

# Easter 2026 - Matthew 28:1-20

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[0:00] Let me add my word of welcome. If you're a visitor here, if this is your first time here, you are very, very welcome indeed. Don't rush away, we'd love to get to know you.

If you've got a Bible near you, I'd love you to turn with me to page 835. Grab one of the Bibles, page 835, and in Matthew 28. Matthew chapter 28.

There are days which turn everything upside down. There are days which turn everything upside down, where nothing is the same ever again.

Your birth, for the people who were around, your parents, probably turned everything upside down. Nothing was the same in your family ever again. You were born.

Marriages. Two people walk into a church. They walk in two single people. They leave joined together in marriage.

[1:08] Their lives are turned upside down. Nothing is the same ever again. A diagnosis from the doctor. I know life is turned upside down.

A death. And a tragedy. And life is turned upside down. And Matthew's point in the last chapter of his gospel is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ turns everything upside down.

And when Jesus walked out of the grave on that first Easter Sunday, nothing is the same ever again. It's a huge reversal in the world.

Somebody walks back from death. And Matthew shows us that in this chapter by showing us those reversals in the life of everyone that the resurrection touches.

The resurrection of Jesus shatters for all time people going back to normal. Of business as usual. And Matthew's interest is not in the mechanics of how it happened.

[2:12] In fact, we're not told how it happened. We are told that it's a miracle. But we're told of the massive impact it has on four different types of people. And so what I want to do is just walk you through this chapter and see the reversals, the upheaval, the wonderful change that the resurrection brings.

First, in the women. Look at verse 1 of Matthew chapter 28. Now, after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

They don't know that a guard has been posted. They don't know how they're going to roll the stone away, how they're going to get access to the body. But they are in for a huge surprise.

When they discover the guards lying on the ground, trembling. And the stone guarding the tomb has been rolled away. And even worse, there's an angel sitting on the stone.

And he's no ordinary messenger. This is an angel who has come from God. Look at verse 5. The angel said to the women, Do not be afraid. For I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

[3:21] He's not here, for he is risen. As he said, come and see the place where he lay. And then go quickly and tell his disciples that he's risen from the dead. And behold, he's going before you to Galilee and there you will see him.

The angel is clear that the stone covering the tomb has been rolled away not to let Jesus out, but to let the women see in. And we are not left to guess what it means.

The angel tells you exactly what it means. He says, doesn't he, Jesus who was crucified, who was killed, is now risen. He says it twice.

You're at the right tomb. This was Jesus' tomb. And he was dead. But he's no longer dead. And he's risen from the dead. It's not reincarnation. Jesus has risen from the dead.

And it is impossible for you and I in those simple words to grasp the enormous transformation that has taken place. For the first time in all of history, the iron grip of death has been broken from the inside out.

[4:28] Somebody has gone through death and come out the other side and shown that he's stronger. The angel says that Jesus has defeated death.

Recently, I read of a Muslim student, a Muslim student in Africa who had become a Christian. And when his friends asked him why that is, why he'd become a Christian, this is what he said.

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

One dead and one alive. Who would you ask for directions? There is a man who has come back from the dead who has walked out of the grave.

And as the women race off to tell the disciples, their imaginations are running ahead of them. You can imagine they're completely discombobulated and they meet the risen Lord Jesus. Verse 9, can you see it?

[5:35] He met them. Verse 9, Jesus met them and said, greetings. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.

And then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid. Again, second time we're told it, do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me. Jesus meets them, this terrifying figure who's come back from the dead and he greets them in the most ordinary way possible.

he says, hi, hello. If he was Australian he'd have said, g'day. If he was Welsh he'd say, shammai. It's just the normal greetings. And they take hold of his feet and they worship him. Why is that important?

This is not a ghost. It's not a hallucination. It's not an apparition. It is real. It is tangible. It is bodily. They grab hold of his feet. It is a physical resurrection.

[6:37] resurrection. He's not really, merely resuscitated back to life. When Lazarus, earlier on in the Gospels, rose from the grave, they didn't worship him, did they?

But they worshiped Jesus. No, this is a risen Lord Jesus, raised physically from the dead with feet you can hold on to. And Jesus encourages the women, don't fear.

