

April 11, 2004 by Steve Brandon



He Must Go To Jerusalem

Matthew 16:21-23

Jesus must...

1. Go to Jerusalem
2. Suffer many things
3. Be killed
4. Be raised up

Every holiday, every pastor has a choice to make. The choice is whether or not to preach a message pertaining to the holiday. For some pastors, the choice is easier than others. Those who preach topically are always looking for issues to address and holidays become a natural opportunity to address the topic at hand (i.e. the birth of Christ during Christmas or the role of mothers during Mother's Day). For those who prefer to exposit through books of the Bible, the choice becomes a bit more difficult. They need to weigh the value of addressing the topic that is on the mind of many verses the value of continuing to systematically teach through the Bible.

At Easter, the choice for me is pretty simple. I am eager to divert from my regular, systematic preaching through a book of the Bible, and preach a topical message on the resurrection, especially as the resurrection has a prominent place in the truth of the gospel. We aren't preaching an ideology. We are preaching history. So, the choice for me each Easter actually becomes, "Which text should I preach to exalt the risen Savior?"

My choice of a text this week began in February, as I was praying through my pace of preaching through Matthew. We were in Matthew 15 at the time and I began to map out how far I could get each morning in Matthew. I discovered that if I continued in Matthew at my present pace, we would arrive in chapter 16, verse 21 this Easter morning. Verse 21 speaks about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the occasion of which we celebrate this Easter morning. I considered going elsewhere in the Scripture this morning. But I figured that Matthew 16:21 would be as good a place as any for us to consider this morning as we set our heart and minds upon the resurrection. And so, for the past eight weeks or so, I have had this little sticky note on my desk, reminding me of how far I need to get each week in order to land in verse 21 this morning. It was a stretch sometimes. There were times when I had a bigger passage and was tempted to cut it in half and deal with it in two messages. There were times when I wanted to linger on a topic for a bit, before moving on. Last week was an example. I desperately wanted to stop for a week and think about the implications of Jesus' words, "I will build My church." However, these temptations would have thrown us off from arriving this morning at Matthew 16:21. And so, I have kept on schedule for the past two months in order to come to where we are today. And we are here in Matthew 16:21. We have made it. This morning, we are going to focus the majority of our attention upon this one verse (though we will pick up a few more verses by way of context). It is a verse that maps out for us the future plans of Jesus. I had my plans for arriving at this text this morning. Jesus had His plans for the future. Let me read them for you:

'From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.' (Matt. 16:21)

These words express the travel itinerary of Jesus: "Destination: Jerusalem. First stop: suffering. Second stop: crucifixion. Third stop: resurrection."

It is about that time of year that each of you are making plans for this summer. Our family is in the midst of making our plans. As most of you know, my wife is from California, near San Francisco. Her parents are still in California. We try to make it out to California each summer to see them. Though we didn't go last year, we are planning on going this year. In the process of planning the trip, I first spoke with Lance (our deacon) about how much time I wanted to spend in California with my in-laws and the possible dates (in an effort to stay above reproach with my schedule). After he approved them, we purchased our tickets for this summer. Yvonne and the kids are going first so as to maximize their time with grandma and grandpa. About a week later, I'm going to come and spend about two weeks in California. The dates of our trip have been established, but we haven't quite nailed down our itinerary yet. We are still in the process of planning what we will do. Personally, I like to sit at Yvonne's parent's home for much of the time. They have a swimming pool. The kids love to swim. I love to watch them swim, read my books, and drink my Mountain Dew. But, we are thinking through what we plan to do out there. Even this week, Yvonne was talking with her sister about the possibility of taking a side trip to Lake Tahoe. Since our kids are studying the westward expansion in school, we are thinking about a tour of some gold-mines, which were built during the time of the California gold rush. While our plans are beginning to take shape, they aren't quite firm. But, the plans of Jesus were firmly established. His travel itinerary wouldn't change. Jesus wasn't going to California for vacation. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to His death and resurrection.

