



Matthew 28

Matthew 28
Tape #8028
By Chuck Smith

Matthew's gospel in chapter twenty-eight as tonight we close out the gospel according to Matthew.

It was the end of the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week (28:1),

so early Sunday morning before dawn,

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (28:1)

and the other gospels tell us that the other Mary was Mary, the mother of James,

they came to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it (28:1,2).

Now as we read the four gospel accounts of this resurrection morning, there does seem to be certain discrepancies in the accounts. They do not all follow in exact, precise order or even in the recording of the events. This to me, of course, is good proof that there wasn't collusion on the part of the gospel writers. They didn't all get together and agree this is what we will say. But they all recorded the events from their perspective. From Matthew's perspective, he was there. He was a part of the whole procedure.

Mark was just a child, and Mark's gospel, they feel, was garnered by Mark's listening to Peter's account. So basically, it is accepted that in Mark's gospel, you have a view of Peter's viewpoint of the whole event. It is thought that perhaps Mark was the little boy that was in the garden when Jesus was arrested and someone grabbed him and he just wriggled free, left his coat and ran naked from the garden. Mark is the only one that records that and they say he records it because that was his own personal experience and he was throwing that into his gospel, it's the only gospel that records this young boy's excitement that night.

Luke, of course, came along later. He began to journey with Paul. It is felt that Luke, being a physician, a professional man, came to Jerusalem to interview personally many of the principals who were involved in the story. It is from Luke that we get great insight into Mary and the announcement of the angels to Mary concerning the fact that she was to bear the Messiah. Luke tells us concerning Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, Zacharias, his father, and it is thought that Luke garnered his information from personal interviews with those who were involved.

John wrote many years later. He left out many of the events that were recorded by the other three gospel writers for, of course, he was familiar with what they had written and probably felt that there was no need to repeat it again. And so John gives us a different slant, and we see the life of Christ from a different perspective from John and the majority of John's gospel is relating to just the last few weeks of the life of Jesus.

So that they each one give us their own particular slant as they sought either through the eyes of Peter, or as with Luke through the eyes of those that he interviewed, or with Matthew through his personal experience, and John through personal experience, writing later and seeking not to duplicate a lot which had already been written. So when you read the four accounts of the resurrection of Jesus, as there seems to be some discrepancy in the stories as far as the principals who were there; as I mentioned here it says Mary Magdalene and the other Mary; both Luke and Mark tell us that it was Mary, the mother of James; Mark adds that Salome was also with them; John tells us that Joanna was with them; and then they mention also the other women. So I tried to put together a possible scenario for you that would harmonize the various accounts and get rid of the seeming discrepancies. Matthew has Mary Magdalene and the other Mary coming to the tomb. Mark adds the name Salome to the two. Luke speaks of the women and he speaks of Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James.

So early in the morning while it is still dark, these three women make their way toward the tomb. The other women perhaps coming from another part of the city will also be coming to the tomb. The purpose is to get to the body of Jesus. As you remember, He was crucified on the day before the sabbath, and there was a lot of hurry up procedures in taking Him from the cross, getting Him buried before the sabbath day began.

So they didn't have a real opportunity to put the spices and all on His body and so it seems that their desire was to come and to wrap spices in the linens and just probably for the last time, just touch His body, though now they figured it was already lifeless and stiff. So the three women making their way towards the tomb.

It could be that Mary Magdalene was impatient, in a hurry to get there and went on ahead. It's quite common when people are walking together for one to walk ahead. If you ever walk with my daughter Cheryl, it's hard to keep up with her and I often find her quite a ways ahead. And it is quite possible that Mary Magdalene, in her anxiety to get there, hurried ahead of the others. When she came to the tomb, she saw that the stone was rolled away and she immediately surmised that they had moved the body of Jesus. And this disturbed her. And so rather than waiting for the other ladies to arrive, she went running off to where Peter and John were staying to inform Peter and John that the stone was rolled away from the tomb and she didn't bother to examine, she just ran to let them know of this change in events.

