

Matthew Chapter 28

Verses 1-7

See also Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1; John 20:1-31.

All four Gospels essentially agree in reporting the facts of the Resurrection.

The variety of details in each account supplement rather than contradict one another.

The empty tomb was discovered “in the end” (Greek "opse", used as improper preposition for “after”), “of the Sabbath,” agreeing with the other evangelists.

By Jewish reckoning the day ended at sunset and the new day began at the same time.

Thus, Saturday night by our reckoning was actually Sunday by their calendar.

Accordingly, the Resurrection actually occurred sometime during the night, for by the time the women arrived “as it began to dawn” He had already risen from the dead.

The “earthquake” and the “angel” (Mark’s “man ... in ... white”), who rolled the stone away, did not come to let Jesus out of the tomb, but reveal that it was empty and that He was already gone.

Matthew 28:1 "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 sepulcher."

“It began to dawn toward the first day of the week”:

Sabbath officially ended with sundown on Saturday.

At that time the women could purchase and prepare spices (Luke 24:1).

The event described here occurred the next morning, just at dawn on Sunday, which was the first day of the week.

“Other Mary”:

The mother of James the less.

The women were the last of Jesus' followers at the cross, and as we see here, they were the first at the grave.

It appears that these two Marys’ came to the tomb early Sunday morning.

The Jews would call this day firstfruits; the Christians would come to know it as Easter.

At any rate, this is Resurrection Day.

These two women probably, were not aware that the sepulcher had been sealed.

Their love and devotion to Jesus had brought them.

Matthew 28:2 "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."

“A great earthquake”:

The second earthquake associated with Christ’s death (27:51).

This one may have been confined to the immediate area around the grave, when “an angel” supernaturally “rolled away the stone” not to let Jesus out.

For if He could rise from the dead, He would need no help escaping an earthly tomb, but to let the women and the apostles in (verse 6).

This is an interesting statement.

Jesus would not need the stone removed for Him to come out, but Mary and Mary Magdalene would need it moved for them to go in.

The soldier guards needed a sign as well.

This "earthquake" would certainly awaken them.

Earthquakes throughout the Bible, are God dealing with man.

This "angel" sitting on the rock had to be quite a sight to see in itself.

Matthew 28:3 "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:"

“His countenance”:

In our language, the word "countenance" refers to the "face only;" in the original it refers to his "whole person."

His "general aspect, or the appearance of the angel himself,"

“Was like lightning”:

Peculiarly bright and shining.

“His raiment white as snow”:

Celestial beings are usually represented as clothed in white (Acts 1:10; Daniel 7:9; Revelation 3:4-5; 4:4; 7:13-14).

White, among the Jews, was the symbol of "purity or innocence."

Matthew 28:4 "And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead [men]."

“Became as dead men”:

This suggests that they were not merely paralyzed with fear, but completely unconscious, totally traumatized by what they had seen.

The word translated “shook”, has the same root as the word for “earthquake” (in verse 2).

The sudden appearance of this angel, at the same time the women arrived, was their first clue that anything extraordinary was happening.

This angel had to be of great authority.

He was probably, the personal angel of Jesus, since he had such a bright countenance.

Jesus is the Light.

Those in close contact with Him would have this brightness, as Moses' head had shone when he came down the mountain.

People, who have seen angels in visions, say that they are enormous.

This one moved this huge stone by himself, so he must have been very large.

Matthew 28:5 "And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified."

“And the angel answered and said”:

This was not on the outside of the tomb, for Matthew does not say that the angel appeared to the "women" there, but only to the keepers.

Mark says, "entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment" (Mark 16:5).

Luke says: Luke 24:3, "they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus; and as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments."

Seeing the stone rolled away and the sepulcher open, they of course anxiously entered into it, to see if the body was there.

They did not find it, and there they saw the vision of the angels, who gave them information respecting his resurrection.

Infidels have objected that there are three inconsistencies in the accounts by Mark and Luke.

That Mark says the angel was sitting, and Luke says they were standing.

Answer: The word in Luke does not of necessity mean that they "stood," but only that they were "present."

Or it may be that the one that Mark mentions was sitting when they entered, and then arose.

The Scripture did not say that the women were afraid.

The angel comforted them just the same.

