

Matthew 28

This chapter sums up the gospel of Matthew and the life of Christ. Matthew began by stating that Jesus was the “son of Abraham, the Son of David” (1:1). Matthew records throughout his gospel how Jesus revealed the meaning and significance of those designations. He is the promised Redeemer of Genesis 3:15, the “seed of woman” (Gal. 4:4), and the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 to bless the world through his seed and the fulfillment of God’s promise to King David in 2 Samuel 7 to have One sitting on his throne, forever. The resurrection of Jesus, recorded here in chapter 28, culminates that story.

TRANSLATION - 28:1-10:

1 And after the Sabbath, the dawning unto the first of the week, there came Mary the Magdalene and the other Mary to see the grave. **2** And behold a great earthquake happened; for an angel of the Lord after descending from heaven and after coming, rolled away the stone and sat above it. **3** And his appearance was as lightning and his garment white as snow. **4** And from the fear of him, they shuttered those guarding and they became as dead [men]. **5** And answering, the angel said to the women, “Do not you fear, you all; for I know that Jesus, the One having been crucified, you are seeking. **6** He is not here, for He arose even as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. **7** Now quickly, after going tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold He precedes you into Galilee, there Him you will see. Behold, I told you.”

8 And after leaving quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to announce to His disciples. **9** And behold Jesus met them saying, “Greetings!” And those approaching grasped His feet and worshipped Him. **10** At that time Jesus said to them, “Do not fear. Go. Announce to My brothers that they might go into Galilee, and there Me they will see.”

GREEK WORDS:

“Sabbath” (ver. 1) is seen most extensively in chapter 12 (verses 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12). The word “week” in this verse is the same word. “To dawn” is only used here and Luke 23:54. “To see, observe, view” was used first at 27:55. This is its only other use in Matthew, out of 58 uses in the NT. “Grave or tomb” was used first at 23:27, 29. The word was used three times in chapter 27: 27:61, 64, 66; here; and Romans 3:13. Out of 200 times the word “Behold” (ver. 2) is used in the NT, Matthew uses it 62 times (in 28 chapters!). It is used six times in this very chapter: 28:2, 7, 9, 11, 20. For “earthquake,” see 8:24. On “angel,” see at 1:20. The phrase “angel of the Lord” is used 68 times in the Bible; in the NT, 12 times, in Matthew, five times: 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19; 28:2. “To roll away” is used four times in the NT: here; Mark 16:3-4; Luke 24:2. “Stone” was first seen at 3:9.

“Appearance” (ver. 3) is used only here in the NT. “Lightning” was used first at 24:27. This is its last use in Matthew. “Garment” was used in 3:4; 6:25, 28; 7:15; 22:11-12; 28:3; and Luke 12:23. “White” was used in 5:36 first. “Snow” is used here and Rev. 1:14. “Fear” (ver. 4) is used at 14:26; 28:4, 8, out of 47 uses in the NT. “To shake, shutter” is found first at 21:10; 27:51. “To keep, guard” is used at 19:17; 23:3; 27:36, 54; 28:4, 20. “Dead” is used at 8:22.

“Women” (ver. 5) was seen first at 1:20. “To fear,” the verb related to the prior noun, was seen first at 1:20. “To be crucified” was seen at 20:19; 23:34; 26:2; 27:22-23, 26, 31, 35, 38; 28:5. “To seek” was seen first at 2:13. “To arise” (ver. 6) was seen first at 1:24. “Come” was seen first at 4:19. “To lay” was seen first at 3:10. “Quickly” (ver. 7) was seen first at 5:25. It is used here at 28:7-8, for its last uses in Matthew. “Disciple” was seen first at 5:1. The noun is used 72 times in Matthew. “To precede, or go before” was used first at 2:9.

“Tomb” (ver. 8) was seen earlier at 8:28. For “joy,” see 2:10. “To run” was seen earlier at 27:48. This is its last use in Matthew. “To announce” is the verbal form of the noun “angel” or “messenger.” It was first seen at 2:8. “To meet” (ver. 9) was seen at 8:28. This is its last use in Matthew. “To greet” was seen first at 2:10. “To grasp, seize, take hold of” was seen first at 9:25. “To worship” can mean to “bow down,” without the connotations of worship, but here the

idea is worship. The verb was used first at 2:2, 8, 11. "Brothers" (ver. 10) was used at 1:2, 11. Matthew uses the noun 39 times out of the 343 uses in the NT. This verb "to see" is used first at 5:8.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

"The dawning" (ver. 1) translates a participle in the present tense. This event happened early in the morning. "The One having been crucified" (ver. 5) translates a participle in the perfect tense, which identifies Jesus as the One who was crucified in the past but still carries that designation. This suggests that Jesus will always be identified as the One having been crucified, which brings up the question: Will He eternally have the scars identifiable in His (spiritual) hands? See John 20:20, 27.

