

Worship the Risen King

Matthew 27:62-28:15

Kingdom Come! (Gospel of Matthew Series)

Prepared by: Matthew S. Black

Sunday, April 16, 2017, 10:30am at Living Hope Church of Roselle, Illinois

livinghopechurch.net

“We understand and acknowledge that the Resurrection has placed
a glorious crown upon all of Christ's sufferings.”

~ **A.W. Tozer**

Proposition: The Risen Christ is worthy of worship...

Open your Bible to **Matthew 27** if you would. This morning we are looking at a message entitled: “Behold the Risen King.” The traditional greeting for Resurrection Day is “Christ is risen.” And the response is “He is risen indeed!” So let’s try that!

- Christ is risen!
- He is risen indeed!

Harry Houdini Could Not Escape Death

Have you ever heard of Harry Houdini? Many of you have. He died in October of 1926. But, his claim to fame was that he was a magician who specialized in spectacular escapes. As a matter of fact, he was said to have laughed at locks and to have sneered at chains. They said of Harry that had the lives of a cat. They did all kinds of things to try to bind him.

- They would seal him in coffins—he would escape.
- They riveted him into a boiler—he escaped.
- They sewed him up in canvas bags—he escaped.
- They locked him in a milk can—he escaped.
- They sealed him in a beer barrel—he escaped.
- They put him in a maximum-security prison, and Harry somehow got out.

But then, in October 1926, death laid his hands upon Harry Houdini, and put him in a grave; and, he has yet to escape.

As a matter of fact, he told his wife, “If there is any way out, I will find it. If there is any way out, I'll make contact with you—and, we'll do it on the anniversary of my death.” For 10 years, she kept a light burning over his portrait each night. He was to blow it out, and show he'd escaped. After 10 years, she turned out the light. Harry Houdini could not escape from death.

Jesus Conquered Death

Death laid his hands on the Lord Jesus Christ, also. And, Death put Jesus in that tomb outside of Jerusalem. And, there was a **stone** in the mouth of that tomb, and the **seal** of the Roman government was placed upon that tomb. But, on the third day, **Jesus Christ stirred Himself**. He rose from the sleep of death. And, He left those **grave clothes** that were wrapped around him, like

a butterfly leaving his cocoon. You see Jesus didn't just escape death, He conquered death! Death could not hold him. The grave could not bind him. He conquered the grave that day!

Jesus Christ passed through the walls of that tomb. The stone wasn't rolled away to let Jesus out—it was rolled away to let the disciples in to see that Jesus had come back from the dead.¹

Worship the Risen Christ

This morning, I want to give you three reasons why you ought to worship the Risen Christ. He is alive! He is worthy of our worship. There are infinite reasons we should worship him, but I want to give you three.

The Risen Christ is worthy of worship, because of...

- His **Witnesses**, Mt 27:62-66; 28:1-4.
- His **Words**, Mt 28:5-10.
- His **Worth**, Mt 28:11-15.

Rom 1:4, “Christ was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.”

Rom 6:9, “We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.”

1 Pet 1:3, “According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

I. **Worship the Risen Christ because of his Witnesses**, Mt 27:62-66; 28:1-4.

Jesus Christ is worthy of your worship today. There are those who witnessed his resurrection. Both friends and enemies of the Lord tell the story of why he is worthy of your worship.

The Soldiers as Witnesses (27:62-66)

Let me call the Roman soldiers as the first witnesses to attest to the resurrection. It is interesting as we consider that God chose Roman soldiers to be the first to see our Lord Jesus raised from the dead. There were **four sets of four soldiers** placed at Jesus' tomb, sixteen in total.

Though a group of centurions believed on Christ at his death, in reality, Roman soldiers would be the last people on earth to believe in Christ. So these are credible witnesses.

We hear the account from **Matthew 27:62-66**, “The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ 64 Therefore order the **tomb to be made secure** until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” 65 Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. **Go, make it as secure as you can.**” 66 So they went and made the **tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.**”

“After 3 Days I Will Rise”

Keeping in mind that the Old Testament regularly reckoned a part of a day as a whole day, we understand that Jesus was in the tomb for a part of three days. Dying at approximately 3:00

¹ The Adrian Rogers Legacy Collection - The Adrian Rogers Legacy Collection – Sermons.

