

AM Matthew 28 The End of Matthew - The Great Commission

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[0 : 00] This is the end of Matthew, Matthew chapter 28, and we'll read the whole chapter.
Matthew chapter 28.

Now, after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead.

[1 : 07] And behold, he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him. See, I have told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them and said, Greetings. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid.

Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me. While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.

And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, Tell people his disciples came by night and stole them away while we were asleep.

And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So they took the money and did as they were directed.

[2 : 15] And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. Now, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Amen. May God bless. The Gospel of Matthew ends in a wonderful way.

But one word in these last five verses of Matthew's Gospel took hold of my heart as I was preparing for this morning. And it's a word that conveys a message that recurs throughout Scripture.

[3 : 34] It's a very simple word. And that's the word come. Or rather the past tense, came in verse 18. Then Jesus came to them.

Now, many of the verses from God's word that we know by heart contain the word come. Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11, 28. Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters. And you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

Isaiah 55, verse 1. Come and let us worship him. Let us bow down with all. And on our knees before the Lord, our maker, let us fall.

Psalms 95. Whoever comes to me, I will never in any wise cast out, says Jesus, John 6, 37.

[4 : 32] And in John 7, on the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.

So there's no doubt, no doubt whatever, that we are asked, invited, encouraged, indeed commanded to come from our sin to Christ for salvation, for eternal life and for earthly purpose.

From the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's own dear Son. From death to life. From despair to hope.

From a life of self-serving futility to life in all its fullness. Life centered on Christ and Christ alone.

For some, that journey, that coming, takes but a moment. An explosive journey that erupts in what we might call a Damascus Road experience.

[5 : 44] But for others, it's a long and quiet and sincere journey where the heart warms and warms and warms till all the hardness melts away in the heat of our Saviour's bounteous love.

But Matthew's Gospel, as it draws to a conclusion, reminds us that this ragbag of 11 defeated and downcast disciples have made their way to Galilee, maybe reluctantly.

After all, it was a message from some women. Who claimed to have seen the resurrected Lord that had been relayed to them. To go to Galilee, where he would meet them.

Could they rely on their word? In those days, women's word was not trusted. Unlike nowadays, I am pleased to say. Just as well you said that.

Now, they wondered, had Jesus' visit to Jerusalem to speak to them personally?

[6 : 58] Had that actually been a ghost? Scripture raises that question. So maybe there was a reluctant trudge to Galilee. Maybe with some hope.

But this was a group of frightened men. Men who had deserted the Lord Jesus in his hour of need. These were Jesus' deniers. They were men in hiding, in fear of their own lives, frightened of their own shadows.

We even have recorded that when they arrived in Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go, and when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted.

Excuse me. Some doubted. Faced with Jesus. The resurrected Lord Jesus. Some doubted. You might ask, what hope then is there for us?

But before we get carried away by that doubt, doubt and a tendency to doubt is built into us by the God who made us.

[8 : 05] He made us to question, to think, to use our God-given brains, and then to choose, to choose willingly him with the free will he has given us.

Though of course, we only do that because he first loved us and God chose us in him before the creation of the world and predestined us for adoption.

If the end result of doubt is unbelief and denial, then that is a tragedy with eternal consequences. But if the end of doubt is a clasping of the Saviour's feet in love and adoration and acceptance of his all-sufficiency, with to follow that a lifetime of service and self-giving to that Saviour, my Lord and my God, you know, Thomas said that affirming the very deity of the despised, crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth, that's a statement that would have been blasphemy to the Orthodox Jew.

But if the end result of the doubt is that affirmation of the truth, then doubt is not altogether a bad thing. Can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?

Died he for me who caused his shame? For me who him to death pursued? Yes. It can be. Yes, it is true.

[9 : 51] And yes, he died for me even when I was his enemy. But let's open our minds' eyes here. The eleven disciples have arrived on the mountain.

They see Jesus. He's over there. Let's just pause a second. They see Jesus. Do they instantly recognise him? Do they see Jesus only?

Do they see a person over there? Might that be Jesus? Or is that some other person? How do they know? They see Jesus.

