

Matthew 28:11-15

- Unexpected evidence of the resurrection of Christ -

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Introduction

- ❖ The resurrection from the dead is the message of the Gospel. We read in Romans 1:1-5:
 - “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— **the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son**, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him and for his name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.”
 - Many people doubt an historical resurrection but there is indirect evidence found in the narrative of the guards.
- ❖ The context, form, and structure as well as the theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap somewhat with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of Matthew. This makes it possible to use this outline as a “stand-alone” or as part of a series.

Context

- ❖ The narrative of the guards is part of the “resurrection-account” of Matthew (Mt 28:57-28:20) as the conclusion of the Gospel. It mirrors in a sense the “birth-account” when the wise men came to Jerusalem and “proclaimed” the birth of the King of the Jews (Mt 2:1-12). The wise men didn’t have any prior knowledge of the Old Testament and its promises. King Herod was a strong opponent and was after the death of the new-born king. In this account, the (Roman) guards

revealed what happened at the tomb to the opponents of Christ, the chief priests. The priests tried to obstruct the spread of the Gospel by a lie.

Form and structure

- ❖ Two stories are intertwined, the story of the guards, and the story of the women, **both** will be witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus.

	The guards	The women
Day 1		As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb (Mt 27:57-61).
Day 2	The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard (Mt 27:62-66).	
Day 3		After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and

		the other Mary went to look at the tomb (Mt 28:1).
	There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. (Mt 28:2-3).	
	The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men (Mt 28:4).	The angel said to the women, " Do not be afraid , for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." (Mt 28:5-10).
	While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day (Mt 28:11-15).	

Technical and hermeneutical notes

- ❖ These two stories, the story of the guards, and the story of the women are intertwined.
 - After the death of Jesus on the cross, the High priests and the Pharisees lost the initiative, although it must be remembered that God remained in control.
 - It was a disciple, Joseph from Arimathea, who asked Pontius Pilate permission to bury Jesus' body.
 - After having lost the initiative, the chief Priests and the Pharisees remembered the words of Jesus about the resurrection. At the same time, the disciples and the women were not able to remember these words.
 - Anger and fear of the adversaries lead to an awareness of the words of Jesus, which was not found with the disciples of Jesus.
 - About the disciples and the women we read: "(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)" (Jn 20:9).
- ❖ The reader must notice some storylines and contrasts within the narrative.
 - After the burial "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb" (Mt 27:61). Although Matthew didn't mention their departure but is clear that the women didn't stay there during the Sabbath. "After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb" (Mt 28:1). Meanwhile, the guards took their place. "So they (chief priests and Pharisees) went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard" (Mt 27:66). The women were NOT present at the tomb when the angel came down from heaven. "They found the stone rolled away from the tomb" (Lk 24:2; Mk 16:4; Jn 20:1). The guards had already left the tomb when the women arrived.

Time	Present at the tomb
As evening approached (Friday-afternoon) (Mt 27:57-61)	Joseph from Arimathea and he went away (Mt 27:57-60). Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb (Mt 27:61). They went home and rested on the Sabbath (Lk 23:55, 56).
The night (evening) of the Sabbath (Saturday-night)	<i>nobody</i>
The next day, the one after Preparation Day (Mt 27:66) (Saturday-morning) - After	The guards were posted.

the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week (Mt 28:1) (Sunday-morning).	
At dawn on the first day of the week (Sunday-morning)	The angel of the Lord and the guards. The guards went away (Mt 28:15). The women arrive (Mt 28:5-7).

- Only the guards witnessed the arrival of the angel of the Lord. The other three Gospel writers only tell about the stone that had been removed from the entrance (Mk 16:4; Lk: 24:2; Jn 20:1). Some of the guards must have been the source of this part of the Gospel (Mt 28:2-4). We can only guess at the possible source of Matthew 28:11-15, perhaps also some of the guards.
- ❖ Subtle contrasts within the narrative.
 - “The guards were so afraid of him” <> “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid’”
 - “That they (guards) shook and became like dead men.” <> “He has risen from the dead”
 - Davies and Allison add to this: “An additional unifying feature is the artistic correlation between the women and the guards. Both groups gather at Jesus’ tomb (vv. 1, 4). Both see an angel (vv. 2–5). Both feel fear (vv. 4, 8). Both leave the tomb in order to tell others what has happened (vv. 8 [with ἀπαγγεῖλαι, cf. v. 10], 11 [with ἀπήγγειλαν]). And both are told by others what they should say (vv. 7, 10, 13–14). The difference lies in this, that while (we assume) the women tell the truth to the disciples, the guards tell a lie about the disciples.”¹
- ❖ A major contrast within the narrative, deception, and lies.

