

As Secure as You Know How

by David Guzik

The chief priests and Pharisees tried to secure the tomb of Jesus, but it was ultimately futile against the resurrection power of Jesus.

Duration: 32:29

Scripture: Matthew 27:62 - 28:10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-18, Acts 2:24, Romans 6:4

Topics: "Jesus Resurrection", "Easter Victory"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the measures taken to secure Jesus' tomb after his crucifixion. The tomb was secured with a stone, which was rolled across the entrance. Additionally, a seal was placed on the stone to ensure it was not tampered with. A detachment of soldiers, equipped with weapons and armor, was also stationed at the tomb to guard it. The speaker emphasizes that these security measures were ultimately futile, as Jesus' resurrection proved to be a powerful and glorious event, overcoming the stone, seal, and soldiers.

Transcript

Let's open our Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 27. I think you'll want to follow along in a Bible because you'll notice that we're pointing out certain words and phrases as we make our way through the scriptures. Believe that every word in the Bible was inspired and motivated by God and he has something to say to us precious in every word.

Matthew chapter 27 beginning at verse 62 On the next day, which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together to Pilate Saying sir, we remember while he was still alive how that deceiver said after three days I will rise therefore a command that the tomb be made secure until the third day lest his disciples come by night and Steal him away and say to the people he is risen from the dead So the last deception will be worse than the first Pilate said to them you have a guard go your way make it as secure as you know how So they went and made the tomb secure sealing the stone setting the guard It's natural for us to focus at this time of the year upon what happened on Good Friday That day when Jesus was crucified When he was beaten and mocked and tortured and suffered for the sins of the whole world it's very natural for our minds and our thoughts to gravitate towards that Good Friday and Then also on a day like today.

We're very naturally Magnetically drawn to consider what happened on Sunday that first Sunday when the women first came to the tomb to Take care of the body of Jesus and to give it a more proper burial and

when they came and discovered that that door of the tomb was rolled away and that the body of Jesus was gone and then the news spread about to the disciples and to other women and Angels told everybody about it and Mary had that precious meeting with Jesus in the garden And she supposed him to be the gardener and I could go on and on about all that It's just fascinating to see what happened on that Sunday You have Friday and you have Sunday, but I think we're missing something aren't we what about Saturday?

What happened on Saturday? I? Want you to notice that something very important in God's plan of redemption happened on the Saturday after Jesus was crucified But before he rose from the dead on Sunday God never wastes any time Sometimes it appears to us that he does but that's just a fault in our perception God knew exactly what he was doing with that Saturday and What he did with that Saturday is contained for us in the text that I just read to you in Matthew chapter 27 beginning at verse 62 take a look at it again with me Please we read on the next day which followed the day of preparation That was the day after Jesus's crucifixion now get the picture in your mind here We're dealing with as verse 62 says the chief priests and the Pharisee These were men who just had a pretty good day the day before because their mortal enemy Jesus of Nazareth was now out of the way He'd been executed crucified Now Jesus and that pesky band of followers that he had that was stirring up all this trouble this man who had stood in such boldness against the scribes and the Pharisees on the temple mountain confronted them straight away with their sin and Exposed their corruption.

He's out of the way now They were probably getting their shoulders dislocated by patting themselves on the back for what a clever job They did in railroading Jesus in this pile and trial before Pilate and sending him off to crucifixion They went home after an afternoon of mocking the Son of God on the cross and they thought this has been a good day We've had a good time here.

We've eliminated an enemy But I don't think they slept very well that night. I Almost read this you get the feeling that these men are beyond conscience. I think it was fear I think that what troubled them was the fear that they hadn't quite stamped out this Jesus problem That they remembered something.

Maybe they had heard of them him say it himself because Jesus said these things publicly Maybe they had heard it secondhand, but they remembered that Jesus had said Destroy this temple and in three days, I'll raise it again I'll rise again the third day and I can just see these chief priests these Pharisees waking up in the middle of night haunted by That thought what way that he said he would rise again We've got to do something about that The way I like to imagine it in my mind is that they all sort of Independently came to this knowledge through a sleepless night and in the morning They all woke up as early as they couldn't got together with one another and said we've got to do something about this This is a problem. Well, what do you think we should do? Well, we could set our own guard around the the tomb Well, no our own guards are only good up at the temple precincts This tomb isn't at the temple precincts and besides we need some meaner some tougher guards Let's see a pilot will send a detachment of guards to secure that tomb to keep that fella from rising from the dead That's what happened verse 62 on the next day which followed the day of preparation the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together to pilot Here it is Saturday the day after the crucifixion the day before the resurrection And they're gathered there before pilot and they say verse 63 saying sir We remember while he was still alive how that deceiver said after three days. I will rise Kind of hurts doesn't it hurts for two reasons it hurts To see these men supposedly religious men Calling our Lord and Savior a deceiver I don't like to hear that.

