

CHRIST TRULY ROSE FROM THE DEAD

—by St. Nektarios—

“On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, ‘Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, After three days I will rise. Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people He has risen from the dead. So the last deception will be worse than the first.’ Pilate said to them, ‘You have the guards; go your way, make it secure as you know how.’ So they went and secured the tomb by sealing the stone and setting the guards” (Mt. 27:62-66).

The archpriests and Pharisees rushed to secure the tomb because a certain hidden fear reigned within their hearts concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; a certain internal voice set them into a panic. After witnessing the events that had taken place during the time of Christ’s death and hearing the confession of the gentile centurion, “truly this was the Son of God!” (Mt. 27: 54), the resurrection of Christ was anticipated by even the archpriests and Pharisees. Desiring to intercept, if possible, this expected event that they feared, they placed seals on the stone, they secured the tomb with powerful, armed soldiers, and appointed guards in order to impede the resurrection of the Savior. The excuse that the disciples, who had “all been scattered, each to his own” (Jn. 16:32), could possibly make a daring attempt to steal the body was not the real reason. The true motive was their fear lest He indeed resurrects, and, consequently, they wanted to detain Him and prevent Him from resurrecting.

However, even though they plotted and employed these measures, they involuntarily became witnesses of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. They verified that He died when they confessed: “we remember what that deceiver said while He was still alive.” They confirmed His burial when they requested that “the tomb be made secure.” By asserting that He could not possibly be stolen if He was guarded, they themselves inadvertently admit that Christ rose from the dead.