Before (Mt 27:62-64)	After (Mt 28:11-15)
The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. “Sir,” they said, “we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said , ‘After three days I will rise again.’ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last	While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “ You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy

¹ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 659).

deception will be worse than the first.”

him and keep you out of trouble.” So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

- At beforehand the chief priests didn't believe a resurrection from the dead. After the report of the guards, they couldn't deny the possibility any longer. The story of the (some) of the guards is a straightforward lie, construed by the chief priests. The disciples were not present at the tomb! The real question is, who is deceiving whom?

Exposition

Verse 27:62-66

- ❖ **“The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.”**
 - **“The next day”** is the Sabbath Day. In John 18:27 we read: “By now it was early morning (of the Preparation Day), and **to avoid ceremonial uncleanness** the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.” Ceremonial uncleanness is now not involved but this tends to be hypocrisy. Earlier in the gospel, the Pharisees went out on the Sabbath and plotted how to kill Jesus.”
- ❖ **“We remember.”** The chief priests and the Pharisees were well informed.
- ❖ **“Deceiver.”** They were well aware of the fact that Jesus had many followers.
 - At the same time, they are deceiving themselves. Nobody can resist the power of God manifest in the resurrection of Christ.
- ❖ **“After three days I will rise again”** (Mt 12:40; 16:21; 17:23; 20:19).
 - “But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, “This fellow said, **‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’**” Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” (Mt 26:60-63).
 - Morris aptly comments: “Had the authorities been able to point to a body in the tomb where Jesus was placed on Good Friday, that preaching would have been shown to be ridiculous. Though they could not have known how central the preaching of the resurrection would be, there is nothing outrageous in the suggestion that the Jewish

leaders would have taken precautions to see that the body of Jesus remained where it was buried.”²

❖ **“This last deception will be worse than the first.”**

- “*This last deception* evidently refers to the belief in Jesus’ resurrection. The ‘first fraud’ is then the Messianic claims which Jesus is accused of having made.”³
 - As long as the people were convinced of the crucifixion and death of Jesus, the first “deception / deceit” would fall into oblivion, and after some years Jesus would have been forgotten. They were afraid that a message about a resurrection would revive the movement started by Jesus and continued by his disciples, whether or not there was a real resurrection.

❖ **“A seal” and “a guard.”**

- Newman and Stine remark: “No one is quite certain what is meant by the act of *sealing the stone*. It may refer to the normal way of securing a tomb, or else to a special kind of sealing. One scholar has suggested that a rope was drawn over the stone and then a seal attached to it. Others believe that the sealing was done by means of filling the space between the face of the rock and the stone used for a door with soft clay, and then stamping on it the seal of the Jewish authorities. The apocryphal Gospel of Peter says that it was sealed with seven seals, though this judgment is without support elsewhere. Some scholars call attention to the parallel between the sealing of the tomb and of the lion’s den (Dan 6:17), since these two themes sometimes occur together in early Christian art. Since *sealing* is not known in all societies, then in this verse one possible translation is ‘put a mark on the stone to know if it was moved’ or ‘put their mark on the stone so no one would move it.’⁴

❖ **“Take a guard.”** Pontius Pilate gave permission to post a guard. The guard was put under command of the chief priests.

- Davies and Allison comment: “Psalm 2:1 asks, ‘Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?’ The theme of human impotence versus divine power runs throughout the Bible, and it is part and parcel of 27:62–6. Jesus’ opponents take every precaution to prevent proclamation of the resurrection: they seal the stone and set a guard. But their efforts are futile: ‘he who sits in the heavens laughs’. Human beings cannot oppose earthquakes and angels and the power of God.”⁵

² Morris, L. (1992, p. 729-730).

³ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 873).

⁴ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992. P. 874).

⁵ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 656-657).