He's over there. And they worship. They worship in a who are you Lord way. Just like Saul of Tarsus on the road, the dust of the Damascus road.

It is a spiritual reflex, is it not? And one day every knee will bow before him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[10 : 55] So they see Jesus, they worship, but some doubt it. They've gone as far as they can in their misery and doubt perhaps, but then it happened.

The crucified, killed, raised to life, resurrected, the deserted, the denied, the forsaken Jesus, comes to them. He does the coming.

He comes to them, it says in verse 18. And remember the message Jesus gave the women earlier in the chapter. Go tell, to go to Galilee, not those traitors, deserters, losers, weaklings, but my brothers.

Not even disciples, but brothers, forgiven, restored, and he'd ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, and brought into the family of God, as children of God, co-heirs with Christ, his very brothers.

That's what real forgiveness is like. Our sins and iniquities hurled into the depths of the sea so that no one can bring them up to challenges about them.

[12 : 13] That's the power of the cross, where Jesus as our substitute paid the complete price for our sins. He took them all on his own body on the tree.

And this is the example, the occasion perhaps, which prompted James, Jesus' half-brother, so to speak, in this future epistle to write, draw near to God and he will draw near to you, James 4 and 8, or as the NIV puts it, come near to God and he will come near to you.

How gracious is that? Just how gracious is that? But this coming near of Jesus the Son and God the Father and God the Holy Spirit pervades scripture.

every covenant made began with God, coming near and carrying the cost of all the arrangements while man's ready acquiescence could then be seen to be frittered away in riotous living.

But there in that parable of the prodigal son, where we have the nearest explanation in scripture to the Our Father of Our Father who art in heaven prayer.

[13 : 39] In the fatherhood of God setting aside protocol and running to greet the returning prodigal with copious overflowing love and arms wide open.

And we have as well that most glorious promise in John 14 23 where Jesus promises to anyone that is anyone who loves him and who obeys his teaching.

My father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them. And this is promised in the context of the coming of the Holy Spirit who amongst the infinity of his attributes is the homemaker for that dwelling of God father and son in our hearts.

And he promises it again does our Lord in Revelation 3 20 be all here I am I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in and I will eat with that person and they with me.

today if you never have before if you see what Jesus has done for you and when you realise that door at which Jesus stands and knocks only has a handle on the inside on your side why don't you open the door welcome him in confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart doubts dispelled that he has risen from the dead then you will be saved that is the promise of scripture and when you let Jesus in for keeps for good then you know a peace that passes all understanding here on that mountain in Galilee the eleven have gathered bringing all their baggage with them they see and they worship but some doubted but then

[15 : 57] Jesus came to them and said and he said the last words Matthew records in his gospel now other gospels finish differently from in Mark that is Peter's account then Luke then John telling the narrative from their perspective they're all true but they've got different complementary descriptions but Matthew tells it as he sees it this is what stood out for him and his gospel climaxes with Jesus instructions indeed some of his final instructions to his possibly maybe certainly bewildered disciples and brothers what a last statement Matthew records all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me says

Jesus now as an unequivocal statement of fact this brooks no argument whatsoever the authority is total it is all authority it isn't 75% authority with 15% to Trump and 10% to Putin or looked at another way within my own life it isn't 75% my authority and 25% really generous lip service wouldn't you think to God no no authority control hand at the helm of history global and personal is total here exactly 100% all and the sphere of influence of that total authority is itself total it's literally everywhere you can think of on earth and everywhere that's not earth but please register this in these troubled times desperately troubled now as then all all authority in this war torn earth with all its pain all authority belongs to the

Lord Jesus we must believe this and the total authority in earth and heaven is not shared by a government or a junta or a committee or a board or a session or a leadership team and it's not given to a dictator or an oligarch or a prime minister or a president or even a moderator or a pontiff it's given to Jesus it is the eternal wisdom and unalterable commitment of the triune God of the God who created the heaven and the earth for his own or should that be their own glory that all authority has been given to the son to Jesus of Nazareth the despised and vilified now glorified and exalted resurrected son and in its own way this is a very simple statement of truth but it is eternally and infinitely profound because no one no entity no power has true authority except

