

Title: The Great Earthquake

Text: Matthew 28:1-10

HALLELUJAH! JESUS IS ALIVE....HE IS RISEN AND HE IS ALIVE.....Let's all say it together.....HALLELUJAH!!!! JESUS IS ALIVE....

Now, if you are visiting with us today, I want you to know that we in this church believe that Jesus is alive. And we believe that one day He is going to come back to this planet in the same body in which he arose from the grave.....AMEN?????.....Well, let's hear it?.....Amen.....

In fact, the Bible even makes it stronger when it says that if you don't believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ then you are not even saved.

Resurrect
Now, Our topic on this ~~Easter~~ Sunday is: "THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE." Would you take your Bibles and turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 28. The Gospel of Matthew chapter 28 beginning at Vs 1. I invite you to follow along in your Bibles as we share the *Resurrection* ~~Easter~~ story.....

(READ MATTHEW 28:1-10)

Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, we thank you for that day when Jesus arose from the dead. And we pray that you will speak to all of us about the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we pray that those, here, who have been considering their commitment might understand that Christianity is built on the historical fact that Jesus actually arose from the dead. That we would all understand that without the resurrection of Jesus there is no hope for anyone. Without the resurrection we are wasting our time. And as the Apostle Paul said, "Our preaching is in vain. And we are still in our sins." And we ask this in Jesus name.....AMEN.....

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EARTHQUAKES!!! California is known for earthquakes. It is interesting to note that the Bible foretold that there would be great numbers of earthquakes during the time described as the end of the age. There would be great earthquakes just before the return of Jesus in Power and glory....

It is, also, interesting to me that in the 16th century there were four major earthquakes recorded. In the years 1700 to 1800 there were only 7 recorded earthquakes. From 1800 to 1900 there were ~~only~~ nine major recorded earthquakes. But, from 1900 to 1950 there were 27 major earthquakes. And from 1950 to 19 ~~85~~ ⁸⁴ there were over ~~50~~ ⁷⁰ recorded earthquakes.

They tell us that the energy released during the Mt. St. Heln's earthquake was 10 million times stronger than the atomic bomb dropped on Japan in 1945.

Did you know that the Bible tells us that God controls earthquakes? That's right. ^{The Bible says} "It is God who shaketh the earth and its foundations."

Earthquakes, dear friends, are in the hands of God. They are not in the hands of man.

The N.T. mentions three specific earthquakes. They are great earthquakes, and ~~God~~ ^{the Bible} describes them as shaking the earth. These three earthquakes happened at the following times:

(1) Number one: when Jesus died. Matthew 27 tells us that a great earthquake occurred when Jesus died on the cross.

(2) Secondly, in Matthew 28, there was a great earthquake when Jesus arose from the grave.

(3) And third, in Acts chapter 16, when Paul and Silas were in a Philippian Jail, a great earthquake occurred.

And it is interesting that as a result of each one of these earthquakes somebody met Jesus. Somebody was saved. *And that is precisely*

Why friends, if an earthquake would cause someone in this congregation to come to the Lord, today, I say...LET AN EARTHQUAKE HAPPEN RIGHT NOW...

The Bible, also, tells us that everytime an earthquake occurred, fear was in the hearts of those who were there. Earthquakes produce fear...

This morning, I want to look at these three earthquakes that occurred in the N.T.

(1) First of all, turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 16. Acts 16 beginning with Vs 25.....

Paul and Silas are in prison in Philippi as a result of casting out a demon from a little girl. And the one's who used this girl for profit were mad. So, they brought charges against Paul and Silas and had them thrown into Jail.....(ACTS 16:25-34)

What a story. A great earthquake and somebody met Jesus. Please notice three important principles about this story.

(1) First, the Bible says in Vs 29 that this Roman jailer "trembled".

Boy! that impressed me. Because according to Roman History the guards in a Roman prison were some of the hardest, meanest men that the world has ever seen. They were men who were used to handling killers and murders. Often, they had been trained as gladators. Some times, they were the best with weapons of the Roman soldiers. And these men were the prison guards. The hardcore of the Roman soldiers.

And yet, the Bible says that an earthquake caused this Roman guard to fall before two prisoners trembling with fear. {In a moment of time, he realized his need. And my friends, God will never be able to do anything with you until you realize your need. God wants to do more for us than we could ever possible imingy. But, until we see our need of Christ, God cannot work in our life. This jailer saw his need. And an earthquake caused it.

