



Risen!

Christ's resurrection assures believers of salvation.

MATTHEW 28:1-10,16-20

A game show on television allows contestants to reach out by phone to a person they know for assistance. The host generally asks the contestant why he or she selected that person. The reasons vary, but typically it is because the contestant trusts that person and what that person knows about the subject. The more firsthand knowledge the person has, the greater the confidence and trust. When we consider the resurrection of Jesus, we find confidence in knowing that the biblical accounts reflect firsthand knowledge.

If you were a contestant on a game show, to whom would you reach out if allowed to get assistance with one question? What are your reasons for selecting that person?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

MATTHEW 27–28

The chapters immediately leading up to Matthew 28 are filled with distressing news. Matthew 27:3 reveals that Jesus was betrayed by Judas. Judas had seen the miracles of Christ. He had firsthand knowledge of Jesus walking on water, feeding the masses, and healing the sick. Yet, Judas had set all this aside for thirty pieces of silver in pursuit of his own personal agenda.

The story continues with the rejection of Jesus. Pilate, who was the governor of that region during this time, knew Jesus to be innocent of the charges and appealed to the crowd for action. It was Pilate's intention to release Jesus. One would think the story would improve here since Jesus had faithfully served and ministered to some in this crowd over the past three years. Instead, the story continues down a troubling path as the crowd opted for the release of a common criminal.

Jesus then was openly mocked. The Roman soldiers mocked Jesus by putting a crown of thorns on His head and dressing Him in purple to symbolize royalty. They then proceeded to beat Him and spit on Him. While Jesus hung on the cross, the elders and scribes encircled Him and challenged Him to save Himself. They indicated that if He would simply come down from the cross, then they too would believe in Him.

A centurion—a Roman soldier—was at the cross of Jesus and observed all that took place. Upon the death of Jesus the centurion said, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matt. 27:54). Jesus died and was placed in a tomb. The distress found in the events leading up to this point was about to be reversed.

As you read Matthew 28:1-10,16-20, note the commands given throughout this account. How do the commands point to the truth of Jesus's resurrection?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

RESURRECTED (MATT. 28:1-4)

¹ 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 sepulchre. ² And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. ³ His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: ⁴ And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

VERSE 1

A firsthand account provides irrefutable assurance. **Mary Magdalene and the other Mary** went to the tomb of Jesus as dawn approached that first Easter morning. The Gospel of Mark indicates that their purpose was to anoint Jesus's body with the spices they had purchased (Mark 16:1).

Matthew said that they came **to see the sepulchre**. The word *see* indicates more than a passing glance. It means to examine something closely with a great deal of attention to detail. The text also reveals this was an action both women took. Neither were content with allowing the other to view the tomb and then taking her word for it. Both wanted a first hand account of Jesus's tomb.

VERSES 2-4

Matthew recorded **there was a great earthquake**. Earlier, he described a powerful quake associated with the tearing of the temple veil (Matt. 27:50-53). This was a different quake, caused by an **angel of the Lord**. Angels are heavenly messengers, and this angel had a specific task to perform. He approached the tomb and rolled back the stone that was covering its entrance.

Angels consistently played significant roles related to the ministry of Jesus. Gabriel appeared to Zechariah to announce the pending birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:13). Gabriel also appeared to Mary and let her know that she would be the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:31). We finally see a multitude of angels singing praises to God in the announcement of Jesus's birth (Luke 2:13).

Matthew noted that the angel's *countenance was like lightning* and his clothes were *white as snow*. In Scripture, the appearance of angels evoked fear and awe in human beings, but Matthew's description emphasized glory and purity.

Along with removing the stone, the angel also took care of the soldiers guarding the tomb. Undoubtedly, this angel was unlike anything the Roman soldiers had ever encountered. The guards *did shake*. The word *shake* means to be in a state of trembling or to quiver without control. This was no small experience. Matthew went on to say that the trembling was caused by fear. The word Matthew used here indicated an extreme state of distress. These same soldiers would later be bribed to tell a different story, knowing they were lying every time they retold it (Matt. 28:11-15).

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb of Jesus to anoint His body. What they experienced that morning changed them forever. They walked away with a firsthand account of an empty tomb, having seen a messenger of God and witnessing the response of the Roman soldiers. All of these events only added to the assurance of the resurrection of the Savior.

How do the details given instill assurance that Jesus was resurrected?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use a Bible dictionary to gain insight*

Read an article from a Bible dictionary on resurrection. Note the various occurrences of a person being brought back to life and how those experiences are different from what happened to Jesus. Focus on the difference between resuscitation and resurrection. Write a summary of what you discover.

ANNOUNCED (MATT. 28:5-7)

⁵ And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. ⁶ He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷ And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

VERSE 5

The angel of the Lord offered to the women a message of assurance: they did not need to be afraid. They had witnessed the soldiers becoming so fearful that they seemed to be dead. Yet the angel told the women, ***Fear not ye***. This statement indicates that they were afraid, and the angel assured them that they had nothing to fear.

Fear is a natural response when we encounter something we do not understand or do not expect. The women wanted to anoint the body of a loved one who was brutally crucified, and now they had an angel engaging them in conversation. We should not fault them for being fearful.

