

King Jesus Conquers All: Jesus is King – Week 20

HOOK

Example: Imagine your grandfather was a soldier at Pearl Harbor and several times told you about personally witnessing the attack that brought the U.S. into WWII? After he died, you found his 70-year-old journal about what he witnessed. What if all the news stations ran a story (conveniently after all the WWII veterans had died) claiming the Japanese attack on Hawaii was a hoax. In fact, President Franklin D. Roosevelt made it up to convince the U.S. to go to war. Which would you believe, the news station or your grandfather?

- What we have are multiple confessions from eyewitnesses of the resurrection.
- It may not be conclusive evidence, but it'd be foolish to dismiss it outright.

INTRO

Matthew has three major themes. **1) Jesus is the King who surpasses David** **2) King Jesus came to break the curse of sin & death.** **3) King Jesus offers entrance to His kingdom – redemption - to anyone, especially the unlikely. **Recently:****

- The King announces His plan for salvation (Eucharist).
- The innocent King is exchanged for the guilty (Barabbas, crucifixion).
- The King's total victory (The resurrection).
 - **No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.**
 - Jesus gave all of Himself.
 - He was a juggernaut, a steamroller in His purpose.
 - ...and He left nothing undone.

BOOK (Jesus called His shot.)

Matthew 16:21-25 – (The King's mission) *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.*

LOOK

If it happened it is far more important than even the Pearl Harbor attack. The nearly 2,000-year-old story of Jesus' resurrection by supposed eyewitnesses HAS serious implications today for EVERYONE EVERYWHERE for ALL of time.

Those who claimed to have witnessed it were tortured and executed, not because of their system of beliefs (doctrine), but because of their outrageous claims that a Man raised Himself from the dead. Their faith blanketed the world and changed countless lives. That Christian faith not only inspired religious hope in life and death but has been an anchor for human history.

Who fought to build the most effective orphanages with little to no funding?

Who founded the largest hospitals?

Who established world-wide disaster relief organizations?

Who built the most influential universities which became ivy league schools?

Who leads in homeless shelters, soup kitchens, hospices, & pregnancy centers?

Who conquered human slavery in Great Britain, the United States, and more?

Who propagated state funded public literacy throughout the world?

- Did you know that the development of public schooling, which began in Scotland by John Knox, was an effort to make sure people of all classes could read the bible for themselves after the Reformation?

All Christianity and its 2,000-year, world-wide influence hangs on the resurrection.

If this event is true, it has more meaning than even hospitals, universities, or equal rights. It has spiritual implications, **perhaps eternal implications** for everyone of every faith or lack of faith. **You can choose not to believe it happened, but you'd be a fool to ignore or dismiss it before wrestling with it for yourself.** Why?

As certain as those who have gone before you have died, so will you. And, you will face death in one of two ways. Both are seen in the dying moments of the thieves crucified with Jesus. The first chose to reject Him despising Him unto death, and the second called Jesus His Lord and was called by Jesus into paradise.

Your final moment, whether it's expected or not, will come. You'll feel the cold climb over your body and your mental faculties surrender to the darkness. In the last flicker of thought, as your vital organs shut down but before the ember of your spirit winks out, you will face death as: **1)** Having made yourself your god all your life, you can pray to yourself that God doesn't exist. It would be far better for you if there were no God so that you simply lived a meaningless life until you slip into non-existence then to encounter a holy God whom you despised. You'll have to face the terrifying thought you might be wrong. Or, **2)** In your last moment, you can rejoice knowing you'll soon be warm in His arms. For to be absent from the body is to be present with Jesus. What a promise, a hope, a joy!

No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.

1 Corinthians 15:12-21 – (Paul calls the death of a believer “fallen asleep” instead of death because there’s no finality in death for them.) *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.*

- If this event didn’t happen:
 - We are still evil
 - We are misrepresenting God... if there is a God
 - Our faith and evangelism have been wasted
 - This brief, shallow life is all there is, and we have no purpose for existence
 - All who have died are gone for good
 - Our eternal future is hopeless
 - **Of all people, we are most to be pitied**

If it happened... If Jesus raised from the dead:

- It proves there IS a God and verifies Jesus IS God.
- All of scripture (O.T. and N.T.) is validated as true.
- All Jesus taught is true.
- There is a heaven and a hell.
- His death and resurrection accomplished what He said it would.
- Unbelievers have an assurance of hell, & believers have an assurance of salvation.
- The citizens of His kingdom will also resurrect at His return.

