



Our Task

BECAUSE JESUS ROSE FROM THE GRAVE, WE ARE TO TAKE
THE GOSPEL TO ALL PEOPLE.

MATTHEW 28:1-10,16-20

Most of us often remember the details of the moments we received bad news. We probably remember where we were and what we were doing on September 11, 2001. Interestingly, sometimes we don't remember details when we receive good news. The joy of the news overshadows the specifics of how and when the news was received. This was not the case for the eyewitnesses to Jesus's resurrection. They could look back on the greatest news of all and remember vividly.



Why do you think we are selective in what we remember and what we forget?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

MATTHEW 28:1-20

The resurrection of Jesus is central to our faith as Christians. All the Old and New Testament find their fulfillment in Christ—His death and resurrection. The resurrection is crucial to the gospel message of salvation through Jesus. If Jesus had not risen, nothing would have been accomplished by His death. The resurrection is God’s stamp of approval on all that Jesus did on the cross.

The resurrection is also factual. One of the most powerful testimonies in court is the word of eyewitnesses. Each of the Gospel writers in their own way highlighted the role of eyewitnesses to Jesus’s resurrection. Matthew, in his account, chose to emphasize the eyewitness account of two women: Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary. In addition, Matthew’s Gospel highlights the witness of the eleven disciples that met Jesus in Galilee.

The previous chapter is needed to understand some of the narrative in Matthew 28. Matthew 28:12-14 speaks of the Roman guards receiving a bribe from the Jewish priests and elders to spread the rumor that the disciples had stolen Jesus’s body from the tomb. Reaching back to Matthew 27:62-66, we learn that the Jewish leaders remembered Jesus’s prediction of His resurrection. Because of that, they went to Pilate and secured Roman soldiers to guard the tomb. Matthew 28:4 indicated that these guards fainted in fear at the angels.

Later, these guards reported what had happened to the chief priests. It was at this point that they were given a bribe to spread the lie that Jesus’s body had been stolen. Matthew, writing sometime around AD 63, indicated that this false story was still circulating in an attempt to deny the reality of the resurrection.



Read Matthew 28:1-10,16-20 and note the reactions of those who encountered the risen Savior.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

BELIEVE (MATT. 28:1-7)

¹ After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb.

² There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men. ⁵ The angel told the women, “Don’t be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.’ Listen, I have told you.”

VERSES 1-4

Jesus was crucified on Friday and then hastily laid in a tomb before the Sabbath began at sundown. Nothing could be done with His body during the Sabbath. That would wait until *after the Sabbath* ended at sunset. Jesus’s resurrection occurred *as the first day of the week* began. This detail is the root of the practice of Christians from that day forward worshiping on Sunday.

In Matthew’s Gospel, the eyewitnesses to the resurrection included the angels, the soldiers, and a group of women. Specifically, Matthew identified two of the women as *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary*. These two women plus several others were at the crucifixion and had witnessed the burial of the body (see Matt. 27:61). *Mary Magdalene* was the one whom Jesus delivered from demon possession (Luke 8:2). *The other Mary* is identified in Mark’s Gospel as the mother of the disciple James, known as James the younger to set him apart from James the brother of John (Mark 16:1). These two women were joined by Salome, the mother of James and John (compare Mark 16:1). These women had prepared spices to anoint the body of Jesus. Early on Sunday they went to the tomb with the intent of finishing the burial procedures.

As they approached the tomb, a severe *earthquake* occurred. This was the second earthquake accompanying the death and resurrection of Jesus (see Matt. 27:51). Matthew cites the cause of

this earthquake as the coming of an **angel of the Lord** to the **tomb** to roll away the **stone** covering the entrance. His purpose was not just to show that the tomb was empty but also to announce that Jesus was risen.

