The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Part 1

Matthew 28:1-7 - John MacArthur

Today in our study of God's Word we come to Matthew's text on the resurrection. I'll ask you to open your Bible to the *twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew*. We're going to be looking this Lord's day and next at the first ten verses of this great chapter in which Matthew gives His look at the greatest event in the history of the world, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

This is the great cornerstone of the Christian faith. Everything that we are and have and ever hope to be, all that we believe in is predicated on the reality of the resurrection. There would be no Christianity if there were no resurrection. Conversely because there is a resurrection, all elements of our faith are affirmed as true in every sense. The resurrection then is the cornerstone of our faith.

The world knows that, for the most part, if they know anything about Christianity or anything about Christian history or heritage. There's little question in our own culture that we believe that Jesus rose from the dead. But there are many possible reactions to the resurrection. Let me suggest some of them to you.

First of all, there is the reaction of rationalism. Rationalism says that the resurrection must be rejected on the basis that it cannot fit into human reason. This is a humanistic view that says because the mind of man is ultimate, only that which man can perceive and explain can therefore be true and since the resurrection is inexplicable by human reason, it did not happen. And so rationalism rejects the resurrection as it rejects all other miraculous elements of redemptive history.

A second reaction and similar is the reaction of unbelief. Unbelief doesn't reason away the reality of the resurrection, it just refuses to believe the plain truth. Simple unbelief is a denial of what is a fact for the fact of the resurrection is perhaps the most indisputable fact of all of ancient history, based on evidences and testimony from eye witnesses. But unbelief denies the facts.

Then there is the reaction of doubt. That's to question the resurrection. There may be such a thing as honest doubt, a true seeker wanting to have questions about the resurrection resolved. And then there is hypocritical doubt which simply continues to question long after available evidence is made clear. But there are those who doubt the resurrection, whether genuinely or hypocritically.

Another possible response is the response of indifference. That is the response that says it may be true or in fact it is true but I just don't care. It makes no claim on my life, it's not something on my agenda, I don't see it at the top of my priority list whether it happened or not, I'm not particularly interested.

Then I suppose we could say there is the response of ignorance. There are those people who are just not familiar with the facts of the resurrection. They may not even know about it and if they do it may be a rather whimsical passing vague thing for which they have no real attestation and so they are in ignorance.

And admittedly there is also the reaction of outright hostility. There are people who are just hostile to the resurrection. It is more than a rationalistic rejection based upon the supremacy of human reason. It is more than just a willful unbelief of the facts. It is more than doubt and more than indifference and more than ignorance, it is anger. It is hostility. It is a vocal vociferous effort to discredit the resurrection. And there are those people who have felt it was their place in life and role in history to write against the resurrection.

And sadly, all of these are wrong reactions and wrong responses and unnecessary. The proper response is the response of faith, of belief, of affirmation and application of the reality of the resurrection to the life of the one who is exposed to its truth.

Now as we come to the gospels, we confess at the very start that we're going to be dealing with the response of faith...for *Matthew*, and *Mark* and *Luke* and *John* all believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ not because they were against their wills forced to believe, but because they who were close to the reality of it were

overwhelmed with its evidence...as were all the other people who were a part of the believing community who identified with Jesus Christ.

So, as we come to *Matthew's account in chapter 28 verses 1 to 10*, we're going to join those who see the resurrection through the eyes of faith. Later on in this chapter we'll hear from the rejecters, but it opens with those who believe. As we come to this chapter, do I need to say to you that this is the end of a long study of this marvelous gospel of many years? And some of us, as we come to chapter 28, have arrived at something we thought the Rapture would preempt, but it hasn't. And maybe for some of us there might be the temptation to say at last we're going to get it over. But you can't look at it that way. Chapter 28 doesn't just get it over, chapter 28 climaxes it.

Some people are under the illusion, you know, that the Bible is just a whole lot of spiritual truths that are put together at random. That's not true. Every book in the Bible starts somewhere and ends somewhere. And as you come to the end as anybody who knows anything about literature knows, any writer worth his salt is going to go somewhere and he's going to get there at the end so that the end becomes climactic and exciting and thrilling and confirming and affirming to all that has been said before. So what we see in chapter 28 is not just the end of a long study, it's the climax of everything. It is the point of everything and the purpose of everything. This then is not a time to diminish our attention. This is a time then to call on all of our memory of everything we have to this point learned and pour it into our minds that we may understand the fullness of meaning that bursts on us in chapter 28. And we come to the glory of the resurrection...this greatest of all events.

Charles Hadden Spurgeon wrote, "Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, I risk my whole eternity and the resurrection is the why." I mean, this is it. The first sermon ever preached in the church the day the church was born was preached by Peter in *Acts 2* and it's a sermon on the resurrection. As a result of that and the reality of the resurrection became the theme of all apostolic preaching. Peter preached again on the resurrection in chapter 4 and again on the resurrection in chapter 10. And Stephen preached the resurrection in chapter 7. And Philip preached the resurrection in chapter 8. And Paul preached the resurrection in chapter 9 and chapter 13 and all the way on to *chapter 28 of Acts.*

And then we come to the epistles and the theme of the epistles is the resurrection. In *Romans* it says *Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father*. And in *1 Corinthians* it says *He rose again the third day according to the Scripture.* And in *2 Corinthians, He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also.* And *Galatians* says *by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead*. And we read in *Ephesians which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.* And Paul says in *Philippians that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection.* And in *Colossians, God who raised Him from the dead.* And in *1 Thessalonians, His Son who He raised from the dead.* And *Peter* says that *He has* in chapter 1 verse 3 *begotten us to a living hope by the resurrection of Christ.* And even when you come to the book of *Revelation* it begins by saying that Christ has the right to take the earth because it is *He who was dead and is alive forever more*.

The whole theme of the New Testament is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we are there as we open this chapter. Not only are we there but we are here because of the resurrection. This is Sunday...this is the first day of the week...this is resurrection day. Spurgeon also wrote so wonderfully of the meaning of the Lord's day in these words, "We gather together on the first rather than the seventh day of the week because redemption is even a greater work than creation and more worthy of commemoration and because the rest which followed creation is far outdone by the rest which ensues upon the completion of redemption. Like the Apostles, we meet on the first day of the week and hope that Jesus may stand in our midst and say, `Peace be unto you.' Our Lord has lifted the Sabbath from the old and rusty hinges where on the law had placed it long before and set it on the new golden hinges which His love has fashioned. He has placed our rest day not at the end of a week of toil but at the beginning of the rest which remains for the people of God. Every first day of the week we should meditate on the rising of our Lord and seek to enter into the fellowship with Him in His risen life," end quote.

Here is the foundation of all our hope. For it was Jesus who said, *"Because I live, ye shall live also."* It was Jesus who said in *John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."* The resurrection is the core of all we believe. And so we come with great excitement then to this record of our Lord's resurrection.

Now let me note for you that each of the four gospel writers presents the resurrection and each of them presents it in a unique way, picking out certain elements of the event of the resurrection to enforce certain spiritual truth from the mind of the Spirit to the heart of the reader. And as we go through *Matthew*'s picture of the resurrection, we're going to draw from *Mark* and *Luke* and *John* in order to enrich and fill out the wholeness of the scene that we may appreciate all of its great truth.

Matthew approaches it so interestingly. He approaches the resurrection through the emotions of a group of women. That's *Matthew*'s intent. *Mark* approaches it differently. *Luke* differently and *John* even differently. They all use the same historical truth, there's no contradiction, perfect harmony but each is selective as to the elements of the resurrection on which they focus for the purpose the Spirit of God gave to each writer. For *Matthew*, he focuses on the resurrection as seen through the emotions of a group of women.