But Jesus DID resurrect! The grave couldn’t hold Him; He took back the keys of death which were handed to satan in the garden of Eden. To those logical thinkers to whom the Holy Spirit is at work in their hearts and minds, **I’ll prove it.**

Matthew's testimony (journal entry):

At the death of Jesus, hanging on a Roman cross, every realm quaked. There was a literal earthquake and the sun blacked out. Something bizarre happened where people who had died exited their graves and visited people they knew. The pagan Romans who didn't even hear Jesus' teaching or believe in a Jewish Messiah came to faith in Jesus as the Son of God. The curtain in the temple which separated the Holiest of Holy places from the rest of the world tore from top to bottom with profound spiritual symbolism.

At the foot of the cross were several women who will become prominent figures in Matthew's testimony. They are Mary Magdalene (whom Jesus cast 7 demons out of), Mary the mother of James and Joseph (who will be called "the other Mary" for the rest of the story), and the mother of James and John who disappears in Matthew's gospel after the cross. **They are important to Matthew's testimony.**

Matthew 27:57 - *When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.*

- He was also on the Sanhedrin but didn't agree with their ruling of Jesus. Where he had been secret about his faith before, the death of Jesus didn't dissuade him, but motivated him to reveal his allegiance to Jesus. Strange.

Matthew 27:58-60 - *He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.*

- His style grave was very expensive. Often the entrance would have been small, and a cork-shaped rock pushed into it like a plug. Essentially, the rock was to prevent animals from getting inside. This was more elaborate where a large, heavy stone would be rolled over the entrance by multiple people to discourage grave robbers.
- "and went away" – There was a finality. They had unexpectedly come to the end of the story, and everyone was closing the book. Despite all Jesus had done, He was human after all, and they had to face returning to their old lives.

Matthew 27:61 - *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.*

- This shows their unparalleled loyalty. In John, Mary Magdalene still calls Jesus her “Lord” even after death.
- But it’s also important to Matthew that his readers know there was zero confusion about where Jesus was laid. **Those who will first witness it empty were those who saw His body go in and the stone sealed.**

Then we get the great two-part story about the religious leaders seeking to avoid a scandal by making it impossible by human standards for it to happen.

Matthew 27:62-64 - *The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ 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.”*

- Matthew is confronting the number 1 theory as to what happened to the body of Jesus by those who refuse to believe in the resurrection. He subtly saying, “There’s no way we could have stolen the body. They made it impossible.”

Matthew 27:65-66 - *Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.*

- The chief priests had a contingent of Roman soldiers assigned to them to secure the temple and be at their command. The religious leaders had the strength and authority of Rome in this situation. As many as 12 Roman soldiers were assigned to around-the-clock duty for three days. Failure = execution.
- Further the stone was stamped with the official roman seal. **How does that stop anyone?** To break it without permission would bring down the wrath of Rome. In short, graver robbers skip that one and go to the next grave.

Matthew has set the stage. Jesus certainly died. He was killed by expert executioners Further, His body prepared for burial, and there was no life in Him. The women witnessed exactly where He was buried – which was easy to spot since it was such an exquisite grave. The disciples were terrified and hiding out during this time hoping those who killed Jesus wouldn’t be able to find them. The grave was well guarded. **Then this happened.**

Matthew 28:1-6 - *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. 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. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.*

- The soldiers either pass out from fear or are petrified, frozen in fear.
- The women are certainly afraid, but the angel comforts them.
- The angel invites them into the tomb to see where His body was laid. They saw it closed. They saw it opened. When it was opened, He was gone.
 - The angel didn't roll away the stone to let Jesus out but to let them in.

Matthew 28:7 - *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."*

- Peter, John, Matthew and the others would receive news by **those who personally witnessed His burial**.
- The angel also confirmed the gathering place Jesus gave them at the last supper for all the potentially scattered disciples to meet.

