



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew

Chapter 28

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Introduction

Chapter Main Points:

- The circumstances of Jesus' resurrection
- The details of the Great Commission



An Overview

- Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week and appeared first to the two Marys, giving them instructions for the disciples to meet Him in Galilee(1-10)
- Meanwhile the chief priests and elders bribed the soldiers to say that the disciples stole the body (11-15)
- When the disciples met Jesus in Galilee, He charged them to go and make disciples of all the nations (16-20)



He Is Risen (28:1-8)

- The day of Jesus' Resurrection was on the Jewish feast of Firstfruits which, according to the Law was to fall in the day after the Sabbath of the holy week of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:9-13)
- It was designated a continuous feast to be observed for all generations (Lev 23:14)
- The Sabbath ended at sunset, so that Jesus had been dead and buried Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday morning, beginning at the previous sunset, three days according to Jewish calculation, 1 Samuel 30:12-13; 2 Chronicles 10:5,2



He Is Risen (28:1-8)

- That first day is the same as that which we now call Sunday, or the Lord's day
- *After the Sabbath* in which Jesus had lain in the tomb
- All the gospels mark the precious moment when the great news first became known, Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1-21
- Their narratives may differ
- However, in all these there is no contradiction; and the difficulties rise only from this, that each evangelist does not relate all the circumstances



He Is Risen (28:1-8)

- Christ, by His own power, rose while the tomb being yet shut
- The angel did not remove the stone to afford a passage to Christ when He arose
- The angel removed the stone to prepare the way for the women and disciples and to show the soldiers that Christ was risen
- He sat on the stone, that the women might know he had removed it
- And that they might not be terrified at the appearance of the soldiers; for he exhorted them not to fear, but to come and see
- And to prevent the soldiers from putting in another body, had they been so disposed



He Is Risen (28:1-8)

- *his clothing as white as snow*, White is the symbol of purity
- So was the Savior's raiment at the Transfiguration, and the robes of the saints as described in Revelation
- Each evangelist's account of the resurrection emphasizes different particulars
- St. Matthew alone notes the outward glory, the earthquake, the action of the angel, and the inability of the military and priestly power to crush the new faith



He Is Risen (28:1-8)

- The appearance was sudden and unexpected
- The stone was probably suddenly removed
- At the noise, the light, the suddenness of the appearance, the guards were affrighted
- God can, by one and the same means, comfort His servants, and terrify His enemies
- The resurrection of Christ is a subject of terror to the servants of sin, and a subject of consolation to the sons of God; because it is a proof of the resurrection of both, the one to shame and everlasting suffering- the other to eternal glory and joy



He Is Risen (28:1-8)

- We do not read of any words as spoken by the women, but the words which they now heard were an answer to their unuttered questionings and fears
- The report in St. Mark (Mk 16:6-7) nearly coincides with this
- St. Luke is somewhat fuller (Lk 24:5-7), introducing the question, *Why do you seek the living among the dead?* and a more detailed reference to our Lord's prophecies of His resurrection
- The women had not seen Him rise and had to be informed
- *See the place where the Lord lay*, The angel does not say your, but the Lord, the Lord of the angels as well as men



He Is Risen (28:1-8)

- The best solution of the questions presented by a comparison of the Gospel narrative at this stage is that Mary Magdalene ran eagerly to tell Peter and John, leaving the other Mary and Joanna (Lk 24:10), and then followed in the rear of the two disciples (Jn 20:2)
- Then when they had left, the Lord showed Himself first to her (Jn 20:14), and then to the others (Mt 28:9), whom she had by that time joined, and then they all hastened together to tell the rest of the disciples
- The disciples being Galileans, it was natural for them to return to Galilee, after the festival week of the Passover

The Women Worship the Risen Lord (28:9-10)



- They are on the way to tell the disciples that they are to be favored with a meeting in Galilee
- They are themselves privileged to meet the risen One
- They took hold of His feet and cast themselves before Him; the gesture befitting the circumstances, an unexpected meeting with one who has been crucified and whose aspect is greatly changed
- Impossible to resume the old familiar relations as if nothing had happened

The Women Worship the Risen Lord (28:9-10)



- The instructions to the women simply repeated, in much the same words, those given by the angel (Mt 28:7), with the exception that the disciples are spoken of by the kindly name of *brethren*
- This is the first time our Lord called His disciples by this name
- They no doubt thought that their Lord would reproach them with their past weaknesses and infidelity; but, in speaking thus, He gives them a full assurance, in the most tender terms, that all that was passed was as buried for ever

The Women Worship the Risen Lord (28:9-10)



- This was the second appearance of the Risen Savior
- The appearances were
 - (1) To Mary Magdalene alone, near Jerusalem, (Mk 16:9; Jn 20:11-18)
 - (2) To the women returning from the tomb (Mt 28:9-10)
 - (3) To Simon Peter alone (Lk 24:34)
 - (4) To the two disciples going to Emmaus (Lk 24:13)
 - (5) To the apostles at Jerusalem, excepting Thomas, who was absent
- These are all the same day (Jn 20:19)

The Women Worship the Risen Lord (28:9-10)



- (6) To the apostles at Jerusalem a second time, when Thomas was present, (Jn 20:26,29)
- (7) At the Sea of Tiberias, when seven disciples were fishing (Jn 21:1)
- (8) To the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Mt 28:16)
- (9) To about five hundred brethren at once, in Galilee, (1 Cor 15:6)
- (10) To James only (1 Cor 15:7)
- (11) To all the apostles on Mt. Olivet at His ascension, (Lk 24:51)
- (12) In addition to these He was seen by Saul of Tarsus and by John on Patmos (Acts 9:3; Rev 1:13)