As I read through this passage, it seems to me to be such a wonderful way to view the resurrection. Because we're not going to look at it historically, we're not going to look at analytically, we're not going to look at it even evidentially, that is as a forensic view, trying to prove it. We're going to look at it emotionally. We're going to look at it attitudinally. We're going to look at it through the heart and soul of some loving women who are sensitized to the event itself in marvelous and thrilling ways. We will then not coldly analyze the resurrection but I pray, God, we will feel the resurrection. We will experience the resurrection in the next couple of weeks as we share in the emotion of these women who first encountered the reality of the risen Christ.

But before we do that, can we set the time by looking at verse 1 in chapter 28? The Authorized Version says, *"In the end of the Sabbath at the dawning toward the first day of the week,"* and we'll stop there.

This is a very important note of time...most important. The little phrase "*in the end of the Sabbath*" is a unique construction in the Greek...apsae(?) Sabbaton, basically the best way to translate it would be "after the Sabbath." In fact, it would not be unfair but very consistent to translate it "long after the Sabbath." That little phrase then intends to say "long after the Sabbath" to express the idea that a certain interval of time has occurred since the Sabbath. Now the Sabbath ended Saturday at sundown. So this is a long time after the end of the Sabbath. How long? The next phrase tells us, *"At the dawning toward the first day of the week,"* and again the Greek phrase used there is very interesting. In fact it again uses the word Sabbaton, again uses the word Sabbath, and what it literally says in the Greek is "at day one with reference to the Sabbath." Now the reason that is done is because the Jews did not name the days. They did not say Sunday, Monday, Tuesday or anything like that. They simply named the days numerically with reference with the Sabbath. It was day one after the Sabbath. It was day two after the Sabbath. It was day three after the Sabbath, and so on through the week. So, long after the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn on day one after the Sabbath sets the time for us.

It is Sunday morning. Sabbath ended Saturday night. And now maybe ten hours have passed, it's nearing dawning early on Sunday morning. This is the third day the Lord has been in the grave. He was there a part of Friday, all of the Sabbath and so many hours already on the Sunday until it began to dawn on the morning of that first day with reference to Sabbath.

It is then the third day since the Lord was placed in the grave. *Mark* says, giving us the same time note, "*Very early on the first day of the week at the rising of the sun."* And *Luke* says, *"At early dawn..."* And *John* says, *"It all began while it was still dark."* So whatever happened is at the breaking of light, the very dawning and actually began when it was still dark. The stage is set then because it is the third day for a great event to happen. Jesus had said He would rise from the grave on the third day.

He had said it many times, *Matthew 12:40; Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:23; Matthew 20 verse 19; Matthew 27:64* it was reaffirmed. *Mark 9:31* records it*; Mark 10:34; Luke 9:22; Luke 18:33* and then in *Luke 24...chapter 24* it's mentioned in verse 7, verse 21, verse 26. It was repeated all through the Lord's ministry through the latter time that He would rise on the third day. So this is a very important time note as we begin chapter 28. It is resurrection day and it is a Sunday after the Sabbath.

We could even use that phrase "after the Sabbath," I think, in a figurative way, for the Sabbath had been the special day of rest for centuries, literally since the creation. But the Sabbath that Jesus was in the grave was the last authorized Sabbath. So it was not only the end of the Sabbath chronologically, it was the end of the Sabbath covenantally. The Sabbath was not only over as a day, it was over as an entity. And it was the dawning not only of a new day but of a new covenant and a new celebration of that new covenant which would no longer be, as Spurgeon said, at the end of a week of work but at the beginning of a new era. And that's why we meet on Sunday, not on the Sabbath, Saturday. So it is the dawning of the third day, the day of resurrection.

With that time reference, we now join the women. And this morning we're going to look at their attitudes and their emotions to begin with as they are confronted with the fact that Jesus whom they expect to be dead in the grave is gone and alive. Their first emotion is the emotion of sympathy. This is the first thing we see. And we can identify with that. These women loved the Lord Jesus Christ more than they love anyone. And women, as you know, have a tremendous capacity to love. I'm always amazed at the love of my own wife for me, given that she knows my imperfections, but women have the marvelous capacity for love and devotion. And I thank God for that. And I can only imagine how it would be when women can love as fully as women are able to love and love one who was without imperfection. These women loved uniquely.

They had ministered with Jesus in Galilee. They had attended to His needs. They had provided food and hospitality and even money and resources for Him and His traveling disciples as they carried on the Galilean ministry. They had descended the journey to Jerusalem for Passover with Jesus and His group. They had been there at the cross. They were there when He was buried. We saw them in chapter 27 verse 56 gathered at the cross. We saw them in verse 61 sitting opposite the tomb. And now they're back again the morning of the third day. They're loyal. They're devoted. They're loving and they are sympathetic.

Let's look what it says in verse 1, "*Came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary,"* that's Mary the mother of James and Joses, Mary who was the wife of Cleophas or Alphaeus, this other Mary mentioned in the prior two verses of chapter 27. The two of them come to the grave. Now they're not alone. *Matthew* just focuses on those two. *Mark* adds *"Salome, the mother of James and John and the wife of Zebedee,"* she was there, too. *Luke*...that, by the way, is in *Mark 16:1. Luke in chapter 24 verse 10* adds Joanna and Joanna was the wife of Chuza who was a steward of Herod. *John* only mentions Mary Magdalene but uses the plural pronoun "we" in chapter 20 verse 2, so we assume that he, too, sort of saw all that group of women. So if you compare the gospels you get the whole group.

So here comes a group of women early. They leave actually when it's dark, John indicates only to arrive at the grave just at the breaking of dawn. They loved the Lord. And they came out of sympathy. You say, "Did they come to see the resurrection?" No, they didn't come to see the resurrection. As many times as Jesus had talked about the resurrection, as many times as He had promised the resurrection, their faith could not handle that. They couldn't accept it. They couldn't understand it. They didn't believe it. You say, "Well, why are they there?" It says in verse 1, they came to see the grave, not to see the risen Lord, they came to see the grave.

You say, "Well, what's the point of coming to see a grave?" Well, *Mark* tells us, *chapter 16, "And when the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome* - or Salome, however you want to say it - *had bought sweet spices."* No doubt the night before when Sabbath ended at six o'clock the shops might then open and they were able to buy some spices. *"Here they came in the morning to anoint Him*

and very early in the morning of the first day of the week they came to the grave at the rising of the sun." Their purpose was not to see a resurrection, their purpose was to anoint a corpse.

You say, "What was the point? Hadn't He already been anointed?" Indeed He had, in excess of 70 pounds of anointing substance had been put on His body and He had had that wrapped in the linen in which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus along with these women had so carefully anointed Him. They didn't embalm and the body decayed very fast. In fact, the Jews had a tradition which comes into play in *John 11* and that tradition was that at the fourth day the spirit left the body permanently because the body was so decayed and corrupted that the spirit could no longer recognize it. And that tradition comes into play because you remember the sister of Lazarus said to the Lord, *"He's already four days dead, by this time he stinketh."*

In other words, it's too late to do anything, the spirit is gone the body is corrupt. And it may be that these dear women came on the third day realizing that had they come a day later there would be no way to minister to His already decayed and corrupted body. And so before it came to that, one last time they wanted to reach out in devoted love and sympathy to the one they adored. Even though He was dead, they wanted to show Him their love and respect and preserve His body if only for a few more hours. And more than that demonstrate their deep love.

So it was an act of compassion. It was an act of sympathy. The thing that was in their hearts toward the crucified Christ was loving sympathy and compassion. They didn't have faith. They didn't have confidence in the resurrection. They just had devotion, love and sympathy and compassion.

And *Mark* tells us in *chapter 16* that as they were walking along in the darkness anticipating the imminent dawn, they were having a discussion about how they were going to get the stone out of the way so they could do what they had come to do. They had commented that it was a very great stone. They had no idea it was being guarded by Romans. They didn't know it was sealed and couldn't be opened. They were anticipating coming into the empty garden and they would need some man or men to help them move that huge massive stone that had been rolled in front of the door. And so they were discussing the fact that they would have to face that large stone. So their emotion was sympathy. And what they lacked in faith they made up for in compassion. And what they lacked in understanding they made up for in courage to identify themselves so continually with Christ. And before we think too little of the women who came without faith, we have to ask ourselves where the disciples are. At least the women were there, whatever the motive.

