

Easter Teaching No. 16

He's Alive

We left Jesus in the tomb, being guarded by the Roman soldiers, having a seal placed on the stone covering the entrance to the tomb. The women were on-lookers having clearly seen where Jesus had been buried.

Jesus died at 3 pm on the Friday and the Sabbath would start between 6 and 7 pm that evening. The claiming of the body and the burial would have to be a hurried affair in order not to violate the Sabbath.

The women who had been totally unprepared for this burial, would have to wait until after the Sabbath finished before they could buy spices to anoint Jesus' body. Mark 16:1 tells us that when the Sabbath had finished, the women went to buy spices but as by that time it was dark, they would leave it until daylight the next morning before going back to the tomb.

We see several accounts of the women going to Jesus' tomb: Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12 and John 20:1-10 and when we put all these together we see the whole picture.

Early on the Sunday morning, once the sun had risen, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, returned to the tomb and according to Matthew 28 from verse 2 there was a violent earthquake and an angel came down from heaven, rolled the stone away and sat on it.

The women braved the Roman guard who had been placed there by Pilate, we are told that on the way to the tomb they had spoken to each other and wondered how they could roll away the stone from the tomb. Yet, as they approached there was an earthquake and an angel appeared, and these professional soldiers were so afraid that in verse 4 'they appeared as dead men', in other words they were terrified.

Let's just focus on this for a minute: Not only would the soldiers have been afraid of what they were witnessing, but when they heard the angel say to the women that the tomb was empty, they would have feared for their lives. Going down to verse 11 tells us that some of the guards went into the city to report to the chief priests what had happened. The chief priests then devised a plan, giving the soldiers a large sum of money. They told the soldiers to say 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away whilst we were asleep'. We are told that this story of the stealing of Jesus body by the disciples was circulated certainly up to the time that Matthew recorded this event. What the chief priests did not want, was the claim that the body of Jesus was not there because he had been resurrected back to life, as he had previously claimed he could.

Two things worthy of comment here:-

Firstly it was a capital offence for a Roman soldier to sleep whilst on duty, and yet the soldiers were told by the chief priests to say they had slept.

Secondly, if the soldiers were asleep, then how would they have known who had stolen Jesus' body? It simply doesn't make sense, but then as we have learned from the trial of Jesus, rules can be bent, and claims made that simply do not make sense. The chief priests reassured the soldiers that if the governor (Pilate) heard of this, then they would intervene on their behalf.

Going back to the women:

The angel told them that Jesus had risen as he said he would and invited them to see where Jesus had lain. The angel then instructed them to go and tell the disciples that Jesus was alive and go to Galilee where He will meet them.

Mary ran to tell Peter and John, and the other women ran to tell the other disciples. Whilst Peter and John ran to the tomb, the other disciples did not believe the women's message, and the word in Greek here is 'leros' which means, worthless, idle, nonsense, their message was humbug!

John believed the miracle of Jesus resurrection but Peter could not make sense of it, such was his state of mind at the time.

John 20:11-18 Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb to be met by two angels (although she did not recognise them as such) who asked her why she was weeping, she replied 'they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him'.

Then Jesus appeared before Mary and asked her the same question, and Mary believing him to be the gardener replied 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.'

Jesus then said 'Mary' on hearing her name, she recognised this man to be Jesus himself. She then went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord.

In Matt 28:9 & 10 we see that as the women were walking away from his empty tomb, Jesus appeared to the women, and the women worshipped him. Jesus told them to go and tell the disciples to go to Galilee, where they will see Him.

However, the disciples did not leave for Galilee and so that shows that yet again they did not believe the account of the women and so they stayed put hiding behind locked doors in Jerusalem.

John 20:19 tells us that on the evening of the first day of the week, that is, much later on the same day that the women had gone to the tomb, Jesus appeared in a locked room to the disciples. We are told they were in fear of the Jewish leadership.

He said 'Peace be with you' and then breathed on them so they could receive the Holy Spirit, telling them that just as the Father had sent him, he was now sending them. This was their commission, just as Jesus had witnessed to the Father, they were now to witness to the Son.

Thomas, who has been known throughout Christian history as 'Doubting Thomas', was not present with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them and he would not believe their account.

However a week later, all the disciples were in a locked room together including Thomas, when Jesus appeared to them. He singled out Thomas and showed him his hands and his side. At this Thomas replied: 'My Lord and My God!'

We pronounce these words to Jesus today, the One who went as a lamb to the slaughter, the One who was raised to life, the One who is seated at the right hand of God, the One who will come again to take us to Himself.

Indeed

My Lord and My God to you be the glory and the power forever more. AMEN