

## Matthew 28:1-15 “The Resurrection Seals It”

Well, Church Family, in our study of Matthew’s Gospel, we’ve finally made it to the quintessential moment in the history of the world... What is that moment? The resurrection of Jesus Christ! For you see, I would propose to you...the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event...it is the Mt. Everest of all human history! For you see, if Jesus Christ had not gotten up from the dead...there would be no hope after this life for any human being! The Resurrection of Jesus Christ seals the deal for humankind to have the opportunity to know life after death.

But did it happen? Did He really rise from the dead? Is there proof? Many books, many movies, many hypotheses have been made about the resurrection of Jesus. Did it happen? This morning, I believe we can show you that it did and I believe we’ll be able to show you the lie that proves the Resurrection. The lie of the religious leaders! **The title of this morning’s message is: “The Resurrection Seals It.”**

Now, we’re going to read verses 1-15, but the first 10 are very, very familiar. We teach these at Easter and they are known as well as the Christmas story. We’ll read these verses, but I’m not going to exegete these 10 verses because I just did that at Easter...but, I will use them to explain our text for today...which will be verses 11-15.

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### Matthew 28:1-15

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> 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.” <sup>8</sup> So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.” <sup>11</sup> While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. <sup>12</sup> And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers <sup>13</sup> and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ <sup>14</sup> And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” <sup>15</sup> So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

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This is account of bribery and one of the greatest lies ever told. This account is only found in Matthew’s Gospel. Do you want to know why I believe this is the case? Because Matthew’s audience...whom he was writing to...was primarily a Jewish audience. AND this is the cover up by the Jewish religious leaders that’s still be purported today. Because if you went to the Wailing Wall today...



and you asked a Jewish man or woman, “What happened to the body of Jesus...did He rise from the dead?” They would say, “No, His disciples stole the body.” Matthew said, “And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.” And it has...even to this day, the year 2018.

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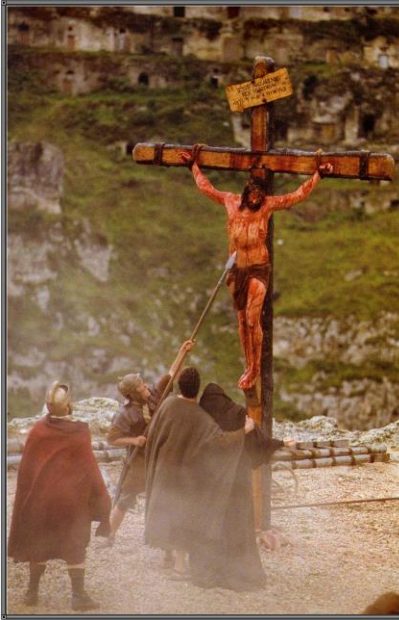
I'll say it again...I've said it many times...church family...if Jesus didn't get up from the dead, we're fools for being here today, because we are worshipping a lie!

Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” Those are the words of Jesus said: “ I am the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Him.” In other words, Jesus said the only hope of salvation for humankind is through Him and therefore, to reject the resurrection, for whatever reason, is to commit a kind of spiritual suicide. To not believe in the resurrection is to forfeit all hope of a future life in heaven, and instead, guarantee separation from God to an eternal hell. **And in so doing, LISTEN**, one not only loses the future, but the meaning and the value of the present. For you see, if you and I can't be certain of what happens to us after we die, the truth is...we can't really be certain of much in the present. We live with question marks.

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Yes, through the years there have been a myriad of explanations offered to explain away the truth of the resurrection. Like the ridiculous “Swoon theory,” where Jesus supposedly just passed out on the cross and somehow was revived by the coolness of the tomb and He somehow pushed the massive stone away and walked out...battered and beaten where he couldn't even carry His cross.

No! He was dead! This guy proved it...



That Roman soldier was skilled and tasked with making sure a criminal was dead before he was pulled off the cross... If he were wrong, he could, himself, be executed. The Romans were experts in executions. They were very proficient at determining death. And you remember, when they came to break Jesus' legs...the Centurion reported back to Pilate, "He's already dead." For you see, that soldier had rammed that spear into the pericardium, the sac around the heart, and blood and water flowed, proving He was dead. And Mathew records that Pilate gave the "corpse" to Joseph of Arimathea. Oh, He was dead.

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Another theory is the "Hallucination theory." The theory that everybody who thought they saw Jesus after His death, just hallucinated. They thought they saw Jesus because they wanted to see Him so badly. Okay, if that were true? Where was the body? Show us the body! You see, these theories and many more like them require a dead body! There is no dead body, because that body...Jesus Christ...got up and He's looking over the balcony of heaven right now...with the scars to prove it!

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So, that leaves us with only one plausible theory to try to explain away the resurrection of Jesus. The "**Theft Theory**" The theory that the disciples came and stole His body...because, **obviously** if the body isn't in the tomb, then you've got to have an explanation, why the body isn't there! So, you have to say, "Somebody came and took it." Okay, then! Let's investigate.

