

Introduction

Matthew's account of the resurrection harkens back to the beginning of his Gospel.

Matthew begins with an angel announcing the good news of Jesus' birth.

Matthew ends with an angel announcing the good news of Jesus' resurrection, his new birth.

Matthew begins with Jesus struggling with Satan in the wilderness before going to Galilee and calling his disciples.

Matthew ends with Jesus' struggle against Sin, Death, and Satan on the cross before going to Galilee, not to call his disciples but to send them.

And, most pertinent to what we consider this morning, Matthew's Gospel begins and ends with accounts of Jesus' two births.

For Matthew presents Jesus' resurrection as a type of birth.

Jesus breaks forth from the womb of the tomb as "***the firstborn from the dead***".

This is the language the New Testament uses to speak of Jesus' resurrection.

In [Colossians 1:18](#) Paul states that Jesus "is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent."

The Apostle John echos this sentiment by describing Jesus as "the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and ruler of kings on earth." in [Rev. 1:5](#).

One of the reasons why the Scriptures speak of Jesus' resurrection this way is because the Bible presents Jesus' resurrection as the beginning of a New Creation.

Because of this, there are many connections between the Resurrection of Jesus and the original account of the creation in the Bible.

With this in mind, I have divided this morning's sermon into the following three points about resurrection:

1. The Resurrection brings rest
2. The Resurrection unites heaven and earth
3. The Resurrection Conquers Death

The Resurrection Brings Rest

Verse 1 can literally be translated, "on the Sabbath, after it began to dawn toward the first of the Sabbaths."

The way Matthew uses these words indicates that there is some sort of new Sabbath being established with Jesus' resurrection.

Jesus is raised from the dead in a garden and a new Sabbath is established.

All of this points us back to the account of the Sabbath's creation in [Genesis 2](#).

In the creation account, the Sabbath takes place on the seventh day.

But here, Jesus' resurrection takes place on the next day, the eighth day.

Scholars have pointed out that there is a theme of the eighth day that can be found throughout the Bible.

In the Bible, the 8th day serves as the beginning of something new, where the old is left behind and the new begins.

Perhaps the best known example of this is that the circumcision of newborn boys was to occur on the eighth day.

But there are many others:

Many of the levitical cleansing rights occur on the eighth day.

The great and final day of the Feast of Tabernacles occurs on the eighth day.

The consecration of the Temple occurred on the eighth day after Solomon's seven day feast.

Priestly Consecration on the 8th Day

But one in particular that I'd like to consider further is the fact that the a priest emerges from the ordeal of his ordination on the eight day in [Leviticus 9](#).

In [Leviticus 8](#), the priests are brought into the Tabernacle and go through a process of ordination.

During this process they are cleansed and clothed.

But at the end of this process, the priests are told to stay in the entrance of the Tabernacle until the 8th day.

On the 8th day the newly ordained priests would emerge from the Tabernacle to begin their ministry before the Lord and for the people.

The entire final week of Jesus' life could be understood as a kind of priestly consecration and ordination.

Jesus enters the Temple after his Triumphal Entry.

Jesus is anointed at Simon the Leper's house at Bethany.

Jesus is clothed, in a mocking fashion.

A sacrifice is made.

Jesus lies hidden in the Tomb (the true Tabernacle where God's glory lies).

And on the eighth day, Jesus emerges, consecrated and set apart as a high priest in the order of Melchizedek to bring his people into true Sabbath rest.

Enter Into Sabbath Rest

One of the tragedies of the creation account in [Genesis 1-2](#) is the fact that man never entered into God's Sabbath rest.

This is something that [Hebrews 4](#) makes clear.

By referencing [Psalm 95](#), Hebrews points out that neither Adam nor Joshua was able to bring rest to God's people.

But Jesus does bring us into the great Sabbath rest of God:

As the Second Adam, Jesus performed his great work on the cross on the sixth day,

On the Sabbath his body rested in the tomb,

Then, on the eighth day, he rose.

And because of this great priestly work, Jesus has won true and everlasting Sabbath rest for his people.

Jesus, sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty and he has seated us with him in heavenly places.

[Psalm 16:11](#) finds its fulfillment in Christ's resurrection and ascension.

He makes known to us the path of life.

He brings us into God's presence by the Spirit where there is fullness of joy.

He brings us to the right hand of the Father where there are pleasures forevermore.

The mystery that has been revealed in Christ is that the path of life leads through the cross and the tomb.

But now that the forerunner of our faith has gone before us, we can follow his path without fear.

You are to live in this rest that Christ gives.