(2) Secondly, I notice this Roman jailer said something. In Vs 30 He said: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

A person once said, "THAT IS ACCEPTING THE LORD OUT OF FEAR." "AND I DON'T THINK WE OUGHT TO SCARE PEOPLE INTO CHRIST."

Well, Let's suppose that your house is on fire. And you are seating in the living room. And you are not aware of the fire. Your house is burning and you don't know it. And somebody who is passing by sees the house on fire. And through the window he notice that you are not aware of the fire. And so he screams and yells at the top of his voice for you to get out....."GET OUT... YOUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE".....And you, in the fear of that moment, realizing what could happen....you run out of the house and escape the fire....

Well, Praise God! Because of fear, you ran out of that house.....

and You escaped the fire because of the fear motive..... Now, I doubt that if your house were on fire and a man came up and tapped very lightly, and said to you: "Sir, there is something I would like to talk to you about, that is...if you have a moment to spare.".....

It is wrong to think of the fear motive as being a wrong motive. Over, over, again Jesus pleads with ~~men~~ ^{people} to flee the wrath of God. Jesus pleads with ~~men~~ ^{people} to repent and to believe the Gospel. He said that many cities who refused to hear his message, it would be worse for them than Sodom and Gomorrah, was in the time of judgement.

Jesus used the fear motive. Now, if you come to Christ without a fear motive, Praise God. But, if it is the only thing that will bring you to Christ, then my friend, I want to say to you, today, that there is no hope for you outside of Jesus Christ.... [If you don't know Christ as Saviour and Lord, you are like the man in the house, that ignores the fire ~~and~~ ^{he} and is about ready to pass into eternity.

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved." That was no time to set down for an hours discussion about the theological implications of God becoming man. That was no time to debate creation theories. That was no time to argue the miracles of Jesus. THAT WAS THE TIME TO GIVE THE MAN AN ANSWER. AND YOU NEED AN ANSWER MY FRIEND. And I need an answer.

And the answer ~~was~~ is: BELIEVE....ON..THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. What must I do to be saved?.. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. And Vs 34 says "he believed." Beleiving in God with all your heart.

It also says his household believed. Often , you know, when someone makes a decision for christ, a ~~chang~~ ^{chain} reaction starts. Do you realize that you who are seating here, and perhaps you have never accepted Christ, you have never trusted him, you have never invitied him to come into your life, But if you accept Christ, you may be the key of introducing many others to Christ.... "He believed.." and his whole house did also. It set off a ~~chang~~ ^{chain} reaction and many others came to Christ as a result.

Have you ever really believed? Have you really trusted Christ as your saviour? Belief isn't simply with the head. It is not just agreeing to a set of facts about a person. Belief is a complete trust. A complete commitment upon the fact that there is no hope for ^{you} ~~me~~ outside of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He died for my sins. And he rose from the dead for my justification. He is alive. And I believe that. And I am trusting Jesus for my eternal salvation. HAVE YOU EVER MADE THAT COMMITMENT? Dear friends, there is no hope without that commitment.

(3) Then, I notice the wonderful results that heppened to that jailer. Vs 33 says: "he was immediately baptized, he and all his household."

In other words, this man followed through, completely, all the way, and he publically demonstrated his faith and commitment in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

This impressed me. He immediately was baptized. WHY? Because Baptism publically demonstrates that I have given myself to Christ. That I have accepted Him as Lord and Saviour. And I am now identified with Him in His death, his burial, and His resurrection. This jailer followed through. He was baptized...Praise God!

I had a great experience when I served in Vietnam. I was a chaplain with the 1st battalion, 12th Infantry. A young soldier accepted Christ as his saviour. It was much like Philip's experience with the Ethiopian Eunuch. This young man found the Lord and right away he wanted to be baptized. And he wanted to be baptized by immersion.

Now, this presented quite a problem. For one did not expose himself to the enemy too often. I talk with his company commander. And he agreed to put out a security force if the men would volunteer to do so. Now, this company commander wasn't a Christian and many others in the company were not Christians. Yet, the entire company volunteered. WHY? Because this young soldier was a man they respected and they knew his decision was real.