The description of the angel harkens back to the angels who appeared in the announcement and birth of Jesus. As with other angels, this one was aglow with the glory of God shining through. There was no mistaking that this was a heavenly messenger. The appearance of the angel terrified **the guards** who had been dispatched to guard the tomb. They were **so shaken by fear** that they evidently passed out from the sight. The word *shaken* is from the same root word as *earthquake*. These soldiers had their own earthquake! They, too, became eyewitnesses to this event and had to be paid off by the priests (28:11-15) to prevent them from telling what they had seen and heard.

VERSES 5-7

No doubt the women also were terrified by the sight of the angel. While the Gospels of Luke and John speak of two angels, Matthew and Mark mention only the one who spoke to the women. **Don't be afraid** were the same words given to Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds about the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:30; 2:10).

The angel indicated that he knew why the women were there. However, there was no body to anoint with oil. Jesus had **risen** from the dead. The angel reminded the women of the words of Jesus about His coming resurrection (see Matt. 17:22-23). The angel verified his announcement by showing the women the empty **place where he lay**.

The angel also had a commission for them to carry out: **go quickly and tell his disciples**. In addition, they were instructed to tell the disciples that Jesus would meet them in **Galilee**. This meeting would be a fulfillment of the promise given by Jesus in Matthew 26:32: "But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." This upcoming appearance in Galilee was one of several appearances recorded in the Gospels. Keep in mind that Jesus continued to appear to the disciples for forty days after His resurrection (Acts 1:3).

Why Galilee? Perhaps Jesus wanted privacy from all the turmoil of Jerusalem. Also, Galilee was a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles. At this appearance, Jesus would give His disciples a commission to take the gospel message into all the world, including both Jews and Gentiles.



What obstacles might cause some people to struggle with faith in Christ?

WORSHIP (MATT. 28:8-10)

⁸ So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell his disciples the news. ⁹ Just then Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” They came up, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus told them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.”

VERSES 8-10

The angel told the women to “go quickly” (v. 7) to tell the disciples the news of the resurrection. In obedience, they departed **quickly from the tomb**. As the women **ran** from the tomb, they were filled with mixed emotions of **fear and great joy**. Fear because they had just experienced the supernatural—the earthquake, the angel, the empty tomb. But overriding their fear was an elation of great joy. After the days of desperate grief and uncertainty, suddenly there was unexpected hope.

Matthew stated that **just then** Jesus appeared to them. The words *just then* carry the meaning of “behold” and call attention to something extraordinary. **Greetings** was much like our “hello.” Imagine the scene. Suddenly, here is Jesus and He is saying to you, “Hello!” No wonder the immediate response of the women was to take **hold of his feet** in worship.

Matthew’s Gospel is the only one to record this brief encounter of Jesus with the women as they made their way to the disciples. This is just one instance of how each of the Gospels has a unique eyewitness account of the resurrection of Jesus. Such a variety of stories of the resurrected Christ add to the authenticity of the account. If all the Gospels contained the exact same content, suspicion could be raised of a collaboration and conspiracy to create a false narrative. Such is not the case. Each writer had his own primary resources of eyewitness accounts that speak to the truthfulness of the Gospel accounts.

Jesus knew of both the fear and joy of the women. He told them, **Do not be afraid**. This was not a time for fear but joy. The joyful news of Jesus's resurrection must be shared. That is why Jesus repeated the instructions of the angel to the women, **Go and tell** the disciples. Note, however, that Jesus made these instructions much more personal. He called His disciples **brothers**. His instruction to the disciples was that they should meet Him in **Galilee**. Jesus understood what His followers had gone through. His every word and move from this time forward would encourage, affirm, and prepare them for the assignment ahead.



What part of the resurrection story leads you to worship?

SHARE (MATT. 28:16-20)

¹⁶ **The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them.** ¹⁷ **When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted.** ¹⁸ **Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.** ¹⁹ **Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** ²⁰ **teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

VERSES 16-17

This appearance of Jesus in **Galilee** is unique to Matthew's Gospel. For Matthew, Galilee was central in the story of Jesus. While Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem, He spent most of His ministry in “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Matt. 4:15). Thus, it was appropriate for Jesus to issue His “Great Commission” to take the good news into the whole world from this region of a mixed Jewish and Gentile population.

