

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 27:62-66 | Fearing the Resurrection
Sunday June 14, 2026

WELCOME:

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

REVIEW:

We continue our verse-by-verse exposition of Matthew's Gospel this morning.

Last time, we examined the burial of Jesus.

Jesus' burial is not just a minor detail in the Gospel story, but a crucial part of God's redemptive plan for His elect.

The burial itself proves that Jesus really died and points to a real resurrection.

The burial of Jesus is so important that it is included in both the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

The creeds, confessions, and catechisms are so important to our Christian faith.

These tools summarize what we believe and why we believe it.

That's why we have them in the foyer for you, because they help us remember our doctrine and teach it to others.

Last time, I closed by encouraging you to embrace Jesus' burial as part of the fullness of the Gospel.

What's the Gospel? 3 main parts:

Jesus *died*, was *buried*, and was *resurrected*.

Many people say that Jesus died for your sins—true—but Jesus is not a martyr.

He's God who was resurrected from the dead.

Because of who Jesus is (God in the flesh) and what Jesus did (paid the price for sins), there is now an invitation for you to believe the Gospel.

Finally, I warned about your beliefs to two extremes:

1. *Little Jesus Syndrome* (good person, do good things = works-based approach).
2. *Big Sinner Syndrome* (Yes, I'm saved, but Jesus doesn't really like me that much).

Both are lies.

I hope you had time to read and reread that passage and ponder those reflection questions over the past week, because Jesus' burial prepares us for today.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we're looking at the last section in Matthew 27.

What's unique about today's passage is that Matthew is the only Gospel writer who includes this narrative.

Today's passage is about the religious leaders fearing the resurrection and going to Pilate, requesting soldiers to guard the tomb.

In this passage, we'll see:

1. How wicked religious men go to great lengths to cover up the truth and concoct a lie.
2. How religious people are doing similar things today.

3. How today's lies impact your faith, attitude, and even your livelihood.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 27:62—*The next day, which followed the preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate*

Matthew 27:63—*and said, "Sir, we remember that while this deceiver was still alive he said, 'After three days I will rise again.'*

Matthew 27:64—*So give orders that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come, steal him, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."*

Matthew 27:65—*"You have a guard of soldiers," Pilate told them. "Go and make it as secure as you know how."*

Matthew 27:66—*They went and secured the tomb by setting a seal on the stone and placing the guards.*

The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith 1.1 (Truths in which we confess)

"The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.

Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are absolutely necessary, because God's former ways of revealing His will to His people have now ceased."

PRAY:

Your word is completely pure, and your servant loves it. (Psalm 119:140)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 27:57—*When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph came, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.*

Matthew 27:58—*He approached Pilate and asked for Jesus's body. Then Pilate ordered that it be released.*

Matthew 27:59—*So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean, fine linen,*

Matthew 27:60—*and placed it in his new tomb, which he had cut into the rock. He left after rolling a great stone against the entrance of the tomb.*

Matthew 27:61—*Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were seated there, facing the tomb.*

Matthew 27:62—*The next day, which followed the preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate*

Right from the start, we see a monumental problem.

Backup: Why was Joseph of Arimathea in such a hurry to get Jesus buried?

Answer: Because the Sabbath day/day of rest (“shabbat”) was only a few hours away.

Jesus died on Friday afternoon around 3:00pm, and the Sabbath began at sunset.

Matthew 27:62—*The next day, which followed the preparation day,*

Matt goes out of his way to tell us that the Jewish Leaders are working on the Sabbath.

In other words, they profane God’s holy day set apart for rest.

Resting on the Sabbath comes in at number 4 on God's top Ten—the Ten Commandments.

This is the day the Lord has commanded that they keep holy.

Exodus 20:8—*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy:*

Exodus 20:9—*You are to labor six days and do all your work,*

Exodus 20:10—*but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. You must not do any work*

God is so serious about His day of rest, He says it again...

Exodus 31:12—*The Lord said to Moses,*

Exodus 31:13—*"Tell the Israelites: You must observe my Sabbaths, for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, so that you will know that I am the Lord who consecrates you.*

Exodus 31:14—*Observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. Whoever profanes it must be put to death. If anyone does work on it, that person must be cut off from his people.*

Exodus 31:15—*Work may be done for six days, but on the seventh day there must be a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord. Anyone who does work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.*

Exodus 31:16—*The Israelites must observe the Sabbath, celebrating it throughout their generations as a permanent covenant.*

Exodus 31:17—*It is a sign forever between me and the Israelites, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, but on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.*"

Regardless of what God says, and regardless of the punishment involved— the religious establishment of Israel completely ignores God and His commands.