PARALLELS:

The resurrection of Jesus, naturally, is recorded by all four Gospel writers. The account is found in Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10. There is no contradiction when Luke (24:4) and John (20:12) mention two angels while Matthew and Mark (16:5) mention only one. The latter two simply focus on the one doing the speaking.

COMMENTS:

Matthew, as well as the other gospel writers, is emphatic that the Sabbath (as it pointed to the Old Law) was past. A new covenant dawns on this new day of the week! The women who had been last at the tomb are first to the grave to finish what they started Friday evening. But, someone had already beaten them to it! Mary of Magdala and the other Mary came to the tomb (they had earlier been witnesses of the death: 27:56, 61), but in route, an earthquake happened (see 27:51-53 for the earthquake which occurred on Friday; it is possible but not probable that the two earthquakes are the same and 27:51-53 is not in chronological order). This was apparently simultaneous with the angel of the Lord descending and removing the stone from the door. Then he sat on the stone. As many have observed, the stone was not moved so that Jesus could get out; it was moved so that witnesses could see the tomb was empty.

His appearance, as bright as lightning and white as snow (indicating purity), had the marks of a divine messenger from God. The soldiers were so afraid, they became catatonic. The angel then spoke to the women. He said: 1) Do not be fearful. 2) He acknowledges they were seeking the Jesus who had been crucified. 3) The Jesus who had been crucified (dead), is not in the grave. 4) He has risen to life again. 5) He had so predicted this resurrection. 6) They are invited to see the evidence with their own eyes. 7) They are then to go tell the disciples that He was risen. 8) He will meet them in Galilee (as He had said, Matt. 26:32; cf. "Galilee of the Gentiles" from 4:15-16). 9) They will see Him alive there. 10) He has now shared the information that God told them to share.

The women immediately left and ran to announce to the disciples what they had seen and heard. They were full of fear and joy. Jesus met them on the road and greeted them (the word "greeting" comes from the same verb as "to rejoice;" cf. the women's response in verse 8), and out of joy they fell and worshipped Him, before the men do (28:17). This is the only post-resurrection appearance of Jesus recorded by Matthew. Then Jesus repeated a few of the items of the angel: 1) Do not be afraid. 2) Go. 3) Announce to "My brothers" (see 12:49-50; 25:40; John 20:17; Heb. 2:11) that He is going into Galilee (John 21:1-14). 4) There they will see Him. Galilee had been the location of most of His ministry, in Matthew's account.

APPLICATION:

If the gospel story was fabricated, or if the gospel story was written by misogynists, the testimony of the women would have been excluded or changed to men. Women were not considered reliable witnesses in the court of law. But they *were* eyewitnesses and they *were*

the first to proclaim His resurrection and the account was recorded for posterity by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The “first day of the week” becomes significant for Christians as the celebration of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ - through the Lord’s Supper - happened on the first day, which came to be known as the “Lord’s Day” (see Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20; 16:1; Rev. 1:10).

Jesus’ resurrection is the first fruit (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) of a coming harvest of souls’ resurrections one day (1 Cor. 15:57-58). For more on the theology of the resurrection, see Acts 2:22-38; 26:6-8; Romans 4:24-25; 6:3-4; 8:34; 10:9; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5:1-10, 15; Eph. 1:15-2:10; Phil. 3:10-11; Col. 2:12-13; 3:1-4; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Heb. 1:1-4; 1 Peter 3:18-21; Rev. 5. If the resurrection did not happen, then we (Christians) of all people deserve pity (see 1 Cor. 15:9) and nothing really is important. If the resurrection did happen, then we will experience a bodily (but changed) resurrection, Christ means everything, and nothing *e/*se is really important! See also 1 John 3:1-3.

Jesus ought to be worshipped; men and angels cannot be worshipped: Acts 10:25-26; 14:11-15; Rev. 22:8-9.

We also note that even though the disciples had forsaken Jesus and fled (26:56), and Peter had denied Him (26:69-75), Jesus still considered them “brothers” (verse 10). He would forgive them (singling out Peter himself in Mark 16:7) and restore them into His grace.

TRANSLATION - 25:11-15:

11 And after their going out, behold some of the guard, after coming into the city, announced to the chief priests all the happenings. **12** And after gathering with the elders, after taking counsel, much silver they gave to the soldiers **13** saying, “Say that His disciples by night after coming stole Him, while we were sleeping. **14** And if it may be heard by the governor, we ourselves will persuade [him], and you all free from care we will make.”

