



## **God's Sovereign choice Chief Priest!**

### **Matthew 27:62-66**

**Matthew 27:62-66**, *On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, <sup>63</sup> saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'<sup>64</sup> 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 has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."<sup>65</sup> Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how."<sup>66</sup> So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.*

We as Christians must understand one of the greatest and essential attributes of God is that God is above all things sovereign.

The old theologians used to call it the supremacy of God.

We like to use the term the sovereignty of God.

God rules over all things.

God controls all things.

The implications are beyond our ability to grasp. We can't understand more of them than we will understand when we have completed our lesson this morning.

The Bible teaches unequivocally that God is the supreme ruler in the universe.

God is the one who created and sustains all things.

The one who ordained is the one who brings it to pass.

The one who established the plan is the one who sees it to its fulfilment.

The testimony of the Scripture to the sovereignty of God.

**1 Chronicles 29:11-13**, *Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, And You are exalted as head over all. <sup>12</sup> Both riches and honour come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all. <sup>13</sup> "Now therefore, our God, We thank You And praise Your glorious name.*

**2 Chronicles 20:6**, and said: *“O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?”*

**Job 23:13**, *“But He is unique, and who can make Him change? And whatever His soul desires, that He does.*

God never think twice between opinions. He has one mind and no one can change it and no one can alter it.

**Psalm 115:3**, *But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.*

**Psalm 135:6**, *Whatever the Lord pleases He does, In heaven and in earth, In the seas and in all deep places.*

**Proverbs 21:30**, *“There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.”*

**Isaiah 46:10**, *Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’*

**Daniel 4:35**, *All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, “What have You done?”*

No one can alter it and no one really can even question it.

**Ephesians 1:11**, *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,*

Myriads of Scriptures tell us that God is sovereign.

Truth must be to understand by all.

The world and the universe and all that is going on with the millions and billions of isolated circumstances are not functioning at random. There is a design. A designer has a purpose, goal, objective and an intention in all of it.

Now to understand how God could take the almost infinite number of circumstances, attitudes and events that exist both in the natural and the demonic world and pull them all together to work out His own will is really beyond our comprehension.

We cannot conceive of that.

It is enough for us to figure out how a computer with identifiable data can come rapidly to a conclusion.

But to understand how the infinite mind of eternal God can collect, collate, and bring to perfect harmony every isolated bit of data that exists in the entire universe and make it all work for His will is really beyond our understanding.

To get a small grasp on the reality of this truth, we need to do to understand that God basically rules in the world through two things.

- One is miracle.
- Another is Providence.

To accomplish His purpose there are times when God interrupts the natural stream. There are times when He interrupts the natural course of the flow of history.

- ✓ He interrupts it supernaturally.
- ✓ He acts in violation of natural law.
- ✓ He overrules natural law.
- ✓ He sets it aside.
- ✓ He invades with supernatural power to accomplish His will.

To accomplish His goal, God simply sets aside the natural flow and does things that are naturally scientifically inexplicable. There is no scientific explanation for a miracle.

Now Scripture is full of this kind of thing.

**Creation** itself obviously was the first interruption in the status quo when God, in a matter of six days, created all that exists.

There was the incredible and miraculous event was the **flood**, when God drowned the entire world except for the saving of eight souls and two of each kind of animal.

The **plagues that came in Egypt** and the death of the first born when God miraculously violated the course of nature, overruled the natural flow, to get His people out of Egypt and into the promised land.

The miracle of the **parting of the Red Sea** for the people of Israel which sea then closed to drown the armies of Egypt.

God brought **water from a rock**, miraculous, overruling the natural.

God provided **manna from heaven** and birds to eat when the people wanted flesh to eat.

God on one occasion caused **the sun to retreat** and go **backwards on a sundial**.

On another occasion God had **the sun stand still**, that is the earth stopped revolving and no one fell off. Supernaturally God controlled creation.

The **ground opened and swallowed** all of those who rebelled against Him under the rebellion of Korah. The miracle was the ground opening and swallowing only those who had sinned and not the others.

**The walls of Jericho fell** flat without any mechanical reason or physical phenomena to make that happen.

God made **an axe head float** and raised a dead boy and provided food for a widow.

One time when a **donkey talked**.