And he gives them the same job that the angels gave them. Go and tell. Because their world has turned upside down. Two days ago, those women had been at the cross.

You see that at the end of Matthew 27. We're told about them. They stand observing the cross and observing Jesus being buried and they are powerless and they are weak and they are helpless.

They are the most powerless people in the story. And on that resurrection morning, they go to anoint a dead body. Their hopes have been shattered. The bottom has fallen out of their world and now, by verse 10 of chapter 28, these women are center stage.

[7:42] Their hopes that have been shattered have been literally raised to life. Their fears have been transformed into confidence. They are the first witnesses of the risen Lord Jesus.

It is a complete reversal for the women. Their lives are turned upside down and it is based on the fact that Jesus has risen from the dead. Fearful, grieving, hopes dashed, powerless.

Is that you this morning? You've come here this morning. Your world is falling apart. Outwardly, everything might seem great, but you don't know how you're going to go on.

Your hopes are dashed and there's a message to you from the resurrection this morning. Jesus says your life can be transformed. Your world can be turned upside down. The second group are the guards.

The soldiers. I think you've got to have real sympathy for these guards. It's a routine exercise. You can imagine it. What have you got to do? What's the job for tonight? You've got to go and keep a dead body dead.

[8:50] That's all you've got to do. Just stand guard outside the tomb. There's a massive rock outside the entrance. They had sealed it with whatever they could find. These guards, they are the picture, aren't they, of authority and power in the story.

They're the ones in control. They are the winners. They've defeated this kind of insurrectionist. They are the ones with the weapons. They are the ones with the capability.

They're the ones in command. These are the guys in control. Look at verse 2. And behold, there was a great earthquake for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and he sat on it.

His appearance was like lightning and his clothing as white as snow. I don't know what you think of when you think of angels. You might think of little kids in a nativity concert, you know, wearing sheets with little wings attached.

Angels are talked of really positively, aren't they, in our culture. Sophie Burnham wrote this in a little book of angels. Angels always bring us a calm and peaceful serenity that descends sweetly over you.

[10:00] Their message is always don't worry, things are working out perfectly, you're going to like this. It's nothing like the Bible's angels. Look at this angel. This angel in verse 2, he brings a splintering earthquake, he tosses the stone to one side and then he comes and he rests on it.

It's a lovely picture. Here is a picture of death, a symbol of the closed door of death. The security of the grave and the only respect that the angel pays to it is to sit in it.

I grew up with two elder brothers. Next elder brother is eight years older than me and occasionally we would fight and we would wrestle and how do you know that you would won the wrestle? How do you know that you would won the wrestle against your brother?

What does the victor do? He sits on the loser, doesn't he? And so my brothers would sit on me until you say, I give up, I give up. And here's this glorious picture, isn't it?

It's like he's sitting on death. The angel, that's the respect that he pays for it. He's defeated death. Can you see there's a little play on the words in verses 2 and 3?

[11:11] The word tremble. So what happens in verse 2, can you see there's an earthquake, there's a great earthquake. And then in verse 4, can you see what happens to the guards?

They quake. They tremble. The guards experience the same word for earthquake. The guards 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 him.

And those whose job it was to keep Jesus from rising, they quake as well. All they had to do was to keep a dead man dead and with all their power and all their skill, they couldn't do it.

And instead, Matthew says, can you see the play on words, they became like, what did they become like? Dead men. They became like dead men because the one who was dead is now alive. What's happened? Their world has been turned upside down. And the living and the powerful ones become like dead men because the dead one has been raised from the dead. And the resurrection, it brings about a complete reversal.

[12:32] It brings about a complete reversal in the values of our world. What we think of as the great human powers are ultimately utterly powerless.

Death, so powerful, is now transformed into life. We don't have time to look at it, but if you look at verses 11 to 15, there's a remarkable contrast between the joy and the thrill and the obedience of the women and the way that the guards reluctantly go to the chief priests and tell them what's happened.

