

## The Lord's Resurrection Mt. 28:2-7

In the midst of Covid 19, there are those who might be doubting in God, and since the Christian faith rest on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, I thought we would look at His resurrection today.

Let's be a detective today and look at the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Paul once said, "***And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins***" (1 Cor. 15:17). So, it really does matter that Jesus rose from the dead.

*If Jesus arose, there is life after death, the ancient prophecies have been fulfilled, His promises are true, He is the Son of God, He is Lord and has authority over our souls, and He will one day come again and judge over all men according to His word.*

If Jesus Christ rose from the dead, we cannot ignore Him or what He requires of us. We cannot hide our heads in the sand. One day we will have to give an account.

So, let's pay close attention to this study this morning since it could have eternal consequences for our souls.

Let us start off with our examination by looking at Jesus prediction of His death and resurrection: "***See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day***" (Mt. 20:18-19). This is an amazing and specific prediction! Jesus not only predicted He would be scourged and crucified at the hands of the chief priests and the gentiles, but also that He would rise from the dead on the third day. How many people can predict their death so exactly, and the rise up from the dead three days afterward? I only know of one person.

We now need to look at the evidence of Jesus death – did he really die on the cross? All four of the gospels speak of the beatings and His scourging. A Roman scourging could often lead to death. The whip they used would lacerate the skin with sharp objects and cause much loss of blood. A scourging was used to leave a person weak so he could not resist the nailing to a cross. The Romans, unlike the Jews, did not limit their stripes to 39.

The cross was designed to kill a person slowly and painfully. The nails themselves were not fatal, it was the position of a crucified person on a cross that created tremendous pressure on the heart and lungs. A person had to pull himself up to breathe in and out. This action would wear a person down until they no longer had the strength to pull themselves up. And in the case of Jesus, fluid surrounded his heart until it failed.

The reason the soldiers would break their legs was to hasten their death. They could not push themselves back up with broken legs. They broke the legs of the two thieves; but these experienced soldiers found Jesus was already dead and did not break His legs – also a fulfilled prophecy. Psalm 34:20 says, "***He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.***" Instead of breaking his legs, a soldier pierced His side with a spear to make sure he was dead, Jn. 19:34

tells us, “**and immediately there came out blood and water.**” This was a sure sign of His death, not only did He not flinch, but the fluid that filled the cavity around his heart and lung flowed out. The Roman soldier made sure He was dead.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus asked Pilate for the body of Jesus, but Pilate wouldn't release the body until he had proof that Jesus was dead, what Roman official would do that, knowing His own life might be required if the prisoner got away. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepared the body for burial in a new tomb a short distance away from where He was crucified. John reveals that they bound the body in linen wrappings with myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds in weight, that is at 12 ounces to the pound. This burial process would have sealed Jesus in a mummy-like wrapping with the spices sealing the cloth together. Bound up like that, even had Jesus been alive, could not have breathed and lived. Jesus was dead in the tomb.

The Pharisees and priests went to Pilate and requested a guard be put on the tomb, Why? Well let's look at their request, **Mt. 27:63-64**, “**Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.**” They were well aware of Jesus prediction that He would rise from the dead on the third day.

Pilate agreed to do this, “**Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.**” (**Mt. 27:65-66**)

Some scholars suggest there were possibly up to 28 guards, painstakingly watching the tomb, especially on the third day, when Jesus had predicted He would rise from the dead. They even put a seal on the stone they placed before the tomb. The governors seal meant it was a criminal offense to mess with this tomb.

It was early on the first day of the week, what we would call Sunday, when Scripture says that women came very early to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. This was the first opportunity since the Sabbath had passed. They even wondered, “**Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?**” They had realized that they could not move the large stone that would be covering the entrance to the tomb (**Mk. 16:4**). It would take several large men to move it away.

Coming to the tomb, they saw an angel had rolled away the stone. The stone sat in an inclined track. To open the tomb, the stone had to be rolled up this incline. John 20:1 tells us, that the angel took away the stone. Apparently, it was picked up and moved out of the track by an angel. It has been estimated that these stones could weigh up to two tons apiece – How could scared disciples, with a Roman guard, have moved this stone, broken the seal and taken the body of Jesus without even one of the guards noticing. It is not likely they would have all been sleeping – they knew well the consequences for such actions. They would also have had to unwrap his body and taken the time to fold up his face cloth.

