

LIFE BIBLE STUDY

SESSION OBJECTIVE: MATTHEW 28:1-20

To understand how the resurrection confirms Jesus' authority to send disciples to proclaim the Gospel.

I Love Bread

I consider myself a foodie. I have been for a very long time. If you're not familiar with the term, this is a more formal definition: "A foodie is a person who has an ardent or refined interest in food and who eats food not only out of hunger but due to their interest or hobby." Yep, that's me. Now, as a foodie I also remind myself



that there are certain foods that I limit myself with, because I'm also rather health-conscious, and bread is a big one. The problem is, I love bread. Bread is one of the few great examples of foods that require a very small amount of ingredients and yet make such a great final product. All you need is flour, oil, salt, sugar, and water, plus one more *really* important ingredient: yeast. All of the ingredients are really important, but the thing that makes bread actual bread, is the yeast. You can put all the other ingredients together and bake them, and you'll get something, but you won't get the bread you thought you were going to get. It's the key cog.

Matthew 28 is the last chapter of Matthew's Gospel, and it is the yeast of the story (because it has to do with rising, get it?). The resurrection is the key cog to the entirety of Matthew's testimony. Without the resurrection, the Apostle Paul says, "we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19). It is what substantiates everything that Jesus commands Christians to do. Apart from the resurrection He is a dead teacher; by it, He lives forever as our intermediary (Heb. 7:24-25), and He commands us to make disciples that follow Him as we do (Matt. 28:18-20).

The Resurrection

Chapter 28 begins essentially where 27 left off, "as the first day of the week was dawning" (Matt. 28:1). Below is a short outline of some of the interesting and important details.

THE FIRST WITNESSES

One of the more historically shocking details is the fact that in a predominantly male-first society, the first two witnesses of the resurrection were women. The text indicates that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (the same two Mary's present in Matthew 27:61). In Mark's account, he reveals that another woman named Salome was also present (Mark 16:1). Luke also indicates a fourth woman named Joanna, as well, "the other women" were also there (Luke 24:10). John only indicates that Mary Magdalene was present (John 20:1). Putting them all together, the priority seems to be on Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus. Either way, all of the first witnesses were female.

THE ANGEL

A notable missing detail in all four Gospels is how Jesus actually came out of the tomb. It is likely not included because no one was actually there to know for sure how it happened. In Matthew's account, the angel's appearance seems to bring about an earthquake, and upon arriving he rolls the stone away from the tomb. This is a terrifying experience for the unbelieving guards standing watch. Matthew employs a little wordplay here in the original language, as it says the guards, "quaked for fear of Him and became like dead men" (Matthew 28:4). The word for *quaked* is usually translated as *shook*, but it's clearly the same word in the Greek and draws upon the earthquake imagery just two verses prior. The tomb is rolled away, and it is confirmed that Jesus has risen and is no longer there. They are told to look, and then go and tell. There is a contrast here to what we have seen earlier in the ministry of Jesus. In Matthew chapter 8, Jesus heals a leper and then tells him to tell no one about it. The message we receive is, "see what God has done and tell nobody." Here, on the other hand, the message is the opposite. We are, "to see what God has done and tell everyone!"

GALILEE

It is notable that the angel tells them that Jesus will be waiting for them in Galilee for two reasons. For one, Galilee is where they spent a large amount of time being developed in discipleship, so it is fitting for them to be re-gathered and commissioned from there. Secondly, it fulfills a promise made to them by Jesus Himself just two chapters prior. In Matthew 26:31, Jesus tells them right after the institution of the Lord's Supper, "You will all fall away because of Me this night." The next verse, however, He says, "But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." Jesus has not only kept to His promise to rise from the dead, but to even meet them where He said He would meet them.

WORSHIP

The disciples, filled with joy, go to see Jesus and are greeted by Him. Verse 9 says, "And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him." There are countless examples throughout not only Matthew's

Gospel account but through the entirety of the New Testament where Jesus it is made clear that Jesus is not a mere human being. He is God in the flesh (Jn. 1:14). Here, in verse 9, He is worshipped by His disciples and He does not stop them from doing so. This, however, is not the first time we have seen Jesus worshipped. In Matthew 2:2, the Magi came saying, "For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." In Matthew 14:33, all who were in the boat that saw Jesus walking on water fell down and worshipped Him saying, "You are truly God's Son." One also cannot help but recall what Jesus said to Satan in chapter 4, when He was being tempted in the desert. Satan tells Jesus that he will give Him everything He see if only He will fall down and worship him. Jesus answers in verse 10, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" Only God is to be worshipped, and here, Jesus is worshipped.

The Cover Up

After the disciples departed to go see Jesus, the guards came into the city and told the chief priests what had taken place, and they were given money to lie and say that the disciples came in the middle of the night while they were sleeping and took Jesus' body. The guards were told that the chief priests would protect them from the Governor if he found out. The whole plot is a massive cover-up to try and cast doubt on the resurrection account, and Matthew even indicates that this cover-up is still prevalent as he was writing the Gospel years after these events took place. In verse 15, he says, "and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day." It's not surprising that the chief priests do this at all. Throughout the Gospel, they have been shown to have a severe hardness of heart. The more shocking part of the story is that the guards go along with this. Having seen the angel, and having felt the earthquake, and knowing that the disciples didn't really come and get the body of Jesus would have almost certainly been convincing enough that He actually rose, and yet there is no indication that they believed. It demonstrates something with regard to belief. Sometimes, Christians can be guilty of thinking, "If I can give this non-believing person enough evidence, they will surely believe." Over and over again, however, Matthew's Gospel demonstrates that enormous, iron-clad evidence isn't even enough to bring someone to belief. Belief then is not purely evidential, but supernatural.