At that point, Peter and John came running to the tomb. But in the meantime, the other two ladies, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, and perhaps the other women coming from another part of the city, arrived at the tomb and there they saw angels who were there and who said unto them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead" (Luke 24:5)? "He is not here, He is risen. Come and see the place where the Lord lay" (Matthew 28:6), and then "go and tell His disciples that He is risen and He will meet them in Galilee" (Matthew 28:7). So these ladies went off to inform the disciples of the angelic message and in the meantime, and after they had left, Peter and John arrived, they saw the stone rolled away. John stood on the outside but Peter rushed in and then John looked in and they saw the linen clothes that Jesus was wrapped in and they saw the napkin that was about His head, it was folded and in a separate place by itself. They went off, Peter wondering what all the significance was, but John in his heart just believing the Lord is risen.

Then Mary finally gets back to the tomb, probably a little breathless, she had run to tell Peter and John, they came running to the tomb, she couldn't keep up with them, and so she arrives back at the tomb and this time, she looks in and she sees an angel who asks her the question, Woman, why are you crying like that? And she answered, Because they have taken away my Lord and I don't know where they have laid it, where they have put Him. So she turned away and she saw Jesus standing there but in the darkness and with her eyes filled with tears, she didn't recognize Him. But she thought that perhaps he was the gardener. He asked her the same question, Woman, why are you crying like that? And she said, If you'll just tell me where you've taken Him, I will carry Him away. And Jesus revealed Himself and said, Oh Mary. She screamed, Rabboni! She came and got a death grip on Him and He said, Mary, don't cling to Me, it's translated "Touch me not" but in reality, Don't cling to me but go and tell Peter and John that I am risen. And the other disciples. So Mary was sent to bring the news directly from Jesus that He had appeared to her that He was risen (John 20:13-18).

Now Mary went off to let the disciples know but in the meantime, Jesus then appeared to the other women as they were on their way to let the disciples know. And when they saw Jesus, they came and held Him by the fist. And He commanded them to go and tell the disciples that He was risen indeed.

And so looking at the scenario from that perspective, you get a harmonizing of the four accounts of that resurrection morning, which if you read them and put them together, there seems to be discrepancies but as I mentioned, the discrepancies are easily solved if you just try and figure the order of these events. And thus you have each one adding little special insights from their perspective.

There was a great earthquake, we are told in verse two. "And the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it." We remember that the day that Jesus was crucified, that there was a great earthquake. And the rocks were torn and that was one of the supernatural phenomena that took place at His crucifixion. It is quite possible that this was a great after shock of the original quake taking place three days later. The result, of course, was the angel rolling the stone away from the door of the sepulchre, not to let Jesus out, but to let the disciples in so that they might indeed see that the tomb was empty, that the Lord had risen. Concerning the angel,

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow (28:3):

Here is this supernatural being, this angel, rolling away the stone.

And the guards were shaking for fear of him, and lay there like dead men (28:4).

Afraid of him, just lying there like they were dead, hoping that he would think they were dead perhaps. But can you imagine, an angel whose face was like lightning, just the brilliance flashing, the white garment, rolling back the stone.

The guards were there at the request of the Jews. Remember that when Jesus was entombed, they came to Pilate and they said, This fellow talked about His resurrection. So we want you to seal the tomb and put a guard on duty lest maybe the disciples come and steal the body and make up some story and it will really turn out disastrous. Pilate said, You have your own guards, you make it as sure as you can. He would not dispatch the Roman soldiers to this task but let them put their own guard there.

So the angel [verse five] then answered and said unto the women (28:5)

which would probably be just Mary, the mother of James, and Salome,

Fear not: for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come and see the place where the Lord lay (28:5,6).

I know who you're looking for. You're looking for Jesus who was crucified. But He's not here. He is risen, and then as he said, I think that was sort of a just what are you expecting? He said He would do it. And it's sort of a put down in a way because of their unbelief in His word. And he said,

Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goes before you into Galilee; and there you will see him: and, I have told you (28:7).

