

MATTHEW 28

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

On the third day after the death of our Lord Jesus, two of the faithful women who had witnessed His burial returned to the tomb. But what a sight met their eyes there – the earth trembling, an angel descending from heaven, and the soldiers becoming so afraid that they were like dead men! And He Who had been crucified and dead was no longer lying within the burial-cavern. “Fear not ye,” declared the angel to the women; “for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.” And what were the next words of the angel? “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said!” How surprised these women were when they plainly saw that Jesus’ resurrected Body was no longer lying in the grave! We may truly share in the joy which they had when they were told that He was “risen, as he said!” And because we are assured of our Savior’s own resurrection – when our own loved ones pass into heaven, or when we draw near to the time when we ourselves shall depart this earthly life – we may be comforted with the hope that looks forward to that glad and glorious time when every grave shall be emptied, and when every single one of Christ’s redeemed people shall be raised up to share the blessedness of new life forever!

Being filled with happy tidings, the women departed quickly from the empty tomb (as the angel bade them) to tell the disciples that their Lord had risen from the dead. And as they were going along, Jesus Himself met them! They immediately recognized Him, held Him by the feet, and worshiped Him. Our Lord also encouraged these devout women, saying, “Be not afraid.”

The soldiers who were supposed to be keeping watch had no sooner recovered from their alarm, than they went to tell the chief priests what had happened, who gave them a large bribe so that they would spread a false account of the things that had transpired: “His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.” In this story, we may observe one clear proof of falsehood, and it is this: if they had really been asleep, how in the world would they know what had happened in the meantime? How would they have known whether the body had been stolen, or whether it had risen from the grave of its own accord? And if the body had indeed been taken by thieves, how could they have known *who* stole it? And then, too, if it had been stolen away, is it likely that Christ’s friends would have wished to unwind the clothes that covered His sacred body? Or if the alleged culprits were His enemies, are we to suppose that they would have risked being caught, just to take the time to undress the dead body – not to mention the leaving behind of such a valuable linen shroud that Joseph’s love had provided? What absurdity! Skeptics have to believe greater

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The women find the tomb empty and are met by Christ Himself – verses 1-10
- ❖ The guards are bribed to say that Jesus’ body was stolen – verses 11-15
- ❖ Jesus ascends into heaven in the presence of His disciples – verses 16-20

marvels than believers do. But it is sadly common that people will believe any lie rather than God's truth, unless their hearts are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

But in contrast with this manifest falsehood of the soldiers and the Jewish leaders, this chapter provides four distinct testimonies to the resurrection of our blessed Lord: first, the words of the angel to the women; second, the appearing of Christ Himself to them; third, the true account which the guards gave to the elders; and lastly, our Lord's own appearance in Galilee to His disciples. Here it was that He had told them to meet Him. Here they saw His risen body, and here they heard the last words of love which He is recorded to have uttered while on earth. How full were those words of affection for mankind! How full of care our Redeemer is for the salvation of the world! "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." This is how He desires us to use the power that we receive from Him: to feed His flock, and to take diligent means and methods to enlarge it. Christ's people have their plain directions: to teach and to baptize. They are to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; and they are to teach people to "observe all things" that Christ has commanded. And He has given us His gracious promise: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He will be with us through life, strengthening us by His grace; He will be with us in the hour of death, supporting us by the hope of His appearing; and He will be with us in the resurrection from the dead, receiving us into the brightness of His glory!



Our Lord Jesus has ascended into heaven, where He is hidden from our physical eyes while we live upon this earth. Between us and the visible presence of that glorified Redeemer Who now sits at the right hand of God, the Ascension-cloud still rolls. But the eye of Faith can pierce it! The incense of true prayer can rise above it; and through it, the dew of His blessing can descend upon us. Yes, He has gone up to heaven. But in His Holy Spirit, He has given us a nearer sense of His presence and a closer enfolding in the arms of His tenderness than we could have enjoyed even if we had lived with Him in those olden days in His hometown of Nazareth, or if we had sailed with Him in the little boat over the crystal waters of Gennesaret! He promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world; and we have not found His promise to fail. It was only for 33 years that He lived upon earth, and it was only for three broken and troubled years that He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. But until all the ages have closed, and until the earth and the heavens that now exist have passed away, every one of His children shall forever find peace, hope, and forgiveness in His name Emmanuel – "God with us!"

Thank You, dear Lord Jesus, for Your gracious assurance that You have made to all of Your redeemed people, that You are with us for all time and eternity! Amen.