❖ **Something to think about.**

- **“The Secured Sepulcher Proves the Resurrection.** Chrysostom: Everywhere deceit recoils upon itself and against its will supports the truth. Observe: It was necessary to believe that he died, and that he rose again, and that he was buried and that all these things were brought to pass by his enemies. Note, at any rate, these words bearing witness to every one of these facts. “We remember that that deceiver said, when he was yet alive” (he was therefore now dead), “ ‘After three days I rise again.’ Command therefore that the sepulcher be sealed” (he was therefore buried), “lest his disciples come and steal him away.” Since the sepulcher was sealed, there could be no funny business. So then the proof of his resurrection has become incontrovertible by what they themselves have put forward. For because the tomb was sealed, there was no deceitfulness at work. But if there was no sleight of hand and the sepulcher was found empty, it is clear that he has risen, plainly and incontrovertibly. Do you see how even against their will his enemies contend for the proof of the truth?” (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 89.1).⁶

Verse 28:2-4

❖ **“An angel of the Lord” = ἄγγελος κυρίου.**

- Wallace comments: “One of the many theologically significant constructions is ἄγγελος κυρίου (cf. Matt 1:20; 28:2; Luke 2:9; Acts 12:7; Gal 4:14 [ἄγγελον θεοῦ]). In the LXX this is the normal phrase used to translate מַלְאָכֵי יְהוָה (“the angel of the Lord”). The NT exhibits the same phenomenon, prompting Nigel Turner to suggest that “ἄγγελος κυρίου is not *an angel* but *the angel* [of the Lord].” Indeed, most scholars treat in the NT as “an angel of the Lord,” there is no *linguistic* basis for doing so. Apart from a theological argument, it is most probable that ἄγγελος κυρίου is *the* angel of the Lord in the NT and is to be identified with *the* angel of the Lord of the OT.”⁷
 - Wallace advocates the possibility that it is not one of the angels, who came down from heaven, but the angel of the Lord. If this is true, it underscores the solemnity of the resurrection.
- The angel was not acting on his own initiative. He has been sent by God. God has ordered the angel to open the tomb and to announce the resurrection. “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay” (Mt 28:5-6).

❖ **“His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.”**

- Newman and Stine comment: “*White*, whether of lightning or of snow, is the ‘heavenly’ color. In Daniel 7:9 the clothes of the ‘One who had been living forever’ are ‘white as

⁶ Simonetti, M. (Red.). (2002, p. 301).

⁷ Wallace, B. (1996, p. 252).

snow,' as is also the hair of the risen Lord (Rev 1:14). And of the angel who appeared to (Daniel 10:6), it is said 'His face was as bright as a flash of lightning'. Note also the similar descriptions found in Luke 9:29 and 24:4.

White as snow is obviously going to be a problem in areas where snow is unknown.

Some translators, recognizing that this is simply a way of saying that his clothing was very white, either use a cultural substitution such as 'white as egret feathers (or, as cotton' or use whatever is the normal way in the language to say 'very, very white.'⁸

- The angel reflects the divine glory. See also the glorification of Christ (Mt 17:2).
- ❖ **"Earthquake."** Often in the Bible, earthquakes (trembling of the earth) occur when God is touching the earth (Ex 19:18).
- ❖ **"The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men."**
 - Newman and Stine wrote: **"Became like dead men is perhaps an intended contrast to the 'dead man' whose tomb they are guarding.** He is alive, but they 'lay there as dead men' (GeCL). One vivid expression is 'fell to the ground paralyzed with fear like dead men.' It is almost essential in many languages to make it explicit that they fell to the ground since otherwise, it would seem they stood in fear without moving."⁹
 - ❖ The tomb was empty! The guards hadn't seen anyone coming out of the tomb, they saw the angel and were terrified. "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said" (Mt 28:6). When did the resurrection actually take place? We don't know. The guards must have noticed that the tomb was empty.
 - It is necessary to recall the account of the burial. "Joseph **took the body** (of Jesus), wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, **and placed it in his own new tomb** that he had cut out of the rock. **He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb** and went away. **Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb**" (Mt 27:59-61).
 - Mary Magdalene and the other Mary witnessed among others the burial of the body of Jesus. There was a dead body inside the tomb, nobody doubted this fact.
 - All present at the site of the crucifixion witnessed the death of Jesus (Mt 27:54-56). Pontius Pilate gave admission to Joseph to take the body. The high priests and Pharisees knew where the tomb was.
 - ❖ The resurrected body of Jesus is a glorified body, but it is still a real body, which he showed to the disciples.
 - "While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, **'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do

⁸ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 877).

