

The Anchor of Faith

Matt. 28

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Bill Reeves

Thank you. Today is a significant day, and the bulletin contains verses from the Apostle Paul and John that relate to this occasion. Additionally, I have included a page that compares the gospel accounts of the resurrection. This document does not include Paul's account of the resurrection, in which he mentions that 5,000 people were present (1 Corinthians 15). This information can be found elsewhere. 1 Corinthians 15 is the resurrection chapter, and it is a valuable passage. Unfortunately, I do not have the word count for this chapter as my word processor was recently updated, and I did not record it.

Our faith and hope is pinned to this event. The Resurrection happening at the testimony of those who witnessed it as recorded in the bible is crucial for our own faith that we too will be with the Lord and our bodies raised, glorified and eternal. So crucial is this Paul correctly writes, "And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty." But the Bible reveals He indeed is raised. Our salvation is sure, our hope is sound, love is demonstrated, faith is secure, eternal.

Today, we reflect on the forty days before Easter, a period of reflection and preparation for Easter. Now think about the next 40 days. Jesus would have appeared at various times, revealing his resurrection. He instructed his disciples to go to Galilee, where he would meet them.

There are several accounts of Jesus meeting with his disciples and others. One such account describes a group of three individuals walking along the road when a third person suddenly appears. They continue their journey, engaging in a conversation about Jesus' teachings, his death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus teaches the two disciples without explicitly revealing his identity. Eventually, the truth becomes clear, and Jesus departs.

Matthew 28 NKJV

1Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 2And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4And the

guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

5But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

8So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

The Women Worship the Risen Lord

9And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. 10Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

The Soldiers Are Bribed

11Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. 12When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' 14And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." 15So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

The Great Commission

16Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. 17When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.

18And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Today, we will examine this narrative from Matthew's perspective. Please turn to Matthew chapter 28. As I have been studying Matthew's Gospel, I felt it was appropriate to discuss Good Friday from his perspective. Today, we will highlight a few additional verses regarding the resurrection.

The disciples' world was profoundly affected by Jesus' death and resurrection. They were defeated and failed to stand by him as they had promised. In fact, Jesus' actions during his arrest were pivotal. He positioned himself between his disciples and the arresting authorities, drawing attention to himself. This act enabled his disciples to escape unharmed. Although they initially perceived it as a defeat, they were actually being safeguarded by the Lord.¹

Jesus had repeatedly stated, "We are going to Jerusalem, and there I will be delivered. I will die, be buried, and on the third day, I will rise." When they anticipated their journey to Jerusalem, Jesus would appear as the Messiah, leading them to expel Rome and usher in a significant event. These two perspectives are crucial to consider, as they differ from the disciples' and Jesus' own beliefs. Ultimately, it is Jesus' perspective that holds true.

God's Eternal Plan

This event is part of a divine plan that predates the creation of the world. God's sovereignty is evident in his eternal plan. He had foreseen Christ's descent to Earth as the Lamb of God, who would offer his life for many. As the Lamb of God, he would atone for the sins of the world.² The crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of Jesus are essential for this purpose.

God made it abundantly clear that Jesus' resurrection proved the efficacy of his sacrifice. As stated in Romans 1:4, "He was raised from the dead, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of Holiness." This declaration is reiterated throughout the book of Romans.³ However, in this passage, God asserts that Jesus' death was validated by his resurrection, demonstrating the sufficiency of His sacrifice in absolving all sins for those who believe. This revelation is truly remarkable and awe-inspiring.

¹ Matt. 26:51-56; Mark 14:46-50; 22:47-53; John 18:5-11 Note verse 5 in particular. Jesus actions of healing the man struck and even speaking drew attention to Himself and protected those under His care.

² John 1:29

³ Romans gives the plan of salvation in chapters 1-8. God knows how to make sinners holy. Consider Paul's words in Acts 13:33, 34; 17:31; Peter's sermon in Acts 2:24; 1 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:18

In a recent interview, Joni Erickson Tada shared a poignant story about a young child, a grade-school student, who asked whether she could communicate with her seventeen-year-old self. The child asked if she would advise her seventeen-year-old self to refrain from jumping into the water where her neck was injured. Joni Erickson Tada acknowledges that her life took a unique turn due to that accident. She became a prominent advocate for people with disabilities and a witness for Jesus Christ. Her remarkable artwork, created using her mouth, showcased her extraordinary talent. Throughout her life, she has shared the gospel and the Bible with people, offering insightful perspectives. In retrospect, she wonders if she would trade her life for a seventeen-year-old who would not have suffered the same neck injury. She candidly admits that she would advise a seventeen-year-old not to jump into the water, as it makes sense to her.