**Another time** when a **chariot of fire caught** in a **whirlwind took Elijah to heaven** without death.

The miracle of **the divine handwriting on the wall in Belshazzar's** feast.

God closed the mouths of lions.

**Three men in a fiery furnace** who did not burn and were not even singed.

**The healings of Jesus and the raising of the dead.**

The **miracles of the Apostles**.

There have been times when God must bring about His eternal purposes, done miraculous things which interrupt the flow of natural history. That we call miracle.

God does that as a means of maintaining His sovereign control over the events that are taking their place in the world.

Most people understand that if they understand anything about the Scripture.

But there is a second factor that many people do not think about that is equally significant.

God not only takes the world and the universe to its destiny using miracles, also using providence.

The word providence is not in the Bible like the word Trinity.

Trinity isn't in the Bible, but the Trinity is.

Providence as a term isn't in the Bible, but the providence of God is.

A term to describe a very important way in which God controls things that are happening in the universe.

God, rather than overruling or interrupting or violating the natural course, simply manipulates and uses all the events that are happening to come to His own ends.

On the one hand He interrupts those events,

On the other hand He simply orchestrates them all, pulls them all together to bring His predetermined conclusion to pass.

Providence is a greater miracle than a miracle.

It seems to me that it would be easier to do miracles.

The wonder of wonders to me is not just the miracle where God instantly invades and just interrupts and violates the flow of everything. The greater wonder is that God can take it all and still make it work for His will. Astounding!

The diversity of an innumerable number of events, circumstances, and attitudes that occur within the limited freedom of men and demons, and God pulls it all together to accomplish exactly what He wants done.

Incredible not only to conceive that it can be done but to make it happen.

Precisely that is what God does, so that the world with what we assume to be an almost infinite number of random choices is doing nothing more than acting out that which is predetermined by God. That is the sovereignty of God, the infinite mind of God.

We read the Bible and find that God uses the thunder, lightning, rain, waters, rivers, hail, frost, ice, snow, cold, heat, sunshine, animals, birds, beasts, nations, governments, kings, princes, rulers, governors, and everyone and everything.

God uses everything and everybody and He pulls it all together to accomplish exactly what He wants done.

All these beings are making random choices, functioning in a way that seems at least to them to be detached from any sovereign control.

- ✓ God sets the birth and death of every man.
- ✓ God sees all they do.
- ✓ God knows all they think.
- ✓ God hears all they say.
- ✓ God uses their good.
- ✓ God uses their bad.
- ✓ God uses the free choices of men.

They are made to fit perfectly into His eternal purposes. Even the choices being made by fallen angels called demons are fitting perfectly into His purposes.

**Proverbs 16:1**, *“The plans of the heart belong to man but the answer of the tongue is from Jehovah.”*

**Proverbs 19:21**, *“There are many devices in a man’s heart but the counsel of Jehovah, that shall stand.”*

**Jeremiah 10:23**, *O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*

Men think they are doing what they want to do. The fact is, they are fitting into a grander scheme that is being worked out by infinitely wise and holy God.

**Philippians 2:13**, *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

God controls everything, even sin.

God allows some, prevents some, and limits all of it to His purpose.

**Proverbs 16:9**, *A man’s heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.*

**John 5:17**, *But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”*

They are controlling everything to bring about the eternal plan. That is the sovereignty of God.

To do that God uses on occasion the miracle which invades that natural flow, but most of the time with very isolated exceptions, God does not use miracles.

They were existing in the time of the **Elijah and Elisha**, in the time of **Moses** before that, in the **time of Christ**, in the time of **the Apostles** and in only those times in biblical redemptive history and the history of the church do we see miracles as any kind of norm.

The rest of the time God uses providence the pulling together of all the diverse elements.

Remember the life story of Joseph.

Joseph was one of 12 brothers. The brothers hated Joseph because Joseph was the favoured son. They decided to get rid of Joseph. There were a group of Midianite traders heading to Egypt through their particular property in the land of Canaan.

They decided to sell Joseph into slavery. They sold Joseph to these traders who took him down to Egypt and made him a slave. He became a slave because of the whim of his brothers, because of the hatred of his brothers. There was no miracle in that. It was just an act that the brothers did thinking they were responding to their own emotions and their own best interests.

