

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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THE BROKEN SEAL

Matthew 27:62-66 and 28:1-8; Romans 6:6-11

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The points of my message today are:

- The tomb was sealed.
- The seal was broken.
- Through Christ, we have a new seal.

INTRODUCTION: Last week, we celebrated what has traditionally been known as Palm Sunday, the day a crowd welcomed and praised Jesus as he entered Jerusalem. Less than a full week later, Jesus was crucified. The crowd that had shouted, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” only a few days later shouted, “Crucify him!”

- Jesus suffered the indignation of a mock trial and the humiliation of the crucifixion. Everything about the trial of Jesus was illegal.
- He died like a criminal, naked and nailed to a cross.
- His body was quickly removed from the cross and buried in the borrowed tomb of a rich man named Joseph.

Joseph probably never expected to get the tomb back, but we all know that Jesus had no intention of using it forever. Today’s scriptures begin the day after the crucifixion.

1-THE TOMB WAS SEALED

SCRIPTURE: Mathew 27:62-66

The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ “Sir,” they said, “we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ ⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last

deception will be worse than the first.”⁶⁵ “Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.”⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

EXPLANATION: The Pharisees and chief priests seemed to understand Jesus’s plan for resurrection better than his own disciples. At least, they remembered his words even if they didn’t grasp the truth. They had pushed for Jesus to be killed, and he had been, but here they were still worrying. Even after Jesus was supposedly dead and gone, they were intimidated by his power. They worried that somehow, someone would make it appear that he had done what he said he would do, that he would prove that he was who he’d always claimed to be. So, these leading religious figures once again employed the help of the very government they hated. Religion and politics make for very strange situations.

Jesus was buried in a tomb, not a grave. This wasn’t a hole in the ground so much as a hole in the side of a mountain or hill. A stone had already been placed in front of the opening, but these men didn’t think that was enough. Roman guards also weren’t enough. They decided they would add one more thing to bolster security. They sealed the tomb.

Historians aren’t sure about the particulars of this process, but the Bible says that a seal was placed on the stone, probably between the rock and the side of the entrance. This was likely either the personal seal of Pilate or more likely the Roman seal. Generally, a seal was a symbol pressed into hot wax. Imagine an envelope that didn’t have any glue on the flap. A seal could be used to secure the flap to the envelope. It would hold the two parts together. Or think about a bottle of steak sauce or ketchup. The manufacturers put a seal around the outside of the bottle or over the top.

Obviously, these types of seals mean very little in terms of physical security. Even a child can break them. So, a glob of wax wasn’t going to prevent anyone from getting into Jesus’s grave. Of course, that wasn’t really the point. The seal did not work like handcuffs. It was more like a badge.

- It was there to scare people into submission.
- It was there to deter would-be grave robbers.

- It was there to authenticate the authority of the Roman government.

Breaking that seal without proper authorization was a crime punishable by death.

2-THE SEAL WAS BROKEN

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 28:1-8

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

EXPLANATION: This is why we celebrate. This is the resurrection. When we talk about the resurrection of Jesus, we place a lot of emphasis on the rock in front of the tomb. We talk about how the stone was rolled away, and yeah, that’s pretty amazing. But understand something. The stone in front of Jesus’s grave... that was normal. Every grave that has a body in it is covered. Today, we cover graves with dirt. Back then, they rolled a stone in front of them. The rock was normal; the seal was not.

- It was not normal for the grave to be sealed.
- It was not normal to have the stamp of Rome on the tomb of a rabbi or any Jew.
- It certainly wasn’t normal for someone to brazenly break the seal and roll the stone away.

But that’s what happened when Jesus arose from the grave. The stone couldn’t be moved without breaking the seal.

APPLICATION: You and I, all of us, were born into a fallen world. That means that we are born sinners. Psalm 51:5 says, “*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*” Every day from the day we take our first breath,

we are on a journey towards death, and we have a rock of sin sitting on the doorstep of our hearts, barring our way to everlasting life.