Matthew 28:8-10 - *So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."*

- They are women on a mission, fired up and full of awe and joy, but then their love and loyalty are rewarded with a bonus. Jesus appears to them first.
- His "greetings" is the casual and informal greeting = "Hi."
- Their response is exactly perfect. They "took hold of his feet and worshipped." They were the first to worship with the full realization of His identity, death, and resurrection. We have this privilege! We can worship having in mind the full breadth of God's revealed character and great works of love toward US.
 - **Let's not wait until eternity before we allow ourselves to be moved to fall at His feet in thanks, praise, and adoration!**

Matthew 28:11 - *While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.*

- Right after the women tiptoed past the stunned soldiers, some of them hopped up and went right to the chief priests.

Matthew 28:12-15 – (The lie that tells the truth.) *And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.*

They “*assembled and taken counsel...*” **Don’t miss the first thing that had to have taken place.** The guards “*told the chief priests all that had taken place.*” They received first-hand reports from witnesses that gain NOTHING by telling the strange truth but did.

There is no report of the religious leaders investigating for themselves, hunting the supposed perpetrators, or even searching for a body. They could have sent the soldiers out to search but didn’t. **The decision of these high, holy men was bribery.** They couldn’t have the story of an angel at the tomb getting out.

- **At this point, the high priests and Pharisees have greater evidence** (the testimonies of unbiased soldiers) **than the apostles** (from very biased, hysterical women), **and they CHOSE not to believe. They had seen the scriptures and prophecies Jesus fulfilled, they had seen Jesus do miracles and signs, and they have the evidence of His resurrection and still reject it.**
- If you say, “Well, if I just see a miracle... if God just speaks to me... if He just answers this one prayer, I’ll believe.” If He hasn’t done a work in your heart, and you are still hard towards God, you won’t believe no matter the evidence.

The lie tells the truth.

Example: What if someone stole my phone and was texting Jacqui? If she got suspicious, she may say, “Convince me you’re my husband.” If this person knew me a little bit, they may say, “I really like Rocky because he’s such a talented boxer.”

***BUZZER!** The lie would give away the truth. She’s not talking to me.

The soldier's lie that they fell asleep, and the disciples stole the body screams of fiction. **First, if they were asleep, how would they know who took the body? Second, did the soldiers - whose job it was to guard and patrol under risk of execution - merrily take a nap and sleep through the bustle of the stone being rolled away and body carried out? Or did 11 disciples armed with 2 swords form a phalanx and to run the Roman soldiers away? It's a ludicrous self-defeating lie.** Something happened and it certainly wasn't what they were saying with their mouths.

That's why Matthew says, "To this day" at the end. He's poking at the rumor and reminding us that every time it's spoken, it's defeating itself.

DISARMING ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE RESURRECTION (Handbook of Christian Apologetics)

Swoon (Jesus didn't die. He resuscitated)

There are 9 reasons this can't be true. Here are 3.

1. Jesus could not have survived crucifixion. Romans were experts on executions. In fact, any soldier that allowed a man who was sentenced to death to escape would be executed themselves.
2. John was an eyewitness to seeing blood and water pour out when the soldiers stabbed Him in the heart (to make sure He was dead) through His side (**John 19:34**). Any doctor knows that's a sign His lungs had collapsed, and He had died from asphyxiation.
3. Had he simply resuscitated, how could he have moved the stone blocking the tomb (and fight off the Roman guards)? Plus, when the disciples saw Him, they wouldn't have worshipped Him, they would have gotten him to a doctor.

Myth (Jesus didn't rise. The apostles created a meaningful myth.)

There are 6 reasons this can't be true. Here is one.

1. Peter says they weren't intending to make a myth (**2 Pet. 1:16**) but give eye-witness testimony.

Hallucination (Jesus didn't rise. The apostles were deceived.)

There are 13 reasons this can't be true. Here are 3.

1. Hallucinations happen inside an individual's head. To suggest an exact hallucination happened to 500 people at a time (**1 Cor. 15:3-8**) is silly.
2. They touched His hands and ate with Him over a period of 30 days.
3. The apostles would never have believed a hallucination if Jesus' corpse was still in the tomb.

Conspiracy (Hoax) (Jesus didn't rise. The apostles lied to invent Christianity.)

There are 8 reasons this can't be true. Here are 4.