It is one final act of love. But no sooner do they approach the grave than the emotion of sympathy is transformed into the emotion of terror. And that's the second one I want us to see. The emotion of terror.

Verse 2 says, "*And behold,"* and that's a word to startle us, to shock us, to pull us up short, to make us realize that something dramatic has happened. *"There was a great earthquake."* Now this is the second earthquake in three days. There was an earthquake when Christ died, you remember, that split the rocks wide open and opened graves and dead people came alive among the saints. So this is the second earthquake. And God again is moving and God is demonstrating in a physiological way His activity. It's not new for God. You can look to the past. For example, back in *Exodus 19:18* at the giving of the law, *1 Kings chapter 19 verse 11*, God came in an earthquake. You can look into the future and you read about it in *Joel 2:10* that the time of the coming of the Lord there will be an earthquake. *Revelation 6, Revelation 8, Revelation 11* describes that kind of thing. Jesus Himself even referred to it in the great Olivet Discourse, *Matthew 24:7*, about the earthquake that's going to be coming or earthquakes attendant with His return. So when God begins to move in the world, the world shakes.

And here these women are approaching...they haven't yet come to the garden. Instantly there is an earthquake. The epicenter of the earthquake is at the tomb. And the seismic radiation waves rumble through the ground beyond the grave and no doubt rock the land on which the women walk. They feel the earthquake not knowing what has happened.

Now what caused the earthquake? I suppose most people have just sort of concluded, "Well, the resurrection of Christ," but that's not the right answer. The resurrection didn't cause the earthquake. *Matthew* tells us what caused the earthquake. *"There was a great earthquake for or because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven."* When this angel hit the garden it created seismic waves. The word for "earthquake" is the root word seismos from which we get seismograph. And when the angel hit the land it sent out an earthquake. And these women not even knowing what was going on felt the movement of the earth, no doubt, as they approached the tomb. But the earthquake was not caused by the resurrection of Christ, it was caused by the arrival of an angel to open the tomb. Nothing, by the way, says that he let Jesus out of the tomb. That is a fallacy.

Have you ever seen a picture of an angel and a stone rolled back and Jesus coming out? That isn't right. I mean, Jesus did not have the power to raise Himself from the dead and then wait in there until somebody moved the stone so He could get out? No one actually saw the resurrection. The women experienced the seismic ramifications of that event of the angel coming and the phenomena around the resurrection. The resurrection occurred in an invisible way, no one was in there to see it. Christ came out of that grave.

Put it this way very simply. The angel did not move the stone to let the Lord out. The angel moved the stone to let the women in so they could see that He was already gone.

You say, "Well, how could He get out of there?" Well the same way *John 20:26* says the disciples were meeting on the eighth day and Jesus was in their midst, the door being shut. The same way He came through the wall into the upper room is the same way He went out of the rock of the grave which we shouldn't imagine as any problem for one in His glorified form. So no one saw the resurrection. The angel came not to let the Lord out but to let the women in and to let the apostles in and to let us in and to let the whole world in to see that He wasn't there.

And when the women arrived, they went in and they saw. And when Peter and John arrived, they went in and they saw. And there were the linen wrappings undisturbed the way they had been wrapped around His body and the head napkin in a separate place. There was no turmoil, no big hurry to unwrap Him and throw everything on the floor and get out of there. It was just the way it had been when His body was in it only He was gone. And then the angel came after He left to move the stone so the world could come in and see that He was gone and sat there as the heavenly witness to what had happened. What a scene. Can you imagine the Jewish leaders, on the other hand, are just having a great time thinking Jesus is dead and buried and captive to a tomb. And little do they know that all of their efforts would only increase His influence and only validate His resurrection.

So, there is the angel. He descends from heaven. He came, verse 2 says, rolled back the stone from the door, sat on it. So these women who have walked through an earthquake arrive at the garden. They come into the garden and they see...they see the tomb is open. The stone is rolled back.

Now at this point we have to digress to John's gospel to insert what happens because I believe this is the proper point to harmonize John's special interest in Mary Magdalene. Mary was to the women what Peter was to the Apostles. She was impetuous. What happens here is fascinating. The women come into the garden and I think this is the best place to insert this, although we can't be dogmatic, it seems to me to fit so perfectly here. When Mary comes in all she sees with her rather myopic viewpoint is this hole and the stone is gone. And she doesn't take note of this angel. And seeing that the stone is moved and the grave is empty is enough for her.

John tells us her reaction. Let's look at *John chapter 20. "The first day of the week comes Mary,"* and then he notes, *"They started out when it was yet dark unto the sepulcher and sees the stone taken away from the sepulcher."* Now apparently that's all she saw. She missed the angel. She saw just that the stone was removed. And then verse 2, *"Then...without a delay...she ran."* She took off. *"And she went right to the two most prominent apostles, she went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved,"* which is John's term used to describe himself and the fact that it's to Peter and to the other disciple probably indicates

they were in two different homes during this Passover time. We can't be certain. But anyway, she ran to Peter and John to tell them.

And what did she tell them? *"They have taken away the Lord out of the grave and we know not where they've laid Him."* They've taken Him...they? I don't know who they are. She didn't know who they are...somebody. *"Peter therefore went forth and so did John and they came to the grave."* Verse 4 says they ran and John out ran Peter and arrived first.

Now we'll leave that story, let's go back to *Matthew*. So as we come to the women then in the confrontation with the angel, Mary Magdalene is apparently gone. She's bolted to tell Peter and John that the body had been stolen. The other ladies stayed and they have the wonderful experience of an encounter with an angel.

The angel is described for us in verse 3. *"His countenance...*or his face*...was like lightning."* Now that's a pretty graphic description, isn't it? Like lightning flashing, brilliant, blazing. This, no doubt, to transmit the effulgence or the essence, the deity, the brilliance of the character of God. This is the glow of God. This is the Shekinah somehow transmitted from God to that angel, as it was on one occasion from God to Moses and shown on his face, do you remember that in the book of *Exodus*? This angel, this one representative of God, this messenger from God possessed the very character of deity. And it emanated from his glowing face. Also it says his raiment or garment was white as snow and this is emblematic of purity, holiness, of virtue.

So here is a holy angel...the holy angel sent from God bearing the very imprimatur of the character of God, an angel representative of deity, a created being who represents the uncreated cause of all beings, God Himself, this holy angel. This to distinguish him from some man, this to distinguish him from some demon, this to identify him as the agent of God, this beautiful, glorious, glowing, pure, holy being sitting on the stone as living witness to the risen Christ...God's own assigned witness.

And verse 4 says, *"For fear of him the guards did shake."* And it uses the same root word that's the word for earthquake in verse 2. The earth quaked and then it stopped and the guards didn't...they are still experiencing a personal earthquake. They were there to make sure nothing happened but something happened they couldn't have anticipated. And not only did they quake, but they became as dead. They went into temporary coma. They were knocked literally unconscious out of terror. Fear will do that. Fear will cause people to be paralyzed to the point where they go unconscious and that's precisely what happened. They were knocked cold out of fear. They were victims of divine power. They had seen something they had never seen or thought of or ever been able to comprehend and they were not now able to comprehend it.

You say, "Were the women afraid?" Yes, the women were afraid but they were sustained by the angel himself. He gave no ministry to the unbelieving guards he reached out as the agent of God to minister to these women. Verse 5, "*And the angel answered and said..."* By the way, I want to note sometimes you read that in the Bible *"and the angel answered and said"* and you say..."Well, nobody asked a question." That's right. A better way to translate that would be "the angel explained and said." Some things need explaining even though someone isn't asking. And this one did. I mean, this definitely needed an explanation. Where is Christ and what are you doing here? And so he explained to the women, this is what he said, "*Stop being terrorized...stop being afraid, there's no reason to be afraid."* Now remember, Mary Magdalene is gone but the rest are there. She's right now on her way running trying to find Peter and John. Meanwhile the angel calms the fears of these ladies.

