

The Resurrection

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] the Gospel according to Matthew chapter 28. And we'll read from the beginning of the chapter that reading from his word.

We continue singing in Psalm 30. We'll continue reading in the Gospel, in the Gospel according to Mark.

Chapter 16, from the beginning. 4. A reading from the beginning. Let us turn now to the Gospel according to Matthew.

Chapter 28. And we may read from verse 5. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.

He is not here, for he is risen as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay, and go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead.

[1 : 32] And behold, he goes before you into Galilee. There shall ye see him. Law I have told you.

Thank you. Thank you. Now in the weeks leading up to the end of the year, we try to study here, Sabbath evenings, some of the teachings that the Gospel writers bring before us relating to the death and to the burial of our Lord.

And tonight, I would like to make a start with you on a short study for a few weeks on the teaching that we have in the Word of God, particularly in the Gospels concerning the resurrection of our Lord from the dead.

You know that the very existence of the Christian Church depends upon the resurrection of our Lord because a dead Christ could never have been the basis of a living Church.

This is the very cornerstone of our faith because Paul states to the Corinthians, if Christ is not risen, then our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins.

[3 : 35] And if he has not risen, we have no hope at all concerning our own resurrection from the dead.

And that is why we say that this teaching is at the very heart of the Christian Church and its very existence.

The existence of the Christian Church depends upon it. And it has been asserted correctly that this is one of the most and one of the best attested facts of history.

At the same time, we must not forget that the account that we have in the Bible of the resurrection is not a history of the resurrection itself, but a history, an account or accounts of the manifestation of the risen Christ to people.

The fact of the resurrection is assumed. It is nowhere in the Bible described.

[5 : 04] Nowhere are we told how the Lord actually arose. What the Bible makes abundantly clear is that he did arise and that he did appear to many people after his resurrection.

And it is the record of these appearances that becomes the subject of our study here for the next few weeks.

The event itself was believed not because anybody saw him rising from the dead, but because he was seen after he had risen from the dead.

As a matter of fact, I suppose that it could be argued that the people who saw the miraculous events which attended the resurrection of our Lord from the dead because we read that there was also an earthquake at his resurrection as there was at his death.

And we know that the bodies of some dead saints rose from the graves which had been opened at the time of his death.

[6 : 44] The graves were opened at the time of his death. But the Gospel makes it clear to us that it was after his resurrection and at his resurrection that the bodies rose from these tombs.

Now the thing is that whether the soldiers who were posted to guard the tomb of Jesus saw the resurrection of the dead bodies we are not very sure what they saw but we do know that they felt and they saw some of the accompanying miracles.

And that was what filled them with fear. They discovered that there was no need to guard the tomb because the stone had been rolled away. Who rolled away the stone we are not told.

But the stone was moved away as we saw not to let Jesus out but rather to let the witnesses who came to the grave in.

And the interesting thing is that it was the enemies of the Lord who were the first witnesses of the phenomena that attended his resurrection from the grave.

[8 : 06] They were not the first witnesses of the resurrection itself because as far as we know from the Bible Jesus never at any time after his resurrection showed himself to any who were enemies of the cross.

He only appeared to his friends and to his followers. And the account that we have then of the resurrection is not an account of how it took place.

It is an account of what happened after it took place. These writers accept the reality of the situation.

they accept that the resurrection was a fact a fact of history and they go on to record something they go on to record simply the appearances of the risen Lord after his resurrection.

And the record that they give us is a very competent one. It describes the various experiences and the various reactions of different people to the resurrection.

[9 : 28] The accounts picked for us the simplicity for example of the faith of the woman at the gravesite that morning.

They received and they believed the testimony of the angel. At the same time they were full of fear. one of them we believe Mary Magdalene couldn't wait to hear the full input of the message from the angel when she saw the empty tomb she ran immediately to tell this news to Peter and to John.

The account picked for us the ignorance of some of his closest disciples and the slowness of their heart to believe the testimony of the women that he had actually risen from the dead.

The record goes on to picture for us the incredulity and almost the obstinate unbelief of a man like Thomas who just couldn't bring himself to believe what had given such ecstasy to the rest of his brethren in the close circle of disciples that the Lord was risen indeed and had been seen by Peter. All these experiences are related to us as part of this history. He was seen by one he was seen on another occasion by two he was seen then by a few friends he was seen by eleven we know that he was seen by the two mares we know also that he was seen by five hundred people at once.

