

Matthew 27:66

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

Analysis

So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch (ἐσφαλίσαντο τὸν τάφον σφραγίσαντες τὸν λίθον)—The religious authorities took unprecedented precautions against resurrection. The verb esphalisanto (ἐσφαλίσαντο) means 'they secured/made safe,' while sphragisantes (σφραγίσαντες) indicates official sealing, likely with wax and the Roman imperial seal. The koustōdian (κουστωδίαν, Latin custodia) was a quaternion of Roman soldiers (4-16 men) whose lives would be forfeit if the body disappeared.

Ironically, their efforts to prevent the resurrection proclamation became its strongest evidence—they themselves testified the tomb was secure, the body was there, and no human theft was possible. Their precautions fulfilled Psalm 2:1-4: the rulers 'take counsel together against the LORD' while 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.' Rome's seal could not hold the Author of Life.

Historical Context

After Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus on Friday evening, the Sanhedrin waited until after Sabbath ended to approach Pilate (Matthew 27:62-64). This was likely Saturday evening or early Sunday. Roman tomb sealing involved cord across the stone secured with clay impressed with official seals. Breaking such seals was a capital offense. The guard detail would have been posted overnight, which makes the timing of the resurrection (before dawn Sunday) even more significant.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does human opposition to God's purposes often end up confirming them instead of thwarting them?
2. What 'sealed tombs' in your life might God be preparing to open with resurrection power?

Interlinear Text

οἱ δὲ πορευθέντες ἡσφαλίσαντο τὸν τάφον
G3588 So G4198 they went G805 and made G3588 the sepulchre
G1161 G5028

σφραγίσαντες τὸν λίθον μετὰ τῆς κουστωδίας
sealing G3588 the stone and setting G3588 a watch
G4972 G3037 G3326 G2892

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 6:17 (Parallel theme): And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.