

“A Significant Cover-up”  
 Pastor Sam Richards  
 Sermon for 5 March 2023  
 Texts: Matthew 28:9-15

**And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.** We may conclude from this that what terrified the guards was **an angel of the Lord who descended from heaven and rolled back the stone whose countenance was like lightning.** And there was a **great earthquake.** All of this supplies the details of what the guards, *who were not asleep saw*, heard and experienced! We cannot say for certain that this angel was the one reported by Mark, **a young man clothed in a long white robe** (Mark 16:5) but the detail of **white clothing** occurs in both accounts (Matt. 28:4) as well as **the heavenly descent.** If we are talking about the same angel, both accounts only mention one angel and this angel **rolled back the heavy stone which sealed the opening to the tomb** that Christ borrowed for His short stay there. Again, the guards are *witnesses of all these things.*

Now, as the women went to tell the disciples to leave for Galilee (**there you will see Him**), we are not told that the guards failed to overhear the whole exchange: **Come and see the place where the Lord lay. And go and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.** (vv.6-7) This information would also have been imparted to the guards: **He is risen from the dead.** Then, **with fear and great joy**, Matthew relates that the women ran off but **as they went . . . Jesus met them, saying “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him.** The guard, *witnessing this encounter* perhaps, had further insight into the character and nature of Christ, knowledge of His resurrected and real bodily presence, and the stunning fact that the two women *actually worshipped Jesus.*

This news, Jesus really alive and being worshipped, would be particularly offensive *and unwelcome even to the point of alarming, to the chief priests* and to others (of the Sanhedrin) who would soon hear the warning of Gamaliel **“Have nothing to do with these men. If this is not of God, it will go away, and if it is of God, nothing you can do will stop it.”** (Or words to that effect, see Acts 5:33-42.) So, initially, the Jewish leadership (high priests) took counsel and decided to do two things: 1. bribe the guard (**a large sum of money**, v.12) and 2. Give them a false narrative, to wit, **Tell them, His disciples came at night and stole Him away, while we slept.** (v.13) What an incredibly dumb thing to tell them to say! For if they were asleep, a dereliction of duty that could result in their summarial execution,-besides how could they know anything if they were asleep?!

Matthew 28:11 reads, **So while they were going.** I wonder if this means the women going to the disciples; or whether it refers to an action on the part of the disciples making their way to Galilee? I have taken all the actions from verses 28:1-15 as best read as being continuous—as concentrated in time and place: all transpiring in Jerusalem and all immediately following the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That works very well, coherently. It was after the disciples met with the Lord in Galilee that the Lord passed on the great commission—after which they would return to Jerusalem and wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit (power from on high to undertake their mission). A period of forty days would pass during which Jesus would make appearances and instruct the disciples in the kingdom business, church governance, then at hand. Pentecost is the birthday of the church, and the forty days leading up to that was a time of spiritual preparation for that event.

We have a lot more to go on than the minimalist explanation: **His disciples came at night and stole Him away.** This false narrative doesn't settle the matters of the empty tomb and the missing body—or the enormous transformation of character in Jesus' devastating and timid followers. And the willingness of the followers to die rather than deny their Lord push us towards an affirmation that what we have here described, or something very like it, is historically valid.

And as for the ramifications of *life beyond life* which the resurrection of Jesus demonstrated, they are life-altering. We can say, without hesitation, it was disruptive, revolutionary and personally transformative. Our consciousness of “life” was expanded and, at the same time, our understanding of death was redefined. Death was no longer final as it had been viewed up to that point and it was no longer merely the biological and physical reality. The words Hebrews 9:27 **And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes the judgment,** 28 **so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him** come alive with future significance and eternal importance. This is eschatology on a very practical and personal level and that understanding of the end times is the foundation of our Christian hope!

This is where our Easter hope speaks most directly to the epidemic of fear—surely a demonic stratagem!—which has so severely traumatized and damaged the world we live in. What if I cited to you this sentence: “A mysterious virus comes out of nowhere and goes on a killing spree”? What would be the first thing that came to your mind? It might very likely be COVID-19. Of course. That would be an apt association. But this sentence was not written for COVID-19. It was written about the AIDS/HIV epidemic which occurred in the late twentieth century, beginning around 1980. *It brought about an epidemic of fear in modern times.* It was not the first epidemic. There were many epidemics before, many pandemics as well meaning that the reach of these diseases were global. We have had diphtheria, tuberculous, measles, small pox, Asiatic flu, swine and bird flue, cholera, anthrax and the bubonic plague. And we have had syphilis (as well as other STD's) which is reputed to have destroyed the Roman Empire! Syphilis and HIV are two diseases which share sexual transmission but the populations affected are very different.