The Soldiers Are Bribed (28:11-15)



- Some of the soldiers went to the chief priests while the women were on their way to tell the disciples
- The elders and the chief priests still persisting in their malice
- They wished to persuade the world that Jesus was not risen, sacrificing that money to falsehood, which was given for the use of the temple
- For as they offered Judas 30 pieces of silver to betray his Master, so now they offer a great sum of money to suppress a truth so useful and so necessary for man

The Soldiers Are Bribed (28:11-15)



- It appears, that the chief priests themselves were fully convinced of the fact; for otherwise, they would not have bribed the soldiers to dissemble, but would have accused the soldiers before the president of a neglect of duty
- The improbability of this story is easily seen:
 - (1) The soldiers would not dare to go to sleep on guard
It was death for them according to the Roman military laws
 - (2) If they had gone to sleep they could testify nothing of what was done while asleep

The Soldiers Are Bribed (28:11-15)



- (3) Could they be so sound asleep as not to awake with all the noise which must be necessarily made by removing the great stone, and taking away the body?
- (4) The disciples did not expect a resurrection
- (5) They had shown themselves weak and would not have dared to take His body away
- (6) Had they dared, had the Roman soldiers slept, they could not have removed the stone and carried off the body without detection

The Soldiers Are Bribed (28:11-15)



- (7) It was a night lighted with the full moon and all the environs of Jerusalem were crowded with people attending the Passover
- (8) Is it at all likely that these disciples could have had time sufficient to do all this, and to come and return, without being perceived by any person?
- (9) And if they were asleep, how could they possibly know that it was the disciples that stole Him, or indeed that any person or persons stole Him? - for, being asleep, they could see no person
- From their own testimony, therefore, the resurrection is fully proved

The Soldiers Are Bribed (28:11-15)



- As Pilate had taken so little interest in the matter as to leave the watch to them it was not likely it would come to his ears at all, as we know that he was only a few days at Jerusalem and then return to Caesarea
- Verse 15 states that the soldiers did as instructed, so originating a theft theory, which, according to our evangelist, was current in his day in Jewish circles at the time he wrote

The Great Commission (28:16-20)



- The eleven went into Galilee because the Lord had commanded them to do so
- The Lord had named the mountain where He should meet them, and had probably also appointed the time
- *They worshipped him*, fell face down at His feet
- The act, as has been said, was not new in itself, but it seems certain that our Lord's manifestations of His Presence after the Resurrection had made the faith of the disciples stronger and clearer (Jn 20:28), and so the act acquired a new significance

The Great Commission (28:16-20)



- The mention of their doubting shows that:
 1. They were honest men
 2. They were not easily imposed on that they had not previously agreed to affirm that He had risen
 3. They were convinced only by the strength of the evidence
- Their caution in examining the evidence; their slowness to believe; their firm conviction after all their doubts; and their willingness to show their conviction even by their death, is most conclusive proof that they were "not" deceived in regard to the fact of His resurrection

The Great Commission (28:16-20)



- The "Son of God," as "Creator," had an original right to all things, to control them and dispose of them, John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:8
- But the universe is put under Him more particularly as Mediator, that He might redeem His people; that He might gather a church; that He might defend His chosen; that He might subdue all their enemies, and bring them off conquerors and more than conquerors, Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Corinthians 15:25-27; John 5:22-23; Philippians 2:6-11

The Great Commission (28:16-20)



- It is in reference to this, doubtless, that He speaks here power or authority committed to Him over all things, that He might redeem, defend, and save the church purchased with His own blood
- The first part of the commission commands the making of disciples, and tells how they must be made
- They are to make disciples, or pupils, and scholars of Christ
- Not the Jews only, but all nations
- Christ came to be the Savior of the world

The Great Commission (28:16-20)



- Rebirth through water and the spirit in Christian baptism is the means Jesus has given for entrance into the community of the New Covenant
- In the Sacrament of Baptism, the baptized person is configured to the risen Savior and incorporated into the Body of Christ which is His Church
- The formula Jesus gives for the Sacrament of Baptism defines the Trinity and designates baptism as the union of the one baptized with the life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

The Great Commission (28:16-20)



- Baptism is linked to teaching the newly baptized to observe *all things that I have commanded you*
- The second part of the commission provides for the instruction of the disciples in righteousness
- This is to be done by teaching them
- We are to teach all things He has commanded

The Great Commission (28:16-20)



- The name Emmanuel means "God with us," which is what Jesus promises His faithful
- It is also the promise of His real but invisible presence in the Eucharist from the time of His Ascension until His return at the end of the Age of Man
- Jesus will teach the Church for forty days prior to His Ascension to the Father (Acts 1:3), appearing and disappearing at will



Conclusion

- Who came to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week?
- Why do the chief priests tell the guards that they will protect them from Pilate?
- How many appearances to His disciples did Jesus make as recorded in the New Testament?
- In round numbers, how many people did Jesus appear to? Why so many?



Conclusion

- What did Jesus charge His disciples to do?
- What did Jesus promise His disciples?
- In what manner is Jesus with the Church always?
- What is your experience with evangelizing?
- What is your attitude toward doing it? What do you think Jesus wants you to do about any fears you may have?