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MATTHEW 28:1-10

- 1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.
- 2 And, behold, 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.
- 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:
- 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.
- 5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.
- 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.
- 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.
- 8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.
- 9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.
- 10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

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This is .. THE .. CENTRAL .. TRUTH .. of Christianity.

Jesus is not dead -- He is ALIVE!

The Ressurrection is the proof that Jesus' death on the cross was sufficient to pay the penalty for our sins. The resurrection is God's message to us that He is satisfied and that Jesus' blood is suffient to cover all our sins.

We may not think we need to be saved. We may innocently believe that our sins aren't so bad. But being innocently mistaken will not save us. Consider the case of little Joshua Harris.

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Little Joshua Harris had found a new friend in the front yard of his grandmother's home in Loveland, Colorado. This two-and-a-half year-old boy reached down to pet his new friend before his grandmother could stop him. His feelings were feelings of curious friendship; his grandmother's feelings were feelings of horror and panic. Joshua's new friend was a rattlesnake! As Joshua reached down to pet the snake, the snake bit his hand.

Joshua's grandmother Susan Ayers immediately got her husband Rod from the house, and Rod sped the boy to a nearby ambulance station. The boy was taken to the intensive care unit of the hospital where he received antivenin and surgery. His entire arm was swollen to twice its size, and his hand turned green. Without the immediate medical attention he received, he would have died.

Joshua had meant no harm. He was innocently making new friends. He was an innocent victim of assumption. The world around us is filled with victims of wrong assumptions. We innocently -- or not so innocently -- reach down to pet the head of sin and we receive the venom of death. Thankfully, there is an antivenin that was obtained at a great price. The price of our Lord and Savior's life. We must either receive this cure, or we will surely die.

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This is absolutely essential: If Jesus did not rise from the dead on that first Easter Morning, then Christianity is nothing but a nasty joke, and the church is just a collection of sad, deluded fools.

In I Corinthians 15:14-19, the apostle Paul wrote:

- 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.
- 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.
- 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:
- 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.
- 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.
- 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

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You see, we need God's forgiveness. We can't truly be happy without it. And we know that God is all powerful: if He forgives us, nobody else can take our forgiveness away. Consider this case:

There was an old and kindly doctor who was noted for his skill and his godliness. After his death, when his books were examined, several accounts were found where he had written across them in red ink, "Forgive - Too poor to pay."

His wife, who was of a different temperament than he, declared that these accounts "MUST BE PAID!" She then sued for the money,

The judge asked her, "Is this your husband's handwriting?"

She answered, "Yes."

"Then," said the judge, "there is not a court in the land that can obtain money where he has written FORGIVE."

So it is that Jesus has written the word **FORGIVE** in His own red blood across the account of your sins. **HE HAS CANCELLED THE CERTIFICATE OF DEBT THAT WAS AGAINST YOU AND ME!**

You are therefore clean. You are forgiven. You are redeemed from the condemnation of sin, if you know Jesus as your Savior.

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Yes, and in fact, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best attested historical truths that we have. In I Corinthians 15:3-8, Paul wrote:

- 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;
- 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:
- 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:
- 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.
- 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.
- 8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Christ did rise from the dead and Christians can take confidence in the fact that belief in the resurrection is not irrational nor

unwarranted by the evidence.

This is demonstrated by the fact that a number of thinkers sought to disprove the resurrection but were unable to do so.

Consider the Englishman, John Singleton Copley, better known as Lord Lyndhurst, and one of the greatest legal minds in British history. He wrote, "I know pretty well what evidence is, and I tell you, such evidence as that for the Resurrection has never broken down yet."

Or take the case of Dr. Simon Greenleaf who was Royall Professor of Law at Harvard University and whose work on the law of evidence is still regarded as a classic. He examined the testimony of the four Gospels on a challenge from one of his students. He concluded that the testimony of the Gospels, including that for the resurrection, would be accepted by any impartial court of law based on the laws of legal evidence.

A number of years ago, English journalist Frank Morison planned to write a book that would lay the myth of the resurrection to rest. But, in doing the research for his book, he was convinced by the evidence for the resurrection and became a Christian.

Or consider this statement from William Lyon Phelps of Yale University. He said, "It may be said that the historical evidence for the resurrection is stronger than for any other miracle anywhere narrated.

One example of all this evidence, is the evidence of the empty tomb.

One reason the empty tomb evidence is so convincing, is because of the detail concerning the prominent role of the women in the Gospel accounts. If later Christians had made up the story, it's highly doubtful that they would have given the women such an important part in the story, because women's value as legal witnesses in that culture was almost nil.

The story also casts the men in an unfavorable light as fearful and in hiding, while the women show boldness and loyalty in being willing to go openly to the tomb.

Another fact supporting the evidence of the empty tomb is that, if it were not empty, the early church could never have succeeded in their proclamation of the resurrection. Their adversaries could have simply checked the tomb or produced the body.

Dr. Paul Maier, professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University sums it up well when he says, "If all the evidence is weighed carefully and fairly, it is indeed justifiable, according to the canons of historical research, to conclude that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was actually empty on the morning of the first Easter. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered

... that would disprove this statement."

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Do you know how valuable you are to God?

One can quickly tell the value of an object by the price that a qualified person places on the object.

Centuries ago, mankind was on the auction block. We were all set to go to the highest bidder. Satan was offering this and that and it looked as if we were all doomed to a life of shame and sin. All hope for redemption appeared to be gone.

Just then, the door of the auction house swung open and in walked the Son of God. The auctioneer was saying, "going, going..." and about to say, "gone" when Jesus said, "I'll buy him."

The auctioneer said that this was highly irregular. "Why, you don't even know what the bid is, sir."

Jesus responded, "It matters not, I will take him."

Satan quickly upped his bid and offered pleasure. Jesus said such pleasure was but for a season. He said that He offered eternal joy in His presence,

Satan then offered fame. Jesus said that such fame was fleeting. Jesus then offered the acceptance of the Father and adoption into the family of God.

Satan then offered wealth. Jesus said that such wealth was temporary. The wealth He offered, on the other hand, would survive the grave.

And so the bidding went until Jesus said that He would give His very life for mankind. Satan fell silent. He would not make such a sacrifice. He wouldn't and he couldn't.

Only the Lord had that kind of love. Only He saw that kind of worth in man. He saw it in us for He had created it there in the form of His very own image and likeness.

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Jesus loves you and wants to wash you clean of all your sins and guarantee you a home in Heaven with Him. Do you know Him? If you do, then you have the joy of salvation even in the midst of your suffering!

If you don't know Him yet, won't you come to him today? Don't make excuses to yourself. Just come.

Hallelujah, Amen!

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