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**Stories of the Master**

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~ **Early One Morning** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Matthew 28: and John 18:15-18 and 18:25-19:16.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

**1. Read the text of the story.**

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<b>Matthew 28:1-10 NASB</b>	<b>Matthew 28:1-10 NLT</b>
<p>Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first <i>day</i> of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. <sup>4</sup>The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. <sup>7</sup>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.”</p> <p><sup>8</sup>And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. <sup>9</sup>And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. <sup>10</sup>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.”</p>	<p>Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb.</p> <p><sup>2</sup>Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. <sup>4</sup>The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint.</p> <p><sup>5</sup>Then the angel spoke to the women. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. <sup>7</sup>And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you.”</p> <p><sup>8</sup>The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel’s message. <sup>9</sup>And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.”</p>
<b>John 20 1-18 (NASB)</b>	<b>John 20:1-18 (NLT)</b>
<p>Now on the first <i>day</i> of the week Mary Magdalene *came early to the tomb, while it *was still dark, and *saw the stone <i>already</i> taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>So she *ran and *came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and *said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” <sup>3</sup>So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. <sup>4</sup>The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; <sup>5</sup>and stooping and looking in, he *saw the linen wrappings lying <i>there</i>; but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>And so Simon Peter also *came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he *saw the linen wrappings lying <i>there</i>, <sup>7</sup>and the face-cloth</p>	<p>Early on Sunday morning, <sup>1</sup>while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. <sup>2</sup>She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, “They have taken the Lord’s body out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”</p> <p><sup>3</sup>Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. <sup>4</sup>They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup>He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn’t go in. <sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup>while the cloth that had covered</p>

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<p>which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. <sup>9</sup> For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So the disciples went away again to their own homes.</p> <p><sup>11</sup> But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; <sup>12</sup> and she *saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. <sup>13</sup> And they *said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She *said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." <sup>14</sup> When she had said this, she turned around and *saw Jesus standing <i>there</i>, and did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus *said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? "Supposing Him to be the gardener, she *said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." <sup>16</sup> Jesus *said to her, "Mary!" She turned and *said to Him in <sup>[a]</sup>Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus *said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene *came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and <i>that</i> He had said these things to her.</p>	<p>Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. <sup>8</sup> Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed— <sup>9</sup> for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then they went home.</p> <p><sup>11</sup> Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. <sup>12</sup> She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. <sup>13</sup> "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her.</p> <p>"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."</p> <p><sup>14</sup> She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. <sup>15</sup> "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"</p> <p>She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."</p> <p><sup>16</sup> "Mary!" Jesus said.</p> <p>She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").</p> <p><sup>17</sup> "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"</p> <p><sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.</p>
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## 2. Discover key cultural and historical insights

These insights from Bruce Malina, A Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels,

1. A first century ordinance, found near Nazareth promoted by the Roman emperor – Malina 382-383

"Ordinance of Caesar: It is my pleasure that graves and tombs – whoever has made them as a pious service for ancestors or children or members of their house – that these remain unmolested in perpetuity. But if any person lay information that another either has destroyed them, or has in any other way cast out the bodies which have been buried there, or with malicious deception has transferred them to other places, to the dishonor of those buried there or has removed the headstones or other stones, in such a case I command that a trial be

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instituted, protecting the pious services of mortals, just as if they were concerned with the gods. For beyond all else it shall be obligatory to honor those who have been buried. If anyone does so however, it is my will that he shall suffer capital punishment on the charge of tomb robbery. (SEG 8:13 Nazareth (?) first-century C.E. trans. B.M. Metzger 1980: 77)

2. Executed criminals were usually dishonored even in death. Romans often denied burial to criminals. 218
3. Burial was in two phases – the body was placed in a tomb and then after a year when the flesh decomposed the bones were collected and placed in an ossuary to await the resurrection. It was believed that sin resided in the flesh and the bones were pure before God. God would use the bones to form the new person who had been purified in the year-long process as the flesh decomposes. This was to atone for his sins and to purify the person. In the case of a criminal, the Sanhedrin would keep the body and after a year return the bones to the family. One can imagine the shock if a body disappears or is thought to be stolen. It cannot be prepared for resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus shows that he was pure – his flesh did not decompose and it vindicates him. (347-348)
4. In the first century Mediterranean world, earthquakes were caused by heavenly beings. The person looks like lightning, something from the sky, in the story. 140
5. Taking spices to a tomb was a family gesture. 322
6. 24:28-29 – Spur-of-the-moment invitations to hospitality are standard fare in Mediterranean culture, but protocol requires that such invitations be considered a formality and declined until repeatedly urged in the strongest terms possible. 323
7. 24:30-32 – Throughout the Gospel of Luke, as indeed in Mediterranean culture in general, table fellowship is seen as the litmus test of social solidarity. Eating together meant that a bond ran deeply among all the participants. Though the Eucharistic overtones of the meal are obvious, in Jesus with the two in Emmaus, the meal as a key event of social interaction suggests that the risen Messiah and his followers are one. 323

From Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell (200-214)

1. In regard to the Roman soldiers – “It must be remembered that these were men who on the field of battle were inured to bloodshed and at Rome found their chief delight in watching the sports of the arena, where gladiators butchered one another to make a Roman holiday.” 477, quoting Stalker
2. In the city of Rome, there was usually a two day interval between a verdict and an execution, but in the provinces this would not be as strict. 479 (quoting Edersheim)
3. Four soldiers would be detached to each cross and a centurion would be in charge.
4. The cross would be carried by the one being executed.
5. The centurion or another soldier would lead the procession. He would carry a placard naming the crime.
6. Normally they would take the longest road to the place of execution and through the most crowded streets to attract attention.

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7. Romans learned crucifixion from the Carthaginians.
8. Rome would not allow one of its own citizens to be crucified. It was for foreigners, slaves, and people living in the provinces.
9. The cross of Jesus would be slightly taller than a man and the feet of the one crucified would be only about a foot off the ground.
10. There were several types of crosses used but the one used for Christ was probably the Tau cross with the transom below the top.
11. A victim would be stripped naked and his garments given to the soldiers.
12. The vertical beam would be planted in the ground and the victim would be laid on the ground with arms stretched on the crossbar. They would wrap the arms with cords to the crossbar and then drive nails into the hands. Then the victim nailed to the crossbar would be fastened to the vertical piece. Spikes would then be driven through the feet.
13. The gall was a narcotic to alleviate the senses and the suffering.

**Answer these reflective questions.**

**Try to describe the feelings you think Peter and the other disciples had after Jesus' death. Do you think it was difficult for Peter to interact with them after his denial of Christ? Do you think it was hard for others to accept him?**

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**Why do you think the angel rolled the stone away from the tomb? Do you think there is any significance to the angel sitting on the stone?**

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**The angels told the women that Jesus had risen from the dead. Yet, the women did not believe until they saw Jesus. Mary Magdalene saw angels twice yet did not believe until she saw Jesus. Why do you think they did not believe the angels' word?**

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**Why is the resurrection of Jesus important? Read Matthew 12:38-40 and John 2:18-22. What do these verses tell us about the one proof Jesus gave that he was the Messiah and the Savior of the world?**

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**Read Romans 4:25 and 5:10-11. What do these verses tell us about the importance of the resurrection of Jesus?**

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**Read Romans 6:10-13. How should the resurrection of Jesus impact our lives?**

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