

MIRACLE ANNOUNCED FROM A TOMB: “HE IS RISEN!”

Matthew 27:62–28:15

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The events on the day of Christ's crucifixion followed one after the other, like a slow and somber beat of a drum. The arrest in the garden of Gethsemane. The mock trials before the Jewish officials and Pilate. The brutal scourging. Jesus' arduous march through the city to the site of His execution. And, finally, His merciless death on the beams of a cross.

Joseph of Arimathea secured permission to give Jesus a dignified burial. Reverently, Joseph wrapped Jesus' body in a clean linen cloth and placed His remains in a tomb. "Then," according to Matthew, "he rolled a great stone across the entrance and left" (Matthew 27:60).

The next morning, the Jewish priests and Pharisees placed a guard at the tomb to secure the grave against would-be robbers. Then, at some moment before Sunday morning, the impossible happened. Jesus came back to life! His resurrected body passed through the stone walls!

Who might have witnessed Him exiting the tomb? The Scriptures don't tell us exactly, but consider this wondrous thought: the first witnesses of the resurrected Christ may have been the temple guards, perhaps the same ones who had spit on Him, beat Him, and mocked Him the Friday night before!

As we study Matthew 27:62–28:15, we will ponder the guards' response to Jesus' resurrection. We'll observe the reaction of the religious leaders to the news they received from the guards. In doing so, we will gain wisdom for knowing how we can rightly respond to that gospel proclamation, "He is risen!"

Quotable

The stone wasn't rolled away to get Jesus out. The stone was rolled away to get us in so that we could see that the tomb is empty.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Before we study Matthew 27:62–28:15 together, let's pray with the psalmist, “Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions” (Psalm 119:18). Take time to write this prayer in your own words as you prepare to study God's Word.



Searching the Scriptures Tip

The study method we use in these guides is the very same method Chuck Swindoll uses to prepare spiritual feasts for his listeners. It's reliable and simple enough for us all to practice as we prepare our own spiritual meals from the Bible. The method includes four vital steps: observation, interpretation, correlation, and application. For this study, we will emphasize correlation because the events of Matthew 28:1–10 are also recorded by other gospel writers. During correlation we compare different passages from Scripture to amplify our understanding.¹ For this study you will need a sharp eye to examine the details of our passage as well as a Bible dictionary. If you don't have one, we recommend the *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*.



Observation: Pushing Back the Curtains of History

When observing Scripture, focus solely on the Bible text, without referencing other resources. In this first step, read Matthew 27:62–28:15 slowly and meditatively. As you read, underline in your Bible those details that initially appear significant.



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The Guard at the Tomb—Matthew 27:62–66

Let's now observe each paragraph beginning with Matthew 27:62–66. What did the Pharisees want to prevent, and why did they want to prevent it (Matthew 27:64)? How did Pilate respond to their request?

In 27:63, notice how the Pharisees remembered what Jesus' disciples forgot!



Searching the Scriptures Tool

To enhance your Bible reading, it's helpful to consult multiple translations. While the English language contains a bounty of excellent Bible translations, we recommend the NASB and the NLT. Read Matthew 28:1–10 in the [NASB](#) and also in the [NLT](#).

The Resurrection—Matthew 28:1–10

Now let's examine Matthew 28:1–10.

Who were the first to go to Jesus' tomb? What happened to the tomb, and who was responsible for it? What did the angel say to the women?

Remember what Chuck said: “The stone was rolled away to get us in so that we could see that the tomb is empty.” What did the angel tell the women to do in Matthew 28:6? Just imagine their conviction after discovering no body. Then as the women left the tomb to obey the angel's command in 28:7–8, they



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encountered Jesus. How did the women respond to Jesus’ greetings? How did the guards respond to the angel in 28:4? Also, take time to record other significant details in this section.

Remember: working hard in observation makes interpretation easier and richer.

The Report of the Guard—Matthew 28:11–15

Let’s slowly reread this last passage for our study just as we did the previous two. How did the leading priests respond to the guards, and what did the guards decide? What were these soldiers to say to anyone who asked about that night? Notice what the leaders promised the soldiers in 28:14—security against Pilate’s fury. Lastly, record any other notes you would like before we move to interpretation.



Interpretation: Understanding the Narrative

To begin interpreting our passage, let’s look up these important terms using a Bible dictionary:

- *Pharisee* (Matthew 27:62)
- *Pilate* (27:62)
- *Mary Magdalene* (28:1)



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As you peruse these definitions, jot down notes that help you better understand Matthew 27:62–28:15. Context gives flesh and blood to the Bible.

