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Matthew 28:1-15

1. “Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.
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.
3. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.
4. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.
5. The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.
6. ‘He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.
7. ‘Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.’
8. And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.
9. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.

10. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.’

11. Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.

12. And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers,

13. and said, ‘You are to say, “His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.”’

14. ‘And if this should come to the governor’s ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.’

15. And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, *and is to this day.*”

In this passage we note that the Roman guards at Jesus’ gravesite were the only eyewitnesses of His actual resurrection out from the tomb. They had been commanded to make sure Jesus’ disciples did not steal His body in order to proclaim that He had risen from the dead. Under Roman law, these guards were under penalty of death if they let their prisoner escape.

As verse 4 records, “The guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men,” when the angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone sealing Jesus’ tomb.

Then verse 11 records that some of the guards came to the chief priests in Jerusalem. The priests then confer with the elders and decide to pay the guards to cover up the resurrection, and circulate the lie that Jesus' disciples stole His body from the tomb. Truth is sometimes harder to believe than fiction!

These religious rulers received the facts concerning the resurrection of their Messiah from unbiased eyewitnesses--who had nothing to gain by their report: indeed they could have lost their lives in disclosing that Jesus was gone!

These religious rulers had the resurrection confirmed and verifiable, yet they chose to cover it up! Their only hope of eternal life was right in front of them. Yet they let it go for earthly power and position.

How about you? Do you claim the fact and power of Jesus' resurrection? Or are you covering it up for earthly things?