As we dive into this verse, we notice that it begins with a time reference. Matthew writes, "from that time." When you come across these types of phrases, you ought to ask yourself, "From what time?" Since we have systematically walked through the pages of the book of Matthew, we know what time it was. It was the time of Peter's confession in verse 16. Until this point, the identity of Jesus was not clearly manifest. It was hinted at; it was demonstrated; it was alluded to. But, it was never clearly stated before Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (verse 16).

Once Peter said this, the truth was out (at least among the disciples). It was time to begin teaching what this meant. Peter spoke it, but that doesn't mean he understood it. Peter was being confronted with a truth that he had never before considered. A suffering Messiah? How can it be? The Messiah, the Christ, came to rule and reign, didn't He? Peter had his Bible verses to show it. So, Peter rebuked Jesus in verse 21 saying, "God forbid." But Jesus in turn rebuked Peter by telling him that He wasn't thinking correctly. Rather than being interested in God's plans, Peter was interested in the plans of men. In fact, this was even a Satanic plan. "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" (verse 22).

We can see the wisdom of Jesus in preventing His disciples from telling others about what was revealed to Peter. Verse 20 says, "He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ." If they would have gone out immediately to proclaim that Jesus was the Messiah, they would have proclaimed His name falsely. It was necessary for Jesus to teach them "from that time" what it meant that He was the Messiah. It meant that Jesus had to go certain places and do certain things.

As an aside, let me point out that the process of understanding Biblical truth is often a process. It would take the disciples several months to fully grasp these words here, though Jesus repeated them on several occasions. This is typical of Biblical understanding. It often takes months or years to be convinced of the truth of things you hear. This is especially true regarding the doctrine of election: that God elects sinners to salvation before the foundation of the world, entirely apart from any works or foreseen faith in them. To some, this truth is so contrary to their own natural understanding, that it isn't believed. And even when confronted with texts that talk of God predestining us to salvation (i.e. Eph. 1:5), it is explained away somehow. It often takes some time to work through what this means. The disciples were in this same situation. They were confronted with the Messiahship of Jesus in a way that they never before considered. It would take them some time to realize that a crucified Messiah was God's plan.

Jesus was teaching them that "He must (1) go to Jerusalem and (2) suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and (3) be killed, and (4) be raised up on the third day." These four points will form the basis of my outline this morning: Jesus will (1) go to Jerusalem; (2) suffer many things; (3) be killed; (4) be raised up.

Before we dive into these points, I want you to notice that this wasn't an optional trip for Jesus. It was necessary for Jesus to go and experience these things. I get this from the word, "**must**." Jesus "must go to Jerusalem." My trip this summer to California is optional. Yes, we have bought our tickets. Yes, we have begun to make some plans. But, it isn't necessary that we go to California. There could be circumstances that come up in our lives that would prohibit the trip. Perhaps an illness might occur in our family. Perhaps a sudden death might occur in our extended family, for which we would want to remain home. Perhaps there is a natural disaster, like California falling in the ocean. Many people think might happen with all of the earthquakes out there. Or perhaps there's another terrorist strike. There are many circumstances that could either prohibit our travel to California, or would persuade us to remain at home. But that was not the case with Jesus' trip to Jerusalem. It was necessary that He (1) go to Jerusalem; (2) suffer many things; (3) be killed; and (4) be raised up.

I've thought through several reasons why it was necessary. First of all, it had been **prophesied**. One of the clearest of the Old Testament prophecies is contained in Isaiah 53. As I considered the prophecy of Isaiah 53, I discovered a very interesting connection to Jesus' words here. There are twelve verses in Isaiah 53, which can be split up into four equal sections. In the first section (verses 1-3), Isaiah 53 clearly describes how the suffering servant would be among the people of Israel, "growing up before them," and being seen by them. Where are the people of Israel, but in Jerusalem, where Jesus must go? In the next few verses, Isaiah 53 describes how the suffering servant would be "chastened, ... scourged, ... oppressed ... [and] afflicted (verses 4-7). This corresponds exactly to Jesus' second point, that he would suffer many things. In the third section of Isaiah 53 (verses 7-9), the suffering servant would be "led to slaughter, ... cut off out of the land of the living, ... [and] assigned a grave with wicked men." This was the third point of Jesus, that He would be killed. Finally, in the fourth section of Isaiah 53, the suffering servant would be raised again to "see His offspring ... prolong His days, ... be satisfied ... [and allotted] a portion with great" (verses 10-12). These all describe one who is raised from the dead, exactly as Jesus has explained will happen to Him. When God prophesies something, He ensures that it takes place.