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#### **Matthew 28:11**

**<sup>11</sup> While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.**

Now, the "They" in "they were going" was the women. They had left to go to tell the disciples of the resurrection...and some of the guard, the soldiers that had been assigned to watch over the tomb left to go tell the chief priests. Now, I want you to think about this. What did those soldiers know about what happened? They knew the disciples didn't come steal the body. They knew it was a supernatural event. Remember, the soldiers saw the angel...

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#### **Matthew 28:4**

**<sup>4</sup> And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.**

They were petrified! They couldn't move! They knew Jesus' body hadn't been stolen. They knew it was a supernatural event that had just occurred...they saw and felt the earth quake, yet again...and there was an angel rolling away the stone and now sitting on it... I love the artist's depiction of that moment...



Oh, the dust had to have still been settling from that earthquake when some of those soldiers headed off to tell Caiaphas and the chief priests. So, they make that 1/3 of mile run down to the Temple...

**Matthew 28:12**

<sup>12</sup> And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers.

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It most likely took some time to get the elders assembled to take counsel. Perhaps an hour...maybe less...and the "council of Elders" is convened. By the way, that phrase: "assembled with the elders," that is a phrase used frequently by Matthew, and every time he used it...he speaks of the official meeting of the Sanhedrin. So, the soldiers (Gk: *Koustodia*, Roman soldiers who guarded the sepulcher, up to 16 soldiers) told them all that happened. But, wait a minute...the soldiers work for Rome...for Pilate...why didn't they go to him? Because he would have killed them for allowing the body to disappear...for not guarding the tomb.

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Listen, they had sealed it... Listen, remember how the Sanhedrin...(the elders) had asked for a guard and Pilate gave them the same guard they had on Thursday evening...



when they headed to Gethsemane to arrest Jesus... Remember what they did to the tomb? See the screens...





They used ropes, clay and the signet of the Roman Centurion to secure that tomb. And that seal...



EXEMPLAR ROMAN SEAL (MORE)

the seal of the Roman centurion in charge, from his own signet ring, that seal could have only been broken by him. Oh, they knew Jesus was alive!

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**And so did the religious leaders, but they refused to believe.**

Remember what they said back in chapter 27 verse 42, "Let Him come down from the cross and we'll believe Him." Huh!!! Here's something even greater, He came out of a tomb, but they still wouldn't believe, and they didn't even investigate. They didn't even go look for themselves or even seek the truth. You would think someone would have said, "Well, maybe it's true. Maybe He is the Messiah. Maybe He is alive. Maybe we ought to check it out." No! They were so obstinate...hard...calloused...blind...they refused to believe.

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You know what I think they were thinking about? Their money and their position. Let me tell you something...see this picture...see these guys...



all along all they've cared about is themselves... They were scared to death of losing their religious power...their prominence...money. Jesus had called them "snakes and viper, shepherds fleecing the flock"...and if He's alive...they lose everything! All the people will follow Him! They're in panic mode! They were saying: **"We can't let this get out! We've got to stop this! Whether He's the Messiah or not...He has exposed us and we've got to stop this!"**

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So what did the Sanhedrin do to cover and ensure the lie... Here comes the money...

**Matthew 28:12**

<sup>12</sup> And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers.

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They gave the soldiers "bribe money" to shut 'em up! You know what they gave them? **är-gü'-rē-on – silver (Greek)** How 'bout that...still giving out silver, just like they had done with the 30 pieces they gave to Judas! But, this is a whole lot more than 30 pieces. That was one man. This is most likely probably 4-6 men. A Roman guard could be as many as 16 men...but, it says, "Some of the guard went to the Elders." Oh...this was a lot more money than 30 pieces of silver. It was likely a small fortune...a small price to pay to keep them quiet! Whatever price was needed to be paid was not too high a price for them to keep the truth from coming out! **And now the lie...**

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**Matthew 28:13**

<sup>13</sup> and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep. Listen, those religious hucksters knew that grave was empty, so they had to have a lie about what happened to the body. Because there is no body! And this is the only lie that makes sense. **The disciples came and stole His body.** That'll do it! But, folks, I want you to think with me about the absurdity of this: These disciples cowering in fear were now all of a sudden to get a surge of boldness and go fight a bunch of soldiers, when Peter wouldn't defend Jesus in front a servant girl at a campfire... And tell me this...they were going to roll this massive stone away that's been sealed the Romans without the Romans knowing it. And remember, when they went into the tomb...what did they find? The grave clothes were there!



Do you really think the disciples would take time to unwrap Jesus' body of the grave clothes... Absurd! And yet, these soldiers would participate in the absurdity and become preachers of the Anti-Gospel (the anti-Good News) for the sake of money. They were cowards! It was a lie and they knew it!

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**But there's something else here that we dare not miss...** Part of the lie was to say, the body was taken while the soldiers were asleep. Did you catch that?