Whatever understanding you have of this event, you must explain who moved the stone, how the tomb became empty, who took the linen wrapping from the body, and folded the facecloth and left them there. The eyewitnesses who examined these events argue without hesitation that Jesus rose from the dead. **Jn. 20:4-10** we read, ***Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.***

But the eyewitnesses were not alone disciples of Jesus – the guards were also eyewitnesses of this event. Here is what we learn of their testimony, (**Mt. 28:4, 11-15**) ***“And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.”*** The guards saw the angel and apparently also heard the words of the angel. Because it is not till the women are leaving that some of the guards go into the city to report to the chief priests - ***While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.***

*The soldiers and the chief priests knew the truth, but would rather lie and cover up the truth.*

Knowing this is the testimony of Scripture, let's ask whether the testimony about the empty tomb is true. Can we test the credibility of the report of the resurrection? Is it believable?

First off, let us remember that Jesus believed and taught that His people are to be honest. The Lord Jesus hated hypocrisy and deceit. He praised Nathanael for being a person in whom was not deceit (**Jn. 1:47**). Jesus spoke of the devil as a liar and condemned it in **Jn. 8:44**. How could his disciples abandon everything they have been taught by Jesus and spread a lie throughout Jerusalem. And then later in their teaching to teach disciples not to lie.

By the way, all the Jews had to do to prove that Jesus had not resurrected was merely to produce the body of Jesus. But they never even tried to find the body, because they knew they could not. Instead, they bribed the soldiers to lie and tried to punish the disciples.

Now let's look at the change in the disciples. Before the disciples knew for sure that Jesus had been raised on the third day, they hid in the upper room with the door locked for fear of the Jews. They doubted and laughed at the women's testimony. Their doubting hearts kept them from believing until Jesus revealed Himself to them. One apostle, Thomas, persisted in his disbelief even when the others insisted, they had the Lord. Thomas in **Jn. 20:25** said, ***“Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”*** His disbelief was strong!

But in **Jn. 20:26-29** he said, *“Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

Jesus appeared to the disciples and proved Himself to them in a variety of ways. **Luke 24:36-39** says, *“As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”*

**Acts 1:3** tells how Jesus *“presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.”* So strong did He convince them that we see a very different group of men at Pentecost than we do on the day that Jesus arose. At first, they disbelieved, hiding themselves as cowards, and doubting the prophecy of Jesus; but Jesus showed Himself alive with many convincing proofs.

At Pentecost they were bold and unrelenting in their preaching of the gospel. They told everyone that they were eyewitnesses of the resurrection. They called the people to repent of their sins, because they crucified Jesus whom for certain God had made both Lord and Christ, **Acts 2:36**. From Acts chapter 3 to Acts chapter 8 the early disciples endured beatings and imprisonments, and even one beheading, but they would not stop preaching Jesus as the Christ resurrected from the dead.

When the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council, commanded them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, Peter answered in **Acts 4:19-20**, *“But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”* Peter and the apostles were convinced beyond a doubt, that Jesus had arisen from the dead, and said they must obey God more than men, and continued to preach the word of Jesus.

In **Acts 5** the Sanhedrin had them arrested and flogged commanding them to stop. But the apostles rejoiced, “that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (**Acts 5:41-42**). They later suffered imprisonment, beatings and even death for their faith, but nothing stopped them from preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, buried and risen.

The disciples never became rich or found an easy life from their preaching. They suffered much to tell the story of Jesus. The stoned Stephen in Acts 7 and beheaded James the son of Zebedee in **Acts 12**. Not one apostle ever recanted his witness of the Resurrection. According to tradition, every apostle except John suffered the martyr’s death. Would you preach a lie if it

meant you would be executed? If Jesus had not been resurrected, then what did the apostles ever get out of teaching that He did? They gained no earthly advantage from doing it. The only reason they spoke out so boldly about their faith in the resurrection of Jesus was because they knew Jesus had been raised from the dead and that He truly was the Son of the Living God.

There is one more proof I would like to share today – Saul of Tarsus, a devoted Rabbi in training. He was sanctioned by the High Priest to persecute Christians and was on his way to Damascus to carry out this duty. But He saw Jesus. His conversion is especially important because of His zeal to destroy Christianity. He gave up everything to become a Christian and an apostle of Jesus Christ. In **1 Cor. 15** he gave us some of the earliest evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. No one can satisfactorily explain his conversion except to use his own words, *he had seen the risen Lord*.

Today I can tell you, the evidence surrounding the resurrection, can give you confidence in the resurrection of Jesus Christ – I am convinced of it, and am staking not only my earthly life on it, but my heavenly one as well. We have seen the apostles, without a doubt witnessed and believed in the risen Lord. And according to Jn. 12:48 – He will one day judge you and me according to His word!

To become a Christian, believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, turn from your sins in repentance, confess Jesus as the Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins as the Bible teaches in **Acts 2:38**.