It's more or less, Go, I've told you, get going. And He's going to meet you in Galilee. We do know that that afternoon, Jesus met with Peter. And we are not told much concerning that meeting but I would imagine that it was one of those beautiful kinds of just letting Peter know that he was forgiven, that the Lord understood, that the Lord knew that he was going to deny Him, and there were no hard feelings, there was just forgiveness and there was understanding. The Bible says that He understands our frame, He knows we're but dust. And it's wonderful to know that the Lord is very understanding concerning our weaknesses. He said to Peter, Peter, the spirit indeed is willing but your flesh is weak. And He understands our frame, He knows we're but dust. Our problem is that we don't understand our frame, and we don't know we're dust, we often think we are stronger than we really are. And that is why we are so often disappointed with ourselves. But Jesus had this meeting with Peter and I think that there was just a lot of forgiveness and assurances to Peter that afternoon.

Later on in the afternoon, He joined the two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus. And then He, the disciples, the ten of them were gathered and the two came running back from Emmaus to Jerusalem, wanting to tell the others that they had seen Jesus, and when they met, they said, Peter saw Him too. And Mary, some of the women, they've seen Him. And while they were there together, the ten of them, suddenly Jesus appeared in the midst saying, Peace. Thomas happened to be absent and later when he was told these stories, he said, I can't believe until I see it for myself. So about a week later, Jesus appeared again and this time, Thomas was present and so he then avowed his faith of believing, Lord I believe. But then they were to go up to Galilee where Jesus have promised that He would meet them at the Galilee. And this is when they had gone up and Jesus hadn't shown up immediately, and Peter then said, I'm going fishing and six others said, We'll go with you. And they fished all night and caught nothing, last chapter of John's gospel.

Then they came back again to Jerusalem. And they were with Jesus on the mount of Olives near Bethany when He ascended into heaven. So for a forty-day period, both around Jerusalem and then later up in the Galilee, to groups, to individuals, and to a large multitude of 500, Jesus was appearing over this period of time. Not constantly with them, but suddenly appearing to them. When He appeared to them the week after the resurrection--when Thomas was present, he would express his doubts that I will not believe until I can put my finger into His hand and thrust my hand into His side--when Jesus appeared to them, He then said, He turned to Thomas, said, Okay, Thomas, you wanted to, go ahead and put your finger here in My hand. Go ahead, touch My side. See if it isn't Me. And Thomas cried, My Lord and my God. And then Jesus said, Blessed are they who see and believe, but more blessed are they who believe without seeing.

The interesting thing is that when Thomas was saying I won't believe unless I can put my finger, Jesus was there. He heard Thomas' expressions of doubt. That's why, and He demonstrated the fact, when He saw Thomas, Okay Thomas, you want to do it, go ahead. And it was a manifestation of the fact that Jesus was

there with them. It seems that Thomas wasn't the only one doubting, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were rebuked by Jesus for their doubting. In fact, they had received the message of the ladies that they had seen Jesus.

But here they were on their way to Emmaus and they were downcast and just walking along, just down in the dumps, and Jesus approached them and said, Hey fellows, what's wrong that you seem to be so sad as you're walking along? They said, Are you a stranger around here, you don't know what's been going on? What are you talking about? Well, there was a man by the name of Jesus, He was from Nazareth, and He went around doing good, and we had hoped in Him for the salvation of Israel but they crucified Him three days ago. This is the third day. Some of the women of our company said that they saw Him this morning but, but they were doubtful of the women's story. And so Jesus began to open the scriptures to them, but He rebuked them, O slow of heart to believe (Luke 24:13-25). He rebuked them for their doubting.

So for forty days, He was appearing. Suddenly, without forewarning, He would be there in the midst. I think that His purpose was to get them accustomed to the realization that He was with them as He said He would be. He was with them even though they could not see Him, to get them aware of the fact that the Lord is here.