Second, it had been **anticipated**. This is the first time that Jesus speaks to His disciples concerning these matters. But, He later repeats them on several other occasions. Two of these occasions are recorded for us in later in Matthew. In Matthew 17:22-23, Jesus says the same thing, almost word for word. "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." Later Jesus will again repeat these words: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up" (Matt. 20:18-19). Jesus knew the realities of what He was about to face when He would step foot into Jerusalem. The crucifixion and resurrection didn't take Jesus by surprise. He knew that He was going to Jerusalem to die and rise again. He anticipated it.

Third, it was the **whole reason** why Jesus came to earth. It's the message of Christianity: a crucified Savior! I mentioned Matthew 20:28 last week. But, I want to read it again for you, because it refers to the life of Christ and emphasizes the whole reason why He came. "[T]he Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (verse 28). In other words, Jesus came to die. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He knew that He was going to die; He knew that the elders and chief priests and scribes would come upon Him; He knew that He would suffer. But, there was a purpose behind it. His life, death, and resurrection would ransom ruined sinners and bring them into glory with God. Don't let anybody tell you; neither let it come into your mind that Jesus could ever have skirted the cross. Don't entertain the idea that Jesus could ever have remained in the tomb. The death of Jesus wasn't a surprise to God, which caused Him to resort to "plan B" which was to raise Jesus from the dead. Make certain you know that He died willingly, voluntarily, and according to "plan A." Jesus didn't find Himself in Jerusalem as a political scapegoat to some issue. Rather, it was the purpose of Jesus coming to live among His people. As Jesus said, "No one has taken [my life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again" (John 10:18).

Jesus must ...

1. Go to Jerusalem

This was very specific. Jesus knew where His death, burial, and resurrection would take place. It would take place in the city of Jerusalem. He wasn't going to die in Nazareth. He wasn't going to die in Capernaum, Bethlehem, Shechem, or Bethel. It was in Jerusalem that Jesus would breathe His final breath. Last week was Palm Sunday, the day that we celebrate Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. It was no accident that He came into Jerusalem on that day. Listen to Zechariah 9:9,

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Why did Jesus have to die and be raised in Jerusalem?

1. The fact that Jesus died in Jerusalem demonstrates the hardness of the heart of man.

Jerusalem was a city unparalleled in its blessings. It was God's chosen city (1 Kings 11:32). It was in Jerusalem that He set His name. It was in Jerusalem that His presence dwelt in a special way. The LORD said, "I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there" (2 Chron. 6:6). Of all the cities in the world, it was Jerusalem that enjoyed the special favor of God. God established the city of Jerusalem. God protected the city of Jerusalem when the nation of Israel had split (1 Kings 11:32). God stirred the heart of Cyrus to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, with foreign, pagan funds. Over the years, God sent many prophets to Jerusalem.

Now, you would think that the city that received such tremendous blessings of God would be receptive to Jesus, who was God incarnate. But they bit that hand that fed them. Jerusalem killed their Messiah. This wasn't simply a one-time occurrence. Jerusalem was always killing the prophets that God sent to them. Perhaps you remember when Jesus was lamenting over Jerusalem's hardness. He said, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [the city] that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her!' (Luke 13:34). Cities and states sometimes have slogans that describe their state. Here are some examples:

ILLINOIS: The Land of Lincoln.
KANSAS: The Sunflower State
ARIZONA: The Grand Canyon State
FLORIDA: The Sunshine State

Slogans are ways in which states like to be known. But, in actuality, they are often known for other things. For instance, ...

ILLINOIS: Please don't pronounce the "s".
KANSAS: Ya want flat? We got flat
ARIZONA: But It's A Dry Heat
FLORIDA: Come, enjoy the humidity.

The officials at Jerusalem would have insisted that on the signs on the outskirts of the city would say, "Jerusalem, the city of God." But Jesus said that the city ought to be called, "Jerusalem: We kill our prophets." Jerusalem is a picture of the hardened heart.