And the response of the priests, the response of the authorities is to do whatever they can to cover it up. And I think it's a wonderful little story because it shows you and I that the resurrection faces us with this fundamental choice of are you going to be like the women who fall at Jesus' feet and worship him or are you going to be like the guards and the authorities who hold on to the illusion of their own power and your own control and kid yourself that you're going to keep in control.

And one is the way of deception and death and the other is the way of life. The resurrection of Jesus turns everything upside down.

And so for the control freak this morning for the person who's buttoned down everything in their life writes endless lists because they can't bear being out of control who has to be in charge who wants to keep their life exactly the way they want it and they've planned out their life for the next 10, 5, 10, 15, 20 years there's a message from the resurrection and the message is you're not in control and sooner or later you will discover that life is in control so stop pretending and recognize the one who is Lord of all.

[14:43] Not only for the women and for the guards but thirdly most importantly the third person that the resurrection brings this reversal for is the Lord Jesus himself. Twice the angel tells you Jesus has been raised.

The will of God was not to leave him in the grave but to raise him from the dead and Matthew wants to take his keeper so look at verse 18 Jesus speaks after being raised from the dead and he says this he says all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me and the word authority there is not just naked power but it is Jesus saying I have the right to decide I have the freedom to act I can act with God's own authority and now it is Jesus' authority because God has given it to him and Jesus says my authority is unrestricted and unqualified it is unconditional it is an authority that extends from the furthest reaches of space into the smallest subatomic particle it draws under its canopy all men and women and boys and girls who have ever lived and Jesus' authority does not wax and wane it does not diminish over time it doesn't weaken with circumstances no he says all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me it is an incredible claim he is claiming that he has authority over angels and archangels demons principalities over might over thrones over governments over the natural world over the supernatural world over the animals over you and over me and he has the ability and the freedom and the right and that is really important because there is no area there is no people there is no culture there is no single being in all the universe that lies outside the authority of Jesus Christ you might not like it but that doesn't change it Jesus Christ could not assert with any more clarity his absolute faultless consummate authority and here is a man who two days ago was crucified naked on a cross who was put to death who was mocked and scorned and now he is risen from the dead and he is saying all authority is mine and I think that is the key point of the chapter and so it is no wonder is it that Jesus received their worship look at verse 9 in verse 9 they come up and they take hold of his feet those women and they worship him and in verse 17 when they saw him they worshipped him and Jesus receives their worship he doesn't stop them he doesn't say no no I am just a good guy I am not really the son of God Jesus is conscious that the resurrection brings a new moment it is a new day and this new moment is marked by his universal lordship if there is any doubt can you see that he includes himself in the name of the single name of God he talks about in the name of the father the son and the holy spirit this is how God is known and I think that when we understand this we come to the heart of Christianity because when the early Christians preached the gospel of the Lord Jesus this is how they preached it they said you rejected Jesus as worthless and irrelevant you thought he wasn't who he said he was you treated him as worthless and irrelevant but God has raised him from the dead and enthroned him in heaven where he is Lord and Christ and that I think is the key significance of the gospel yes it's true that God loves you very very much and you are important and God wants your very best for you yes it is true that Jesus came and died an atoning death for your sins that is true but the way that the New Testament preaches the gospel it says what you thought of Jesus is wrong and actually he is the exact opposite of what you thought he is Lord and God and the proof of that is the resurrection it's so bold isn't it what you think is wrong what you've done is wrong the one you've crucified now rules heaven and earth you could pick half a dozen sermons in the book of Acts and see this and Matthew's point in Matthew 28 is this understand that the resurrection is a great reversal that Jesus is alive and he's stronger than death and you and I must bow before him and worship him and God has given him all authority in heaven and on earth and so we can trust him and we can live for him and we can come under his control he is now Lord and Christ and that is the great reversal for Jesus and so for some of you that's revolutionary isn't it that Jesus is not who you think he is in fact as you understand something of the great reversal and the significance of Jesus Christ you've got to realise like I did I got it all wrong about him it's why we're running this course Christianity Explored we're going to have three weeks where we look at the teaching of Jesus you can come with any questions and you can come and look at the evidence of who he says he is and what he did and what he's done for you that he is Lord and Christ so there's a reversal in the resurrection for the women and for the guards and for the Lord Jesus but lastly there's a reversal for the disciples the followers the followers of Jesus in the week leading up to the cross what had they done they had deserted him they denied him they'd fled from him they were scattered from him but they gathered together through the words of these women and the point of verses 16 to 20 is Jesus wants to spell out what the resurrection means for his