He had said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be there in the midst" (Matthew 18:20). And so it was a little training session during this forty days, as He was suddenly appearing and showing Himself, and it was getting them acclimated to the realization that the Lord is here, even though we can't see Him. That's exactly the kind of consciousness that He wants us to have. He wants us to be conscious of His presence, though we may not see Him with our physical eyes, to become accustomed to the fact that the Lord is with His people. The Lord is with us tonight. He is here, He wants us to be aware of that. And I think one of our great problems is the lack of the consciousness of the presence of the Lord with us. I think that if we could only develop that kind of consciousness that the Lord is here with us, He is with us in every situation, He knows our doubts and our misgivings, and we need to become aware and conscious of the Lord's presence.

So He was instructing them that He will meet them in the Galilee.

And as they went to tell his disciples [these women], behold, Jesus met them, and said, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him (28:9).

It's interesting to Mary Magdalene, He said, Don't touch Me or don't cling to Me, but here the women are holding on to His feet and worshipping Him.

Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go and tell my brothers that they go into Galilee, and there they will see me. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch (28:10,11)

Those men who were guards, who were placed there to guard the tomb.

They came into the city (28:11),

The tomb evidently was outside of the city, as was the place of the crucifixion. We know that the place of the crucifixion was outside of the city, so was the place of entombment. And it is revealed here they came into the city.

and they showed unto the chief priests all of the things that were done. [They related their story.] And when the chief priests assembled the elders together, they took counsel, and they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, And they said, We want you to pass around the story that, His disciples came at night, and stole the body while you were asleep (28:11-13).

They bribed them to tell this lie, We fell asleep on duty. Now the punishment for that should have been death. If you were a guard and your prisoner escaped as a result of your negligence, you were put to death. So they, however, bribed them and told them to pass along this story that the disciples came and stole the body and they said,

If the governor happens to hear about this, we will persuade him, and we will secure you (28:14).

So this story comes back to Pilate, don't worry, we'll cover for you, we'll take care of you.

So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews unto this day (28:15).

In other words, that became the accepted story among the Jews that the disciples stole the body of Jesus.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had designated that they should meet him. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted (28:16,17).

This is probably a reference to Thomas. Wouldn't it be tragic to pick up the title of Doubting Thomas? I mean, to be known for your doubts. Let that be the special earmark by which you are designated.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth (28:18).

"God has put all things in subjection," the scripture says, "unto Him" (Hebrews 2:8). All power has been given to Him. We are told that Jesus is the creator, the creator of the universe. He not only is the creator of the universe, He is the sustainer of the universe. "By Him all things are held together or consist" (Colossians 1:17), or cohere, He's the cohesive force, holding the whole material world from disintegrating.

Now it is interesting, and as we pointed out this morning, in the nucleus of an atom, these protons are tightly clustered but it is the natural characteristic of protons to repel. Like poles repel. We have learned how to bombard the nucleus of an atom with slow moving neutrons that disturb and upset the molecular balance of the atom, causing these atomic explosions. The tremendous energy and power that is released when the atoms act according to their natural characteristics, the positive charges being upset so that they do repel each other, and as they repel this tremendous blast of energy. Jesus is holding the material world together. One day, He's going to relax. Peter tells us that this whole universe is going to go up. That it's going to be dissolved. It will melt with a fervent heat. One big gigantic atomic explosion, the big bang is not past, it's future. It's going to happen. When the Lord releases the atoms and the protons repel each other, and the whole universe dissolves, melting with a fervent heat, and God then to create a new heaven and a new earth. What it would be like, we really don't know. We just have to wait and find out. But "All power," He said, "is given to me in heaven and in earth." Awesome. We can't possibly even imagine the scope of this statement. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." Creative powers. Powers in the material universe that are greater than anything that man knows or understands. But not only in the physical, in heaven and in earth. So the powers of the spirit realm, the heavenly realm, and all principalities and powers and all subject unto Him. Power over it all. And thus, He said to them,

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations (28:19),

Their task, their commission of the Lord was to go out into the world "and teach all nations," *teaching them to observe the things that I have commanded you (28:20):*