Joseph goes to Egypt. He ends up serving a man named Potiphar. Potiphar has a wife who likes the way Joseph looks. She decides to seduce Joseph. Joseph won't have a thing to do with it. He runs. She grabs his coat and accuses him falsely of intending to rape her.

Joseph is then thrown into jail. He is in jail because of this woman and because everybody believed her lies. In jail he comes across another prisoner. This other prisoner has a dream. He interprets the dream.

The Pharaoh has a dream and the Pharaoh says, "Who can interpret my dream?" The cupbearer says, "There is a Hebrew in jail who can interpret your dream."

Joseph comes to the Pharaoh, interprets his dream, the Pharaoh makes him Prime Minister of Egypt. No miracles.

- The decision of the brothers,
- The decision of Potiphar's wife,
- The decision of the cupbearer in the jail,
- The decision of Pharaoh,

Joseph has gone from being sold into slavery to being the second man in Egypt under the Pharaoh. He is the Prime Minister of Egypt.

Because Joseph has a plan.

The Pharaoh's dream said there would be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. During the seven years of plenty Joseph collects 20 percent tax from everybody of all their grain and all that they have and stores it away to feed his nation during the seven years of famine. During the seven years of famine the people living up in his homeland don't have any supply, they haven't prepared for this.

They all come to Egypt to beg for some food from Egypt.

**Who do you think they are going to have to come to beg for it?**

Joseph.

Joseph's family comes to him to get food.

**What happens if Joseph's family die?**

Then the 12 tribes of Israel will be lost.

They come to Joseph to beg him for some provision.

**Genesis 45:4-5**, *And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup> But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.*

God could have just picked up Joseph, taken him in a cloud, dropped him into Egypt and made him Prime Minister instantaneously.

Didn't do that. That would have been a miracle.  
But God didn't use a miracle, but He used providence.

A whole lot of random choices by a whole lot of people did nothing but work out God's perfect plan.

**Genesis 45:6-7**, *For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvesting.<sup>7</sup> And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*

Isn't that great.

**Genesis 50:20**, *But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.*

God in a sequence of random events working out His purpose.

### **What was His purpose?**

To preserve the 12 sons, to preserve the 12 tribes of Israel.

God does it through providence. No miracle.

### **Naomi.**

Naomi who had a son and her son violated the law of God, breached the law of God by marrying a pagan Moabites woman by the name of Ruth.

He took off, married Ruth, went to live in Moabite country, violating God's law. He died probably as a divine judgment along with his brother who did the same thing and married Orpah.

When God took their lives Ruth was left with Naomi her mother-in-law who was a Jewess.

Ruth at that point because of the testimony of Naomi said to her.

**Ruth 1:16**, *But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God.*

Through the testimony of Naomi, she came to faith in the true God.

What happened was there was a sin, God overruled the sin.  
Out of that sin brought Ruth to meet Naomi.

Out of that meeting brought Ruth to know the true God.

Naomi took Ruth back to the land. She was gleaning in the field of a man named Boaz who was related to her dead husband. That man under Jewish law took her as his wife. She became the grandmother of David. She was put in the Messianic line.

No miracle, just providence.

God controlling everybody's choices and all the events.

### **The story of Esther.**

The book of Esther the name of God is never mentioned in the entire book.

It is the only book in the Bible that doesn't mention God in any way. Yet the main character in the book of Esther is God.

There are no miracles in the book of Esther, but God is at work in a way that is even beyond the miraculous.

It is an unbelievable series of providential events orchestrated by God to bring about His will. Now God's will in the book of Esther is to preserve the nation, Israel. But there is a man in the kingdom there who wants them eliminated.

He wants all the Jews annihilated because he despises the worship of the true God. His name is Haman. Haman is a high official. He has the ear of the king. The king is impressed by Haman who flatters him. Haman has this plot to get rid of the Jews.

The plot hasn't even come to the knowledge of everybody when the book begins.

What happens in the beginning of the book is the king's wife Vashti is deposed. He wants to replace the queen. He wants a new queen.

He wanted the most beautiful girl. There was Mordecai a Jew, who kept the gate there. He was a foster father to a girl named Esther.

