

## **Intro**

Oftentimes we want certainty.

Certainty that we won't have bad weather during our vacation. Certainty that we won't get COVID the day before we're scheduled to fly. Certainty that our snow blower isn't going to break down prematurely. Certainty that we'll have plenty stored away for retirement. Certainty that we won't get Alzheimer's.

In this life there's many things we can't be certain about.

But when God the Father resurrected God the Son, Jesus, the Father vindicated Jesus such that many things became certain. This morning we learn that...

**BIG IDEA: The resurrection makes us sure about a lot of things!**

## **READ PASSAGE**

## **PRAY**

## **Body**

### **Passage Focus**

The eyewitness account then 5 implications of the resurrection.

Matthew presents the facts to counter lies being spread in his day.

### **Scene 1: Jesus buried (27:57-61)**

Crucified criminals were normally dumped in a mass grave. But Jesus was buried in a rich man's tomb (27:60). Scripture fulfilled.

*And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. – Isaiah 53:9*

Crucified with the wicked. Buried in a rich man's grave.

Jesus died around 3pm and Joseph of Arimathea must have approached Pilate quickly because Jesus' body needed to be prepared and buried before sundown when Sabbath began. From Luke and John we learn that Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin that didn't consent to Jesus' crucifixion, a secret disciple, and the tomb was close to the crucifixion site (Luke 23:50-51; John 19:38-42). Joseph could approach Pilate because he was in the Sanhedrin.

Jesus's tomb was cut out of a rock formation. And sealed with a large rolling stone. A disc-shaped stone kind of like one of our rolling tables in the gym, but thicker and much heavier.

The two Marys are significant. They see Jesus die. They see Jesus buried. They see Jesus risen. This is eyewitness testimony. One could look them or their relatives up to confirm. Matthew was written about 30 years after the resurrection.

We could only know these things if eyewitnesses recorded them!

The “other Mary” is Jesus’ mother or the mother of James and Joses (Mark 15:40) or the wife of Clopas (John 19:25).

### **Scene 2: Guards in place (27:62-66)**

The next day is Saturday, the Sabbath. The chief priests (mostly Sadducees) and Pharisees join together. Religious opponents joining together for a common cause: stop the Jesus movement. Like Republicans and Democrats in a united front against an independent candidate.

They understood Jesus’ claims about rising after three days. They didn’t believe he would actually rise, but they were concerned Jesus’ disciples would steal the body and proclaim a hoax resurrection.

Likely Roman soldiers because:

- 1) The world “soldier” (27:65; 28:12).
- 2) The Sanhedrin seeks Pilate’s help.
- 3) The soldiers are afraid of Pilate’s punishment.
- 4) The soldiers ultimately answer to Pilate (28:14).

Jesus’ tomb was secured by “*sealing the stone and setting a guard*” (28:66). The seal was wax or clay placed at the cracks where the rolling stone and the tomb entrance met. Probably stamped with an official Roman symbol. Broken seal would reveal tampering. A guard was a group of soldiers.

### **Scene 3: Jesus risen (28:1-10)**

The first day of the week is Sunday. Dawn means sometime Sunday morning. The two Marys knew the exact tomb because they saw Jesus buried. Per Mark 16:1 they were going to anoint Jesus’ dead body, not to find him risen.

Ironically, the Sanhedrin remembered Jesus’ words about raising his dead body after three days, but Jesus’ disciples didn’t (John 2:19-22).

An angel appeared with an earthquake and rolled back the heavy stone. Pilate’s guards saw the whole thing. Their response? Hardened soldiers became like dead men. Petrified.

The angel comforts the two Marys - “*Do not be afraid*”, reveals what’s happened - “*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*”, and gives them instructions - “*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 depart quickly. Urgency mixed with fear and joy. That’s fear as in being afraid and joy as in gladness. Extraordinary news.

