

Episode #950 Matthew 28 Part 3-The Cover-Up

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord had just appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary as they ran to bring the disciples word from the angel at His empty tomb. He had instructed them to tell His brethren to go into Galilee where He would meet them. Now, we return to the useless guard at His tomb, who had fainted dead away when the glorious angel appeared to roll away the stone.

III. The Sanhedrin Covers Up the Resurrection. Matthew 28:11-15.

- A. Verse 11. These were the guards from the tomb. They had woken from their faint, no doubt then had seen the rolled-away stone and the empty tomb, and had fled. They reported to the chief priests, which was brave, since they could have been killed for allowing the tomb to be opened. Perhaps they felt they had a sufficient excuse. Or perhaps they thought the chief priests would be more understanding than the governor! “Reported” is the same word as “to bring word” and “to tell” in verses 8 and 9. Again our translators have not been consistent. They came and made this report. The chief priests find out that all their precautions are in vain. So is every effort to defeat God: whether sooner or later, all will come to nothing.
- B. Verse 12. This was the same wicked assembly that had plotted His murder in the first place in Matthew 26:3. Notice that their counsel was not what they should do now that they discovered they were wrong about Jesus. They did not care. It did not matter to them if He really was the Messiah or not. They hated and feared Him, and His real identification with God did not concern them in the slightest. These men were true sons of their father the devil, as the Lord told them. The word actually the word means a “sufficient” sum of money. We would say it was as much as it took to get them to repeat the story they fed them, rather than the truth. The Greek word for money means “silver.” These soldiers were those comprising the “watch.”
- C. Verse 13. This is what they had feared in Matthew 27:64, but which never happened. Instead, it was the power of God that removed Him from the tomb. However, these men would much rather it had been His disciples, and so they pay to spread the deception that their unbelieving fears were reality, rather than the truth. “Slept” is *koimaO*, meaning they involuntarily fell asleep on duty. This was a dangerous thing to say or admit, and so “sufficient” money to get them to say this must indeed have been large!
- D. Verse 14. The governor means Pilate, their chief, who had originally loaned them to the religious leaders, and who ultimately was responsible for them. To the Roman government, the Lord Jesus Christ was not of great importance. The issue was forced upon them by Israel, but they were not going out each day to inspect the tomb and see it secure. To “appease him” meant so he would not to punish his soldiers for this dereliction of duty. They might have had in mind the same kind of persuasion they used with the soldiers: that is, to bribe him. This is literally “make you free from care.” Normally it would have been a terrible thing to be found to have fallen asleep on guard duty, and to have allowed that which you were guarding to be stolen this way! Under the Roman government, for a soldier to be derelict in his duty, it meant certain death. You can see that in Acts 12:19: that when certain men who were

supposed to guard Peter were found derelict in their duty, they were put to death. The Philippian jailor knew this in Acts 16:27, which is why he tried to kill himself. If this had been true, that they had come out and stolen His body while they were asleep, these soldiers would have been put to death. The Roman government allowed no such thing.

- E. Verse 15. In other words, they spread the lies they were taught to spread. “Commonly reported” means blazed abroad. This is the same word as is used for the disobedient blind men who blazed abroad the Lord’s healing of them after He told them to tell no one. Notice this was “among the Jews.” This is the first and only time in Matthew that the term “Jews” is used this way. (Otherwise, it is only used to refer to Jesus as “King of the Jews.”) We would take this to be in the same sense as it is in John: to mean the rich, ruling class. These leaders saw to it that this story was blazed abroad among them. It was their excuse to hide the truth of His resurrection. Notice that they knew the story was false, but did not care. They wanted to hide the truth! But God knows, and He saw what they did. Matthew here counters this false story and shows its black beginning. This book, being written for Israelites, is an appropriate place for God to provide His answer to this lie. Notice that it is in the gospel written particularly for Jews that this story is told, and in none of the others. “This day” doesn’t mean today, of course, but the day on which Matthew wrote.

IV. The Meeting in Galilee. Matthew 28:16-17.

- A. Verse 16. Notice the “eleven disciples” because Judas was dead. It occurs only here in Matthew, once in Mark 16, twice in Luke 24, and once apiece in Acts 1 and Acts 2, for a total of six times. “The twelve,” on the other hand, appears 26 times. The devil tempted Him on a mountain, Matthew 4:8; the sermon on the mount was given on a mountain, Matthew 5-7; He prayed on a mountain, Matthew 14:23; He fed the four thousand on a mountain, Matthew 15:29; He was transfigured on a high mountain, Matthew 17:1; and He spent the last days before His crucifixion staying at the Mount of Olives. Now, after His resurrection, He meets His eleven on a mountain, we don’t know which one. We know that, since they did not listen to the women, He first appeared to them in the locked room in Jerusalem. He must there have given them further instructions as to their Galilee meeting, and now they follow these instructions. Interesting that He first appeared to them in Judea, then sent them into Galilee where He appeared to them, and then back into Judea, from where He ascended. He had a not-insignificant ministry among them after His resurrection.
- B. Verse 17. Worshipped is *proskuneo*, meaning true worship here. What else ought one to do to One Who rose from the dead, and to Whom God has given all power, verse 18? “Doubted” or wavered, “hesitated.” This is the same word He chided Peter with when he started to sink after walking on the water. The question is: what did they doubt or waver about? Did they doubt His resurrection? No, for He was standing right in front of them. Yet it was very against the grain for Israelites at that time and in their culture to be worshipping a man. Having to constantly fight against the pagan mindset, which made men like Caesar to be gods, the Jews were very insistent that men are men and God is God and never the two shall meet. They stood boldly on this fact, and were willing to die for this fact, and truly some did when they refused to worship Caesar. Now the time has come for them to worship One, Jesus Christ, Who is standing before them as a Man, and yet Who is God. No wonder some of them

doubted! This went against the grain of their culture. Notice that this is what the Lord's answers. He does not justify to them His resurrection, but His right to the worship that belongs to God alone.

V. The Great Commission of Matthew. Matthew 28:18-20.

- A. *Resultant Version.* And Jesus approaching them spoke unto them, saying, "All authority in heaven and in earth has been given to Me. 19. Going therefore, disciple all the nations, relating them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: 20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you all the days, even to the consummation of the eon.
- B. Verse 18. "Came" is *proserchomai* or approached; came to them. "Authority" is the Greek *exousia*. All the authority of God, both in heaven and on the earth, has been granted by God to Jesus Christ. In this case, can it possibly be wrong to worship Him? Not in the least! He was given this power because He is God. All He has to do to make this world His Own is to exercise this power and authority. He does not have to come back to earth to do it. At the present time Jesus Christ is not exercising His authority and power. He is demonstrating His grace, writing a record of that grace. But the power is His, and all He has to do is take it and exercise it. The time will come when He will do just that. The time will yet come when Jesus Christ will take unto Himself His great power and He will govern (Revelation 11:17). We will yet know what it is to live on an earth that is governed by our God. Happy day!
- C. Verse 19. This is commonly called the "Great Commission." These are supposed to be our marching orders. Is this truly the case?

VI. Conclusion: The religious leaders didn't care that the Lord rose as He said; they just wanted to cover it up. They bribed the guards to tell a lie of their preference instead of the truth, yet this lie was incredibly shallow and made no sense. The eleven, as instructed, went to meet the Lord in Galilee on a mountain. They worshiped Him, and were right in doing so, for He has been given all authority by God. Do we believe as they did that Jesus Christ deserves our worship? Do we dare to kneel before Him as not just our King, but our God?