

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 5 April 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

He Is Risen, As He Said!

Matthew 28:1-15

Back in 1994, I read, for the first time, about a world-famous rabbi named **Menachem Mendel Schneerson**, who had recently passed away. To say that his death was major news in the Jewish world would be an understatement. Schneerson was an incredibly brilliant man, with a memory that could only be described as “photographic.” His father had brought him up in rabbinic studies; and by the time he was 17, he had memorised all 5,422 pages of the Talmud. In his lifetime, he took a small, dwindling Jewish movement called “Chabad-Lubavitch,” and transformed it into a large, thriving, global movement. He led many Jewish organisations, and wrote more than 400 volumes before his death in 1994.¹

Now, Schneerson didn’t claim to be the Messiah; yet, during his lifetime, most of his followers believed that he *was* “King Messiah.” When he died, many of his followers were profoundly disappointed; but many others refused to give up hope. In 1996, a sect of his followers claimed that Schneerson *was*, indeed, the Messiah, and that in the future, *he will rise again*, conquer the world, and reign as Messiah. To this day, many Hasidic Jews cling to the hope of Schneerson’s future resurrection.²

Needless to say, these claims caused a huge stir in the Jewish world. Arguments flew back and forth. The Rabbinical Council of America proclaimed that “There is not, and has never been, a place in Judaism for the belief that Mashiah ben David will bring his Messianic mission, only to experience death, burial, and resurrection before completing it.”³ Now, that is an interesting statement! Does this mean that the “Lubavitcher” Jews who still believe that Schneerson will rise again should be *expelled* from the Jewish community? Strangely, according to the Rabbinical Council of America, no! They refuse to expel these Jewish brethren, or deprecate them in any way.⁴ This raises an obvious question, then: What about those Jews who believe that a Jew named **Jesus of Nazareth** *already* died and rose again in three days, as the Scriptures foretold of the Messiah, and that He is coming back to reign? Should *they* be accepted in the Jewish community? Clearly, they are *not* accepted. Even atheistic Jews are accepted, while Jewish believers in Jesus are regarded as outcasts. Why? **Because Jesus is a divider of men; and His resurrection is the “blade” that separates those who truly receive Christ from those who reject him.**

Even before Jesus’ resurrection, people didn’t have the option of remaining neutral about Jesus of Nazareth; but *after* the resurrection, it became a matter of life or death. Those who believed on the risen Jesus couldn’t remain silent: they were compelled, by love and obedience to their Master, to testify to the world that He is Lord and Messiah! It cost them their reputation, their family ties, their living, and often their lives; yet, they were willing to embrace the cost, because they *knew* that one day they would stand before their risen Saviour! This morning, we will be talking about the most important event in history: the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave! The title of this message is ***He Is Risen, As He Said.***

Read Matthew 28:1-15.

I. The moving of the stone (vv. 1-4, 11-15)

Folks, the whole meaning and direction of human history rests on just one simple question: **“Who moved the stone?”** If mere men moved the stone to Jesus’ tomb, then all Jesus’ claims about Himself were false, and Christianity is false. But if men did *not* move the stone, then all Jesus’ claims about Himself are true, and He is the only Way to God the Father. This morning, as we study this passage here in **Matthew**, we will also be carefully examining all the other Gospel accounts, and piecing their reports together. We will now look at those Scriptures.

Read Mark 16:1-11.

Read Luke 24:1-12.

Read John 20:1-18.

As you can see, there are many facets to the account of Jesus’ resurrection; and each of the four Gospels reports the story from a different angle, and with a slightly different emphasis. By the way, if Jesus’ resurrection were all made up, then you’d think that the inventors of this tale would have been sure to claim that **someone actually saw Jesus come out of the tomb!** Yet, they *didn’t* make this claim. No one actually *saw* Jesus at the moment when He walked out of the tomb; but many people *did* see Him shortly thereafter.

By the way, the fact that it takes careful study of all four Gospels to harmonise the events of Jesus’ resurrection goes to show that these events were *not* made up! You would *expect* to see varying perspectives in any real, historical account. More than a few lawyers, journalists, and forensic experts down through the years have placed their faith in Christ after studying the account of Christ’s resurrection in the four Gospels. Why? Because they know, from their profession, that *variation in testimonies* is a mark of a story’s authenticity! In a real history, you would *expect* the witnesses to include details that they personally saw, or that *they* felt were important, while leaving out details that other witnesses thought were *very* important. If all the accounts had been told in exactly the same way, we would suspect that it had been made up by a band of conspirators. But that’s not the case! The resurrection of Jesus was told from the unique perspectives of at least *18 witnesses*, and was compiled and written down by four different authors. When you look at them closely, they all fit together, like puzzle pieces!

So, let's put the pieces of Jesus' resurrection account together. First of all, back in **Matthew 27**, we read that after Jesus was buried, the Sanhedrin went to Pilate and demanded that he dispatch soldiers to guard the body of Jesus, because they remembered that Jesus had said, "***After three days I will rise again.***" Those words made them nervous! They *said* that they wanted to make sure that Jesus' disciples didn't steal His body, and claim that He had risen; but in reality, they were afraid that Jesus really *would* rise again! At any rate, Pilate set soldiers at the tomb; and for three days and three nights, they carefully guarded Jesus' body.

But then, very early on Sunday morning, an angel came down from heaven, rolled back the stone, and sat on it. (At the same time, there was a great earthquake.) The soldiers all fainted from sheer terror; and when they awoke, the angel was nowhere to be seen. Fearful that they would be executed, they didn't tell their Roman superiors; instead, they ran to the leaders of the Sanhedrin, and told them. Of course, the Sanhedrin didn't want this story to be known any more than the soldiers did; and so, they bribed the soldiers to say that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body by night: and they promised them that they would "fix things" with Pilate.

Now, with this in mind, please look again at **Matthew 28:2**. (**Read Matthew 28:2.**) According to this verse, who moved the stone? An *angel* moved the stone. But what happened next? Does the Bible say that Jesus then came out of the tomb? No, the Bible doesn't say this. Matthew reports that the soldiers fainted for fear: *but it wasn't because they saw Jesus*. They fainted out of fear of the *angel*; but they never saw Jesus Himself. How *did* Jesus come out of the tomb, then? The same way that He walked out of the 100-pound "cocoon" of dried myrrh and cloth, and left it in a neat, untouched pile; and the same way that He simply walked through the locked door of the Upper Room later that day! Apparently, Jesus simply *walked through* the rock door of the tomb, a short while *before* the angel moved it. The angel didn't roll back the stone to *let Jesus out* of the tomb: He rolled back the stone in order to *let Jesus' followers into* the tomb, so that they could see that He was risen!

II. The message from Heaven (vv. 5-7)

(**Read Matthew 28:5-7 again.**) After the angel rolled back the stone, the soldiers ran back to the city; and the angel sat down on the stone, and waited for what he knew was coming next. He knew that at that very moment, five women were on their way toward the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices. Their names were **Mary Magdalene**; **Mary the aunt of Jesus**; **Mary** the mother of James and Joses; **Salome**; **Joanna**; and at least one other lady, whom the Bible doesn't name. When these women arrived at the tomb, they found the stone rolled away from the door, but saw no one there (at first). Now, at this point, Mary Magdalene was overcome with grief; and she didn't stick around. As soon as she saw that the stone was rolled away, she assumed the worst—that someone had stolen Jesus' body. She turned on her heels, and ran straight back to Jerusalem to tell Peter and John, who were both at John's house.

Now, the other ladies kept their heads a little better. Even though they were afraid and bewildered, they decided to go into the tomb to investigate. But while they were in the tomb, they were suddenly met by two angels. They appeared to be men; but it soon became obvious that they were *not* men. In fact, one of them was the same angel who had rolled back the stone a short while earlier. He spoke to the ladies and said, ***“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. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead.”***

III. The movement of the missionaries (v. 8)

After being given their mission from the angel, the women didn't lose any time. They were the very first “missionaries” after Jesus' resurrection! They ran back to John's house to tell everyone that Jesus was risen! However, when they got to the house, Peter and John weren't there. Other believers were there, but not Peter and John. Why? Because while the other four women had been lingering at the tomb, Mary Magdalene had run back to Jerusalem, and had told Peter, John, and the others, that ***“They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre.”*** Well, when Peter and John heard this, they ran to the tomb to check it out. They didn't realise, though, that as they were running through dark the streets, the two Marys, Joanna, and the others, were running *back* to their house to tell them what *they* had seen! When Peter and John arrived at the tomb, they found the stone rolled back, just as Mary had said!

