

He Must Go To Jerusalem

*²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.
(Matthew 16:21. ESV)*

Just As He Said
Easter Sunday
April 20th, 2014
Matthew 28:1-10
Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Good morning! Open your Bibles please to Matthew 28:1-10. This is Matthew's account of the resurrection of our Lord. Hear now the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God:

Matthew 28:1-10 (ESV)

¹ 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.

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 sat on it.

³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.

⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

⁷ 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."

⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

This is one of the places where I think if we could we would like to say to Matthew: "Give us more! How did it happen? Did Jesus pass through the grave clothes in a flash of light or did he wake up and unwrap himself and then refold the clothes and put them back? Was he hungry when he woke up? Did he squeeze out of the tomb or did he pass right through the rock? We have all sorts of how questions don't we but the Bible doesn't answer any of them. Not one of the four Gospels describes the actual moment of the resurrection – not one. It happened – just as he said it would. The Gospels are very economical in their descriptions of the event and its

immediate aftermath; even when you combine all the accounts, as indeed it seems we are meant to do, you don't end up with a great deal more than we have here in these 10 verses. Luke names a few more of the ladies and also mentions that there were two angels present, not just the one who did the talking, John tells us that Mary Magdalene thought that Jesus was the gardener at first glance, but all are agreed on the basic outline of the story. Jesus rose from the dead – JUST AS HE SAID! An angel rolled away the stone, not so that Jesus could get out but so that the ladies could get in – the concern shifts immediately to verification, understanding and proclamation. Come and see and then go and tell. The ladies head out to tell the disciples that Jesus has risen and will meet them in Galilee and Jesus greets them as they are going out to further reassure them that he has indeed risen, they are not hallucinating, and to privilege them, I think, because of their faithful, courageous and loyal service throughout the events of his humiliation and death. That is probably the one detail of the event itself that is most worth considering before we move on to message and meaning of the event, as we are obviously intended to do. As brief as all the accounts are, they all seem to emphasize this one particular detail which is that women are privileged with a special appearance from Jesus and are entrusted with the first witness to the reality of the resurrection. That shouldn't be passed over.

I worry sometimes that our church has become known in this town for what we are against rather than what we are for. I'm not sure that in our day and age there is any way around that, but I worry about it nonetheless. Because we take the whole Bible seriously people in town tend to know that we are against treating men and women as if they are exactly the same. We take gender and gender differences seriously because the Bible does. We believe men and women are equal in dignity and worth but very different in terms of role and responsibility. We believe very highly in the office of motherhood. That is co-creator role, as Genesis 4:1 indicates, and it is massively significant. **MASSIVELY SIGNIFICANT**. In my manuscript I have that in BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS and I wish there was something more that I could do to indicate the esteem with which we treat that office. Let me just say that I do not believe that there is a more exalted office in the human sphere than the office of motherhood. Mothers you are CO-CREATORS with God; you make and mould the image bearers of Almighty God – that is HUGE! We believe that this task is primary and deserves priority attention and that puts us at odds with our culture that by and large tries to maximize options for women by denigrating motherhood and minimizing differences in gender and we are known in town as being opposed to those minimizing efforts. We are also known for believing that while the office of motherhood is given

to women the office of teaching pastor or elder within the church is given to men. Again because we take the Bible seriously we can't get around passages like 1 Timothy 2:9-15 which seem to state that rather emphatically. We think that both of those primary offices are important and we believe that they have been assigned on a gender basis – we think submitting to that as a church is part of what it means to tremble before the Word of God. We ask women in our church to prioritize motherhood and we ask men in our church to prioritize the teaching office in the home and in the public worship and we take some heat for that. While we can't avoid being known for some of what we are “against” I'm glad this passage gives us an opportunity to state what we are for. We are absolutely FOR the full and even priority inclusion of women in the universal responsibility of the Great Commission. Women are the first people commanded to share the Good News of the Resurrection and that should be noted and celebrated. We believe in this church that women are more often than not the first ones in when it comes to sharing the Gospel. We want you to be equipped, we want you to be trained and we want you to feel the full weight of permission and empowerment and encouragement for that job. My mother was the first person to share the Gospel with me and I was led to the Lord by Mrs. West when I was 6 years old at DVBS camp at King Bible Church. Women were first in with the Gospel, in my life, and they will be first in more often than not and we are emphatically FOR THAT.

Now, I want to turn the corner here from the details of what happened to the significance of what happened because, as I mentioned, that is where the emphasis lies in Scripture. Far more ink is spilled in the New Testament dealing with the meaning of the resurrection than is spent on the details of the event itself. Therefore, I want to ask and answer the question:

Why Is The Resurrection Of Jesus Such Good News?

Let me suggest four answers to that. First of all, the resurrection of Jesus is very good news because:

1. It proves that God's Word can be trusted

We get that one right from the text we read this morning. Look carefully at verse 6, the angel says to the women:

⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, **as he said**. Come, see the place where he lay.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is ultimately God's seal of approval on everything Jesus ever said. Jesus predicted his death and resurrection way back in Matthew 16:

Matthew 16:21 (ESV)

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, **and on the third day be raised**.

When everyone else was planning parade routes and lobbying for good jobs in the new administration Jesus knew the precise details of how God's plan of redemption would come to pass and he predicted it down to the letter. It happened – just as he said. If Jesus was right about that, then everything he said can be trusted.

Furthermore, the resurrection is God's vindication of everything the Bible says about Messiah. 1000 years before Jesus was born David prophesied that the Messiah would not linger and rot in the grave as other men do:

Psalm 16:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.

