

Matthew 28 - The Resurrection; The Great Commission

VI. Passion of the King (Matt 26:1—28:20)

(4) Resurrection (28:1-20)

(A) Christ appears to the women (28:1-10)

(B) Israel argues that the disciples stole the body (28:11-15)

(C) Christ appears to the eleven (28:16-17)

(D) The Great Commission (28:18-20)

Matthew 28

(4) Resurrection (28:1-20)

(A) Christ appears to the women (28:1-10) (Cf. Mark 16:1)

(1) Dawn of Resurrection Day

1 Now after the **Sabbath**, as it began to **dawn** toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and **the other Mary** came **to look at the tomb**.

1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

1 After the Sabbaths, around dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to take a look at the burial site.

1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

- "...Sabbath" - noun *plural*. The day after Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, one of the seven "high" sabbaths, and one of three that were compulsory for every able bodied male to come to Jerusalem

- "...dawn" - not sunrise on Sunday morning, but rather, to a Jew, sunset on Saturday evening

— It literally means "toward the beginning of a new day"; to a Jew, the new day started at sunset in the evening since their "day" lasted from sundown to sundown instead of midnight to midnight.

— This is a slightly different time than Mark notes, which is "after the sabbath[s] [were] past," meaning after sundown.

— This points the actual resurrection occurred sometime between the hours of late Saturday night and the early hours of Sunday morning. Note: Saturday night, after sundown, begins the first day of the week.

- "...the other Mary" - the mother of James and Joses (Cf. 27:56)
- "...to look at the tomb" - they also went there to anoint the corpse (Mark 16:1); they didn't know that the tomb had been sealed.

(2) Opening the Tomb

2 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.

2 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.

2 Suddenly, there was a powerful earthquake, because an angel of the Lord had come down from heaven, approached the stone, rolled it away, and was sitting on top of it.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

- "...severe earthquake" - this is the second great earthquake in a three-day span; there was also an earthquake at the time Jesus was crucified

- "...an angel of the Lord" - this verse and Mark 16:5 only describe one angel, but there were actually two on scene (Luke 24:4). There are always two witnesses (Cf. the Ascension).

— An angel announced the Incarnation, and now an angel announced the resurrection (1:20-23; Cf. 18:10)

- By rolling back the stone, the angel would've broken the Roman seal that had been placed on the stone

— The angel rolled the stone away to admit the witnesses, not to allow Jesus to escape (Cf. John 20:26)

3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

3 His appearance was bright as lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

- The guards experienced the earthquake and observed the angel, who appeared as a young man (Mark 16:5). It was them seeing the angel, whose appearance was "like lightening" that terrified them so greatly that Matthew could describe them appearing "as dead" (v4).

4 The guards shook from fear of him and became like dead men.

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4 Trembling from fear, even the guards themselves became catatonic.

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*.

- The Roman guards who were stationed at the tomb were so filled with fear, they could not move. They were "scared stiff."

(3) Arrival of the Women (Cf. Mark 16:2-8; Luke 24:1-9; John 20:1)

5 And the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.

5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.

5 Responding to the women, the angel said, "Stop being frightened! I know you're looking for Jesus, who was crucified.

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

- The angel calmed the women's fear by speaking to them (Cf. Mark 16:2-7; Luke 24:1-8; John 20:1)

6 He is not here, for He has risen, just **as He said**. Come, see the place where He was lying.

6 He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.

6 He is not here. He has been raised, just as he said. Come and see the place where he was lying.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

- "...as He said" - the angel reminded them that Jesus had predicted His resurrection (Cf. 16:21; 17:23; 20:18-19)

- He then invited them to "Come and see" where He was laid, and to "go and tell" (v7) the other disciples

7 And **goquickly** and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

7 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."

7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead. He is going ahead of you into Galilee, and you will see him there. Remember, I have told you!"

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

- "...go quickly" - this was the greatest bit of news in the history of the world; they were not to delay

- Jesus would confirm His resurrection with a personal appearance in Galilee shortly (Cf. 26:32). He would arrive in Galilee before they did and meet them there.

