

**Text:** Matthew 28:9-15

**Title:** The Risen Christ is Worshipped

**Truth:** Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, seems even *more* worthy of our worship than He was before rising from the dead.

**Date/Location:** Wednesday February 15, 2023 at FBC

## Introduction

So far we have read that on the first day of the week, the women who came to the tomb of Jesus learned from an angel that Jesus was not there anymore He had risen from the dead shortly before. They left to tell the other disciples this news. Next, there is the...

### I. First Appearance of Jesus and Worship of Him

- A. But as they went, they encountered Jesus. Because of the shock and surprise of the entire situation, it may have taken a few moments for them to recognize Him. But they did. See Luke 24:16 and John 20:15 for initial confusion about who the risen Jesus actually was.
- B. Jesus greeted the women with what the NKJV translates as “Rejoice!” The word is in the imperative form but in that form it is often used as a formal greeting wishing the other party well. It expresses the good relationship that the parties have together. It could have the nuance of *welcome*, or *good day*, or *hail* or *hello* or *I am glad to see you*. Of course, the women would think, “No, we are glad to see *You!*”
- C. The women grabbed hold of Jesus. They did not want to let Him go. The fact that He took upon Himself humanity including human flesh means that He is one that someone can hang onto. The women did that. They were “huggers” so to speak.
- D. They worshipped Him. This is completely appropriate because Jesus is the Son of God, God the Son, the Son of Man, co-equal with the Father. It is a common response, not one that is rare or unattested in the text of the Bible. Notice these texts:

Matthew 2:2, 2:11, 8:2, 9:18, 14:33, 15:25, 21:9, 28:17; Mark 5:6; Luke 24:52; John 9:38, 12:13, 20:28; Hebrews 1:6, 1:8.

These 15+ texts demonstrate conclusively that Jesus was, is, and ought to be worshipped.

Furthermore, Revelation 5:8-14 clearly shows the Lamb being worshipped alongside of God (the Father).

- E. Jesus told the women not to be afraid. Their hearts were no doubt beating fast and they felt strange with all that was happening. He reassured them. Take this word for yourself when you are feeling scared or overwhelmed.
- F. He also instructed them to tell the disciples to go to Galilee to meet with Jesus. This must have been an important instruction because the angel said it, and now Jesus says it again. We read about that Galilee meeting in 28:16 and in John 21.

## II. Bribery and Lies

- A. It seems possible that the guards, or some of them, observed what happened with the women when they encountered Jesus. But if not, they had observed the open and empty tomb, the angel, the earthquake, and the angel's message. They were undoubtedly also in a state of shock, as well as fear for their lives since they had ultimately failed in their mission. In a similar situation, some soldiers lost their lives in what we might chalk up to collateral damage (Acts 12:1-19, esp. verses 18-19).
- B. If it came down to it, I probably would come to their defense in the sense that it was obvious—because of divine intervention—that it was *impossible* for them to carry out their assigned mission. Acts 2:24 says that it was not possible for even death itself to hold Jesus in captivity. So a tomb rock, a seal, and a few soldiers were completely inadequate.
- C. With their lives on the line, they had to find some allies “in the system”—some power brokers—to vouch for them. They could not go to Pilate. They had to go to someone else who had a vested interest in the outcome of the situation, so they went to the Jewish chief priests.
- D. This was no small matter for the priests. They had to put their heads together with the elders to see what to do about it. They

decided that they would bribe the soldiers to lie. This would suffice for the Jews to keep up the story that Jesus was dead. It would also pay for living expenses for the soldiers, since they might not be able to work as soldiers any longer. Or maybe they would continue their jobs as soldiers but this was fun money for them.

- E. In return for all the risk they were facing, the soldiers were given not only money, but also a guarantee that the elders and priests would go to bat for them before the governor so as to save their lives. If the governor heard that they had fallen asleep on the job, he might have them executed for abandoning their post.
- F. Given their circumstances, the soldiers were not going to get a better deal anywhere else, so they took this bargain and went about lying about the situation. They lied that they fell asleep—which lie would put them in jeopardy of their lives and is why they received money from the priests. They lied that the disciples came and took away the body. How they knew this if they were sleeping is not quite clear, although they probably would have said they woke up just as the disciples were leaving and they could not catch them, or something similar.

Their version of events became the commonly-reported “fake news” of the day and was still circulating some years later when Matthew wrote his gospel (50-60 AD?).

- G. The Bible’s prohibition against bribery is clear. The priests knew better than to take a bribe, much less give one: Exodus 23:8; Deut. 10:17, 16:19; 1 Samuel 8:3, 12:3; 2 Chron. 19:7; Psalm 15, esp. v. 5), 26:9-10; Prov. 15:27, 17:23, 21:14, 29:4; Eccles. 7:7; Isa. 1:23 (the priests were like the ‘shepherds’ of old in Israel), 33:14-15; Ezekiel 22:12; Amos 5:12; Micah 3:9-12, 7:2-3. By the way, notice that all these are in the Old Testament! But the principle is as true today as it was then, even though the New Testament does not mention it.

In this particular case, the bribe does not seem to have perverted justice in the sense that it did not get a truly guilty person off the hook. Instead, it propagated a lie and helped make that lie more believable to the crowds. In the end, it did pervert the truth and direct people away from God and Messiah instead of toward Him.

## Conclusion

What struck me most about this passage most was the worship of the Lord. It was spontaneously offered by the women. It was not precisely the kind of worship that we might think about when we think of worship, such as singing hymns. But it was bowing down, holding His feet, expressing reverence and gratitude. Their attitude toward the Lord was tremendously worshipful. After all, not only did they know everything from before about this Man, but now they were seeing a man who Himself had risen from the dead. No one had done that before. He is definitely worthy of worship.

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