HIV affected mostly gay young men and IV drug users for the virus was transmitted through blood and semen involved in sexual contact. And, yes, some others contracted the disease through contaminated blood, through transfusions. Syphilis affected heterosexuals as promiscuous practices were widespread. Premarital and extramarital sexual liaisons (all fornication and most adulterous—at least according to Jesus' instruction). These diseases were impediments to both “free love” and “safe sex” practices. Chastity, abstinence and marital fidelity, all moral restraints on sexual licentiousness, actually still work effectively where consensual sex is concerned; but, like pregnancy another natural consequence of sex, they were unacceptable restraints to the lustful, lied, lascivious and liberated. I trust that what I have said up to this point is medically and scientifically accurate and acceptable.

*My topic here is the epidemic of fear and false narratives.* And I want to explore with you what Easter, or resurrection faith, has to say about this fear itself. I want to suggest that faith

is the antidote to fear, even the fear of death which is what Jesus freed us from when He died the death that conquered death once for all, for all who trust in Him.

The epidemic of fear which informed the COVID-19 pandemic had its roots in the AIDS/HIV debacle. Because AIDS/HIV affected gays, gay activists were alarmed and a cadre of AIDS activists soon formed to lobby the government and the WHO to elevate AIDS to the place of top priority. They felt compelled to do this because the affected population, gays and junkies, composed a minority that lacked public sympathy and approval. And in order to move this forward they had to “normalize” homosexuality and create the impression that gays and junkies are just like everyone else—they are “just like you and me.” They wanted to get a heterosexual face on the disease and establish that AIDS/HIV was a threat, or terror to everyone. Forget that this works contrary to establishing gay identity as just another “form of love,” and that homosexual unions were the same as marriage and should have civil rights status/protections. High-risk anal sex and dirty needles had to be swept under the carpet—along with drug abuse and sexual abuse—because such practices tend to define and distinguish gay and junkies from others rather than unite them! This subterfuge prettifies the actual situation. This was all PR—still is.

So what if the idea that the virus would, through heterosexual transmission, begin to infect housewives in suburbia and businessmen worldwide? And what if that idea of transmission began to cut in on the homosexual trafficking at gay bars—who knew if that next partner might be carrying the deadly disease? What if we could scare everyone who was having promiscuous sex into the idea that everyone was playing Russian roulette with this sexual adventurism?! So what if we could create this nightmare scenario and scare the hell out of straight America. And that is what the AIDS activist desperately wanted to accomplish. ***No one is safe anymore!*** Scare enough people seriously enough and the clamor for a cure will drown out everything else in a PR generated epidemic of fear. *And that is the lobbyist playbook out of which the COVID-19 fear epidemic was run.*

“While AIDS was devastating minority and gay communities in American, while it was leaving Middle American virtually untouched, the news stories conjured up another story.” (Goldberg, Bias, 2002, p.77)

Oprah Winfrey added, “AIDS has both sexes running scared. Research studies now project that one in five—listen to me, hard to believe, one in five heterosexuals could be dead from AIDS at the end of the next three years. That’s by 1990. One in five. It is no longer just a gay disease. Believe me.” (op cit)

This on top of “a \$5,000,000 ad campaign: “AIDS doesn’t discriminate” aimed at heterosexuals who were not having sex with junkies.” (op cit)

An epidemic of fear about heterosexual AIDS was leading people to equate sex with death! Can’t blame the media really, not with so many “experts” contributing horror stories! (P. 78)

“Despite evidence to the contrary—heterosexuals were not falling by the wayside like junkies or gay men—the press, especially TV, loved the “No One Is Safe Anymore” story. (P. 78) All in pursuit of higher ratings, more money—greed is a great source of lying deception. Cloak it in “compassion” and the “unity” forged by terror, this could integrate America!

Don't let the truth get in the way of a good story! Thank God they had it wrong! "AIDS remains a disease limited primarily to specific groups engaging in specific practices." (Fumento, 1990, A CITED P. 79)

"At least since 1986, our government had been misleading the public on the extent of the AIDS epidemic. The CDC moved all AIDS suffered of African and Haitian *origin* into the category of heterosexual AIDS cases . . . resulting in the doubling of this category from 2 to 4 percent of the total." Rather than cry foul, or to question this suspect and arbitrary move, the media watchdogs jumped on this "statistical artifact to launch their first wave of AIDS terror." (Op cit) But where were all these straight Americans with AIDS? . . . "Where was this *epidemic*" . . . "that was in the newspapers and on the evening news in all its lurid evil?" Well, The Center for Media and Public Affairs monitored the TV stories in 1992 and concluded "TV's visual portrait of AIDS victims has little in common with real life."

Compared with real-world data 6% of the People with AIDS were gay men versus 53% in real life. On TV 16% were blacks and Hispanics, in real life 46%. On TV 2% of AIDS sufferers were IV drug users, in real life 23% were. "The risk groups the news audience sees are very different from their real world counterparts," was the reports conclusion. These are fabricated demographics, very like the newsroom set chosen for impact and impression—a very "prettified," "a just like you and me" effort to win sympathetic support by drumming up the ratings. Like "memory picture" making up of a dead person to make him, or her look alive and to soften the blow of death's indignity! AIDS became a disease with civil rights, akin to *the right to privacy* because no one was allowed to ask: "How did you get it?" Presumed to be a "hostile question." That was uncivil. Of course, it is more important to be politically correct than factually correct!