2. The fact that Jesus died in Jerusalem demonstrates the riches of the grace of God.

Jerusalem was an unworthy city. They not only spurned and rejected God, but they also committed the worse sin that you could ever commit. I can't think of a sin worse than what took place in that city. They killed God. Its bad enough to be a city full of immorality, pagan worship, or sensuality. But, those sins pale in significance when compared to hating and killing the God-man, Jesus Christ. Yet, God showed His continued grace and faithfulness to that city. While God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their immorality, and the cities in Palestine for their pagan worship, God was gracious to Jerusalem.

Though Jerusalem killed its Messiah, God raised their Messiah from the dead, and allowed the gospel to be first proclaimed in Jerusalem. For three and a half years, the church prospered in Jerusalem. At Pentecost, three thousand souls were saved (Acts 2:41). A short time later, the number of believers in Jerusalem were about five thousand (Acts 4:4). We are even told that "a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). But, do you know what caused the gospel to be banished from Jerusalem? They killed another prophet sent to them. They killed Stephen. Old habits die hard, I guess. And we are told that the church "scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1).

Jesus must go to Jerusalem to show the hardness of the heart of man, and to show the riches of the grace of God.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, He must also...

2. Suffer many things

I know that this is a story that we know well. But it is also a story that needs to be repeated.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem in that last week before He died, He faced the sufferings of being a hunted man. On the very day that He entered, the Pharisees rebuked Him, for receiving the praise of the multitudes, who shouted, "Blessed in the King who comes in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19:38). When Jesus came, "The chief priests and the scribes ... were trying to destroy Him" (Luke 19:47). "The chief priests and the scribes and the elders confronted Him" and questioned His authority (Luke 20:2). "The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him" but they feared the multitude (Luke 20:19). The religious leaders "sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so as to deliver Him up to the rule and the authority of the governor" (Luke 20:20). The pressure upon Jesus

was so great, that He didn't dare to spend the night in Jerusalem, lest they capture Him in His sleep, before His hour would arrive. Each night, Jesus went over the Mount of Olives and spent the night in Bethany (Matt. 21:17; Luke 21:37).

The chief priests and officers finally got their break when Judas Iscariot agreed to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3-6). Jesus was arrested in the garden, by a Roman cohort who had been sent by the chief priests and elders (John 18:12). They came to Jesus, surrounded by a great multitude who came with swords and clubs (Matt. 26:47). They "laid hands on Jesus and seized Him" and took Him away bound as they would with any criminal (Matt. 26:50; John 18:12). They convened a late-night court before Annas, the former high-priest (John 18:13). It was in front of Annas that Jesus received His first physical punishment of the night. One of the officers standing at the trial hit Jesus with his hand when he thought that Jesus had responded inappropriately to the high priest (John 18:22). Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas for the second phase of His trial, where they tried repeatedly to "obtain false testimony against Jesus" (Matt. 26:59). When Jesus finally broke His silence and admitted to being the Son of God, the high priest accused Him of blasphemy (Matt. 26:65). The other leaders present said, "He is deserving of death" (Matt. 26:66). "Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and ... slapped Him" (Matt. 26:67). "They bound Him, and led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate the governor" (Matt. 27:2), for the third phase of His trial.

Pilate struggled in his own heart as to what to do with Jesus. He saw that He was innocent (Matt. 27:24). But, he also saw the rage of the Jewish leaders, who had stirred the crowds to demand that Jesus be crucified (Matt. 27:20-23). At one point, Pilate sent Jesus off to stand before Herod (Luke 23:6-12). Finally, Pilate gave him over to be crucified (Matt. 27:26). The Roman soldiers scourged Him (Matt. 27:26); stripped Him of His clothes (Matt. 27:28); pressed a crown of thorns upon His head (Matt. 27:29); spat on Him (Matt. 27:30); and beat Him on the head (Matt. 27:30). From there, Jesus was commanded to carry His cross, which he did until His weakened body could carry it no longer (Matt. 27:32). He was nailed to a cross and lifted up to suffocate upon the cross.