You are to follow the Resurrected Son, in the power of the Spirit, to the right hand of the Father to enjoy your rest.

Nothing else will give you the rest your soul longs for.

All other good things point ultimately to this.

The Resurrection Unites Heaven and Earth

The reason why all of this is possible is because of our second point: The Resurrection Unites Heaven and Earth.

If you go back and read [Genesis 1-2](#) you will notice an emphasis on the distinction between heaven and earth.

God creates the heavenly realm and the earthly realm.

On the second day of the creation, God places a firmament in the heavens to divide the waters below from the waters above.

In order for the blessings of the heavenly rain to fall on those who dwell on earth, the waters above must break through this firmament.

There is a firmament, like a curtain or a veil, dividing the earth from heaven.

Division & Union

But if you read through the gospels, this division between heaven and earth is always being broken down by Jesus.

This is especially the case in Matthew's gospel.

In Matthew, Jesus proclaims the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus tells his disciples to pray to the Father who is in heaven that his will would be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And at Jesus' death on the cross, the curtain of the Temple, which was decorated with stars, and symbolized the firmament dividing heaven and earth, was torn in two.

Matthew is the gospel of heaven coming to earth, invading and overthrowing the powers of darkness, and renewing the earth.

This union between heaven and earth has always been the purpose of God.

Even in Genesis, the division between heaven and earth was not total.

For the Garden itself was the place where heaven and earth met.

In the Garden, the God of heaven met with man who was formed from the dirt of the earth.

Indeed, man himself is a picture of the union of heaven and earth.

Man is formed from the dust of the earth, but does not become a living soul until God breathes the breath of life into him.

The goal of the creation is to be in perfect union with heaven.

That it would be on earth as it is in heaven.

And this is the goal of every man as well.

Each man is made from dust, but each man is made to be a temple, a dwelling place of God's very presence.

In the Gospel we see this union fulfilled in Christ.

In taking on our human form, the man of heaven takes on our earthly nature.

In the incarnation, the human nature is joined with the divine nature.

But, in rising from the tomb, Jesus is named the firstborn from the dead.

His resurrection is the first of many to come.

And because he rose from the dead, we too will rise from the grave at his return.

His resurrection, means that we too will experience the union of heaven and earth.

And indeed, this union is what we experience in the outpouring of the Spirit as a guarantee of our final participation in Christ's Resurrection.

The Spirit unites us who are of earth to our heavenly Father, through the Son who unites heaven and earth.

When we keep in step with the Spirit of God, we show forth the truth that heaven and earth are united in our bodies.

And we ourselves, as temples of the living God, issue forth rivers of living water that go forth to renew the rest of the creation.

We become outposts of heaven on earth, advancing the kingdom of God through the power of Christ's resurrection.

And the power of Christ's resurrection, is power over death.

The Resurrection Conquers Death

Ever since the Fall, death has been the final foe of all men.

And ever since the Fall, men have been seeking ways to avoid death.

You see this from the earliest human accounts in ancient mythology:

Whether it is the epic of Gilgamesh, the story of Orpheus, or that of Sisyphus, there is a through line of humanity trying to overcome the problem of death.

You can also see this through the man's attempts to conquer nature through magic and science.

The practice of hermeticism and alchemy are both closely linked to the prolonging of life or the avoidance of death.

Indeed, many forms of modern science and technology are closely related to those traditions.

You don't have to search far to find people spending billions of dollars of medical and bio-technological research to extend their lives and avoid death.

This is a modern version of alchemy.

Likewise, if you go to Silicon Valley, you will find equally extravagant amounts of money being spent on ways to upload your consciousness to the cloud, avoiding death by abandoning the body.

This is a modern version of hermetic gnosticism.

What's wrong with these approaches isn't that they desire to overcome death.

Humans aren't meant to die!

God has placed immortality in our soul and it is right for us to seek this.

But we cannot conquer death.

It is only through submission to God that death is conquered.

And this conquest of death has carried out by Christ.

When Christ submitted to the cross, he conquered death.

And his victory over death was announced to the whole creation in the Resurrection and ascension.

And this victory over death is given to all his people.

He is the firstborn and we are his brethren who will rise in like manner upon his return.

We conquer death by following Christ to the cross.

It profits a man nothing if he gains immortal life through bio-medical technology or uploading their consciousness to the cloud.

For in both cases, a man loses his soul.

But whoever loses their life, for the sake of Christ, will live forever, and their glory will ever grow as they gaze upon the beauty of God in perfect peace, rest, and joy.

Let us give thanks to God for this victory, and proclaim again the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus as he invites us to his table this Easter morning.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! AMEN!