8 And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to report to His disciples.

8 And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.

8 So they quickly left the tomb, terrified but also ecstatic, and ran to tell Jesus' disciples.

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

(6) Second Appearance: The Women

9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "**Rejoice!**" And they came up and took hold of His feet, and **worshipped** Him.

9 And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him.

9 Suddenly, Jesus met them and said, "**Greetings!**" They went up to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him.

9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, **All hail**. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

- After Mary Magdalene left, the women returned to the tomb and saw Jesus

— They grabbed His feet to worship Him; Jesus instructed them to tell the disciples to go to Galilee and that they would see Him; (this was the 3rd time they were instructed to go to Galilee...during last Passover, by Mary Magdalene, now by the women)

— The disciples didn't believe their testimony and didn't follow the instructions to go to Galilee

- "...Rejoice!" - *chariete*, a customary salutation ("Greetings" or "Hello")

- "...worshipped" - the fact that He accepted their worship shows He recognized their belief that He is God

— Grabbing someone's feet was a recognized act of supplication and homage (Mark 5:22; 7:25; Luke 17:16)

All the Gospels mention the fact that women were the first people to see Jesus alive. This is a proof that the resurrection was real. In that culture, the witness of women was not regarded very highly. Thus, if the evangelists fabricated the resurrection, they certainly would not have written that women witnessed it first.

10 Then Jesus *said to them, "**Do not be afraid; go, bring word to My brothers to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.**"

10 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."

10 Then Jesus told them, "Stop being frightened! Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

- Jesus instructed them to go tell the disciples what they had seen, again

- This is the third time the disciples were instructed to leave Jerusalem and go to Galilee (first time at last Passover, second time by Mary Magdalene)

(7) Report of the Guard

11 Now while they were on their way, some of the *men from the guard* came into the city and reported to the **chiefpriests** all that had happened.

11 Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.

11 While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the high priests everything that had happened.

11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

- "...chief priests" - Sadducees; the Roman guard went to the Jewish chief priests (Sadducees), who assembled the elders (Pharisees), to report the missing body.

- The guard was fearful to report the incident to Pilate because his failure could mean a death sentence

- They (Pharisees and Sadducees) bribed the guard and conspired to tell a story (in Jewish circles only) that the disciples had stolen the body. If the story got back to Pilate, they would intervene to protect the guard.

12 And when **they** had assembled with the **elders** and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers,

12 And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers,

12 So they met with the elders and agreed on a plan to give the soldiers a large amount of money.

12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

- "...they" - the chief priests (Sadducees)

- "...elders" - Pharisees

13 and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him while we were asleep.'

13 and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.'

13 They said, "Say that Jesus' disciples came at night and stole him while you were sleeping.

13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him *away* while we slept.

- They essentially bribed the soldier to say that the body was stolen by the disciples

— This proves that their promise to believe in Jesus if He would come down from the Cross was hypocritical (Cf. 27:42; Luke 24:13-32)

— They continued to show more concern for their own reputations and what was expedient than for the truth

Their devised story was a weak one that a critic could easily discredit. If the guards had been asleep, they could not have known of the theft. If one of them was awake, why did he not sound an alarm? It was also incredible that the disciples, who had abandoned Jesus out of fear, would have summoned enough courage to risk opening the guarded tomb. Moreover, if the Sanhedrin had any evidence against the disciples, they surely would have prosecuted them, but they did not.

14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will **appease** him and keep you out of trouble."

14 And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble."

14 If this is reported to the governor, we'll personally persuade him to keep you out of trouble."

14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

- "...appease" - bribe. If Pilate found out, the chief priests and elders would come to the guard's rescue.

— Molesting graves was sometimes punishable by death in the ancient Near East.

Consequently Jesus' enemies resorted to bribery to shut the mouths of the soldiers, and later Pilate if necessary.

This actually *proves* the resurrection of Jesus Christ: If Jesus' body was stolen, then it was taken either by His friends or His enemies. His friends could not have done it since they had left the scene and were convinced that Jesus was dead. His enemies would not steal His body because belief in His resurrection was what they were trying to prevent. They would have defeated their own purposes if they had removed His body. And, if they had

taken it, why did they not produce it and silence the witness of the early church? The inclusion of this important portion is peculiar to Matthew. Peter and John then race to the tomb to inspect for themselves...