I Don't like to hear anybody call my Lord my Savior a deceiver, but that's what they called him and What also hurts is not just that they called Jesus a deceiver, but they called pilot, sir Did you notice that they give him a title of respect and honor the previous day? They were mocking and literally spitting on the Son of God yet They come to this Roman official who had the blood of many Jewish people on his hands and they come to him and they call him sir Because really they're a lot more like pilot than they are like the Son of God So here they are before this audience with pilot and say sir We remember that while he was still alive how that deceiver said after three days I will rise now I think there's a couple more interesting things there in verse 63 first of all, they make it very plain that Jesus is dead Did you notice that they say? while he was still alive There is not a shred of doubt in the minds of those chief priests and Pharisees The Jesus Christ is in fact dead at the time. They're speaking to pilot. They might say well isn't doesn't everybody know that? No, not everybody does know that Some people think that you explain the resurrection by saying that Jesus never really died That he just fainted on the cross That he just swooned on the cross Years ago a man wrote a book that turned out to be a pretty big seller called the Passover plot And this was his theory that Jesus never really died on the cross He just swooned on the cross and sometimes they call it the swoon theory.

I Read one time in a Christian magazine a man who wrote in a letter to the editor and he said dear editor Our preachers said that on Easter Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed him back to health. What do you think? Sincerely bill will bewildered The editor wrote back and said dear bewildered Beat your preacher with a cat of nine tails with 39 heavy strokes Nail him to a cross hang him in the Sun for six hours run a spear through his heart Embalm him put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours and see what happens Well, you don't believe that Jesus just swooned on the cross, do you Of course, you don't and might I say the chief priests and the Pharisees agree with you completely They knew that Jesus died on the cross that he didn't just faint or swoon But they remembered something they remembered if you notice here at verse 63 that Jesus said after Three days I will rise now when I read that that also gets me a little annoyed Makes me see just how corrupt these men were because at the trial of Jesus They falsely accused Jesus and brought forth false witnesses to accuse Jesus of saying that he was some kind of Terrorist who was going to destroy the temple building and raise it again in three days And that was one of their big accusations against Jesus. Oh, you see he's a terrorist.

He says you're gonna blow up the temple All the while they knew that Jesus never meant the physical temple They knew that he meant the temple of his body, but they wouldn't admit it So they concealed their knowledge of this in their false accusation at the trial of Jesus But now they come up and when it's convenient for them to admit it, they admit it He said that he would rise again on the third day And then they go on and say verse 63 verse 64 Pardon me therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day lest his Disciples come by night and steal him away and say to the people he's risen from the dead So the last deception would be worse than the first Now do you think that this is what the chief priests and the Pharisees were really afraid of? Do you think they were really afraid of the disciples coming and stealing the body of Jesus the dead? Lifeless body of Jesus and then going around telling everybody that he's really alive. I don't believe that for a moment I'll give you two reasons why I don't believe it. First of all, I Believe that the chief priests and the Pharisees knew very well that the disciples were Terrified at this moment.

They were present at the scene of Jesus's crucifixion Did they see the disciples gathered around the cross saying we're here for you Jesus were your men We're going to carry on your work, even though you looks like you're going they didn't say any of that They had their informants. They had their intelligence sources

They knew that the disciples weren't concerned about nobly carrying on the work of Jesus. The disciples were concerned about saving their own skins. They thought Jesus is crucified.

We might be next we better better go into hiding. They knew this. They knew that the disciples were very unlikely candidates to come and do some kind of SWAT team commando raid on the tomb and steal away the body of Jesus. But it's also proven that they didn't really believe this and what they say in verse 64. They're afraid that the disciples will steal the body of Jesus and then run around and tell everybody you see he's risen. Now why I don't buy that is because that is so easily refuted. What if you were one of these chief priests or Pharisees and the disciples ran around saying Jesus is risen. What would you say? You'd say where is he? Show me and if all you had was a lifeless body and an empty tomb you couldn't show them the resurrected Jesus. And so it would be a very easy lie to expose. I don't think that the chief priests and the Pharisees were worried in the slightest about the disciples stealing Jesus's body. They were worried about the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. They knew that this man was more than a man and they thought that somehow if they took the best measures they could they could shut him up in the tomb that they could break the power. They thought well we gave him a good wounding there at the crucifixion and we're gonna make sure that he stays down. By setting a guard by setting a seal around that tomb. He's not gonna get up.

He's not gonna hurt us again. They really thought that they could do before I move on and consider another point. Let me say that it's sad that the chief priests and the Pharisees were afraid of the resurrection power of Jesus. But at least they believed it. What can you say of the disciples at this point? They didn't even believe it. They were more surprised than the chief priests and the Pharisees when Jesus rose from the dead. At least when Jesus rose from the dead the chief priests and Pharisees said I knew it. I knew it. We should have set a bigger guard around that tomb. Of course, it wouldn't have made any difference, but at least they could say we were expecting this the disciples. They didn't even believe it when the women came back with the first news from the tomb. Loosely translated they looked at the women said you're nuts. He couldn't have rose from the dead. What are you talking about? The disciples didn't believe it, but the chief priests and the Pharisees did. Well, look at what happened next the enemies of Jesus made the tomb of Jesus as secure as they knew. How verse 65 says so. Pilate said to them you have a guard go your way make it as secure as you know how. Now they had their means of making things secure in that day and they said we're going to do the best we can. We're going to do everything we can to make this a secure place a secure site. Why because Pilate had given them the permission first he says you have a guard go ahead take a detachment of Roman soldiers. They're yours.

That's your disposal. But then Pilate added something. He said at the end of verse 65 make it as secure as you know how. Again, I wish I was there. I wish I could have heard the tone of voice that Pilate used. I wish I could have seen the expression on his face. The feeling I get from it is that what Pilate is doing here is he's daring them. Go ahead. You know Pilate had heard the reports. Pilate felt the earthquake that shook the ground when the Son of God was on the cross. Pilate saw the supernatural darkness that enveloped the earth when Jesus hung on the cross. Pilate heard from one of his centurions who supervised the crucifixion that that centurion was so struck by what he saw that he said Surely this man is the Son of God. Pilate heard the reports. He knew that there was something different. He himself had his own dramatic encounter with Jesus the day before it's as if Pilate was looking at Jesus and saying If this man's going to rise from the dead, there's nothing you can do about it.

Give it your best shot. Go ahead. Make it as as secure as you know, how? Pilate for his own sake was unconcerned about setting a guard. What did he care? Why would he care about the tomb of a convicted

criminal? But the Jewish leaders were interested in making sure that that tomb was secure So they did the best they could make it as secure as you know, how I don't know if you've Encountered this truth in your life before how deeply it's impressed on your heart But can I tell you that you can make something as secure as you know, how and it's still not very secure You can have a lot of money in the bank and think that that makes you secure. You're as secure as you know How you're not secure You can have a relationship that you think meets all your needs makes you secure.

You're fine. You're not secure You can have a career that makes you think oh, this is great. Everything's wonderful.

Everything's fine. I have a security this you're not secure The money can be gone. The relationship can sour your career can end abruptly the resurrection power of Jesus That's security.

That's power and they could make it as secure as they knew how but it wouldn't make any difference Now they had specific means that they were going to use to make it secure in our modern technological age We do something different, you know, we would say, okay Well the door shut, you know where the tomb is and then you'll put explosive booby traps all around and then you know Those funny laser beam things, you know that they have in all the movies that guards I don't know if they really have they have them in all the movies I don't have in real life, you know make all this elaborate closed-circuit TV computer surveillance We'll make it as secure as we know how they did the best they could in their day They secured it with three things and that's in verse 66. Take a look So they went and made the tomb secure Sealing the stone and setting the guard there were three aspects to their security plan. First of all a stone That's very important.

That's the door He said well the door you can open a door. You can't open a stone You see there was a square opening to the tomb and the tombs square opening was not the size of a normal door Maybe it was about four feet tall. Maybe about you know, 18 inches wide it was because people weren't normally going in and out of there and So you have this small door and to close the door you have a circular stone That's rolled across the entrance across the doorway Now the stone is set on a slant on an incline so where you can roll it down More easily than you can roll it up and the stones heavy and it kind of slots into place That was a secure door.

There was no way anybody could open it from the inside It's serious like Jesus could even if he had swooned. What's he gonna do open the door from the inside? After he jumps out of all his grave clothes and then he runs out of the tomb and kind of kung-fu kicks all the guards Or something what it's ridiculous That was a secure door By the way, I think the door was secure enough to the stone to keep the disciples away. I Mean this was not the kind of stone that could be rolled away by one man It would probably take four or five strong men working together I think that's one thing that the disciples were totally incapable of at this time working together If they would have got together for the job of rolling away the stone, it would have been constant arguing.

No, I'm in charge No, I'm in charge. No, you get behind it. No you pull from the front.