Matthew 28:6 "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay":

(Luke 24:4), says two men, (these were angels).

Only Luke mentioned them both.

Mark was concerned only with the one who spoke for the duo.

Such minor differences in the gospel accounts are all reconcilable. Here's a summary of the event of the resurrection, assembled from all 4 evangelists accounts.

Finding the stone rolled away, the women entered the tomb, but found it empty.

While they were still in the tomb, the angels suddenly appeared (Mark 16:5).

The angel who spoke reminded them of Jesus' promises, then sent them to find Peter and the disciples to report that Jesus was risen (Matt. 28:7-8; Mark 16:7-8).

The women did as they were told.

The disciples were skeptical at first, but ran to where the tomb was.

John arriving first (John 20:4), but Peter actually entering the tomb first (John 20:6).

They saw the linen wrappings intact but empty, proof that Jesus was risen (John 20:6-8).

They left immediately (John 20:10).

Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb, and was standing outside weeping when Christ suddenly appeared to her (John 20:11-18).

That was His first appearance (Mark 16:9).

Sometime soon after that, He met the other women on the road and appeared to them as well (Matt. 28:9-10).

Later that day He appeared to two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and to Peter.

The resurrection of Christ included five accomplishments:

1. The physical renewing of His life;
2. The reunion of His body and His spirit;
3. The subjugation of death under Him;
4. The attainment of His new position;
5. His receiving of a transfigured body.

Because of the Resurrection, the Christian receives both eternal life (John 11:25), and spiritual power (Eph. 1:19-20).

Christ's resurrection also provides for the future resurrection of the believer (1 Cor. 15:20), and is the key to victory in the Christian life because of our union with Christ (Eph. 2:6).

Matthew 28:7 "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."

"Tell his disciples":

Mark adds particularly, "tell Peter."

This was a kind message to Peter, who had so recently denied his Lord.

It would serve to cheer him in his despondency, and to assure him that his sin had been forgiven.

And it shows the tender love and remembrance of Jesus, even for his unfaithful friends.

These women found out first about Jesus, because they were there.

They cared for the Lord whether living or dead.

The eleven disciples were not told first, because they had gone back to their old way of life.

Some, as we will find out later, had stopped fishing for men and had just gone back to fishing for real fish.

The message they were to tell is still the same today, HE IS RISEN.

“There shall ye see him”:

See verses 10, 16, 26:32; John 21:1-14.

This does not mean they would not see Him until then.

He was seen by the apostles several times before they saw Him in Galilee (Luke 24:15; 34; 36; John 20:19, 26).

But His supreme post-resurrection appearance was in Galilee, where “He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at once” (1 Cor. 15:6).

He had promised to go to Galilee, and that was where they would find Him.

Verses 8-15:

Running ahead with “fear and great joy” they actually met Jesus and worshiped Him.

We cannot imagine their emotions at this particular moment when both fear and joy gripped them simultaneously.

Again, they were instructed to go before Him into Galilee.

Here Matthew’s account is considerably briefer and less detailed than other Gospels.

Where we have specific accounts of Peter and John running to the tomb; Mary meeting Jesus; the walk to Emmaus; the appearance in the Upper Room; the appearance to more than five hundred believers at once; and the incident on the seashore (John chapter 21).

Pilate had put the soldiers at the disposal of the Jewish Sanhedrin, so the soldiers reported first to that body.

The assemblage “gave large money” (a large bribe) to the soldiers to hide the truth of the Resurrection with the lie, “saying ... his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we were sleeping.”

A ridiculous statement in view of the disciples’ earlier defection in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Also, the soldiers would have been unable to testify about what happened while they slept!

Matthew 28:8 "And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word."

“And they departed quickly from the sepulchre”:

Or "they went out from it", as it may be rendered, and as it is in (Mark 16:8).

Which shows that they went into the sepulcher upon the invitation of the angel, and saw the place where the Lord lay.

And here it was the angel that gave them their instructions, and errand to the disciples.

Which as soon as they received the instructions, left the sepulcher in all haste, partly in obedience to the angel's orders, and partly through surprise and fear.

For Mark says, "they fled from the sepulchre" (Mark 16:8), as persons terrified and affrighted.

And it is added here, with fear and great joy.

A mixture of both these; with fear and dread, because of the vision they had seen, and with joy at the news of Christ's resurrection.

