

Matthew 23-06-11b

We are looking at the morning of the resurrection and we're about to discuss this very unique account in the gospel of John regarding the burial clothes that he and Peter saw in the tomb. But I have a question for you just ahead of that. And you might not think to ask this question.

And then once I ask it, you'll think, well, I wonder why I didn't ask myself that question sooner. So here's your pop quiz. Who raised Jesus from the dead? It's the central fact.

It's the very hub around which all of these accounts revolve. Jesus was dead and now he is alive. Who raised him from the dead? You can say God, but that's kind of a generality.

Was it God, the father? Was it God, the son? Did he raise himself? Was it God, the Holy Spirit? Who raised Jesus from the dead? If you want full credit for the answer, you need to appeal to the source of all of our information, which is scripture. So who did raise Jesus from the dead? Well, the first answer that I got here in the sanctuary was God raised Jesus from the dead. If you turn with me to Acts chapter two, verse 24, this is the testimony of the apostle Peter.

You remember famously Acts two is the day of Pentecost. And when the Holy Spirit descends, everyone hears people speaking in their own tongues about the wonderful works of God. This is another great Bible trivia question.

On the day of Pentecost, they're all gathered in one place. The spirit descends like tongues of fire. Everyone hears preaching in their own language.

What is preached? What is the content of the message that the Holy Spirit places in the mouths of these suddenly multilingual preachers? Well, it tells you in Acts chapter two, verse 11, visitors from Rome, Jews, proselytes, people from, and it goes, there's two and a half verses that tell you Parthians and Medes and Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judeans, Cappadocians, people that live in Pontus in Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya, adjoining Cyrene. Remember parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene? Who do we know comes from Cyrene? Shimon that carried the cross, Shimon of Cyrene. Visitors from Rome, Jews and proselytes, these visitors from Rome would speak Latin.

There are just an abundance of languages. Cretans, guys from Crete, they've got their own dialect of Greek that is different. And there's an ancient language of the Minoans that apparently had persisted all the way down into this time that was not Greek.

It was the proto-language before the Greeks took over Crete. Arabs, Arabic, cognate, but very distinct and separate from Aramaic and Hebrew. We hear them speaking in our own tongues.

What are they talking about? The wonderful works of God. The wonderful works of God.

We just heard in our special music that the almighty power of God is manifest in creation.

All creation witnesses and testifies to the power of God because they are the works of God. Others say, ah, y'all are drunk. Skip down to verse 22.

This is Peter standing up and saying, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know, him being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified and put to death, whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it.

And he goes on to quote Old Testament prophecy in that regard. And down in verse 36, therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When they hear this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter said to them, repent, change your mind.

Metanoeo. Let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ with a view toward, not in order to receive, but with respect to looking at the forgiveness of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are afar off and as many as the Lord our God will call.

So Peter says in Acts 2 24, God raised Jesus from the dead. That's the basic answer. That's the short, simple, easy to get off the hook answer.

However, scripture tells us all three members of the Trinity were involved in bringing resurrection life to the body of the Lord Jesus. Galatians 1 1, Paul the apostle says, I am an apostle not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the father who raised him from the dead. Paul's apostolic commission is from the Lord Jesus and God the father.

And first verse of the letter to the Galatian church, Paul emphasizes the father raised the son from the dead. First Peter 3 18, Peter in later years says, Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the spirit. Now this is the Greek preposition, and which is can be translated in, in, by, or with.

Was he in context made alive by the spirit, the Holy Spirit or in his own spirit? I tend to lean toward his own spirit. Jesus dismissed his spirit. He committed his spirit to the father from the cross.

One of the last things he said, father into thy hands, I commit my spirit. It says he

dismissed his spirit. So he was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

And the parallelism there makes me think that this isn't the best verse to use for the Holy Spirit, although many will do so. You can also look at Romans chapter one, verse four. The same Paul who wrote Galatians 1, 1 in the opening verses of Romans, mentions the Lord Jesus Christ, declared to be the son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness, according to the Holy Spirit, by his resurrection from the dead.

Jesus Christ, our Lord. So he is declared to be the son of God in power, according to the Holy Spirit, by his resurrection from the dead. So does this mean the Holy Spirit was the agent? There is strong implication here in the same way that the Holy Spirit is strongly implicated in the origination of life on earth in Genesis chapter one.

The spirit of God hovers on the face of the waters. God begins his creative commands. And it is no accident that the Holy Spirit's presence is mentioned.