In Chuck’s sermon, he helpfully points out that the leading priests in Matthew 27:62 (referenced again in 28:11) served under Caiaphas, the high priest (Matthew 26:57). So let’s use a Bible dictionary to look up *Caiaphas*. Isn’t it amazing how those most responsible to mediate between God and others were often the most resistant to God’s work? Again, jot down anything you find helpful for interpreting this passage.



Correlation: Comparing Passages of Scripture

For some narrative passages like this one in Matthew, correlation becomes integral to interpretation. Mark 16:1–8 and Luke 24:1–12 record the same events found in Matthew 28:1–10. Take time to slowly read the Mark and Luke accounts. You’ll notice Matthew emphasized *how* the stone rolled from the tomb while Mark and Luke merely stated *that* the stone was rolled away before the women arrived. Because Jesus was not in the tomb when the women arrived, the guards almost certainly witnessed the resurrected Jesus emerge from the tomb before anyone else. Then when the guards saw the angel, they “shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint” (Matthew 28:4).

Can you find anything else that Matthew emphasized more than Mark or Luke? (The gospel writers complement each other when one adds a detail that another excludes. The writers don’t contradict each other, but each emphasizes what’s important for his unique message.)



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We stated above that each gospel writer emphasized details that contributed to his unique message. Matthew 28:12–15 states:

A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. They told the soldiers, “You must say, ‘Jesus’ disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.’ If the governor hears about it, we’ll stand up for you so you won’t get in trouble.” So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today.

From the last little phrase, “and they still tell it today,” Matthew revealed his intent; he wanted to tell his first readers why they were hearing that phony story, a tale of deception about the disciples stealing Jesus’ body. Only Matthew wrote about the events he recorded in Matthew 27:62–66 and 28:11–15. The other gospel writers didn’t address the grave-robbery rumors. Have you ever heard someone share this rationale for the empty tomb? In his sermon, Chuck highlights some flaws in the story that the elders and leading priests prompted the soldiers to tell. Note those flaws and any others you can find in Matthew 28:13–14.

Application: Responding to God’s News Today

From our study, we just witnessed how the guards fearfully responded to Jesus’ resurrection, how they accepted money to lie about Jesus’ missing body, and how they placed their faith in the religious leaders to keep them out of trouble. When you enter seasons of fear and anxiety, how do you respond? Do you turn away from the Lord or to the Lord for security and comfort? Self-reflection can provide clarity for making incremental changes in our lives that foster our turning to the Lord rather than away from Him. Can you think of any changes you can implement this week?



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So the guards took the hush money—they responded to the resurrection in fear, but they weren’t the only ones. The leading priests and the elders could not endure the possibility of embarrassment from “that deceiver.” They secured their seats of authority by exploiting the tomb guards and using them to disseminate false words. In their pride, they overlooked the public work of God, *but not so with the women*.

These women encountered the resurrected Jesus for the first time in Matthew 28:9 when Jesus said to them, “Greetings!” (NIV). The Greek word, *chairo*, in this context means, “hello,” or “good day.” Now look at how the women responded to Jesus: “And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him” (Matthew 28:9). The women postured themselves on the dirt before the feet of their Master.

The resurrection is not news to fear but God’s good news for us to celebrate. Because of Jesus’ resurrection, we worship Him. Do you rejoice in God each day? Use this time of reflection to write down your own prayer of rejoicing and worship.

Remember how Chuck ended his sermon about the repentant guard? How great would it be to walk through the doors of eternity into that everlasting jubilee and see one of those guards who changed his mind in his final days. We know the Roman officer had a change of heart when Jesus breathed His last (27:54). During that eternal party, we will all sing the same message you and I proclaim today, “HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!”



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for making known to me the good news of Your Son’s resurrection. He is risen indeed, and in this I rejoice with joy too great for words. I ask to continue rejoicing in You when I enter seasons of fear as well as seasons of comfort, so that in all circumstances I may cherish the most important news in human history. That news centers around the glorious name of Your Son Jesus, and it is in His name I pray, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2017), 140–41.



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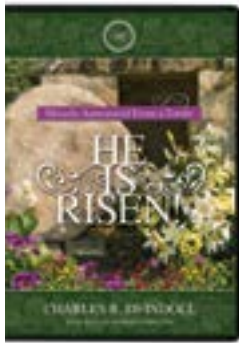
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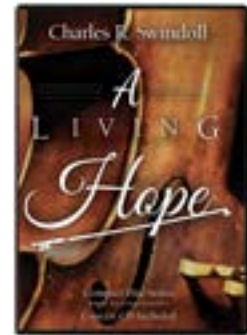
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For the 2018 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages.



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