And yet in this their faith might not be so confirmed, as to have no doubt about it: they might fear the body was taken away, and removed to some other place.

And that this they had seen might be a deception and a delusion.

However, between both joy and fear, they set out, and did run to bring his disciples word.

As Mary Magdalene ran to Peter (John 20:2), nor is running unusual for women, or unbecoming them on certain occasions (see Genesis 24:20).

Their fright, as well as their joy, and their regard to the angel's order, might cause them to run, and make the quicker dispatch.

Male or female, young or old, white or black, the only answer God wants to hear, when He says go and tell, is "Here am I Lord, send me".

This was what these women did.

Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

These women feared God and all the time were filled with great joy.

They did not just go at their own convenience and dally around, they ran.

Be on fire for God.

Do what He wants you to do, and do it NOW.

Matthew 28:9 "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."

“And as they went ... Jesus met them”.

This was when they left the sepulcher the "second" time.

Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene when alone (John 20:14).

"Afterward" he appeared to the other women, as related by Matthew.

“All hail”:

This is a term of salutation.

The word "all" has been supplied by the translators.

It is not in the original.

The meaning of the word "hail," here, is rejoice;" a term of salutation connected with the idea of joy at his resurrection, and at meeting them again.

Held him by the feet.

Or threw themselves prostrate before him.

This was the usual posture of supplication (see 2 Kings 4:37). It does not mean that they took hold of his feet, but only that they cast themselves down before him.

“And worshipped him”:

In this place the word "worship" seems to denote the homage due to the Messiah that had risen from the dead.

Regarded by them now in a proper light, and entitled to the honor which was due to God, agreeably to (John 5:23).

There was no question now, this was their Lord.

They humbled themselves and bowed down to Him in reverence.

These women had pure hearts, and that allows us to see God

In this instance, He is the Risen Christ, God the Son, Messiah, Lord of Lords.

Seek and ye shall find.

They had found their master.

Their sorrow had been turned into joy.

Matthew 28:10 "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."

“Be not afraid”:

They were seized with fear at the sight of the angel; and this was now renewed by this unexpected appearance of Christ (see the note on Matthew 28:8).

“Go, tell my brethren”:

This is the first time our Lord called his disciples by this endearing name.

They no doubt thought that their Lord would reproach them with both their past cowardice and their infidelity.

But, in speaking thus, he gives them a full assurance, in the most tender terms, that all that was passed was as buried forever.

Jesus called them "brethren" to reassure them that in spite of their fear and abandonment of Him at the cross, He still loved them.

He sent them word so that they would know what He prophesied had happened.

He was alive.

He said, meet me in Galilee, and I will show you.

Some of the other books of the Bible have additional information on this, but we will wait until we get to that book to discuss it.

The scene changed in the next verse to the watchmen who had apparently finally awakened.

Matthew 28:11 "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."

“Shewed unto the chief priests”:

The Jewish leaders' determination to cover up what had occurred reveals the obstinacy of unbelief in the face of evidence (Luke 16:31).

Matthew 28:12 "And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

“They gave large money unto the soldiers”:

Literally “silver” (26:15).

The bribery was necessary because the soldiers' story, if true, could cost them their lives.

Since they were charged with guard duty under Pilate's personal orders (27:65).

The Jewish leaders also promised to cover for the soldiers if the false story they spread leaked back to Pilate (verse 14).

Matthew 28:13 "Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him [away] while we slept."

“While we slept”:

The story was obviously bogus, and not a very good cover-up.

They could not possibly know what had happened while they were asleep.

Matthew 28:14 "And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you."

“If this came to the governor's ears”:

Pilate, then we will persuade him that it is for his own interest and honor to join in the deception; and we will render you secure.

We will take care that you shalt not suffer that punishment for this pretended breach of duty which otherwise you might expect.

Matthew 28:15 "So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

“So they took the money, and did as they were taught”:

Though they had been just now in the greatest fright and consternation imaginable at the sight of the angel, and knew what was done.

Yet being men of no religion or conscience, were tempted with the money, and took it, and reported everywhere what had been put into their mouths by the chief priests and elders.

These religious people knew if they got back to the governor, that they would be in danger.

He had not wanted to kill Jesus from the beginning.