While dying helplessly, He still was the object of abuse. One of the robbers being crucified with Him was mocking him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" (Luke 23:39). Those passing by were "hurling abuse at Him" saying, "If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. 27:40). Even God, Himself, forsook Jesus. Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46).

Such were the sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth. And in our text this morning, Jesus knew that all of this was going to take place. He told His disciples that He would suffer "many things from the elders and the chief priests and scribes." And glory be to God that He did! His sufferings, His death, and His blood paid for the sins of those who believe in Him. You can't be freed from your sin with money. You can't be freed from your sin by giving \$5 million to Rock Valley Bible Church (... though it doesn't sound like a bad idea to me). You can't be freed from your sin by the blood of bulls or goats. You can't be freed from your sin by doing good to balance the bad. You can't be freed from your sin by life-long devotion to religion. The only way that you can know of complete pardon of your sins is by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

But, the sufferings of Christ were not complete until He died. Jesus must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, and...
3. Be killed

In the Old Testament, the sacrifice was only complete when the animal died. We never read in the law that breaking the leg of the lamb would atone for your sins. We never read in the law that you were to injure the bull upon the altar. We never read in the law that you were to poke out the eyes of the ram. A wounded sacrifice was not a sacrifice at all. With Jesus, His sacrifice was finished when He died. The demands of the law were met. Sin was atoned. A new day had dawned in redemption history. No longer would they look forward to the Messiah; now, they look back upon the work of the Messiah. This is why Jesus said just before He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit, 'It is finished' (John 18:30). He may have said this in the very last breath that He ever took. Once the death of Jesus took place, redemption was accomplished. It was finished. There was nothing more that had to be done. Peter told us that, "Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). Jesus, the righteous, died for the unrighteous ones. Jesus, the holy one, died for the unholy ones. Jesus, the pure one, died for the impure ones. Jesus, the sinless one, died for the sinful ones.

Peter tried to prevent the death of Jesus. Let's look at verse 22. After Peter heard these things, He took Him aside and began to rebuke Jesus. "Hey Jesus, come over here, I've got something to tell you. Your plan? It's not a good one. In fact, it's a terrible plan. Other prophets have gone up to Jerusalem and have been killed. What good has that done? We are still under Roman bondage. But, now that you are here, you can free us from this bondage. So, don't be a martyr. Use your powers. Let's go to Jerusalem and rule and reign. You're the king. God forbid [your plan] Lord! This shall never happen you." But Jesus would have none of it. He told Peter, "You are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." God's interest was upon the reconciling of His enemies. "What the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh [to be a]n offering for sin" (Romans 8:3). This could only be done through the suffering and the death of Jesus. Any other plan is a Satanic plan, which is precisely what Peter had suggested.

Jesus told Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan!" The language is similar to when Jesus addressed Satan himself in the temptation. In Matt. 4:10, Jesus had said, "Go Satan!" Here, Jesus says, "Go behind Me, Satan!" In the temptation, it was the devil, himself. Here, it was Peter, pushing Satan's plan. And Satan sought to cause Jesus to stumble in whatever way he could. In the temptation, Satan tempted Jesus to sin by trusting His flesh (in making bread from stones); by testing God (in falling from the pinnacle of the temple); and by mocking God (worshipping Satan instead). Using Peter's mouth, Satan attempted to keep Jesus from the cross. The terrible realities of what was about to face Jesus were a struggle in and of themselves. Remember in the garden, when Jesus prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:42). The struggle was real enough. Jesus didn't need His closest disciples trying to keep Him away from His purpose in coming to the earth. Jesus knew that He would die. It was necessary for Him to die. It was God's plan that He die.

Just as it was necessary that Jesus be killed, it was also necessary that He ...
4. Be raised up

We've reached the best part of the message. We come to the resurrection. This is Easter. But we can't understand the resurrection until we understand His death, so the first portion of my message hasn't been in vain. The wonderful truth here is that though Jesus died, God raised Him from the dead. Jesus knew that He was going to rise from the dead. It was on His itinerary.