15 And those, after taking the silver did as they were taught. And it spread this word by the Jews until today.

GREEK WORDS:

“Guard” (ver. 11) was used at 27:65-66. “To gather” (ver. 12) was first seen at 2:4. “Counsel” was seen at 12:14. “Silver, money” was used first at 25:18. “Much, considerable” was used at 3:11; 8:8; and here in Matthew. It is used 39 times in the NT. “Soldiers” was used at 8:9; 27:27; here. “To steal” (ver. 13) was seen first at 6:19-20. “To sleep” was seen at 27:52; 28:13. It is used 18 times in the NT.

“To persuade” (ver. 14) was used at 27:20, 43; here. It is used 52 times in the NT. “Free from care” is used only here and 1 Cor. 7:32. “To teach” (ver. 15) was used at 4:23. “To spread abroad” is used at 9:31; 28:15 and Mark 1:45.

PARALLELS:

This passage is not found in the other gospel accounts.

COMMENTS:

While the women were running to tell the disciples, the Roman guards are running to tell the chief priests: the tomb is empty! The chief priests assemble the Sanhedrin together and they decide among themselves to offer a massive amount of money to the guards to lie. They were to tell others that the reason the tomb was empty was because they were “sleeping on the job!” It must have been a massive amount of money, which probably came from the temple treasury, because the penalty for Roman soldiers failing in their job was severe, perhaps even death. They were to say that the disciples came by night and stole the body while the soldiers were sleeping. Perhaps they were asked: “Did you not hear the stone being rolled away from the door?” Or, “all of you were sleeping at the same time?” The story is hollow.

The soldiers took the bribe and left, doing as “they were taught.” That same verb is used in verse 20. Here (ver. 15), the soldiers *lie* as “they were taught.” In verse 20, the disciples

are to *teach the truth* as they were taught. The chief priests promise that if Pilate hears about the affair, they will “persuade” him; perhaps offering him a sufficient bribe as well. Then Matthew makes the comment that the Jews were continuing to spread that same lie even to the day he wrote his gospel account, as much as 20-30 years later.

APPLICATION:

The lie about the disciples stealing the body of Jesus was still being told by Jews 100 years after the close of the NT, according to the Christian named Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho* 108.2). But when the disciples completely did not expect the resurrection, how would they have found the courage to sneak through a contingent of Roman soldiers to steal the body of Jesus? Also, when they started preaching the resurrection of Jesus, beginning in Acts 2, why did not the Jewish authorities, with the aid of Roman soldiers whose law the disciples would have thus violated, prosecute the Christians with evidence that they had stolen the body? The accusation is preposterous and unhistorical. When as many as sixteen soldiers allowed Peter to escape their custody in Acts 12:19, all of them were put to death!

TRANSLATION - 28:16-20:

16 And the eleven disciples went into Galilee unto the mountain which Jesus designated to them, **17** And seeing Him, they worshipped [Him], and they hesitated. **18** And after approaching Jesus spoke to them, saying, “There is given to Me all authority in heaven and on [the] earth. **19** Therefore, after going, make disciples of all the nations, immersing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to keep all which I have commanded you; and behold I Myself with you all I am, all the days until the completion of the age.”

GREEK WORDS:

“To designate, determine” (ver. 16) is only used here in the NT, out of 8 times. “To hesitate, waver, doubt” (ver. 17) is used here and Matthew 14:31. “Authority, power” was used first at 7:29. “To make disciples or to disciple” is the verbal form of the noun; it was used at 13:52; 27:57; here and again at Acts 14:21. “Nations” is used first at 4:15. “To baptize” was used first at 3:6, 11, 13-14. The verb is used 7 times in Matthew. It is used 77 times in the NT. “Name” is used 230 times in the NT, first at 1:21.

“To teach” (ver. 20) was first seen at 4:23. “To keep, guard” was used at 19:17 first. “To command, order” is used first at 4:6. “Completion, close, end” is used 6 times, five in Matthew: 13:39-40, 49; 24:3; 28:20; Heb. 9:26. “Age” is used at 12:32.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

The grammar of verse 19 is important. “After going” is a participle in the past tense (aorist in Greek language terminology). It carries the force of the main verb (“make disciples”) which is an imperative. In order to “make disciples,” Jesus uses two verbs in the form of a participle: “immersing” and “teaching” (ver. 20). It is clear from Jesus’ words, here, that one is made a disciple *by immersing*. If one is not *immersed* (for the “forgiveness of sins,” see Acts 2:38), that person is *not a disciple*. If one does not continue *learning*, he or she is not a disciple.

