

## **Exegetical Notes, Matthew 28:1-10**

### **“The Power of Our King”**

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## **Matthew 28:1-10**

### **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.***

- Since the Jewish Sabbath is Saturday, these events took place at dawn on Sunday morning.
- The “other Mary” is not the mother of Jesus but the wife of Clopas (see Matthew 27:56).
- Apparently, their concern was to make sure that everything was right at the tomb. They may have wanted to enter the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, but the heavy stone would have made entrance to the tomb impossible for them since they were not strong enough to move it. Thus, all they could hope to do was look at the tomb.

### **Verse 2**

***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.***

- The proper translation of the Greek text is, “Now there had been an earthquake.” The earthquake and the accompanying events did not occur as the women approached the tomb but before they started to go there.
- Apparently, the earthquake was the angelic force used to move the stone.
- By sitting on the stone, the angel indicates his intention to prevent it from being moved back into place by any agent. The angel, not the Roman soldiers, then becomes the true guardian of the tomb.

### **Verse 3**

***His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.***

- The angel was an impressive fellow. He has a startlingly bright appearance.

#### **Verse 4**

***The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.***

- The Roman soldiers were so overwhelmed by the sight of the angel that they were powerless to do anything.

#### **Verse 5**

***The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.”***

- The women are also frightened by the appearance of the angel. However, while he ignores the guards who are not seeking Jesus, he tells the women who are seeking him not to be afraid. The intention of the women seems to be the difference. They are not rendered helpless in the presence of the angel.

#### **Verse 6**

***“He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.”***

- The angel tells the women three truths: First, Jesus is not there. Second, he has risen from the dead. Third, all this was in perfect accord with what Jesus had told his disciples (see Matthew 16:21; 17:22; and 20:18-19).
- He then invites them to confirm the news for themselves by seeing that the tomb is empty.

#### **Verse 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.”***

- Having given the women the basic facts and confirming the news to them by showing them where Jesus’ body had been, the angel commissions them to share the news with others. Specifically, they are commissioned to go and tell the disciples the news that they have received.
- They are given a threefold message for the disciples: First, they are to tell that Jesus is raised. Second, they are to tell the disciples that Jesus

is going ahead of them into Galilee. Third, they are to explain that there they will see him.

- The final phrase indicates that the angel has completed his assignment.

#### **Verse 8**

***So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.***

- The sight of the angel and the news of Jesus' resurrection left the women emotionally confused. They were afraid and filled with joy.
- They hurried to fulfill the commission that they were given.

#### **Verse 9**

***Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.***

- As the women were hurrying away from the tomb Jesus, himself, appeared to them.
- His greeting to them is the usual greeting that friends would exchange.
- They know him and fall down in homage to worship him.

#### **Verse 10**

***Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."***

- Jesus extends the same commission to the women as they had received from the angel. They are to go and tell the disciples that they will meet with him in Galilee.

#### **Verse 11**

***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.***

- The women were on their way to accomplish the commission that Jesus had given them; to go and tell the disciples that he was risen and that he would meet them in Galilee. See Matthew 28:10.
- When the women first came to the tomb they found the guards rendered helpless by fear. See Matthew 28:4. These guards had been given a specific mission. They were to guard the tomb of Jesus so as to keep his followers from stealing the body and faking the resurrection. They had failed in this mission. This failure could have resulted in their death. So some of the soldiers, in order to cover

themselves and point to others for the group's failure, reported about the happenings to the chief priests.

#### **Verse 12-14**

***When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."***

- The chief priests quickly consulted after they heard the report of the guards and devised a damage control plan:
  - + First, they agreed to bribe the guards with a large financial reward.
  - + Second, the guards were to take blame for the failure by claiming that they had fallen asleep while on duty.
  - + Third, the story that the guards were to tell was to ignore the actual circumstances of the resurrection and to report that Jesus' disciples had come at night, crept past the sleeping guards, noiselessly rolled back the huge stone that sealed the entrance to the tomb, and stolen the body of Jesus.
- The chief priests promised to take care of any issues related to the soldiers' failure while on duty, a crime punishable by death, if the governor heard about it and wanted to act against the derelict soldiers. This was what the soldiers hoped to gain by going to the chief priests in the first place.