And so we moved to a nearby river. Half the company took up positions on one side of the river and the other half on the other side. This young man and I went out into the middle of the river. And I was privileged to baptize Dale in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And Dale was used by God to lead others in his company to Christ. Faith results in positive action. It follows through in commitment. *Praise God*

(2) Now, let's come to the second time the Bible mentions a great earthquake. Turn back to Matthew chapter 27. The Gospel of Matthew chapter 27 and beginning at Vs 50. This earthquake happened when Jesus died. The scene is the cross. And the bible says in vs 50:

(Read Vs 50-54)

The very reason the religious leaders had put Jesus on the cross was for blasphemy because He said He was the Son of God. He declared that He was God. God in human flesh.

And there at the foot of the cross, this Centurion realized what was happening and he said: "Truly this was the Son of God." This Centurion believed.

Please notice, a great earthquake and he feared greatly. But, the result was that he recognized that the one who died on the cross was the Son of God.

Oh, let me tell you dear friends, Christ can meet your need if you believe that He is the Son of God. He can change your life. He can give you new life. He can cause you to live forever, if you believe that Jesus is ^{The Son of God} God. A wonderful truth about ^{Resurrection} Easter. Praise God.

(3) But, let's come to chapter 28. Matthew chapter 28 and Vs 2. The final earthquake. The one we read in our scripture reading.

Vs 2: "Behold, there was a great earthquake." What Happened?

Vs 4 And the guards shook for fear and became like dead men. And the angel said to the women, do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus."

Vs 9 "as they went to tell his disciples, behold Jesus met them."

What a wonderful privilege those ladies had. Jesus met them. The risen Lord. The one who died for them. They saw him on the cross. They wept for Him. They knew He died and they couldn't understand why.

And now the resurrection. Here is Jesus. The wounds in His hands. The wound in His side. And they see Him....WOW!!

He met them and greeted them. And what did they do?

Vs 9.. "They came and held Him by the ^{feet} ~~feet~~ and worshipped Him."

Do You understand? They meet the risen Christ. And the first thing they did was to fall at his feet and worship Him.

I wonder...I wonder if that would have been our reaction. If Jesus ^{was} ~~were~~ to appear here today, would we fall at his ^{feet} ~~feet~~ and worship Him?

Well, Pastor, if I could see Jesus ^{like these women} then I would fall at his ^{feet} ~~feet~~ and worship Him. You know, one of the disciples said the same thing. It was Thomas. Jesus had appeared to the disciples. But, Thomas had been absent. And when the disciples told him that they had seen the risen Lord, Thomas said.."Unless I see the wounds in his hands and feet and ^{the} ~~be~~ wound in his side, I will not believe.

And then Jesus appeared to Thomas. And Jesus told Thomas to put his finger into the nail prints in his hands. And to put his hand into the wound in his side.

And what did Thomas do? He fell at the feet of Jesus and made a great confession of faith. He said, "My Lord and My God. MY LORD! MY GOD!

But, you know, dear friends. I love what Jesus said back to Thomas. I love this because this applies to me. And it applies to you.

Jesus said to Thomas. "Thomas! you have seen and you have believed. Blessed are they who do not see, and yet believe." WOW!!

God says that if you would only believe what I have done for you. I died for your sins on the cross. I rose again that you might live forever. If you would believe that, you can be saved, right now, this very moment.

And what a glorious day ^{Resurrection Sunday} ~~Easter~~ would become. It would be a great day for you because you will have encountered the living Christ.

OH I trust you will ask Jesus to save you. And I trust you will make that decision known by coming forward during the singing of our Invitation Hymn.

Let us close with prayer

Our Father, we thank you for the Word of God. We thank you for that Philippian jailer who because of an earthquake fell down and cried out his need to be saved. Father, I pray that you would help each of us to come to that place of recognizing our need. That we might believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. That we might be saved from the consequence of sin and its effect on our life. That we might be saved to a wonderful life in fellowship with the one who made us and loves us.

Father, I pray that you would speak to our hearts. That everyone who has never made that decision might do so, right now. Those who are considering the claims of Christ might come and meet Jesus, today. And by experience know He is the saviour.

I thank you that if we ask Christ to come into our life, He will come in. And He is knocking at the door of our hearts as the Bible tells us. God, I pray that people will open the door, today, and let you come in.

And I ask this in the name of Jesus.....Amen.