How in the world they got these people to lie, I do not know.

I guess money was more important to them than their souls.

These high priests, scribes, and Pharisees should have been on their knees repenting, because they knew that they had been wrong.

They wanted earthly power enough to trade their souls for it.

These Jews sent people everywhere scattering this lie, and it is still believed by most of them, even today.

Verses 16-17:

Now instead of sending His disciples back to the house of Israel, they are sent into all the world.

The kingdom rejected by the Jews will now be offered to the Gentiles in accordance with Jesus' earlier parables.

This appearance in "Galilee" is not to be confused with the appearances at Jerusalem and is probably the same as the appearance to "about five hundred brethren" (1 Cor. 15:6), with the "eleven" being among them.

This is further implied by the statement "they worshiped him: but some doubted," which would be unlikely of the Eleven after the earlier appearances and the "doubting Thomas" incident.

The Greek verb distazo may also be translated "hesitated", in the sense that while they obviously saw Him, they hesitated to offer Him such unbounded worship.

Matthew 28:16 "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them."

"The eleven disciples": This does not mean that only the eleven were present.

The fact that some were "doubtful" (see verse 17), strongly suggests that more than the eleven were present.

It is likely that Christ arranged this meeting in Galilee because that was where most of His followers were.

This seems the most likely location for the massive gathering of disciples Paul describes (in 1 Corinthians 15:6).

Matthew 28:17 "And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted."

“But some doubted”:

That simple phrase is one of countless testimonies to the integrity of Scripture.

The transparent honesty of a statement like this shows that Matthew was not attempting to exclude or cover up facts that might lessen the perfection of such a glorious moment.

The women's message from Jesus to them had been heeded.

They met Jesus on a mountain in Galilee of Jesus' choosing.

They worshipped Him.

The "some" that doubted was probably, Thomas, who is told of in another book.

There were probably, more than just the eleven here but they were mentioned specifically because of their following instructions to meet Him.

Verses 18-20:

The Great Commission brings the first Gospel to its grand finale.

Christianity is not represented here as the mere reverential devotion of disappointed men who honor their martyred leader.

Here is a far different scene.

The triumphant, living Lord sends forth His ambassadors to proclaim His gospel throughout all the world.

The Great Commission is not just an order but a pronouncement of victory (mundus regium Christi) by the risen Savior through His disciples.

“All power” or authority (in Greek it's exousia), is now in the hands of Christ, in heaven and on the earth.

On the basis of that authority and power the Christian disciple is to carry out the Great Commission of the church.

“Go ye,” though a participle, conveys the force of a command: “Go.”

In other words, the idea expressed is that you must go and make disciples.

“Teach all nations” can be translated “disciple all nations.”

Thus, the converting influence of the gospel is indicated here.

The “all nations” clearly indicates that the commission to the church is a worldwide one encompassing the entire missionary effort.

The church is not to be merely “missionary-minded.”

The church is the vehicle of Christ’s mission to the world.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

“All power”:

11:27; John 3:35.

Absolute sovereign authority, lordship over all, is handed to Christ, “in heaven and on earth.”

This is clear proof of His deity.

The time of His humiliation was at an end, and God had exalted Him above all (Phil. 2:9-11).

Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"

“Therefore”:

I.e., on the basis of His authority, the disciples were sent to “make disciples of all the nations.”

The sweeping scope of their commission is consummate with His unlimited authority.

“In the name of the Father ... Son ... Holy Ghost”:

The formula is a strong affirmation of Trinitarianism.

“Baptizing” the converted disciples are the first step of outward obedience to the Lord.

“Baptize” (Greek baptizo), is an English transliteration, and means to “dip,” or “immerse,” thus indicating its proper mode.

Nowhere does this term ever indicate “sprinkling” or “pouring.”

These converts are to be baptized in water “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

The “name” is singular, followed by an elliptical clause indicating that one name is the name of each person of the Trinity.

While baptismal references in Acts refer to being baptized in Jesus’ name (emphasizing His deity as Savior), they in no way eliminate or contradict the significance of this formula which is given by Christ Himself.

Trinity designates one eternal God in unity, yet existing in three eternal persons.

The members of the Trinity are equal in nature, distinct in person, and subordinate in duties.

As the Son is eternally begotten by the Father, so Jesus is submissive to the work of the Father, yet equal in nature to Him.

The Father is the source of authority; the Son is the channel, and the Holy Spirit the agent whereby authority is exercised.

Because each member of the Trinity is God and a distinct person; each should be so recognized in worship by the Christian (Gen. 48:15, Num. 6:24-26; Isa 6:3).

“Holy Ghost”:

There is no shortage of biblical evidence for the deity of the Holy Spirit.

He is spoken of in Scripture as God.

The attributes of God are assigned to Him, He is engaged in the work of God, and He receives honor due only to God.

Further, He was recognized as God by the early church both in the baptismal formula (verse 19) and in the apostolic benediction (2 Cor. 13:14).

Finally, the words of the Holy Spirit are recognized as being the words of God.

The apostle Paul recognized the deity of the Holy Spirit in his ministry when he followed the leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:7).

One of the biblical characteristics of believers is that they are led by the Spirit of God (see Romans 8:14).

The controlling purpose of the local church is to make disciples of all kinds of people.

Those who are evangelized and converted should then be baptized, attesting to their identification with Christ and the local body of believers.

The final phase of the Great Commission is to train disciples in Christian knowledge and for effective service.

A church cannot choose one aspect of its responsibility and neglect the others.

The Great Commission is a simple command with three steps, which are evangelism, baptism and education.

The Great Commission is the strategy by which the church at Jerusalem saturated its community with the gospel.

Every Christian should determine that his ministry for Christ in the church upholds God's objectives for that institution.

Matthew 28:20 "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 them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you":

The kind of evangelism called for in this commission does not end here with the conversion of the unbeliever.

"I am with you":

There's a touching echo of the beginning of Matthew's gospel here.

Immanuel, which is translated "God with us" (1:23), and remains "with" us "even to the end of the age".

I.e., until He returns bodily to judge the world and establish His earthly kingdom.

The closing promise, though given to the apostles, is transmitted by every generation of believers (see John 17:20).

Christ's promise of His presence, "I am with you always," guarantees the success of the church's mission because it is really His mission carried out by His called out disciples.

The phrase "unto the end of the world" means until the end of the "age" (Greek *aion*).

Therefore, Christ's empowerment of the church to evangelize the world is available in every age, even unto the end of the church age.

In comparing the Great Commission with Jesus' promise to continually build His church (see chapter 18), we must conclude that He intended His church always to be spiritually militant and evangelistically aggressive as we take His claims of lordship to the entire world of our times.

Jesus explained here, that all power was given unto Him.

The next statement is the Great Commission given to all who believe in Jesus and especially those called to minister.

Jesus not only told us to teach, but what to teach and what to do when someone gets saved.

The baptism of salvation is in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is in the name of Jesus alone.

He not only said to teach what He taught, but He promised to be with us as we teach.

He specifically said to teach the things He commanded us.

He didn't say to twist it around to fit our views.

Just give them the pure Word of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is powerful unto salvation.

Matthew Chapter 28 Questions

1. When did Mary and Mary Magdalene come back to the tomb?
2. Who were the last at the cross and the first at the tomb?
3. What did the Jews call the day we call Easter?
4. What has brought them to the tomb?
5. What natural phenomenon happened?
6. Who rolled back the stone?
7. Who did he roll the stone back for?
8. Describe the angel?

9. What happened to the guards when they saw the angel?
10. What did the angel say to the women?
11. Where was Jesus?
12. Where were the women to tell the disciples to meet Jesus?
13. Where were the disciples?
14. What message were these women to tell? (three words)
15. How did they go?
16. What is the only answer God wants, when He calls us to minister?
17. What is the beginning of wisdom?
18. What did the women do when they saw Jesus?
19. Their sorrow was turned into _____.
20. What did Jesus call the disciples?
21. What did this indicate about His feelings toward them?
22. Who did the watch soldiers go to, to report?
23. What did they tell them to do?
24. How did they get them to do it?
25. Why did they not want the governor to know?
26. How long did this lie continue to be told?
27. Where did Jesus meet the disciples in Galilee?
28. What did they do when they saw Him?
29. Were there any exceptions?
30. What did Jesus say to them?
31. What is this called?
32. How were they to baptize, in whose name?
33. The Word of the Lord is powerful unto_____.