[11 : 10] Now these people didn't imagine what they saw they just recall what they actually saw and their account is what we have before us here in the word of God and it's that record that we turn here this evening and begin our series by looking at what happened to these women who came to the grave that morning now we are not sure exactly how many there were we know that there were at least three there was Mary Magdalene and there was Mary the mother of James and Joseph and there was Salome and we know that the two Marys at least knew the exact location of the tomb because they had sat after Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had wrapped the body of our

Lord in linen cloth and anointed it and had placed it in the tomb they had seen these two men rolling the stone over the door of the tomb and after these men went away the Bible makes it clear that these two women sat on they waited to see as long as they could they waited there to witness that scene and then they went home because the Sabbath was drawing in and I think the record leads us to believe that these women did not realize that after they had left that Roman soldiers had been placed by the tomb to seal it and to guard it the inference of course being that or at least this is the impression that the Jewish leader gave to Pilate and the Roman authorities this man taught that he would rise again from the dead on the third day and just in case the disciples come and steal him away and try to prove the reality of that teaching you better seal the tomb so that they can't attribute that miracle tomb and probably at the back of that fear was a recollection that his disciples themselves had forgotten a recollection of his teaching as we have seen before it is perfectly possible for those who are the enemies of

Christ to remember his teaching when those who are his friends forget that very same teaching in any case ostensibly it was to guard against this lie being fabricated that he had risen from the dead that the soldiers were placed there to make sure that there was no escape for that body and that there was no thieving of it by the Jews and isn't it significant that the people who were placed there

to make sure that the body wasn't taken where as I said earlier the very first witnesses of the phenomena that attended the resurrection of Christ so it is today there are people still placed as guards over the tomb of Jesus there are people still placed to make sure that no one believes that Jesus rose from the dead there are people who still believe and who still teach and who still preach that there was no physical actual resurrection from the dead it was all a figment of the imagination what happened was that they thought he rose from the dead and that the spirit that that spirit animated the Christian church at the beginning of time and animates the Christian church to this very day you don't need to believe that there was a physical resurrection at all of Jesus from the dead you just believe that the spirit of Jesus lives on in the world and that is a denial of the actual physical resurrection of Christ a denial of the truth of God and a denial of that which is at the very heart and the very foundation of the church of Jesus Christ because that church is built upon an empty tomb and the tomb is empty not because he was taken away by people from it but because according to the scriptures he rose from the tomb and as regards your attitude to the resurrection of the dead you remember my friend that it is a case of either an acceptance of the record of the revelation of the word an acceptance by faith of what the word states or else a rejection of it on the basis of your own inability to accept the truth as it is presented to you you either believe it or you reject it you either accept the word of

God or you choose to exercise your own mind as sovereign over the revelation of the word and because you cannot accept the miracle as it is stated you put it to one side that is sheer unbelief now then these women came to the grave that morning and as we saw here on new year's day dealing with the text who shall move the stone as they came to the grave the morning of the resurrection having prepared the spices and the anointing oil with which to anoint the body of Jesus they were perplexed with one fear one worry one anxiety one problem who was going to move the stone now you know that remember that they had seen the stone rolled over the door of the tomb and they realized that that stone was beyond their ability to move it was beyond their strength they just couldn't do it that was the only thing that bothered them in that eerie early morning light it's obvious that they knew nothing about the

[17:45] Roman soldiers watching the grave but the point is that when they reached there their fears were removed regarding the stone it had already been moved there was no sign of the soldiers they had fled with fear and they had gone to their superiors with this tale and then they hatched the plot by which they would try to deceive the people and try to prove that the resurrection had not taken place at all well when the woman got there the stone was moved away and they found that two angels sitting there now of course Matthew referred to it as one rather and Luke tells us there were two of course some people say that's a contradiction there's the Bible contradiction itself no it isn't the Bible contradicting itself at all as things were recorded by these women in the panic of the situation it is quite well that one would emphasize what the angel said so that would come down as seeing that there was one angel the others would have taken in more you see if two or three people witness the same event no one sees it exactly the same as the other person these people some others saw the two angels sitting there there is no contradiction here at all in the word of

God sorry to disappoint you if it be that you're looking for contradictions in the truth the purpose of our study here tonight is to look very briefly at the message that these women had these angels had for the women the angel answered and said unto the woman fear not ye for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified he is not here for he is risen as he said come see the place where the Lord lay and go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead now of course looking at this message first of all tonight want to say this about it surely this is one of the most blessed messages ever heard on earth because here's a message that addresses itself to the fear and to the numbness to the confusion to the inability of the minds of the women to grasp the significance of the situation fear not for I know that ye seek

