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CH28

1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. 2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. 6 “He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. 7 “Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”

8 And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. 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 take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.”

Last week we considered the providence of God. How God accomplishes His good pleasure in this world. How God unfolds His master plan.

This is an important concept. The tension between God and Satan in this world.

So, if God is the ultimate authority and ruler over everything, why does the world continue to reel out of control in a path of unhindered evil? Why does He allow Satan to continue to reign over men. Why does the world groan under the control of an evil ruler who has usurped what is not his?

Why doesn't God fix it? What is He waiting for?

First of all, evil, as bad as it is, is not un-restrained. If you want to see evil un-restrained, read the book of Revelation, where in a 7 year period, fully half of the men alive on the earth now, will perish as a result of un-restrained evil.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and it was . . . what? Good. Good.

God gave authority to reign over this creation to Adam. And when Adam sinned, that authority was defaulted to Satan who is the ruler of this world.

The rest of the answer is; God wins. God wins. Jesus will return from heaven and depose Satan and rule this world in righteousness. In His time. According to His plan. On His exact schedule. According to His good pleasure and His glory.

In the meantime, and this is where we live; the meantime, we are strangers and aliens in a world where Satan is ruler and evil seems to be gaining speed at a more rapid pace than anyone has ever seen.

God is causing the working out of His plan. His way. He wins. And those who belong to Him, no matter what this world does to them, will ultimately enjoy the victory that belongs to our God.

If you're interested in this idea of providence, God working in the background to accomplish His goals, His pleasure, His plan for the good of the ones who belong to Him, read the story of queen Esther.

How Satan has this big plan to exterminate God's people, the Jews, and the edicts are passed to cause that to happen, and God is working in the background to cause a great victory for His glory and His people's good. God is never mentioned in that book, yet He's on every page.

God is in the background, using friends and enemies alike to cause all things to work together for His ultimate victory.

Listen to what this book says about this wonderful truth. Our God wins.

Job 23:13

"But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does.

Is. 14:24 The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand,

Isaiah 46:10

Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

Our passage this morning is all about God providentially working together with His enemies in order to make the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead . . . un-assailable.

Stop just there for a moment. The doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is singularly important. Paul tells us why in Acts 17. Paul is in Athens preaching to the literati. The elites. Listen to what Paul tells these esteemed men of the greatest learning in all of earth;

30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Did you catch that last sentence. The proof of the gospel of God to this

world is bound up in one incident. Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

Repent because God has appointed a judge who will judge the entire world in righteousness on an appointed day. The proof to all men of this gospel; He raised Him from the dead.

It's that simple. We don't need miracles. We don't need speaking in tongues. We don't need bizarre activities, extra natural happenings in order to prove God's gospel. We don't need musical extravaganzas and fog machines to prove Jesus. The proof has already been furnished.

God raised Jesus from the dead. That's it. Take it or leave it. No other proof that Jesus is who He said He is and will accomplish all of God's plan for this world needs to be given other than that one proof. *having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."*

So that makes these events surrounding the burial site of this same Jesus, all the more important. God is working by providentially using His enemies to make the proof of the resurrection, un-arguable. Infallible truth.

62 Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate,

This is the first providence, and it borders on miraculous. This activity is almost harder to believe than the resurrection itself.

Chief priests. Pharisees. Pilate. The chief priests are all Saducees. They hate the pharisees. And both groups hate Pilate. It's like the Republicans and the Democrats gathered together with Vladimir Putin to accomplish a goal.

They all hate each other, but; the enemy of my enemy, is my friend. they all hate Jesus more than they hate each other, so they conspire together.

What makes it even more bizarre is, meeting with Pilate would cause them to be ceremonially unclean. On the passover day. The very day!

But it's more important to take care of the Jesus problem, once and for ALL. So they will do what would be unthinkable to a religious jew.

So all these strange bedfellows come together to accomplish a common goal. Make Jesus go away, once and for all, and make Him stay away.

63 and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.' 64 "Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."

The rulers of Isreal had understood Jesus prediction of rising from the dead better than His own disciples who He had told so very plainly 3 times.

When had the scribes and pharisees been told this? Where is their concern about a resurrection plot based from.

In Matthew 12. 38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." 39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; 40 for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Even though they had twisted His words about rebuilding the temple in 3 days to be some sort of threat to Rome when they spoke earlier to Pilate, they may also have understood that reference also as a claim of resurrection.

Notice also the name they use in place of His name which they hate too much to even say. "that deceiver". In Satan's realm, everything is flipped upside down.

Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life* to His disciples. To

Satan's disciples ruling in Satan's realm, everything is upside down. The Truth becomes The Liar.

To these men, He is NOT the truth, He is the deceiver. He is not the way, He is the WRONG way, and they at this moment with Pilate are working in conjunction with Satan to make sure He is NOT the life.

This is willful ignorance of their own scriptures which said in Psalm 16:10

For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

God in His providence is about to cause all these things to be true. The workings and plannings of wicked men only serve to make them more infallibly true.

