

He Has Risen!

(All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me)

Matthew 28:1-20

Key Verse: 28:18 “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’”

Happy Easter! Happy Resurrection! Today, we want to celebrate Easter by studying the last chapter of Matthew’s gospel. In this chapter, we will see Resurrected Jesus, Victorious Jesus. Why do we start at the very end of the book, you may ask? Well, if we know who the winner is, then when we read from the beginning we are confident in the midst of the battles. Similarly, when we read Matthew’s gospel with the end in mind, we will see conflicts between the disciples versus Jesus; the death of Jesus, the king of the Jews by the Jewish leaders; the rebellion of sinful people against a loving God; and ultimately the greatest conflict of Jesus against the destroyer, Satan.

Today, we will see how Jesus who has RISEN and is ALL powerful with all AUTHORITY reigns in victory. The words, “all authority” may be a bitter and scary pill to swallow. Some say that absolute authority corrupts absolutely. However, Jesus who has received all authority through his death and resurrection, knows how to use his authority. He uses his authority and power to save all peoples of all nations. And when we trust his authority that comes through his resurrection, we experience his peace and have his authority to make disciples in all circumstances that we face each day. Through this message, let us celebrate Easter joyfully by newly accepting Jesus’ resurrection and authority.

1. He has risen! (1-17)

Firstly, the message of Jesus’ resurrection to the women. Look at 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.” Who were these women? They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. They had watched Jesus crucified and buried from a distance (27:55-56, 61). After the Sabbath, at dawn on Sunday, they went to the tomb. In their grief, they wanted to anoint Jesus’ dead body with spices. Upon their arrival, however, they experienced the shock of their lives.

Look at verses 2-4. “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. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.” What a dramatic event! They saw a violent earthquake, an angel blinding like lightning; and hardened soldiers so scared that they passed out.

The angel began speaking as if he had been waiting for the women. Look at verses 5-7 carefully. Do you see the extra quotation marks in verse 7? The angel is quoting Jesus’ words from Matthew 26:32. Considering this, let’s read them together. “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 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.”

Let’s first think about the angel’s words to the women. The angel said, “Do not be afraid! I am an angel. I am a good guy!” Next the angel told them why they were afraid saying, “for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.” The women had many reasons to be terrified: they just experienced an earthquake and an angel. However, the real reason for their fear was that Jesus was missing. Even though they were faithful and courageous, they were still bound in their natural thinking: Jesus died, Jesus was buried in this tomb, so Jesus’ dead body should be in the tomb. If it were not in the tomb, then who stole it? When the unnatural happened, they were terribly afraid. They could not even begin to think that Jesus had risen from the dead.

How did the angel help them? He said, “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.” He told them clearly. Jesus is not dead and his body is not stolen. He has risen from the dead. And he pointed to the physical proof. Come and see the place where he lay. However, to our scientific and logical minds, the absence of his body is not enough proof of his resurrection. The key point of the angel’s words is “just as he said.” The angel reminded them that Jesus had risen, just as he had said. Jesus was faithful to keep his words. If they could trust Jesus and his words in the past, they could believe- he will rise again from the dead, even if it were beyond their experience and understanding. How can we believe that he has risen from the dead? One who trusts in Jesus can accept the supernatural message, “He has risen.” One who trusts Jesus’ words can come out of the natural world and soar into God’s supernatural world. Then experience and understanding follow. If Jesus was crucified according to his words (16:21, 17:22-23 and 20:18-19), then wouldn’t he be raised just as he said? Take a moment to think: Has Jesus been trust-worthy to you? Have you experienced the truthfulness of even one of his promises? If so can you believe the supernatural- He has risen, just as he said? When the women renewed their personal faith in Jesus, they could also accept the angel’s message of Jesus’ resurrection just as he said. And their fear began to melt.

Now let’s move to Jesus’ instructions to his disciples through the women. The angel said to the women, “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.’ I have told you.” He did not say to his disciples, “Repent of your sins!” Instead, his instruction to them was simple: “I have risen from the dead. See you in Galilee!” Why did Jesus want them to meet him in Galilee? Again it was to remind them of his words of promise. During the Last Supper, Jesus predicted that all of them would be scattered while he would be arrested and crucified (26:31). He also said, “But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee (26:32).” Instead of remaining in guilt and shame in their failure, they were to trust that Jesus had risen, and go to meet this resurrected Jesus, just as he said. But what If Jesus remained dead? Then the disciples would have remained overwhelmed by guilt and sorrow. Their last memory with Jesus was running away and abandoning him! But Jesus has risen from the dead. And because he has risen, he forgives all our sins and failures. The Risen Jesus graciously restores us to him, to be with him again in Galilee.