The soldiers had reason to fear when Christ arose. But those who loved Him had no reason to fear. So he says, *"Stop being afraid."* And then this, *"For I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified."* I know why you're here. Wasn't that a comforting word? "Oh, he knows us...he knows what we're coming here to do." That's a comforting thing. "Yes, I know why you're here, you seek Jesus."

They came to find a corpse, folks, not to see a resurrection. They came out of devotion to anoint a dead body, to put spices. And I suppose if it had been us we would have said, "Oh, you unbelieving women, you of little faith," and maybe a rebuke against their feeble minds and weak faith seem more in order. But no, God is so

gracious. Their faith was weak, their understanding was feeble but God is ever gracious. And they loved the Lord Jesus Christ and even in the moments of their doubt and despair God recognized that love and responded in grace. And he says, *"I know you seek Jesus who was crucified. Be comforted in this, He is not here."* The Greek text says, *"He was raised...He is not here, He was raised."* And the word is a word to indicate resurrection from the dead. There's no question that He was dead. That's why the soldiers who were experts at death didn't break His legs, He was already dead. They thrust a spear into His side penetrating the sac around the heart and out came the blood from His heart and the water from the pericardium. He was dead. And these same women, along with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, had spent some time wrapping His body with spices. And had there been any indication of life they would have known that. He was dead. And lying in that tomb for this the third day, no question He was dead.

But now He was raised. He was raised. It's an aorist passive. And the Bible emphasizes that He was raised by the power of the Father. Over and over again it says that in Scripture...*Romans 6:4, Galatians 1:1, 1 Peter 1:3,* a couple of those I mentioned to you. He was raised by the power of the Father. It also says, doesn't it, in *John 10:18, "I have power to lay My life down and I have power to*...what?...*take it up again."* So He was raised not only by the Father but He was raised by His own power. And then in *Romans 8:11* it says He was raised by the power of the Spirit. *"It is the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead."* So the whole trinity is involved in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the angel gives this incredible announcement, *"He's not here He was raised."* The point is He's alive.

And then I love this, *"He was raised,"* it says, "*as He said."* Isn't that great? I mean, He just jolts them with the memory that this is exactly what He said He would do on the third day, just like He said. And by the way, *Luke 24:8* says, "*And they remembered His words."* So, that's what He meant...so that's what He was saying. And then the angels says, verse 6, *"Come see the place where He lay."* See the place where He lay...go on in. Well *Luke 24:3* and *4* says they did. They went in. And it also says the angel showed up on the inside, too. And when they got inside the angel appeared again and gave them basically the same speech. You say, "Why did he give it twice?" Well, it was a little hard to believe the first time. It seems to me the kind of message you'd need to repeat at least twice...He is not here, He's raised.

And so as they went on the inside they got the same message and it's recorded in *Mark 16:5 a*nd 6 that on the inside that angel repeated the message...twice to emphasize the incredible reality that so stunned their minds. It didn't come easily to startled minds.

Then *Luke 24:4* says that first angel who gave that speech twice was joined by a second angel...one at the head of where the body lay and one at the feet of where the body lay. Beautiful picture. Do you remember the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament on the top had the Mercy Seat where atonement was made for sin? And on both sides it had angels? And here with an angel on one side and an angel on the other side and Christ in the middle is the true Mercy Seat where Christ is offered the satisfaction for the sins of the world.

And then John tells us in his gospel about these two angels being positioned there, chapter 20 I think its verse 12. And I see in that that emblem of the Mercy Seat. If we go to *Luke* again, *Luke 24:5 to 7, Luke* says those two angels then gave another message. And together those two angels said, *"Why seek ye the living among the dead? He's not here, He was raised. Remember how He spoke to you when He was yet in Galilee saying the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again?"* Now this is the third time they repeat the same message. This is hard to understand, it's a powerful thing they're experiencing.

And finally after that third time he says, "*And they remembered the words of Jesus."* And once it had gotten through to their minds, the angel then concluded back in *verse 7 of Matthew 28* with a command. He said, *"And go quickly."* This is not a time to be wasted at the tomb, this is not a time to hang around. Fascination has to give way to proclamation, right? *"Go quickly and tell His disciples that He's risen from the dead."*

Now again, I thought to myself as I was reading this..."Boy, my temptation would be go and don't tell His disciples...they're not here, they're going to pay for it. Those blockheads, this time they're going to miss

out and I'm not going to tell them. They need a week of pain then we'll tell them." But that's not the heart of the Lord, is it? Those disciples, oh, they were vacillating, they were weak, they were witless, they fled, they denied, they abandoned the Savior and yet He says, I don't want them to know a moment's anguish or a moment's misery, or a moment's grief, I want you to go as fast as you can and tell them Christ is alive. That's grace, isn't it? What grace that is. Tell His disciples He was raised from the dead.

Now let me draw this together for this morning. Listen very carefully. Why were the women the first to experience the angel? Why were the women first to see the risen Christ? Oh, I read on that, I thought I'm going to examine that and I read many, many things. One writer said, "Because God chooses the weak to confound the strong." We don't want to go any further with that point. Another writer said, "God rewards the faithful and they had served the Lord in the past and so they were to be specially rewarded." Another writer said, "Death came by a woman in the garden so life comes to a woman in the garden." That's nice...a good sentiment (laughter). Someone else said, "The deepest sorrow deserves the greatest joy." Another said, "Supreme love deserves supreme privilege."

You want to know the truth? You know why those women were the first to see the angel and the living Christ? Because they were there. That's right. Isn't that profound? I mean, if you're not there you're not going to see it. I mean, they were there and so they saw it. If anybody else would have been there they would have seen it. I mean, you don't have to get too profound in some of this.

You know what that says to me? I don't want to extrapolate too much on this but it's nice if you're there when the Lord does wonderful things. There's a great spiritual truth in that somewhere and that is that the closer you stay to the Lord and what He's doing, the more you're going to enjoy what He's doing. I don't know about you but I'd rather be there and experience it than hear it from somebody else, wouldn't you? I praise God for people who are there. I mean they're there when the Lord is working. They're there when His people gather together. They're there when His Word is taught. They're there when it's time to come to your knees before Him. They're there when it's time to call on His power in ministry. And they're the ones that experience firsthand the moving of the power of God. No, they saw it because they were there.

I trust that you will be the kind of person like those women. What you may lack in faith you make up for in devotion, what you may lack in understanding you make up for in loyalty. And God will confirm your weakness and turn it into strength because you're faithful enough and loyal enough to be where He is and where He's moving and where He's working.

And then the angel said something else to them, but we're going to look at that next week and all the ramifications of it. Let's bow in prayer.

What a lesson, Father, we've seen this morning. We thank You for the example of these women. We thank You for the pattern of their sympathy to one they loved so deeply. Even demonstrating love to a Savior that was dead and utterly unable to help them in any way, that being the truest measure of love, love that loves and gives sacrificially when it knows there can be no return, so did those women love. And we thank You even for the fact that they were there. It was love that drew them. Even though they didn't understand, they wanted to be in that place. Even as they had lingered by the grave after the Savior was buried, so they come back soon after the Sabbath, a day in which no journey would have been possible if they were to keep the law. Thank You for the demonstration of such loyal faithfulness. And thank You that You met them in their sympathy and removed their fear and their terror.