And when God speaks, these things are accomplished. We also have Romans 8, 11. If you want a clear reference to the role of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection, Romans 8, 11, if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

It doesn't get much clearer than that. Romans 8, 11, if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, now, who is the spirit of him who raised Jesus? The spirit is the Holy Spirit, but this is the spirit of him who raised Jesus. So this isn't the spirit of the Holy Spirit.

This is the spirit of the father, right? We've already acknowledged that the father is directly said to have raised Jesus from the dead. If the spirit of the father who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead, the father, will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you. So it is accomplished by the father through the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 2, 19 supplies the third member of the Trinity's involvement. When Jesus says, talking about the temple and everybody admiring it, and he says, destroy this temple and in three days, I will raise it up. And the disciples come to realize that he was talking about the temple of his body.

Kill this body and in three days, I will raise it up. With that, you can put John 10, 18. When Jesus is speaking of his physical life and he says, no one takes it from me, I lay it down of my own accord.

I have authority to lay it, my life down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my father, this authority I have received from my father. So the general answer is God did it.

And the specific answer is each member of the Trinity is involved in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why belabor this? Why emphasize this point? In the first place, we are given to understand each member of the Trinity's role in resurrection life, in specific passages of scripture. So what do we do with it? What is our application? I especially like Romans 8, 11.

If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, how fulsomely, how effectively, how energetically does the Holy Spirit dwell in us? Is it a meaningful presence? Is it an active presence? Is it a presence of which we are aware and on which we rely for insight, memory, application of the truth that we have learned over so much time from the word of God? This isn't just, are you down in the phone book as dwelling at an address? Does the Holy Spirit have me as one of the addresses where he dwells, but is he at home in my heart? Is he active and recognized? Is he functioning in all of his various roles? Is he activating my gift? Is he leading me into all truth? Is he comforting me and encouraging me when I need comfort and encouragement? Is he shining the light of the word on my specific path in a way that I am using? This is our opportunity for genuine fellowship of the 1 John variety. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, this is a reminder that the presence of the spirit is life providing. It is life inspiring.

It did it at creation. It does it in our new creation. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.

So how much eternal life factors into our moment by moment conscious walk through circumstances? How spiritually alive are we? It depends on the extent to which the indwelling of the Holy Spirit turns into filling. And I disagree with the notion that is sometimes put forward that the filling of the spirit is kind of like a light switch. And when you sin, the switch gets flipped off.

And when you confess, it gets flipped back on. It's not quite that black and white. I think we can grieve the Holy Spirit.

We can distance ourselves. We can stop listening when he speaks. And there is a lot of gradualness.

The spirit is still present and active when we sin. Otherwise, how would we receive conviction of our sin? The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, right? If he exits stage left, as soon as we commit a sin, I could go for weeks and never really acknowledge that sin because his convicting power left with him. I believe that one of the times when the Holy Spirit is most active is when we are in a state of disobedience and whom the Lord loves, he chastens and he disciplines every son that he receives.

And that discipline comes when we are not being obedient and we're not being faithful and we're not doing what we should. That's when the Holy Spirit, I think, is even more

active in the discipline, judgment, exhortation, and convicting role. He has a positive role when we're doing what we should and he has an active role in trying to bring us back to being where we should be when we fail.

So this jumping in and out, depending on whether or not we have sinned and confessed is rather mechanical and I don't think it matches observable reality or even the witness of scripture. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you. If the spirit dwells in you through that indwelling spirit, he will give life to your mortal bodies.

And that is something that can take place now. We can express and take advantage of and exploit eternal life because the spirit that is going to promote us to our resurrection body is already present and his life-giving ability is already here. And it is a tragedy to underestimate the importance of the gift of the spirit that we have, to not avail ourselves of it, to not think about it, to not pray about it.

You have no prayer life without that indwelling spirit. Prayers never get higher than the sound of your own voice, if not for him. So it is an important question.

And remember in the earlier chapters of John, starting in 14, when Jesus speaks of the role of the Holy Spirit who will come lead us into truth, be our comforter, and the one who has Jesus' words and keeps them, I and my father will come to him and make our home with him because he's the one that loves me. So Jesus speaks of the indwelling of these same three individuals. They give life to the resurrected Lord Jesus and they give life to us.

Life is not just a simple on-off switch, is it? You can be alive and not really living, or you can be enjoying life in its fullness, in its potential, in its opportunity, in its potential for accomplishment, to get things done. One of my favorite parts of the movie, Little Big Man, is when his Native American friend who is old and decides that he's ready to die is bemoaning the fact that when he was young, he had power and he could make things happen. And now that he's old, he feels like that power has left and he wishes and he aspires to his old power to be able to make things happen.