After meeting the angel of the Lord, what did the women do? Look at verse 8. “So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.”

Now look at verses 9-10. “Suddenly Jesus met them, ‘Greetings,’ he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’” What a surprise that the Risen Christ met them in person. He was not dead. He had indeed risen, with a body they could physically see and clasp. He wasn’t a ghost or their imagination. When they saw him, how did they respond? They fell at his feet, clutched them and worshiped him. Why did they worship him? Because Jesus was no longer a rabbi or friend, but God himself. Jesus died, his body broken and his blood poured out. But here Jesus was, more glorious and real than ever! Who but God can rise from the dead? Who but God can laugh at death and Satan and the grave? Praise Jesus who is God himself! Praise Jesus who has defeated the grave and defeated Satan! Praise Jesus who has risen! And praise Risen Jesus who alone deserves our worship! May each one of us this Easter time meet and worship Risen Jesus as of first importance.

As they worshiped Risen Jesus, fear was expelled from their hearts. Now the women had two testimonies about Jesus’ resurrection: that of the angel and of the Risen Jesus. They ran freely and joyfully to his disciples, Jesus’ brothers.

Secondly, the disciples’ response. Look at verses 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.” When the disciples heard, though they had many weaknesses and flaws, they obeyed. Though some of them doubted, they still had spiritual minds to see Jesus as God and willing hearts to worship Him as God. How good it is for us to come to Jesus, even with our doubts, and worship him. He accepts us as we are and will teach us who he is when we come to him.

Furthermore, meeting resurrected Jesus not only brought resolution to their doubts, but also resolved their conflict with him. As they followed Jesus, they had their own glorious expectations from him and for themselves. Peter had rebuked Jesus and Jesus rebuked Peter back calling him Satan. While Jesus kept predicting his suffering and resurrection, they argued who was the greatest. They acted as if they had never heard Jesus’ words of suffering. They knew Jesus’ suffering and death would mean their own suffering and death. So they refused to submit to Jesus’ way. So when Jesus was crucified, they scattered. But when Jesus rose again, this very conflict was resolved. They realized that Jesus’ way was right. He had been killed but now he had gloriously Risen! He was the Risen God who defeated death and was the true King. Now they worshiped him joyfully. Their worship was their submission of themselves to Jesus, their King, and their acceptance of his way as God’s way, which was higher and greater than theirs.

Thirdly, the opposite response of the Jewish religious leaders. Verse 11 states that some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. How did they respond? Look at verse 12. “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 sleeping.’ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.’”

These religious leaders had had a huge conflict with Jesus. Jesus threatened their authority so they crucified him with the help of the Roman governor. By crucifying him they depicted Jesus as cursed by God according to Moses' Law (Dt 21:22-23). They seemed successful in getting rid of Jesus, his teachings, and his followers with one blow. Three days later, however, when they heard everything that had happened, they realized that they were in the wrong. They knew that they had killed the Son of God, but God raised him from the dead. But did they repent? No! In order to cover up their sins, they bribed the guards and made them lie. They were murderers and liars just like their father Satan.

Thus far, we have heard about the message of Jesus' resurrection delivered to the women, to his disciples and to the religious leaders, and their responses. Today the Apostle Matthew delivers the same message of Jesus' resurrection to each one of us. How will you respond to Jesus and the message of his resurrection? Will you live in rebellion or will you bow down and worship Jesus?

2. Jesus' authority (18-20)

As his disciples worshiped him, what did Jesus do? He didn't shy away from their worship; he accepted their worship as God. During their worship, what did Jesus say? Look at verses 18-20. **"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.'"** I want to break these verses into three parts.

Firstly, Jesus came to them. I imagine he came to them with his arms wide open showing them his nail pierced hands. Jesus did not come to them like the Lord God on Mount Sinai in thick clouds, lightning and thunder, which brought fear of judgment. Savior King Jesus confirmed they were his own beloved people, his new covenant people, that he sealed with his own blood for the forgiveness of their sins. The same Savior King is coming to you today!

