

[PDF version of the lesson notes.](#)

## I. Lesson Coverage and Structure

- The lesson covers the "resurrection narrative." I am going to use Matthew as the primary text as I did for both the events of the garden and the crucifixion narrative. This is not a manifestation of a preference for Matthew over the other gospels. Rather it is a manifestation of a preference for continuity in the literary account across these important events.
- This weeks reading material is much shorter, but I still want to take a step back and outline the material to get a sense of the big picture presented by the narrative.
- ***Outline of Matthew 28:1–20:[1]***
  1. The Announcement of the Resurrection to the Women at the Tomb (28:1–7)
  2. The Appearance of the Risen Jesus to the Women (28:8–10)
  3. Jewish Authorities Concoct a Story (28:11–15)
  4. Jesus' appearance to the Eleven and the Great Commission (28:16–20)
- *Is there anything that jumps out at you when you look at an outline of the Matthew portion of the lesson?*
- *Do you see any themes that are continued by Matthew from the crucifixion narrative?*

## II. The Announcement of the Resurrection to the Women at the Tomb

- Read Matthew 28:1–7:
  - (1) In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.
  - (2) 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. (3) His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: (4) And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. (5) And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. (6) He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

(7) And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

- *What parts, details, or motifs in this pericope jump out at you?*
- The irony of verse (4) jumps out at me:

(4) And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

Jesus is now alive, and his guards are now dead (not quite dead (maybe they fainted?), but they appear dead). It is a wonderful image of complete reversal and the triumph of Jesus over death but not just death; He has really triumphed over everything.

- Second, I think there is interesting symmetry and parallelism between the events surrounding the death of Jesus (27:51–56) and events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus (28:1–11). Read 27:51–56:

(51) And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; (52) And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, (53) And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. (54) Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. (55) And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: (56) Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

- **Symmetry between Matt 27:51–55 and Matt 28:1–11:[2]**

| <b>The Death of Jesus</b>                                  | <b>The Resurrection of Jesus</b>                 |
|--|--|
| An earthquake  | An earthquake                                    |
| Opening of tombs   | Opening of the tomb                              |
| Resurrections  | The Resurrection                                 |
| The guards fear  | The guards fear                                  |
| Witnesses to the events                                    | Witness to the events                            |
| (The resurrected saints) Go to the holy city               | (The Roman guards) Go to the holy city           |
| Women witnesses: including Mary Magdalene and another Mary | Women witnesses: Mary Magdalene and another Mary |

- *What do you think about the symmetry and parallels between the events surrounding the death of Jesus and the events surrounding the resurrection?*

- *How do the symmetry and parallels focus the reader's attention?*
- *Do you think the symmetry and parallels points to or focuses the reader's attention on a explosion of miracles? Something else? What makes the explosion of miracles stand out so much? Why do you think the miracles are important? Isn't the great miracle of "the resurrection" enough?*
- *Why were the women coming to the sepulcher? Can we infer the reason from the text?*  
Compare the preceding verses with the Markan version:

(1) And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. —Mark 16:1

Matthew often closely follow Mark but here it departs from it. *Can you think of a reason why Matthew would leave out the part about the women coming to anoint Jesus with spices? Is it an important difference or inconsequential?*

- The notion of a empty tomb is I think for many a powerful symbol of the veracity of the resurrection. *I guess I wonder why? What make it such and apt symbol? I mean really the resurrection could be real and the tomb not be empty and Jesus could not have risen and the tomb empty (the body was stolen).[3] Why is the empty tomb a powerful symbol of the validity of the resurrection of Jesus?*

### **III. The Appearance of the Risen Jesus to the Women (28:8–10)**

- Read Matthew 28:8–10:

(8) And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. (9) And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him. (10) Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

- *Women once again play a prominent role here. Do you think it is important that they are the first to see the empty tomb and the resurrected Savior? What themes or motifs from the gospel does this emphasize?*
- *Do you think it is important that these women are appointed as "apostles" (one sent on an errand, a messenger [4]) to the Apostles (the eleven)?*
- *Do you think it is important that the risen Savior appears to the women after they have left the empty tomb and while they are trying to fulfill the command given to them by the Angel?*
- There does seem to be quite a bit of overlap between what the Angel says and what Jesus

says[5]:

| <b>The Angel (28:5–6)</b>               | <b>The Savior (28:10)</b>               |
|---|---|
| Fear not                                | Fear not                                |
| Go                                      | Go                                      |
| Proclaim the news                       | Proclaim the news                       |
| The disciples should go to Galilee      | The disciples should go to Galilee      |
| The disciples will see Jesus in Galilee | The disciples will see Jesus in Galilee |

- *How does the overlap and the parallels between what the Angel says and what Jesus says affect the narrative? How does it focus the readers attention? What themes does it signal as important?*
- *Actually, Jesus breaks the parallelism with the Angel a bit when he refers to his "brothers" instead of using the word "disciples" like the angel. I am not sure what to make of the difference, but it does stand out so I tend to think it is important. *Could it signal forgiveness? Could it signal that the desertion and denial is forgotten?**
- *How is the theme of fear developed in this chapter? Do you think it is important message to the Christian community or is it just a natural consequence of the great events portrayed?*
- *I find the juxtaposition of "fear and great joy" really interesting. I don't think we juxtapose the emotions, fear and joy, very often but it seems very fitting in this situation.*
- *What do you make of the contrast between the description of the resurrected Savior and the angel? The angel is compared to lightning (and there is the whole earthquake thing going on in the background) but Matthew only says "Jesus met them." There is really no description at all? In fact Matthew describes this meeting in very ordinary terms.[6] I wonder why?*