We will not have the experience they had that first Easter morning, but we might fear other things. We too have fears, and we too need to hear the message of the angel to stop being afraid.

VERSE 6

The angel offered factual evidence. The two phrases ***he is not here*** and ***he is risen*** represent the heart of Easter and of the Christian faith (1 Cor. 15:3-8). Without the resurrection, we are hopeless and helpless (1 Cor. 15:12-19).

The angel confirmed the resurrection in two ways. First, he reminded the women that Jesus had told them about His resurrection. (See Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31.) Even His enemies knew about this claim (Matt. 27:62-66). Second, the angel invited them to ***see the place where the Lord lay***. The women knew that Joseph and Nicodemus had put Jesus's body in the grave on Friday night. The angel's offer verified that they were at the correct tomb. Now, they had the opportunity to see that it was empty. While Matthew did not say they looked into the tomb, it is reasonable to assume they did, making them the first eyewitnesses to the resurrection.

VERSE 7

The angel concluded by telling the woman what to do, how to do it, and what to say. He told them to **go** and **tell**. *Go* indicates an ongoing action as opposed to a one-time event. He also wanted them to go **quickly**. Finally, he told them the message they needed to proclaim.

In addition to the news of the resurrection, the disciples needed to know that Jesus was going ahead of them **into Galilee**. During Passover, Jesus had said He would meet them in Galilee (Matt. 26:32). He wanted the women to remind them of this. They would see Jesus there and would receive His marching orders.

Why was it important for the women to act with urgency in delivering the message of Jesus's resurrection? Should that same urgency be felt today? Explain.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Jesus*

Jesus was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion (See Luke 24:46; John 20:27.)

ENCOUNTERED (MATT. 28:8-10)

⁸ And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. ⁹ And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. ¹⁰ Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

VERSES 8-10

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were obedient to the angel's command. As they went, they experienced a mixture of emotions.

On one hand they were filled with **fear**. On the other hand, they experienced **great joy**. This combination of fear and joy suggests they knew something wonderful had happened and that things would never be the same.

Along the way, **Jesus met them**. They responded in two ways. First, they **held him by the feet**. This was a common act of submission in the first century. Second, they **worshipped him**.

We are not afforded the opportunity to physically bow at Jesus's feet and worship Him. We are, however, afforded the chance to bow our hearts before Him. We are afforded the opportunity to acknowledge that He is risen. We are afforded the opportunity to obey His commands and to experience great joy as a result.

Their encounter led to purpose. Jesus commanded the women to **go tell** the disciples the good news that He was alive.

Many of us long for purpose. We want to do things that have meaning. Purpose and meaning can be found in living according to the truth God gives us in His Word.

How was the encounter with Jesus critical for the women? How does an encounter with Jesus change a person's view of Him?

COMMISSIONED (MATT. 28:16-20)

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

VERSES 16-17

The disciples traveled to the specific **mountain** in **Galilee**, where they had an encounter with the risen Lord. There, they **worshipped** Him,

as the women had done earlier. **Some**, though, **doubted**. The Greek word refers to wavering or having a divided mind. The idea is more like hesitation or confusion than skepticism. Some of those present responded more slowly, while others quickly believed.

What might cause a person to doubt the resurrection despite the eyewitness accounts?

VERSES 18-20

In this passage, Jesus gave a specific command that is to be fulfilled by all His followers throughout all ages. He also provided three specific steps to take in order to fulfill His command. He finally left us with a promise.

***Everyone needs the gospel,
and everyone should be given
the chance to respond to it.***

The primary command is to **teach**, or to make disciples. A disciple is one who seeks to actively and consistently follow the teaching of another. Jesus wants us to know Him personally and follow His teachings and to help others do the same. These disciples would come from **all nations**. The Greek word used here (*ethne*) indicates ethnic groups and includes every demographic category. Everyone needs the gospel, and everyone should be given the chance to respond to it.

We make disciples by going, **baptizing**, and **teaching**. Going indicates a continual action or lifestyle. As we go to work, school, and throughout our daily activities, we are to make disciples. Baptizing and teaching further indicate the necessary steps involved in fulfilling His command.

Jesus offered the promise to be with us **always, even unto the end of the world**. While circumstances can make us feel alone, Jesus promises that we will never be alone. We know from the New Testament that the disciples faithfully fulfilled this command. Their obedience attests to the truth of the resurrection.

APPLY THE TEXT

- The empty tomb attests to the resurrection of Jesus.
- The angel declared Christ's resurrection.
- Eyewitness accounts affirm the resurrection of Jesus.
- The spread of the gospel demonstrates the truth of Christ's resurrection.

List people you know who have objections to the resurrection of Jesus or have been unwilling to accept Him. What can you share with them from today's study that may help them take a step toward Jesus?

Reflect on Matthew 28:6. Imagine different ways the statements could be said and the emotion carried in each statement. Memorize the verse this week, repeating it every morning after you awake.

Discuss as a group the role your group has in helping your church accomplish the different elements of the Great Commission. What actions can your Bible study group take this week that would lead to faithfully living out this command?

PRAYER NEEDS
