

Matthew 28

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[0 : 00] I think you've got a Bible, it would be a great help to me and I hope to you and we can get a bit open before you. It's on page 835 from Matthew 28 in the Church Bibles.

Matthew 28 on page 835. You may have come across the true story from Russia before the end of the Cold War and the Communism.

There's a Baptist pastor who's travelling on a train and reading his New Testament. And he stood up to take a walk on the train and he left the New Testament on his table.

While he was away, a train guard came along, read what it was, opened up the window of the train and threw it out the window. A month later, a farmer came to see the Baptist pastor and he asked the pastor to lead him to become a Christian. The pastor gladly did so.

When he finished praying, the farmer reached into his pocket and pulled out the pastor's New Testament and said, you'll never believe it. I was working in the fields on my farm a month ago by the railway track and as a train went past, this hit me in the head.

[1 : 16] And I want to say to you that as you read the accounts of the resurrection in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, I hope that you'll find the same thing happens to you.

That you'll get hit on the head. Because what we find in these fascinating passages right at the centre of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. The early Christians in the book of Acts, those in the immediate years after the death of the Lord Jesus, called the gospel the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

It was the resurrection of Jesus that created the earthly church and gave it life and gave it fire. Now I want us to look at Matthew chapter 28 because in this chapter what Matthew teaches you is very, very simple.

Matthew teaches you this. The resurrection of Jesus Christ changes everything. The resurrection of Jesus Christ changes everything.

[2 : 27] It turns everything upside down. It acts as a huge reversal in the world. And Matthew shows us that by showing us that everyone this resurrection touches in this chapter, their lives are turned upside down.

The resurrection shatters for all time and for all people the matter of business as usual. When Jesus stacked out of the grave, it was one small stack for man, but one giant leap for mankind.

It changes everything. And Matthew's interest is not in the mechanics of the actual resurrection. But Matthew wants you and I to experience the massive impact that it had.

And it happened in four parties. So first of all, the women. Look at verse 1. It says, now after the Sabbath, towards the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

They don't know that a guard has been posted. They do not know how they're going to roll the stone away to get access to the body. But they are in for a huge surprise.

[3 : 47] They discover, don't they, guards lying on the ground and trembling. The stone is rolled away. And even worse than that, there is an angel sitting on the stone.

And he's no ordinary messenger boy. But this is an angel who's come from the presence of God. So look at verses 5 and 6 and 7. But the angel said to the woman, do not be afraid.

For I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He's not here for he is risen. As he said. Come see the place where he lay.

Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he's risen from the dead. And behold, he's going before you to Galilee. There you will see him. See, I told you. The angel is clear. That the stone has been rolled away.

Not to let Jesus out. But to let the woman see him. We're not left against what it means. The angel explains to you exactly what it means.

[4 : 48] He says, can you see it? Jesus. Who was crucified. It's now risen. He says it twice.

He says to them, you're at the right tomb. You've gone to the wrong address. You're at the right tomb. He was dead. He is no longer dead.

See where he lay. He's now risen from the dead. It's not a reincarnation. Jesus has risen from the dead. And it is impossible for you and I to capture in those very simple words the enormous transformation that's taken place.

For the first time in all of history the iron grip of death has been broken from the inside out.

Somebody has gone through death to show that he is stronger. The angel is saying Jesus has defeated death. I read of a Muslim student in Africa who became a Christian and when his friends asked him why why have you done this this is what he said.

[6 : 00] He said about it's like this suppose you are going down a road and the road forks in two different directions and you don't know which way to go. And there at the fork in the road were two men one dead one alive.

Who would you ask for directions? As the women race off to tell the disciples their imaginations are running wild on ahead of them and they meet the risen Jesus verse 9 He met them and he said verse 9 behold Jesus met them and said greetings and they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.