Now, this part of the narrative is recorded in **John 20**; yet, you may have noticed that John, in his Gospel, didn't mention the other four ladies who went to the tomb. Why? For one thing, the accounts of the other four ladies had already written down in the other three Gospels, and were well known by Christians everywhere. (John was the last one to write his Gospel.) But that isn't the only reason. The main reason that John focused on Mary Magdalene's part of the story is that **Mary Magdalene** was the one who had *personally told him* that Jesus' body wasn't in the tomb! John went to check out the tomb because of **Mary Magdalene's** report. In his Gospel, John was telling the story from the standpoint of what *he* saw and heard.

Well, needless to say, Peter and John were now running to the tomb as fast as their legs could carry them; but Peter, being older, couldn't keep up with John. By the way, it wasn't much of a jog to the tomb. To this day, the hill that many Christians believe to be Golgotha still looks strikingly like a skull; and right at the base of the hill, only meters below where the cross would have stood, is a first-century tomb, which is cut right into the hill. (It was discovered in 1867.) This is exactly the way the Bible describes it. In **John 19**, John said that ***“In the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre.”*** The tomb was almost immediately next to the place where Jesus died on the cross.

Now, how did John respond when he got to the tomb? Like Mary, he seems to have made assumptions that weren't based on faith. Let's read **verses 4 and 5** again. (**Read John 20:4-5.**) John came right up to the threshold of the tomb, but didn't go in. Why? Probably because he saw the linen clothes lying there, still in the shape of Jesus' body, like an empty, but unbroken shell, and assumed that Jesus was still *in* the clothes. In the darkness, he couldn't tell that they were empty. Peter, on the other hand, actually went in and investigated; and when he got there, he saw that Jesus' body was not there! And *that* was when Peter came to the biggest turning point of his life (other than the moment when he first believed on Jesus). From this moment forward, nothing would ever be the same again!

IV. The moment of belief for Jesus' followers (vv. 9-10)

(**Read Matthew 28:9-10 again.**) Before the day of Christ's crucifixion, none of Jesus' followers (with the possible exception of Mary of Bethany) had taken Jesus' words about His coming death and resurrection literally. Their faith was real, and their salvation was real; but they had failed to receive Jesus' word about His resurrection. Now, one by one, they would be confronted with the reality of Jesus' resurrection; and they would have to decide, "Will I believe?" We will now examine the exact moments when the earliest witnesses of Jesus' resurrection believed that He was risen.

Now, since we're still in **John 20**, let's start with **Peter and John**. Can you imagine what must have been going through Peter's and John's heads at this point? They had not yet heard the women's report from the angel that Jesus was risen; but they surely must have remembered all the times when Jesus had told them that He would be crucified, and rise from the grave in three days! Can you imagine how ashamed they must have felt that they had been so slow to believe Him? As Peter looked at the linen cloths, he realised that no power on earth could have removed the body from those clothes, and have left them in the untouched condition that they were in! Jesus' body had been packed in a sort of "cocoon" of linen cloth and 100 pounds of myrrh; and by this time, it would have been hardened, like cement. There was only one explanation for their pristine condition: Jesus had supernaturally risen from the dead, and had risen right out of His grave clothes! John tells us that Peter "***saw, and believed.***" Jesus appeared to Peter one-on-one later that afternoon, and then again in the Upper Room; but from the moment when he saw those empty grave clothes, he believed.

Folks, the Bible says that "***Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.***" Peter saw the empty linen with his eyes; but the evidence that he saw with his eyes was not nearly as important as the evidence of *God's Word*. Peter *had heard Jesus say* that He would rise again; and every word that Jesus speaks is *God's Word*! If what Peter was seeing with his eyes had not been founded upon *faith* in the Word of God, he would never have believed. All the

physical evidence in the world cannot convince a heart that will not believe God's Word! Peter finally believed, because he finally received the *Word* that Jesus had spoken.

However, Peter's faith in God's Word was soon to be strengthened even more. Not only had *Jesus* foretold that He would rise from the dead, but the Scriptures had foretold it, as well. Very soon, Peter would become acquainted with those Scriptures. **(Read John 20:9 again.)** What Scriptures foretold that Jesus would rise again? Let's look at a couple examples.

