

Matthew 27:62 - 28:15

Many doubters and critics will say nice things about Jesus but they object to anything concerning the supernatural and Jesus.

The first Christians heard these attacks and so do we. If we hope to go and tell the story of Jesus with full confidence, we must be ready and able to answer the critics.

The Gospel accounts of the resurrection help us to do this.

The gospel writer, Matthew, encloses his account of the resurrection within the setting of the guard that was posted at the tomb of Jesus and their report afterwards. In this way, Matthew sets the challenge of the resurrection before us.

Summary

In Matthew 27:62-28:15, we are given a true and faithful account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, emphasizing Christ's triumph over his enemies.

1. Posted Guard vv. 27:62-66

After the death of Jesus on the cross, the Jewish leaders asked the Roman governor, to set a guard on the tomb until the third day. They feared that 'his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first" (**Matt. 27:62-64**). Pilate gave his permission and they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard (**Matt. 27:65-66**). Unknowingly they were providing evidence of the truth of Christ's coming resurrection.

2. Angelic Appearance vv. 28:1-7

Whilst the guards are in position as instruments of the Jewish leaders to thwart the supporters of Jesus, some of those supporters, the women, come to the tomb (28:1). There is no description of the actual resurrection itself, here or anywhere else.

What we have are the accompanying circumstances (**Matt. 28:2**).

There is no suggestion that the stone had to be removed before the Lord could rise, only that it had to be taken away so that people could see that the tomb was empty. When the angel of the Lord appeared and rolled away the stone from the tomb, the guards were so terrified that they 'trembled and became like dead men' (**Matt 28:3-4**). The striking appearance of the angel of the Lord testified to Christ's victory over them and over sin, Satan and death.

This is a sign of things yet to come. What will the ungodly do at the last day, when the trumpet shall sound, and Christ shall come in glory to judge the world?

The women too were afraid, but the angel reassured them (**Matt. 28:5-7a**)

NB the obvious absence of Jesus' body, the stress on fulfilled prophecy, this time of our Lord's own prediction of his resurrection and the urgency of the command to go and tell the disciples (**Matt. 28:7b**. Jesus keeps His Word.

3. Risen Christ vv. 28:8-10

The women left the tomb with mixed emotions: fear and great joy' (**Matt 28:8**). On their way, they were confronted by Jesus himself (**Matt 28:9a**).

The fact that according to the prejudices of the first century, women generally were not thought reliable witnesses, makes this report that that much more credible, because no one seeking to fabricate a resurrection story would put such people in the role of primary witnesses.

Yet Jesus chose them for this role, and the Gospel writers faithfully report it.

Jesus greeted the women with words of comfort and repeated instruction (**28:9-10**).

Christ's words of comfort, 'do not be afraid' cheer the hearts of believers in every age. They are intended to remind us, that true Christians have no cause for alarm in the last day, whatever may come on the world.

4. Stubborn Unbelief vv. 11-15

Matthew contrasts the loving obedience of the women with the servile obedience of the guards (**Matt 28:11**).

The obstinate unbelief of the Jewish leaders is clearly seen here.

Confronted by the evidence of their own soldiers that something quite remarkable had happened, they refused to believe in Jesus. Against the background of the obedience and faith of the women, the hardness of heart seen in the Jewish leaders stands out as a great sin, well-deserving of judgment.

So too today, many people stubbornly refuse to believe what the Bible says.

They would rather believe and perpetuate an incredulous lie.

They do not believe that Jesus was crucified to pay the penalty of sins, and they certainly do not believe that he came back to life.

This too is a great sin, well-deserving of the judgment.

5. Right Response

Christ's resurrection is the seal and headstone of the great work of redemption, which He came to do. It is the crowning proof that He has paid the debt which He undertook to pay for sinners, that he has won the battle which He fought to deliver sinners from hell, and he is accepted as the substitute for all this who will believe.

Thanks be unto God, we are not left in doubt: the Lord Jesus really "rose again for our justification."

The wisdom of God, who knows the unbelief of human nature, has provided a great cloud of witnesses on the subject.

In his Gospel, Matthew has written a reliable, historical account of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

His report challenges us to reach our own decision as to whether Jesus is among the living or the dead.