

Introduction: Today is the third of the four most important days of the church year, which begins with Advent leading up to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Today we worship God (Father-Son-Holy Spirit) because the unique God-Man (Jesus-Savior), who died for the sins of all people on the second most important day, rose from death on the third day and came out of His tomb in a glorified body! *** Because of what Jesus did on the third most important day, all people who hear this good news can know that, even though they were born with dead spirits (Ephesians 2:1), and from birth live under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19), if they respond and receive Him in humble child-like faith that leads to surrendered obedience to Him, they will have their dead spirits brought to life that is better than they ever dreamed was possible (John 5:24-25). *** All who do this are filled with the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent on the fourth most important day (Acts 2). He will help them understand the Word He inspired (2 Timothy 3:14-17); He will assist them when they pray (Romans 8:26); and, He will give them power to do God's will (Acts 1:8; Philippians 2:12-15). *** Because of all Jesus' resurrection means, we should worship Him with all we are: body, soul and spirit. We should always serve Him in humble, reverent, joyful surrender; because He bought us with the shedding of His life-blood, and redeemed us to life by His resurrection, and empowered us in the Holy Spirit. ***Let us reverently worship our risen Savior.*** *** Matthew tells us that two women and eleven disciples fell down and worshipped Jesus when they saw Him raised from the dead, even before they understood all this meant for them and all people! Furthermore, many who died believing messianic passages in Moses, the prophets and the writings centuries before Jesus was born, came back to life and entered Jerusalem! *** Let us hear this old, old story with open hearts, so we will respond with their wonder driven worship.

I. Two Marys go to Jesus' tomb and find an angel on the stone and guards scared to death; he tells them Jesus has risen from the dead and they must go, tell His disciples; they leave in fear and joy. (Matthew 28:1-8)

- A. Two Marys go to Jesus' tomb on the first day of the week after an earthquake; a glowing angel was sitting on the rolled away stone, and the guards were scared to death. (*Verses 1-4*)
1. After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week dawned, she came – Mary of Magdala, and the other Mary to attentively view the tomb. (*Verse 1*)
Women at tomb: Jesus cast seven demons out of the first Mary (Luke 8:2). The second Mary was His mother's sister (John 19:25). They wanted to view with reverence the place where the One they loved was buried.
Notice the day of the week!
 2. Behold! A great earthquake happened because an angel of the Lord, having descended from heaven rolled away the stone and was sitting upon it. (*Verse 2*)
Signs from heaven: God brought about the earthquake as He sent one of His first-created spirit beings to bring an important message!
 3. His appearance was being as lightning, and his clothing as white as snow; and from fear of him, those guarding (the tomb) were shaken and became as dead men. (*Verses 3-4*)
Spirit beings: Spirit beings remaining faithful to the Creator, can shine with His light so intensely brilliant that no mortal could approach it (1 Timothy 6:16). The Roman guards were 'scared to death'!
- B. The angel calms the women and tells them Jesus has risen from the dead as He said; they must tell His disciples He has risen and go see Him in Galilee; they go quickly in fear and joy. (*Verses 5-8*)
1. The angel said to the women: You must NOT be afraid! I know you are seeking Jesus, who had been crucified. (*Verse 5*)
Reassuring word: He seeks to comfort them by emphatically telling them to have no fear.
They may have suspected God sent him because he knew their hearts.
 2. He is not being here because He has risen, just as He said! Come, you must see the place where He was lying. (*Verse 6*)
He's alive: Jesus has risen to life! He said so in Galilee (Matthew 17:22-23), on Palm Sunday, (Matthew 20:18-19), and on the Mount of Olives two days before Passover (Matthew 24:3; 26:2, 32).
 3. Quickly, having gone, you must tell His disciples: He has been raised from the dead and behold! He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; Behold! I have told you. (*Verse 7*)
Message: The Marys must bring a simple and powerful message to the eleven: Jesus is alive!
Galilee: Galilee is ninety miles from Jerusalem. On foot, it takes two to three days to make the trip.
 4. Having departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to report it to His disciples. (*Verse 8*)
Fear and joy: The disciples are still in Jerusalem. The women are amazed and overwhelmed by the miracles of the resurrection of the One they loved. Paradoxically, their joy is a result of this fear!

Application: Their response challenges us to never take Jesus' resurrection for granted. We must always have awe and wonder that the Son of Man, born to a virgin young woman, proved His divinity by His resurrection to give us joy, even in the deepest valleys and most painful life experiences!

II. The women worship Jesus, He sends them to His brothers; as Jesus had died the Temple curtain was torn, tombs were opened and saints rose after His resurrection; the chief priests plot a cover-up; the eleven see Jesus and worship. (Matthew 28:9-17; 27:50-53)

- A. Jesus meets the Marys, greets them and they worship Him; He calms them and tells them to take word to His brothers to meet Him in Galilee. (*Matthew 28:9-10*)
1. Behold! Jesus met them, saying: Grace! Having come near, they took hold of His feet, and they worshipped Him. (*Verse 9*)
Reverent worship: The Greek word of greeting explains why they worshipped Jesus by falling before and holding on to Him! God's grace should always inspire reverence.