Read Isaiah 53:7-10. [*“He shall prolong his days”* means that Christ would come to life again!]

Read Psalm 16:8-11.

Now, let's examine the **moment when the women believed.** **(Read Matthew 28:5-8 again.)** As you read this account, it is important to realise that Matthew left out many details. Between **verses 4 and 5**, Matthew does not tell us that the five ladies showed up *shortly after* the earthquake; nor does he tell us that Mary Magdalene, after seeing the rolled away stone, ran back and told Peter and John that Jesus' body had been stolen. He doesn't tell us that Peter and John then ran to the tomb to check it out. He also doesn't mention that there was a *second* angel that appeared to the four ladies who ventured into the tomb. Matthew merely jumps from the moment when the angel first rolled away the stone to the moment when that same angel spoke to the four ladies, and told them that Jesus had risen. By reading **John 20**, as well as **Mark** and **Luke**, we get the complete picture of what happened that morning.

So, starting in **verse 5**, we find that the angel commanded Mary, Mary, Joanna, and the other lady to tell the disciples that Jesus had risen; and that is exactly what they did. They ran back to John's house as fast as they could. However, when they arrived at the house, they found that Peter and John had left to go to the tomb. (Everyone was running around in a big circle between the house and the tomb, and just missing each other!) The ladies told the people who *were* there at the house what had happened; but they didn't stay at the house for long. All the other disciples (except Thomas) were at another house; and so, they left John's house, and went to the other house, where the other eight disciples were gathered. But on the way, Jesus suddenly appeared to them; and they fell at His feet and worshipped Him. (By the way, this shows, once again, that Jesus is God. Only God is to be worshipped!) After this, the ladies went and told the other eight disciples that Jesus is risen! However, they *didn't have to see* Jesus with their own eyes before they believed: they believed as soon as the angel told them.

Now, let's look at the moment of belief for **Mary Magdalene**. In **John 20**, we are told that Mary Magdalene was alone at the tomb, a short while *after* Peter and John had run back to their house. (She had stayed at Peter and John's house for a little while; but she couldn't bring herself to remain there. She ran back to the tomb, expecting to see Peter and John there, but didn't realise that Peter and John had just left the tomb to go *back* to the house.) Now, at this point, two angels (who looked like men) were sitting at the head and foot of the bed where Jesus' body had lain. When the angels asked Mary why she was crying, she responded, **"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."** Mary was so distraught, that the strangeness of the situation didn't occur to her. But then, Jesus Himself appeared to her! However, Mary was crying so hard, that she didn't recognise Him.

Now, I find it interesting that when Mary responded to Jesus' question, she didn't even use Jesus' name. She said, **"Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."** She spoke of Jesus as "Him"—as though everyone in the world should know who Jesus is! But then, Jesus said one simple word: **"Mary."** Immediately, Mary knew Jesus' voice; and in shock and wonder, she said, **"Rabboni"** ("Master")! She knew her Master's voice! And so it is with all true believers in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, **"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."** Those who have truly put their trust in Christ can distinguish Jesus' voice from the voice of deceivers. Of course, we have never heard Jesus' voice audibly; but we *do* hear His voice in the Scriptures. Do *you* know His voice? Have you placed your faith in the Son of God? If not, please do so today!

Now, we could spend all morning examining the exact moments when the other Apostles and followers of Jesus believed in Jesus' resurrection; however, **I wish to focus particularly on the women**. You see, there is a reason why Christ honoured Mary and the other women by appearing to them *first*. For one thing, these women had stuck right by the cross to the moment of His death; and secondly, they were the ones who went to the tomb to put spices on Jesus' body. They had no idea how they were going to evade the soldiers, and move that two-ton rock; but they were determined to honour their Lord. That took some serious faith and courage! They were ready to charge Hell with a water pistol! They evidently went to the tomb *expecting a miracle*; and God honoured their faith by letting them see the Lord first. By the way, it seems that the more faith they had, the less frightened they were when they actually saw Jesus! Mary Magdalene didn't seem to be surprised at all! Thomas, on the other hand, was the *last* one to have the honour of seeing Jesus, because his faith was very weak.