Esther was a beautiful girl. Mordecai realized that this might be a wonderful opportunity for her to live in that kind of situation and to have good influence for his people. So, he entered her in the queen's beauty contest and she won.

The king took Esther as his queen. Once that's established then the plot begins to thicken. Nobody really knows she is Jewish. Haman then plots this annihilation of all the Jewish people which would create great problems with the plan of God in the Persian Empire there, about **483 B.C.**

Haman persuades the king to stamp an edict to annihilate all the Jews, which the king does. He himself sought to kill Mordecai who was sort of the representative Jew truly devoted to God.

At that point Esther found out about the plot. Esther is now in a position to influence the king. She goes to the king and really lays it on. She really put on all the stuff and went in and begged him on behalf of her people.

The King is not able to sleep and asked the people read the records and finds that Mordecai was once helped the plot to kill king and has been defeated. He wants to honour him. Next morning Haman reports to the king and king asks him the question what should be done to the one who helped the king. The answer was highest honour. He ask him to do that to Mordecai.

The king favoured Esther and Mordecai, spared all the Jewish people, made Mordecai the Prime Minister and hanged Haman on the gallows he built himself for the Jewish people and preserved the nation, Israel.

There isn't a miracle in the book, and the name of God isn't mentioned. God is in control of every single event.

This is how God controls history through providence.

We will never see the providence of God anymore graphically then we will see it in the scene in the death and burial of Jesus Christ.

The greatest illustration of the sovereignty of God and the providence of God is in the death of Jesus Christ. That's the greatest illustration.

God used all the human and Satanic forces to kill His Son to accomplish His redemptive purpose.

- ✓ God controlled the hatred of the Jews.
- ✓ God controlled the hostility of the Romans toward the Jews.
- ✓ God controlled even the defection of the disciples.

God controlled every element of the betrayal of Judas, the denial of Peter, every piece of that entire scene was controlled by God., Jesus even rode into the city on the very day that Daniel prophesied in chapter 9 He would do it.

Jesus rode into the city on the very day everyone else was selecting their Passover lamb, He coming as the true Passover lamb.

He died on the very day that the Passover lambs were slaughtered. Every single detail was covered.

All by the free choice of men.

They thought by the solicitation of demons moving on the hearts of evil men to accomplish this.  
In truth it is all the work of God.

- There are no miracles in the trial of Christ,
- There are no miracles on the cross,
- There are no miracles in the burial,
- but there is providence and God is controlling every detail.

**Acts 4:27-28**, *“For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together <sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.*

Herod was against Him,  
Pilate was against Him,  
The Jews were against Him,  
The Gentiles were against Him.

They were all against Your holy child Jesus.

They just did what God laid out for them to do, and they did it with their own independent choices within the framework of their sin and yet worked out the perfect plan of God.

Staggering thing to understand the providence of God.

- He uses the plotting of evil men.
- He uses the hatred of the leaders,
- the fickle affection of the crowd,
- the defection of the disciples,
- the execution of the Romans,

Every piece of the puzzle to bring about His own perfect will.

**Psalm 76:10**, *“Surely the wrath of man shall praise You; With the remainder of wrath You shall gird Yourself.*

In the burial of Christ, we have the providence of God at work.

**V 57-60**, God uses to do this by Joseph of Arimathea.

There were two prophecies about the burial of Christ.

The first one was **Isaiah 53:9**, *“His grave was assigned to be with wicked men, but He was with a rich man in His death.”*

He was supposed to be buried with the criminals, but He wound up with a rich man in His death. The prophet said He would be with a rich man in His death.

The second prophecy of His death is in **Matthew 12:40** and that is that as Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man will be three days in the earth before His resurrection.

A rich man in His death and  
Three days and three nights buried.

**Joseph of Arimathea** had prior been a secret disciple and having seen Jesus die and having love for Jesus and affection for Him, the one who is secret is now willing to take a stand for Christ, not even for a living Christ but for a dead Christ.

- He is going to sacrifice all his relationships.
- He is a member of the Sanhedrin.
- He is going to forfeit that, his social status, his business.
- He will be cut off in every way.

But his affection for the now dead Christ pulls his heart so much that he wants Him to have a proper place of burial. A rich man comes, just as Isaiah said.

Joseph when he had taken the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, laid it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock and rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and left.