However, she acknowledges that God has many ways to accomplish extraordinary things. God could have provided a different path for Joni to learn and be utilized by the Lord. This perspective resonates with her, and she expresses her understanding. Despite her struggles, Joni has always anticipated the day she would ascend to heaven, where she would regain the ability to walk, swim, and fully utilize her body. She would no longer endure the challenges associated with her condition, including bouts of depression. However, she has faith that God has guided her through these trials.

In essence, the resurrection serves as a testament to God's unwavering support and the promise of our own resurrection. We, too, hope to reach heaven, where the creator of the universe will summon our resurrected bodies from their respective locations. He recreates it not with the body that we have now, which is made for earth, but for the body that will be made for eternity. It is quite remarkable.

Now, after the Sabbath, Matthew 28:1. As the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, and the other women came to see the tomb. They had been told elsewhere that two other women had also come.⁴ They actually made a trip from another location to join them. And behold, there was a great earthquake. For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, came down, wrote back to stone from the door, and sat on it.

Key Observation 🔍

Observe what you do not see here. His countenance was like lightning. His clothing was white as snow, and the guards trembled with fear, becoming

⁴ Luke 24:1, 10; 8:3

like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come see the place where the Lord lay.” *The one thing you do not see is that when the angel opens the grave, Jesus does not exit it. He does not leave the grave as the door is open. Why is that? He has already risen.* You see, the angel did not open the door or give Jesus permission to leave. He opened it so that they could come in and see Jesus as he left. They would see the clothes but He is already gone.

Now, how do I know that? The disciples were together in a building, talking about these things. And right through the wall, Jesus appeared. He did not go through the door. He went through the wall. And he talked to them. And then he left.⁵ Of course, we have already talked about the fellows from the Emmaus Road. But the Lord, once he was raised, nothing could keep him out of that, keep him in the grave.

When He comes back down to Earth, you think a physical mountain like Mount of Olives is going to keep Him from going into the city?⁶ No, He will go right through it. Oh, they got a wall there. It is all sealed up. Well, about the time they sealed this wall up. In fact, the wall was already technologically obsolete at that time, as cannons were being developed that could breach it, rendering castles obsolete. Castles, city walls became obsolete. We have had the technology to destroy a wall for a long time. The only reason we never destroyed that wall was its immense significance to people and their inability to accurately target it. We must observe the unfolding events, as the Middle East is undergoing significant changes.

However, Jesus departed, and his disciples visited his burial site and discovered his burial garments. They were instructed to inform his disciples that he had risen from the dead. Indeed, he is proceeding before them into Galilee. Behold, and there you will see him. Behold, I have already informed you. Consequently, they departed swiftly from the tomb, filled with fear and great joy, and rushed to convey the news to his disciples. The disciples, in their wisdom, expressed their amazement and gratitude for the revelation. They believed it wholeheartedly and shared the news with his disciples. Behold, Jesus greeted them with joy. As they were journeying, Jesus encountered them. These were the women. They approached and held him by the feet, revering him. Jesus then instructed them not to be afraid and to inform his brethren to go to Galilee, where they would find him.

John 20:19

⁶ Zechariah 14:4

It is noteworthy that other accounts reveal that the disciples initially struggled to believe the women's testimony. However, Peter and John, driven by their faith, rushed to the tomb, with John, being the younger, outpacing Peter. Upon reaching the tomb, they witnessed the events that transpired. Matthew recounts that while they were on their way, the guards arrived in the city and reported all the events to the chief priest. When the elders convened, they deliberated on the matter.

Returning to Psalm 2, we observe that these individuals are conspiring against the Lord and his anointed. Their actions continue unabated. In response to the accusation of Jesus's disciples stealing him away at night, the men offered a substantial sum of money to the governor. They assured him that if this information reached his ears, they would appease him and ensure his safety. This promise, however, may have been interpreted differently by Pilate. It is plausible that Pilate could have disciplined or executed these men regardless of their promise. Consequently, they complied with their instructions and accepted the money. This account is widely reported among the Jewish community to this day.

Following this incident, a narrative emerged to explain the events surrounding Jesus's death. This story was disseminated among the Jewish people of that era. Notably, Matthew, writing approximately 30 years later, or possibly slightly earlier, incorporated this theory and explanation into his writings. It is important to note that this narrative resonated with the Jewish community at the time.

Subsequently, individuals such as Paul and later Peter challenged the Jewish people about the validity of this narrative. They presented the historical facts of the resurrection. It is convenient to employ terms like "fake news" and "truth" in contemporary discourse, but it is crucial to recognize that these terms are often used interchangeably, regardless of one's political stance. While it was once the conservatives who criticized the liberals for spreading "fake news," it is now the liberals who have adopted this term. Consequently, the concept of "fake news" has become overused.