65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how." 66 And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

The "seal" was something similar to what we might do today to protect a scene. We use yellow tape with a warning not to cross it under whatever authority has placed it there.

We can imagine a Roman seal that warns anyone of tampering under penalty of Rome. Perhaps it was something like molten wax poured on two surfaces where the large stone met the entrance. Then a Roman signet ring is pressed into the surface to show that this is official Roman business.

The grave is sealed. The guard is in place. The disciples have fled. There is nothing more that mere men can do to secure this scene.

A few Roman soldiers. The devices of wicked Israelites and stupid soldiers and evil rulers will not keep the man who spoke the universes into place, in the ground. This is folly.

This is a big deal. The resurrection of Jesus is a very big deal. And it

seems that these days, in the churches, it hardly ever gets a mention. And yet when the church is born, in the book of Acts, everything revolves around this truth.

Spend a few minutes with me in the book of Acts. In chapters 3 and 4, and God adds 5000 men to His church, it is the resurrection, over and over that is center stage.

*Acts 3:1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. 2And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. 3When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. 4But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!" 5And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 6But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In **the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene**—walk!" 7And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. 8With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9And all the people saw him walking and praising God; 10and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.*

*11While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. 12But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14"But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, **15but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.** 16"And on the basis of faith in His*

name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Here, the resurrection of Jesus, God's chosen servant, is the basis of the faith which has restored this lame man, and also the subject of Peter's power and preaching. Resurrection. Jesus raised from the dead.

Peter goes on to preach to this audience that Jesus is God's chosen servant.

Then in the next chapter as a direct result of Peter's preaching, watch what happens next in chapter 4

1 As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, 2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

This is the same group that went to Pilate in order to have the grave guarded and sealed. This is their worst nightmare. This is exactly what they did everything possible as humans to prevent.

Notice the cause of them being disturbed. Peter is preaching Christ, risen from the dead. The firstborn of many brethren who will also be raised from the dead. Jesus, resurrected by God, once dead by the direct action of these men, now alive, with God in heaven. Peter preaching their nightmare.

3And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. 4But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

This is the birth of the church. 5000 believers added to the ones already who believed at Pentecost. Swept into the church, by the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of what? Jesus. You killed Him. God raised Him up from the dead. Therefore, believe.

Peter and John have spent the night in jail. The providence of God is working in every moment. This reads like a breathtaking thriller. God is arranging for the very men who sealed the grave of Jesus to hear the message of what? Resurrection.

Before He was crucified, Jesus had said this very thing would happen to them. This is no surprise. Mt. 10:16*“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. 17 “But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; 18and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. 19“But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. 20“For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*

Back to Acts 4 5*On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. 7When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, “By what power, or in what name, have you done this?”*

What is the source of the power in which a man who is over 40 years old, who is born lame and has never walked, now leaps on legs that were previously shriveled and worthless? How did this happen? What is the source.

Wind Peter up like a main spring, and what comes out? Resurrection!

8 *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, **that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead**—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. 11 “He is the **STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED** by you, **THE BUILDERS**, but **WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone**. 12“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that*

has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

*13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. 15 But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another, 16 saying, “What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 “But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name.” 18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; **20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.**” 21 When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; 22 for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.*

What was it that Peter and John had seen and heard that they could not dis-obey God and keep silent about? Jesus, alive. Jesus resurrected from the grave.

There's more for us in Acts chapter 4. The very providence of God that we have been speaking of all morning long today is the subject of the praises and prayer of thankfulness of the disciples when they return to the brethren.

Listen to this prayer of exultation. It mentions all the details of the burial of Jesus and the providences of God in raising Him up in spite of what wicked men tried to do to seal the grave shut.

23 When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one

accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM,

25who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said,

*'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE,
AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?*

*26'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND,
AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER
AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'*

*27"For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 **to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.***

Herod. Pilate. Gentiles. Soldiers of Rome. Jewish rulers. All conspired to both murder Jesus and to seal His grave. Did you catch the reason behind all of these acts. *28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.*

All of it, performed by enemies of God, was part of accomplishing providentially what God had predestined to happen! The nations rage against God. Kings and Rulers, gentiles and peoples, rage against God and He uses all of it to accomplish His plans. His goals.

I remind you again of what Job and Isaiah said: *"But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does.*

The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand,

Raging against God is laughable. The Psalmist says; *He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them.*

Paul speaks of the sovereign unstoppable providence of God carrying out His plans. Eph. 1:9 *And He has made known to us the mystery of*

His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ

I want to end our thoughts this morning with some words that Jesus spoke, post resurrection.

The scene here is John's vision of the risen Christ. 17 *When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.*

Jesus is the only source of salvation for men. Jesus was alive, and dead, and made alive again, resurrected from the dead. Jesus alone, holds the keys of death and Hades. ***For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.***"