#### **Verse 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.***

- The soldiers had nothing to lose and everything to gain by cooperating with the chief priests. Not only were they saved from potential execution for dereliction of duty but they were rewarded financially for cooperating with the priests.
- To this very day, as recently as Sunday, March 23, 2008, this tale is still told, usually for the same reasons, financial gain and/or self-protection. In the case of the soldiers, both of these reasons were operative. The chief priests lied about the circumstances and circulated this false report to protect themselves. If Jesus rose from the dead, he was Israel's Messiah and the chief priests had led the case for his crucifixion.

### **Verse 16-17**

***Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.***

- The women accomplished the commission that Jesus had given them; to go and tell the disciples that he was risen and that he would meet them in Galilee. See Matthew 28:10. The disciples went to Galilee, as they were told to do, to see Jesus.
- The disciples went to the “mountain where Jesus had told them to go.” Apparently, in his pre-crucifixion teaching, Jesus had told the disciples where he would meet them if, for any reason, he was separated from them. So, they went to that place to wait for him after the women told them the news of his resurrection. And, in fact, Jesus did come to them there.
- When they saw Jesus, they recognized him and they worshiped him. Jesus’ form was not altered by death. He appeared to his disciples in the same body that had died.
- Even so, some of the disciples were unsure. Resurrection from the dead is not normal, nor logical. Despite what they saw, it was hard to credit the facts. How could someone return from the grave? For many people today, this remains the stumbling block. But if this is not true, then the Bible lies, Christians are misguided, and there is no life after death.

### **Verse 18**

***Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.***

- Verses 18-20 are called the Great Commission. They describe the purpose of the Church in every age and time. While this Great Commission is most fully explained in the Gospel of Matthew, it is repeated in all four Gospels and in the book of Acts.
- In his opening remarks, Jesus establishes his right to so commission the Church. “All power,” the word translated “authority” in the NIV, means power. The word “all” means that no power has been withheld from Jesus. Because God has invested him with unlimited power, he has the authority to commission the Church. Jesus’ power is not limited to the Kingdom of God, heaven. It extends over all the “earth,” over all other kingdoms and authorities.

## Verse 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

- The “therefore” refers to the fact stated in verse 18. Namely, that Jesus now has all authority or power.
- The grammar in this passage is extremely important to understand if we would understand the commission that Jesus gave to the Church.
  - + The word “go” in the English text appears to be a command. However in the Greek text it is a participle. Therefore, it is correctly translated, “going.” It simply means that while Christians are going about the routines of everyday life they are to make disciples.
  - + The words, “make disciples” are the command. What Jesus commands the church to do is to go out into life and, while living life, make disciples. **THIS IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH, TO MAKE DISCIPLES.**
  - + **The first step in the process of disciple making is “baptizing.”** The word is properly translated baptizing, for like the word “go” in verse 18, it is a participle. It is a word that indicates process. It means that the first step in disciple making is to help a potential disciple to understand who Jesus is and what Jesus came to earth to do. When the potential disciple knows these things and professes faith in Jesus, we baptize him/her to indicate that they are now believers, disciples, Christians. But this is only the first step in the process of making a disciple.
  - + **The second step in the process of disciple making is “teaching.”** This word, too, is a process word, a participle. After a person becomes a disciple they need to be taught how to be a disciple. They are not expected to know everything that they need to know about discipleship from the beginning. Those who have learned more are to instruct the initiates even as they themselves learn more about being a disciple, themselves. The goal is to teach beginning disciples everything that Jesus taught. This will require a lifetime of learning. The goal of this learning is obedience to the entire word of God.
- At the close of the Gospel of Matthew the promise of Jesus’ birth is repeated. Immanuel! God will be with us as we engage in the process of making disciples, and he will stay with us as we do so until the close of the age, until the time when disciple making is over because

He has returned to gather the faithful into the millennial kingdom of God.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Power of Our King*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)