Lately I have observed AI used to show things that never happened. Voices are manipulated to say things that never happened. Today you can watch Bigfoot, sharks returning men and women to a ship, lions saving animals, men and women doing the impossible. All of it staged as true. Fiction labeled as fiction can be entertaining, but when it labeled as truth watch out!

However, this narrative overlooks the fact that many people witnessed Jesus's resurrection. Over 500 people claimed to have seen him rise from the dead. These individuals included James, Peter, Paul, and the twelve apostles. We have already discussed the women who were also significant to Jesus. Notably, Mary Magdalene, who endured a life marred by demonic possession, and another woman whose life was entangled in the political intrigue in the court of Herod, became uncertain about her future. Through John the Baptist, she came to know the Lord and developed a deep love for Him. Many of these women supported Jesus in his ministry, and I believe they continued to share their faith with others throughout their lives. Considering that the Roman world was approximately sixty percent enslaved, many of these individuals were women, and regardless of their social status, they embraced Christianity. Jesus possessed a remarkable compassion for his followers.

Regarding the age of the disciples, it is commonly believed that they ranged from 20's and 30's. The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee to the mountain that Jesus had designated for them. However, it is widely acknowledged that the exact location of this mountain remains unknown, and many Bible teachers choose not to discuss it. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that they visited a specific place.

When considering potential meeting locations, the Mountain of Beatitudes stands out as a strong candidate. It is believed that 500 people could witness Jesus at one time there. While Mount Arbel is also a popular choice, I have personally visited it and found it an excellent location for Bible study. The mountain offers a breathtaking view of the Sea of Galilee, and the weather during our August visit was pleasant and conducive to learning. While other hills or mountains could potentially be considered, it is important to note that Jesus specifically instructed them to meet in Galilee. Mount Tabor, on the other hand, is ruled out as a meeting place because of a Roman garrison on its summit.

In conclusion, while there are several potential locations for the disciples' meeting, the specific location that Jesus instructed them to gather at remains uncertain. Certainly, let us delve into the narrative of their encounter. Verse 17 recounts their initial awe upon witnessing him, yet some remained skeptical.

“When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.”

This narrative, while potentially referring to Thomas, Although that encounter took place within a building, Thomas's doubt persisted. Jesus, however, presented his hands and feet as tangible proof of his resurrection.

Thomas's belief in this miraculous event underscores the transformative power of witnessing the risen Christ.

From this encounter, we derive three essential takeaways.

1. First, we must embark on our mission, guided by our shared goal of making disciples and leading individuals to Christ. This involves actively engaging in discipleship and baptizing those who have embraced the teachings of Jesus. Baptism serves as a tangible witness to the transformative power of Christ's presence within their hearts.
2. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that the teachings we receive from the Apostle Paul, John, and other apostles originate from Jesus Himself. Jesus imparted his wisdom and teachings to these individuals, who then shared them with their disciples. By observing and adhering to Jesus' commands, we can ensure that our understanding of the faith remains grounded in the teachings of the risen Christ.
3. Finally, we are reminded of the promise that accompanies our mission. By faithfully following Jesus's commands, we can experience the transformative power of his teachings and become agents of change in the world. Regardless of whether it is a sunny day like today or a cloudy day, whether we are in good health or not, regardless of our current state, please take this to heart: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Jesus said this to her in John 11, as mentioned in the bulletin. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? She replied, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world."

"Now, if Christ is preached, that he has been raised from the dead, how can some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty, and your faith is also empty."⁷ But now Christ is raised from the dead or has been raised from the dead. He has become the first fruits, as John said. You mentioned this to me this morning. The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall be made alive. That is the resurrection. It is significant because we look forward to going to heaven. Because Christ rose, he promised to raise us, and it will happen. Just as he said. And that just strengthens our faith on a clear day, a cloudy day, a day of health, or a day of sickness. We know that Christ is with us

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

always, and He will take us all the way through. Even in death “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

Do you have a trial today? Think of all the things Paul went through if you have some kind of trial today, knowing that God is with you through that trial. No matter how it feels, He is with you to the end of the age. Oh, that is something I can hold onto. It is something that truly helps me. It helps support me when I may need it most, and you may need it most. Hallelujah!

Christ has risen. Lord, we thank you for your word. We pray that it may encourage us to the very impossible of what man can only perceive under the sun. He sees no hope. But you were raised from the dead. You traversed that tomb. No angel opened the door for you. You traversed it. And you appeared to people for 40 days. And then you ascended into heaven. Over the next 40 days, let us contemplate the significance of the resurrection and integrate its profound evidence into our daily lives. By doing so, we can cultivate a profound appreciation for the truth, which will serve as a guiding principle in times of need. We give you praise in Jesus' name. Amen.