Then Jesus said to them do not be afraid go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me. It is the most natural greeting in verse 9 I don't think greetings is a great translation it's the most natural hi if you were in Wales it would be Shammai if you were in Australia it would be G'day if you were in France it would be Salud it's the most natural greeting and just notice the women fall at his feet and there's a really interesting detail that's got the authenticity marked all over it they take hold of his feet and they worship him it's not a vision it's not a hallucination it's not an apparition it is a bodily and physical resurrection they grab hold of his feet they feel his hairy toes it's that physical it's not merely a resurrection back to this life because do you remember when Lazarus came out of the tomb they didn't worship Lazarus did they they didn't fall at his feet but no this is a risen Jesus physically raised from the dead with feet you can hold and Jesus encourages the women not to fear and he gives them the same job doesn't he but the angel gave them to go he says go and tell the other disciples and because of that their world is turned upside down you back to chapter 27 and you back to chapter 27 and what are the women like there they are powerless to change the course of events can you see that there's this point isn't it and verse 55 in Matthew chapter 27 in the other column it just says there were also many women there looking on from a distance who'd followed Jesus from Galilee ministering to him and then if you look at verse 61 it's the same picture again he's been buried in the tomb and Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there sitting opposite the tomb they are helpless bystanders they are the most powerless of people aren't they weeping and they go on resurrection morning to anoint a dead body their hopes have been shattered the bottoms formed out of their world but by now by verse 10 of chapter 28 they are centre stage in God's purposes their hopes had literally been shattered but now they're raised to life their fears and their tears have been transformed into confidence and joy and now these women are centre stage in getting the good news of the gospel out they are the first witnesses to the risen Christ in a culture where a woman couldn't even give evidence in a court of law because she didn't count but in the world of Jesus women count and in the world of Jesus they are the first witnesses to the resurrection it is a complete reversal from helpless bystanders bystanders to centre stage in God's purposes the resurrection changes everything lives are turned upside down because of the resurrection because Jesus has risen from the dead second group it changes everything for is the guards and I think you've got to have real real sympathy for the guards on that day when they turned up to work it was a routine exercise the guards were told your job for today is to guard a dead body it's a great job isn't it what a great job it's a massive rock put in front of the entrance they seal it with whatever they could find and they are aren't they the picture of human authority and power the guards are the winners they are the ones with the weapons and the capability they are in command they are in control verse 2 behold there was a great earthquake for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it his appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow angels are really popular if you go to a bookshop you'll find lots of books on angels if you go to a waitrose and you cross over the road there's that kind of new

age place and they're massively into angels as I looked in the window yesterday there are angel seminars you can go into London but what you find is that these new angels what they have in common is that they will always give you what you want

Sophie Burnham in you know that little book of when you don't know the little book of angels you know those little books that you can get little books of angels and she says this angels always bring us a calm and peaceful serenity that descends sweetly upon you their message is always don't worry things are working out perfectly you're going to like this well can you see verse 2 this angel comes and he brings a splintering earthquake he tosses the stone to one side and then when he comes he rests on it it's a lovely picture isn't it here's the symbol of the closed door of death the security of the sepulchre and the only respect he pays for it is to sit on it I'm going to wait this afternoon I've seen my two older brothers the one is 8 years older than me the other one is 12 years older than me and we would have fought it was quite unfair even when I was a little boy but how did you know when the fight between your siblings was over think back how did you know that you'd lost when your siblings fought with you it's very simple isn't it they sat on you they sat on you and can you see that's what the angel does it's the only respect he pays for death he sits on it it's a wonderful word and I want you to see what is mind-boggling really look at verse 2 there is an earthquake there's an earth trembling and then can you see in verse 4 the guards the symbol of authority they tremble it's the same root word there's an earthquake in verse 2 and an earthquake in verse 4 and they're having their own earthquake as they see the angel and the angel comes to announce that Jesus is risen and the rocks quake and those whose job it was to keep Jesus from rising they quake all they had to do was keep a dead man dead and with all their power and with all their skill they couldn't do it and instead

[13 : 21] Matthew says can you see it verse 4 it's so brilliantly written they become like dead men their world is turned upside down and so what is the message of the resurrection the living and the powerful ones become like dead men because the dead man has been raised from the dead the living and the powerful ones become like dead men because the dead man is alive the resurrection is about a complete reversal in the values of our world because what we think of as human power as great human power is ultimately utterly powerless death itself so powerful is now transformed into life we don't have time to look at it but verses 11 to 15 there's this remarkable contrast between the joy and the obedience of the women and the way that the guards reluctantly go to the chief priests and tell them what's happened and the response of the priests is to do whatever they can to cover it up and it's a wonderful little vignette really it tells us the resurrection faces you with a fundamental choice either to be like the women this morning and fall at Jesus' feet and worship him or you can pretend for the rest of your life that you are in control and you've got the power and one is the way of deception and death and the other is the way of life the resurrection turns everything upside down not only for the women and for the guards but thirdly and most importantly for Jesus himself chapter 27 he is dead and buried chapter 28 he is alive and kicking and twice the angel says that Jesus has been raised the divine passive the will of God was not to leave him in the grave but Matthew wants to take you far deeper than that so I want you to look at verse 18 and I want you to see how Jesus speaks after he is raised from the dead

