

Matthew 28: The Resurrection and the Great Commission

The Dawn of a New Era

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 tomb. (Matthew 28:1, NKJV)

The resurrection of Jesus took place as the Sabbath ended and the first day of the week, Sunday, began. This moment is not just a historical marker but a transition from the old covenant to the new. The Sabbath, a day of rest under the Law, gives way to the dawn of resurrection—a new day of grace and victory over sin and death.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb, demonstrating their love and devotion to Jesus. Even in their grief, they sought Him. This challenges us to ask ourselves: Do we seek Jesus even in our darkest moments? Their example reminds us that when we pursue Jesus, we will encounter Him in ways we never expected.

The Earthquake and the Angel's Message

And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. (Matthew 28:2, NKJV)

The resurrection of Jesus was accompanied by a supernatural event—a great earthquake. This was not just a physical phenomenon but a divine sign that the world had changed forever. The angel rolled back the stone, not to let Jesus out (for He had already risen), but to show the world that the tomb was empty.

His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And for fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. (Matthew 28:3-4, NKJV)

The angel's appearance, radiant and powerful, caused the Roman guards to faint in terror. These were hardened soldiers, trained to face battle, yet they were rendered powerless in the presence of God's messenger. This highlights the divine nature of the resurrection—an event no human power could prevent or control.

The First Proclamation of the Resurrection

But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." (Matthew 28:5-6, NKJV)

The angel's words carry both comfort and challenge. "Do not be afraid" is a command we see often in Scripture when God is doing something miraculous. Fear is natural, but faith calls us beyond fear. The angel acknowledges their seeking hearts—"I know that you seek Jesus." God honors those who earnestly seek Him.

The phrase "He is risen, as He said" is a reminder that Jesus' resurrection was foretold. How often do we doubt God's promises, even when He has spoken clearly? Just as the women were reminded of Jesus' words, we too must remember the promises of God and stand firm in faith.

And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." (Matthew 28:7, NKJV)

The resurrection is not just an event to be observed but a truth to be proclaimed. The angel commissions the women to be the first witnesses of the risen Christ. The message of the resurrection is urgent—"Go quickly." This same urgency applies to us. We are called to share the good news without delay.

The Joyful Encounter with Jesus

So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. (Matthew 28:8-9, NKJV)

As the women obeyed, Jesus Himself appeared to them. Notice the sequence: first, they obeyed the command to go, and then they encountered Jesus. Often, we want to see Jesus before we step out in faith, but He reveals Himself as we walk in obedience.

Their response was immediate worship. They held Him by the feet, signifying both their recognition of His lordship and their deep love for Him. True encounters with Jesus should always lead to worship.

Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me." (Matthew 28:10, NKJV)

Jesus' first words after His resurrection are full of grace: "Do not be afraid." He reassures them and gives them a mission—to go and tell His disciples. Notice He calls them "My brethren." Despite their failures, He still claims them as His own. What a picture of grace! No matter how we have failed, Jesus still calls us His own and invites us back into fellowship.

The Cover-Up: The Guards' Report

Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. (Matthew 28:11, NKJV)

The religious leaders, instead of acknowledging the truth, sought to suppress it.

When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.'" (Matthew 28:12-13, NKJV)

This lie is absurd. If they were asleep, how could they know who took the body? The chief priests were more concerned with maintaining power than seeking the truth. Many today reject Jesus, not because of lack of evidence, but because of a refusal to submit to His lordship.

The Great Commission: Our Mandate

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. (Matthew 28:16-17, NKJV)

Even among the disciples, some wrestled with doubt. Yet Jesus did not reject them. Doubt is part of the journey of faith, but we must bring our doubts to Jesus, allowing Him to strengthen our belief.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, NKJV)

This is the Great Commission, the call to every believer. The foundation of our mission is Jesus' authority—"All authority has been given to Me." Because He reigns, we go in confidence.

We are commanded to:

1. Make disciples—Not just converts, but fully devoted followers of Christ.
2. Baptize them—A public declaration of faith and entrance into the community of believers.
3. Teach them—Spiritual growth comes through learning and obeying the Word of God.

And the greatest promise: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." We are never alone in this mission. His presence empowers, guides, and sustains us.

Personal Application

- Like the women at the tomb, we must seek Jesus earnestly and share the gospel urgently.
- Our obedience leads to deeper encounters with Christ.
- We must not let fear keep us from proclaiming the truth.
- Jesus' authority and presence empower us to fulfill our mission.

May we, like the disciples, take this commission seriously, living as bold witnesses of the risen Christ until He returns.