I Don't think they could have done it. You've been impossible So the tomb was secured by a stone now. I want you to think of the stone.

That's a material obstacle, right? It's material. It's right there. You can't get through it But that's not the only obstacle they have they also had a seal I want you to understand how a seal would work in the ancient

world Maybe you've sealed a letter with a glob of wax and you have the glob of wax and you put a stamp on it And it's kind of a fancy way to see a letter and if something's really fancy or documents super fancy You would use a glob of wax and a piece of string that sort of set in the glob of wax Well, what they would use is a rope that would extend across the stone on either side of the doorway and a big glob of wax that would be on the tomb on either side of the stone that would be rolled away and So there you have it the globs of wax and a rope in between them so that you could not move that stone without breaking the rope and the wax seal Very simply you could just tell whether or not somebody had been in there But there was something also very important about that seal over the door of the tomb It would have an insignia of a Roman soldier or a centurion or maybe even the insignia of Pontius Pilate himself That was a barrier of human authority When you ever see a crime scene or you're driving by and you see that yellow tape It says police line do not cross.

That's a barrier, isn't it? Now, it's not so much a physical barrier You could walk under or break through the tape pretty easily if you wanted to but what it is, it's a barrier of authority It's a very strong statement saying don't cross here The police are telling you don't do it the authority of the police department tells you don't cross this line Well friends if you want to amplify that by about a hundred times, that's what that seal meant at the tomb of Jesus It was the expression of authority from the Roman government a Roman seal carried legal authority To break a Roman seal was to defy Roman authority That stone was secured by the authority of the Roman Empire And I suggest to you too that the guards that were on scene there They probably witnessed the sealing and I'll speculate here just for a moment They may even have opened the tomb themselves Inspected the contents, you know Like you would in inventory and then sealed it back up and said, okay now set the seal on either side because We've inspected the contents will be responsible for what's in there The reason why I say this is because when a Roman soldier was guarding something that was serious business The prestige and the authority of the Roman Empire was on the line because that's what was impressed in the seal So you didn't mess around with that You obeyed it you took careful care of it and that's what the soldiers did So they secured the tomb by a stone they secured the tomb by a seal Now I want you to see that they secured the tomb by Soldiers, did you see that in verse 66? So they went made the tombs the tomb secure Setting the stone and or sealing the stone and setting the guard Now a typical Roman detachment of guards had four soldiers Two would be on duty two would be on break They would sleep or goof off or whatever. And so there were always two guards on duty Now this was a highly charged political scene here They may have had more than four guards on duty at this on duty at this scene But they would have had at least four soldiers there camping out Guarding the entrance of the tomb and the soldiers would have been fully equipped Sword shield spear dagger armor Can't you just see the disciples getting in the face of these guys? Not a chance And by the way, might I remind you that these were Roman soldiers They didn't care about Jesus. They didn't care about Jewish laws or rituals They were called to secure the tomb of a criminal to them The only sacred thing at this tomb was the Roman seal And that's a terrible thing to do Because if that Roman seal was broken, then their careers could be ruined They might even be executed for falling down on their duty And friends remember these were soldiers who were cold-blooded enough to gamble over a dying man's clothes These weren't the kind of men to be tricked by trembling disciples or to jeopardize their necks by sleeping at the post That's Saturday for you.

God put it all in place. You got the stone you got the seal You got the soldiers and that lasts all through the day on Saturday all through Saturday night Until Jesus Christ emerges in his resurrection glory Did the stone matter to Jesus was that an obstacle hard for him? Not at all By the way Might I point out that the stone was not rolled away for the tomb from the tomb for the sake of Jesus The resurrection body of Jesus

seems to have been capable of just materializing in a room and leaving a room at will No, the stone was rolled away from the tomb so that the disciples could see in and notice that the tomb was empty Stone was no barrier the seal what you think Jesus was it? Oh, I'd break this stone, but I don't know about the seal I don't know if I want to offend the Roman Empire didn't care What about the soldiers they were nothing? Jesus didn't kill them, but they just brushed them aside and did what they were called to do friends None of these obstacles mattered material obstacles don't stand before the resurrected Jesus human authority doesn't stand before the resurrected Jesus human strength doesn't stand before the resurrected Jesus it all falls away before him Now let me bring this home in two ways First of all We can understand that God has called us to live our lives in the footsteps of Jesus Christ God's great goal for our lives is to make us like Jesus for whom he foreknew he also Predestined to be conformed into the image of his son. That's what God wants for your life He wants you to follow in Jesus's footsteps and many of you may feel like in your life Either now perhaps in the past perhaps in a future time.

