

Notes for Matthew -Chapter 28 (Page 1 of 6)

Introduction - “ The Resurrection - The Most Important Fact in the Bible”

1. The fact of the resurrection is the most important aspect of the Gospel of Matthew.
2. Without the resurrection, we are wasting our time being Christians.
 - a. Paul says in effect, that if the resurrection isn't true, we are wasting our time preaching Christ: “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” (1st Corinthians 15:19, NIV).
3. That is why the last few chapters of each Gospel are so essential. The four Gospels each give a different account and different details about the events around the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. The resurrection is the validation that Jesus rose from the dead and God the Father accepted His death as payment for our sins. In a sense you can think of the resurrection as “God's receipt” as proof that He accepted Jesus as payment for our sins.
5. Dr. Simon Greenleaf, (1783-1853) one of the principle founders of the Harvard Law School. He originally set out to disprove the biblical testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But this legal scholar came to the conclusion that the witnesses were reliable, and that the resurrection did in fact happen. Here is what he wrote:
 - a. “It was therefore impossible that they (Gospel writers) could have persisted in affirming the truths they had narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.” Simon Greenleaf, (The Testimony of the Evangelists, (New York, 1874), p. 28)
6. Another question to ponder about the resurrection is: “Would you be willing to die for a lie?”
 - a. If you knew something was fiction, are you willing to be tortured and killed for that lie?
 - b. History records that some or all of the disciples were tortured and killed. Suppose that the disciples made up the story of Jesus, as many bible critics will argue. The question is, “If they made it up, why were they all willing to be tortured and killed for a lie?”
7. The fact of the resurrection is God's validation that Jesus has paid the price for all sins for all time. He died for my sins and for your sins, past, present and future. That period at the end of the last sentence is symbolic meaning there is no additional price to be paid.
8. Getting to Matthew, He spends relatively little time describing the events of the resurrection.
 - a. Matthew ends his Gospel message with Jesus command to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. This is commonly referred to as the “Great Commission”.
 - b. I think Matthew ended on this point as if he wanted “The Great Commission” to be the last thing his readers remember about this book.

Verse 1: “After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.”

1. In the timeline of the last week of Jesus' life on earth, probably the only thing scholars agree upon is the fact that Jesus rose again on a Sunday morning. (Mark 16:2 and Luke 24:1)
 - a. There is a classical debate whether the crucifixion took place on the Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday beforehand.
 - b. The traditional view is Friday-crucifixion and thus we celebrate “Good Friday”.
2. Verse one mentions two Mary's. One is Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary”. This other Mary is not Jesus' mother. She is the mother of one of the apostles named “James”. This can be very confusing, as this is not the same James who wrote the book of James.
 - a. We learn from John's Gospel that Jesus' mother Mary was also at the cross at some point.
 - b. At this point, I don't think these women fully comprehended the resurrection.
 - c. Luke 24 Verses 1-3 said they went to the tomb to finish a Jewish burial ritual that involves taking some spices and anointing the body.

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Verses 2-4: "There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men."

1. First, let's talk about the earthquake:
 - a. First of all, the earthquake was not strong enough to destroy the tomb.
 - b. Since this was early morning, I suspect it shook everybody up and awake.
 - c. This was "God's way" of drawing attention to the empty tomb.
 - d. Remember there was another earthquake three days earlier when Jesus died (See Matthew 27:51). That was the moment when the veil was ripped in two.
 - e. This earthquake three days later, had to make those working in the Temple think, "Ok, what is it this time? The last time we had an earthquake the veil was torn. What significant event is going to happen this time?"
2. Let's talk about the angel who moved the stone:
 - a. It is important to understand that the purpose of the angel rolling back the stone is not to let Jesus out, but to let others peak in and see the empty tomb.
 - b. Jesus, in his resurrected state, could walk through walls. In John's Gospel, Jesus suddenly appeared to the disciples as they were in a locked room (John 20:26). Therefore, I believe Jesus left the tomb with the stone in place.

Verse 5: "The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified."