Father, teach us to be like those women to be so faithful, so devoted not to a Christ we assume to be dead but one we know to be alive to be in the place where He moves and works and shows His power. And may the resurrection be believed by every person here for the truth that it is and in believing that Jesus lives may we know that by faith in Him we live also. We pray in His name. Amen.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Part 2

Matthew 28:8-10 - John MacArthur

Let's open our Bibles to *Matthew chapter 28* as we return to Matthew's narrative on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The world has heard many important messages. The world has learned many great truths. The world has experienced many dramatic and life-changing events. But not any one of them nor all of them combined can come close to the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nothing in the history of the world...in fact, not everything in the history of the world can match for significance the reality that Jesus was raised from the dead.

In the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the heart of the Christian faith. Christianity is a belief, is a series of truths and doctrines and principles that rise and fall on the resurrection of Christ. When Jesus rose from the dead, He proved Himself to be exactly who He claimed to be. When He rose from the dead by the power of the Father, He was affirmed to have accomplished what He came to accomplish. And in *2 Corinthians 4:14* it says that as God raised up Jesus from the dead, so also shall He raise us up. Ours is a belief in resurrection life and that is built on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because He lives, we shall live also.

Now the message of the Scripture has always been a message of resurrection hope, that death is not the end. Death is not a cul-de-sac, it's not a dead-end street. For the believer it's a thoroughfare that enters into eternity. That's always been the belief of the people of God. In *Psalm 49:15*, for example, the Scripture says *God will ransom my soul from the power of the grave*. In *Psalm 73* and *verse 24* we read, *"Afterward*...that is after this life, speaking to God...*Thou wilt receive me to glory."* The prophet *Hosea in chapter 6 verse 2* confidently asserts that God will raise us up that we may live before Him. The great prophet *Isaiah in chapter 26 and verse 19* says, *"Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers of the dust awake and sing for joy." And in Daniel 12 verse 2*, there is the great promise that *those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake unto everlasting life.*

In the *fourteenth chapter of Job*, one of the oldest books in Scripture, *verse 14 says, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time, will I wait*...says the answer...*till my change come."* And in the *nineteenth chapter of Job and verse 25 through 27* we read, *"For I know that my redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day on the earth and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God whom I shall see for myself and not another, though my heart be consumed within me."* And so, the testimony of Job is that no matter what happens to his flesh, some day in a new flesh He will see God.

That has been the hope of God's people for all history. And it is a hope predicated on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is His resurrection that guarantees ours. It is His resurrection, says Paul, that is the firstfruits of all that slept. He is the guarantor of our resurrection. Is it any wonder then that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is mentioned at least 104 times in the New Testament?

The resurrection may be denied, it may be despised, it may be mocked, men may make an effort to explain it away, to give some rational arguments to explain the phenomena, but frankly I think only a fool would want to explain away the resurrection of Christ because in so doing he explains himself right into eternal doom. For the only hope of life after death, the only hope of eternal salvation, the only hope of being with God in glory forever is the resurrection of Christ. To explain that away is to damn the entire human race. Only a fool would do that. But there have been many such fools.

I'm reminded of the account of a missionary by the name of Dr. Bull. He was a Methodist missionary to the Riucco (?) Islands of Japan. And he visited on one occasion the island of Amakusa.

And on that island he found a grave, a mass grave. And he was told that the burial there was a burial of Christians. And as he deciphered the marker on the grave he found that there were 11,111 heads taken from the bodies of Christians and buried in that place. The date of the grave is 1637, the same year in which the Japanese government ordered all Christians exterminated. And in this case he was told that they put the heads in one place and the bodies in another place to frustrate the Christian's hope of resurrection, feeling that if there was ever a resurrection God wouldn't be able to figure out what head went with what body. Foolish people.

Listen, the resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees the resurrection of every saint, no matter what happens to the body. That is the promise of Scripture. And this then is unarguably the single greatest event in the history of the world. You cannot just slide the resurrection out of Christianity. Anybody who denies the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ cannot be a Christian. He can only falsely claim the title because the resurrection is the heart of everything in the Christian faith.

Look with me for a moment to the *fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians* and let me show you the centrality of the resurrection and the argument of the Apostle Paul. If there is no resurrection there is no Christian faith, there is no hope, there is no salvation, and there is no eternal life. And he makes that argument very clear in *1 Corinthians 15* beginning in *verse 13*. He says, *"If there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen?"* So let's start with that assumption...Christ is not risen. Let's say that Christ did not rise. We'll try to explain the fact that His body wasn't there another way. We'll try to explain the fact that the grave clothes were lying in perfect order another way. We'll try another angle. Maybe somebody took His body, maybe He never was dead and He just kind of awakened in the coolness of the tomb and got up and walked out. Let's say He didn't rise.

Then verse 14 says, *"If Christ is not risen then our preaching is useless because the gospel says men are sinners and sinners need a Savior and Christ is that Savior and Christ has paid the penalty for sin and conquered death if He did rise. If He did not rise then He is as dead as everybody else is and He didn't do a thing for us. His payment was not accepted. He was not powerful enough."* So if Christ is not risen, then gospel preaching is useless. There is no good news. The news is all bad.

The next statement in his argument comes in the same verse, verse 14, *"And your faith is also useless,"* and he repeats that in verse 17. *"If Christ is not raised your faith is useless."* If Christ is not risen then all gospel preaching is useless and anyone who believes it is exercising an absolutely useless faith because a dead Christ is not good news and believing in a dead Christ is pointless.

Furthermore, in verse 15 Paul says, *"Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God because we have testified of Christ that He raised up Christ whom He raised not up if so be that the dead rise not."* In other words, he says all the Apostles are liars. And men whom the world has honored for centuries and whom the world has esteemed as men of truth and morality and conviction and ethics are nothing but a bunch of liars. If Christ is not risen, gospel preaching is useless, faith in it is useless and the Apostles are liars who repeatedly preach that Christ did rise.

Furthermore, verse 17 says *"If Christ be not raised your faith is vain or useless and you are yet in your sins."* And the next point in his argument is that the power of sin is unbroken. And every man therefore is under the total domination of sin to be doomed and damned forever by it. No, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just negotiable reality; it is the very cornerstone of the Christian faith. And if you remove it, the whole thing comes down.

Furthermore, verse 18 says, *"Then they also who are fallen asleep, or who have already died in Christ, are damned."* If Christ is not risen, gospel preaching is useless, faith in it is useless, the Apostles are liars, sin's power is unbroken and everybody who died hoping in Christ is damned.

Therefore he says in verse 19, *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."* If Christ didn't rise from the dead, then Christians are putting their hope in a different Christ and they are the most pitiful people in the world.

But bless God, He did rise. And let's go back to *Matthew 28* and see His resurrection. And this is the theme of *Matthew's* last chapter. This is the climax of 28 chapters of the life of Christ. It is the monumental event of history. The simplicity of which he presents it is thrilling. The lack of effort to try to prove it but to just let it speak for itself is convincing.

Now we set the time last time, verse 1, in the end of the Sabbath. Or literally, long after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week...Sunday morning at dawn. John says when all of it began to happen it was still dark. By the time the ladies arrived at the tomb, the streaks of sunlight coming from the east had begun to come across the top of the Mount of Olives and it was beginning to be light. It is then the third day. It is Sunday, the third day since Jesus was put in the grave on Friday. This then is the promised day of resurrection. For at least five times already in *Matthew's* gospel, the fact that Jesus would be in the grave has been stated and that He would be there three days. Five times it has already been said or noted by some that Christ said He would be in the grave three days. And now it is that third day...resurrection day.

Now as we saw last time, *Matthew* approaches the resurrection scene differently than *Mark* and *Luke* and *John.* They all see the same scene. They all deal with the similar phenomena and yet their perspectives are unique to each writer. *Matthew* approaches it from the feelings and attitudes and emotions of the women who were there. And thus it has a very human quality. Though it is a supernatural event to exceed all events, it still has a very natural, a very human, a very real sense as we come to it through the emotions of these women who loved Christ.