Peter preached on that prophesy in Acts 3 saying

Acts 2:25-36 (ESV)

²⁵ For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;

²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.

²⁷ **For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.**

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

²⁹ "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,

³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

³² This Jesus God raised up, and **of that we all are witnesses**.

We are witnesses to the fact that every word of Scripture will come to pass. This is one of the most specific and outrageous promises in the Bible and if God is keeping this one then you better believe that no Word of Scripture will be broken. God's Word can be trusted. Jesus said he

would die and he did. Jesus said he would rise again on the third day and he did. A thousand years before Jesus was born the Bible said he would die and not stay dead – that’s a pretty bold prediction and it came to pass, just as he said. The resurrection makes a pretty strong case that the Bible can be trusted.

Friends we live in a world that ridicules faith in the Word of God. We are told to trust in science. Science is our new authority, science is our firm foundation. Yes, science changes its mind a great deal and yes science makes some pretty bold claims and expects us to accept those claims upon very little evidence, but science is the new priesthood and reason our new god and we must obey without question. Those who tremble before the Word of God are primitive and unenlightened, or so the story goes. I’ll tell you what: you prove to me that the resurrection of Jesus Christ didn’t happen and I’ll bow down and worship at whatever altar you like; until then, I will put my trust in the Word of the Lord.

Secondly, the resurrection of Jesus is very good news because:

2. It proves that Christ’s redeeming work was effective

Take a look at Romans 4:25:

Romans 4:24-25 (ESV)

It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,
²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and **raised for our justification.**

Paul argues that the resurrection is the final stamp upon our legal justification before God. “Paid In Full” and “Qualified For Entry” – that’s what you want stamped on your passport come judgment day. The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead is the sign that God accepted his death as a just ransom for the sins of his people. It shows that God esteemed his life and death as a sufficient sacrifice for the redemption of sinners. It completed the transaction that established our just standing before the God to whom we must all give an account. That gives us confidence in facing final judgment. When you stand before God and he asks you “Why should I let you into heaven?” you want to know that the life and death of Jesus is sufficient for your standing. You want to know that his blood is sufficiently worthy in God’s eyes to pay for all your sin and you want to know that his life is sufficiently meritorious to purchase your entrance and

inheritance. The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead is your proof and your confidence that his life and death were enough. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the seal of God's approval upon the redeeming work of Christ.

Thirdly, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is very good news because:

3. It proves that Jesus is in charge

Matthew makes that connection in chapter 28 in verse 18:

Matthew 28:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

The Apostle Paul connects the resurrection with the authority of Jesus in Ephesians 1 when he says concerning the power of God which:

Ephesians 1:20-21 (ESV)

he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,
²¹ **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion**, and above every name that is named, **not only in this age but also in the one to come**.

When God raised Jesus from the dead he lifted him all the way up to the highest seat of authority in all the cosmos. He seated Jesus high above every rule and every authority and every power and all dominion such that he has ALL AUTHORITY in this age and in the age to come. What's more, Jesus promises to share that authority with all who persevere in faith. He said that multiple times in The Book of Revelation:

Revelation 2:26-27 (ESV)

²⁶ The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,
²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

Revelation 3:21 (ESV)

²¹ The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

The empty tomb is very good news because Jesus did not just come up from the dead, he went up to the heavens and has been given the highest seat and all authority and he has promised to share

that authority with those who persevere in faith until the end. Jesus is large and in charge and you can trust him with your life now and with your future for all eternity.

Lastly, the resurrection of Jesus is very good news because:

4. It proves that there is life beyond the grave

In 1 Corinthians 15 the Apostle Paul said:

1 Corinthians 15:19-23 (ESV)

¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

Paul is using the Old Testament imagery of first fruits there to describe the impact of the resurrection of Jesus. In the Old Testament worshippers gave the first fruits to God as a symbol that all of what they had ultimately belonged to God. Here Paul turns that around to say that God raised Christ from the dead to prove that all of those who belong to Christ will also be raised to life on the last day. The one is the proof of the whole. If Christ is raised from the dead then everyone united to Christ through faith will also be raised from the dead. That is why the Bible often talks of Jesus as the one who goes first, or as the author and pioneer of our faith. Jesus opens a way through death and into life everlasting – by the way, that is why the angel was sitting on the stone; did you notice that? In Matthew 28:2 the Bible says:

Matthew 28:2 (ESV)

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 sat on it.**

Why would Matthew include that detail? Why would an angel need to sit anyway? Was he tired? Was he unionized? What is going on here? William Hendriksen writes: “the heavy slab was lying flat on the ground and the angel was sitting upon it, **to symbolize Christ’s triumph.**”¹ In the resurrection of Jesus Christ the GRAVE IS DEFEATED! It no longer has the last word on

¹ William Hendriksen, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 989.

human life! There is more to come. Death is but a doorway now, a passage to a new and better world.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 (KJV)

⁵⁵ “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The empty tomb ends forever the tyranny of the grave and proves forever that Jesus can do for us what he said he would do. He promised in John 14:

John 14:2-3 (ESV)

² In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and will take you to myself**, that where I am you may be also.

Jesus said he would do that for us and the empty tomb proves that he can deliver on that promise. For all those who have repented of their sins and believed on Christ as Lord and Saviour death will not be the end; they will see their Redeemer in the flesh and they will be with him forever. This is the good news; and this is the trustworthy, certain and sure Word of the Lord; thanks be to God. Amen. Let’s worship the Lord together.