The Great Commission

The eleven disciples made their way to the mountain in Galilee that Jesus designated, and there they worshipped Him, but some had doubt. The presence of doubt amidst the now 11 disciples post-resurrection is troubling, however the word connotes more of a sense of hesitation rather than lack of belief. It is here that Jesus gives His famous, "Great Commission."

ALL AUTHORITY

Usually the Great Commission is marked as Matthew 28:19-20, but to leave out verse 18 is foolish. In order for Jesus to give the command to make disciples, He must have authority to do so. In verse 18 we are told that, "all authority" has been given to Him. However, to be even more specific, all authority both in heaven and on earth is given to Him. In other words, this is Divine authority, the type that only God is able to possess. In light of this authority, Jesus commands His disciples to go, make disciples.

GO! GO! GO!

In order to make disciples, the eleven must go! This is often a part of the Commission that believers fail to remember. In modern Christianity, often the hope is that non-believers will come to us, either in church or in our own personal circles at work or in school. The reality though is that Jesus commands us not to wait for them to come to us but for us to go to them. Discipleship cannot happen if it is not intentional. It's not the byproduct of other Christian tasks, it is *the* Christian task.

MAKE DISCIPLES

Of all the details in the Great Commission, grammatically this is the command. It is in the imperative mood, a function of the great language (and other languages) that marks a command. To make disciples is not a suggestion in the mind of Jesus, but an expectation. There are two ways disciple-making happens. For one, we are to baptize the new disciples in a Trinitarian baptism (the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit). Baptism, then, could be seen as the first step in obedience to Jesus as a disciple. This cannot be understated. Secondly, they are to be taught to observe all that He commanded. There is a somewhat pervasive belief in the church today that discipleship is teaching people *what* Jesus said. Pastors will emphasize memorizing Scripture, daily devotional readings, and both individual and group Bible studies in order to know what Jesus said! All of these are great practices, however, what is the end goal of knowing what Jesus said? Obedience! That is what Jesus commands us to teach new disciples. Not *what* He said but *to obey what He said*. The former is easy, the latter is much more challenging. It means having difficult conversations with new believers when they fall into sinful behavior. Teaching obedience directly implies correcting disobedience, which is awkward and challenging for many Christians, but it is nonetheless what we are commanded to do.

ALWAYS WITH YOU

The Gospel closes with the comforting words of the Risen Savior, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." In light of the challenges that Christians will face in sharing the Gospel and making disciples, we are reminded by Jesus Himself that we are not alone. With the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, Jesus' presence is never away from us. We, therefore, can face any circumstance, good or bad, with the hope of the resurrection, the assurance of faith, and the power of Christ is us until we either die, or He returns.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Matthew 28:1. Who came to the tomb? According to Luke (Luke 24:10) and Mark (Mark 16:1), who else was with them?
2. Read Matthew 28:2-4. What event literally shook the tomb? Who proceeded to come to the tomb after that? What did this figure look like and how did the guards respond to him?

Day Two

1. Read Matthew 28:5-7. What did the angel say to them? What did he say happened to Jesus and where did he say Jesus was?
2. Why was Jesus returning to Galilee significant? (Hint: See above)

Day Three

1. Read Matthew 28:8-10. What did Mary and Mary do after they left the tomb? Where did the disciples go? What happened when they saw Jesus and what did He say?
2. Read Matthew 28:11-14. Where did the guards go after they saw the angel? What did the chief priests say? What was the plan they devised? Who else were they concerned about finding out what had happened?

Day Four

1. Read Matthew 28:15. How effective was this plan to cover-up the resurrection? How do you know?
2. Read Matthew 28:16-20. What all does disciple-making entail? Write out the steps to making a disciple.

Week 33 Discussion: Make Disciples

Matthew 28:18-20 is the cornerstone passage regarding disciple-making. Here, Jesus unveils the authority given to Him and then commands His disciples to go and make more disciples by baptizing them and then teaching them how to be obedient. Teaching obedience is a challenge. It creates many uncomfortable scenarios. As awkward as it can be, these uncomfortable moments are crucial in developing solid believers for the ages to come. Talk as a group about disciple-making, the challenges it presents, and the fruit you've seen from it.

1. Icebreaker: How did you become a disciple of Jesus? Who led you to faith? What were your first years of being a Christian like?
2. Teaching someone to obey commands means correcting disobedience in the process. Has anyone every confronted you when you were being disobedient to God's commands? How did you respond? Do you feel differently about it now than you did in the moment?
3. Have you ever had to correct someone? Talk about that experience, and discuss what you did well and what you could have done better.
4. Have you been baptized? Why or why not? Is baptism important to following the commandments of Jesus?
5. Who are you discipling? If you are not discipling someone, why aren't you?

Takeaways:

1. The resurrection is the climax of redemptive history, and is the key cog to the Christian faith.
2. The resurrection gives validity to Jesus' commands to make disciples.

PRAYER REQUESTS: