

Week 31**Matthew series: Resurrection****Matthew 28 (A new beginning)**

In Matthew 27, we have a small mention of an earthquake and a curtain being torn in two. You would think that would have been a pretty big deal. It also says for three hours darkness covered the land. That seemed like a pretty big deal too. History is an odd thing. We have so little information on the culture of the Romans. Archeology plays such a big part of discovering the past. In reality we know very little about history. From the Titanic to Hitler we have very little understanding of what happened in the end. How did the Titanic really sink? Did Hitler die?

Books have been written explaining both the Titanic and Hitler. We have the events but we also have a mystery. Why is there nothing written on the earthquake and darkness? There is so little written on the death of Jesus too. Some 1st century scholars have touched on the death of Jesus and the life of Rome. It seems some epic historical events got little coverage at the time. In Matthew 28, we have another earthquake. We also have another historical event. Jesus rose from the dead. Part of chapter 28 is the authorities rescuing the event from history. Guards are payed off. Rumors are circulated. What really happened to Jesus, Hitler and the Titanic? History seems ignorant of the real story.

I bring up Hitler and the Titanic because we know the story. We have heard the rumors. Jesus death and resurrection are a story over 2000 years later. History has not been kind to it. Was Jesus God? Did he rise from the dead? Was he even real? How do we prove the Titanic did indeed hit an iceberg? Eye witness accounts. What I find interesting is the earthquake. The whole earth shook when Jesus died and it shook when he rose from the dead. Your thoughts on resurrection?

Matthew 27:51 **“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split “**

Matthew 28:2 **“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”**

Exodus 19:18 **“Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently.”**

The tale of the Mary's. Did you notice that the women came to the tomb first? Jesus had repeated over and over that he would rise in three days. Even Mary Magdalen said that we would be resurrected after the death of her brother. She knew. They all knew. Yet, who believed? The women did. The other Gospels mention more women. Actually, there are more details in the other Gospels. Why did Matthew mention so little? Who is the other Mary? It does not seem to be Jesus mother. It could be Mary the mother of the Zebedee brothers. She was present at the cross.

The guards probably thought they had the stupidest job. Guard a tomb. Do you know how many tombs there are in that area? Thousands and thousands. This is not a plush grave yard. It's a carved-out hole in the wall of sand stone. The stone cave was probably not that big. Who owned the wall? It's said in chapter 27 that Joseph of Arimathea donated his own new tomb.

Finally, we have the Sadducees. It's fascinating. This is a group of Bible scholars. They were political and law writers. They did not believe in resurrection. You could notice that they disappear after Matthew 22. Jesus, from that point forward, talks about rising from the dead. The religious rulers that came to Pilate asking to guard the tomb were the chief priest and Pharisees. They did believe in resurrection. Ironically, they also wanted Jesus to stay dead. This whole chapter has a theme of belief. What do you really believe?

Matthew 27:62 "The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate."

Matthew 28:13 "telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' "

Acts 7:52 "Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him."

The poor guards. Like I said, they had a dumb job. Who guards the dead? They stood at the foot of the cross, watching men die. Let's say just for fun that they were there at the cross. It says the centurion witnessed the whole thing and said "surely this was God's son." Fast forward to the tomb. There is another earthquake and angels appear. It says the guards shook and became like dead men. Imagine the rocks being split and the dead rising from nearby graves. You might faint too.

It's interesting that Judas was given money from the religious to give up Jesus. The guards are given money by the religious to be quiet. Jesus said he could call on angels to save himself but he refused. Angels appear and roll away the stone. For the most part the disciples are nowhere to be found. The women are at the cross and the grave. The one person having the most trouble with attitude

and Jesus was Mary Magdalene. Yet, she is found near Jesus the whole time through his death. I think she may have believed more than all of them.

Matthew 27:56 “Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.”

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

Read Matthew 27 again. Read Matthew 28. There is so much more being played out between the death and resurrection of Jesus. Two sides of the cross. Check out 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

1. Let’s talk about Galilee. Jesus was Born in Bethlehem but moved to Nazareth. I always pictured those places in the same place. They are not that close. They are about 70 miles apart. Remember that’s on foot in those days. Jesus told the disciples while in galilee that he would die and rise again. Jesus told the women after his resurrection to tell the disciples to go to galilee like he told them. Told them what? All that he taught them from that place. They knew things we don’t read in scripture.

Jesus sent the disciples to a mountain in Galilee to wait for him. What mountain? Oh, there is a ton of speculation on this one. I have always thought that the sermon on the Mountain was at the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Tradition places it on Mt. Eremos in Galilee. That would fit a place to send the disciples because galilee was Jesus stomping grounds. (caution) however, Jesus baptism is right near the Dead sea. It’s not that far from Jerusalem, Bethlehem or the Mount of Olives. Placing Jesus in a certain place because it fits is just speculation. We should avoid that.

I feel one of the reasons Jesus sent the disciples back to Galilee is for safety. Remember the religious rulers were hunting believers down and that is how we are introduced to Paul in Acts. Many roads in this area were not that friendly. It’s possible the disciples were afraid to leave for home. Remember that Joseph of Arimathea donated his tomb. That is near Jerusalem too. Plus, the women had to run and tell the disciples that Jesus was missing in the tomb. They did not run 70 miles. What this means to me is that we need to just read it. Putting this mountain here and those disciples there is all rabbit trails that take our eyes off the real story of Jesus resurrection.

Matthew 28:8 “So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.”

John 20:19 “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!””