I believe that the very thought of the resurrection is what gave Jesus the foresight to continue on in obedience. In Philippians, chapter 2, we are told that Jesus, "humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:8, 9). I believe that Jesus knew that if He would humble Himself to the point of death, that God would highly exalt Him. What is it that kept Jesus from calling twelve legions of angels when He was arrested? (Matt. 26:53). What is it that kept Jesus silent at His unjust trials? (John 19:10). What is it that kept Jesus from uttering threats when scourged? (1 Pet. 2:23) What is it that kept Jesus upon the cross, when mocked as a fraud? (Mat. 27:39). Jesus knew the whole picture. Sure, He knew that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer immensely. Sure, He knew that He was going to die. But, He also knew that He would "be raised up on the third day." And that's what changed everything. He knew that the path to glory went through the path to the cross. And as Hebrews 12:2 says, Jesus, "for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." Why? Because He knew that one day He would sit down "at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Children will eat their vegetables when they know that dessert is coming. Men toil at a difficult job when they know that their paycheck is coming. Musicians endure long practice hours when they know that the performance is coming. Mothers endure the pangs of labor when they know that a child is coming. Students will study long and hard, when they know that one day they will be a doctor. Athletes will push themselves, when they know that it will make them stronger. Children will receive discipline, when they know that it "yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11). Christians will gladly endure their various trials, when they know that their imperishable, undefiled and unfading crown awaits them (1 Pet. 1:3-9). Christians will be patient when suffering unjustly, when they know that "the Judge is standing right at the door" (James 5:10). And the Messiah will suffer many things and be willing to die, when He knows that He will be raised on the third day.

Jesus had no doubt as to the end result of His sufferings. As surely as He was going to Jerusalem, He would rise from the dead. As surely as He was going to suffer at the hands of wicked men, He would rise from the dead. As surely as He was going to die, He would rise from the dead. When Peter objected, it was because He didn't understand the whole picture. I think that Peter heard Jesus say that He was going to die, but failed to understand that He would rise again. And so, He tried to shut down the show. But Jesus knew more.

I am reminded of the story written by C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. In that story, Aslan, the Lion, the Christ-figure, makes an arrangement with the witch to save a little boy, named Edmund, who was a traitor. Under the agreement, Aslan was to die, rather than the boy. This is a picture of the sacrifice of Christ, who died in our place. Aslan, the Lion, was muzzled and tied to the Stone Table, where the witch took a knife to kill Him. Before she did, she said to Aslan,

"And now, who has won? Fool, did you think that by all this you would save the human traitor? Now I will kill you instead of him as our pact was and so the Deep Magic will be appeased. But when you are dead what will prevent me from killing him as well? And who will take him out of my hand then? Understand that you have given me Narnia forever, you have lost your own life and you have not saved his. In that knowledge, despair and die."

So she killed the Lion, thinking to be done with him forever, and went off to wage war with the humans. But, like Jesus, Aslan was raised from the dead. When Susan and Lucy asked Aslan about how he was alive again, Aslan said,

"Though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards."

Since Aslan knew what awaited Him, he gladly took the knife to the throat. Jesus is like Aslan in this way. Jesus knew of the "deeper magic" (if I can use that phrase with reverence), that death couldn't contain Him. Jesus knew that a sinless sacrifice would be raised from the dead. Jesus knew that "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). Jesus knew that He was the chief cornerstone which "the builders rejected" (Matt. 21:42), but must be raised again to be the foundation of the church.

We come to this point in the message where you might be asking, "So what?" If you grasp the full implications of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, your life will be radically transformed. Thomas was a doubter until He saw the resurrected Christ. Then, he was a believer. Peter was a denier until He saw the resurrected Christ. Then, he was a mighty preacher. Paul was a persecutor of the church until He saw the resurrected Christ. Then, he was a mighty missionary. ^[1] Jesus was resurrected from the dead, just as He thought. He is alive and well. His death was sufficient to save all who come to Him. He lives now to "make intercession for ... those who draw near to God" (Heb. 7:25). My desire for Rock Valley Bible Church is that we would be people who would embrace the resurrection of Jesus Christ and live lives that are transformed by His power.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 11, 2004 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] See Ray Stedman's Sermon, "The Fact of Facts" on 1 Cor. 15:1-20.