

Teachings of Jesus

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Keith Chuvala, Keith@BackToTheBibleCatechism.com

Jesus' Teaching in the Gospel of Matthew: Chapter 28

28:1-10, Jesus' Resurrection

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb: These women came to finish the preparation of Jesus' body, as the time to do so was cut short by the Sabbath (Luke 24:1-3). So on Sunday, after the Sabbath, they went to the tomb fully expecting to find the body of Jesus in the tomb.

There was a great earthquake: Only Matthew records this event. Interestingly, the earthquake per se did not cause the stone to be rolled away; it sounds more like the angel rolling the stone prompted the earthquake! Interestingly, the word used here -- σεισμός ("seismOs"), from which we get words like seismology – can also mean a great confusion or disturbance, which certainly would have applied to the guards assigned to the tomb when the angel appeared and rolled the stone away!

Anglican commentator John Trapp, quoted by David Guzik:

"The earth shook both at Christ's passion and at his resurrection; then, to show that it could not bear his suffering; now, to show that it could not hinder his rising."

Of course an angel was not needed to move the stone, however, the appearance and actions of this angel not only caused the guards to be frozen with fear, but likely also added to the public testimony – by them! -- regarding Jesus' resurrection. Also, we remember that angels attended Jesus' entry into the world as man, so it's fitting that they would attend his resurrection as well.

He is not here, for He has risen, as He said: There are distinct differences between Jesus' resurrection and other Biblical examples of people being raised from the dead, such as the widow's son in the days of Elijah in 1 Kings 17:17-24, and Lazarus (John 11:38-44). Only Jesus spoke of His own resurrection. And while the others were resuscitated from death, none of them were resurrected to new life in a new body. Each of the others was raised in the same body they died in, eventually to die again. Resurrection isn't just living again; it is living again in a new body, perfectly fitted for

life in eternity. Jesus was not the first one brought back from the dead, but He was the first one truly resurrected.

The angel reminded these women – and all the disciples – that they should have expected this. It was just “as He said” – exactly what He had promised them.

Come, see the place where he lay. The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out, but so that others could see in and be persuaded that Jesus Christ was indeed raised from the dead.

Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead: The angel commanded these women to be the first messengers of the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. How anti-establishment is *that?!?*

He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him: This assured the women they would indeed see the resurrected Jesus. He wasn’t simply raised from the dead to disappear into the heavenly ether; He was raised to continue His relationship with them and countless others.

Jesus met them, saying “Rejoice!” The “Authorized” (old King James) Version translates “Rejoice!” with “All hail!” Commentator R. T. France observes, “‘Hail!’ represents the normal Greek greeting, an almost homely ‘Hello!’ in contrast with the fearsome appearance of the angel.”

So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him: When the women met Jesus, they felt compelled to worship Him. Just an hour earlier, they were in mourning over the thought that Jesus was dead. Note here how Jesus accepts their worship. This is in itself another proclamation of His deity, . If Jesus were not God, it would have been sinful for Him to accept worship. But being fully God, it was “right and salutary” for Him to receive it from these women.

Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me: Jesus told the women to do the same thing that the angel told them to do. Repetitive? Perhaps. But let’s give them a break; they *could have* frozen like the guards did! So a gentle reminder of what they were needing to do – from Jesus Himself – made a lot of sense in that particular moment!

My brethren: Commentator Adam Clarke:

“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 their past cowardice and infidelity; but, in speaking thus, he gives them a full assurance, in the most tender terms, that all that was passed was buried for ever.”

28:11-15, The Cover-up Begins

Tell them, “His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept”: Right away we see the darkness in the hearts of these priests. They are told the truth of the resurrection, yet reject that truth and immediately seek to suppress it.

A sufficient sum of money: Many translations have “large” here instead of “sufficient”, which is fine. The idea is that it was enough to perpetuate the fraud, so it likely was, in fact, a large sum.

While we slept: This is where the cover-up gets a bit foolish. If it was true that the guards were asleep, they could not know that it was His disciples that stole Jesus’ body!

To believe this lie, one would 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 deeply that none of them were awakened by the work and exertion and noise necessary to roll away the stone and carry out the body.
- All the soldiers were so soundly asleep – yet now somehow they know who it was who did this.

This saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day: Through the years, there have been many alternative theories suggested for the resurrection of Jesus. Some say He didn’t die at all, but just swooned or fainted on the cross and spontaneously revived in the tomb. Others say He really died, but His body was stolen. Still others suggest He really died, but His desperate followers hallucinated His resurrection. A plain, simple understanding of these evidences of the resurrection of Jesus answers all of these theories, and shows they take far more faith to believe than the Biblical account does.

28:16-20 The Great Commission

The eleven disciples went away into Galilee: Wait, isn't there stuff missing here? Indeed there is. John tells us about Jesus' appearances to His disciples, but Matthew does not. Matthew seems more interested in showing that the promise of Jesus in 26:32, "But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." was fulfilled.

To the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them: The exact place would have been one familiar to the disciples, though we don't have a perfect fix on it from the Gospel texts.

When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted: This was not their first meeting with the risen Jesus; but it was an important one, even if some had to overcome uncertainty and hesitation. At this meeting, they received their apostolic commission. What was important here was not the "quality" of their faith; God the Holy Spirit would continue to work on that. Rather, what was important was the commissioning of Jesus disciples to carry the gospel to the world.

So while it might seem surprising that "some doubted", in fact we have seen God use conflicted, doubting, fearful people to accomplish His will over and over and over again.

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth: This commission that follows is founded upon the authority of Jesus, not the righteousness or even the faithfulness of the apostles.

Commentator D. A. Carson notes that the word "All" dominates these verses and binds them together: **all** authority, **all** nations, **all** things, **all** the days.

Go therefore: Because Jesus has this authority, we are therefore commissioned to go. It is His authority and good pleasure that sends us, His authority and Word that guides us, and His authority and Holy Spirit that empowers us. His work and message would continue to flood the world through His disciples.

Make disciples of all the nations: The commission is to make disciples, not merely converts or supporters of a cause. The idea behind the word disciples is of scholars, learners, or students. "Make disciples" reminds us that disciples are indeed made. *Believers* are miraculously created at conversion by God in ways that we may or may not be able to comprehend. Disciple-making is a process involving other believers. This making of disciples is the power of both spreading Christianity and training each other up in that faith that God gives us.

Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: Significantly, 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, which is quite the break with traditional Judaism!

The singular noun “name” underlines the unity of the three Persons of the Trinity.

So disciples are “made” through baptizing and teaching. We should never neglect either! Teaching is not with words only, but by living as examples for our children and fellow believers.

And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age: Jesus sends His disciples with a mission to fulfill, but He does not send them alone. The promise of His constant presence was and is more than enough to strengthen and guide the disciples as they obey Jesus in making disciples of all nations.