Now remember the first attitude we saw was the attitude of sympathy. Early in the morning while it is still dark, *John* says, the women begin to move toward the tomb. The night before, after sun had gone down, that is the Sabbath was ended, they had purchased some spices and they were coming for a final anointing of the corpse. They didn't believe in a resurrection. They weren't anticipating a resurrection. They were coming out of devoted love and sympathy to Christ to anoint His body one more time before decay finally totally took over. In *Mark 16* it says as they approached the grave they were concerned about who might roll the stone away because it was so large and they were weak and they would need some men to do that. That tells me that they weren't at all expecting a resurrection. They didn't even realize there would be a Roman guard there to keep them from doing what they intended to do. And so they came not aware of a resurrection, not aware of the guard at the grave...only aware of their own sympathy for the Savior, for the teacher that they had followed so long and they were now sad because He was dead. And frankly, they had little if any hope in their heart for a resurrection. They never seem to even expect it.

The women appear at the end of verse 1, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, Mary the wife of Cleophas or Alphaeus, the mother of James the Little and Joses. And *Mark* says also Salome was there. Salome was the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John. And Luke says that Joanna was there, the wife of Chuza who was one of the stewards of Herod. So it was a little group of women who came.

As they came the ground must have rumbled with the tremors because there was an earthquake, as verse 2 indicates. But their purpose in coming was to see the tomb, it says at the end of verse 1. They wanted to see it and then to go and anoint the body of the Lord. When they arrived, or even as they began to approach feeling the waves of the earthquake, their sympathy was turned to another emotion and that was the emotion of terror. And verse 2 tells us there was a great earthquake and the earthquake was not caused by the resurrection. Remember what I told you, Christ had already gone out of the grave. The angel came and he caused it. It says there was a great earthquake because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat on it...that's what created the earthquake. And remember what I told you, the angel did not open the grave to let Christ out, the angel opened the grave to let people in. Christ had already left. He didn't need to wait for the stone to be removed; He went right through the stone...just as later on

He went through the walls of the upper room to meet the disciples, the door being shut. Christ left. And then the angel rolled the stone away that the world may go in and see that Christ was risen. And that arrival created an earthquake.

I said last time, also, that as the women approached they could see the tomb was opened. The stone was lying flat and an angel was sitting on it. Now apparently one of those women, Mary Magdalene, was very devoted and very impetuous and very impulsive. She was sort of the counterpart of Peter among the women. Apparently as she saw the opened tomb didn't really take stock of the angel and wait to see what was going to happen...but *John chapter 20* records that Mary Magdalene having arrived and seen the tomb opened turned immediately and ran. And if you read the *twentieth chapter of John* and the first four verses, you will see that she ran back into the city to find Peter and John to tell them that something terrible had happened and someone had taken the Lord. She didn't wait around to talk to the angel, perhaps didn't even see the angel. In fact, I'm almost sure she didn't or she would have been anxious to stay and find out from the angel what had happened. And so she goes to Peter and John.

So as the description of the angel comes in verse 3, by this time Mary Magdalene is gone. She's running back into the city to find Peter and to find John. Meanwhile the rest of the women remain and they face an angel whose face or countenance is like lightning. And that is to identify him with the glory of God, the Shekinah presence, the glowing incandescent light defusing the divine one Himself. This then is a messenger from holy God. Further that is confirmed because his garment is as white as snow, speaking of holiness and purity and sinlessness. This is a holy angel sent from the face of God. And we remember, don't we, that the angels do always behold the face of the Father. And the glory of the Father, it says in *Matthew 18*, they behold His face, the glory of the Father transmitted to them, borne by them in this occasion to those women demonstrates that this is a messenger from God and his white garment that he is a holy angel.

So fearful was he, verse 4 says, that the soldiers were knocked unconscious. And they're in a state of coma at this point, lying on the ground. The women are in sheer terror. And in verse 5, *"The angel answered and said unto them, Stop being terrorized, stop being afraid, there's no need for this. For I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. I know why you're here."* That must have been a comforting word for them.

And then in verse 6 he says, *"He's not here, He was raised as He said."* And the emphasis is on *"as He said,"* this is what He predicted. This was the prophecy. *"Come see the place where He lay."* And if you compare the other accounts, the women went into the tomb and as they went in the angel went in with them and the angel repeated the same message again. So hard to believe, he repeated it again. And then a second angel appeared one at the head and one at the feet and the two angels together repeated the message similar and said He was raised.

And then in verse 7 you'll remember the angel said, "*Go quickly*." All of this is taking place in a very brief time. "*Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen,* or literally that He was raised by the power of the Father--implied--*from the dead."* Fascination has to give way to proclamation. You can't just hang around the tomb; you've got to get out with the message. Go to the Apostles immediately and tell them He is alive.

Now the evidence was all there. If they were taking note of it, the evidence was all there. The empty tomb...not only the empty tomb but the unconscious guards, something so powerful that it overpowered the Roman soldiers. And then there was the angelic testimony from a holy angel out of the presence of God. And then there was the orderly grave clothes. The other gospel writers point out how that if Jesus had been stolen by someone, they would have ripped those things off Him and they would have been scattered all over the inside of that tomb, or the outside. But they were lying

perfectly as they had been lying when He was in them with the headpiece where the head would be and the rest where the body would be as if He had lifted out.

Further testimony was these women knew the disciples didn't believe in any resurrection, they hadn't really come to grips with the resurrection so they wouldn't have stolen the body to falsify a resurrection they didn't even believe was going to happen. Furthermore there was the explicit statement of Jesus fulfilled in this. Oh there was plenty of evidence that it really was a resurrection. But the angel goes even further. Look at verse 7. You're not going to have to take my word for it; he says in effect, *"Behold, He goes before you into Galilee. There shall you see Him. Lo, I have told you."* I've given my message, I've done my duty. You're going to become eye witnesses when you see Him in Galilee. And this, of course, would be the climax of *Matthew's gospel.* The promise of the resurrection would be fulfilled. And Jesus said it in chapter 26 verse 32, *"After I am raised up, again I will go before you into Galilee. I'll meet you all in Galilee."* Galilee of the Gentiles...Galilee of the nations where the Lord first ministered and first did His miracles and first redeemed souls and was first hated and rejected...Galilee, a microcosm of the world.

The fact that He would meet them and commission them to preach the gospel in Galilee was in a sense to say, "I want this to be a representation that you must go to the whole world." It was a positive statement. Even as when Jesus came in *Matthew 4:15* it says *He came to Galilee as a light to the darkness, as light to the shadow of death*. Galilee represented the world and the message of resurrection was to go to the world so the commissioning was to be in Galilee. And indeed it was as *Matthew* points out in verses 16 to 20, that great statement, *"Go ye and make disciples, baptizing..."* and so forth and so on. That was said to them, verse 16 says, in a mountain in Galilee. And *Matthew's gospel* ends with that great commission, all those people gathered in Galilee and sent out with the message of the risen Christ.

Now that doesn't mean that He didn't appear to anybody in Jerusalem first, because He did. It simply means that the great commissioning would take place in Galilee. The Lord will lead you there and He will meet you there and there you will be sent to the world with the message.

There were some appearances of Christ in Jerusalem before the meeting in Galilee. There's no question about that. In fact I can give it to you very briefly. This is Sunday morning. In just a matter of moments He will appear to Mary Magdalene who will arrive at the grave. The women who have been there since she left are now on their way to the disciples. They're going to be leaving. And as they're leaving, Mary Magdalene and Peter and John are coming and He'll appear to Mary. And later on He will appear personally to Simon Peter as *Luke 24 tells us* and *1 Corinthians 15:5* also tells us He appeared first to Peter. So there will be a personal appearance to Mary because of her deep devotion and because she stayed by the grave. A personal appearance to Peter because he of all the disciples had seemingly defected the farthest and needed grace for restoration.