You're gonna feel like you have a crucifixion experience Oh, I'm dying Lord. I'm dying to myself. This is terrible Lord.

When are you going to raise me from the dead? When are you going to show forth your resurrection power? This is awful God. It's like my own crucifixion You might feel like you're there in that Saturday after the time of crucifixion before the time of resurrection glory You know what God's purpose was for the Saturday in Jesus's life to bring more glory to the resurrection Now the proof of the resurrection is even more Certain because a stone had to be moved a seal had to be broken and soldiers had to be overcome and they were all It all happened that way God's purpose is to show forth the glory and the power of Jesus's resurrection If you feel like you're kind of in that limbo that that's Saturday between the crucifixion and in between the resurrection power Don't sweat it God's working in your life right now to make that experience of resurrection even more glorious when it happens But then I think about another miracle It's miraculous to roll the stone away It's miraculous to not care about the seal or the soldiers all of that's a glorious miracle But I think a greater miracle is wrought Whenever somebody yields their life to Jesus Christ, you know, it's like our hearts are that tomb full of death and Jesus wants to fill your heart with new life Take away the death fill it with new life But there's a problem there's there's a stone in the way There's a seal in the way There's soldiers in the way You know, the stone is there and it doesn't look like it can be moved. Jesus can move no problem there You might feel like your heart is stony before the Lord that it's hard You don't feel for the Lord the way that you once did or you don't care about the things of God You look around at these other people and they seem so in love with Jesus, but you're wondering what's up with that You look at your heart and honestly speaking your heart's hard.

It's like a stone Jesus wants to take your heart of stone and make it like a heart of flesh as Smooth and as soft as a baby's skin and make it that responsive that in tune with his heart It's no problem for the Lord Jesus the resurrected Jesus to deal with your heart of stone What about the seal? You may have placed some authority over your heart you don't want Jesus in you know, you're there you got the authority I don't want to give you control in my life. I'm gonna run my own life Jesus. Thank you very much I'm sure you got a lot of good suggestions for me and I'll take the ones that I like But no Jesus I'm gonna keep my authority human authority, that's what's important to me friends Let Jesus break that seal of human authority that blocks your heart That's the barrier of him showing forth his resurrection power in you.

What good is your human authority? What good is your own governing of your own life? How great have you really run your own life? Why not let Jesus run it for a while and let him break that seal of human authority Then finally you think of the soldiers. I think sometimes people when we're resisting Jesus Christ

We kind of set soldiers about on our heart. Maybe there's excuses You know, well, I don't want to come to Jesus.

I I don't know if I can really live the Christian life you can't But he can live it in you Well, I don't want to come to Jesus until I I know that I can do it until I know that I can live the Christian life Friends you can But Jesus can live it in you and if you feel like you can't give Jesus Everything right now then Jesus says then just give me everything you can I'll work with the rest Maybe another soldier outside of your heart. There's that soldier. It's a soldier of an excuse of line I want more time Yeah, you know when I'm old and tired and I can't get around so well and where then I'll go after Jesus You know then I have too much fun now.

So my wild oats No, no You don't know if you have it tomorrow. That's just an excuse. That's just a deception Jesus wants to knock away all those soldiers that are a barrier between his resurrection power and your life and he'll do it He'll do it right now And pour into your heart and into your life The glory and the power of his resurrection friends.

You might be here today and you might have the hardest heart You might have the biggest seal of human authority over your heart. You might have soldiers all around you thought the excuses the rationalizations I'm telling you right now today Jesus Christ and his resurrection power can overcome it all if you'll yield to him if you'll yield if you'll open your heart Maybe thinking that you'll put it off for another day Why? Why not today? Why not now? Let today be your resurrection Sunday I'm gonna pray right now and In my prayer, I'm gonna give an invitation for anybody here this morning who wants to receive Jesus Christ It's a secret thing. It's a holy thing between you and God friends it is between you and God and You need to respond not to the preacher Not to the people sitting around you You need to respond to the Lord God as he speaks to your heart right now.

Let's pray Father I want to pray For every one of us here this morning who feel that in some way We've resisted the resurrection power of Jesus in our life We haven't wanted to die to self. We haven't wanted to Lay down our lives We've pushed you away in some way or another Lord, I pray for every person here that you just show us some Some Area where our heart is kind of stony some seal that needs to be broken some soldier that needs to be chased away Lord God, I think more pointedly this morning Towards anybody here who who doesn't have their Their life settled with you They've never known the newness of life that you can pour into a person Or perhaps they knew at once but it seems so so so far away Lord Jesus, I pray For every person here that you'd help them to make a decision for Jesus today

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