

## **Matthew 28:5-7 - Rejoice in Jesus' victory over death! Easter Sunrise April 21, 2019**

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Grace and peace are yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

The Word that describes the victory of Christ is written in Matthew 28:5-7

These are Your Words heavenly Father. Strengthen us by your truth for life. Your Word is truth. Amen

Dear Redeemed, by our living Savior,

Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! We spoke those words this morning as we began our service. Do we realize why this truth is the greatest reason to celebrate? Jesus made many promises to His people. He said that He would go and prepare a place for them in heaven (*John 14*). He said that He would offer us the forgiveness of all our sins (*Matthew 26:28*). He said, that whoever believes in Him, will cross over from death to life (*John 5:24*). Did He keep those promises? Not if He is still dead! Paul wrote, *"If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.... And if Christ has not been raised; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost."* (*1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-18*).

Many people, even some who claim to be Christians, don't believe that Jesus rose from the dead. They theorize that the disciples dreamed He came alive or that they were mistaken about which grave belonged to Jesus or that His resurrection was fake news. But God's Word is clear. The disciples were not dreaming or expecting Jesus to rise from the dead. Jesus practically had to break down the door see them. He had to eat food and show them the marks of the nails in His hands so that they were convinced. God's Word is just as clear to us. The angel proclaimed Jesus' tomb was empty. He was risen from death! He was seen alive by many people, including the women, disciples, and later 500 people at once. Jesus conquered death! Death seems so permanent, but Jesus changed all of that. Paul wrote, *"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (*1 Corinthians 15:56-57*).

### **Rejoice in Jesus' victory over death!**

**1. There can be no better news!** Easter should always be a wonderful day for Christians, even if weather isn't always nice or if our life is troubled. What could be better for us than Christ rising from the dead? The women came that morning to anoint Jesus' dead body. But thankfully God provided something so much better for them!

Again the women initially thought of Jesus' death as a tragic defeat and an end to His ministry. But God saw His Son's death as an overwhelming victory and the beginning of His ministry through His Word to people all over the world! Christ's rising from death has changed everything! Paul wrote of Christ. *"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification"* (*Romans 4:25*). By raising Jesus from death, God declared Jesus' sacrifice complete. He won the full forgiveness of sins, which spares us from eternal death. Christ's victory is ours as we trust in Him.

His victory was hidden to the world. The Roman soldiers guarding the tomb never saw Jesus alive on Easter. After the angels opened the tomb, they saw that it was empty and then ran away. We don't know exactly when Jesus came alive that morning. But when He came alive, He had with a glorified body. He could suddenly appear wherever He wanted to be. He was not confined to a tomb. The angel announced it when he rolled away the stone. When the women arrived to anoint Jesus' body, the angel told them: *"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"* (*v.5-6*).

Certainly the women were glad to hear that Jesus was alive. I'm sure they immediately wanted to see Him. But at first, the women only had God's Word to believe. Today we would love to see Jesus appear, to bring back loved ones from death or heal others who are injured or seriously ill. If Jesus appeared, then we would be reunited with the saints of old and share the joy and glory of heaven! Instead for now, we only have God's Word of Jesus' victory and we accept it by faith.

When Jesus appeared bodily to the women later that day, God's Word had done its work! They were not afraid of Jesus. When saw Him, they ran to Him as their Savior and worshipped Him. Their joy couldn't be contained. Their Savior was risen! It was a day to tell others of His victory!

The angel told them, "*Go quickly and tell his disciples that He has risen...*" (v.7). How comforting that news must have been to the disciples. Earlier, they had slept while Jesus prayed. They had run when He was captured. They were in hiding during the crucifixion. On Easter Sunday they were not near the tomb. Yet, Jesus included them, even after all the disappointments. Jesus later told the women, "*Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee.*" (v. 10) He still called the disciples His "brothers"! He based His relationship not on their failures, but on the forgiveness He had won for them at the cross!

What a blessing that first Easter was for them! The risen Jesus welcomed them as part of His family even though they didn't deserve it and neither do we. We are no better than the disciples. We have not stood up for Jesus and His truth as often as we should. Too many times by our words and actions we have denied that Christ is our Savior. We deserve to be separated from God forever. But, Jesus suffered the depths of hell on the cross and He died to fully pay for our sins. Because of Jesus' death and holy life, all believers in Christ have become precious children of God. Jesus resurrection is the proof of His victory for us. The world says, "In the midst of life we are in death." A Christian who trusts in Christ says, "In the midst of death, we have life!" Jesus is our living Savior to be with us always!

**Second, God's Word gives us joy in His victory.** Jesus hasn't appeared to us this Easter day, as much as we would like to see Him. But, we can always find encouragement from Him in God's Word. Notice in Matthew that Jesus was seen after people heard the message. The angel told the women, "*He has risen, just as he said*" (v.6). This Word gave them reassurance and it helped them remember that Jesus had predicted His death and His rising from the grave. Then, Jesus appeared to them.

The disciples heard the good news first from the women. Then Jesus appeared to them. He wanted them to depend on His Word. Earlier He had promised that once He rose from death He would meet His followers in Galilee. He focused them back to His Word. Why is this? Jesus would soon ascend to heaven and they wouldn't see Him again. Yet, His Word would remain with them all as they trusted in Him.

So, do we want to find the victory of Easter? We've come to the right place! Here, Christ's Word is proclaimed. Here, His forgiveness won at the cross is offered in His Word. His Word drives away our fears. Jesus promised, "*Because I live, you also will live*" (John 14:19). His promise is our reason for joy! Tomorrow may have its problems. But, since Jesus conquered death, He can help us in any situation!

Even our death will become our entrance to eternal life. A time is coming when we will see Jesus in heaven. The Bible promises that we will reflect His glory. Then, He will fully share the victory that He won for us on the cross. While we wait to see Him, He will keep our faith strong through His promises. We will do well to read and hear them often! Christ is risen! He has won our victory! Hallelujah! Amen.