

Matthew 28 *After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.*

<sup>2</sup> *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.* <sup>3</sup> *His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.* <sup>4</sup> *The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.*

<sup>5</sup> *The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified."* <sup>6</sup> *He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.* <sup>7</sup> *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."*

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

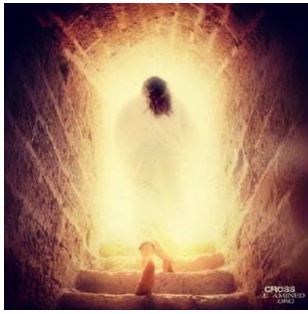
### ***The Guards' Report***

<sup>11</sup> *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.* <sup>12</sup> *When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money,* <sup>13</sup> *telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'"* <sup>14</sup> *If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."* <sup>15</sup> *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 Great Commission***

<sup>16</sup> *Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.* <sup>17</sup> *When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.* <sup>18</sup> *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* <sup>19</sup> *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,* <sup>20</sup> *and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (Matthew 28, NIV).

Let us pray.



This chapter begins before dawn on Resurrection Day. You will notice that I don't use the term "Easter" because it has its roots in the name of the ancient fertility goddess, "Astarte," whom the Anglo-Saxon pagans called "Eostre." I just prefer to call it Resurrection Day. The scriptures tell us that this event that changed history happened on the first day of the week. This is when the early church began to gather together on the "Lord's Day" and it was set apart. Having said that, I want to stress that there is no commandment to meet on the first day of the week for worship.

I want to briefly mention that some have asked me why we don't worship on the Sabbath Day. You know there are some denominations that claim Christians must meet on Saturday or we're somehow breaking God's law? I'd like to say two things about that.

- 1) We weren't commanded anywhere in the New Testament to have our worship services only on Saturday or Sunday.
- 2) We were specifically told not to observe "special days."

Paul had to address this in various places in his letters to the churches that he started. He told the Romans to value whatever day they wanted to value (Romans 14:5-6). So, if you want to consider Sunday special, then have church on Sunday. If you want to worship on Thursday night like some of the Cowboy churches do, then do that. Paul is basically saying, "Don't focus on the day so much. Just meet with other believers." Let the day that you set apart be the day you set apart.<sup>1</sup>

While we're talking about the Sabbath, let me ask a question. From what did the Sabbath give rest? It gave rest from work, right? From what did Jesus give rest? He also gave rest from work; working for our salvation. Paul wrote the Colossian church.

*<sup>16</sup> Therefore, no one is to act as your judge in regard to food and drink, or in respect to a festival or a new moon, or a Sabbath day— <sup>17</sup> things which are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17, NASB).*

The Sabbath is all about rest. Paul is saying that the focus on the Sabbath in Old Testament times was a shadow of the Sabbath rest that we find in Jesus. The "works" are removed and we rest in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Jesus is our Sabbath rest. We can rest in Him because we don't have to work for our salvation, rather He is the fulfillment of sabbath rest.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Galatians 4:10-11

Verse 1 - In this first verse of this magnificent text we see that Mary Magdalene and Mary went to see the tomb. We know from the other gospels that they were going there to anoint the body of Jesus. They took with them wrappings and spices to do that (the other gospel accounts give us the full details). So why did they take all of these things to the tomb? They were coming because they had NO EXPECTATION OF FINDING AN EMPTY TOMB. It makes me think about how misguided my expectations can be about Jesus. We as humans are so confined to our own minds. Over and over we fail to imagine the great things God can do. Let's continue on.

Verse 2 - Matthew is letting us know what must have happened before dawn. He tells us that there was a great earthquake and an angel rolled back the stone and sat on it. We know from Luke's account that this happened before the women ever got there. So when Mary Magdalene and Mary arrived, the stone had already been rolled away.

Verse 3 - He Matthew tells us that this angel was like lightning. The text tells us that when the guards saw the angel they were terrified of him and they shook till they fainted or were overtaken by shock. These were tough soldiers who were overcome with fear. Can you imagine what it was like to see an angel show up like lightning, the stone being rolled away, and Jesus in all of His risen glory standing there? No wonder the soldiers fell to the ground like dead men!



Verses 5-7 - *The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> 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."* (Matthew 28:5-7, NIV).



Over and over in scripture, angels tell us to "fear not". The angel led the women to the place where Jesus had laid. This reminds us that God gives us so much evidence to believe. Faith is not believing without evidence. Our faith is based on evidence. For example, the places named in our Bible are real. The events that happened are real. The angel invited them into the tomb, and told them to come take a look. He told them exactly what happened, "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee." I think that God has left us all kinds of evidence that tell us over and over that the Bible is true. I have thought about this a lot as Sandy and I have visited the Holy Lands.

You can go to Magdala. You can go to Jerusalem. You can go to Bethlehem and see where He was born. You can go to Nazareth where Jesus grew up. You can go to Capernaum where He centered His ministry. Over and over God has left evidence for us that the Word of God is factual and true. He calls out to our hearts to come and see.



Verses 8-10 - As they were running along the way, Jesus met them and again told them to not be afraid. John lets us know that Jesus also met up with them that night. At this same time the soldiers headed for town to get their story straight and to silence the rumors. I can only imagine that they all headed to the tomb to look for Jesus, and cooked up a story that during the night the disciples stole the body of Jesus. They all participated in a cover up and a conspiracy with all kinds of bribe money being spread around. The whole story they cooked up is really pretty ridiculous.