While running they meet the risen Jesus. Resurrection confirmed. They worship Jesus = he’s God. Jesus says don’t be afraid and tell the brothers to meet me in Galilee.

Another eyewitness account.

### **Scene 4: The lie that was spread (28:11-15)**

The soldiers fear Pilate’s retribution so they tell the chief priests what happened (28:11). The Sanhedrin decides to pay the soldiers off to spread a lie:

*"Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' <sup>14</sup> And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."* – 28:13-14

**Protection and payment.** Protection because they have failed Pilate. Falling asleep on duty could result in execution. Payment possibly because soldiers who fall asleep while guarding a tomb find themselves out of work and in hiding.

*And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.* – 28:15

A lie spread since the time of the resurrection into 60's AD. Matthew is explaining the origin of the lie. The origin of the Sanhedrin's narrative. Some questions jump out:

- 1) If the soldiers were asleep, how did they know what happened to the body? Who took it?
- 2) How did they remain asleep?

They must have been in a pretty deep sleep!

- 3) If the disciples stole the body, why weren't they arrested?

The disciples were arrested were proclaiming the gospel in the days following the resurrection (Acts 4:1-3), but never for theft of Jesus' body. Why not?

### **Basic Proofs**

- 1) Eyewitness testimony.

Normal legal procedure is to accept eyewitness accounts unless proven false. How else could we know?

Presenting unfavorable details of early leaders like Peter suggests authenticity. Deceivers don't highlight their faults.

In the gospels the resurrection events are presented in diverse ways with each eyewitness adding their own details. A rehearsed conspiracy/lie wouldn't allow for this diversity.

Women are presented as key eyewitnesses at a time when the witness of women wasn't valued. If deception was intended, this didn't help their cause.

- 2) The empty tomb.

Jewish authorities didn't have Jesus' body. All they had to do was produce Jesus' body to end Christianity.

Why weren't the apostles arrested?

Why couldn't they secure the tomb?

How could Roman guards fall asleep when the punishment for failure was likely death?

The evidence suggests the disciples had no opportunity to steal and there was great motive to maintain the body, yet the Jewish leadership couldn't produce the body!

- 3) Persecution endured

Why would disciples subject themselves to persecution, and even death, for something they knew to be false? Early believers were executed for their faith. People don't die for claims they know to be hoaxes. No one gave up the "hoax" when threatened with death.

### **Point 1: Unbelief is primarily a matter of what we love, not what we know**

#### **Explanation**

The Sanhedrin knew a lot about Jesus.

- 1) They knew he healed a paralytic (crippled person unable to walk – Matt 9:4-7).
- 2) They knew he was casting out demons (Matt 9:34).
- 3) They knew he healed a man with a withered hand (Matt 12:9-14).
- 4) They knew he brought Lazarus back to life (John 11:45-53).
- 5) They knew he healed the blind and the lame in the temple that Monday (Matt 21:14-16).
- 6) They knew from the Roman soldiers' testimony that an angel appeared with an earthquake and rolled back the stone (Matt 28:2-4).

They had enough evidence to confirm Jesus' claims. Yet they persisted in unbelief. Manufacturing lies to cover the truth.

We learn from Matthew's gospel that they loved to be seen by others, they loved having the place of honor at feasts, they loved having the best seats in the synagogues, they loved being greeted in the marketplace, they loved being called Rabbi (Matt 23:5-7). But they didn't love the attention Jesus received. Jesus was a threat to what they loved. Pilate knew they delivered Jesus for crucifixion out of envy (Matt 27:18).

What they loved stood in the way of repentance and faith. Not a lack of facts.

#### **Application**

What we love can prevent us from following Jesus. What we love can prevent us from embracing truth.

Is there anything you love that stands in the way of following Jesus? Autonomy? Peer approval? Family approval? Drunkenness? Pride that I'm a good person who doesn't need to be forgiven? Pride that my view of right and wrong is better than God's?

Our problem as fallen sinners is disordered loves. We love the wrong things!

