

Matthew 28:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Analysis

So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. The guards accepted the bribe and followed instructions: 'did as they were taught' (έποιήσαν ως ἐδιδάχθησαν/epoiēsan hōs edidachthēsan). They exchanged truth for money, integrity for security. This echoes Judas's betrayal—both involved silver purchasing participation in evil. The love of money enables suppression of conscience and truth.

'This saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day' (καὶ διεφημίσθη ὁ λόγος οὗτος παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις μέχρι τῆς σήμερον/kai diephēmisthē ho logos houtos para Ioudaiois mechri tēs sēmeron)—Matthew, writing perhaps 20-40 years after these events, notes the false narrative still circulated. 'Until this day' indicates it persisted during his writing (AD 50-70) and likely beyond.

This phrase also serves apologetic purpose: Matthew confirms the empty tomb was undisputed fact even by Jesus's opponents. The debate wasn't whether the tomb was empty but why. Jews couldn't deny the empty tomb; they could only offer alternative explanations. That they chose an absurd explanation (disciples stealing the body while guards slept) underscores the absence of plausible natural alternatives to resurrection.

The contrast is stark: guards took money and spread lies; disciples took nothing material but proclaimed truth, suffering persecution and martyrdom as a result.

The gospel advances not through bribery and propaganda but through faithful testimony backed by transformed lives. Truth requires no payment; lies demand it.

Historical Context

Jewish polemic against Christianity continued for centuries using this theft allegation. The Toledot Yeshu, a medieval Jewish anti-Christian polemic, expanded this story with various embellishments. Yet the basic claim—disciples stole the body—originates here in Matthew 28, acknowledged even in hostile sources.

Church fathers (Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen) all reference this Jewish counter-claim in their apologetic writings, confirming its widespread circulation. Yet the same fathers note that Jews could produce no body, no tomb with Jesus's remains, no credible alternative to resurrection—only accusations of theft.

The phrase 'among the Jews' (παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις/para Ioudaiois) distinguishes Jewish communities who rejected Jesus from Jewish believers who accepted Him as Messiah (including Matthew himself and other apostles). This isn't anti-Semitism but acknowledgment that official Judaism rejected Christian claims while many individual Jews believed.

Archaeological and historical research has never uncovered Jesus's body or tomb (despite various claimed discoveries that haven't withstood scrutiny). The absence of any ancient claim to have found the body—despite immense incentive for Jesus's opponents to produce it—powerfully supports resurrection's historicity.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the persistence of false narratives 'until this day' remind us that lies often have long shelf-lives while truth requires patient, persistent, faithful witness?
2. What does the stark contrast between guards accepting bribes and apostles accepting persecution teach us about the nature of truth versus falsehood?
3. Why is the fact that even opponents acknowledged the empty tomb (while offering false explanations for it) actually strong evidence for resurrection's historicity?

Interlinear Text

οἱ δὲ λαβόντες τὰ ἀργύρια ἐποίησαν ὡς
G3588 So they took G3588 the money and did as
G1161 G2983 G694 G4160 G5613

ἐδιδάχθησαν. Καὶ διεφημίσθη ὁ λόγος οὗτος παρὰ^ν
they were taught and is commonly reported saying this among
G1321 G2532 G1310 G3588 G3056 G3778 G3844

Ἰουδαίοις μέχρι τῆς σήμερον
the Jews until this day
G2453 G3360 G3588 G4594

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 27:8 (Parallel theme): Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

1 Timothy 6:10 (Parallel theme): For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Matthew 26:15 (Parallel theme): And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

