

## Episode #946 Matthew 27 Part 8-The Dead Christ

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 proved at last that He was in charge of His Own death by decided exactly when He would die. Then, great signs accompanied His death: the giant veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom, a mighty earthquake split open the rocks, and, after His resurrection, another great sign too place.

III. After the Death. Matthew 27:51-54.

A. Verse 53. “Resurrection” only here is the Greek *egersis*, meaning a rousing or rising up, or excitation. As Matthew gives his running account many things run together. Though this is listed now at His death, we are informed that this was after His resurrection. Probably did not rise until then.

1. These individuals roused from death made themselves known unto many. This was not like a ghost, appearing and disappearing. It would be like if your recently dead relative showed up on your doorstep and said, “Here I am!”
2. As a help in better understanding this, let us keep in mind that while Jesus Christ was on the earth He cast out demons and He said to the Pharisees Matthew 12:28. The Greek says that “the kingdom of God has taken a step in advance toward you,” and in the vernacular we say, “You have a foretaste of the kingdom of God.” That is what they had when they saw the casting out of demons. When He healed the sick, they got a foretaste of the kingdom of God, and when He raised the dead, they got a foretaste of the kingdom of God. Every miracle that Jesus Christ performed, whether He fed the hungry or stilled the waters of the raging storm, they got a foretaste of the kingdom of God.
3. Now when Jesus Christ was dead for three days and three nights, men had done all they could do. Yet when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, God stepped in to reverse what man had done. God stepped in to alter the evil work of Adam’s race, which is exactly what God does when He steps in to begin the kingdom of God.
4. At this time as a sign these men came out of the graves after his resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared unto many.
5. These were probably people who had died recently, and so they would have recognized them as their recent dead. If they were men long dead, they would have been no sign, for no one would have recognized them.
6. What happened to them afterwards? Probably they went back to living a normal life, until death again caught up with them. They were doubtless raised like Lazarus back to a dying body, and not to the glorious, undying body of the future resurrection.

B. Verse 54. A centurion is a captain of a hundred soldiers in the Roman army. This was the man in charge of the soldiers and the crucifixion. They guarded Him so no one could rescue Him from the cross and make off with Him. The orders of Rome for crucifixion must be carried out.

1. “The Son of God” could be “a Son of God,” there being no article.

2. Where did the centurion and his companion soldiers get such an idea? No mention was made before Pilate of His being the Son of God. Where, then? From the mocking words of His enemies in verses 40 and 43. Surely the Romans' ears must have pricked up at this mockery, for they admitted that He claimed to be the Son of God.
3. Now, seeing what happened at His death, the centurion and his soldiers conclude that what they mocked Him of was true. These Romans and their centurion were more men of faith than the corrupt religious elites of Israel!
4. We wonder what happened to them afterwards? But of course we do not know.

#### IV. The Burial of the Lord. Matthew 27:55-61.

- A. Verse 55. The Lord's female followers were there, when the males had scattered and run! In defense of the men, it was probably easier for the women, knowing they did not face crucifixion themselves, than it was for the men. They looked on from afar, the same word used of Peter, following the crowd that arrested the Lord to the high priest's courtyard. They too watched from afar. They followed Jesus as members of His party, not just physically following Him. It seems He had more followers from cosmopolitan Galilee than from proud Judea. These women were ministering to Him, *diakoneo*, the verb form of "deacons," meaning serving. Luke 8:3 informs us this ministering was from their possessions, and involved material and financial support.
- B. Verse 56. The first mention of Mary Magdalene in Matthew.
  1. Magdalene means she was from the city of Magdala, meaning "A Tower."
  2. We do not have the story of just when and how she became a follower of Jesus, but Mark 16:9 and Luke 8:2 give us a clue when they tell us He had cast seven demons out of her. When and how she had seven demons we do not know. From the early reference in Luke 8, we learn that she had been a disciple for a long time, and from Luke 8:3, we learn that she must have had means, for she was one of the women who helped support the Lord financially. She loved the Lord and wept at His tomb, then was overjoyed to meet Him alive. Any facts beyond these are speculation.
  3. We should deal with some of these, as they are quite egregious. One makes Mary Magdalene to be the woman caught in adultery of John 8. There is no mention of that woman having demons, or having become the Lord's follower. There are some who make her to be the Mary who was the sister of Martha and Lazarus. There is no evidence for this whatsoever, and we have no reason to think that that Mary ever had demons.
  4. The slander and libel against Mary have been atrocious. She is made out to have been a prostitute, and this idea was so widespread that, in olden days at least, a prostitute was called a "Magdalene" in common English. This is no more right or fair than to take any other female follower of the Lord and make up the story that she was formerly a prostitute, simply because we do not know that she was not.
  5. Others have made her to be the "black Madonna," making her out to have been the Lord's paramour, and to have had a son with Him! Such foul blasphemies we leave with the unbelievers, only mentioning them to show how this sincere follower of the Lord has been treated down through the years.

6. What we know for sure about her is that she loved the Lord, had been delivered by Him from a terrible bondage, followed Him, loved Him, supported Him, and was among His followers at His death.
7. In reality Mary's two sons were named Jacob and Joseph, "James" being this odd misnaming through Latin mispronunciations, and "Joses" being as close as Greek can get to Joseph. In Mark she is called the mother of "James the less and of Joses." James the less was the apostle named in the third group of four among the twelve, not to be confused with the more prominent and famous James the brother of John. James the less was among the apostles, but his brother Joses or Joseph was not. It seems a stretch to say this Joses was the man surnamed Barnabas by the apostles. This is probably a different man, who, though he may have been a disciple, was not privileged to be among the twelve.
8. Of course, Zebedee's children were James and John. Some have compared this verse to Mark 15:40 and concluded that the mother of Zebedee's children was named Salome. Yet we might as well conclude that their mother was named Joanna from Luke 24:10. We simply do not know this for sure. There was a group of women, and these were "among which," as the verse begins. There is no way, when women are called different things, to be sure which ones match.

C. Verse 57. "Rich" tells us that he had wealth, yes, but more importantly that he was of the rich, ruling class of men in Israel, and therefore a man of influence. "Disciple" does not just mean he liked Jesus' teaching, but that he had actually taken steps to become His follower and adherent. Being a disciple is a radical step.

V. Conclusion: As a sign of the Lord's victory over death, many recently-dead came alive at His resurrection. The centurion and soldiers overseeing the crucifixion believed He is the Son of God when they saw these signs. Many women who followed the Lord from Galilee watched all these events from afar. Finally, a rich ruler of the Sanhedrin came at evening before sundown to request His body from Pilate. This death was not just like any other death; it was related to you and me. It was our Savior dying for us. Do we see the Bible record, do we read of the signs, and do we believe?