

## **He is Risen: Matthew 28:1-8**

**28 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.**

The Gospel of Matthew presents the Resurrection of Jesus as the culmination of Jesus' mission as the Messiah.

As followers of Jesus, it's important for us to understand that the cross and resurrection are the fulfillment of God's promise to send a savior, cornerstone of our faith, it is the primary mission of Jesus' life, and is the foundation of the gospel. It can be truly said that if you do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ than you are not a Christian in any ultimately meaningful, saving sense.

We don't see Matthew mention the spices that are so prominent in Luke since the important anointing had already occurred in Matthew 26:12-13 **12 For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. 13 Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her.**" It was this anointing out of her repentant heart and love for Him as Messiah that was the true anointing. The women thought that they were going to pay respects and anoint Jesus' body, thinking that they were arriving just in time, but found out that their role was instead as the primary, first-hand witnesses to both the burial and the resurrection. The women will become the first witnesses to the resurrection, a fact that seems to guarantee the credibility of the account in a world that usually did not accept women's testimony as legally binding. If this were a made-up story designed to persuade people, the last thing that the disciples would do is include women as their primary witnesses. So these women could verify both the location of Jesus' burial, and that by the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, the tomb was empty—thereby proving that God had fulfilled His word not to allow Jesus to see corruption or decay.

**2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it.**

When we see the word Behold, in the Bible, it's like God is saying, "Watch this, you're going to see something special". There were not one, but two great earthquakes during Holy Week.

The first was when Jesus died on the Cross. After three hours of darkness at midday on Good Friday, Our Lord Jesus exclaimed the words "It is finished!" as He died on the cross. Immediately, **51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. 52 Also the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;** (Matt 27:51-54). The earthquake upon the death of Christ called attention to the great salvation that had been accomplished that day on the cross. The barrier between God and man was removed by Jesus' atoning work on the Cross, and was symbolized by the tearing of the Temple's veil, from top to bottom, In our verses today, we read of a second great earthquake that marked the end of Jesus' time in the tomb. But, this time, the agent that God used to cause the earthquake is revealed. An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, causing the earthquake which rolled away the stone. And just to be sure that the enemy wouldn't try to roll it back again, the angel sat on the stone for good measure!

**3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.**

Now, if you saw an angel in their more natural state, with a countenance or face made out of lightning, shining with glorious brightness, coming from the presence of God himself, brightly illuminating the whole tomb, then you would be amazed, and fearful, just as they were.

**4 The guards shook from fear of him and became like dead men.**

Now, why does Matthew bother to tell us about the very different reaction of the guards? These were the same guards that we read about in Matthew 27 vs. 62-66, who were there, not there to serve Jesus, as the women were, but to attempt to hinder His mission.

**5 And the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.**

He knows that they are followers of Jesus, and he confirms that Jesus has been crucified and had been dead. The angel acknowledges that they have come to the right place, the tomb of Jesus. And that it's the same Jesus—Jesus of Nazareth.

**6 He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.**

They are looking for a corpse, but no body remains. Jesus is resurrected, not just spiritually alive, but bodily resurrected, so that the tomb is empty. His own predictions in Matthew have come true (16:21; 17:23; 20:19). The voice of the verb ēgerthē is passive (“he was raised”). God raised Him. The angel tells them, **He is risen; He is not here.** Talk about exceeded expectations. This is exactly the opposite of what they expected to find in the tomb. With this one word, risen, the whole scenario changes. The tragedy of His crucifixion is revealed as a triumph over death and sin. The women who had probably spent the past 3 days crying were suddenly filled with joy! He's Alive—the one that we saw killed in horrible suffering is Alive. The one who we believed in as Messiah, then were suddenly thrown into such confusion when he was killed, is alive, and God has sent His angel to tell us so! They get to hear, for the first time, the central belief, the most important thing in Christianity. Paul later makes this point in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 **3 For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,** This is the means by which God saves us. It is because Christ died, paying for all of our sins, was buried and was raised from the dead that we can be saved. And it is our belief in Jesus, whom God has sent to do this very thing. The wages of sin is death—it should have been us sinners hanging on that tree, but (John 3:16) **6 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.** God gave Jesus, so we wouldn't have to die for our sins. And God raised Jesus to show that the price had been paid. The resurrection is like the receipt from God saying that the price had been paid and that He has accepted the payment. And we can bank on the fact of the resurrection, trusting Him with what is most precious—our eternity. Or as Paul continues in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:20-23 **20 But the fact is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man death came, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,** He is coming back folks, and you want to be His when He does. You want to be found in Christ when He returns.

**Come, see the place where He was lying.**

These words let us know that they saw the place where Jesus had been laid empty, and that they could verify, as eye witnesses, that Jesus was no longer in his tomb on the morning of the third day.

**7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”**

And then the angel gives them a mission. And he tells them to go quickly. Why quickly? Not so much because time is of the essence, but because of the exciting news they have to bring! The best news ever! They are to go tell Jesus' disciples that He is no longer dead, that God has raised Him from the Dead. Acts 2:24 **24 But God raised Him from the dead, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.** As Acts 2:24 tells us. He put an end to the agony of death, not only for Himself, but for us as well. Hell and death had no power over Him, because He did not sin. Remember, at the Last Supper, Jesus had said: as recorded in Matthew 27:32 **32 But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”** If the disciples had really understood, then they would have been waiting for Him in Galilee, and would have likely got to see Him sooner, and spend more time with Him.

**8 And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to report to His disciples.**

Verse 8 says “They left the tomb quickly.” Another way to translate it is that they ran quickly to tell the disciples. They were no longer afraid of having to face the death of their Lord, they now had a Holy fear

of the awesomeness of God. But more importantly, and more at the top of their heart was a profound joy. Joy must have the last word in the hearts of these women who had come to mourn and anoint the dead, and are leaving shouting “He’s Alive!”

**9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Rejoice!” And they came up and took hold of His feet, and worshiped Him.**

Notice that it’s when the joy was overflowing in their hearts in faith, taking God at His word, despite the seeming impossibility of what the angel had said that they see Jesus. It’s the same with us. It’s when we take steps out in faith that God reveals Himself as our protector, our provider our all-becoming-One who is whatever is needed at the time.