Christian, you and I are looking back at Jesus' resurrection with 20-20 hindsight; so it's easy for us to cluck our tongues at the disciples' unbelief. But would *you* have had the faith to do what those women did? Or would you, like Thomas, be the *last* one to have Christ revealed to you? Jesus said, **"According to your faith, so be it unto you."** If you want God to do great things through your life, you must have a heart of faith that is *ready* to see the glory of God!

V. The meaning of the resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just a doctrine. It is a life-changing reality to everyone who has believed on Jesus' name. Because Christ conquered death for us, we who are saved will also receive resurrected bodies that are sinless and immortal, just like Christ's. That is why Jesus is called "*the firstfruits of them that slept.*"

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.

Read Leviticus 23:9-14. [The first sheaf of barley was offered to God; then the rest of the harvest followed. Likewise, Christ's resurrection came first; and later, our resurrection will follow.]

Jesus arose from the grave on the Feast of Firstfruits, because He is the Firstfruits of the resurrection. Because *His* resurrection was offered up to God the Father on our behalf, all who believe on Him will one day partake of the resurrection unto life, too! Christian, no matter how dark a time you may be going through, you have the sure promise that you will one day receive a resurrected body like Christ's—a body that will be fit to dwell in the glory of Heaven, for all eternity! You and I have a hope that the world does *not* have! When a brother or sister in Christ dies, we don't have to sorrow the way that lost people do. Is there a season of tears and sadness? Of course. But are we without hope? Absolutely not! Before we knew Christ, we *were* without hope, and "*without God in the world*"; but because Christ is now in our lives, we don't need to sorrow "*as others which have no hope.*" By Christ's resurrection, we have the victory over death! But that's not all. We also have *victory over sin.*

Read Philippians 3:3-10.

What is Paul saying in this passage? He is saying, first of all, that he *knew* that he was accepted by God. Paul was accepted by God not because of *his own* righteousness, but because of Christ's righteousness. At the moment he stopped trusting in his own righteousness, and trusted Christ instead, *Christ's* own perfect righteousness was put on his account; and from that moment forward, he was a *saved* man. But that's not all. As a saved man, Paul's desire was now to "*know*" Christ more intimately every day. And how did his relationship with Jesus grow? It grew as Paul availed of the "*power of his resurrection.*"

Christian, all the power you need to overcome sin, and to live your life for God, is available through the **“power”** of Christ’s resurrection. The power by which Christ arose from the grave is the same power by which sinful habits and desires in *your* life can be cast down, and put to death! All you have to do is go to the Lord in prayer, and *ask* Him to give you more of His resurrection power. You need to realise, though, that there is a *cost* that comes with victorious Christian living: and that cost is the **“fellowship of his sufferings.”** You will never suffer in the sense that *Christ* suffered, of course. You will *never* have to suffer to earn your salvation. Christ already paid the full price for your salvation on the cross; and there is nothing you could possibly do to add to it. You are saved forever! However, there *is* a cost that comes with victorious Christian living. You see, when you are living your life for Jesus, there *will* be a measure of scorn, ridicule, and persecution from those who don’t know the Lord. You’re going one way, and the world is going the opposite way; and when the world sees you not going their sinful way, it makes them mad! As you walk in close fellowship with Christ, you *will* suffer for Christ’s name, in some way or other. Many Christians must even give up their lives for Jesus. However, *Jesus is worth it!* He gave His life as a ransom for you, so that you might be raised up from spiritual death; and now, it is a privilege to live your life for Him. The Bible says, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”**

Conclusion: We’ve talked much about Christ’s resurrection this morning: but Christ’s resurrection will do you no good unless you *personally trust* in the One who came out of that tomb. As we close this morning, I would ask, “Are you saved? Has there been a day in your life when you stopped believing that you are a ‘good person’; agreed with God that you are lost and hell-bound; and asked Christ to save you?” If not, then you are still lost; and you need Christ’s gift of salvation. Repent of your sin, and believe on Christ today! If you are saved already, I exhort you to live your life as a **“living sacrifice”** unto the Lord! Stop trying to serve God in your own strength, and trust in the limitless power of Christ’s resurrection!

¹ Wikipedia, “Menachem Mendel Schneerson,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menachem_Mendel_Schneerson

² *Ibid.*

³ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “Orthodox Rabbis Condemn Messianic Sect of Lubavitch,” <https://www.jta.org/archive/orthodox-rabbis-condemn-messianic-sect-of-lubavitch>

⁴ *Ibid.*