priority, it will be a bother.

Secondly, it will mean baptizing with the local body of Christ. We don't become disciples in isolation. You are not a disciple, in fact, unless you're bound up with other disciples.

discipleship is all about the church. Thirdly, it'll involve you teaching you to observe all I've commanded you.

It's not so that you become some kind of Bible nerd, but that our lives would be recognizably different. So that means there'll be a comprehensiveness to it.

means there'll be a comprehensiveness to it. The book finishes, doesn't it, with enormous encouragement. Enormous encouragement from the risen Jesus.

[26 : 28] Jesus to whom belongs all authority. And he says, your mission as my church is to go into all the world and to make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them.

And then he gives this remarkable promise, doesn't he? And he says, at the end of verse 20, I am with you always. At the end of the age. Gospel of Matthew begins, doesn't it, with Jesus coming as Emmanuel, God with us.

And Matthew's gospel finishes with him saying to his people, I am God to you. God with you to the end of the age.

And I'm not winging my way into heaven, leaving you to do the work. I am deeply invested. I am promising my personal companionship, not just every day, but always.

So it doesn't matter what your circumstances are, that you're in. It doesn't matter whether you feel like it. It doesn't matter whether you feel like he's with us or is he not with us?

[27 : 39] any success or any success? any success or any success? any success or any success? any success or any success? any success or any success?