This is a great example of people using Scripture to serve their own purposes. Ex:

Matthew 12:1—*At that time Jesus passed through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick and eat some heads of grain.*

Matthew 12:2—*When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "See, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."*

Not lawful? Do you know what else is not lawful?

What about murdering the Son of God and then working and scheming on the Sabbath day during Passover to procure your lies?

Wow! Talk about religious hypocrisy at its worst.

BTW, this commandment of Sabbath rest still holds true for us today.

Historically, that's why the Reformers began their sabbath day with a church service and also ended their Sabbath day with a church service.

Sunday was specifically set apart for worship and rest.

Presently, if we ignore this command, there will come a time when God will put us physically on our backs— to the point where there is nothing we can do but rest.

We are to *be still and know that God is God*—a better translation is “*stop fighting and know that I’m God.*” (Psam 46:10)

God will not be mocked, and He will get those Sabbath days back.

Matthew 27:62—the *chief priests* and the *Pharisees* gathered before Pilate

These two religious groups are unlikely partners—this is like putting republicans and democrats in the same room to solve world peace.

However, they are united here to accomplish the common goal of keeping Jesus dead, buried, and forgotten.

The chief priests were mostly Sadducees—meaning they didn’t believe in any resurrection.

The chief priests mostly ignored Jesus because they didn’t see Him as a threat until the resurrection of Lazarus.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, did believe in the resurrection but were hyper-vigilant in following their man-centered traditions.

And since Jesus broke every one of those traditions, the Pharisees didn’t ignore Jesus.

You would think that now that Jesus is dead, they would forget about Him, but these men don’t—they can’t stop thinking about Him.

Matthew 27:62—... gathered before Pilate

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.

At this point, what’s Pilate thinking?

He must have thought he was done with the case—“The King of the Jews.”

First, Pilate did what they wanted—crucifying Jesus.

Second, Pilate did what Joseph of Arimathea wanted—giving him Jesus body.

Now, for the third time, these Jewish people show up at Pilate’s door!

These irritating Jewish leaders are like pesky flies.

Matthew 27:63—and said, “Sir, we remember...

They “remember.” What do they remember?

- How Jesus healed the sick.
- Gave sight to the blind.
- Gave sound to the deaf.
- Cleansed lepers.
- Fed 20,000 people from a boy’s sack lunch!

Most amazing of all, just a few days prior—they remember that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the grave.

Nobody could deny any of Jesus’ miracles.

So they had to come up with a different way to discredit Jesus—and they pulled the devil card.

They said that Jesus performs signs, miracles, and wonders because he’s empowered by the devil. (Matt. 12:24)

We see their hatred in their statement.

Notice the distancing language of the religious leaders—“this deceiver.”

They hate Jesus so much that they can't even say His holy name.

Matthew 27:63— *that while this deceiver was still alive he said, 'After three days I will rise again.'*

You know that the religious leaders talked about this prophecy a lot.

Matthew 12:38—*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you."*

Matthew 12:39—*He answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation demands a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."*

Matthew 12:40—*For as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish, three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.*

The religious leaders rightly understood what Jesus prophesied.

Within that conversation, somebody had to ask: *Is it possible? What if it's true?*

So their thinking goes like this:

If Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, and if Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead— does Jesus have the power to raise Himself from the dead?

It's a legitimate question.

If Jesus is resurrected, it proves that He really is the Messiah—just like He said He was.

That would mean that Jesus was right, and they are wrong—dead wrong.

It's interesting that the religious leaders didn't take *Jesus* seriously, but they took this *prediction* seriously.

So they now tell Pilate what he should do to fix their problem.

Matthew 27:64—*So give orders that the tomb be made secure until the third day.*

People make decisions based on their motives and feelings.

Their motives are to protect their jobs—we've seen that throughout the Gospel.

But how are they feeling? Answer: Fearful.

They fear the resurrection.

It's out of fear that these men tell Pilate what he should do.

So with this request, I'm guessing Pilate is both very irritated and highly amused at the same time.

Matthew doesn't provide the full conversation, but I'm guessing the whole thing was quite entertaining.

Pilate: *Let me get this straight, you want me to order soldiers to protect one dead man in a tomb?*

Matthew 27:64—*Otherwise, his disciples may come, steal him, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,'*

Notice their second fear—Jesus' Disciples.

