

Matthew 28:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

Analysis

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. The women's response combines 'fear' (φόβου/phobou) and 'great joy' (χαρὰς μεγάλης/charas megalēs)—emotions that seem contradictory but properly characterize encounters with the living God. Fear here is not terror but awe, reverence, holy amazement at divine power manifested. They had witnessed the supernatural—angels, glory, empty tomb, resurrection announcement. Such experiences produce trembling wonder.

Yet simultaneously, 'great joy'—the adjective 'great' (μεγάλης/megalēs) intensifies the noun, indicating overwhelming gladness. The one they loved, mourned, and sought is alive! Death could not hold Him; the grave is defeated; their hope was not in vain. This joy was not shallow happiness but profound, soul-satisfying gladness grounded in objective reality: Jesus lives.

'They departed quickly' (ἀπῆλθον ταχὺ/apēlthon tachy) shows immediate obedience to the angel's commission. 'Did run' (ἔδραμον/edramon) suggests urgency and excitement. They did not walk sedately but ran—unladylike in ancient culture but appropriate to the news's magnitude. Decorum gives way to zeal when the gospel is at stake.

'To bring his disciples word' (ἀπαγγεῖλαι τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ/apangeilai tois mathētais autou)—their mission is proclamation. They become the first evangelists

of resurrection, carrying the message that would transform the cowering, scattered disciples into bold apostles willing to die for this truth.

Historical Context

The combination of fear and joy reflects authentic eyewitness testimony. Fabricated accounts typically portray heroes with simple, expected emotions. The women's complex emotional state—trembling yet joyful—marks genuine human response to unprecedented events.

The disciples were likely hiding in Jerusalem, fearing arrest (John 20:19). They had abandoned Jesus at His arrest (Matthew 26:56), denied Him (Peter), and witnessed His brutal execution. They were emotionally devastated, fearful, and confused. Into this darkness, the women brought light: 'He is risen!'

Mark's Gospel notes the women initially 'said nothing to any man; for they were afraid' (Mark 16:8), which some see as contradicting Matthew. More likely, they said nothing to strangers encountered on the way but went directly to the disciples, as Matthew describes. The various Gospel accounts provide complementary perspectives, not contradictions.

The women's role as first witnesses is even more remarkable given cultural context. Jewish law required two or three male witnesses to establish testimony (Deuteronomy 19:15). Women's testimony was generally inadmissible. Yet God chose women to first announce resurrection—another instance of God exalting the humble and confounding the wise.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How can we cultivate the balance of holy fear (reverence) and great joy that properly characterizes Christian experience of God's presence and mighty acts?
2. What does the women's immediate obedience and urgency ('departed quickly... did run') teach us about appropriate response to encounters with Christ and His word?
3. In what ways are we called to 'bring word to the disciples'—to announce resurrection truth to fellow believers who may be discouraged, fearful, or doubting?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ταχὺ ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου μετὰ φόβου
And **they departed** **quickly** **from** ^{G3588} **the sepulchre** **with** **fear**
G2532 G1831 G5035 G575 G3419 G3326 G5401

καὶ χαρᾶς μεγάλης ἔδραμον ἀπαγγεῖλαι τοῖς μαθηταῖς
And **joy** **great** **and did run** **to bring** ^{G3588} **disciples**
G2532 G5479 G3173 G5143 G518 G3101

αὐτοῦ
his
G846

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 2:11 (Parallel theme): Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Mark 16:8 (Parallel theme): And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

John 16:20 (Parallel theme): Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

John 16:22 (Parallel theme): And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

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