And after that there would be an appearance to two disciples. Two disciples are on their way to Emmaus. And as they walk on the road to Emmaus, the Lord joins them, walks along with them, opens the Scripture, and teaches them about Himself. Then reveals Himself to them in the breaking of bread. So He appears to Mary in the area of Jerusalem. He appears to Peter in the area of Jerusalem. He appears to the two on the road to Emmaus outside Jerusalem. And then on this very Sunday night, all the disciples were gathered in the upper room and the Lord appeared to them. It says in *Luke 24:36, "And as they spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and said to them, Peace be unto you."* And they were terrified and frightened and thought they'd seen a spirit.

So, He appeared to Mary. He appeared to Peter. He appeared to unnamed disciples on the road to Emmaus in the afternoon. And by evening He appears to the eleven disciples gathered together. In fact there were only ten at that time, who was missing? Thomas. And eight days later the

Scriptures tell us, *John chapter 20 verses 26 to 29*, He appeared again in the upper room, this time Thomas was there and Thomas when he saw Him said, *"My Lord and My God."* So there were several appearings to the disciples in Jerusalem.

But the great appearing in which there was a great commissioning occurred in Galilee. And that is the one of which Paul writes in *1 Corinthians 15 and verse 6* when he says, "*And after that*...after He had been seen by Peter and the disciples...*He was seen of about 500 brethren at one time."* And that would have been that great appearing in Galilee to all the gathered disciples on a mountain. And even after that, He appeared to Apostles prior to His ascension. And every time He appeared to them it says in *Acts 1* He spoke of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. For 40 days, from resurrection to ascension, at varying intervals to varying groups of the disciples, He appeared. But the high point of all those appearances was the appearance on the mountain in Galilee, I believe it was to that 500 plus where He commissioned them to preach the gospel to the whole world. And every meeting in Jerusalem prior to that was just a preparation for the great commissioning that would occur in Galilee.

So the angel then says to the ladies, *"He will go before you into Galilee, you'll see Him there. I've told you."* And sent them off as if to say you have your orders. *Mark 16:7* says, *"The angel said, go tell the apostles and Peter."* Peter most needed restoration. He most needed grace and forgiveness.

And so the women had come to the tomb with an emotion of sympathy. That had been turned into an emotion of terror and now the emotion of terror began to give way to a third emotion and that's noted in verse 8 and that is the emotion of joy. Verse 8, "*And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy."* Now their fear is tempered by tremendous joy and they did run to bring His disciples the message. "Did run" is the main verb. The angel said go, they spun around on their heels and took off down the path. And they're running into the city to find the disciples to tell them that the message from the angel is that Jesus was raised from the dead. And their terror is mingled now with great joy...the thrill that it might be true that it might be true that it might be true and we're going to see Him in Galilee.

By the way, when they got to the apostles and delivered their message, according to *Mark 16:13*, *the apostles did not believe them*. That's important. And again it reaffirms the fact that they didn't steal the body because they didn't even believe in the resurrection so why would they falsify it. *Luke 24* also indicates the same thing, verses 10 and 11, verses 22 to 25, they didn't even believe in the resurrection. So off the women go to find the disciples. When they find them they can't even convince them that it's true.

Now meanwhile, Mary Magdalene who has been finding Peter and John in another place is on her way with them to the grave. And they pass each other, apparently without seeing each other. The soldiers are still unconscious. The tomb is open. The angel is there. Peter and John and Mary Magdalene are returning to find out what is going on.

Now turn in your Bible to *John 20* and let's see what happens when they arrive. Verse 4 says, "*Peter and John ran together and the other disciple,"* John never uses his own name, always calls himself the other disciple, or the disciple whom Jesus loved, or the disciple who leaned on Jesus' chest, something like that. He ran faster than Peter. And He came first to the grave.

Now John was somewhat timid. He was faster than Peter but he was also a little more timid. And he just stooped down and looked in. He didn't go in. He just kind of stooped and looked. And he saw the linen clothes lying there but he didn't go in. See, he hasn't got any information except that Mary says somebody took the body. And he looks in and all he sees are the grave clothes and he can't figure out immediately what's happening. And he's a little bit tense about just bursting into a grave. And I can understand that.

And then comes Simon Peter. And Peter doesn't know any of that kind of sensitivity. He just blasts into the grave...right by John, may have almost knocked him down. And he saw the linen clothes lying there and the cloth that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes but wrapped together in a place by itself. In other words, indicating that there had been no struggle at all but that Christ had just left in perfect peace and quiet.

Then after Peter went in and sort of broke the barrier a little, then went in the other disciple who came first to the sepulcher and he saw and what? And believed. He had such a heart of faith, didn't he? Peter's probably got a million questions and John goes from curiosity to faith that fast. He believed. For as yet, up to this point, they hadn't even known deep in their hearts the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead. They didn't even understand that. Oh, they heard Him say it, it didn't compute, it didn't register. You see, they were unwilling to allow Jesus to even say He was going to die, therefore they blocked out of their minds that He might rise again.

But John believed. And Peter questioned. And verse 10 says *they went away again to their own home*. They went back to try to figure it out. They didn't seem to want to do any investigation. They didn't seem to want to chase around and find out what foul play might have occurred they just left.

But typically verse 11 says Mary didn't leave. Ever and always the devoted follower, always seeming to linger past everyone else, at the cross, at the burial and here. And so *she was weeping and she stooped down* and it mentions stooping down all the time because the entrance would be very low and it would be necessary if you were to go to that place now where they believe the grave of the Lord has been discovered, you would find you have to stoop to get into that little entrance. She finally *stooped down and looked into the sepulcher and she sees two angels in white...the one at the head, the other at the feet where the body of Jesus has lain*. These two angels are still there.

And they said to her, *"Woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him."* Now we don't know who "they" are and she didn't know who "they" were, she just said somebody has taken Him. *"And when she had thus said she turned herself back."* Now I don't know what was going on in her mind other than that she was so sorrowful she didn't realize she was talking to two angels. That ought to sort of wake you up to something. She looks in and here are two angels and they talk to her and she acts like this is normal. "*Well, somebody took Him away and I don't know where they put Him."* Her spiritual perception and her ability to understand what's going on is overpowered by her sorrow. And now we might understand why the original time when she came to the grave a few moments before this and there was an open grave and an angel there, she didn't compute that either. She just took off. And here she's having a conversation with these two angels about where this body might be. Maybe assuming they were men, for angels do take the appearance of men.

And then she had spoken and turned herself around, verse 14 says, and saw Jesus standing and didn't know it was Jesus. And somebody says, "Well, she was crying and she couldn't see too well." Well, that's probably right and she was so upset and emotional that she just couldn't make sense out of much, that's right. But the reason she didn't know it was Jesus was because Jesus after His resurrection was not known by anyone who saw Him unless He opened their eyes that they might know who He was, for in His resurrection glory He was changed so that He had to reveal Himself. How else could the two disciples on the road to Emmaus this afternoon walk with Him and talk with Him and not know who He was until He disclosed it to them by some personal means?

And so, Jesus said to her, *"Woman, why are you weeping? Who you looking for? And she supposed Him to be the gardener...the person who takes care of the garden...and she said, Sir, if you have taken Him from here, tell me where you laid Him and I'll take Him away."* In other words, if this grave was only for rent and not for sale or if this could only be used a few days because

someone else has to be placed here and you've put Him somewhere else, please tell me where He is, I'll take Him and find a proper place to put Him. *"And Jesus said to her in Aramaic, her own language, Miriam..."* very personal touch and said her name and instantly she knew. *"She turned herself and said to Him, Rabboni,"* which is the most dignified you could ever use in Aramaic, Rabbi is a step below Rabboni which is only for a highly exalted teacher and it means master. And Jesus in that moment revealed Himself to her and she was the first, it says in *Mark chapter 16,* to see the resurrected Christ.