Jesus which was crucified don't be afraid and here the angels recognized the purpose for which the women were at the grave no of course we cannot condone their unbelief they ought to have known that Jesus would rise from the dead he had taught them that time and time again but they had failed to grasp that teaching except we believe one woman Mary of Bethany they had failed to grasp the teaching of the resurrection it was all as someone has put it it was the one glimmer of light in a dark firmament for them all but they just couldn't grasp the fact that he would rise from the dead and so we don't condone their unbelief as they make their way to the grave that morning but at the same

time we acknowledge as the angel acknowledged that their love and their devotion and their attachment to the

Lord brought them to that place that morning we know that they were wrong as they were told by the angels to seek the dead to seek the living amongst the dead we know that they didn't come for our living saviour they came expecting to find the dead body of the Lord we know that not but at the same time is paid tribute unwilling tribute to the devotion and to the love a devotion and a love that brought them to a place that was conspicuous by the absence of other people who claimed devotion and love for the Lord.

And you remember this, that if it be that the Lord is working in your heart at all, a spirit of devotion and of love and of service and of attachment and of seeking himself.

[23 : 01] If he's working that spirit in your heart, you remember this, let this encourage you, that there are heavenly messengers who recognize the presence of that attitude in your heart.

Fear not, for I know, said the angels, that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said.

Isn't it good that though there are people present maybe who know nothing of the secret desires of your soul, does it not encourage you that heaven knows what your heart wants?

Perhaps it may encourage you to know, to remember what Peter said to the same Lord a few days afterwards when he asked him, Peter, do you love me? Lord, thou knowest all things.

Thou knowest that I love thee. And maybe you can say here tonight that though you would find it difficult to say that Christ is your Lord, that nevertheless you entertain the hope that the Lord has worked in your heart a desire for himself.

[24 : 27] And whatever else you may say, you can say this, that you have that devotion and you have that affection, you have that desire to know him and to find him. The problem is, you don't know where to find him.

The problem very often is that you find you're looking for him in the wrong place, looking for the living, amongst the dead. Well, no. How did the angels address the fear of the women?

Fear not, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.

And this, in essence, is the message of the gospel to each one of us here tonight. We have all our fears, each and every one of us.

And he would be a man of great temerity who would dare suggest that even in the exercise of his Christian faith, he has no fear, no problems, and no doubts.

[25 : 34] These aren't. I'm not suggesting that these are of the essence of faith. But I am suggesting that if we are to be honest with ourselves, we have to acknowledge that presence.

From time to time. And the gospel would be a meaningless message to you, my friend, tonight, let me say this, if you were a stranger to such experiences in your heart.

The Lord speaks to you, and he speaks to your fear, and how thankful we are to be that he does.

And the resurrection of Jesus speaks to us tonight, and stills our fear in these directions.

Let me mention a few of them to you. We know, said the Apostle Paul, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, and house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

In this week, we grow, being burdened. But then, you see, this was the whole burden of his message in that great chapter in Corinthians, that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead had given him hope as he fought.

[26 : 54] We know what awaits us because we know that he is alive with power from the dead.

That was the same teaching that I referred to at the very beginning of this service that Paul has in the first letter to the Corinthians.

If Christ is not risen, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins. If Christ is not risen, neither will we rise from the dead. And if Christ is not ascended, neither will we ascend into heaven above.

Fear not! When your faith is assailed by the devil, when you are tempted to disbelieve the reality of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, don't be afraid.

He is risen, and he is risen as a pledge to you that you too will rise from the dead. Are there not times when you need that message? Well, there are times when I need it.

Are there times when you need the assurance that the Lord is risen with power to forgive sins? How could he forgive if he were dead?

[28 : 05] Is that not the very hallmark of our religion here tonight? The very hallmark of our Christian faith? That we lift our hearts as sinners not to a dead founder of our religion, but to the living Lord of glory who is alive with power from the dead.

Where could you get solace and rest for your sin-bordened soul if there wasn't a risen Savior from the dead? Who would you address?

Who would you come to? Who could you have confidence in? He is crucified but he's risen from the dead. don't be afraid.

He died for our sins. He rose for our justification and as a sin-burdened soul tonight you can lift your heart to him and know that he has power to forgive and know that he has the ability to save and know that he is alive as one who has completed that work as one who has satisfied the justice of God know that he reigns as the living Lord and Savior.

Let me remind you just of one instance of this in the Bible. Perhaps we ought I'll turn to it myself you don't need to turn to it I'll turn to it so I can read this chapter to you this verse to you and I'll remind you of the context.