1. The disciples underwent drastic character changes seemingly overnight. They went from running away to standing boldly and from despair to hope.
2. There is no earthly motive for such a lie. What was the benefit? Their testimony only brought them pain, rejection, loss, and death.
3. Their enemies (the Jewish leaders) never produced a corpse. The disciples proclaimed the resurrection in the face of their enemies, in the city of Jesus' death, to the people who watched Him die. Had this been a conspiracy, it would certainly have been uncovered by those who hated them most.
4. Only one of His disciples had to buckle under torture and the threat of death and confess to faking Jesus' resurrection for the whole lie to be disproven.
 - a. No one dies for a hoax.
 - b. Nothing proves sincerity like martyrdom. The truth of what they witnessed was more important than death.

A Common Final Objection: The Gospels have so many contradictions we can't trust anything they say.

- Putting the spotlight on minor "discrepancies" doesn't begin to defend the claim that the major details are false or that we can't know what happened.

The "truth" which the apostles, Pharisees, and 500 other people couldn't deny was the **1) empty tomb** and **2) Jesus' appearance**. It's not intellectually honest to argue that nothing happened. **Something happened**. And that "something" was an **atomic cause**. Its effects rocked the world, changed cultures, and propelled the greatest displays of love and service history has ever seen. It has been more influential than any leader, religion, government, war, or scientific breakthrough.

Matthew 28:16-17 - *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.*

- They're being obedient to Jesus and following the instructions of the women.
- Even seeing Him in person, this was not easy for them to accept. But, yet everyone one of them would suffer torture and martyrdom (accept John) refusing to deny what they came to believe.

Matthew 28:18-20 - *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

- **Where is authority?** Any strength or authority is Jesus working through you.
- **The Kingdom of Heaven is established, the entrance has been made through the cross, and there are many God is calling all over the world.** It's time to be the sowers. It's not your responsibility to save. It's your responsibility to go.
- Matthew closes with the way he opens. At the beginning, the angel declares Jesus to be **Immanuel**, "God with us." Jesus reminds them HE is **Immanuel** wherever they go and to the end of time.

TOOK

William Borden

Son of the founders of the Borden Dairy Company (Elsie the Cow). He gave his life to Jesus at a young age and when he graduated at the age of sixteen, his family gave him an extravagant gift, a trip around the world. His traveling companion and guide happened to be a minister and missionary. It was on this trip that he would learn about "heathenism," a people group without a single gospel witness. By the time he made it home, he has decided to walk away from the enormous family business and become a missionary to the Muslims in China. He returned to the U.S. and completed his higher education at Yale, but stayed committed to his life's calling. After Yale, he enrolled in Princeton Theological seminary to be well educated in scripture. After graduating, he joined Hudson Taylor's organization, The China Inland Mission. In 1913, he traveled to Cairo, Egypt to learn Arabic for the sake of ministering to the 10 million unreached Muslims. He was there a very brief time when he was taken ill with spinal meningitis and 19 days after arrival in Cairo, at 26 years old, he died having never made it to China.

He left two things behind. The first was his will which donated the entirety of his more-than-a-million-dollar inheritance to missionaries and Christian teachers. The second was his bible. In the flyleaf, on the day he rejected taking on the family business, he had written the date and the words, "**No reserves.**" Later he wrote, "**No retreats.**" And on a date shortly before his death, he wrote, "**No regrets.**"

- Jesus lived and died giving His all. Jesus faced His enemies and His death with no retreats. And He died and resurrected having left nothing undone.

Matthew 16:21-25 – (The King's mission) *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. [...]*

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

- Jesus left his disciples with the challenge to “Go”.
- We are the disciples of disciples who were disciples, on-and-on back to 11 men who obeyed Jesus with no reserves, no retreats, and no regrets. **It was from them and their unwavering witness through the power of the Holy Spirit that we have the opportunity to know Jesus. Will you be the link for another?**

Challenge 1: Step down from the throne of your heart and surrender it to the One for whom it was made? Make the living King Jesus the Lord of your life and your death. Live with no reserves, no retreats, and no regrets.

Challenge 2: Go... cross the room, cross the street, cross Houma, cross the nation, cross the world – wherever the Holy Spirit is calling you to go, GO! No reserves, no retreats, no regrets.

~ *Soli DEO Gloria*