⁹ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 877).

you have anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence” (Lk 24:36-43).

- Peter preached at Pentecost: “Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of **the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay**” (Acts 2:29-31).
- “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:55).

Verse 11-15

- ❖ The following remark made by Newton and Stine is interesting.
 - “This narrative serves to explain the origin of the false rumor that the disciples of Jesus stole his body. **It is constructed similarly to the story of the guard at the tomb** (27:62–66), and it also possesses grammatical and stylistic features in common with that account. Both accounts open with a description of the setting (27:62 and 28:11) and close with an observation by the author (27:66 and 28:15). In the first account, the chief priests and the Pharisees are the opponents of Jesus, and they employ direct discourse (27:63–64), while in the second account Jesus’ foes are the chief priests and the elders, and they also use direct discourse (28:12–14). Of special interest is the attitude that dominates the two narratives: **everything is reported in a matter-of-fact fashion**, and in either story, the narrator adds no negative comment against the evil plans of the Jewish leaders.”¹⁰
 - There is no need for Matthew to add any negative comment. The narrative itself makes clear that the
- ❖ **“While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened”** (Mt 28:11). Compare ESV: **“While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.”**
 - **“Behold”** is a marker of attention.
 - There are two groups of messengers:
 - The women, who went to the disciples to tell them everything the angel had commanded them to do so.
 - Some of the guards, not all of them, went into the city and reported to the chief priests. It is most likely that the other guards had fled away because of the possible consequences they were facing.

¹⁰ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 881).

- They reported everything that had happened. Everything is a summary of what happened in the preceding passage. The guards probably didn't hear anything of the words spoken by the angel to the women.
 - Davies and Allison aptly remark: "This is the second time the chief priests purchase opposition to Jesus and his cause. The story of Judas, recalled here through common vocabulary, marked the first (26:14–16). So the resurrection has not changed them at all. We recall Lk 16:31: 'Neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' The boast of 27:42—'Let him come down now from the cross and we will believe in him'—was empty."¹¹
- ❖ "You are to say,"
 - "It is almost comical that the soldiers are told to spread the rumor abroad that Jesus' disciples came during the night and stole his body while they were asleep. If they were asleep, how could they know what had happened to the body of Jesus? Moreover, as one commentator observes, 'Above all, to ask them to say that they had fallen asleep while on watch and allowed what they were guarding to be stolen is asking them to sign their own death warrant.' Matthew appears to have recorded this narrative with some degree of humor, emphasizing how foolish it is to believe the rumor current in his day that Jesus' disciples had stolen his body."¹²
 - At first, the chief priests and Pharisees were afraid that the disciples of Jesus would deceive the people. Now, they themselves are deceiving the people.
 - It will cost a lot of money. Morris: "The guards had been through a harrowing experience that must have left a deep impression on them, but they were to keep quiet about all this. More. They were to say that they had slept on the job, a dereliction of duty that Roman officers would take with the utmost seriousness. A 'substantial bribe' (REB) was going to be needed to persuade them to do as the chief priests wanted."¹³
- ❖ "If this report gets to the governor."
 - Newman and Stine comment: "*And if this comes to the governor's ears* ('*And if the Governor should hear of this*') translates a passive construction in Greek, literally 'And if this should be heard by the governor.' *This* refers to the news about the disciples having come and stolen the body of Jesus while the guards slept. It does not refer to the money being paid to the guards.
In the construction *we will satisfy him*, the pronoun *we* is emphatic. 'We will speak with him,' and 'we will straighten it out with him'; more specific yet with '*we will convince*

¹¹ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 671).

¹² Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 882).

¹³ Morris, L. (1992, p. 721).

him that you are innocent. It may be that the verb *satisfy* has the implied meaning 'with money,' in which case the full meaning is 'we will pay him off' or 'we will pay him what is necessary.' But no translations seem to go in this direction."¹⁴

- Morris: "There is a contrast between the emphatic *we* and *you*: 'We will persuade him, and *you* will be without a care!'"¹⁵
- The Jewish leaders pledge to protect false witnesses.¹⁶ They did the same thing during the trial of Jesus.
- ❖ Davies and Allison conclude: "The Jewish leaders feared that 'this last deception would be worse than the first' (27:64); but, as Heil, p. 104, puts it, 'the reader now experiences the ironic reversal that this last "deception" by the Jewish leaders involving their own false interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is worse than their own first "deception" (*dolos*, 26:4) in putting him to death'."¹⁷

Application

Praise

- ❖ Praise Christ because he died for our sins and was raised from the dead, and we too may live a new life.
 - "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom 6:4).
 - "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3, 4).
 - "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Pet 3:18).