[29 : 41] Paul was facing death and he was leaving behind him in this world a young timid man called Timothy to take over the work of guiding the then Christian church.

Now that man was he was a diffident kind of individual he was you know that there are some people who have great strength of character the moment you see them you know that they're strong men and they're what we call pushy they would they're not afraid to say things or to go anywhere Timothy was the exact opposite and on his shoulders was being placed the burden and the responsibility of leading the church after the demise after the death of Paul.

Paul knew this and he wrote to encourage you and he says this to him Timothy says let me remind you of something remember this Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel why did he say that to Timothy well I've told you he said it to strengthen his heart to encourage his mind to hold him up and to to give him confidence and strength in the face of the tremendous responsibility and burden that was falling upon him in the providence of God and this is the way he was going to strengthen him Timothy you remember that Jesus Christ in you the seed of David is risen from the dead you remember that he sits enthroned tonight in heaven above that he has control over the affairs of this world you have been pushed into the situation pressed into it tremendous forces against you opposing you but he reigns and he guides and he controls fear not he is risen from the dead and this is the message of the gospel to you tonight in you fear with you problems and with you difficulties with the opposition against you with all the forces arrayed against you the strength of the evil one the power of the enemies of the cross the articulateness the sheer force of the numbers so what does he not live does he not win is he not king of kings and lord of lords is he still in the grave as I said earlier they will try to keep him in the grave but they can't he isn't there he's risen and thrown to the right hand of God the father on high why should you fear here tonight why should you be afraid to step out in the name of Jesus and on the side of Jesus Christ why should you fear when he has been raised from the dead and enthroned a prince and a saviour that was the message of the angels to the women and let that be a message to you tonight done to me to feed our hope to strengthen us in our resolve to meet us in the depth of our need reminding us that our lord isn't dead he is alive from the dead and they went on further to say this he is risen as he said and let us let you and I remember this that the word of God is given to us to encourage our faith as well but anyway seeing the time has gone just to mention this invitation that they addressed to the woman come they said see the place where the lord lay of course as many of you will appreciate there is much here to a great of great theological significance for each one of us come see the place where the lord lay and just to put it like this the body of the lord as it was laid in the grave was still united to his passion you know that some time ago a minister a visiting preacher here used that illustration and applied it I can't remember who it was to someone who died quite recently as a matter of fact the illustration was used long ago by a man called Dr.

McLagan who used the illustration of the warrior with the sword in the scabbard and Jesus in his passion was like that warrior he took to himself our nature a human body and a reasonable soul and death is the severance of soul from body but the soul and death was never severed from his passion neither was his body whereas soul we believe was in heaven during these three days while he was under the power of death in the grave his body was as united to his passion in the grave as was a soul to his passion in glory and therefore the angels say come see the place where the Lord

lay it wasn't just the body it was the Lord the body united to the person now someone may say and I can almost hear them saying it ah well what significance of that kind of statement on a sabbath evening to a congregation such as this well I'll tell you the significance of it if you haven't seen it already the significance of it is that the grave itself was not beyond the riches of that the grave itself is not beyond the riches of consolation for each one of us because the grave was never ever visited by a person such as this oh he wasn't the only person or the only great person to go into the grave many renowned men of

[36 : 45] God saw the tomb their bodies saw the tomb at their death or after their death but this was no ordinary passion this was the son of God and the grave was visited by an ordinary person when his body went into it death and the grave were visited by the Lord by the Lord of glory and the significance of it is this my friend when you and I face death fear not he has gone behold when you think of the grave fear not the Lord lay in the grave long ago and in that sense he has both sanctified he has sanctified both the grave and death by his presence for each one of us and as his grave was empty that morning what a blessed thought that one day your grave will be empty too that's Paul's great teaching again as he rose so will we rise he conquered the death and grave and he bequeathed that victory to us come see the place where the

Lord lay he was an invitation to these women look at the empty grave look at it and think of the significance of its teaching its emptiness testifying to its power testifying to the victory testifying to the fullness of salvation testifying to the fullness of hope the resurrected Lord has given you a hope which embraces not just the salvation of your soul but the salvation of your body not just deliverance from death but deliverance from the grave an emptiness an emptiness which testified of the fullness of his own love the extent to which he went in his love to death and to the grave come see the place it testifies to his faithfulness did he not say do you not remember his words did he not say that he would rise from the dead and the