I WANT YOU TO LISTEN TO THIS – PLEASE HEAR AND UNDERSTAND:

For Satan, that’s not enough. Satan is not content for us to just live under the curse of sin. He comes at us and slaps a seal on our chest. It may say “rejected” or “worthless” or “ugly.” His sign may say “damaged” or “broken” or “unredeemable.” He comes right up to that rock of sin and stamps all kinds of hurtful labels on it. Why? Because like a rancher tags his cattle, Satan tags us. He wants us to believe that we are his. He wants us to stay dead in our trespasses. He wants to keep us locked away because he knows that if we stay behind that rock, if we believe in the power of his seal, we will never experience the life that Christ offers us. WOW!

That’s why it’s so important that we understand what happened on Resurrection Sunday. Christ died and was resurrected in order to break that seal, to free us from the grave and to offer us hope here on earth and eternity in heaven.

ILLUSTRATION: There was a mother who used to take her young son with her to visit an elderly bachelor named Jack. When the old man died, the mother and son went to the graveside service of the man. Not knowing whether the casket would be open or closed, the mother tried to prepare her son. She told him that their friend, who knew the Lord, was in Heaven but that his body had been left behind for a while. She tried to explain it in terms the young child would understand. She thought he understood as much as anyone his age could, but still, she breathed a sigh of relief when she saw that the casket was closed. She took her son’s hand and slowly inched toward the front of the crowd where she could hear the preacher beginning to speak. They had just moved in behind the family when her son said loudly, “Mom? Is Jack in the box?”

So often, I think that we picture Jesus’s resurrection kind of like that. We imagine him popping up out of that tomb and throwing that rock aside like a superhero. But that’s not really how it happened.

First of all, the angel—not Jesus—rolled the stone away. Jesus didn’t need the stone rolled away. Jesus had already risen; he was already gone. He didn’t come barreling

out of that grave like a convict trying to get out of jail. He rose up like he'd just taken a good nap. From scripture, we get the picture that his grave clothes were left neatly on the stone slab. Understand this. The grave was not a deterrent to Jesus, it was just a means to an end. That angel did not roll the stone away in order for Jesus to get out, because we learn that after the resurrection, that resurrection body of Christ could pass through walls. He rolled the stone away in order that we could see in. He rolled that stone away so that you and I could know that the tomb was empty.

Let's review:

- The tomb had been sealed.
- The seal was broken.

3-THROUGH CHRIST, WE HAVE A NEW SEAL

SCRIPTURE: Romans 6:6-11

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

EXPLANATION: The resurrection story is not just about Jesus rising from the grave, it's about us being called to new life. It's our invitation to join Christ in His resurrection, to be freed from sin and death, to come and see so that we can go and tell.

Satan wants us to stay dead and buried, hidden away, useless, barred from life by a wall of sin, scarred by the lies that he tells us, and the labels that he gives us. Satan wants us to believe that we are his, but Jesus has given us a different story.

- Jesus suffered the shame of the cross, was buried and arose so that we don't have to live behind a barrier of guilt, shame, and condemnation.
- Because Jesus broke the seal, we too can have new life.
- Like Jesus called Lazarus to come forth, he calls us out of the grave as well.

For those of us who believe and accept his free gift of salvation, Jesus does something else amazing. He gives us a new seal—the seal of the Holy Spirit.

- Ephesians 1:13 says, *“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”*
- 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 says, *“Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”*
- We hear a lot about cancel culture today. *Cancel culture* refers to the popular practice of withdrawing support for (*canceling*) public figures and companies after they have done or said something considered objectionable or offensive (copied). With Christ Jesus, the risen Lord, our past, present, and future – the sin debt has been canceled and the contract of cancellation has been signed, sealed, and delivered by none other than our risen Lord and Savior.

APPLICATION:

- The tomb was sealed.
- The seal was broken.
- Through Christ, we have a new seal.

If you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, then today is not just a day to celebrate Christ’s resurrection, it’s also a day to celebrate your own resurrection because of what Christ has done. By the authority of God the Father, Christ seals believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit so that Satan and the world will know that we belong to God.

- We are his.
- We are under his authority .
- Satan, sin, and death no longer have a hold on us.
- The seal of condemnation has been broken and replaced by the incorruptible seal of Christ.

But if you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, if you are still living behind that rock of sin, if Satan still claims ownership of your heart, why not come to Christ today? Accept his free gift of salvation and let today be the beginning of your new life in him.

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