Secondly, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Jesus didn't say, "Happy Resurrection!" He declared to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." What did Jesus mean by this?

When he was crucified on the cross, Jesus seemed to have no authority; he looked as if he were the victim of political and religious authorities of the earth, the ultimate victim of Satan. But he rose from the grave. His resurrection brought forth a complete reversal. The religious leaders could not keep Christ in the grave. Satan and death could not keep Christ in the grave. When he rose again, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." By whom? Of course by God the Father!

In his first message on Pentecost, Apostle Peter said, **"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."** (Ac 2:36) Apostle Paul also tells us what God did for Jesus who had obeyed him to the point of death, **"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above**

every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Php 2:9-11)

In my introduction, I said that Jesus’ declaration of “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” is not easy to swallow. No one wants to give up his or her own authority, power, control and freedom. While meditating on verse 18, I felt that the Holy Spirit was speaking to me, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given *to Jesus!*” Hebrews 2:10 states that God made Jesus perfect to be the pioneer of our salvation through what he suffered so that he can bring many sons and daughters to glory. Jesus has been made perfect to receive authority from God the Father as Lord and Messiah and to save sinners like us according to God’s good and perfect will.

While living in this fallen world, we fight for control over our lives and our circumstances. We often feel conflict within as the pandemic virus sweeps our world. Our jobs, our health, and even when we can leave our house seem completely out of our control. We experience conflict with others as we seek to exert authority over others or others exert authority over us. Some of us must have suffered under the ill-practiced authority of their parents, bosses, teachers and spouses. Ultimately, we have suffered under the authority of the red dragon, Satan, who causes us to sin, cuts us off from God, and accuses us (Revelations 12-13). For a long time, I lived with a victim’s mentality caused by my angry father and by abusive teachers. I thought that God is an angry and authoritarian God even if I recited John 3:16 hundreds of times. As I read verse 18 first, I didn’t like it. However, I found that Jesus did not use his authority to punish others. Jesus was forsaken by God in my place. Jesus already made the new covenant with me in his blood. So I could trust in Him. I believe that he never abuses his authority and I believe that he will use his authority correctly. I believe he lovingly holds my life, my wife’s, our family, and our nation during these unprecedented times. As I believed, I began to have deep peace.

Some of us might struggle to trust God fully in certain areas of our lives, like finances, or how we spend our time, our marriage, our children, or our future. But are you willing to entrust to Jesus all of your authority, power and autonomy? Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China said, “Christ is either Lord of all, or he is not Lord at all.” Unless we give Jesus all authority and power in every aspect of our lives we will always live in conflict with him. However, when Christ is Lord of all, we live a life of true freedom, hope and excitement. We find our meaning, our purpose, and our identity in him. We are now in Jesus’ good hands! Do you trust in Jesus? Do you believe that Jesus is able to use all authority in heaven and on earth given to him for your good, for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his good purpose (Ro 8:28)?

Now let’s see how Jesus is going to use his authority. Matthew’s gospel doesn’t show the full picture of it like the book of Revelation.

Thirdly, Jesus’ Great Commission. Let’s read verses 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.”** How did Jesus use his authority? He did not use

his authority right away to destroy those who had crucified him or refused to submit to him. Instead, he has used his authority to love and to save all nations. Jesus wants all people of all nations to be blessed, just as God had promised to Abraham (Gen 12:3; Gal 3:7-9). How have all people been blessed? When his apostles went to them, they were blessed to hear the gospel and be saved. Now when we (his church) go out and make disciples of all nations, they will be blessed.

Who then is a true disciple? It is the one who is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is the one who obeys and puts into practice everything Jesus has commanded. A true disciple of Jesus is the one who is and lives under the authority of King Jesus. A true disciple of Jesus has the name of the Father and of the Son in his or her heart and daily life. Such a person is blessed to become a citizen of his kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. Jesus promises to both his apostles and his kingdom people saying, "Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." He promises that he is always with us, he will never abandon us, and is with us to the very end of the age.

Today, we learned how to celebrate Easter. May God bless each of us to newly accept Jesus' resurrection and authority. May God bless you to live as Jesus' disciples who have received the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit into your hearts. May your life be a life that obeys everything Jesus has commanded with the full assurance that Jesus is with us always. May God use us (his church) to continue making Jesus' disciples of all nations, even in these difficult times, until Jesus comes again.