P.M. on Friday, he was placed in the tomb before sundown (day one). He remained in the tomb all day Saturday (day two) and from sundown Saturday until his resurrection on Sunday morning (day three). Thus, he was raised on the third day, as he prophesied.²

“Go Make it As Secure As You Can”

Pilate told the soldiers, “Go, make it as secure as you can” (vs. 65). They should have known that death has no power over the Prince of life! The grave could not hold him. The soldiers, with all their weapons and the seal of the Roman governor could not hold back the one who conquered death! They tried, but they could not hold Christ in that tomb. They waited and guarded, but soon they would witness the greatest battle in the history of the world: Jesus vs. Death. Death has no chance!

The Women as Witnesses (28:1-3)

Another group of witnesses is the women. We read in **Mt 28:1**, “Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.”

Matthew mentions just two of the women that were there (Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Cleopas – *who we see later on the Emmaus Road walking with Jesus*). The other Gospel writers name several others who were there:

- In addition to **Mary Magdalene**
- **Mary, wife of Cleopas**, mother of James and Joseph
- **Joanna** (Lk 24:10)
- “**Other women**” (Lk 24:10)

First, the women come early to the grave of Jesus (v. 1). **Mary Magdalene** and “the other Mary” were there. **The other Mary** was the mother of James and Joseph and the wife of Cleopas (see Matt. 27:56; John 19:25).³ They had rested on the Sabbath day.⁴ The Sabbath would have ended at sundown on Saturday, so these dear ladies would have been working at that time to prepare the perfumes and ointments to be applied to the Lord’s dead body. They truly thought he was dead.

They had seen him buried. **Matthew 27:59-61** clearly says they saw Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus wrap Jesus’ body in a clean linen shroud and place the body in the tomb.

“And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb” (Mt 27:59-61).

They watched as Joseph of Arimathea and probably some servants put a TWO-TON stone in front of the grave. These women were eyewitnesses of his burial.

Now the Roman government was very ripe for a Jewish rebellion. Christ had openly prophesied of his resurrection, so what they did is they stationed a Roman garrison in front of the tomb.

² Wilkins, M. J. (2004). *Matthew* (p. 936). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

³ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew* (Mt 28:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁴ Campbell, I. D. (2008). *Opening up Matthew* (p. 174). Leominster: Day One Publications.

It doesn't say these were the only women. According to Mark, Salome (likely the sister of the virgin Mary) was with them as well (Mk 16:1). They came to bring spices and anoint the body of Jesus. They saw him buried, and it is very clear, they think Jesus Christ is dead.

The Women Were Eyewitnesses

Biblical scholar Richard Bauckham, goes to great lengths in his book "Jesus and the Eyewitnesses" to demonstrate that **these women were well known in the early church** and could be interviewed as eye witnesses of the death and burial of Christ at the time of the writing of Mark.⁵ He says that this account has all the marks of how ancient historians verified historical accounts in those days. Ancient historians gave more credence to the oral testimony of living eye witnesses than written documents. Why? Because you could cross examine them and verify what they said. When you see these women's names put down over and over and over again, you have the earmarks of well-documented history.

Paul uses the same method in **1 Corinthians 15:1–8**. Paul gives a litany of witnesses in this passage including 500 eyewitnesses that he says, "most of whom are still alive" to this day.

Verifiable Eye Witnesses

We know that these women were alive at the time of the writing because of the way Mark has emphasized the credibility of their testimony. In other words, what Mark was saying was, if you want to verify these accounts, talk to the two Marys. Talk to Salome. Paul says, talk to the 500 witnesses. You can find them and interview them and cross examine them and verify their testimony. This was the most trusted, verifiable, and unrelenting method of recording and authenticating history at the time. And the idea is that many had already done that. And the result was that the Gospel spread—rapidly.

These women must have been busy because the Gospel spreads ferociously in their lifetimes. In fact by the time we get to **Acts 17:6**—only about 16 years after this account of the resurrection, we read the testimony of the authorities of Thessalonica (AD 49). It says they could not find Paul and Silas, so "they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also"". Within 16 years, the Gospel was spreading in an unrelenting manner.

The Angels as Witnesses (28:4)

Mt 28:2-4, "And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow."

Here we experience an earthquake, see an angel and a rolling stone! The God who remained apparently silent on Good Friday is having the last word. "The earth, which trembled with sorrow at the Death of Christ now leaps for joy at His Resurrection."⁶

What God is doing is not just an extraordinary **miracle**, a display of **supernatural power**. God is signifying the start of something new, beginning the new world promised long ago, sending the **disciples** to Galilee in the first place but then, as we shall see, on to the ends of the earth and the close of the age with the news of what has happened. A whole new world is opening up in front

⁵ Richard Bauckham. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 50.

⁶ Robertson (quoting Cornelius à Lapide), "Matthew," *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1:240–41.

of them⁷ and in front of us. Behold the Risen King! Behold the New Covenant! Behold a day of grace and love and mercy! It is such an amazing day, this day of Christ's resurrection. There he is on the third day, just as Hosea had prophesied and predicted, Jesus, the true Israel, would rise from the dead.

Jesus said he would rise on the third day "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:4). How did Jesus rise of the third day in the Scriptures?

Hosea 6:1-3, "Come, let us return to the Lord;
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.
2 After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.
3 Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord."

Hosea personifies the Israel in the Messiah, who is the true Israel. This is a corporate thing. The Bible prophesies in such a beautiful, amazing way and includes all of us in the resurrection. All who put their trust in Christ, though they are "torn down" and "struck down" – we can say "on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him."

Can you say that? Are you alive in Christ? Are you living before him? "Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord."

The Earthquake

So it is appropriate that an earthquake should welcome in the New Covenant age. An angel of the Lord descended from heaven causing the earth around the grave to tremble violently.

The angel had come to open the secured and sealed grave, and when he arrived he **rolled away the stone and sat upon it**. He wasn't trying to let the Lord out. The Lord didn't need help. If Jesus had the power to raise himself from the dead, which he did (**Jn 10:18**), he certainly had the relatively minor power required to escape a sealed grave.⁸ He had already risen from the dead. He could have moved the stone himself. He wasn't letting the Lord out, but was letting the women in to see the empty tomb.

The Glorious Angel – Reflecting God's Glory

The angels had witnessed Christ when he came as an infant to Bethlehem, and now an angel witnesses his resurrection.

The angel's appearance **was like lightning**. The description suggests that God transmitted some of His own Shekinah glory to the angel, just as He had transmitted a measure of it to Moses on Sinai when the covenant was renewed (Exo 34:29).⁹

The Angels Welcoming the New Covenant

The angels had been present during all the major epochs of the Old Covenant and now there was an angel representative to demonstrate God's complete sovereignty at the opening of the New Covenant. Angels are God's messengers. They are heralds who announce important news. They

⁷ Wright, T. (2004). *Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16-28* (pp. 198–199). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

⁸ MacArthur, Mt 28:2.

⁹ Ibid.

announced his birth to the shepherds, and now they announce Jesus' resurrection to the women. These women are going to be telling this story for the rest of their lives.

The Miracles: The Firstfruit of the New Creation

When Jesus died, the temple veil was torn, the earth shook, the tombs opened, and other believers returned to life. These events and above all the resurrection itself constitute the first taste, the firstfruits of the new creation (1 Cor 15:20–23).¹⁰

Back to the Guards (28:4)

Mt 28:4, “And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.”

It is interesting as we consider the Resurrection of our Lord that God chose Roman soldiers to be the first to see our Lord Jesus raised from the dead. There were four sets of four soldiers placed at Jesus' tomb, sixteen in total.

The **guards** were so awestruck that at first they **shook for fear of him**. **Shook** translates a Greek term that has the same root as “earthquake” in verse 2, indicating that the soldiers experienced personal earthquakes of both mind and body. But after a brief moment of shaking, they then **became like dead men**, completely awake, but paralyzed with fear.¹¹

Christ is risen! The stone was closed and sealed with Caesar's seal. The penalty for falling asleep for these men or deserting their post was crucifixion. A Roman garrison consisted of 16 soldiers. They all “did shake” the Bible says. They were told “He is not here, He is risen!”

Now think about this, Here Christ was such a public figure. Most in Jerusalem knew of His prophecy. The authorities would have had time to have a major investigation.

These soldiers were also witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus our Lord.

II. Worship the Risen Christ because of his Words, Mt 28:5-10.

A WORD ABOUT COMFORT

Don't Be Afraid (28:5)

Mt 28:5, “But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen from the dead.””

Look again at **verse 10**, Jesus meets these same women and says, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

Of course they are afraid. They've seen an angel. And then they see Jesus raised from the dead. What does Jesus say? “Don't be afraid – Go and tell.” Don't be afraid to proclaim this Good News boldly to people. Do not fear.

Maybe you are like the two Marys. Everything is confused. It seems like everything is going wrong, and all of a sudden, everything is so right! It's almost too good to be true! They are afraid because it's never gone this right in life. And there is fear. Of course there is an angel. That's a fearful thing. And most of all, Jesus is risen. It's too good. They are trembling.

