

## **Matthew Chapter 28 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):**

1. What sign had Jesus given to this evil generation that was fulfilled when Jesus came out of the grave?

### **Help for Teachers:**

Twice in Matthew Jesus referred to “the sign of the prophet Jonas” (12:39, 16:4). Jonah was the prophet sent by God to Nineveh. Disobedient at first, he was swallowed by a great fish and spewed out on dry land three days later. Jesus’ resurrection is the fulfilment of that sign, having been buried in the tomb for three days and then raised up again. Some points for comparison:

- God sent Jonah. - *God sent His only begotten Son Jesus.*
- Jonah preached to the mariners and was cast into the sea to save them. - *Jesus preached to the people and was crucified to save them.*
- Jonah was in the belly of the fish in the heart of the earth three days and nights. - *Jesus was in the tomb three days and nights.*
- Jonah was delivered from the depths. - *Jesus rose from the tomb.*
- Rising from the depths, Jonah preached a message that brought grace to those that heeded. - *Conquering the grave, Jesus brought a message of grace to all that heed His call.*

2. Compare Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20 (and any other Scriptures that reference the events between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension). As a group, list the order in which you think these events.

### **Help for Teachers:**

See “Possible Chronology of Resurrection Chart”. Please note that this chart is not being offered as absolutely correct, but as a possible order of events based on comparing the gospels. Making a comparison from all the accounts forces us to put the whole story together more clearly, though an exact timeline is very hard to establish.

3. Compare the experience of the women in verses 1 through 10 with what the experience of the church should be. How does this fit with your story as a disciple of Jesus?

### Help for Teachers:

- V1: The women came to see. - *When drawn by God, we see the gospel message.*
- V2-6: What the women saw was amazing, causing them to fear, but to the unbelieving keepers, their fear had no relief and caused them to become “as dead men”- *When drawn by the irresistible power of God, the elect respond in faith as God opens our eyes and understanding so that we can believe. To the unbelieving, they hear that same gospel message, but it falls on a dead (unregenerated) heart that refuses to believe.*
- V7: The women were given urgent instructions to bring the disciples together and follow the Lord into Galilee. – *We are assigned the same task. We are to come together and urge one another in fellowship of Jesus. We are to remember His death and resurrection and encourage one another in that glorious hope. We have the promise that we will see Him one day.*
- V8: The women gave full heed to the instructions; they “departed quickly” and they didn’t just go, they “did run”. – *We are issued instructions from a more powerful messenger than an angel, our instructions come from the very Word of God. We are to read it with all the urgency that it obviously demands. We are not just to read it; we must respond promptly and “run” to obey it.*
- V9-10: As the women went, Jesus met them on their journey. He revealed Himself to them and invited them to look on Him. They worshiped Him and were encouraged in the work by His presence. – *Because it pleases God that we walk by faith and not by sight, we often feel like we just want to see Him, to be closer and experience more of Him. Just like with these women, it is so thrilling when we have those times, that in a special way, Jesus shows Himself in our heart and we fall before Him in worship. One day, after this life is over, we will spend eternity in His presence, enjoying the King and worshiping Him, but for now we crave those moments. What a blessing that our Lord strengthens us by revealing more of Himself when we need it most, giving us strength to push forward, and the promise that we will see Him soon.*

4. Verses 16 and 17 find the eleven, Jesus' chosen apostles, together on a mountain in Galilee as Jesus had commanded them. Jesus comes to them, they see Him, they worship Him... "but some doubted". Discuss doubt in the life of a believer. Do we have doubts at times? How do we deal with doubt? How did Jesus deal with their doubt?

### Help for Teachers:

Some have said that if you ever have doubts (concerning salvation) that you are not saved. Such a statement is not supported by Scripture and reorients the understanding of the source of salvation from exclusively the divine power of God without any help from you to your capacity to control your mind. Doubt can be crippling to the spiritual growth of a believer; such a teaching may be devastating and unkind (and wrong) for one struggling with doubt.

Doubt is defined as a feeling of uncertainty or lack of conviction. We studied in chapter 17 how Jesus, coming down from the mount of transfiguration, healed the son of a man from demonic possession. Mark records more of the story. The disciples had failed to help with the problem, so now the father turns to Jesus. Jesus' statement to the father was, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth". The father of the young man replies with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief". Jesus didn't reject this man's plea because he struggled with doubt, but rather relieved the doubt with miraculous help.