15 And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews *and is* to this day.

15 And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, *and is* to this day.

15 So the soldiers took the money, did as they were instructed, and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

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

- The events of the previous verses were the origin of the conspiracy to explain away the resurrection of Jesus. This conspiracy evidently persisted until the day Matthew wrote his Gospel, and continue on even to today.

The reason for Matthew's diligence in approaching the resurrection in such an apologetic manner is evident since so much is dependent upon the resurrection of the Messiah. It authenticated His person. To the nation of Israel, His resurrection was the sign of the prophet Jonah (12:38-39) attesting the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. The reason Matthew says nothing about the ascension is bound up in this point. If Jesus is the Messiah, then an account of the ascension is both unnecessary and self-evident to the Israelite. He would yet come in clouds of glory. What mattered to Matthew was that Jesus was Israel's Messiah and the resurrection proved that fact; therefore he goes no further. Second, the resurrection validated Christ's prophecies concerning His rising from the dead (16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19). Finally, the message of the King involving the character of the kingdom, the offer of the kingdom, and the offer's withdrawal are all involved in the resurrection, for the resurrection verifies the truthfulness of all that Christ ever spoke. [Toussaint]

(13) Eighth Appearance: The Five Hundred (Cf. Mark 16:15-18; 1 Cor 15:6)

Most scholars believe this meeting included over 500 believers at one time, although Jesus spoke primarily to the eleven disciples to give them the second of three final commissions.

(C) Christ appears to the eleven (28:16-17)

16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated to them.

16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.

16 The eleven disciples went into Galilee to the hillside to which Jesus had directed them.

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into [the] mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

- Jesus issued this instruction in v7,10

- This meeting, apparently on a specific mountain in Galilee (unidentified) and the disciples seems to be pre-arranged, based on the wording of this verse

17 And when they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were **doubtful**.

17 When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful.

17 When they saw him, they worshipped him, though some had doubts.

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

- The disciples had a mixed reaction to meeting Jesus

- "...doubtful" - *edistasan*, hesitated (Cf. 14:31)

- Apparently Jesus' resurrection did not immediately dispel all the questions that remained in the minds of the disciples

- It's also possible that some of the disciples were embarrassed for deserting Him at His arrest, and wondered how He would deal with them

- Some scholars speculate that other believers were present as well (maybe the 500 mentioned in 1 Cor 15:6?)

- This would seem logical since it's doubtful any of the 11 doubted at this point, and their presence would also apply the Great Commission to the Universal Church instead of given solely to the disciples.

(D) The Great Commission (28:18-20)

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.**

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**

18 Then Jesus approached them and told them, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**

- Amillennialists and Progressive Dispensationalists conflate the fact that Jesus has been *given* all authority with Him *exercising* that authority today

- They reason that Jesus has been given all authority, therefore He's exercising all authority, therefore we must be in the kingdom now

— Jesus clearly is not exercising all authority because Jesus is in heaven, at the right hand of the Father. And He will be there *until* His enemies have been made a footstool for His feet (Heb 10:12-13). If Jesus were exercising all authority now, there would not be a contingency ("until") in the Hebrew passage.

— All authority has been given to Jesus, but He is not exercising all of it (Phil 2:9-11; Heb 2:5-9; 10:12-13; Rev 3:21). He will manifest/exercise His full power and authority when He returns in all His glory (1 Cor 15:27-28; Eph 1:10).

— A great example of Jesus' current situation is David in the OT...David was anointed king in 1 Sam 16, but did not immediately take the throne (Saul was still ruling). So there was a transitionary time when David was king, but Saul was still ruling. David had the authority, but he did not exercise it. He was waiting for God to depose Saul. Twice (1 Sam 24; 26) David had an opportunity to kill Saul, but didn't take it but instead waiting on the Lord.