And so he lays down and he's gonna die, but he has been trying to make it rain. And as he's laying there trying to die, all of a sudden the raindrops start hitting him in the face and his eyelids begin to twitch and his face begins to move because he's getting rain in the face. And as we age and advance in years, our physical abilities diminish, our opportunities to be movers and shakers in the big wide world become constrained along with our horizons.

But the power to make things happen is with us in the person of the Holy Spirit and in the indwelling of the Father and the Son. And no matter what our physical limitations or

our physical constraints may be, we have the power to make things happen within us because of the indwelling of the members of the Trinity. And the power that brought Jesus back from the dead can energize our mortal bodies regardless of their condition, regardless of their limitations.

And it is a God thing and it is God's way. We may not even be aware of what God is doing in us and through us because of his indwelling presence. But if we cultivate that presence, the power to make things happen, those things that happen are in God's plan for God's purpose and reflecting God's glory.

And we should never underestimate it. Returning now to John chapter 20, let's look at this fascinating sight that Peter and John see when they enter the tomb. And because of the space that is dedicated to it in chapter 20, verses four through eight, there's been a lot of speculation and a lot of intense scrutiny and attention given to these burial clothes.

And I don't want to disappoint anyone who has heard one of these ideas, one of these speculations. But when it says here that the linen cloths are lying there in verse six, and the handkerchief that had been around his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. This is described in the King James and is translated a napkin, a napkin.

And this linen napkin has generated something of a urban legend. And it is this. I'll read you a typical expression of this idea.

John 20, verse seven tells us that the napkin that was placed over the face of Jesus was not just thrown aside like the grave clothes. The Bible takes an entire verse to tell us that the napkin was neatly folded and was placed at the head of that stony coffin. Is that significant? Absolutely.

In order to understand the significance of the folded napkin, you have to understand a little bit about Hebrew tradition of that day. The folded napkin had to do with master and servant, and every Jewish boy knew this tradition. When the servant set the dinner table for the master, he made sure that it was exactly the way the master wanted it.

The table was furnished perfectly. The servant would wait just out of sight until the master had finished eating, and the servant would not dare touch that table until the master was finished. If the master was done eating, he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers, his mouth, and clean his beard, and would wad up the napkin and toss it onto the table.

The servant would then know to clear the table, for in those days, the wadded napkin meant, I am done, I'm finished. But if the master got up from the table, folded his napkin, and laid it beside his plate, the servant would not dare touch the table because the servant knew that the folded napkin meant, I'm not finished yet. The folded napkin

meant, I am coming back.

He, the master, Jesus, is coming back. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Here are the problems. No account of this ever cites a biblical or rabbinical source. You can look in Edersheim, to your heart's content, you'll never find it there.

And it began with the King James translation of this word, sudarion, S-O-U-D-A-R-I-O-N, is the Greek word that is translated napkin in the King James. The problem is, when we think napkin, we think an item of table setting, but that is not what a sudarion is. This sudarion was a small cloth.

In the rabbinic literature, it is called a mithpakat, which we would, the most close modern equivalent is handkerchief. The word occurs three other places in the New Testament, and those are very enlightening. One is in Luke chapter 19, verse 20, when Jesus is telling the parable of the talents, as we, the parable of the minas, remember? And remember, he gives five to one servant, three to another, and one to the third.

And when he returns, the one with five says, I've made five more. The one with three says, I've made three more. And the one with one mina, what does he say? I knew you to be a hard man.

And so he had wrapped this mina in a sudarion and shoved it in his pocket. And he pulls out the sudarion, unwraps it, and says, here's your mina back. I don't want to be a part of your business.

And you remember how that goes. That's Luke 19, verse 20. The second usage is in Acts chapter 19, verse 12.

And you'll remember this, it's easy to forget, but there was a time when the apostle Paul was traveling in his missionary journeys, and sudaria, which is the plural of sudarion, handkerchiefs, pieces of cloth that were carried from Paul's body had the power to heal the sick and cast out demons. Just handkerchiefs that he had touched. They would take the handkerchief back, touch the person who was afflicted, and their affliction would be healed.

It's a sudarion, not a table napkin. It is a utility cloth, like a handkerchief. The third use outside of this context is by far the most interesting.

Can you remember where it is? Yeah, I didn't either. I'm just telling you, having done all four gospels now, I didn't remember this either, but it's really fascinating. If you're in John 20, turn back a few pages to chapter 11.