followers and here's the central meaning of the resurrection that Jesus has transferred his mission what he came to do to our mission as a church that Jesus continues as the risen and ascended [21:26] Lord he continues to call disciples like you and I from all over the world and when he says that he's been given all authority in heaven and earth the question is Jesus what are you going to do with that authority what are you going to do with that authority and the answer in verse 18 is quite shocking isn't it he says to his church all authority has been given to me therefore you go and make disciples there's four things in verses 19 and 20 in our English Bible really it's one word that Jesus is talking about there it's about making disciples and it's really important that you and I understand what that word means on this resurrection morning it's a really precious word because the word disciple is another word for Christian a disciple first of all is a learner when you become a follower of the Lord Jesus you become a lifelong learner none of us no matter how long we've been disciples have reached a stage where we've arrived where we've got nothing to learn where we've got nothing to learn following Jesus ought to make you more curious as a human being following Jesus means that you're a learner but the second part of being a disciple is of being a follower that is there is a personal attachment to

Jesus it's not learning for the sake of learning so the life of a disciple is different from every other kind of life precisely because our allegiance is to Jesus we love him and we want to know him and we want to follow in his ways and so becoming a follower of the Lord Jesus becoming a disciple becoming a Christian is not essentially primarily an intellectual assignment it means being willing to open up every area of your life to him and this chapter gives us our job as a church that what is our church all about it is about making disciples people who are followers and learners of the Lord Jesus and it is to call on you this morning to call on me to change my allegiance to recognise! that the one that I thought was irrelevant is Lord and Christ to call on you to recognise that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth and the book finishes with an enormous encouragement from the risen Jesus the risen Jesus who has all authority he says can you see it I am with you to the end of the age Mark's gospel starts with Matthew's gospel starts with Jesus as Emmanuel the baby do you know what the word Emmanuel the word Emmanuel means God with us that's why Jesus came he came to be with us and as we get to the end of the gospel can you see what the end of the gospel Jesus message is he is with his people always Jesus came to rescue he came to be with you he says

I am deeply invested I am promising my personal companionship every day and so it doesn't matter what your circumstances are this morning it doesn't matter whether you feel like it or not he is with us always to the end of the age his presence is not intermittent in success or in failure his presence doesn't wax and wane in joy or sorrow in youth or in old age he says if you will come to me I will never leave you and so we began this morning didn't we by thinking of days which turn everything upside down of days which change everything and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is one of those days but today can be one of those days you can come to the Lord Jesus with all your fears and all your worries and all your broken and shattered dreams like the women and you can come with all your control freakery and you're trying to organise life and trying to not let anything slip and you can bring it all to the

Lord Jesus and you can bring your brokenness and your rebellion and your ignoring him and treating him like an irrelevance and not realising who he is and see that he is the one who lived and died for your sins but who is wonderfully risen from the dead and he is now Lord and God and he is all authority and he is worthy of your worship and your life and you today can come with all your hangups and you can put your life into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ and say I want to be your disciple I want to follow the Lord Jesus I want to be a lifelong learner I don't know everything there is to know but what I do know is that I need you Lord and you can ask him today and if you will trust him and if you will submit yourself to his authority he says

[27:23] I can forgive you and you can ask him to save you and rescue you and you can trust him and the promise is this that he will lead you and he will guide you and he will be with you and so you can walk out of this

building knowing that he who has all authority in heaven and earth will be with you to the end of the age or you can pretend or you can pretend that the resurrection never really happened you can pretend that he doesn't have all authority you can pretend that you're in control and you can sort yourself out how's that working out how is that going recognize the reality that there was a day when someone walked out of the grave and he is Lord and God and so follow him call out to him cry into him and you will be saved let's pause for a moment

I'm going to pray let's pause in the silence you can cry to God now you can pray to him in your heart  
God