This is not a miracle.  
May be a greater miracle than a miracle.

God worked out all those details to get Jesus into the grave before the day was over so that He would be there a part of Wednesday to fulfil the prophecy.

The providence of God working to proclaim the deity of Christ through the fulfilment of prophecy even in His burial.

The second way we see the providence of God here is through the two women in verse 61. They are used to show it through first-hand testimony.

### **The Chief Priest.**

**V 62**, *On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate,*

The third group that God providentially orders in the scene to bring about the amazing burial of Jesus Christ are the chief priests and the Pharisees.

They provide in this testimony to the deity of Christ as forceful as any proof of His resurrection anywhere in the Scripture.

This is Passover day now.

The next day is the feast of the unleavened bread.

It is an annual Sabbath.

Chief priests and Pharisees both came together.

- Chief Priest represents the Sanhedrin, the ruling body.
- Chief priests were Sadducees.

The Pharisees were their theological enemies and opponents.

It is an uncommon kind of combination.

**Acts 23:8**, *For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.*

They both don't agree on anything.

But they could agree on one thing and that was they wanted to make sure they eliminated the movement around Jesus Christ.

It wasn't enough to have Him dead. They weren't done yet. They were afraid of one more thing.

They get together in a small group and they come to Pilate.

**What is their request?**

**V 63**, *saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'*

"Saying, Sir" a term of dignity and honour.

They were afraid because He said after three days I will rise. They call Him that deceiver.

They use a pronoun 'that,' which indicates He is far removed from them. A word that calls Him a seducer of the people, that deceiver, that one who deceives the people.

They have such contempt for Christ.

Their hostility, hatred, and brutality extend even beyond His death. They are still identifying Him with these ungracious epithets.

The thing they are concerned about is that He said, *"After three days I will rise again."*

### **When did Jesus say that?**

They said we want a sign.

**Matthew 12:38-41**, *Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."*

*<sup>39</sup> But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. <sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. <sup>42</sup> The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.*

They understood that Jesus was saying that He is going to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth just like Jonah was.

They knew what He was saying. He was saying, "I am going to go into the ground, be buried and rise."

The disciples didn't even understand it.

The disciples thought He was talking mystically, spiritually, figuratively. They didn't understand that He was talking about a real death and a real resurrection.

But the Jews didn't think about the mystical, spiritual, physical thing because they didn't believe He was the Messiah anyway.

They thought He was just an impostor who was going to try to pull something off which obviously He couldn't do.

But the fact that He said He was going to do it, the disciples must have thought He was supposed to do it, and they might even try to pull it off themselves.

Their concern was Jesus had said He was only going to be three days in the earth.

**V 64**, *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 has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."*

They are commanding Pilate to command.

They still have him under their control.

He is intimidated by them for fear they will report him to Caesar if there is another conflict.

**Matthew 12:40** it was three days and three nights.

**V 63**, it's after three days.

They say, "You better make that grave secure."

**V 64**, *lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.'*

They are not afraid that He will rise. They are afraid that the disciples will fabricate a resurrection to keep the movement alive.

That's what they are afraid of. The irony of it is the disciples had no such thought. The disciples couldn't get their own heads together. They are afraid. They are off somewhere.

We don't know where they are hiding. They don't even understand the reality of a resurrection. They are thinking of it mystically, figuratively, spiritually. They don't understand the real death and the real resurrection as happening, even though Jesus said to them repeatedly.

**Matthew 16:21, Matthew 17:23, Matthew 20:19, and Mark 8:31.**

**Mark 9:9-10**, *Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.*

The disciples couldn't handle that, the physical thing, because they couldn't handle that He would ever die.

**Mark 9:31-32**, *For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.*

**Mark 10:33-34**, *"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; <sup>34</sup> and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."*

They still don't get the message. They still do not understand what He is really talking about. They are in the dark about it.

**John 20:9**, *For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.*

When they came into the empty tomb still, they couldn't understand.

It just never occurred that He was speaking about a real death and a real resurrection.

The Jews thought He was claiming that, which He couldn't pull off. But they were afraid the disciples would have thought just like they did, that He really meant that and so to keep their movement alive they would come and steal the body.