Richard Threlkeld, in 1991, a CBS and ABC reporter reflecting on Magic Johnson's infection, opined that "four out of ten people with AIDS were heterosexuals." aA reasonable inferences would be that he was suggesting infection of straight Americans through heterosexual transmission. That was a hyperbolic lie! But the 40% he was talking about were infected by shooting up, or having unprotected sex with those who were as well as those infected through blood transfusions and babies born to infected women. The percentage was hardly transparent—perhaps dishonest. "AIDS is presented not just as a hideous disease, but as a gauge of our collective humanity (read, "Sympathy") wrote Harry Stein. What a dreadful way to attain equality. How bizarre for the media to insist on showing our face as the face of AIDS as if self-flattery, as if liking those who look like us is the path to sympathy and quickened true compassion! And it was all subterfuge and deception—visual fabrication. Poll those experts who say what you want to promote and promote those you wish to use for your promotion.

In 1996 Jacqueline Adams did a CBS on teens with AIDS reporting that the problem was mainly kids having unprotected sex. Patricia Flemming, an AIDS activist claimed that "At least one American teenager is becoming infected every hour of every day." September of 1996, Diana Click raised the ante to two," two kids under twenty are infected every hour." This is pure hype and hyperbole! In the Adams story the word gay, or homosexual appears not to have been mentioned-but almost all teen infections involve homosexual sex, IV drugs or

tainted blood! *Every hour of every day! It was simply not happening*<sup>1</sup>. (See the data in footnote 1.)

That the gay lobby, or AIDS activists would want to so misled the American public is understandable. But for the media to play along with the fear mongering is truly disgraceful. The allure of money and ratings fostered greed and greed wins over truth—sadly, every time. Presenting their truth, the media chose to ignore the truth—nothing was fair, balanced and accurate. How like the high priests these media moguls appear to be: selling their souls, perpetrating lies and hiring false witnesses. Are these the folks you choose to go to . . . for your news? The truth?

Here's where the truth of Easter comes in. In footnote 1 I note that .3% of the American public is hardly an epidemic of disease; but the epidemic of fear that the activists and lobbyists put the country through—a needless panic, projecting—no, broadcasting and hyping messages like “we are all going to die,” “No one is safe from AIDS” (another lie) and a campaign declaring that AIDS is “The Killer next door” ensued. Horrible. And since then, we've had fear-mongering over environmentalism, poisoning the ocean, over-population and draconian population control measures, climate change and on and on the list goes. It is as if the AIDS/HIV event became the playbook out of which the “crisis driven” government practices governance. It certainly effected the handling of COVID-19 in a reprehensible and extremely costly manner. *It is not that we didn't have the expertise, or the data to have handled each of these catastrophic end-of-the-world causes.* However, that is the kind of world that Christ entered to alter. Fear destroys community, but Christ alive, crucified and risen builds trust, and hope, and trust, *the essentials to community which make for human health and human thriving.* **Christ came that we may have life and that abundantly.**

---

<sup>1</sup> By the end of 1999, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 751,965 people, living and dead had contracted AIDS in the United States since the beginning of the epidemic: (At the end of 2019, an estimated .3% of the American population had AIDS—*hardly an epidemic*, certainly a terrible figure but way short of “We Are All Going to Die.” Compare our .3% with Uganda (6.7%) and Malawi (9.2%) for more perspective.)

- About 50% were men who had sex with other men.
- 28% were IV drug users.
- 6% more were men who had sex with men and injected drugs.
- 1% got HIV through a blood transfusion.
- Less than 1% were hemophiliacs.

That leaves about 13-14%—99,483 cases—listed officially as “heterosexual contact.” But not just any heterosexual contact.

Of these about 35,000 got AIDS after sex with an IV drug user, most of them women who got HIV from a man who injected drugs. Another 4,000 women got HIV and Eventually AIDS from a bisexual male. Another 1,681 got AIDS after having sex with a hemophiliac, or someone who had a blood transfusion that was infected with HIV.

*And then there's the mystery group, the group which helps feed the myth about heterosexual AIDS.*

The CDC lists 58,571 people in the United States as having gotten AIDS after “sex with HIV-infected person, risk not specified.”

So how many heterosexual Americans got AIDS from another heterosexual not in a high-risk group? **Nobody knows.** But the data would indicate that the number is very, very small. (p.88)

And as the first step on our path to that higher plane of existence, heaven, is the confrontation with death—which is Christ’s defeat of our ancient foe, and the disarming of death. False narratives do not exist in heaven. For if there is life beyond life then death is terminated, by resurrection faith, once for all. It’s game over for death and the grave. We shall rise and all of this fear, anxiety, and terror will fade in our rearview mirror. Easter is our triumph over death!

Amen.