

## **After the Resurrection The Risen Jesus Matthew 28**

### **Introduction**

On Sunday morning, when Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany go to the tomb of Jesus, they find the grave is open and an angel sitting on the tombstone.

Matthew 28 says, "Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow." ([Mat 28: 1-3 NKJV](#))

Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany came to finish the preparation of Jesus' body, which was cut short by the Sabbath. They came to the tomb - fully expecting to find the dead body of Jesus. When the angel rolled the stone away, it prompted an earthquake. The earth shook at Christ's death on the Cross - It could not bear his suffering. And it quaked again at the Resurrection; It could not hinder His rising.

When the women came to the tomb, they saw the stone rolled away and an angel sitting on the stone. The door to the tomb was wide open. Verse 4 says, "And the guards shook for fear of him (the angel), and became like dead *men*." ([Mat 28: 4 NKJV](#))

"But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come see the place where the Lord lay." ([Mat 28:5-6 NKJV](#))

The Roman soldiers responsible for guarding the tomb were terrified. The very presence of the angels made these professional soldiers tremble and faint. The Resurrection is a terror to the servants of sin, but it is a source of rejoicing to the servants of the Savior. The angel tells the women, "He is not here, for He is risen!" In Israel, there is an ocean of tombs on the Mount of Olives, and a vast sea of graves outside the eastern wall of the temple mount. You can visit the sealed tomb of Rebekka, King David, and Absalom – but you won't find Jesus sealed in any tomb! Why not? Because the angel said, "He is not here; He is risen!"

By the way, the angel didn't roll the stone away to let Jesus out. John 20:19 tells us that in His resurrected body, Jesus could pass through physical barriers. The angel rolled the stone away so that others could see for themselves that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

The fact of the Resurrection is clear enough.

### **I. The Meaning of the Resurrection**

But what is the meaning of the Resurrection? The Resurrection is proof that God, the Father, accepted the death of Jesus as sufficient payment for our sins. The Cross was the payment, but the Resurrection was the receipt. When we see the place where they laid Jesus, we know that the Father did not forsake Him. When we see the place where they laid Jesus, we know that He conquered death. When we see the place where they laid Jesus, we know that He is alive and with us now!

In verse 7, the angel says, " And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word." (Mat 28: 7-8 NKJV)

These two women were the first messengers of the good news of Jesus' Resurrection. The angels assured them they would see the resurrected Jesus. Jesus was eager to continue His relationship with them and the disciples. The women were filled with fear and great joy as they headed out to do precisely what the angel told them to do.

In verse 9 it says, And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me." (Mat 28: 9-10 NKJV)

They obeyed the command to go and tell the disciples the news, and on their way, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" What else could they do other than rejoice? An hour before, they thought everything was lost because they thought Jesus was dead. Now they knew they had gained everything because Jesus was alive.

Jesus reminds the women to do what the angel told them to do. "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me." This is the *first* time Jesus calls his disciples "my brethren."

## II. The Cover-Up of the Resurrection

The cover-up of the Resurrection begins with the bribery of the guards. Verse 11, "Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him *away* while we slept.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. (Mat 28: 11-15 NKJV)

This attempt at cover-up reveals the real darkness of these priests. They saw the evidence of the Resurrection, yet they rejected that truth. The cover-up also shows their foolishness. If it was true that the guards were asleep, how would they know that it was His disciples that stole the body of Jesus?

To believe this, you have to believe:

- All the soldiers were asleep – all of them!
- All the soldiers violated the strict law of the Roman military against sleeping on watch, punishable by death.
- All the soldiers slept so soundly that none of them heard or felt the effects of an earthquake. And yet,
- All the soldiers were confident it was the disciples who stole the body of Jesus.

Through the years, there have been many objections to the Resurrection of Jesus. Some say He didn't die at all, but just swooned or fainted on the Cross and then spontaneously revived in the tomb. Others say He did die on the Cross, but His disciples stole His body. Still, others suggest He did die, but His desperate followers hallucinated His Resurrection.

The New Testament truth is that even a simple understanding of the evidence of the Resurrection refutes all of these theories. It takes far more faith to believe these faulty theories than it does to believe the Biblical account. Spurgeon wrote, "I suppose there are those who will doubt whether there was ever such a man as Julius Caesar or Napoleon Bonaparte; and when they do, – when all reliable history is flung to the winds, – then, but not till then, may they begin to question whether Jesus Christ rose from the dead, for this historical fact is attested by more witnesses than almost any other fact that stands on record in history, whether sacred or profane. If we can believe anything in history, we can believe the reliable, confirmed testimony of these eyewitnesses.

### **III. The Response to the Resurrection**

In verse 16, the disciples meet Jesus in Galilee. "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted." (Mat 28: 16-17 NKJV)

This was not their first meeting with the risen Jesus, but it was an important one. But at this meeting, they received their apostolic commission. The natural reaction to encountering the risen Jesus was worship, even if some had to overcome uncertainty and hesitation. Some doubted probably feeling the Resurrection was too good to be true - or from the lingering shame of having forsaken Jesus during His suffering. The fact that some of the disciples doubted rules out the theory that seeing Jesus was simply a hallucination born of a desperate desire to see Him. But Jesus does give the disciples some instructions about their mission after His return to the Father.

Verse 18 says, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*" Amen." (Mat 28: 18-20 NKJV)

The Godhead gave Jesus the authority to commission the disciples to tell the world about the Resurrection. It is an authoritative command, not a suggestion. These verses are tied together by the word "all." - all authority, all nations, all things, all the days. Power in the hands of some people is dangerous, but power in the hands of Christ is safety.

Because Jesus has this authority, He commands us to go. It is His authority that sends us, His authority that guides us, and His authority that empowers us. Jesus wanted His work and message to continue to the world through His disciples.

Jesus gave this Great Commission to some very imperfect disciples. "Who were they? There was Peter, the rash and the headstrong. There was James and John, who wanted to call fire from heaven to destroy some Samaritans. There was Philip, to whom Jesus said, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me." And there was Thomas, who wouldn't believe in the Resurrection unless he was able to put his finger into the nail prints in His hands. Jesus says to all of them, 'All power is given unto me, therefore go ye.

The command is to make disciples, not merely converts or supporters. A disciple is a scholar, a learner, a student. To make disciples reminds us that disciples are made. Disciples are not spontaneously created at conversion; they are the product of a process that involves other believers. It is the making of disciples that is the power of spreading Christianity.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus deliberately restricted His work to the Jewish people. Only in rare exceptions did Jesus minister among the Gentiles. But now all of that is in the past. Jesus commissions the disciples to take the gospel to all the nations. The mission is to make disciples of all men everywhere, without distinction. When Jesus told them to go to all the nations, He did not tell them to circumcise those who became disciples.

Instead, they were to baptize them, suggesting the break with traditional Judaism. New circumstances require new and different methods.

## **Conclusion**

The sign of the Abrahamic Covenant was circumcision. But the sign of the New Covenant in Christ is Baptism. The church began as a collection of Christian disciples.

The early church didn't just hold church services like so many places do today. The early church was committed to making disciples and following Christ. Baptisms were conducted in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Experiencing God in these three Persons is the essential basis of discipleship. And yet, at the same time, the singular noun name (not 'names') underscores the unity of the three Persons as the One True God.

Disciples are made through teaching. This teaching is not with words only, but with the power of the always-present Jesus. Jesus promises to be present with those who are his disciples until the job of making disciples is completed – which doesn't occur until the end of the age. Up to this point, Jesus has been the teacher, but now the disciples are to take over the role of teaching. The content of the teaching was to be all the things Jesus had commanded them.

As followers of Jesus, we are responsible for presenting the counsel of God to those who we are making disciples. That can be your family, or your neighbor, or your co-worker, or your friend. It can be anyone who takes seriously the call of Jesus to "Come and follow me."

Jesus sent His disciples with a great mission to fulfill, but He did not send them alone. The promise of His constant presence was more than enough to strengthen and guide the disciples as they obeyed Jesus in making disciples of all the nations.

We too, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, have been called to work together to fill our world with good news! To complete this task, Jesus has promised, "I am with you always." That's why we're not afraid of the Coronavirus or anything else for that matter. The presence of Jesus means protection because we are never out of His sight or supervision. His presence means power because, as we fulfill this great command, we work in His name. His presence means peace because it always reminds us that the church belongs to Jesus. We are His church and His work. Why should we worry?

Listen to the words of the great disciple-maker from Romans 8: 38, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 8: 38-39 NKJV)