And then in verse 17 Jesus says unto her, *"Don't cling to Me...don't cling to Me."* She grabbed Him. I mean, she had lost Him once and she wasn't going to let go again. The pain of His dying and going away was more than she could stand and she's holding on and He says no, *"Because I'm not yet ascended to My Father."* I can't stay. *"Go to My brethren and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and to your Father, to My God and your God."* One of the great statements of all of Scripture. He says, first of all, from now on they are My brethren, not friends like He had called them so beautifully in *John 15:15*, but now brethren. Why? Because of His death and resurrection they have been brought fully into the family of God and as Paul put it, they are heirs and joint heirs with Jesus Christ who is...*Hebrews 2:11 and 12* says...*not ashamed to call them brother."* Go tell My brothers though they are cowardly, though they have forsaken Me, though they have denied Me, though they have fled from Me, though they have demonstrated that they do not stand by, they are My brothers, they have been redeemed into the family of God and go tell them that I have to go to My Father and your Father, My God and your God. And in those two identifications, He draws them into Himself...we share the same Father, we share the same God...tell them.

And so she lets go and now she also takes off to tell the disciples. Verse 18 it says that when she came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that He had spoken these things...it says she came and told the disciples she had seen the Lord and that He had spoken these things unto her.

So, you understand the scene? The women have gone. Mary Magdalene, Peter and John have come. Peter and John took off, went back home. Mary lingered, saw Christ. Now she leaves to tell the disciples. The other women are also on their way. She's a little behind them. After having revealed Himself to Mary, the Lord then supernaturally transports Himself out in front of the other women and comes along the road to meet them. And we pick that scene up again in *Matthew chapter 28*. And it is a marvelous scene...absolutely marvelous.

In verse 9, and this takes us to their fourth emotion...they're filled with joy and their joy will turn to worship. "*And as they went to tell His disciples, behold Jesus met them, having already revealed Himself first to Mary"* as it says in *Mark 16* and now He goes ahead of them supernaturally transporting Himself and comes back approaching them and He meets them. And I just love this. *"Jesus met them saying, Chairo te...is the Greek word...Chairo te*." There He was in resurrection glory, in physical form right on the road, alive from the dead and He says to them, "Chairo te." You know what that is? "Hi...Good Morning...Hello." Well, you'd think maybe you'd get something more profound than that out of the resurrected Son of God. There's something so beautiful about that. That was the ordinary salutation of the marketplace. That was the ordinary greeting that everybody gave as they passed on the roads. That was what you said when you spoke to the people in your own house every day. Here is Christ in resurrection glory...here is the Son of God in His kingly majesty having conquered death and in a very simple and warm and human way He simply stops some women that He loves and with human tenderness and very natural human sympathy He says good morning, hi.

And even though Jesus Christ is glorified, beloved, He has not lost His human sensitivity. He has not lost His human tenderness. He is heavenly but He is also earthly. He can commune with the holy angels and the trinity but He can also commune with men who walk the dusty roads of life. Marvelous picture. And even though He said to them something as simple as hi, or hello,

immediately they held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. They knew who He was. They knew He was the risen Christ. And this was their recognition of His deity. This was their recognition that He was to be adored and praised and glorified and worshiped and honored. They were doing what Paul says everyone should do, *that every knee should bow, every tongue should confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God, Philippians 2:11*. They worshiped one who was worthy of worship. They paid Him homage as to God. And so they come to the emotion of worship.

I sense that in my own heart here. When I look at the cross I'm like those women...I feel sympathy. When I come to the grave and I feel the earthquake and sense the movement of God in a mighty way delivering Christ from death and a descending angel rolling the stone away, I sense the terror and the fear of almighty power. As I become alert and awake and alive to the resurrection, my heart is filled with joy and in coming to see Jesus Christ, you fall at His feet in adoring worship.

The evidence is all there. I mean, it was coming together in their minds, now it was solidified. They were eye witnesses of His resurrection. The empty tomb, that said something. The grave clothes, they said something. The unconscious soldiers, that said something. The testimony of the angels, boy, that was strong evidence. But this was it...they touched Him. This is not a figment of their imagination. This is not an apparition. This is not a spiritual resurrection. They held Him by the feet. It was a real physical bodily literal resurrection.

A lawyer by the name of Sir Edward Clarke said, and I quote, "As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the first Easter day. To me the evidence is conclusive and over and over again in the high court I have secured the verdict on evidence not so compelling. Inference follows on evidence and a truthful witness is always artless and distains effect. The gospel evidence for the resurrection is of this class and as a lawyer I accept it unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts they were able to substantiate," end quote.

Professor Thomas Arnold who was the author of the famous three volume History of Rome and an appointee to the chair of modern history at Oxford University in England writes this, quote: "The evidence for our Lord's life and death and resurrection may be and often has been shown to be satisfactory. It is good according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece as carefully as every judge summing up a most important cause. I have myself done it many times over, not to persuade others but to satisfy myself. I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence than the great sign which God hath given us, that Christ died and rose again from the dead," end quote.

The evidence is there. And it was for the women. The final moment of grasping the living Christ. And in that moment, of course, their worship turned to a new emotion, a new feeling, a new attitude of hope, verse 10, "*Then said Jesus unto them, Stop being afraid. Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee and there shall they see Me."* Their hope was so clear now. They would see Him in Galilee for they had seen Him already.

Jesus repeats the same message the angel gave, reminding us again of the source of the angelic message and says, *"Go tell My brethren, those who are now My brethren, those who now belong to Me who are in the family...go tell them...tell them that I'll see them in Galilee. We'll have a great convocation and commissioning there."*

And so, we come then to the end of *Matthew's* brief glimpse of the resurrection. It's so simple. It lacks pretension. It doesn't look like the kind of case that someone is working very hard to prove because it's so incredulous. He states it so simply and so artlessly and such common terms are used. It doesn't even try to beg the issue. It states the simple convincing truth. And the women run to tell the rest. And before the days of Christs' earthly journey are over, He will appear to them all,

confirming His resurrection. And then select from among them who will write the New Testament which is the record of His resurrection and the meaning of it.

Let me close with that. What does the resurrection mean? Let me suggest several things for you to think about. First of all, it means that the Word of God is true. Jesus said it over and over again, I'll rise…I'll rise...I'll rise...I'll rise in three days. And He did. The record of the Word of God is true. It affirms the truthfulness of Scripture.

Secondly, the resurrection means that Jesus Christ is the Son of God as He claimed to be, that He as God has power over death.

Thirdly, it proves that salvation is complete...that on the cross He conquered sin and death and hell and rose victorious.

Fourthly, the resurrection proves that the church is established. You remember in *Matthew 16* He said, "*I'll build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it?"* And the gates of hell is a colloquial expression for death in that culture. He says I'll build My church and death won't stop Me, and it didn't. His resurrection proved that death could not stop Him from building His church.

Fifthly, it also proves that judgment is coming. The judge is alive. And He said He would live in *John 5* and He said that God would give Him judgment. And He would have the power to raise the dead and He would judge the dead. Some would enter eternal life and some would enter eternal judgment. The judge is alive, folks, and court will be in session to determine the eternal destiny of every man and woman.

And sixthly, the resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that heaven is waiting. In *John 14 He said I'm going to go away, but if I go I will come again and when I go I go to prepare*...what?...*a place for you because in My Father's house are many rooms.* Heaven is waiting and Christ is preparing it for His own.

You see, the resurrection proves all of that. The Word of God is true. Jesus is the Son of God, deity, salvation is complete, the church is established, judgment is coming and heaven is waiting. All of that because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I trust that you not only believe in the resurrection, but that you have received as your Lord and Savior the one who was raised, the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall we bow in prayer?

God knows every heart here as we wait for just a final moment. He knows your heart. He knows whether you believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. In *Romans 10* it says "*if you believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead and confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, you shall be saved for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* Being a Christian is believing in the resurrection of Christ and receiving the resurrected Christ as Lord and Savior. My prayer is that that is your prayer. And if you know Him, thank God again for what He has done for you.