— Jesus today is in the same transitionary time between His anointing and His ruling, with Satan (Saul) still on the throne. Jesus is waiting until Satan is deposed by the Father, even though Jesus has the authority to reign on this earth now, if He wanted to.

— You want to talk about someone who knows how to wait on the Father...Jesus does. He's waiting on the Father to depose Satan, who is ruler of this earth, before He takes His rightful throne. Just because Jesus has the authority, doesn't mean He's exercising it, just like David.

- "...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" - as a result of the Resurrection, God the Father gave all authority to the Son. Since the Son has such authority, He can delegate this authority to the disciples.

— "authority" - *exousia*, conferred upon Jesus by God the Father through the resurrection

— God restricted Jesus' authority before His resurrection because of His role as the Suffering Servant. Following His resurrection, God broadened the sphere in which Jesus exercised authority (Cf. 4:8-10). He became the One through whom God now mediates "all authority" (Cf. Dan 7:14; Phil 2:5-11).

The Great Commission

This passage has often been misunderstood to mean merely to evangelize. In the English translation it appears that the command is "Go ye." However, this is not what it says in the Greek. The Greek text has only one imperative: "make disciples." The Great Commission is not to evangelize, but to "make disciples." This imperative is followed by three subordinate participial clauses that explain what making disciples means:

1. "Going" - means to preach the gospel to the whole creation. Evangelism is very much a part of the Great Commission, but it is not the Great Commission. The Great Commission is to "make disciples" and the first step is to evangelize. If someone is preaching the gospel, but nothing else, he is simply evangelizing but not making disciples, and therefore not fulfilling the Great Commission.
2. "Baptizing" - a new type of baptism, a believer's baptism distinct from other types of baptism (such as proselyte baptism into Judaism or John's baptism of repentance). The distinction was that this new baptism was done in the Name of the Triune God. If someone is preaching the gospel and baptizing only, he is not fulfilling the Great Commission.
3. "Teaching" - newly baptized believers must be taught to observe what Jesus has commanded because obedience is the test of discipleship. Only when someone is evangelizing, baptizing and teaching is he fulfilling the Great Commission.

19 **Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,**

19 **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,**

19 **Therefore, as you go, disciple people in all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,**

19 **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:**

- "Go" - *poreuo*, the participle is auxiliary to the main verb. To "go" to the nations is the self-evident and natural way to proceed in making them disciples; it's a presupposition.

— The Greek verb is not an imperative, but a present participle ("going"). The only command in the entire Great Commission is to "make disciples" ("teach all nations").

— Jesus said, "While you are going, make disciples of all the nations"

— However, "go" is not only circumstantial...it has some imperatival force. Believers should reach out to unreached people to make disciples, not only those who we come into contact with on a day-to-day basis.

— Jesus' very usage of the verb "Go" shows that we are not currently in the kingdom: when the kingdom is established, the nations of the world will go to Jerusalem to worship Jesus (Is 2:2-3). Those who don't will be immediately punished (Zech 14:16-18). Jesus' command to "Go" is the complete opposite of kingdom conditions.

- "...therefore" - *oun*, connects v19 back to v18

— Jesus has been given all authority, but He is exercising it in a limited sense to empower His Church into their assignment of fulfilling the Great Commission

- When you step out and fulfill the Great Commission, you're functioning under Jesus' authority, because that's the authority Jesus is wielding today
- When we're fulfilling the Great Commission, we're not out trying to conquer the world. Why? Because Jesus is not out conquering the world right now. He's exercising authority in a limited sense.
- "...make disciples" - *matheteusate*, some translations use "teach"; literally means "to turn into disciples"; the way "all nations" are to be made into disciples is through teaching and baptism
- This is the only command in the Great Commission, and is comprehensive
- It is modified by three participles: "go," "baptizing," and "teaching." It involves bringing people into relationship with Jesus as pupils to Teacher. It involves getting them to take His yoke of instruction upon themselves as authoritative (11:29), accepting His words as true, and submitting to His will.
- This includes men of any nation and all nations; one need not travel the world to fulfill the Great Commission
- "...all the nations" - *panta ta ethne*, all tribes, nations and peoples, including Israel (Cf. Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). The phrase does not mean Gentiles exclusive from Jews.
- Instead of sending His disciples back to the house of Israel (Cf. 10:5-7), they were sent into all the world
- "...baptizing" - the command to "make disciples" is carried out in two activities: baptism and teaching (v20)

See [The Coming Kingdom 53_Kingdom Not of This World \(John 18:36\); All Authority is Given to Me \(Matt 28:18-20\)](#) for details on how Progressive Dispensationalists use the Great Commission to argue for a present, spiritual form of the kingdom.