Dear saint, tremble because of God's goodness. Jesus is alive. But don't be afraid. God means this all for good. You no longer need to be afraid. Jesus is alive.

Whatever you are afraid of, be afraid no longer!

¹⁰ Doriani, D. M. (2008). *Matthew & 2*. (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.) (Vol. 2, p. 522). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

¹¹ MacArthur, Mt 28:4.

- Are you afraid of **illness**? Listen, the brokenness of this life is not final. I promise you, you will not be sick forever.
- Are you afraid of **death**? Because of the resurrection, death is not final.
- Afraid of the **sinful thoughts** in your heart and mind? Your sin is not final. Christ not only removes your sin, but He also renews you and promises to renew you completely in the final resurrection.
- Are you afraid of the **guilt and shame of sin**? “Don’t be afraid!” There is no condemnation because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Every promise of God is true to you because of the resurrection.

You will rise one day because He has risen. You may be trampled on in this world because of Christ, but it doesn’t matter. Bring it on. Why? Because one day I will rise with Him! Because Christ arose, I know that “All things work together for good...” (**Romans 8:28**).

Now that Christ is alive, we don’t have a worldview of fear, but a worldview of boldness and love. “For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (**2 Tim 1:7**).

A WORD ABOUT AUTHORITY

He is not Here (28:6)

Mt 28:6, “He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.” Jesus keeps his word. He said he would rise again. He did exactly as he said.

The angels said, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen” (**Lk 24:6**).

Peter said in his sermon at Pentecost in **Acts 2:24**, “God raised Christ up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”

Historians have always wondered how in the world Christianity spread so rapidly as it did. You must remember Christianity started with a little tiny group of marginal people –

- people who were by and large not educated
- people who had no social standing
- no financial standing
- just outcasts, marginal people to say the least.

Yet in 200 years, these simple Christians swept the Roman Empire and became the dominant force in it.

One historian at Yale said:

“Never in so short a time has any other religious faith, or for that matter, any other set of ideas – religious, political, or otherwise – without the aid of physical force, achieved so commanding a position in such a short time in such an important society.”

Why Did Christianity Spread so Rapidly?

How did Christianity spread so rapidly? Later in this chapter, Jesus, our risen Lord, is going to say, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (**Mt 28:18-20**).

They died well. Historians will say, Christianity spread because the Christians **died so peacefully**. They died with courage and with love. It was such an amazing sight, that they used to

say, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” They counted it a privilege to die for Christ.

They were compassionate. Historians will say, Christianity spread so rapidly because Christians were so **compassionate**. It was common to put baby girls out in the streets. There is a story told about the Alexandrian church in Egypt and the women of that church would round up the baby girls in the streets and bring them into their own homes to adopt them and raise them as their own.

They were inclusive. Historians will say, another thing, Christianity spread so rapidly because Christians were so **inclusive**. I don’t mean morally inclusive **but ethnically and economically inclusive**. This Yale historian – she said...

“Every other religion tended to favor a particular ethnic group or tended to favor a particular class. Some of the religions were for the very educated. Some were for the very, very uneducated. Some were for certain ethnic groups, and so on. Christianity was the only one, the first one, that ever came along and united and embraced every class, every race, every gender, as you can see.”¹²

“A Vast Release of Energy”

The Yale same historian – she goes on to say, “The more one examines the factors which seem to account for the extraordinary victory of Christianity, the more one is driven to search for a cause underlying them all. It is clear that at the very beginning of Christianity there must have occurred **a vast release of energy**, virtually unparalleled in history, without which the future course of the religion is unexplainable.”¹³

This historian says there must be “a vast release of energy.” She doesn’t know what to call it! I’ll tell you what it is! **It’s the resurrection of Jesus Christ.** That’s what propelled Christians to **die with courage**, to be **compassionate**, and to be so **ethnically and economically inclusive**.

Without physical force, without military, without modern technology to communicate to thousands, how could this happen? Why is the world turned upside down so quickly? Because our Lord Jesus kept his word. It’s just as the angel said: “He is not here, for he has risen!”

A WORD ABOUT WITNESS

Go, Tell His Disciples (28:7-8)

Then we have a word about witnessing and boldly proclaiming the Lord’s resurrection. Look at **Mt 28:7-8**, “Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and **great joy**, and ran to tell his disciples.”

The women got a further word from the angels. These women were to tell the disciples that Jesus was alive.