#### **IV. Jewish Authorities Concoct a Story**

- Read Matthew 28:11–15:

(11) Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. (12) And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, (13) Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. (14) And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. (15) So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

- *Why would Matthew include this story in the narrative? Why is it an important story? How does it fit in with the other parts of chapter 28? How does it affect the reader's*

*focus?*

- *Does this story almost seem comical?*
- *What about ironic?*
- *Do you think it is likely or possible that Matthew includes this story to combat contemporary concerns in his community?*
- *Do you think Matthew is using the story to emphasize or allude to something like the following (Psalm 2:1–6)?*

- (1) Why do the nations conspire,  
and the peoples plot in vain?
- (2) The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the Lord and his anointed,  
saying, (3) "Let us burst their bonds asunder,  
and cast their cords from us."
- (4) He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
the Lord has them in derision.
- (5) Then he will speak to them in his wrath,  
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
- (6) "I have set my king on Zion,  
my holy hill." —Psalm 23:1–6 (NRSV)

## **V. Jesus' appearance to the Eleven and the Great Commission**

- Read Matthew 28:16–20:

(16) Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. (17) And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted. (18) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

- *What parts, details, or motifs in this pericope jump out at you?*
- *Is it important that the meeting happens in Galilee? Is it important that it happens on a Mountain? How does the setting help complete or bring back to mind important themes in the gospel of Matthew?*
- The Galilean setting fulfills the prophecy of Matt 26:31–32 during the last supper:

(31) Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. (32) But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Thus, I think the setting reinforces the idea that the betrayal and desertion have been overcome and the disciples have been forgiven. It really is a wonderful image; it reverses the dreadful actions (they forsook him and fled) of the disciples that night. It reminds us that Christ has really changed everything. The setting of Galilee also returns the story to where it began.

- The mountain reminds me of important themes that run throughout the gospel of Matthew. For example, it reminds me of how Matthew creates an image for his readers of Jesus as a new Moses. It also reminds me of part of the temptation scene (Matt 4:8–10):[7]

(8) Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; (9) And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. (10) Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

- *What about the theme of doubt? Are you surprised how it shows up in this story? What could this doubt actually refer to? I mean Jesus is with them? What exactly are they doubting?*
- Once again we have a strange pairing of words: worship and doubt. *Why this pairing?*
- Note, also that it may be the case that the word "some" can also be translated as they. Thus Donald Hagner translates that passage in verse 17 as, "they worshiped him, but they doubted." [8]
- *Is it even possible that "they" worshiped and "doubted" at the same time assuming the doubt and worship part refers to all eleven?*
- *Also, the doubt is not addressed specifically. Is it? Doesn't it seem to hang there in the narrative?*
- Donald Hagner points out the following related to the underlying Greek that is translated as "doubt:"

The key to a proper understanding of the statement is the definition of the verb [distazo]. To begin with it must be stressed that this word does not refer to unbelief nor even perplexity ... The word occurs in the NT only here and in 14:31. In the latter passage, Peter walks on water until he sees

the wind and becomes afraid. Then Jesus addresses him as ... "O little faith" and asks ... "why did you doubt?" The doubt amounts to hesitation, indecision, ... and perhaps uncertainty. [9]

- *Does the preceding quote affect how you understand what is going on here? Does it give a hint about why at least some of the disciples doubted? Does it suggest that it is possible to both worship and doubt? What does this tell us about the nature of worship, doubt, discipleship more generally?*
- *How would you summarize that "all things whatsoever I have commanded you" in verse 20? Do you think more than verbal revelation is implied here? Do you think it is fair to say the Jesus' life is a revelation and a command?[10]*
- *Do you think this story has an introspective element? Does it invite the reader to enter the story? At what point?*

## Endnotes

1. Slightly adapted from Hagner, Donald A., 1988, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14–28*, Nelson Reference and Electronic, 865–878.
2. Barton, John, and John Muddiman (Editors), 2001, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 884.
3. Brown, Raymond E. (editor), Joseph A. Fitzmyer (editor), and Roland E. Murphy (editor), 1990, *The New Jerome Bible Commentary*, Prentice Hall, 673.
4. *The Oxford English Dictionary*.
5. Hagner, Donald A., 1988, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14–28*, Nelson Reference and Electronic, 873.
6. Hagner, Donald A., 1988, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14–28*, Nelson Reference and Electronic, 874.
7. Barton, John, and John Muddiman (Editors), 2001, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 885.
8. Hagner, Donald A., 1988, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14–28*, Nelson Reference and Electronic, 880.
9. Hagner, Donald A., 1988, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14–28*, Nelson Reference and Electronic, 885.
10. Barton, John, and John Muddiman (Editors), 2001, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 885.