We studied in chapter 11 where John the Baptist, shut up in prison, sends two disciples to ask Jesus, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" John the Baptist was proclaimed by Jesus as "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist". John the Baptist was called from before his birth to be the one to introduce Messiah to the world. John was brought up under the teachings his father that was a devout and God-fearing priest. John the Baptist had seen Jesus walking in the desert, baptized Him at Jesus' command, saw the dove descending and heard the voice from heaven, but John now had doubts. Would you contend that John the Baptist was an unbeliever?

So now, and not for the first time, we find doubting apostles. To say that these men were unsaved would not be an assertion you are likely to hear anyone present.

Doubt and disbelief are two different things, at least by strict definition ("doubt" is sometimes used incorrectly to express unbelief. Should someone say, "I can run faster than a horse", to which another replies, "I doubt it", that would be an expression of unbelief, though the word isn't used in its truest sense). Again, "doubt" = a feeling of uncertainty or lack of conviction, "unbelief" = incredulity or skepticism especially in matters of religious faith. "Unbelief" is to reject the truth of the gospel. "Doubt", as applied here, is to embrace the truth of the gospel but to wrestle with feelings of uncertainty at times.

What causes doubt in a believer? Just from looking at the above referenced passages some answers begin to emerge. The man with the demon possessed son wanted desperately for his son to be healed. When told that healing depended on his ability to believe, he tried with all he had to believe, but realized in horror that his best wasn't enough. Only the help of God could rescue him from the doubts arising from his human insecurity and long history of failure.

For John the Baptist, circumstances and incomplete information led to his question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" John had spent his life preparing for his God-ordained role to introduce the Messiah to the world. He had preached to Israel boldly that they must repent and get ready. He had seen Jesus and talked with Him and expected that the kingdom of heaven was to be fully manifest now. Can you imagine his confusion to be suddenly shut up in prison for months and there's no rescue in sight. This was certainly not what he expected the kingdom of heaven to look like. His circumstances were perplexing and like all the Old Testament saints he believed in salvation through the Anointed One, but exactly how Christ would accomplish this salvation was yet a mystery. He, like other devout Jews of the day that truly waited for the consolation of Israel, didn't grasp gentile inclusion and over two thousand more years.

And then we have these apostles, these men who had walked with, worked alongside, learned from, witnessed and been part of the miracles of the Lord Himself. And though there is no denying that they were believers, they struggled with doubt because they were, like we, regenerated in heart but trapped in a fallen body of flesh that is under the curse of sin. Paul declares in Romans 14:23 that whatsoever is not of faith is sin, and in Romans 7 he had already written of the believer's struggle of being trapped in a body of sin that wars with the new creature we are in Christ, thankfully concluding that Jesus Christ will deliver us.

How did the doubters in these passages deal with their problem and how can we deal with doubts? Without exception, they all came to Jesus for help. The man with the demon possessed son cried out to Jesus, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief". John the Baptist sent word to Jesus through his disciples, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Thomas said in doubt, "Unless I shall see...", but he didn't leave the group. And when Jesus appeared to them again, Thomas saw the wounds and answered, "My Lord and my God".

5. What we refer to as the “Great Commission” is given in verses 18-20 and ends the Gospel According to Matthew. Is our church obedient to the Great Commission and what do you think obedience to this command should look like?

### Help for Teachers:

Some more specific questions that may be useful in answering the broader question of our obedience:

- Obeying this command requires a lot of resources. The lack of resources limits our ability to comply. What do we (you) rely on to supply the resources needed? Considering verse 18, are you okay with your answer?
  - Who is the “ye” in verse 19?
  - What elements does Jesus give that must be obeyed as part of His commission to the church from verses 19 and 20? Where do you fit in personally?
  - Looking at both Bible teaching and Bible example (what we see in Acts would be a good place to look), what level of commitment is required? Is what we offer in obedience to this command of our Lord reasonable service? (Romans 12:1-2)
6. Discuss what you have found valuable in your group and private study of Matthew. Have you learned anything that has significantly changed your understanding and/ or practices?
- How could future Bible studies be more helpful in your growth in Christ?