The witness of the guards

- ❖ The importance of witnesses is made clear by the apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. Paul is referring to the Peter and the twelve, even to more than five hundred at the

¹⁴ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 882-883).

¹⁵ Morris, L. (1992, p. 743).

¹⁶ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 671).

¹⁷ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 672).

same time. The witness of the guards, although they didn't see Jesus, is of special importance because they were facing a death penalty due to negligence of duty. They had to fear the worst. This narrative is meant to root the resurrection firmly in history.

- “And that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born” (1 Cor 15:5-8).
- “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men” (1 Cor 15:17-19).
- ❖ The witness of the guards and the subsequent reaction of the chief priests is also a reminder that people who experience Christianity as a threat for their own position, are very well aware of the strength and the weaknesses of the Christian faith and community! They will act accordingly.

Resurrection and glorification

- ❖ Praise Christ because of his obedience unto his death, his power to conquer death, and his glorious resurrection.
 - **Why Was the Stone Rolled Back?** Peter Chrysologus: An angel descended and rolled back the stone. He did not roll back the stone to provide a way of escape for the Lord but to show the world that the Lord had already risen. He rolled back the stone to help his fellow servants believe, not to help the Lord rise from the dead. He rolled back the stone for the sake of faith because it had been rolled over the tomb for the sake of unbelief. He rolled back the stone so that he who took death captive might hold the title of Life. Pray, brothers, that the angel would descend now and roll away all the hardness of our hearts and open up our closed senses and declare to our minds that Christ has risen, for just as the heart in which Christ lives and reigns is heaven, so also the heart in which Christ remains dead and buried is a grave. May it be believed that just as he died, so was he transformed. Christ the man suffered, died and was buried; as God, he lives, reigns, is and will be forever. Sermons 75.4.¹⁸
- ❖ After he has humbled himself unto death, he was glorified by the Father.
 - “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above

¹⁸ Simonetti, M. (Red.). (2002, p. 306).

every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philip 2:6-11).

- “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth” (Isa 53:9).

❖ The resurrection of Christ is the central focus of the Gospel.

- “Jesus said to her (Martha), ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’”
- “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33; 17:18).
- “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.
- “For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.” (Rom 6:9, 10).
- “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Pet 3:18, 19).
 - Davies and Allison remarked: “The resurrection—the full meaning of which only becomes apparent in 28:16–20—makes Jesus himself an illustration of his own teaching. He is, like the prophets before him, wrongly persecuted because of his loyalty to God, and he gains great reward in heaven. He finds his life after losing it. He is the servant who becomes great, the last who becomes first.”¹⁹

His resurrection and our resurrection

❖ Praise Christ for his saving death and resurrection.

- “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Rom 4:25).
- “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” (Rom 5:10).

¹⁹ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 673).

- “If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection” (Rom 6:5). In relation to the baptism, see Romans 6:3, 4.
 - “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor 15:20-22).
 - “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Eph 2:4, 5; Col 2:13).
 - “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Tess 4:16).
- ❖ An additional remark by Davies and Allison: “There is (whether intended by the author or not) a happy contrast between chapter 2 and 28:1ff., the only two places where angels are active participants in the story. In the former, the Gentile magi inform Herod and the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, including the chief priests, of events surrounding the advent of the Messiah. In the latter Gentile soldiers announce to the chief priests of Jerusalem the events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus. In the former, the king opposes the infant Messiah and tries to kill him. In the latter, the leaders counter the resurrection by setting a guard at the tomb and, when that fails, by promulgating a false rumour. In the former, the faithful magi worship Jesus and rejoice with great joy. In the latter, the faithful women worship Jesus and go on their way with great joy.”²⁰

Pay attention to

- ❖ Arguments people advance against the historical fact the resurrection. It is important to study the Gospel of Matthew with special interest of the witness of the guards.

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²⁰ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004). [*A critical and exegetical commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 673). London; New York: T&T Clark International.

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