

The resurrection of Jesus Christ produced various reactions among the different people involved in His death and burial. Some became fearful and even attempted to cover up and explain away the resurrection. However, others responded with surprise, joy and anticipation as they met with Jesus and received His command to reach the world with the good news of salvation through faith in Him and what He had accomplished through His death, burial and resurrection.

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1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

**“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week”** – The sabbath ended at sundown Saturday evening and this would be Sunday morning as the sun was starting to rise.

**“came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre”** – The “other Mary” is believed to be Mary the wife of Cleophas, who stood by the cross with the other women as Jesus was being crucified (John 19:25). They did not come merely to see the sepulcher but had brought spices to anoint Jesus’ body for burial (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1).

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2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

**“And, behold, there was a great earthquake”** – This earthquake is only recorded in Matthew and it’s unclear if the earthquake is the result of Jesus’ resurrection or the angel descending to roll back the stone.

**“for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door”** – Obviously, the angel did not come down to roll back the stone because Jesus needed help getting out of the sepulcher. Rather, the stone was rolled back to allow the women (and later, the disciples) to see that the tomb was empty.

**“and sat upon it”** – The angel was waiting for the women to arrive in order to proclaim to them that Jesus had risen and to demonstrate that the stone had been rolled back at the command of God. The chief priests and Roman soldiers had taken steps to prevent the stone from being rolled back but they could not stop the power of God!

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3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*.

**“His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow”** – The angel’s face and clothing shone with heavenly glory, similar to that of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:2). At that early hour while it was still dark, the angel’s appearance must have been brilliant and intimidating.

**“And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*”** – Only Matthew’s gospel records that Roman soldiers were assigned to guard the sepulcher (Matt. 27:62-66). The other gospels ignore them, perhaps because their presence was inconsequential despite the insistence of the chief priests and Pharisees that they guard the sepulcher. These soldiers were no doubt surprised by the appearance of the angel in the dark and they trembled in fear. Apparently they were so overcome with fear that they had fainted and passed out for we have no record of them interacting with the women or anyone else at the sepulcher. They evidently did not wake up (or were too afraid to do anything) until after everyone had left or else woke up and fled, perhaps shortly after the women left.

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5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

**“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye”** – The sight of the angel and the passed-out soldiers would have caused the women to be afraid, but the angel assures them that they have nothing to fear.

**“for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified”** – The soldiers were there to make sure the sepulcher remained closed. However, God had sent the angel to open the sepulcher to reveal that Christ had risen. While the soldiers had a reason to fear since they were at cross-purposes with God, the women had no reason to be afraid because the angel understood their purpose for coming to the sepulcher.

**“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay”** – They had come to anoint the Lord’s body with spices, but the angel informs that Jesus was no longer there because He had risen just as He said that He would. Personally, I like what the angel said in Luke’s account: “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” (Luke 24:5b). The angel invites the women to see for themselves that Jesus is no longer there.

**Verses 7-10:** The angel instructs the women to go and tell the disciples that Jesus has risen from the dead and that He will meet them in Galilee. The women are filled with joy and as they leave to tell the disciples what has happened, Jesus appears to them with a greeting. As they hold Him by the feet and worship Him, Jesus also instructs them to tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee.

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11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

By the time the women have left the sepulcher to deliver Jesus’ message to the disciples, the Roman soldiers have apparently recovered from their experience with the earthquake and the angel and decide that they should report what has happened. Pilate had placed this squad of soldiers under the authority of the chief priests (Matt. 27:62-66) and so this is who they go to with their report.

12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

**“And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel”** – The Jewish leadership met to decide how to handle this situation. Their hypocrisy is evident because rather than investigating to see if Jesus was indeed the Messiah after all and that He was indeed risen from the dead, they instead choose to attempt to cover it up with a lie.

**“they gave large money unto the soldiers”** – The Jewish leadership are willing to bribe the soldiers with enough money to convince them to cooperate with the cover-up. This shows that they know that *something* has happened.

**“Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept”** – In addition to giving enough money to make them willing, the Jews provide the soldiers with the cover story to explain why the body of Jesus is no longer in the sepulcher. Of course, this is a weak story since it doesn't explain how the soldiers knew who had stolen the body if they were asleep. And if one of them was awake to see, why did he not sound an alarm so that they could prevent the theft and capture the perpetrators?

**“And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you”** – It was a serious offense for a soldier assigned to a watch to fall asleep while on duty, often punishable by death. It could be a dangerous situation for these soldiers if Pilate were to hear that they had fallen asleep while on watch duty, so in addition to the money the Jews give the soldiers their assurance that they will intercede on their behalf before the governor so that they will not get in trouble. Obviously they feared the truth more than the consequences of a lie.

15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

**“So they took the money, and did as they were taught”** – The money and the assurances that they will not be prosecuted for “sleeping on the job” are enough to convince the soldiers to use the cover story given by the Jews instead of telling the truth.

**“and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day”** – The cover story that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body became the default explanation for the empty sepulcher from that day on, or at least until the day that Matthew was writing this. Some skeptics still attempt to use this explanation today to discount Jesus' resurrection.

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

**“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them”** – Apparently before His crucifixion Jesus had chosen a specific place in Galilee to meet with the disciples after His resurrection (**Matt. 26:32** “*But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee*”). The women are told twice at the sepulcher to tell the disciples to go meet Jesus in Galilee (v. 7, 10).

**“And when they saw him, they worshipped him”** – The disciples recognize that Jesus has overcome death and risen again as He told them, and so they worship Him as God.

**“but some doubted”** – It is incredible to think that some of the group could doubt who Jesus is after seeing Him die on the cross and now stand before them alive once again. Some commentators suggest that other disciples besides the eleven were there and some of these extra disciples were the ones who were doubting. They point Paul's statement in **1 Cor. 15:6** as referring to this meeting: “*After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.*” Another possibility may be that Jesus looked different after the resurrection since Mary did not recognize Jesus at first (John 20:14-16), nor the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32). When Jesus fed the disciples on the shores of Galilee (John 21:1-12), John says that none of them dared to ask Jesus Who He was since they knew that it was Him. Why make that statement unless there was a reason to doubt Who this was that was feeding them? A third possibility for doubt might be whether or not Jesus was indeed raised to life again or was a ghost. Jesus cleared that up in Luke 24:36-43 when He appeared to them, letting them handle Him and eating fish and honeycomb in front of them. Perhaps what Luke describes is the occasion Matthew mentions here.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

While He was in the flesh, Jesus lived as a man totally submitted to His heavenly Father. Now that His earthly task of bearing our sins is complete, the Father has given Him absolute power (the Greek word means “authority”) over everything that the Father governs, both heavenly and earthly. This is what Paul is speaking about in **Phil. 2:9-11**: “*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

On the basis of this absolute authority, Jesus commands the disciples to take the gospel of Christ to all parts of the world. They (and we) are to baptize those who believe and teach them to obey Christ's commands. Contrary to some teaching today, getting saved goes beyond a mere mental acknowledgment that Jesus died so that we could go to heaven. We are to follow Him, obeying His commands to love one another and live in righteousness. Jesus then promises to be with us as we spread the gospel, meaning that we operate with His authority as well as with His enablement.