Make Disciples

There is clearly a progression in the meaning of a "disciple" because when the Bible talks about disciples, there are three levels of discipleship. The word "disciple" means "learner."

1. The Curious Ones (Matt 5:1; 13:2; John 8:31): at this point, these "disciples" were merely "learners," wanting to know who Jesus is or who He claimed to be. At this point, they are no more than pupils in a school. For now, this was only an intellectual pursuit for them; they have not yet responded one way or the other to the claims of Jesus.
2. The Convinced Disciple (John 2:11): When a person moves from being curious to being convinced, he moves from the first to the second level of discipleship. He believes the facts; he is convinced of the truth of the claims of Christ.

3. The Committed Disciple (Matt 16:13-16; John 6:66-68): This level of discipleship involves the Lordship of the Messiah. This is the committed disciple; he has found out the facts, has believed and been saved, and is now committed and has dedicated his life to that truth.

20 **teaching them to follow** all that I commanded you; and behold, **I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

20 **teaching them to observe** all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

20 **teaching them to obey** everything that I've commanded you. And remember, I am with you each and every day until the end of the age."

20 **Teaching them to observe** all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you *always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

- "teaching" - the second, on-going means of "making disciples"

- "...to follow" - *tereo*, to attend carefully to; to guard; implies watchful care

— Disciples should not just understand what Jesus has commanded, as foundational as that is. They must also obey it.

- The entire Gospel of Matthew stresses the **authority** of Jesus Christ:

- There was authority to His teaching (Matt 7:29)
- He exercised authority in healing (Matt 8:1-13); in forgiving sins (Matt 9:6)
- He had authority over Satan, and He delegated that authority to His Apostles (Matt 10:1)
- At the close of his Gospel, Matthew made it clear that Jesus has **ALL** authority

- "...I am with you always" - the Gospel ends not with a command, but with a promise (and a fact): Jesus will always be with His disciples as they carry out His will. This is His great commitment.

— "always" - *pasas tes hermera*, literally means "the whole of every day"

- "...end of the age" - implies that He has a plan...He is also the Lord of history

The Great Commission explains what Jesus has called His believing disciples to do between His departure from the earth and His return to establish His kingdom on earth.

That is why these verses are so important. Every Gospel writer recorded Jesus giving these marching orders, but they did not all record the same occasion when He did so. Jesus evidently gave this commission on at least three separate occasions. Mark and John recorded the first one (Mark 16:15-16; John 20:21- 23). Matthew recorded the second one (28:19-20), and Luke recorded the third one (Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8). His purposes for us as His disciples could not be clearer.

Significance of the Resurrection

Both in the OT and in the teaching of Jesus, His resurrection is clearly taught (see Ps 16:10; 110:1). If Jesus had not come out of the tomb, then these Scriptures would not be true. The remarkable change in the early believers is ***another proof*** of His resurrection. If all of this were a manufactured tale, it could never have changed their lives or enabled them to lay down their lives as martyrs.

- Proves that Jesus is God's Son (John 10:17-18)
- Verifies the truth of Scripture (Ps 16:10; 110:1)
 - If the body had been stolen by enemies, they would have produced it
 - One day they were discouraged and hiding in defeat. The next day they were declaring His resurrection and walking in joyful victory. In fact, they proved willing to die for the truth of the Resurrection.
- Assures our own future resurrection (1 Thess 4:13-18)
- Proof of a future judgment (Acts 17:31)
- Basis for Christ's heavenly priesthood (Heb 7:23-28)
- Gives power for Christian living (Rom 6:4)
- Assures our future inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-5)