

Christ's Resurrection: The Dawning of the New Creation

By Steve Burchett



Two ladies named Mary went to Jesus' tomb early Sunday morning (Matthew 28:1). They weren't expecting to see a risen Jesus, but to anoint his dead body with spices. First, they would have to figure out how to get that giant stone rolled away from the tomb's entrance.

Before they arrived, some dramatic events took place at the tomb: "And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel

of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it" (v. 2). It's difficult to know if the earthquake happened as the angel came from heaven, or if the angel used the earthquake to roll the massive stone away. And why did the angel sit on the stone? Maybe it was meant to picture dominion and triumph. Charles Spurgeon said, "When the angel had rolled back the stone from the door, he sat upon it, as if to defy earth and hell ever to roll it back again" (www.spurgeongems.org, Matthew commentary). The angel was stunning: "His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow" (v. 3). The guards, possibly tough veterans of war, "trembled and became like dead men" (v. 4).

The ladies arrived *after* this drama. "Do not be afraid," the angel said to them, "for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay" (vv. 5-6).

With Christ's resurrection, death had been defeated. The world had been under a curse since the fall of Adam and Eve. Sin, sadness, and death had been the norm since Genesis 3. But with the resurrection of Jesus, a new era was beginning; a new creation was unveiled — not fully, but it was a first taste of something that will one day arrive completely. This was God breaking into a fallen world revealing his power to destroy the curse and saying, "Death will not have the last word. Sin will not have the final say. The Devil will not win. My Son's resurrection means a new day — a new creation — has dawned."

A believers' heart should be filled with hope with the thought that history is moving toward a completely new creation that dawned at Christ's resurrection. The brokenness and sadness we experience in this world will one day end. Our fight with sin will one day be a distant memory. Downcast feelings and fears will be long forgotten and never again known. And these bodies that experience pain and disease and death? Paul said, "Christ has been raised

from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:20-21).

Some trials make you wonder, "Will this ever end?" Some experiences cause you to say, "Will the sadness ever go away?" The resurrection of Jesus, the first act and appearance of the coming new creation, says to us, "Yes, that trial will one day cease. Yes, the tears will soon dry up. In the future, all of creation will be transformed." We have been "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefined, and unfolding, kept in heaven" for us (1 Peter 1:3b-4). So keep living for Jesus, even if it means great suffering, even death for him, because our future with Christ is unbelievably bright and glorious.

If you are not a believer in Jesus yet, the resurrection story speaks to you as well. Christ *is* risen. The guards knew it, and they initially responded correctly in the presence of the angel of the Lord — falling down as dead men! But then what did they do? They got up and instead of repenting of their sin and crying out to God for mercy, they joined in on a conspiracy with the chief priests in order to make sure that the truth didn't get out (see Matthew 28:11-15). Instead of acknowledging the truth, they sought to control the narrative and promote a conspiracy.

The guards had the evidence, but they still didn't believe. They chose darkness instead of the light, refusing to believe what was plainly stated and demonstrated. Continuing on in their unbelief would mean eternal judgment. If they died in their sin, even as you read this they are in agony awaiting the coming judgment that is only going to make things worse for them for eternity (cf. Revelations 20:13-15).

These men were foolish and selfish, but you don't have to be. You might say, "I need more evidence if I am ever going to submit my life to this so-called 'King Jesus.'" But you've got all of the proof you could ever need in the Bible which speaks of the empty tomb of Jesus and hundreds of eyewitnesses to his resurrection. Scripture also gives the only cogent explanation of God and evil and sin and pain and life and death and spiritual realities and Jesus and salvation and judgment and eternity. It's time, then, to acknowledge and embrace the truth. Jesus is alive. He alone, therefore, is the Savior of sinners. Knowing this, it only makes sense to look to him immediately to save you. He'll bring the new creation to you in part even now by raising you from the dead spiritually, just as the new creation dawned at his physical resurrection. You won't immediately be like Jesus, but you will be well on your way to Christlikeness and life on a transformed earth where righteousness dwells. Christ's resurrection guarantees it.

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