Has it occurred to you that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead? That should bring you great joy as well! We are to **tell the world** that Jesus is alive. We are to do as Jesus said in **Mark 16:15**

¹² Keller, T. J. (2013). *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*. New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church. April 7, 1996. “Easter Sermon.”

¹³ Ibid.

— “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” That means to every person you see! What are we to tell?

1. Go and tell people that because of the resurrection, **there’s no fear in death!** Jesus paid the price and conquered death! No death cannot hurt us.

One poet says something like this, speaking of death: *Death used to be an executioner, but now he’s nothing more than a gatekeeper of heaven.*

1 Cor 15:55, 57, “Death, where is your sting? Grave where is your victory? ...But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Death is crushed by death. Life is mine to live! Death is dead! Hell has lost! Death is now an entrance into eternal, glorious, beautiful, peaceful life!

2. Go and tell people that because of the resurrection, **God will bring heaven to earth.**

Every other religion offers an **escape from this earth.** God promises to bring heaven to earth. The good news is not only that Jesus rose again to save me, that right. But he’s redeeming the whole creation. Rom 8, the whole earth groans awaiting that day of redemption when heaven and earth will become one!

I’m **not going to live on a cloud** for all of eternity. Jesus did not purchase my freedom so that I could walk on water vapors. He’s bringing heaven to this earth in a paradise, and I’m going to worship Him and serve Him here on this earth. He will rule and reign and we will reign with Him. He’s made us kings and priests unto God.

A WORD ABOUT WORSHIP

Greetings (28:9-10)

So here are these women – obediently, fearfully, and joyfully – running off to Gallilee “to tell his disciples.” As they ran, “Jesus met them [the women] and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him” (28:9). And what does Jesus say to them? Verse 10, “Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.””

Death could not hold our Lord. Joy overcame them! These women now knew with certainty that Jesus is the risen Messiah, the divine Son of God, and that adoration and praise were the only proper responses to His presence. They did what every person, unbeliever as well as believer, will do one day. When He comes again, “every knee will bow ... and ... every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10–11).¹⁴

Oh, these women took hold of the feet of the glorified Christ and worshipped him! They could now do nothing but adore and worship him.

How Thankful We Should Be

How thankful we should be for the resurrection. Jesus greets us and welcomes us into his forever family! You are no longer a foreigner and an outcast. You are a member of the family of God!

And notice that Jesus receives their worship. Listen, angels are not to be worshipped. No humans should be worshipped. God alone is worthy of worship.

¹⁴ MacArthur, Mt 28:9.

Do you see here that by allowing this act of worship here Jesus accepts the acknowledgment of his deity? And so these women now prostrate themselves before the Risen One, who is rightly to be accorded that honor.¹⁵

Let us do the same! Let us worship the Lamb who was slain, and is now risen again from the dead! He is worthy of our worship! This world cannot satisfy. Let us worship the risen Christ!

III. Worship the Risen Christ because of his **Worth**, Mt 28:11-15.

The Report of Christ's Worth

Matthew records this: **Mt 28:11-15**, "While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place."

The **women** who worshipped Jesus immediately obey their risen Master by hurrying to tell the miraculous story of the resurrection, but the **Roman soldiers** hurry back to Jerusalem to talk to their **superior officers**.

With such a serious breach of their responsibility to maintain the integrity of the sealed tomb, the guards need to inform their superior officers. Other officers are left back at the tomb. Their **report** presumably includes what transpired up to the point when they fainted away—

- the earthquake,
- the stone being rolled back,
- the appearance of the brilliance of the angel, and
- the empty tomb.¹⁶

The Bribe Against Christ's Worth

Matthew records this: **Mt 28:11-15**, "While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they [*Jewish leaders*] gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers 13 and said, 'Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.'" 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day."

We must come to Jesus by faith. We cannot be blinded by the deceitful treasures of this world. This world is passing away. We must look to Jesus. How sad that those who had all the evidence would not look to Jesus.

The Blindness to Christ's Worth

Here we have an account of people who had seen the miracles of Jesus, and they are blinded to the power of the resurrection. How is that possible?

The Real Enemy. You see the real enemies of Jesus are the not Jews and the Romans who conspire to make up lies about Jesus for money and power on this earth. They sell their souls for temporary happiness. But they are not the real enemy. They are pawns. Who is the real enemy of Jesus Christ? It is the wicked one. The one in Genesis who deceived mankind. Jesus came to rescue us from God's enemy.