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2. Jesus said: You must NOT be afraid! You must go and take word to My brothers that they may leave for Galilee, and there, they will see Me. (*Verse 10*)

Affirmation: Jesus' repeated words of assurance carried more weight than their fellow creature the angel. Then He gives them the assignment to tell His 'brothers', now more than disciples.

Notice: God is often counter-cultural. Jesus chose women, considered second-class citizens by Jews and Romans to send news of His resurrection to men!

Application: These women must inspire us to let nothing prevent us from witnessing to all we meet about the forgiveness, reconciliation, and new life the resurrected Jesus gives, so they become followers of Jesus who make more followers of Jesus.

- B. On Friday, as Jesus died, the Temple curtain was torn and an earthquake opened tombs; after Jesus rose, many dead saints were raised and appeared to many in Jerusalem. (*Matthew 27:50-53*)

1. Jesus, having cried out again, with a great sound, He let go (of) the Spirit. (*Verse 50*)

Death: Death is separation. Physical death is separation of body and spirit-soul. But, Jesus was in control of His death.

2. Behold! The curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth was shaken and the rocks were split. (*Verse 51*)

Access to God: God reached down and tore the curtain which shielded all people, who are sinners (Romans 3:20-23), from being stuck dead by God. Only the high priest could enter His presence, once a year, with innocent blood (Leviticus 16:1-4, 23-24, 34; Hebrews 9:6-7, 11-15). Because of Jesus' death, all sinners may be forgiven and have access to God (John 1:14-34)!

3. Tombs were also opened, and many bodies of saints who had fallen asleep were raised. (*Verse 52*)

Tombs opened: The earthquake that God sent split more than rocks. Some tombs of people who followed Torah by the faith of God were opened by God when Jesus died.

4. Having come out from the tombs after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city; and, they appeared to many. (*Verse 53*)

Went to Jerusalem: They stayed in their tombs until Jesus rose on the first day of the week. Then their bodies were resurrected because they had faith in what they knew about His resurrection from the Scriptures they had (Psalm 16:9-11; Job 19:25; Isaiah 25:6-8).

All who die in the faith of God will be bodily resurrected

Application: From our knowledge of the Gospels and the New Testament, as an act of worship to the One who rose from the dead, we must take every opportunity to tell people about Jesus' mission to die for the sins of all and rise to life again, so all may pass from spiritual death to eternal, abundant and meaningful life.

- C. The guards take word to the high priests who plot a cover-up with a bribe; many Jews heard their story; the eleven go to Galilee and having seen Him, they worship. (*Matthew 28:11-17*)

1. While they were on their way, behold! Some of the guard, having come into the city, reported to the chief priests all that happened. (*Verse 11*)

Roman guards to priests: We left the eleven on their way to Galilee. Then – look! Some Roman guards tell the chief priests about the earthquake, angel and empty tomb.

2. Having assembled with the elders having taken council together, they gave much silver to the soldiers, saying: You must say: His disciples, having come by night, and stole Him while we were sleeping. (*Verses 12-13*)

Cover-up plot: The council of seventy decided to bribe the soldiers and force them to say His followers stole Jesus' body to cover-up the frightening supernatural truth the soldiers experienced.

3. If this should be heard by the governor, we will surely persuade him, so do not worry; then they took the silver and did as they were instructed; and this word (is) spread widely among Jews to this day. (*Verses 14-15*)

Big lie: When Matthew wrote his account of Jesus' mission, this big lie hatched by the Sanhedrin was heard and believed by large numbers of Jews. The council could mollify Pilate, but Herod executed soldiers who let Peter escape (Acts 4:1-19)!

4. But, the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus directed them. (*Verse 16*)

Eleven to Galilee: This meeting happened on Tuesday or Wednesday. Could this be where Jesus preached the 'Sermon on the Mount' (Matthew 4:18-25; 8:1-17)?

5. Having seen Him, they worshipped Him; but, some doubted. (*Verse 17*)

Worship: The eleven disciples fell before Jesus to worship Him just as the women had at the Empty Tomb. The awesome truth of Jesus' resurrection should inspire all who love Him with obedient faith to reverently worship Him – always!

Application: We must continually ask ourselves how much the truth of the Cross and Empty Tomb has changed our hearts, minds and way of living. Are we continually amazed and moved to worship God IN Jesus in all we do and say?

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Conclusion: Two of the three Marys go to Jesus' tomb at dawn on the first day of the week after an earthquake and they find an angel sitting on the stone rolled from the tomb after the guards were scared to death. The angel tells them Jesus has risen from the dead and they must tell His disciples. Then the women leave trembling in fear and filled with joy. On the way Jesus meets them and they worship Him. He sends them to tell His brothers. As Jesus had died, the Temple curtain was torn in two and many tombs were opened. Many saints rose from these tombs after Jesus' resurrection. The chief priests plot a cover-up to explain the empty tomb, and pay a bribe. Finally, the eleven meet Jesus in Galilee and worship Him!

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