

THE FIRST EASTER MORNING

TEXT: MATTHEW 28:1-20

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Gospel of Matthew begins with the miracle of the virgin birth, and ends with the miracle of our Lord's resurrection from the dead.
2. This is very important because for the past two thousand years people have been denying both the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ.
3. Recently some Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on the door of one of our members, and they invited him to come and celebrate the death of Christ.
4. But there was no mention of His resurrection.
5. This does not surprise me because this cult denies our Lord's bodily resurrection. Here is what they say regarding the empty tomb and our Lord's body: "We know nothing about what became of it, except that it did not decay or corrupt. Whether it was dissolved into gases or whether it is still preserved somewhere as the grand memorial of God's love, of Christ's obedience, and of our redemption, no one knows; nor is such knowledge necessary" (1913, *Studies in the Scriptures*).
6. What a horrible thing to say!
7. And contrary to Scripture (Matthew 28:9).
8. Some JW literature refers to our Lord's resurrection as a "spiritual resurrection." But spirits cannot be resurrected -- only bodies can!
9. It's not just the cults that deny our Lord's bodily resurrection. Liberal preachers are guilty too. I heard about a liberal preacher who preached an eloquent, flowery message on the resurrection but he did not believe in a literal bodily resurrection. He believed in a so-called "spiritual resurrection," and he employed "double-talk."
10. A while ago, a church member wrote a letter to an advice column in his local newspaper. "Dear Sir: On Easter, our preacher said that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think? Sincerely, Bewildered."
11. Here was the reply, published a few days later: Dear Bewildered: Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy strokes, nail him to a cross; hang him out in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear through his heart; embalm him; put him in an airless tomb for three days and three nights, and then see what happens." That's a good answer!
12. Let me say that though the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ has often been denied, it has never been disproved!

13. And although Easter Sunday is the day we commemorate the resurrection of Christ, every Sunday is really "Resurrection Sunday."
14. We meet on the first day of the week, because it is the first day of the week that our Lord arose from the dead. The early church began to meet on the first day of the week because it was the day of our Lord's resurrection -- as we see in John chapter 20.

I. THE EMPTY TOMB (28:1-7).

1. When studying the Bible, it is always wise to compare Scripture with Scripture. So when reading about the resurrection of Christ, it is good to study Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
2. Mark 16:1 says, "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him."
3. They came to the grave just as the day began to dawn on that first Resurrection Sunday (Matthew 28:1).
4. Mark 16:3 says the women said among themselves, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"
5. Matthew 28:2 says, "there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it."
6. The angel did not come down from heaven and roll away the stone so that our Lord could get out of the sepulchre. Our Lord was already out of the sepulchre.
7. The stone was rolled so the women could see for themselves the empty tomb.
8. The angel of the Lord said to the women, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:5, 6).
9. The angel charged them to go and tell the disciples and Peter (Matthew 28:7). The angel assured them that our Lord would see them in Galilee.
10. He also reminded them of what Jesus had said when they were in Galilee (cf. Luke 24:6-8).
11. Because Christ rose from the dead, we too shall rise. First Corinthians 15:20 says, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."
12. Sir Walter Raleigh was beheaded in the Tower of London in 1618. The night before his execution he wrote these words:

Even such is Time, that takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
And pays us but with earth and dust;
Who in the dark and silent grave,
When we have wandered all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days:
**But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust.**

II. THE RISEN SAVIOUR (28:8-15).

1. Thank God we serve a risen Saviour!

I serve a risen Savior

He's in the world today.

I know that He is living,

Whatever men may say.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!

He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.

He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!

You ask me how I know He lives?

He lives within my heart.

2. The apostle Paul said, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17).
3. Wilbur M. Smith wrote, "The resurrection of Christ is the very citadel of the Christian faith. This is the doctrine that turned the world upside down in the first century, that lifted Christianity preeminently above Judaism, and the pagan religions of the Mediterranean world."
4. We see in Matthew 28:7 that the angel told the women at the empty tomb, "And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead..." (28:7). The women obeyed and "they departed quickly..." (28:8).
5. On their way they met the risen Saviour and the Bible says they "worshipped Him." (28:9; cf. vs. 17).
6. The JW's and the other religious cults will not worship Jesus but these women did. If Jesus was anything less than the sinless Son of God, He would have stopped them, but of course He did not stop them because He is the sinless Son of God.
7. When Thomas saw the risen Saviour, he called Him, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). If Jesus was not Lord and God He should

- have corrected Thomas, but of course He did not correct Thomas because Thomas was right.
8. Jesus is Lord and God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).
 9. "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Heb. 1:8).
 10. Notice these religious leaders resorted to trickery, deceit, and bribery to cover up their crime and hinder the Gospel (Matt. 28:11-15).

III. THE GREAT COMMISSION GIVEN (28:16-20).

1. Beloved, Jesus said, “Go” (28:19), so we ought to go.
2. Let’s put the GO back into the GOSPEL!
3. We have here the Great Commission. One preacher (W. Graham Scroggie) put it this way:
 - How comprehensive it is - “all nations” (28:19)
 - How commanding - “all power” (28:18)
 - How exacting - “all things” (28:20)
 - How satisfying - “always” (28:20)
4. For most Christians the Great Commission has become “the great omission.”
5. Most Christians today are not involved in soulwinning. Most churches do not even have a soulwinning program or visitation program.
6. This is our Lord’s last command before He ascended into heaven (28:18-20).
7. The Great Commission is in all four Gospels as well as the Book of Acts (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:19-21; Acts 1:8).
8. Our Lord has commanded every Christian to go out and win souls. Every Christian is equally responsible for taking the Gospel to every creature.
9. I should stress that our Lord never sends us out without equipping us (cf. “power” - 28:18... “Go ye therefore” (28:19).
10. “Endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).
11. If you are not going after lost souls you are disobedient, because Jesus said, “Go” and you are saying, “No.” Don’t say “no” to Jesus.
12. Obey Jesus and He will go with you. He said, “and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:20).
13. Unsaved friend, you need to stop saying “no” to Jesus too. He will save you today if you come to Him.

CONCLUSION:

"Who will roll the stone?" they questioned,
Early on that Easter day;
When the women reached the garden,
Lo! The stone was rolled away.

Angels' hands had been before them,
Wasted was their anxious dread;
They, who thought to touch the body,
Found a risen Lord instead.

In the garden of experience;
Does some rock of great defeat
Keep a dead Christ sealed before you,
Who was once alive and sweet?

Christian, bring the spice of service
To the place you left the Lord;
There to find the tomb forsaken,
Opened of divine accord.

There to turn and meet, with wonder,
In that hushed and holy place,
Jesus Christ, alive and precious,
Speaking with you face to face.

"Who will roll the stone?" they wondered,
Christian, question not today;
Rise up early, seek the garden—
God will roll the stone away. -- Anon.