1. It is interesting to read about the guards fainting at the sight of the angels (Verse 4).
2. Yet a couple of women saw the same angels and did not faint at the site (Verse 5).
 - a. They were scared, but did not faint like the soldiers did.
 - b. The difference is the fact that these women were looking for Jesus.
 - c. As long as you are seeking Jesus and trusting in Jesus, we have no reason to be afraid of angels or any other created being.
3. On the topic of nonbelievers being in the Lord's presence, notice what the bible says: "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31 NIV)

Verses 6-7: "He is not here; 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 is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

1. I don't believe these women expected Jesus to rise from the dead. As I stated earlier, they went to the grave to complete a Jewish burial ritual.
 - a. Luke's account of this story adds this line: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5, NIV)
 - b. The point of seeing the empty tomb is the reminder that we don't worship a dead martyr, but a living God.
2. Arguably the most important word in these verses is the word "disciples" in Verse 7.
 - a. The angel says, "Then (you, the women) go quickly and tell his disciples".
 - b. The point of God's message (via the angel) is that the disciples are still his disciples. Despite the fact they ran away and deserted Jesus, they are still his disciples.
 - c. Young in-faith Christians often face ridicule from their old friends. Shyness about their believe in Jesus is common. Jesus does not condemn us for that just as he does not condemn the disciples for the fact they ran away. If anything, Jesus is encouraging them.
3. The angel told the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee, as opposed to where they are in Jerusalem.
 - a. I suspect a reason Jesus asks to meet his disciples in Galilee and not Jerusalem is that the Galilee area is a "comfort zone". It is away from the threat of the Jewish leadership.

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Verses 8-10: "So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

1. First we had the angel tell the women to go to Galilee. Just to make sure they understood the message, Jesus "pops in" on the women on the way.
 - a. "Saints running in the way of obedience are likely to be met by Jesus." Charles Spurgeon,
2. Notice Jesus calls his disciples "my brothers". This is another passage that shows that they are already forgiven for the "sin" of desertion at the time of Jesus' arrest.
3. These women were at the cross. They came to worship "the dead Jesus" at the cemetery. They were rewarded for their faith by being the first to see the risen Jesus.
 - a. I have found that if people are honestly seeking Jesus, they do find him.
You won't necessarily get a visual appearance, but you will find him.
 - b. "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me." (Pro. 8:17, NKJV)
4. When you read through all 4 gospels, you read of Jesus "popping up" in different places.
 - a. If Jesus didn't do that, critics would have said, "Jesus is not really dead, and he just walked from place to place to show himself to people".
 - b. If you study the locations where Jesus "popped up", it was not possible for him to run from place to place that quickly.
5. This is a good set of verses to show a Jehovah Witness:
 - a. Jehovah Witness believe you should only worship God-the-Father and not worship Jesus.
 - b. Here are the women worshipping at Jesus feet. Jesus never says, "Don't do that". He just says, "Don't be afraid".
 - c. On a similar note, "Doubting Thomas" said to the resurrected Jesus, "My Lord and My God" in John 20:28. In that passage, Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for worshipping Jesus nor for calling Jesus "My Lord and My God".

Verses 11-15: "While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³ telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day."

1. This is the story of the religious leaders bribing the soldiers who fainted on duty.
2. If a Roman soldier let a prisoner escape, the soldier had to serve out his term. If the prisoner was sentenced to death, and escaped, the soldier was to be sentenced to death.
 - a. I think the soldiers would rather commit suicide than report that they "fell asleep" on duty.
3. The fact that the soldiers reported the incident adds to the validity.
 - a. Here was this "alien being" (an angel) sitting on top of the rock. If it was "just their imagination", why did all the soldiers go and report it?
4. The soldiers went to the religious leaders to report the incident and not to Pontius Pilate. I suspect because they saw an angel, and knew that Jesus reported to be the Messiah, that this is a "religious matter". Therefore, they went to the Priests. Further, if they went to Pilate, they might have been killed for allowing the prisoner to escape.
5. When the soldiers came back, did the religious leaders say, "Maybe we were wrong about this Jesus guy?" Unfortunately no, all the religious leaders did in response was to bribe the guards.
6. There are those who believe you can "fix anything with enough money".