PARALLELS:

The sending out of the apostles is found at Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-8.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

We see indicated here in this paragraph Jesus’ understanding that He fulfilled the prediction found in Daniel 7:13-14. The authority of Jehovah God will be picked up here by Jesus Christ; see Exodus 29:35; Deut. 1:3, 41; 7:11; 12:11, 14.

COMMENTS:

The eleven apostles still following Jesus (Judas, 27:5, had hanged himself) met Him on some unidentified mountain or hill in Galilee. Matthew skips the 40-days that Jesus kept proving Himself alive to His apostles, recorded by Luke (Acts 1:3-9). Just as the women did in verse 9, here the apostles worship Jesus. However, some hesitated, one of whom John will identify in his account (see Luke 24:10-11; John 20:24-29). Who else it was who hesitated, how long they hesitated, how their hesitation was alleviated we are not told anywhere. As Jesus was preparing to ascend into heaven, to the Father, He told His disciples that as they were going about their daily lives, they should make more disciples.

Count the number of times the word "all" is used in verses 18-20. The way disciples are made, Jesus says (see above under "Greek grammar") is to immerse people into Him (see Rom. 6:1-7) for the forgiveness of sins (see Acts 2:38), by the authority ("in the name") of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Secondly, disciples are made by teaching those immersed all that Jesus had commanded them to know, feel, and do. Discipleship, then, is a life-long process of growth. Then, Jesus promised that His presence would be with them until the end of the age. The next age to come will be the age consummated in heaven, in the eternal realm, in the "eternal kingdom" (see 2 Peter 1:11).

APPLICATION:

For immersion "in the name of Jesus," see Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5. See also Acts 22:16 for the statement that immersion is the point when sins are washed away. It is also the point when one truly "calls on the name of the Lord." To be immersed "in the name of the Lord" means to be immersed by His authority and into a relationship with Him; it does not necessarily mean that the words "in the name of Jesus Christ" must be spoken at the time of immersion.

For a more complete view of the subject of immersion for the forgiveness of sins, see: Mark 16:15-16; John 3:3-5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-7; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-27; Eph. 5:26; Col. 2:11-12; Titus 3:3-5; Heb. 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21. Then the accounts of immersion in the book of Acts should be studied.

Combinations of the "Godhead" (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) are also found at Matthew 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20-21; Rev. 1:4-6. The word "Godhead" which reflects the later idea of a "Trinity" (which is not a biblical word) is found in four passages: Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9; 2 Peter 1:3-4. For passages which state Jesus is God, see: John 1:1; 14:9; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:8; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 1:8.

A Christian must continue learning all that Jesus commanded and continue to be reminded of all that Jesus commanded so that the Christian can continue living a life of obedience to Jesus' commands: John 15:10, 14; 2 Peter 3:18. For more on the authority of Christ, see: Matthew 4:23-24; 7:29; 8:9, 29-32; 9:6, 8, 35; 10:1, 7-8; 11:27; 12:22; 13:41; 17:18; 21:23-27; 22:43-44; 24:35; Luke 24:46-47; John 5:22-23; 15:16; 16:23-26; 17:2; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:18; 3:17.

The story of God's relationship with mankind began with Him walking with Adam and Eve in the "cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8). That relationship was interrupted by sin (see Isaiah 59:1-2), but the promise of God's future presence runs throughout the OT: Gen. 28:15; Exo. 3:12; Joshua 1:5, 9; Isa. 41:10. The angel Gabriel promised that Jesus' nature would be "God with us" (Immanuel; Matt. 1:23). Jesus now promises that He will be with His disciples until the age of physical existence comes to an end (28:20).

We also see, as a culmination point, that Jesus had always intended to take His gospel beyond the Jewish nation and Matthew regularly hinted at that universal mission: 2:1-12; 3:9; 4:15-16; 8:11-12; 10:18; 12:21; 13:38; 21:28-32, 41-43; 22:8-10; 24:14, 31; 26:13. This is in fulfillment of the allusion in 1:1 to the promise God made to Abraham to bless all the nations through Abraham's seed (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18), whom we now know to be Jesus of Nazareth.

Post-resurrection appearances of Jesus before His ascension	
Mary of Magdala	Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18
Women who left the tomb	Matt. 28:8-10
Peter in Jerusalem	Luke 24:34 (1 Cor. 15:5)
Two disciples on the road to Emmaus	Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32
Ten apostles in Jerusalem (without Thomas)	Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25
Eleven apostles (including Thomas)	John 20:26-29 (1 Cor. 15:5)
Seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee	John 21:1-23
Eleven apostles in Galilee	Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18
More than 500 disciples	1 Cor. 15:6
James, Jesus' brother	1 Cor. 15:7
On the Mount of Olives at the ascension	Mark 16:19; Luke 24:44-53 (Acts 1:3-8; 1 Cor. 15:7)