### **Point 2: We can be sure that we have it right**

#### **Explanation**

That's a pretty bold claim. Sounds pretty arrogant right? No more arrogant than a Democrat political candidate saying I have the endorsement of Obama. No more arrogant than a Republican candidate saying I have the endorsement of the NRA. What's an endorsement? A public declaration of support and approval. At the resurrection, God the Father gave his public endorsement of Jesus.

No more arrogant than an NFL player saying I am one of the best to play the game. What's the point of a Hall of Fame induction? Public affirmation of a player's career. Hall of Fame selection means a player was

one of the best and deserves to be recognized as such. At the resurrection, God the Father gave his public affirmation of Jesus. His seal of approval.

God the Father affirmed a number of things when he endorsed Jesus:

- 1) Jesus' teachings.
- 2) Jesus' understanding of the Old Testament (it's God's Word).
- 3) Jesus' apostles (Matt 16:18 = Jesus will build his church through his apostles).
- 4) Jesus' apostles as the divinely appointed writers of the New Testament (every NT book was written by an apostle, a brother of Jesus, or a traveling companion of the apostles).

We could say the Father's affirmation of Jesus was an affirmation of our Bible.

What I'm not saying. Not saying the resurrection guarantees we interpret the Bible rightly. You can have the right book and use it incorrectly.

What I am saying. The resurrection sets Christianity apart from all world religions. No other world religion has been authenticated by God. God authenticated Christianity. No other religious book has been authenticated by God. God authenticated the Bible. With the resurrection we can know we have the right Savior, the right God, and the right book.

### **Point 3: We can be sure that we are saved**

#### **Explanation**

The resurrection endorses and affirms Jesus' promises. Promises like:

*for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.* – Matthew 26:28

*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.* – John 5:24

How does forgiveness come to sinners? Through the blood of Christ. On the cross Jesus died such that whoever believes in him will receive the benefits of his death = forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus died as a substitute. If we believe, the Father's wrath against our sins was poured out on Jesus and we're declared not guilty. If we persist in rebellion, we'll face the Father's wrath when Jesus returns.

Salvation is past, present, and future. At the point in time when we believed all sins we'll ever commit were forgiven and we began to experience an ongoing peace with God. Presently we're being delivered from the power of sin in that the Holy Spirit is working God's character in us. Future in that we'll have glorified bodies that can't die or sin or decay and we'll reign with God in his eternal kingdom.

### **Point 4: We can be sure there will be a final judgment**

*"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."* – Acts 17:30-31

How can we be certain there will be a final judgment? God raised Jesus from the dead. Why does every ever born need to repent? Because the world, peoples from every nation, will be judged. In other words, the resurrection grounds the gospel.

We need to repent and believe because the resurrection happened. Everyone needs to repent assumes universal rebellion against God. We need to turn from rebellion to trust. Trust in Jesus' death to rescue us from our sins.

God is merciful. God delights in showing mercy to rebels. How can we know? Jesus died on the cross.

### **Point 5: We can be sure spiritual growth is possible**

#### **Explanation**

*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. – Romans 6:4*

Jesus was raised to alter our manner of life. The resurrection corrects something wrong about us.

*Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. – Romans 7:4*

Jesus was raised was so that we could bear fruit for God. This assumes we're unfruitful apart from the new birth.

So the resurrection says, if I believe, if I'm born again, I can develop new patterns in my life, I can make wise choices, I can develop self-control, I can control my tongue, I can break that addiction, I can love that difficult person, I can have joy and peace in the middle of that hard circumstance, I can persevere in my marriage, I can share the gospel...in the strength that God supplies. Jesus was raised from the dead to change us in this life!

#### **Conclusion**

In the resurrection, God the Father endorsed and affirmed Jesus. **The resurrection makes us sure about a lot of things!**

Our Savior, our Bible, our salvation, the final judgment, newness of life.