Jesus says in verse 18 Jesus came and said that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me it's been given to me now I think it's we're all so familiar with that statement it's very difficult for you and I to understand the scope of what Jesus is saying the word authority is not just naked power but it's the right to decide it's the freedom to act God's own authority is now Jesus' authority because God has given it to him and Jesus says my authority is unrestricted it is unqualified it is unconditional and it is an authority which extends from the farthest reaches of outer space to the smallest subatomic particle of matter Jesus' authority draws under its canopy all men and all women who have ever lived and Jesus' authority does not diminish over time it doesn't weaken with different circumstances in our lives do you see what he says he says all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me over angels over archangels over demons over principalities over might and over thrones over the natural world and over the supernatural world he now has the ability he now has the freedom and he now has the right and that is very very important for you and I if we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ because there is no area and there is no people and there is no culture and there is no single being in all of the universe who lies outside the authority of Jesus Christ

Jesus could not assert with any more clarity is absolute faultless consummate sovereign dominion and rule and command over all things there is nowhere there is no one who is outside of Jesus' authority you can shake your fist today you can say I don't believe you can say I don't want to believe it doesn't make the blindest bit of difference and so here is the man standing before his friends who three or four days earlier was crucified was risen from the dead and he said all authority is mine and I think that's the key point in the whole of the chapter all authority is mine Jesus says Jesus happily receives their worship can you see that verse 9 they worship him verse 17 they worship him

Jesus accepts that he is God and Jesus is conscious that in the resurrection there is a new beginning there is a new moment and that new moment is marked by his universal lordship and if there's any doubt about that he includes himself in the single name of God doesn't he called the father son and holy spirit it's name of God not names and this is how God will be known from now on and so I think when we come to this point we come to the very heart of the gospel and so if you haven't noticed how the Christians in the book of Acts in the immediate months and years after the Lord Jesus how they preached this is how they preached they said you rejected Jesus as worthless and irrelevant but God has raised him from the dead and enthroned him in heaven where he is Lord and Christ let me show you that in a couple of cases because I think it's so important let me show you in Acts chapter 2 ok just click over with me to Acts chapter 2

I'll do the page and what I get in Acts chapter 2 and it's on page 910 Acts chapter 2 page 910 and this is what Peter is saying Peter says that the congregation he says man of Israel hear this Jesus of Nazareth he was a man attested to you by God of mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst you know this this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God you crucified and you killed him by the hands of lawless man God raised him up losing the pangs of death because it was not possible of him to be held by it he speaks about how the resurrection of Jesus Jesus coming back to life it fulfills all that had gone before in the Bible but you see what he's saying he's saying Jesus was nothing more than a common criminal to you but God's assessment is very different and the proof is the resurrection so verse 32 and verse 33 this Jesus raised up and of that we are all witnesses being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the

[20 : 59] Holy Spirit he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing and then he comes to the conclusion verse 36 let all the house of Israel know therefore for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified it's a very interesting sermon he does not say he does not say let all the house of Israel know that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and you can have eternal life and you can get to heaven and be happy forever and you can get out of going to hell and the key significance of the resurrection is that God has made Jesus Lord and Christ and I would say that it's a very different gospel from maybe sometimes the way that I preach the gospel and certainly different from lots of the way churches preach the gospel so the message is often this God loves you very very very much and you are very very important and God wants the very very best for you and that is true or you may hear it that Jesus died an atoning death for your sins please come to

Jesus again that's true but I want you to see this morning that isn't the way that the New Testament preachers the gospel they said to you listen up your view of Jesus is exactly the opposite of God's and the proof is the resurrection what you think is wrong what you've done is wrong the one who you crucified this morning now rules heaven and earth we can pick a half a dozen other sermons in that let me just pick one more for you to show you Acts chapter 4 verse 2 the priests are desperately annoyed because verse 2 they were greatly annoyed they were mad because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead now you go down to the sermon in verse 8 and he says this Peter filled with the Holy Spirit said to them rulers of the people and elders if we are being examined today concerning a good deed we've done to a cripple by what means does this man be healed let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of

Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified you see that again it's so direct you crucify him whom God has raised from the dead by him this man is standing before you well the goodly end of verse 11 this this Jesus is the stone who is rejected by you the builders which has become the cornerstone and there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved so he says to you this morning if you've rejected Jesus