2. I just think there is something to the angels being clothed in white. I think there is something about the title Angel of the Lord. Some people call many of these incidences in the Old Testament, to be what they call, *the pre-incarnate Jesus*. Basically, Jesus in a different form other than his heavenly or earthy body. I am not so sure. In the New Testament, Jesus appears to many. Not once is he called the Angel of the Lord. Of the many appearances of this heavenly

creature, there is sometimes a bright light, white clothes, or nothing descriptive at all. Often, they say something like “fear not.” Angels were said to look terrifying.

Matthew goes out of his way to mention them in white. Why? I feel it’s a staple or calling card. In the transfiguration, Jesus is turned to bright white. Read Daniel 7 and we see the Ancient of days clothed in white. In Revelation we have Jesus sitting on the great white throne of judgment. White is the good guy. White is holy and clean. I feel white is also a signature of heaven. There will be transparent pearl gates and gold streets. Plus, in heaven, there is no sun because the Glory of the Lord will shine. Moses met God and became too bright to look at. Brightness, light, and white are a sign of God’s presence.

Here is my last thought on this. Moses had to wear a veil to hide the light. There was a curtain hiding the inner chamber to God in the temple. When Jesus died the curtain was torn in two. We now see angels in bright white. A glimpse of heaven? A sign that heaven is here. Matthew begins making a case for the savior. The Jews knew that one day they would be taken to heaven. Matthew is finishing his Gospel by picturing heaven in the real world. We are free of death. Free to shine the light on a hill.

Matthew 28:18-20 “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Judges 8:16 **“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”**

Daniel 7:9 “As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.”

3. Why Sunday? The common Jewish week was from Sunday to Saturday. The Sabbath day went from Friday at 6pm till Saturday at 6 pm. Even when I was in Egypt recently, they do most of their day at night. They eat, gather, and rest. Muslims worship Friday. Jews Worship Saturday. Christians worship Sunday. The reason is simple. The religious rulers had Jesus crucified Friday at the end of the Pentecost week. Nobody worked from 6 pm on. It was a good time to get it done. The crowds were going home. It says in Matthew 28 that after the Sabbath the first day was dawning. Sunday!

Realize that the Jewish custom was to sacrifice a lamb for the sabbath Pentecost meal. They prepared everything before Friday at 6pm. Jesus is the last sacrifice. Ironic, coincidental, convenient? Many things God does is symbolic like a rainbow. Holiness is white. The ark was a seat of judgment like the great white throne. Jesus said “it is finished.” His time, day, week, ministry, sacrifice, and intention for creation was done. This first Sunday after, everything changed.

It’s the first day. In the beginning God created. On the first day Jesus rose from the dead. It’s a new beginning. The Sabbath was over. Ironically Jesus was criticized over and over for breaking the sabbath. Yet, after his resurrection we find him cooking fish while the disciples

worked. When he raised Lazarus from the dead, he told them to feed him. The symbolism in Matthews Gospel is amazing.

Matthew 28:7 “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.”

John 20:30 “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.”

4. Revelation 9 is a doozy. It describes a portion of the judgments of God on humankind. Read it and then realize in verses 20-21 they refused to repent. Ask yourself “what would it take to believe in God?” Matthew 28:17 is a doozy too. Three years with Jesus. All the words, miracles, and time spent with Jesus and they still did not get it. What would it take?

Jesus died. He is gone for three days. What are you doing after three days when someone has died? You move on. The disciples are back in Galilee. How long had it been? It was more than three days since the cross. It says in Acts 1 that Jesus appeared for 40 days. It’s Moses like. It’s symbolic and significant. The number 40 is Jewish. However long, Matthew points out that seeing Jesus after his death had doubters still. What would it take to believe?

The ending of Matthew is a doozy too. It’s called the great commission. There is more than that. Jesus mentions the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost clearly. There are still doubters on that. He mentions the end of the age. That means the end of times and there are still doubters. I feel that Matthew is ending his Gospel with a warning. Some will still doubt. Is it so hard to believe? Even after all the prophesies, miracles, and resurrection from the dead? It all pointed to the Christ as Jesus yet still some doubted.

Matthew 28:17 “When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted”

Revelation 9:20-21 “And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”

What it means?

I can’t end this study properly. Matthew is so much more than I said it was. All I know is that I see prophesy. I see the teaching of Jesus. The Bible has pointed to this place. The resurrection. I am haunted by people taking the Bible verses out of context. Matthew has themes and an intentional point to make. Over and over he points out belief and doubt. That’s why he wrote a case for the Christ. He believes it was Jesus.

If you notice, Matthew does not expand the death and resurrection like the other Gospels do. He is to the point. It’s almost cold. Yet Matthew is only telling us what the prophesy said. He would be born, die, and raised from the dead. He is not glorifying heaven. He is not glorifying the man named Jesus. He is not glorifying the disciples, church, or Christianity. Matthew is pointing out that the radiant Christ of God is king over church, death, and creation.

Matthew wrote this Gospel to glorify the Christ. He said he came from God. He was anointed by God. Matthew then has Jesus as the victor of death and sin standing before his disciples. Verse 18 repeats that Jesus has all the authority in heaven and on earth. The kingdom is here and Jesus is the king. Then the king gives only one command "go and tell." Moses last speech is really big. Jesus (the new Moses) needed only one verse "go and tell." Matthew got it right because Christianity did go forth and changed the world. Many were saved by the Christ Jesus. It was a reckless plan. Yet, the prophets predicted it. God orchestrated it. He promised it in a covenant with Abraham and David. God took ownership of getting it done. So here we are, now, it's up to you. What will you do with the Christianity Matthew wrote about?

Matthew 28:19 "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."