

Matthew 28: 5-7; and 27: 57-66

He has RISEN!!

"The angel said to the women, 'do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.' " Matthew 28: 5-7

To fully appreciate this proclamation by the angel at the empty tomb of Jesus, some explanation of the burial of Jesus from the previous chapter may be helpful.

"As evening [of the day of the crucifixion] approached, there was a rich man from Aramathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb, and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb." Matthew 27: 57-61

"The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate, 'Sir,' they said, 'we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, "After three days I will rise again." So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. The last deception will be worse than the first.' "

Matthew 27: 62-66

" 'Take a guard,' Pilate answered. 'Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.' So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard." Matthew 27: 57-66

"After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalen and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for the angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men." Matthew 28: 1-4

Notice that it was the women, NOT the men, who first went to the tomb of Jesus early that morning. These women were the first to see the empty tomb, and they were the first to see the risen Christ. Also notice that the angel did not have to move the stone to let Jesus OUT. Jesus was already gone from the tomb. The angel had to move the stone to let the two Marys and, later the disciples, IN to view the emptiness of the tomb!! The stone, seal on the stone, and the guards that were posted on the tomb to keep the disciples from "stealing" the body ironically all add to the evidence that Jesus actually DID rise from the dead! Of course, the ultimate evidence of the resurrection was the actual appearance of Jesus to his disciples and to several hundred believers, confirmed by the drastic change in their behavior. How could disciples who fled the crucifixion in absolute terror suddenly change into the fearless men and women who willingly suffered torture and death rather than deny their faith in Christ? These Christians of the first century church, who saw the Resurrected Christ and experienced the promised Holy Spirit, turned the world upside down. Through the 2000 years since this time, millions of lives have been drastically changed through the power of the Lord.

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