Can you imagine someone coming into court and saying, "While I was sleeping, they came and took Him away." How could anyone know what happened while they were asleep?



Verses 16-17 – Here we are told, <sup>16</sup> *Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.* <sup>17</sup> *When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.*

It's hard for me to imagine anyone seeing Jesus and still doubting that it was Him. This is great proof that this is a true text. It is so real because it doesn't make things sound good in an artificial way. No person trying to paint a totally positive picture would include that some doubted. To "doubt" in Greek means they were wavering or were wishy washy about the whole thing. This is actually sort of comforting to know that some wavered after they actually saw Jesus. If they could waver, it is understandable that we too can waver when we've never seen Him physically in front of us.

I want to end focusing on verse 17 where it talks about the authority given to Jesus. The resurrection story tells us that Jesus was given authority over death when He rose from the dead. So, what does this really mean to us? Jesus raised Himself from the dead, and He too can raise us from the dead. Why is this so important? Well, death is the big problem. It haunts us and we don't like to think about the fact that our lives on this earth will come to an end.

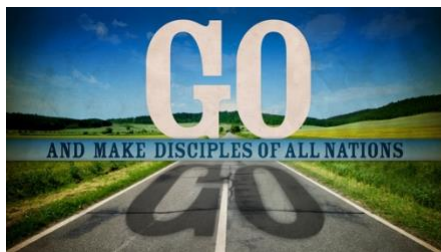
I was sort of a strange little kid. I thought about death when I was 12 years old. I remember how I anguished over my aunts and uncles and grandparents who would come visit. I would sometimes weep when they would leave knowing they would die some day.

When I was young I remember this author, Jim Fixx, came out with a method of helping people live way into old age. He wrote a book called the *Complete Book of Running*. A jogging and running craze took over the country. People were convinced that this was a sure fire way to live a long healthy life. I remember this old guy would run by our house every day and each day he was more and more hunched over. My dad, who was a brilliant doctor, commented to me one day, "He'll kill himself running like that." Right in the middle of the running craze, the author, Jim Fixx, died of a heart attack... while running. He was only 52 years old.

Death haunts humans. If we stop long enough to think about it, we realize just how short this all is.

*"<sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." (James 4:14, NIV). <sup>12</sup> So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:12, ESV).*

When a person comes to Christ he or she no longer has to fear death. Jesus rose from the dead and He'll raise us too! All authority on heaven and earth is given to Him, and He gives us that authority also.



Verses 18-20 - Jesus tells us *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to*

*the very end of the age."*

He gives us seven things that make our lives worth living:

- 1 **Go.** The Great Commission is about doing, it is not about just knowing. We are not called to act one time; the Greek verb is a continuous action. We must keep on doing it.
- 2 **Make Disciples!** This means way more than just going out and converting people to Christ. Making disciples means living the life in front of others. This means that I have invited each of you into my life so that you can learn how to be a friend, a mother, a brother, an employee, and a citizen. This is what

- we're to do. We invite others into our lives to see a better way; to see God's way. It will cost you your time, talent, and treasure to invite others into your life.
- 3 **Into All Nations** – This means the gospel is for everyone. No one is excluded from the hope of eternal life.
  - 4 **Baptize them** – We do this publicly. We are baptized to show that we *are* saved, not *to be* saved. Otherwise, we are preaching works. It is done as per number 5 below.
  - 5 **In the Name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit** – We are to do this in the authority of God. It's like if I send one of you to the hardware store with my money to pay my bill, you go in my name. I've heard arguments and discussions about whether a baptism is okay if all three persons of God are not mentioned. It is done in the authority of God.
  - 6 **Teaching them to obey what HE has commanded.** We aren't to put rules on other people. My dad used to categorize legalism by saying it says things like "Don't drink, don't chew, and don't go with girls that do."
  - 7 **I am with you to the end of the ages.** That is a promise. God has a plan and that plan includes each of us who have placed our hope and promise in Him. This age will come to an end, but we will be with Him until the end of the ages.

Some may hear this message today and say, "So what's the big deal. He said He would come back, and He never did." I think it's good to remember what Peter said,

*<sup>3</sup> First of all, you must understand that in the last days some people will appear whose lives are controlled by their own lusts. They will make fun of you <sup>4</sup> and will ask, "He promised to come, didn't he? Where is he? Our ancestors have already died, but everything is still the same as it was since the creation of the world!" <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins. (2 Peter 3:3,4,9, GNT).*

So, friends, I am here to tell you this morning. Jesus died. Jesus rose from the dead. And HE WILL COME AGAIN. Here is the message of the resurrection. God came in the form of a man, a perfect man named Jesus. He was spoken of from the beginning of God's revelation to man. He was spoken of by the prophets and in the fulness of time (that means at just the right time) He came from heaven. He was born as prophesied. He lived, died, and rose from the dead. He conquered sin and death. He does not

desire for any to perish, but for all to live in relationship with Him. He raised Himself and He will raise us just as He promised. What is your response to all of this? Just believe! Scripture tells us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved (Acts 16:31).

Now friends, give Him praise and glory. Oh what a happy day this Resurrection Day is!

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at [uniongrove362@gmail.com](mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com) or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese-Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.