

Text: Matthew 28:1-20

Section 1

So today we come to the Resurrection, undoubtedly the most important event in all of Scripture. Like most events of importance in redemptive history, this one was foretold before it occurred. Last week we mentioned several occasions on which Jesus predicted His death and resurrection.

18The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" **19**Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." **20**The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" **21**But He was speaking of the temple of His body. **22**So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken. (John 2:18-22)

38Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." **39**But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; **40**for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:38-40)

17"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. **18**"No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again This commandment I received from My Father." (John 10:17-18)

Not only did Jesus predict it Himself, the Resurrection was also predicted in the Old Testament.

10For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. (Psalm 16:10)

The Resurrection is of paramount importance to the Gospel. Christ not only took our sins upon Himself when He was crucified, He also promised that believers would rise again to everlasting life. If Christ did not Himself rise, however, on what basis could His followers expect to do so? Paul speaks at length about the importance of the Resurrection in this regard.

12Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? **13**But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; **14**and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. **15**Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. **16**For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; **17**and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. **18**Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. **19**If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. **20**But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. **21**For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. **22**For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. **23**But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, **24**then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. **25**For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. **26**The last enemy that will be abolished is death. (1 Corinthians 15:12-26)

The centrality of the Resurrection must be acknowledged when both presenting and believing the Gospel, as Paul indicated.

1Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, **2**by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. **3**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4**and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

9that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; **10**for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. **11**For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." **12**For there is no

distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; 13for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:9-13)

Now, let us move on to Matthew's account of the Resurrection.

Section 2

1Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. 2And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. 5The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. 6"He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. 7"Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you." 8And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. 9And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. 10Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me." (Matthew 28:1-10)

So, we see that the women, not the disciples, were the first to visit the tomb, and were therefore honored by being the first to witness the resurrected Christ. Why did the women go first? Because the disciples abandoned Him at Gethsemane. Only John returned to witness the Crucifixion along with the women.

56"But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets." Then all the disciples left Him and fled. (Matthew 26:56)

25Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household. (John 19:25-27)

Please understand that for God to reveal His resurrected Son first to women defied the conventions of the day. The testimony and perhaps even the intelligence of women were considered inferior to that of men. Still, the women, although they mistakenly believed that Jesus would still be dead (in spite of His prophecies to the contrary), loved Him enough to show up, and were, again, honored by being the first to see Him. Furthermore, this demonstrates again that God does not operate according to human conventions or expectations.

27but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29so that no man may boast before God. (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

**8"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.
9"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)**

Section 3

11Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. 12And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' 14"And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble." 15And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day. (Matthew 28:11-15)

Remember, the chief priests understood that Jesus predicted His resurrection.

62Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, 63and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.' 64"Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first." 65Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how." 66And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone. (Matthew 27:62-66)

Yet, when presented with incontrovertible evidence to that fact by the soldiers, they still refused to believe. I cannot help but think of Paul's description of the consequences of unbelief in Romans 1.

18For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Romans 1:18-21)

Let us assume for a moment, giving the soldiers the "benefit of the doubt," that they were prepared to believe after witnessing what they did. Even if this were the case, they were prevented from doing so by the religious leaders, who bribed them with "hush money" and protection of their lives. The Word was quickly taken away from their hearts, as the parable states, but **woe** to those that would actively take steps to prevent anyone from hearing or believing the Gospel.

13"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. (Matthew 23:13)

11"Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. 12"Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. (Luke 8:11-12)

Section 4

16But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)

Jesus is LORD, whether or not we acknowledge Him as such. He declared here that *All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.* Jesus' reign is not only a future reality. He is, at this moment seated at the Father's right hand, and ruling over all of creation.

1God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. 5For to which of the angels did He ever say,

**"YOU ARE MY SON,
TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"?**

And again,

"I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM

AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"? 6And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says,

"AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM." 7And of the angels He says,

"WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS,

AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE." 8But of the Son He says,

"YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER,

AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.

9"YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS;

THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU

WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS." 10And,

"YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH,

AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;

11THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN;

AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT,

12AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP;

LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED

BUT YOU ARE THE SAME,

AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END." 13But to which of the angels has He ever said,

"SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES

A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET"? 14Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:1-14)

As Lord, as Master of all of creation and specifically of those that have bowed the knee to Him and received salvation, He has commanded that His followers *make disciples of all the nations*. Again, He said *disciples*, not converts, not professions of faith, not sinner's prayers, and not church memberships. He said *disciples*. How many professed Christians are like the second and third groups in the Parable of the Sower, believing that their shallow and abortive faith will get them to Heaven, when in reality the Word is not in their hearts, and neither is the Holy Spirit? We as believers must be about the business of making sure those to whom we witness are truly *disciples*, firmly rooted in deep soil, able to resist the Devil and all the troubles of this life, and enduring to the end.

4When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: **5**"The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. **6**"Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. **7**"Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. **8**"Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." **9**His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. **10**And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that **SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND**. **11**"Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. **12**"Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. **13**"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. **14**"The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. **15**"But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. (Luke 8:4-15)

13"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Matthew 24:13)

Being disciples means learning and studying His Word, moving from "milk" to "solid food." The author of Hebrews rebuked his readers for not progressing in their knowledge of the Word.

11Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. **12**For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. **13**For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. **14**But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (Hebrews 5:11-14)

Doing God's will is an important mark of a true believer. How do we know God's will? By reading His Word. That's why it is vital that we move from "milk" to "solid food." As Jesus warned, not everyone that professes Christ is truly saved. Antinomianism, or lawlessness, has been a temptation of Christians for 2,000 years, and is widely present in the Church today. Yes, we are under Grace and not under Law, but the Law is still instructive in revealing God's will for our lives and behavior, and professed Christians that behave in defiance of its principles are at best "backsliders," and at worst unbelievers.

15"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16**"You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? **17**"So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. **18**"A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. **19**"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20**"So then, you will know them by their fruits. **21**"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. **22**"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' **23**"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; **DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.**' (Matthew 7:15-23)

Because of the reality of false professions, Paul warns us to make sure we are true believers.

5Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5)

How do we make sure? We look at our "fruits." Consider the following list: do you find in yourself the fruits of the flesh, or those of the Spirit? I pray that each of us finds the latter group. If not, repent and believe, and receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit!

19Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20**idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, **21**envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23**gentleness, self-control; against such

things there is no law. 24Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:19-25)