So the mission of the church is to carry the message of Jesus to the world, to carry to them the teachings which basically summed up is that the spirit realm is far superior to the physical realm. That which belongs to the physical realm is in the realm of death. The spirit realm is life. The things of the material, physical realm create strife, anxiety, fear, worry, misery, uncertainty, all of these things grow out of the desires that we have for physical things. Wars, strivings. The realm of the spirit is marked by love, it's filled with joy, its effect is peace; that it is much better, far superior to live after the spirit because that's the life of peace and joy and love, rather than after the flesh which is a life of strife and frustration, anxiety. He taught that we are to forgive, He taught that we are to be compassionate, understanding, loving. These are the things that Jesus taught. We're not to take advantage of other people. We're not to destroy others. We're not to defile others. We should live to please the Lord rather than living to please ourselves. Our lives should not be egocentric but should be Christ-centric, centered around Him. And then you'll have joy, then you'll be blessed, then you'll have fulfillment and satisfaction. But the life after the flesh will always leave you empty and frustrated.

These are basically the things that Jesus taught. These are basically the things that we need to teach men. That you'll never find satisfaction in the life of the flesh, it leads to pain, misery, fighting, wars; but the life of the spirit will bring you into peace, love, tranquility. Now, why do you suppose people are so upset with the gospel message? Why do you suppose that that upsets people to hear that you should be loving, you should be forgiving, you should be kind and considerate. Why does that upset people? Why are people so upset with Jesus and the gospel that He taught?

There are many people that are just plain antagonistic towards the teaching of Jesus. They don't want to hear it. They get upset when you start to talk about Jesus. Why? It must be that they are egocentric, they are out for themselves, they are living after the flesh and they are drawn to that life of the flesh and they don't

want to hear something else because it might make them feel guilty for what they are doing. So you're trying to pass your moral standards on to us. And you have no right to tell us what we should do or shouldn't do. And the attitude of the world is very antagonistic towards Jesus. But yet, we've been commissioned to go and tell people.

Though many people are indeed antagonistic, there are some who are so miserable that they're ready to hear it. They want something different. They've tasted of the world and found that it was empty. And they are really longing to hear a message of hope because they've lost hope. They're longing for love, they're tired of all of the bickering and the fighting and all, and they long for peace. And they're just waiting for someone to give them the message of the love and the peace that Jesus gives.

So we're to share with all people, we're to be His witnesses. We're not to convince all people, that isn't what we've been asked to do. Just to bear witness to all people and whether or not they accept or reject the witness is in their court. It's my obligation to let them know the truth, what they want to do with the truth is up to them and they'll be required for the truth that they received. I think that we make a mistake in trying to argue people into a faith or belief in Jesus Christ.

I think though that a lot of people are mistaken as to what Jesus is all about and what Jesus really taught. I think that, unfortunately, many people have been observing people who have claimed to be Christians and have not seen much difference between them and what they are. And thus, the message of Christianity has been hurt by the fact that people who claim to be Christians still are doing things that the person in the world is doing. There's still a striving, there's still living after the material things of life, and egocentric and all, and so they say, what's makes you any different from me?

So we need to be living epistles. We need our lives to be examples unto the world of the difference that Jesus makes when we surrender ourselves to Him. So "Go" is the commission and "teach all nations."

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (28:19):

Father is not a name, Son is not a name, Holy Spirit is not a name. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, we find that in the book of Acts, they were baptizing them in the name of Jesus, Jehovah Shewa. However, this formula is Father, Son and Holy Spirit was probably being also used. And when we baptize people, we usually say, I baptize you in the name of Jesus, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we cover all the bases, because there are those who are United Pentecostal Church of God and they say, If you haven't been baptized in the name of Jesus, you haven't been baptized. And they confuse young believers. So that's why I say, In the name of Jesus, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in case they get hold of some of these rabid people who love to argue and confuse. They say, How were you baptized? Were you baptized in the name of Jesus? Oh yeah. And so it leaves the people without any further argument.