¹⁵ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 941.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 942.

St. Paul says – “we wrestle not against flesh and blood,” but against evil powers of darkness, against demons and spiritual rulers of this present evil age (**Eph 6:10ff**).

So the enemies here are not mainly the Jewish leaders who paid the Roman soldiers to lie or the soldiers themselves. The enemy is the wicked one who “blinds” the hearts and minds of people.

- How sad and shocking that the **Jewish leaders** can witness the ministry of miracles that Jesus had and still reject him.
- How sad and shocking that the **Roman soldiers** can witness the earthquake at his death and then another earthquake at Jesus’ resurrection, see angels, see the stone rolled away, and still reject him.

The Enemy’s Tools. How could these of all people be so blind to all the miracles of Jesus? The idol of **comfort** and **money** are so powerful that they can blind you to your need for Christ. We all need to take stock of ourselves, because there is power and money all around us in America.

Jesus asks, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul?” (**Mk 8:36-37**).

I think there was fear of losing their lives.

The Absurdity of a Stolen Body

Nonetheless, the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers tried to stop the power of the risen Christ.

The **Christians** would proclaim: “The Lord is risen!”

The **Jews** said: “No, his disciples stole away his body.”

Christians: “The guard at the tomb would have prevented any such theft upon penalty of death.”

Jews: “No, his disciples stole away his body while the guards slept.”

Christians: “Then why are the 16 Roman soldiers who guarded our Lord’s tomb still alive?”

The Believability of Christ’s Resurrection

Why Were the Roman Soldiers Not Put to Death?

You see the penalty for Roman soldiers falling asleep was **crucifixion**. Why were they not hung before all for their negligence? And how would 16 soldiers fall asleep all at the same time?

The Roman soldiers were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Christ. They were present when the angels rolled away the stone and were terrified by it. They went to the religious leaders to report what had happened. “Angels came! The earth quaked. The stone was rolled away! The body is not there!”¹⁷

The Claims of the Roman Soldiers Were Believable

The only reason they were not put to death is that their claims of angels, earthquakes and the resurrection was **believable**. Why would 16 soldiers lie?

The sad thing is the Roman soldiers took the money. They saw a miracle, and money was enough to keep their mouths shut. Some of you here today, you might say, “Well if I saw Christ risen from the dead I would believe as well.” Well here you have 16 soldiers who saw Christ risen from the dead, and **they choose temporary comfort** over eternal salvation!

¹⁷ Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 643). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Don't think you are above rejecting the risen Christ. If you are lost in your sin, call out on him now! Ask him to open your eyes. Believe on him. Worship him. Give him your life, your mind, your heart, your goals and desires, and your ambitions. Lose your life in Christ that you might find it!

Trust in the Risen Christ!

The Power of the Resurrection

How sad it is that these **Roman soldiers** and **Jewish leaders** who had seen so many miracles would still reject Christ. Jesus said, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (Lk 16:31).

The heart of mankind is so deceitful and selfish that even in the light of miracles and direct evidence, we will reject God.

To come to Christ you must come by faith! You can see Jesus risen from the dead and still reject him. You must have no confidence in yourself.

The Risen Christ is Unstoppable

Yet these Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders cannot stop the power of the resurrection. Jesus' worth cannot be snuffed out with a few bribes. The glory of his person cannot be put down by falsehoods. Why? Because there were eyewitnesses going everywhere telling of the risen Christ.

The Eyewitnesses Spoke of Christ's Worth

The eyewitnesses said, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Eyewitnesses were everywhere after the resurrection. In addition to the 11 apostles plus Matthias, over 500 witnesses have seen and touched the risen Christ, and they are eyewitnesses, giving testimony that the Messiah has come and is risen. And very soon, thousands do at Pentecost believe, including **some of the Jewish leaders** (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:1,7).¹⁸

Great Many Priests Converted

Acts 6:7 records, "And the word of God continued to increase... and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith."

And 2000 years since, we can say that all the great religious leaders are dead.

Muhammad is dead.

Buddha is dead.

Joseph Smith is dead.

But Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He's alive! Joy to the world! He is risen! He is more than a man; he is the God-man. He is more than a leader, he is the Lord of lords and the King of all kings.

Come to the Risen Christ

Come to the Lord this Resurrection Sunday morning! Jesus said come as a child. He said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). Come humbly. Don't wait. This world will not satisfy you. Don't wait another second. "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (Jms 5:5). Come and worship the risen Christ!

¹⁸ Wilkins, 994.