**Matthew 28:13**

<sup>13</sup> "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'"

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Can I ask you a question... Can you know about something happening while you're asleep? I sure can't! *That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard in my life!!* Furthermore, if you know anything about how Roman soldiers operated in the watches of the night...they didn't all sleep at the same time anyway! They rotated their watches. It's impossible to believe that they would have all fallen asleep at the same time.

Furthermore, if they were caught sleeping on duty and it wasn't their turn to sleep, they could be killed! This is impossible to believe: "while we were asleep." Are you kidding me! You want us to believe that: While you were asleep, you saw the disciples come and steal the body, did you? They can't have it both ways. That's the foolishness of it! If you're asleep, you don't know what happened. That explanation offends reason and logic. It offends the facts. And what we're seeing, Church...is the proof of the resurrection with a lie.

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And the Sanhedrin will now cover the base of Pilate... verse 14...

**Matthew 28:14**

<sup>14</sup> "And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."

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Who is the governor? Pilate! And those religious frauds knew he'd hear about it! He'd have to! You can't keep this quiet. I mean...there's been another earthquake. He's gonna hear about what happened...no doubt about it...and here's why those men weren't killed... **Go back to Matthew 27, verse 64.**

**Matthew 27:64-66**

<sup>64</sup> "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." <sup>65</sup> Pilate

said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can."<sup>66</sup> So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

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The guard was Pilate's...it was the same guard they had been given to go arrest Jesus in the first place. The Temple Guard didn't have the power to kill...but, the Romans did. Pilate said, you still have that same guard assigned to you...to this task...GO!

Well, to make the lie even more secure, the Sanhedrin had to make a provision to protect the Roman soldiers so they'd feel comfortable being the preachers of the lie. And so, **this satisfied the soldiers and they took the money...see verse 15.**

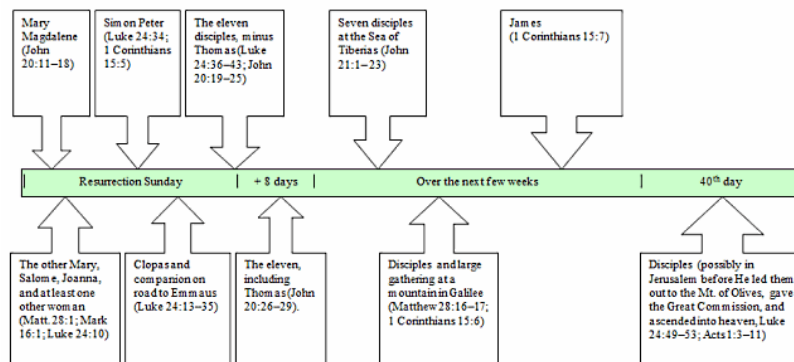
### **Matthew 28:15**

<sup>15</sup> So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

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And they went out and preached the "Anti-Gospel" of the Lie: "The disciples stole His body." A lie from the Father of Lies...Satan...a lie still being spread to this day. **So what do you believe?** Did Jesus rise from the dead as the Scriptures teach? I want to remind us of just how many people saw Jesus alive after His resurrection. See this chart... Over a period of 40 days...500+ people saw Him alive...

### **Timeline of the Post-Resurrection Appearances**



1. Mary Magdalene
  2. Women on the road
  3. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus
  4. Apostle Peter
  5. Ten Apostles in the upper room (Thomas wasn't present)
  6. Eight days later to the disciples plus Thomas in the upper room.
  7. Seven Apostles by the Sea of Galilee
  8. 500 followers on a mountain in Galilee
  9. James (Jesus' half-brother)
  10. Eleven Apostles on Mount of Olives when He ascended into heaven
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That's enough eyewitness testimony for any judge in any courtroom to say, "That's an airtight case." After all...most attorneys would take just one eyewitness...feeling they could win a case. This was 500+ eyewitnesses, who has seen Jesus alive!

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Now think with me about these witnesses...particularly the Apostles...



what transformed them from cowards, who had abandoned Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, into bold, courageous men? One word: RESURRECTION! The resurrection changed their lives. So much so, that these same men would be pressed by the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 4 to stop preaching in Jesus' name and they would boldly say, "You do what you got to do, but we're going to obey God and we'll never stop!" The resurrection of Jesus changed their lives! **And it can change your life...any life!**

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**Listen carefully as we close. See the screens...**

**Romans 10:9**

**<sup>9</sup>because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

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You must BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART that God raised Jesus from the dead! You can't be like those soldiers or religious leaders and have any hope of eternal life. Salvation comes when you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and this will settle your eternal destiny! Never forget, salvation belongs to those who believe in the resurrection and who confess Jesus as Lord identifying themselves with Him.

So, how do you respond to the resurrection today? Do you believe? Oh how I pray there won't be people here today who will try to explain it away or allow Satan to give you a bag of silver, not to believe. That's spiritual suicide. Don't put your hope in this life. Don't place your money on this life... If you're here today and still don't believe...what if you're wrong? You're risking your eternal destiny... oh...the facts are so clear and the evidence so strong and the Resurrection Seals It!!

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