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Verses 20-21 (cont.) A discussion of the religious leaders bribing the soldiers to keep quiet:

7. Verse 14 says, "If this report gets to the governor, we (religious leaders) will satisfy him (Pilate) and keep you (the soldiers) out of trouble."
 - a. Historically, Pilate was in trouble with the leadership in Rome. He was in danger of being recalled. The religious leaders had a "trump card" they could use with Pilate. The Priests had some influence over who could be governor and therefore they could handle Pilate. Pilate was more interested in "keeping the peace" than accepting Jesus innocence.
8. Verse 15 says, "And this story has been widely circulated... to this very day".
 - a. I suspect over the next 30 years as the disciples were going around trying to convince people that Jesus had risen from the dead, a common response was, "I don't buy your story. We know the guards fell asleep and you stole the body".
 - b. The more you analyze the "logic" of the bribery story, the more you realize how impossible it for it to be true. How can the soldiers claim the body was stolen if they were fast asleep?

Verse 16-17: "Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted."

1. Here is the reference to the disciples obeying Jesus order to go to Galilee.
2. Notice that our Lord is faithful to be there when we do what we are instructed to do!
3. Verse 17 it says, "they worshiped him; but some doubted." This refer to "Doubting Thomas".
 - a. In the Gospels you never read of Jesus eternally condemning a disciple for his doubts.
 - b. They get rebuked, but never condemned for their doubts.
 - c. We as Christians need to take comfort in that fact. I think we all go through periods in our faith when we have moments of doubts.

Vs. 18: "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

1. The key word is all. One of my bible rules is, "All means all, and that is all, all means".
2. We pray to God the Father through Jesus is because all authority has been given to Jesus.
3. Why does God the Father give all authority to Jesus? The answer is so you can't do an end-run-around Jesus to get to God the Father!
 - a. "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. (John 5:22-23a, NIV).
4. Jesus is God. The first few verses of John's gospel say in effect that all things that were created (including the earth, stars, sun, the angels, Satan himself) were made by Jesus.
 - a. It is not that God the Father created Jesus and Jesus made everything else.
 - b. Isaiah 44:24 says that God ("Jehovah") has made all things. This refers to Jesus equally as much as it applies to God the Father. Therefore, Isaiah is saying that Jesus is "Jehovah-God" as part of the Trinity.

Verses 19-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

1. Here we have the "Great Commission" passage. This is a nickname given to these verses.
2. These verses are often used at missionary conferences. Missionaries use these verses as their "orders from headquarters" to go and preach the Gospel around the world.
3. We preach the Gospel because Jesus commands us to do it.
4. The point of the Great Commission is Jesus saying in effect, "Look, everyone who does not believe the Gospel message will go to hell. Tell people the message in order to save them.
5. The term "go make disciples" does not necessarily mean we all have to quit our jobs and become missionaries. It implies that as we go through our daily lives we are to be witnesses for Jesus.

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Topical: The "parachute" illustration of the Gospel Message by Ray Comfort.

1. Suppose on an airplane flight, a stewardess says to a passenger #1: "We're sorry, but the landing gear is broken. We are going to have to jump. Hold on to this parachute until I give the word."
2. The same stewardess tells passenger #2, "I see your back is hurting. Here, take this parachute and put it behind you and you will feel better."
 - a. The stewardess doesn't mention the plane is going to crash to passenger #2.
3. Later, the stewardess accidentally spills hot coffee on both passengers.
 - a. The one with the backache says, "This parachute isn't helping, I'm miserable because of the hot coffee."
 - b. The one who thinks the plane is going to crash clings tighter to the parachute, despite the pain of the hot coffee because their life depends on that parachute.
4. We as Christians are like the passenger clinging to the parachute. We cling to Jesus no matter what happens in our life because our eternity depends upon it.
5. For the Great Commission, our job is to tell others, "The plane is going to crash, please take this parachute." That parachute is Jesus Christ.
6. In their own "free-will", they must decide if we are telling the truth about the plane crash. Our job is "just" to preach the Great Commission. It is the Holy Spirit's job to do the conviction.