These guys are a bunch of religious scardy cats and worry warts!

They fear two things:

1. Jesus' resurrection
2. Jesus' Disciples.

They completely misjudged the Disciples.

That's what fear does—fear gives power to what's powerless.

There's no reason to fear Jesus' Disciples.

All the Disciples are in hiding! They're fearing for their own lives.

The truth is that the religious leaders took Jesus' words about resurrection more seriously than the Disciples did!

Deep down, the religious leaders knew that if Jesus rose from the dead, everything in their lives would have to change—especially for them.

And they are unwilling to change.

KEYPOINT 1:

Although the Jewish leaders won't believe in Jesus' resurrection, they still fear the resurrection.

We all know that fear causes people to do irrational things.

If we don't know how to control our thought life—fear will control us.

Fear convinces us of the worst possible outcome imaginable.

That's why Scripture says:

2 Corinthians 10:5—and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Romans 12:2— *Do not be conformed to this age,*

As Christians, we are not to fear the world, the future, or death.

Romans 12:2—*but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.*

If we don't take our thoughts captive to Christ— within seconds, we've got scenarios, plans, and more backup scenarios in place—all based on what?

Nothing but the fears running unchecked in our minds.

Here's one of their scenarios...

Matthew 27:64—*Otherwise, his disciples may come, steal him,*

Matthew addresses the number-one conspiracy theory about the resurrection.

This theory is as old as it is improbable.

First, stealing Jesus' body and performing some grand hoax is not even on the Disciple's radar.

They fled at Jesus' arrest and were terrified by His crucifixion.

Second, the Disciples could never overpower Roman soldiers.

These guys are fishermen! Matthew used to crunch numbers for the IRS!

What's Matt going to do to a marine? Beat him with a spreadsheet?!

They're not soldiers—Peter proved that in the Garden of Gethsemane, trying to protect Jesus.

Third, if the Disciples did steal the body, why would they undress Him first?
Why would they leave a hundred pounds of burial clothes in the tomb?

Why would they all die for a lie?

Here's the irony—if the disciples wanted to steal the body, they could have stolen it already when Joe and Nic were taking Jesus' body off the cross.

KEYPOINT: 2

Stealing the body doesn't prove the resurrection—the resurrected Christ proves the resurrection.

Matthew 27:64—*and the last deception will be worse than the first."*

From their viewpoint, the Jewish leaders are protecting themselves and the people from deception.

From Matthew's perspective, they are deceiving themselves and projecting their fear onto Pilate.

If the crowds hailed Jesus as King when He arrived in Jerusalem, think about the frenzy this city would go into if they believed He's been resurrected! Then you will really have an uprising on your hands.

It's amazing how quickly things can spiral out of control.

KEYPOINT 3:

The ongoing conspiracy shows the lengths to which unbelief will go.

So what's Pilate do?

Matthew 27:65—"You have a guard of soldiers," Pilate told them.

This is a tricky verse. How does Pilate say it?

“You have a guard,”—as in you have your own guard of soldiers—the Temple guards.

“You have a guard,”—as in Pilate giving his own guard of soldiers.

While it’s true that the Temple guard normally didn’t have any authority outside the Temple area, this is not a normal time.

Most movies show Roman Soldiers guarding the tomb, but I have a hard time believing that Pilate will waste his men and resources on this request.

It’s also interesting that when the soldiers were bribed to lie in chapter 28, they didn’t go to Pilate; they went to the chief priests, suggesting that they were Temple guards rather than Roman soldiers.

Matthew 27:65—“*Go and make it as secure as you know how.*”

Once again, can’t you see Pilate rolling his eyes?

Can you hear the sarcasm dripping from his lips?

In other words, *You were afraid of this man when he was alive; now he is dead, and you are still afraid! By all means, secure the tomb as tightly as possible.*

What were they to do? How did they make the tomb secure? They did what they could.

Matthew 27:66—*They went and secured the tomb by setting a seal on the stone*

They placed a seal upon the entrance to the tomb.

The seal served as a warning that the tomb was under Roman protection.

Anyone who tampered with the rope or touched the stone would be executed.

They used rope and hot wax as a security device.

If someone/group of people could somehow 1) overpower the soldiers and 2) move the stone—the movement would break the seal and prove that it's been tampered with.

On the other hand, if the stone was not moved, there could be no rumor of theft.

So they placed a seal...

Matthew 27:66— *and placing the guards.*

“A guard” consists of four soldiers.

To prevent anyone from sleeping on the job, these four soldiers were divided into two surveillance teams.

Every three hours, the teams rotated—so nobody's getting into that tomb to steal the body.

So...the chief priests and Pharisees got what they wanted—again.

In their minds, the stone was sealed, the soldiers were in place—the problem was solved.

They had tied up any loose ends and were proactive against those pesky Disciples.

But in God's providence, the religious leaders did more than they knew.

They ensured that Jesus' Disciples couldn't steal the body.

KEYPOINT 4:

God uses their wicked plan to protect the truth they hated.

There is a delicious irony here.

The very people trying to stop the resurrection end up supporting it!

Psalm 7:15— *He dug a pit and hollowed it out, but fell into the hole he had made.*

Psalm 7:16— *His trouble comes back on his own head; his own violence comes down on top of his head.*

Proverbs 26:27— *The one who digs a pit will fall into it, and whoever rolls a stone—it will come back on him.*

The soldiers and the seal become the very evidence that something supernatural is about to happen.

- The stone was sealed—check!
- The guards are in place—check!
- The watch continues to tick away—check!

But Sunday's "a-comin'."

APPLICATION:

There are many ways to apply this passage to our lives personally.

God has revealed:

1. The importance of His Sabbath day.
2. How fear can control your decisions if you don't renew your minds and take your thoughts to obey Christ.
3. Sovereignty of God.

KP: God uses the plans of the wicked to protect the truth they hated.

In other words, no human scheme can stop the reality of the resurrection.

Now, let's apply that thought and this passage to the church today.

What human schemes—what lies are being concocted — that are trying to stop the reality of the Gospel.

In other words, how are religious people covering up the truth and concocting lies in the church today?

As I look at the landscape of the American church, it's not only one lie that's being concocted—but a series of lies.

1. Umbrella of Teaching Partial Truths.

The American Church today focuses on how much God loves you and has sent His son to die (partial truth) so that you can be happy, healthy, and wealthy (outright lie).

It's a partial truth because there is no teaching on sin, sanctification, or suffering.

Just as the Pharisees were teaching their own doctrine and traditions—so do many churches today.

I had a church leader in town tell me they don't talk about sin— which was evident because their store was bigger than the sanctuary.

If we don't know the fullness of the Gospel—depravity of our sin, we don't have a clue about God's holiness.

BTW, God does care about your happiness, but he cares way more about your *holiness*.

Your holiness comes through the painful reality of being sanctified *through suffering*.

The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ demands a response.

We can act like the religious leaders did—refusing to believe it because if it's true—then *everything* changes. Like what?

- Our time/schedule/Sabbath days
- Our entertainment choices
- The way we work/the way that we play
- The way that we talk to people
- The way that we love our spouse, kids, and family.
- The way that we treat strangers
- The way that we use my spiritual gifts
- Our finances.
- The way that we spend time in retirement.

Why does everything change?

Because your life is not your own.

The Lord Jesus Christ bought you with a price.

How do today's lies (teaching partial truths) impact your faith, attitude, and even your livelihood?

Faith: Partial truths make it sound as if you can have Jesus without changing.

Attitude: Partial truths make you *feel good* about your sin— as you walk the wide road to hell.

Livelihood: False teachers peddling partial truths need a way to fund their own kingdom.

Isn't it interesting that just as the chief priests and Pharisees used religion to protect their own jobs and build their own kingdom—

A similar thing is happening today in the way false teachers present the Gospel to build their own kingdom.

Be very careful who you let into your home to teach the Bible.

1. What are the three main parts of the Gospel?

- A. Jesus lived, taught, and performed miracles
- B. Jesus died, was buried, and was resurrected
- C. Jesus died, ascended, and will return
- D. Jesus was born, lived, and died

Answer: B

2. How does the sermon describe people who say only, “Jesus died for your sins”?

- A. Completely accurate
- B. Misleading, because they ignore His teachings
- C. Incomplete, because Jesus is not a martyr but God resurrected from the dead
- D. Only relevant for non-Jews

Answer: C

3. What two incorrect “syndromes” about belief did the previous sermon warn against?

- A. Legalism Syndrome and License Syndrome
- B. Pharisee Syndrome and Sadducee Syndrome
- C. Little Faith Syndrome and Great Faith Syndrome
- D. Little Jesus Syndrome and Big Sinner Syndrome

Answer: D

4. What is unique about Matthew 27:62–66 among the four Gospels, according to the sermon?

- A. It is the only place where Pilate appears
- B. It is the only passage that records the veil of the temple tearing
- C. It is the only Gospel account that includes the religious leaders asking for a guard at the tomb
- D. It is the only passage that mentions Joseph of Arimathea

Answer: C

5. Why was Joseph of Arimathea in a hurry to bury Jesus?

- A. A storm was coming
- B. The Sabbath was only a few hours away

- C. Pilate ordered a quick burial
- D. The disciples demanded it

Answer: B

6. What main sin of the religious leaders does Matthew highlight by saying “the next day, which followed the preparation day”?

- A. Their failure to pay taxes
- B. Their neglect of tithing
- C. Their profaning of the Sabbath by working on it
- D. Their refusal to attend synagogue

Answer: C

7. How does the sermon describe the relationship between the chief priests and the Pharisees in this passage?

- A. Natural allies who always agreed
- B. Political rivals who refused to work together
- C. Unlikely partners, like putting republicans and democrats in the same room
- D. A teacher–student relationship

Answer: C

8. What do the religious leaders call Jesus when they speak to Pilate?

- A. “This teacher”
- B. “This deceiver”
- C. “This rebel”
- D. “This prophet”

Answer: B

9. According to the sermon, what are the two main fears driving the religious leaders’ request to Pilate?

- A. Fear of Rome and fear of the crowds
- B. Fear of losing money and fear of the temple being destroyed

- C. Fear of Jesus' resurrection and fear of Jesus' disciples
- D. Fear of Herod and fear of Pilate

Answer: C

10. What ironic result of the religious leaders' actions does the sermon highlight in Keypoint 4?

- A. They accidentally free Barabbas again
- B. They convert many Roman soldiers
- C. They ensure the tomb will never be found
- D. God uses their wicked plan (guards and seal) to protect the very truth of the resurrection they hate

Answer: D

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Monday – The Gospel & the Burial of Jesus

1. If the Gospel is that Jesus died, was buried, and was resurrected, which of those three do you tend to focus on most, and which do you tend to neglect? Why?
2. How does Jesus' burial strengthen your confidence that His death was real and His resurrection historical, not just symbolic?
3. Where have you slipped into thinking of Jesus more like a "martyr" rather than the Messiah/Savior who conquered death for you?

Tuesday – Creeds, Confessions, and Truth

1. How have creeds, confessions, or catechisms (if at all) helped you understand what you believe and why you believe it?
2. Are there areas of your faith where your convictions are vague or second-hand (borrowed from others) rather than rooted in Scripture and sound doctrine?
3. What is one concrete step you could take this week to deepen your grasp of biblical doctrine (e.g., reading a confession, studying a catechism, or memorizing a verse)?

Wednesday – Sabbath Rest & Religious Hypocrisy

1. In what ways do you see yourself "working" when God is calling you to rest—physically, emotionally, or spiritually?
2. Where might there be a gap between what you say you believe (like honoring the Lord's Day) and how you actually live?
3. If God "got your Sabbath days back" today, what might He have to remove or interrupt in your schedule to make you lie down and rest in Him?

Thursday – Fear, Control, and the Mind

1. When fear grips you, what kinds of worst-case scenarios does your mind create, and how quickly does that spiral happen?

2. What would it look like, very practically, to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5) in one specific area of fear you’re facing right now?
3. How is God inviting you to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2) instead of being conformed to the anxious patterns of this world?

Friday – The Resurrection & God’s Ironic Providence

1. The religious leaders feared the resurrection and tried to prevent it, yet God used their plan (guards and seal) to confirm it. Where have you seen God turn opposition or evil intent into something that actually strengthens your faith?
2. If the resurrection is true (and it is), what specific area of your life must change—habits, priorities, relationships, or attitudes—because Jesus is alive?
3. How can you live this weekend more consciously in light of the resurrection—with hope, courage, and joy rooted in the risen Christ?

Main Keypoint of the Sermon:

Because Jesus truly died, was buried, and rose again, no human scheme can stop or disprove the resurrection—God even uses the wicked, fearful plans of unbelievers (the seal, the guards, the conspiracy) to *protect and confirm* the truth they hate.

In other words, the religious leaders feared the resurrection and tried to prevent it, but their efforts only served *God’s providential purpose* to make the reality of the resurrection even clearer and more secure for our faith.

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