What do you remember about John chapter 11? Shortest verse in the Bible, right? What's he weeping about? Yeah, people not remembering what he said. People mistakenly say,

oh, how he loved him. And this is how Lazarus comes to be a candidate for the beloved disciple, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Oh, see how he loved him. That's not why Jesus is weeping at all. He is so disappointed that at this stage in his ministry, which is late, his disciples don't have the faith.

They're still not gonna have it when Jesus himself is in the tomb. So Jesus, verse five, loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. When he heard Lazarus was sick, he stayed two more days in the place where he was.

Verse seven, after this, he said to the disciples, let us go to Judea again. The disciples said, Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone you. Are you going there again? Jesus answered, are there not 12 hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of this world.

But if one walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him. How does Jesus know to go back to Judea? How does he know that he's not gonna be stoned to death? He knows the word of God. He is walking in the light of the word of God and the spirit of God.

His disciples fear to go back because there are Jews who are out to kill him. What is Jesus' response? What is the light? If you walk in the light, thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path, right? With it, Jesus sees his way. He not only knows that he can go to Judea, but he knows when to go to Judea.

And he waits two more days before he goes. Same lesson we have with Lazarus dead and laid in the tomb. How many days journey is it from where Jesus is back down to Judea? You know this from Jesus at the age of 12 when he's missing from the caravan that's returning to Galilee and they're gone two days.

They're not home yet. And they begin to miss Jesus. It's a couple of days journey and Jesus waits.

And when he does get down there, remember how long his sister says Lazarus has been in the tomb? This is now the fourth day. So Jesus is waiting until he is sure that Lazarus has succumbed to his sickness and is no longer among the living. So he said after this in verse 11, our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.

Jesus knows Lazarus has expired. If he's expired, his body has been prepared and he's in the tomb. This is another tomb scene.

Another death that is going to be followed by resurrection, resuscitation in this case. So the disciple said, Lord, if he sleeps, he will get well. He's no longer in the angst and the pain of his affliction.

If he's sleeping, his fever is broken or whatever else. Sleep is good. Sleep means he's going to get better.

Jesus spoke of his death. They thought he was speaking about taking rest in sleep. This is critical right here.

Jesus speaks and his followers, his dedicated visible disciples do not understand what he says. What a tragedy if we are declared followers of the Lord Jesus and we don't really understand what he says when he speaks. It's tragic.

The disciples didn't understand the Lord Jesus. He's talking directly to them. By this time, should they not have recognized that Jesus' words are freighted with spiritual meaning? He doesn't just talk about pleasantries.

It's not a shallow, casual conversation like you would have with everyone. If he's sleeping, why would Jesus feel the need to travel just to go wake him up? I mean, stop and think. Jesus is gonna take a two-day trip down to Bethany just to wake Lazarus up because he's taking a nap.

Stop and think. Reflect on the words of the Lord Jesus. Jesus has to tell them finally, plainly in verse 14, Lazarus is dead.

I'm glad for your sakes that I was not there so that you may believe. What you are going to see at the tomb is going to enable you to believe. John rushes into Jesus' tomb.

He sees and he believes. John starts his first epistle, that which our eyes have seen we declare unto you. He's gonna conclude the fourth gospel with Jesus did many things, but these are written.

I'm telling you what I saw so that you may believe. Faith is the objective. But when Mary and Martha are there at the tomb, Jesus has told Martha, I'm the resurrection and the life.

Mary comes in verse 32. In verse 34, Jesus says, where have you laid him? They said, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, see how he loved him. Could not this man who opened the eyes of the blind have kept this man from dying? Lord, couldn't you have spared me from this test? Jesus again, groaning in himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave and a stone lay against it.

How much of a foreshadowing is this? It's a cave tomb with a stone. Jesus said, take away the stone. Martha said, Lord, by this time, there is a stench.

He's been dead four days. Did I not say to you, if you would believe, you would see the glory of God. If you have faith, if you trust, you will see the glory of God.

They took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me. And I know that you always hear me.

But because of the people who are standing by, I say this, that they may believe that you sent me. He who had died, well, when he had said these things, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He who had died came out, how? Bound hand and foot with grave clothes.

And his face was wrapped with a sudarian. Sudarian. His face is wrapped with a sudarian, a handkerchief, a utility cloth.

Jesus said to them, loose him and let him go. So many similarities, but what is the key difference? Lazarus, it would be somewhat amusing if he had to sort of bunny hop because he is bound hand and foot with these grave clothes. Apparently he can move his feet enough to walk out, but Lazarus had to sit up.

He can't get himself out of these grave clothes. He's bound hand and foot and there's a cloth over his face. So Lazarus gets up and evidently has to kind of bump his way to the opening of the tomb.

So many different ways Jesus could have done this. When they rolled away the stone, somebody could potentially have gone in. Jesus could have gone in and touched him and raised him up.

Nobody wanted to go in because they thought by after four days, even the spices and such would not be doing their work so well. And so everyone is standing well back. And Lazarus shuffles, bound hand and foot with this cloth still over his head.

He can't see where he's going. There's a rag over his head. Jesus says, notice in verse 44, he came out bound hand and foot and his face was wrapped with a cloth.

It's wrapped, it's secured. They've got to unwrap this face cloth, which they do and release his hands and feet. He doesn't smell at all.

He's fresh as a daisy, probably the freshest human being ever and they let him go. In typical fashion, it's such an understated miracle, but when you picture it, you just think this had to be one of the most gobsmacking sites that's ever been seen. But this is your Sudarian.

Jesus has the very same head wrapping and the very same burial clothes that are binding his body, but nobody needs to release him from them. Why does John see them and believe? Because Jesus passed through the grave clothes. They did not bind him.

Not only the grave could not hold him, the grave clothes could not hold him. They hold

Lazarus, but they don't hold the Lord Jesus. But his head does not pass through the head cloth.

And that's why it is so fascinating that the Sudarion has been removed. Jesus passes through the grave clothes, but he can still handle and manipulate the head cloth. And he either picks it up or unties it from his own head.

And it is not folded, it is rolled. The word translated folded means rolled. It is the word used in Revelation when it says, the heavens are rolled up like a scroll, like a scroll, rolled.

It's rolled up and set aside. Jesus rolls up the head cloth. And it tells you two things.

He is eminent and he is transcendent. He can touch things that he wants to touch. He's going to pick up a fish and a honeycomb and eat them in their presence, but he can pass through doors and walls.

He can appear and disappear. He has supernatural power to transparently pass through the grave clothes if he so desires. He can take that head cloth and roll it up.

And one would think that they have seen the Lord Jesus roll up a cloth in a particular fashion many times. These cloths were used for all kinds of things. Some people have speculated that it was a prayer shawl, a head covering that was used to cover the head in prayer or uncover the head for prayer or whatever.

And that when you weren't using one of these, if you were going to sit down to a meal, you might roll it up and set it aside to keep it neat and unwrinkled. But the presence of these linen burial clothes and this sudarion laying by itself, when John sees it, he knows two things. Jesus has been raised by the power of God and he is under his own steam and doing his own thing.

He hasn't been, if the body were gonna be stolen, the biggest contra evidence to the body was stolen theory, if somebody was gonna steal the body, they wouldn't take time to take all of the grave clothes off and roll them up carefully and lay them in place. They would take the body wrappings and all and hiko out of there as fast as they can. The neatness and the arrangement of these clothes says, Jesus arose and left the tomb under his own power in his own time, in his own way.

He wasn't hurried. He wasn't carried away by angels or men or anybody else. He sat there, probably the sealed tomb effused with a glorious light and took that head covering either off of his face or from where it had lain and rolled it up and laid it in place for the disciples to see.

The angel says, come look at the place where he lay. There are clues here. If you're willing to take time to observe them and interpret them and apply them.

This is what we should do with all of the word of God. Challenging times, shocking times, long duration testing times. It is the word of God that is the light for our paths.

It is the Holy Spirit who shines that light, who energizes it and makes it real and pertinent. How real is the presence of the Holy Spirit? If the indwelling spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is active, he is going to bring life to our mortal bodies. Not just when we are raised at the rapture, but now.

Life, even in the midst of decay and decline, even in the midst of physical limitation, we're not really limited because it is the power of God. And that is the reason we're here. The general answer, why are we here? Well, to reflect the glory of God.

Well, you wanna just talk about the glory of God, or do you want to be a living example and a place where the glory of God happens and makes things happen? That's what happened at the tomb. Well, we'll pick up and conclude our study of Matthew 28. We just have a short paragraph left and it will conclude our gospel study next week, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the wonderful truth of your word. Thank you for the gift, the presence, and the power of your Holy Spirit within us and among us. We pray that as we reflect on these wonderful truths from your word, that the Holy Spirit will find us teachable and amenable, those who can hear it, receive it, understand it, believe it, and make use of it so that your power will be visible, manifest, and evident in our lives, both now and in the ages to come.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.