

Text: Matthew 28:1-8

Title: Announcement of the Resurrection

Truth: Matthew explains what happened after the burial of Jesus.

Date/Location: Wednesday February 8, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

Two months from tomorrow (April 9, 2023) we will be celebrating the resurrection of Christ. But today in our verse-by-verse study in Matthew, we are already at the Scripture which reveals that miraculous event which is at the very foundation of the Christian faith. The text does not give any “theology” or “explanation of the meaning” of the events. It just recounts what happened. Let us read through it with Matthew and see what we can glean.

I. Time, v. 1a

- A. After the Sabbath. Saturday is past. The first day of the week began to dawn. The first day technically started the evening before, but the dawning part of the day was early Sunday morning. For the ladies coming to visit the Lord’s tomb, this was the first opportunity they had to make a visit because of the requirement to cease work on the Sabbath. They were undoubtedly itching to get back there to properly anoint the Lord’s body. I imagine there is not much worse of a “I left something unfinished” feeling than with not giving someone a proper burial.
- B. This timing is why churches meet on the morning of the first day of the week. We are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We do not worship on the Jewish Sabbath, which is Saturday. There is no such thing as a Christian Sabbath, for you will find no instruction or command that shifts the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. We worship on the Lord’s Day. With our Seventh Day Adventist friends (who are hard-nosed about Saturday worship), we share passages such as Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2, Rev. 1:10 which speak to the first day of the week, which also came to be known as the Lord’s Day.

II. Recipients of the News, v. 1b

- A. We have mentioned the two ladies before—Mary Magdalene and the other Mary.
- B. Mary Magdalene. Luke 8:2 (and Mark 16:9) comments that she had been demon possessed. The text presents her as a beneficiary of Christ’s miraculous healing ministry. Some who were healed by Christ walked away; others gave thanks (Luke 17:15-17); and some followed and served Him, like Mary Magdalene.
- C. The “other” Mary. She is identified in 27:56 as the mother of James and Joses (Joseph). Mark 15:40 further identifies this Mary as the mother of James *the Less*. He was one of the twelve apostles selected by the Lord (from Mark 3:16-19):
1. Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter
 2. James the *son* of Zebedee and
 3. John the brother of James, Boanerges, “Sons of Thunder”
 4. Andrew
 5. Philip
 6. Bartholomew
 7. Matthew
 8. Thomas
 9. **James the son of Alphaeus**, identified as James the Less (younger?). So Alphaeus was married to the “other” Mary.
 10. Thaddaeus = Judas the son of James, Judas not Iscariot, and some MSS Lebbeaus, surnamed Thaddaeus.
 11. Simon the Cananite = the Zealot
 12. Judas Iscariot, the betrayer
- D. Matthew reports that they “came to see the tomb.” Mark adds that they bought spices to come and anoint Jesus (Mark 16:1-3; see also Luke 24:1).

III. The Angel’s Arrival, v. 2-4

- A. The angels arrived around the time that the women did. Whether just before or immediately after their arrival is not specified by Matthew, and it is also not that important. We can figure out details by harmonizing all the gospel passages. It all happened

early in the morning. The other gospels indicate that when the women arrived, the stone had just been removed. [As a side note: I believe we English readers probably look at “the women came” and think that it means “they arrived.” In reality, all it means is that they moved, they went, they traveled in that direction. Obviously they did eventually arrive, but the earthquake well could have happened as they made their final approach to the destination.]

- B. The point is that with the angelic arrival came a large earthquake which dislodged the stone from the entryway to the tomb. The angel was the agent who caused the shaking, with the purpose of opening the entry to the tomb.
- C. He sat on the stone, using it as a resting place, so to speak, showing his complete power over it. His appearance was brilliant and white, matching how angels often appear in the Bible.
- D. Because of his presence, the guards were trembling with fear. This is the knee-knocking, incapacitating kind of fear that happens to the body in certain awful circumstances. They were unable to maintain their composure and probably fell, unable to stand their guard. This is a great reminder that the schemes of man (sealing the tomb, using a military guard) are completely inadequate when faced with divine power. God’s power is a totally “other” kind of thing. Like nuclear energy is so much more sophisticated and powerful than gasoline-powered engines, so God’s power is in another league altogether from human power.
- E. Notice that in our reading we did not see Jesus come out of the tomb. From what we can ascertain from all the texts that record the events, His tomb exit preceded the removal of the stone. He did not need a stone moved out of His way. One who can rise from the dead in a glorified body does not need the material help of an angel or human to open the tomb. He was not tapping out Morse code on the inside of the large stone, asking to be let out! The stone was removed for the benefit of people—to let them in—not to let Jesus out.

IV. The Angel's Message, v. 5-7

- A. Do not be afraid. The women would likely share the same fear that the soldiers had, so the reassurance would help them. Many times in Scripture angels tell people not to be afraid; God also does this at many places in the Bible (Luke 12:7, 12:32, Rev. 2:10). He knows our frame, that we are but dust. We are weak, including in our emotional state. Even the strongest, most stoic among us has emotions.
- B. The angel knew what they were looking for—Jesus who was crucified. The angel is entirely knowledgeable about the situation that they faced. He knew what they wanted before they arrived. God had sent this angel on a mission to guide the perplexed women and disciples, as well as to dumbfound the soldiers.
- C. He is not here. That was news! Why was He not there? Had His body been stolen? Had the Romans moved it? Had the Pharisees come and taken it?
- D. He has risen from the dead. None of the aforementioned explanations were correct. The fact was that He was now alive. No other human being was involved in His “disappearance” from the tomb. An angel from God confirmed this word. The skeptic, of course, will say that there was no angel; rather, the women were full of wishful thinking, perhaps even having a hallucination brought on by strong hopes that Jesus had not really died, or had come back to life. But the disciples did, collectively speaking, look into the tomb and saw there was no body there. Furthermore, later that morning and day, and in the following days, they saw Him alive, and He gave them many infallible proofs-of-life.
- E. “As He said.” The angel reminds the women that the Lord had told them he would rise from the dead. Remember, the Lord had promised multiple times that he would rise on the third day (Matt 12:39-40, [16:4,] 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, 27:63-64; Mark 9:31, 10:34; Luke 9:22, [11:29-30,] 18:33, 24:7, 24:46; John 2:19-20).
- F. “See for yourself that he is not here.” There is no hiding anything here. The eyewitnesses were invited right in. Of course, you cannot see because you are not alive at this time and in this place. But you

can believe reliable, repeated eyewitness testimony—by these women, by the angel, by the other disciples, recorded in the Bible, reinforced by the lives and martyrdom of the disciples, and evidenced by the radical transformation and holiness of Christ’s followers and their impact on the world.

- G. The angel told them to go and tell the other disciples, and do so quickly. They had suffered in grief long enough. It was time to get them the good news. Also, the angel had a message for the disciples: they were to go to Galilee to meet Jesus.
- I. “Look, I’m telling you.” That’s my paraphrase of what the angel said to close his speech.

V. The Women’s Response, v. 8

- A. The women went out quickly, with a mixture of fear and great joy. Can you imagine that?
- B. They went to tell the disciples. There was no more important thing to do at that time. Nothing else mattered.

Conclusion

The glorious truth of the resurrection of Jesus had to be told. Such was the command of the angel.

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