Verses 19-20 (Part 2): "baptize everyone in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

1. Some cult groups deny that the "Trinity" exists, because the word "Trinity" is not in the bible.
2. Just because the word is not there, does not mean the principal is not there.
3. Notice Jesus says we are to baptize in the name (that's singular!) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It does not say "names" as if the three entities are plural. This verse implies the Trinity.

Verses 19-20 (Part 3): "Jesus says that we are to "obey everything I have commanded you."

1. Jesus is saying in effect, "All of the things I have taught you over the past three and a half years that I have been with you...go live them!"
2. As I have stated many times through these lessons, the secret of living the Christian life is not trying harder, but letting God work through us.
3. The reason we study the bible, and the gospels in particular is that Jesus commands us to obey all that is written in them.

Verses 19-20 (Part 4): "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

1. Jesus is always there. If you believe Jesus is the Messiah, if you believe Jesus is Lord, if you believe Jesus is God, then you must believe that Jesus is always there.
2. No matter how tough the situation, we need to take comfort in that fact. This is a promise.
3. "The end of the age" is a general term for the Second Coming of Jesus.

Verses 19-20 (Part 5): "Make disciples of all nations"

1. Remember the word "disciple" and "discipline" have the same root word.
2. We are not to get people to accept Jesus and then leave them alone. We are to help others grow in their faith. To be a disciple is to "discipline" your life as Jesus wants us to live.
3. Therefore, being a bible teacher (adult or child), or being a counselor, or a pastor or raising your children with the Scriptures or even helping people in service and sharing Jesus with them is fulfilling the Great Commission.
4. To "all nations": The message was not just for the Jews only or any particular group.
5. Remember what Isaiah said: So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11, NIV) "God's Word will accomplish what God desires it to do.

Supplement: Bibliography

“If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.”
(Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), The New King James Version (NKJV), The King James Version (KJV) and the paraphrased-translation: The Living Bible (TLB). The Bible text used is from the NIV. All of these are copyrighted.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons, (in no particular order). The reference to “audio” commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in Real Audio® or MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated.

1. Commentary on Matthew by Jon Curson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format <http://joncourson.com>
2. Commentary on Matthew by David Guzik. It is available for free in text format. The web address is <http://enduringword.com/commentaries/01.html> It is also published in book format.
3. Audio Commentary on Matthew by Dr. David Hocking; Dr. Hocking's complete set of audio messages are available at <http://www.hopefortoday.org> Dr. Hocking's audio commentary on Chapters 1-10 is available for free via Real Audio® at http://www.hopefortoday.org/html/audio_library.htm
4. MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Matthew (4 Volumes); By John MacArthur, Jr. Moody Press, Chicago, IL Copyright © 1985 by The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; Also available in electronic format through Parsons Technology (“QuickVerse® 7.0”) Copyright © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa. All rights reserved.
5. Audio Commentary on Matthew by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org/> It is also available for free through MP3® <http://firefighters.org/html/library.cfm>
6. Audio Commentary on Matthew by Chuck Smith, from the “6,000 series”. It is available at Chapel Store, at Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, CA. Other sermons by Chuck Smith are available online at <http://www.thewordfortoday.org/>
7. The Gospel of the Kingdom by C.H. Spurgeon Pilgrim Publications, Pasadena Texas; 1974, 1978, 1996; ISBN 1-56186-202-9
8. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every verse of the Bible. (It is available at Christian bookstores.) Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this source.
9. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing <http://www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm>
10. Jewish New Testament Commentary: A Companion Volume to the Jewish New Testament -- David H. Stern; (June 1994) Jewish New Testament Pubns; ISBN: 9653590081; David Stern is a Messianic Jew writing a New Testament commentary from a Jewish-Christian perspective.
11. When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties -- Norman L. Geisler, Thomas Howe; Baker Book House 1999 (Available at Christian Bookstores.)