To prevent that, they go to Pilate and they say, "We want the guard put on the grave so that the disciples are unable to come and steal away the body."

**V 64**, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.'

That deceiver who will be allowed another deception, and it will be worse than the first one.

### **What was the first deception?**

The triumphal entry.

He comes riding into the city on the colt, the foal of an ass, the garments and the branches and everything is thrown at His feet. Jesus comes riding into the city, "*Hosanna. Halleluiah to the Son of David. Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.*"

They were giving Him all the Messianic accolades as He came into the city, and the Jews saw that as a tremendous deception.

The whole crowd, the whole city has gone out to Jesus. They are deceived. They think He is the Messiah.

What they are saying to Pilate is this: If you think that caused a problem, you just watch what happens if the disciples are able to fabricate the fact that He rose from the dead.

**V 65**, Pilate said to them, "*You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how.*"

He gave them a Roman guard.

Pilate wants to brush it off. He had enough of the whole thing. He just says, "Here is your guard, get out of here, and make that grave as secure as you possibly can."

**V 66**, *So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.*

Now sealing the stone doesn't mean they sealed it with glue or something.

They probably put some wax on the stone and some wax on the wall of the cave and ran some string and sealed the wax so that if anybody moved the stone, they would have to break the string and they would know it was violated.

That wax may have been stamped with a Roman endorsement so that they would know they were violating Roman law. It was a way to make sure there was nothing done to take the body out.

Then they set in front of the grave a group of Roman soldiers very secure.

This is all the work of the chief priests and the Pharisees and Pilate and the soldiers.  
No miracles!

**What significance does it have?**  
**Do you see what they are doing?**

There are people today who still want to say, "Oh, if the body of Jesus was gone the disciples stole it."

God made sure that a whole lot of pagans, a whole lot of people who rejected and hated Jesus Christ set it up so that there was no way possible for the disciples to steal His body or anybody else either.

**The only way He could have come out of there was by what?**  
Resurrection.

Again, God uses the wrath of men to praise Him.

The Jewish leaders by their hatred of Jesus, Pilate by his scorn and indifference, wanting to slough it all off, make it secure.

**Do you know what would have happened if there was no guard and no seal?**

Nobody was watching the tomb and all a sudden we were trying to preach a message that Jesus rose from the dead.

Somebody would say, "Don't give me that, it never happened. They just took His body, and somebody took on His identity and somebody who looked like Him made a few appearances," and so forth.

But the unbelieving world itself made sure that there is no other explanation for the absent body of Jesus Christ except a resurrection.

If no seal and no guard, the resurrection could have been explained as a grave robbery.

But not after this. The wrath of these Christ haters has led them to secure that grave to the extent that there is no other explanation than a resurrection.

Later, the soldiers were bribed to deny the resurrection, which is another testimony to its reality.

**Conclusion:**

**Do you see how God is working in everything?**

- ✓ God used Joseph of Arimathea providentially to fulfil prophecy.
- ✓ God used the two Marys providentially to give first-hand testimony to the resurrection.

- ✓ God used the chief priests and the Pharisees providentially to give forceful proof that Jesus indeed rose from the dead.

### **How does this relate to you and me?**

**Romans 8:28**, And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

Does that come to you with new meaning now?

Do you understand what that says?

All things are controlled by God to work together to fulfil His eternal purpose for His own beloved children which is their good.

God's sovereignty and God's providence is not some distant doctrine only for theologians.

This is when you can't explain the trouble you are going through that you need to understand the providential power of a sovereign God who takes every bit of the diverse data of the universe and controls it all for your good and His glory and eternal purpose.

### **Is that comforting?**

It doesn't matter what it is.

God demonstrated His ability to do it in the death and burial of Jesus Christ! Glorious!!

Whatever happens in your life, whatever you can't understand, whatever you struggle with, whatever doesn't make sense, whatever trials you may be going through to make it very personal to me, it all fits. It's unquestioned. It all fits. I ask no questions. This is it. This is part of it.

- ✓ God is doing it.
- ✓ God is at work.
- ✓ God is in control.
- ✓ God hasn't abandoned His throne.
- ✓ It is for His glory and for our good.

Our hope and our confidence is in the God who providentially, and if need be miraculously, controls all things to His own intended and eternal purpose.