Any attempt to pinpoint the time frame for this appearance within the forty days after the resurrection is sheer speculation. However, a probable estimate would be that this occurred around three weeks after the resurrection.

This, however, is not the appearance from which Jesus ascended into heaven. That would take place outside of Jerusalem at Bethany

some days later (see Luke 24:50-51). Again, each of the Gospel writers chose to include appearances of the risen Lord that fit the intent of their narrative.

The identity of this *mountain* is not given. Obviously, the instructions Jesus gave to the women (v. 10) *directed* the disciples to a specific location. For Matthew's readers, the details of the location were irrelevant.

Who was Matthew speaking of when he says *they saw him*? Was this the eleven disciples only? Could this include the five hundred that Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 15:6? Many scholars lean toward the five hundred believers being present on this occasion as Jesus charged His followers to spread the gospel message throughout the world.

Two responses to Jesus's appearance are mentioned. *They worshiped* Him, but *some doubted*. The worship of Jesus no doubt took the form of bowing before Him. Over the many months spent with Jesus and culminating with the resurrection, His followers became fully convinced Jesus was God and was worthy of worship. The word *doubted* means "to hesitate." For some in the crowd, this may have been their first glimpse of the resurrected Christ. They may have been thinking, "Is this really Jesus?" Perhaps they weren't sure how to act in His presence.



KEY DOCTRINE: *Evangelism and Missions*

The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. (See Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8.)

VERSES 18-20

Regardless of the reason for their doubts, Jesus set them at ease when He *came near* to them. He approached the disciples and spoke concerning His *authority*. The *authority* of Jesus has been central in Matthew's Gospel (see for instance Matt. 7:29). The word *authority* speaks of kingly power and the right to act. All authority over all the created world has been *given* to Jesus from the Father. In this commission, Jesus is giving to His followers His authority to make disciples throughout the world.

The training of the disciples was now complete. The time had arrived for them to carry on the work Jesus had begun. Based on Jesus's kingdom authority, the disciples were to draw more of God's chosen ones into the kingdom. They were to *make disciples*.

Verse 19 begins with a Greek participle that says, “As you are going.” Next came the command: *make disciples* or followers of Jesus. These disciples were to come from **all nations**. This term *nations* speaks of all people groups everywhere. From all the nations these disciples were to make strong, committed followers of Jesus.

Making disciples involved two actions. First, they were to “mark” these disciples by **baptizing them**. Baptism was an outward declaration that one belonged to Jesus Christ by faith in His atoning work. Through baptism one is uniquely linked with the fullness of the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Second, making disciples involved **teaching them to observe** all that Jesus taught and commanded. Bringing the nations to faith was only part of the job. They would need to be nurtured in the teachings of Jesus.

The task would not be easy. However, they would not be alone in the job. Jesus promised that ***I am with you always***. The master Teacher was not abandoning them; rather, the Holy Spirit would indwell them permanently (Acts 1:8). Because of that, they were assured success.

 **What does this passage teach us about our role in Christ’s mission?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare passages that share the same account.*

Read Matthew 28:1-15 again and record significant points related to the resurrection. Then, read the resurrection passages in Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-52; John 20:1-22 and do the same for them. What similarities do you see in these passages? What are some differences that help you get a more complete picture of the events surrounding the resurrection?

APPLY THE TEXT

- + We can trust that Jesus is risen because the tomb was empty.
- + Our appropriate response to Jesus's resurrection is worship.
- + Believers are to share the gospel with people of all nations.



Consider how your group might have responded had you met Jesus in Galilee. Would you worship or doubt? Ask each participant how their choice would impact their daily life. Discuss ways that your group can share the good news of the resurrection of Jesus with those in their world.



While there are many proofs to the resurrection of Jesus such as the many eyewitnesses and the unexplained empty tomb, perhaps the greatest proof is the transformed lives of the disciples. Looking at your own life, is there evidence of the resurrection through the changes Jesus has made?

Memorize Matthew 28:19-20.

Prayer Needs