But you remember when Paul came to the church of Ephesus and he saw that there seemed to be something lacking in their experience, and in trying to probe for what's missing here, he said, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? The Holy Spirit, we've not heard about the Holy Spirit. Haven't heard about the Holy Spirit, how were you baptized? It evidently was the formula that they were using because why would he question, How were you baptized? when they said they hadn't heard of the Holy Spirit. Had they been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, the Holy Spirit, that had become a practice, then they would have heard at least of the Holy Spirit. So how are you then baptized? They then said, we never heard of the Holy Spirit. So it really honestly doesn't matter what words are said, or if you were dunk forwards or backwards, or three times as some people do, in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, in the name of the Holy Spirit. Doesn't matter. What matters is what has happened in your heart. Baptism signifies and represents the death of the old life, the life of the flesh. And the commitment to a new life in the Spirit. And if it hasn't happened in your heart, drowning you isn't going to save you. It isn't baptism that saves but it is that work of God's Spirit within our hearts that really matters.

[The Lord said,] Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and then, I am with you (28:20).

This is the tie. All power is given to me, Jesus said, now you are to go. Doesn't seem right. If He said all power is given unto me, I'm going to go, then that seems right. But you weaklings, you go. I have the power,

but you go. But the answer is, "I am with you always." He is there to give us that power that we need. He is there to empower us in our witness. And He told them, now look, you're going to be called before kings, you're going to be brought before judges, don't be afraid, don't take forethought of what you're going to say and all, because in that hour, the Holy Spirit will give you what you are to say. And it will turn to you as an opportunity to witness. And so everytime they were brought before the councils, the judges, the kings, they used it as an opportunity to witness for Jesus Christ.

Look at Paul the apostle before King Agrippa. What a powerful witness he laid on him. I believe that Paul laid a witness on Nero, I think that that's probably what upset Nero so much, the conviction from the witness that Paul laid on him. Because Paul took every opportunity when he was brought before the kings and all to witness of Jesus Christ and what the Lord had done in His life.

So "I am with you always,"

even to the end of the world [which is the age] (29:20).

So the promise is the Lord's presence with us. Here we are approaching the end of the age and we're getting so close. We're getting so close. I had given to me when we were in Hawaii by a fellow who is a Major in the U.S. Army, he taught at West Point the subject of Philosophy and while he was there, he started Calvary Chapel of West Point, and we have the chapel there at West Point College still. He is now stationed in Hawaii but he gave me the new identity card that they are issuing to the servicemen that is interestingly called "the mark." It has a little computer chip here that has all of the information concerning Michael, he gave me his card, all of the information from his birth, his schooling, medical records, the whole information is all here in the card. This card is a prototype of the health card that is being proposed for all of you. The smart card. The card that you would be required to carry at all times if Hillary's bill passes, a card that would be required as identity for all of your check cashing or anything, you shall have to have this as an identity card, it becomes your passport. You'll not really be able to buy or sell without this card. And it's already being issued to the military personnel, but the prototype of the smart card that they're planning for the health care program in which of course, your whole medical history and all will be encoded into the card, and people would be filled on the necessity of having this and you'll even have to have these cards for your babies, for your children that you're carrying with you. It's required, a misdemeanor if you don't have your card on your person. So, it's only a matter of time until they find the card isn't practical, people will lose them, they will be stolen. So they'll finally take and decide to put this little chip under your skin on your right hand. But we're moving towards it. We're moving towards it. We're getting towards the end of the age but that's great, He said He'll be with us even to the end of the age.

Father, we thank You for the promise of the presence of Jesus Christ with us, right down to the closeout of this age. Lord help us to become more aware of Your presence all the time. May we like Paul realize that in You, we live, we move, we have our being. We're surrounded, we're enveloped, You are the environment and the atmosphere in which we live, in which we breath. Make us more aware of this Lord in order that we might live always in a way that is pleasing to You. Not wanting to offend You. And in order that we might experience that power in our times of need and weakness. Thank You Lord for the promise to be with us. Thank You for keeping that promise. Go with us tonight as we go our separate ways, during the week Lord, even as You manifested Your presence to Your disciples, so manifest Your presence to us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.