

Chapter 90

The Resurrection of Christ

Matthew 28 vv 2-4

It is Sunday morning!

The sun has not yet risen, yet a streak of light which illumines the Eastern sky shows that a new day is dawning. Already a faint twilight has appeared, though under the trees it is still quite dark.

The guards by the sepulchre of Jesus also welcome the glow of the new day with joy. It will not be long now before they are relieved. They have kept watch the whole night long by the grave of the crucified Nazarite. At the least sound which broke the quiet of the night, they had pricked up their ears and grasped their weapons more firmly, for you never know. The followers of Jesus could have the evil intent of risking an attack upon the grave. So they were on the alert the whole night long.

But no, nothing happened. They long for the moment when they can leave. Other soldiers will then take over the watch from them, and they can go and rest, a well-earned rest.

Suddenly they have a terrible shock and look at each other in consternation- Why do those tough veterans start so? ... Just read it in the Word of the Lord: ... "There was a great earthquake."

The ground undulates beneath their feet. The earth shudders and shakes.

But something else happens. An angel, a heavenly messenger descends from heaven. The whole garden in which the grave is situated, is at

once illuminated brightly. No wonder, for the countenance of the angel was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.

This heavenly messenger descends and walks calmly to the closed grave. He takes away the heavy stone from the opening.

But ... but ... that was not allowed surely? ... That stone is sealed, isn't it? ... Has the angel no fear of Caesar's wrath? ...

In my thoughts I can see you smiling at such questions. Of course the angel is not worried about the seal of an earthly prince, for he has been sent by the Creator of heaven and earth.

The watchmen see all this. Why do they not grasp their weapons? ... Why do they not defend the grave? ... That was their duty surely? That is why they were keeping watch, wasn't it? Up then, guards and show what you are worth!

Defence? ... not a word of it. That does not enter their thoughts.

Look, there are those tough, fearless warriors. But they do not stir. "They became as dead men." With trembling knees and throbbing hearts they observe what takes place. They are as though nailed to the ground. They see how the great stone is rolled away. They see how the angel lays the stone flat and sits upon it.

And then what? ... Then they flee in panic. They dare not look back, far less return. One thought fills all their hearts - get away, away from that frightening place. Away, as quickly as

THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

- NEW TESTAMENT -

possible!

And there they run, out of the garden, into the road which leads to Jerusalem. They run harder than they have ever run before. Soon they disappear from sight. The noise of their footsteps gradually dies away.

It is now quiet by the open tomb. And what took place then? ...

Well, children, I cannot tell you very much about what took place next, for the Bible is silent about it. One thing however I can tell you.

The Lord Jesus, who had been laid there reverently Friday evening by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, rises from the dead and steps outside. That is the proof that the Lord Jesus has in truth finished His work.

He had come upon earth to bear God's wrath against sin. He atoned for the guilt of His people. Oh, if the devil had succeeded in causing Jesus to commit one sin, then the Lord would not now have risen. Then He would have been held by death, for then His death would have been punishment for sin. But now, His death is the PAYMENT for sin.

The resurrection of Christ is the proof that Jesus had paid in full. The wrath of God is removed for all His elect people, through the suffering and death of Christ. Their sins shall be forgiven, yes their sin IS forgiven through the death of the Saviour. This resurrection is the receipt for Jesus' complete satisfaction of the debt.

And, just as the Lord Jesus rises here from the dead and leaves the tomb, so too shall all God's children one day rise from the dead and



The fleeing watchmen

leave their graves to go into everlasting glory.

For the ungodly there shall be a fearful resurrection for they shall be judged by a righteous God and for them the Saviour will not act as Mediator. For God's people it will be a blessed resurrection, for they shall be freed from sin and its consequences and enter into eternal

heaven. They shall bless and praise God for evermore.

The Lord Jesus closed the gates of hell, conquered death and opened the way to heaven for His people.

He, the great High Priest, the eternal Son of David leaves the grave early on this Sunday morning, the grave in which He had lain for three days and three nights.

I hope that you have understood this portion, though I know that that it is still very difficult for you. You will not perhaps understand all of it yet, but pray God to teach it you.

How happy you would be if your sins too were washed away through the sufferings and death of the Saviour.

The resurrection of Christ is the comfort and joy of all God's people. They have not a DEAD Saviour but a LIVING Saviour. He, the king of Israel lives for ever and ever. And that is why they too shall live for ever and ever. How happy are those people, don't you agree?

Are you sometimes jealous of them? ...

You see children, that is the meaning of our Easter. Then we remember year after year the resurrection of Christ.

For thousands of people Easter is but a

THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

- NEW TESTAMENT -

dead form, nothing more. Thousands go out at Easter time on motor car rides or cycling, walking and enjoying all sorts of other amusements. They have a few days holiday - that is all. How little thought, alas, is given on those days to the rich blessing of the resurrection of the Son of God.

God grant that you may yet celebrate Easter time (Passover) in truth.

There is one more thing I must still point out to you. Perhaps some of you think sometimes: "How is it that the Jews had their day of rest on Saturday and we have ours on Sunday?"

Saturday is the last day of the week. Sunday is the first day of the new week. To explain all of it precisely, is still much too difficult for you to understand. One thing however you can easily understand - we have our day of rest on Sunday, because that was the day when the Lord Jesus rose again.

Come, let us go back to the watchmen who have fled in great terror to Jerusalem. Breathless and beside themselves they enter the city and make their way straight to some chief priests, or in other words, to some of the members of the Sanhedrin. Once there, they tell excitedly what had happened in the early hours of the morning there by the grave, and why they had fled.

The Jewish elders listen with frightened, alarmed faces. When the watchers at last finish their story, there is a moment's painful silence. The Pharisees and Sadducees who hear it all, look at each other.

Hastily the whole Sanhedrin is called together in the early hours. What must they do? ... Confess their guilt? ... Acknowledge that they have been wrong? ... No, alas! One thought only

fills their hearts and that thought is: "The people must not get to know this."

The watchmen must keep quiet about what has taken place at the sepulchre, for if this story becomes known, then for them, the Sanhedrin, all is lost. No, No, Never! That must be avoided at all costs.

Their eyes glint with evil. With a sly smile upon their lips they say to the disconcerted warriors: "Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept."

That is a foolish lie, for they had not slept, furthermore, does anyone who sleeps know what is going on around him? ... If they had slept, how did they know that the disciples stole the body? ... Do you see how foolish those words are?

The Jewish elders however give so much money that the soldiers fall into the temptation and promise to tell the lie to everyone.

There is however one other difficulty for them. A watchman is not allowed to sleep. If he did so he was severely punished, yes it usually called forth the death penalty. If this comes to the Governor's ears, then they will be put to death. They fear the wrath of Pontius Pilate.

Oh, no need to worry about that. "If this comes to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you."

The keepers agree to this. They take the money and ... go about telling, to their own shame, that they fell asleep. They give the Jews to understand that the body of the Nazarite was stolen by His disciples. That lie is still believed even now. However can it happen? How false the devil is, isn't he? Soon it is known throughout Jerusalem. "The body of Jesus is stolen. His disciples have done it."

THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

- NEW TESTAMENT -

Those hardened, maddened elders stop at nothing to achieve their ends. They dare anything, so long as the truth remains hidden.

But ... God will make certain that the

shall conquer. How that comes about though, I hope to tell you among other things in the next chapter.

truth is made known. Not falsehood, but truth