you've missed everything Jesus Christ is God's key to absolutely everything and the proof of that is the resurrection and so Matthew 28 the point is this the resurrection is a great reversal and it's not just that Jesus is alive and stronger than death though that is true wonderful and we praise God for that the key significance in Matthew 28 is that Jesus has been given all authority on earth to him he is now Lord and Christ and that is the great reversal for Jesus so the reversal for women the guards and Jesus and then finally the great reversal for the disciples do you remember where you left them at the cross they are scattered aren't they and they fled with their tails between their legs Peter has denied him Judas has betrayed him and the rest of them are in hiding and they gather again to the mountain of Galilee and the point of verse 16 to 20 of Matthew 28 is that Jesus wants to spell out to his disciples to his church what is the meaning of the resurrection and here is the message of the resurrection if you are a follower of Jesus it is not just life after death it is not just our resurrection but in Matthew's gospel the point of the resurrection is that Jesus transforms transfers his mission to his church that Jesus mission becomes our mission as his people and that is why there is such an emphasis on Galilee in this chapter it was in Galilee where Jesus first launched his mission and that is where he is going to launch the next stage of his ministry when his disciples his people his church will be the main players and so Jesus continues to rescue people but in a different way he says all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me so when you hear those words all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me the big question is what are you going to do with it and the answer is he doesn't say what he's going to do with it at all does he look at verse 18 all authority has been given to me therefore you go and make disciples and the results and the consequence of Jesus authority is spelled out by what his church does on earth and you will know in verses 19 to 20 that there are four commands in English there's go make disciples baptise teach but in the Greek only one of them is a command it's the command to make disciples and the other three the going the baptising the teaching they are all to serve the purpose of making disciples and Jesus complete authority over heaven and earth is exercised through his church as they make disciples and you want to see Jesus in action you want to see what Jesus authority looks like you see it most closely when his church make disciples the whole idea of making disciples is not a bright idea cooked up by the navigators in the 70s it comes directly from who

Jesus is the word disciple is a precious word isn't it what does the word disciple mean it's really really simple a disciple means primarily a learner and when you become a Jesus you become a lifelong learner and you never reach a stage when you've arrived you never reach a stage as a Christian where you've got nothing to learn following Jesus ought to make you more curious as a human being and the second part of Jesus being a disciple first of all it's being a learner and then secondly it's being a follower and that describes our personal attachment to the Lord Jesus we're not learning for the sake of learning and the life of a disciple is to be different from every kind of life because our allegiance is to Jesus that we love him and we want to know him and his ways it's not primarily an intellectual assignment opening up our kind of minds but it is opening up of every area of life as he hope opens up his life to us and

[28 : 23] Jesus does not command us to be disciples but to make disciples of all nations and that's terribly important there's lots of confusion about what the role of the church is and what the work of the church is what is our central purpose our central purpose is as disciple of Christ is to make disciples of the nations it's to do this it's to call on you if you are not a follower and a learner of the Lord Jesus Christ it is to call on you to change your allegiance today to call on him and to recognise that the one that you thought was irrelevant to your life is Lord and Christ he is boss and it's to call on you to recognise that Jesus Christ whom you thought well it's nice to go to church on Easter Sunday morning and maybe learn about him he is the one who has all authority in heaven on earth Jesus doesn't spell out for his church how we are to do that but he does tell us three things that it will involve going and so for us as a church if we are going to follow this mandate of Jesus we are going to constantly have to be stirring ourselves up from our comfort zone and it will be a bother to us as a church family and if we make it a priority in our lives to see people make disciples it will mean that we will have to give ourselves secondly it will mean baptising which is the way people come to identify with the local body of

Christ how they enter the church you cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ outside the church it's absolute madness to think you can do that in fact it's impossible to do that and Jesus is very clearly saying here that discipleship is a church activity and you are not a disciple unless you are bound up

with other disciples and thirdly it will involve teaching you to observe all that I commanded you and so it's not the aim that you'll be kind of a master of biblical theology but that our lives will be recognisably different by who we follow and what we know as a comprehensiveness is in all things we have to teach and the key to those all things all those things are to lead to that main mission that Jesus left for us of making disciples of the nations and the book finishes with this enormous encouragement isn't it an enormous encouragement from the risen Jesus whom belongs all authority that when we go along with his mission he says I will be with you till the end of the age gospel of

Matthew so beautifully written it begins with Emmanuel God with us and it finishes with the risen Christ saying I am with you to the end of the age and Jesus is not saying I'm about to head up my way to heaven leaving you to do all the work Jesus says to us as a church family I am deeply invested I am promising my personal companionship with you every day so it doesn't matter what circumstances you are in as a disciple of Jesus it doesn't matter whether you feel it or not he is with you and his presence is not intermittent in success or in failure in joy or in sorrow in youth or in old age he will never leave the disciple of Christ alone and so in conclusion the question for us as a church is how are we on board with his mission because the resurrection of Jesus

Christ changes everything and if you are somebody who has stumbled in here this morning as a visitor we want to say you are very very welcome but have you realised as we have to realise that it was my sin I crucified Jesus Christ I thought he was irrelevant I thought he didn't matter I thought he was a footnote in history but God has raised him from the dead and he is Lord and Christ and so bend your stubborn knee and bow before him because Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth and one day you will meet him and one day I will meet him and on that day his authority will be clearly seen and on that day you may bow your knee then but it will be too late and so the message of resurrection

Sunday is praise the Lord he is risen he is risen indeed but make sure you submit to him and make sure you bow before him and if you do so he will never leave you and he will never forsake you let's pray Thank you.