Lord has never broken a promise that he has given he will fulfill every word that he ever spoke come see this and let this testify tonight to the feebleness of your faith and to the fear that may dwell in your heart the Lord is risen come and see the evidence and that is why the gospel tonight and the Christian church which presents the gospel built on the empty tomb bids you come and see the evidence the proof the reality he is not here he is risen us he said finally this go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead the other gospel writers himself said something else for us go quickly tell his disciples and tell

Peter that he is risen from the dead and you may wonder why this special message to Peter ah well you know the answer to that question I don't need to elaborate on it because the angel knew that that poor man was somewhere was somewhere faulting himself for what he had done to the Lord he had denied his Lord immediately prior to his death in the high priest's hall he knew that he had fallen and the angel knew that somewhere that man was still weak that man was still burdened that man was still overcome that man was still concerned that man was still full of grief full of self loasy full of shame because of what he had done he knew that that angel knew that that man was really bowed down he was burdened with a load of care go and tell that man that he is risen from the dead and maybe there's that type of man here tonight maybe there's someone who's finding fault with himself and who doesn't from time to time maybe there's someone who isn't what he or she ought to be on the side of the

Lord maybe you are a fault in yourself for your unfaithfulness and for your lack of steadfastness and lack of love and lack of trust well the gospel comes to you my friend as it comes to us all this is the significance of the gospel it meets us in every need speaks to every situation meets every every filling of the human heart are you a Peter here tonight needing the restoring power of his grace in your life here's a message I have risen from the dead there's a sense almost when you feel as though there is there is this sense of anticipation the angel says that Peter will see the evidence of the resurrection and that

[43 : 04] Peter will look forward to that time which we know he did have a private interview with the Lord of which there is nothing at all recalled or recounted for us in the word of God go and tell go and tell and you know that Peter James rather James goes on to make use of this kind of thing in his own letter when he encourages the Christians of his day to recover to help recover those who have fallen away those who have fallen away is it not the tendency with us that when someone falls away we tend to stand back and to criticize and to fault ourselves but that wasn't the message that the angel gave the women go tell Peter that the Lord is risen indeed and what a Christian spirit they

had with what alacrity of mind with what swiftness of feet they went go quickly and they went to tell as a matter of fact

Mary Magdalene beat them to it she got to Peter and John asked with a message they have taken away my Lord and I don't know where they have laid ah my friend how thankful you and I ought to be tonight that the Lord is gracious and that the Lord comes to us in no need and that he comes with the offer of forgiveness and the offer of restoration and the offer of renewed grace in no need go quickly and tell his disciples are you thankful tonight that the Lord is your hope built on the finished work of Jesus Christ well you've got a message for the world go and tell what you believe go and tell what he's done for you and you know we don't believe of

Christian women ministers in the church and rightly so but is it not wonderful that the Lord gave these women a ministry for the very men who were to be the ministers in his church the very men who were to be the apostles in the church of Jesus Christ and here were these women sent with this message to animate their faith and to encourage their hope the Lord is risen indeed well as I said earlier have you got a message tonight from the Lord with which you can go to people go and tell his disciples that he's risen but I want to leave it at this because this leads us into the next study as these women left the angel at the tomb they went to meet the disciples do you remember the history do you know your

Bible do you know what happened as they went to tell the disciples do you remember it Jesus himself met them and he said to them all hail go and tell my brethren that I will meet them in Galilee and there's a wonderful there's a wonderfully instructive that's a wonderfully instructive passage in the Gospels what does it tell us it tells us this if you do what the Lord tells you if you obey his call if you accept his invitation and if you do his bidding you be assured of this the Lord will always meet you in the path of obedience you see there are some people who say well if the

Lord would only do this for me or say this to me or meet me in this way I would really do what he's telling but you see my friend that's putting the cart before the horse it is as you do what he tells you that he meets you and he and he and he he says to him every blessing to you you know when the Lord wishes every blessing to you he means he will give you everything that he says to you may the Lord bless you every blessing to you he says go and tell my brethren that I will meet them in Galilee do you see the significance the angel said go and tell his disciples he says go and tell my brethren what a wonder of grace that a sinner should be made a disciple of

[48 : 30] Christ yea rather that a sinner should be made a brother of the Lord that's the case with you tonight what a message you have to deliver what a story you have to tell what a tale you have to unfold that the Lord is risen and that in his grace he has appeared to yourself let us pray oh have mercy upon us Lord and bless us bless us in our fellowship in the gospel in the gospel of thy love may the holy spirit apply it with power with meaning with conviction to our hearts so that we may respond in faith and in love to thy claims upon us forgive us our sins and holy things for Jesus sake amen to