

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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*Easter Sunday 2021*

*April 4, 2021*

**Matthew's Case for the  
Resurrection of Christ**

**Sermon Text:** Matthew 27-28

**Scripture Reading:** Jonah 2:1-10

Mat 12:38-42 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." (39) But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. (40) For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (41) The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. (42) The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this

generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

Ever since the days of the Lord Jesus upon this earth there have been myriads of people who deny His claims. They deny that He was and is the Son of God. They deny that He performed His miracles. And largely they make these denials because they hate who He is and what He says. They cannot have a god like this – they need a Jesus of their own creation.

And among these denials are the many proposed theories whose purpose is to explain away the resurrection of Christ from the dead. If you have a real, historical, bodily resurrection as the Bible records, then you have a real problem if you refuse to bow to Him. You see this even from the moment Jesus' body was put in the tomb-

Mat 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 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.

Matthew provides us with several evidences like this for the reality of the resurrection. Notice that the people who crucified Him *knew*. *They knew who He was, but they hated Him because they hated God*. These Jewish leaders knew full well that the Roman guard soldiers were telling the truth – Jesus had indeed risen from that tomb, the angels were there, the soldiers were struck dumb, the stone was rolled away.

Let's look at some more proofs that Matthew records in regard to the reality of the resurrection:

#### Events Occurring When Jesus Died

Mat 27:45-54 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land

until the ninth hour. (46) And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

(47) And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” (48) And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. (49) But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”

(50) And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. (51) And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

(52) The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, (53) and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

(54) When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of

God!”

The centurion’s declaration here is the verdict that Matthew’s account necessarily leads to. Anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear could not come to any other conclusion – *truly this was the Son of God*. You can see all through this record of Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion (and really all through His entire earthly ministry) that unbelief by man’s sinful nature is very intentional. That no amount of evidence in itself will bring fallen man to faith:

Luk 16:27-31 And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— (28) for I have five brothers— so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ (29) But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ (30) And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ (31) He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Largely the evidence in the Bible for the truth of Christ’s claims *is given for the benefit of Christ’s true people. For*

*believers*. The evidence given includes:

- Extended darkness at midday. All of the Jews would have known exactly what such darkness meant – no light in Goshen, God’s judgment is upon them
- Thick temple curtain torn from top to bottom
- A strong earthquake
- A resurrection of saints who had died (this miracle is a very much ignored evidence, even by the church)

So everyone *knew*. You even see it in this:

(47) And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” (48) And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. (49) But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”

Now, these people knew full well how the Old Testament ended – with the Lord’s promise to send Elijah again. Jesus had, of course, announced that this promise was fulfilled in John the Baptist, but these people blew that off.

However, they linger. They want to see if Elijah is going to hear and come. Why? If Jesus were an impostor, why even bother?

And again:

Mat 27:40-42 and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” (41) So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, (42) **“He saved others; he cannot save himself.** He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

These evil men actually affirm that Jesus had in fact saved others – healed them. They knew it. It was a fact. So Matthew records this to show us that even these wicked enemies acknowledged Him. Testimony from enemies is quite significant when it has no choice but to acknowledge facts.

### The Testimony of the Women

Mat 27:55-56 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, (56)

**among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary** the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

And –

Mat 27:57-61 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. (58) He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. (59) 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.**

Now –

Mat 28:1-8 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.** (2) 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. (4) And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. (5) But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. (6) He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. (7) 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.

Matthew, it is evident, is intentionally showing us that Mary and Mary Magdalene knew full well where Jesus’ tomb was. They didn’t go to the wrong tomb! To maintain that they did creates far more untenable problems than it overcomes (for those who deny the resurrection) –

- It requires that a second tomb with a Roman guard (quivering and unconscious) be nearby
- It means that all the accounts of the angels being present were lies
- And of course it would require these women to not have sense enough to know where Jesus’

tomb was, *which they had been at the day before.*

### The Roman Guard and Secure Tomb

The lie circulated intentionally by the Jewish leaders was that Jesus’ disciples had come and stolen His body. Once again that is completely unbelievable. The tomb had been made absolutely secure –

Mat 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.

And then as we have seen they bribed the soldiers in order to have them tell this lie that the disciples had come and

stolen the body.

### To This Day

Notice this very significant phrase that Matthew uses very purposefully –

Mat 28:15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. **And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.**

What does this tell us? It is this:

*“To this day” means that Matthew wrote his Gospel very soon after these events occurred. At the time of his writing, the Jews were still promoting this lie. Therefore, for example, when Matthew tells of people who had died being resurrected and going into Jerusalem, those people would still have been alive and those who saw them were still alive.*

It is the same logic as Paul points us to in this:

1Co 15:6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, **most of whom are still alive**, though some have fallen asleep.

In other words, just how successful is a mythical resurrection of Christ going to be if the “myth teller” is telling it and claiming it to be fact, when all these people who were there were still alive?

### Why Does it Matter?

Is this entire matter just one of craving to win an argument? Some debate that is just for theologians and Bible geeks who thrive on trivia? Hardly. Listen to Paul again:

1Co 15:12-19 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

(14) And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. (15) We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

(16) For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. (17) And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

(18) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (19) If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Trace Paul's argument here. What he is saying is that you can't have your cake and eat it too. That is, you cannot have "Christianity" and at the same time have a Christ who did not rise from the dead (this is the very thing the liberal theology types do).

- These kind of people not only deny Christ's resurrection, they deny ANY possibility of resurrection from the dead
- If Christ did not rise from the dead, then all of Christianity is false, all of its preaching, all of the gospel, all of the Bible – all a lie, and we are guilty of misrepresenting God
- If Christ is not raised, then we have no Savior. He has not conquered death, He has not been a satisfaction to the Father for our sins. We are still in our sins and condemned.
- If Christ is not raised, if there is no resurrection, then there will be no resurrection of anyone. All who have died, and all of us when

we die, will perish in our sins. Lost and in hell for all eternity.

- If Christ is not raised then we are all a bunch of pathetic losers who have traded off the pleasures of this world for a lie. If the Christian religion only has application *to this present life*, then it is worthless because it does not deal with our real need – salvation from sin and death, and being put right with God.

But...

1Co 15:50-58 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (51) Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

(53) For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (54) When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the

saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” (55) “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

(56) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. (57) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.