Jesus only and this is the way things are and always will be as an absolute statement this is absolutely absolute as we so cryptically say nowadays end off so point two go therefore and make disciples of all nations that conjunction therefore is critical here because it's because of the complete unequivocal unquestionable eternal unchanging authority of the crucified risen son it's not just a reason though it's the power the energy and the justification for what we would gather together as a comfortable thought as mission mission because we have missionaries to do mission don't we and this we think or as it hope removes from us immediately any personal onus to be intimately involved ourselves we don't have that gifting we protest oh we'll support missionaries we'll give our pennies to send them out but don't for an instant think that

I'm going to be involved no no no that's too difficult too awkward too embarrassing too uncomfortable too costly sorry Jesus is looking the eleven in the eye the eleven represent us he is looking me and he's looking you in the eye and he's saying I have all authority you go now I hear myself speaking and I have a hundred questions me me in the now when today where to here Botswana Ecuador how will I fly to whom what about my children my parents my brothers my sisters my job everything I'd leave behind go it's what Jesus says go and make disciples of all nations starting in Jerusalem and then Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth global mission isn't everyone from

[21 : 53] Scotland going and living somewhere else nor is it everyone from somewhere else coming and living in Scotland global mission is everyone living for Jesus where he in his infinite wisdom has placed each individual to carry out those good works which God has already prepared in advance for us to do asking your neighbour for a coffee and living and speaking Jesus in a natural way giving a lift to the X 74 and living Jesus living and loving loving and living showing forth Christ in our lives persuading showing an example in deed and in speech in behaviour in thought and in prayer starting at home starting where God has placed you with your eyes fixed on the very person who has all authority in heaven and on earth baptising them it says next well that seems straightforward enough doesn't it

Jesus commands us on the basis of his authority to make disciples of all nations and to baptise them well never has something so simple been made such a cauldron of man-made confusion because the questions and the comments fly to and fro don't they ah well this is a symbol so we don't need immersion it could be sprinkling but what about pouring though are all three allowable and remember the thief on the cross and deathbed conversions is baptism absolutely essential and since it's a symbol of dying to sin being buried with Christ and rising again does the amount of water and the way it's applied really matter but what about infant baptism where parents take vows on behalf of the child are they not of value should a child baptised while knowing nothing of Christ and a personal salvation be baptised again as an adult as a believer how can these ideas all be married and reconciled how indeed as Paul said of other disputable matters in Romans 14 5 each person should be fully convinced in their own mind how the evil one though has taken the simplest command from the mouth of the Lord

Jesus and has twisted our fallen minds to make this such a bone of contentions that brothers and sisters fall out and come to verbal blows however you read it however you understand it do it that's the command to do it it involves water it involves symbolic cleansing and public profession of our union with Christ as we are saved by his death for us on the cross and it's something where we follow the specific instructions of Jesus and the example of scripture to the best of our abilities and lights as we follow the leading not of our own wisdom but the leading of the Holy Spirit in our inner beings because fourthly this baptizing is in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit the Greek word baptizo is defined as to dip repeatedly or to immerse or in the case of a sunken ship to submerge it may mean to cleanse by dipping or submerging to wash to make clean with water to wash oneself to cleanse and in a derivative sense it may also mean to overwhelm in the name of the Father and the

Son and the Holy Spirit authenticates the baptism it defines that any external encounter with the waters of baptism is by the authority of the Godhead not in the name of Paul or Apollos or Augustine or Luther or Spurgeon or Lloyd Jones such a thing would be an unspeakable blasphemy now of course an external application of water may occur physically in infants and adults without any regeneration in the heart of the person being baptised they might just think it's the right thing to do and the person doing the baptising may be blinded as to the reality of any heart change in the baptised person or in their parents yet the process takes place invoking the name of the

Godhead and clearly that whole performance generated without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a vacuous one with no benefit or honour or obedience to the command of Christ because the heart is not right there with God and the blessing of the Almighty is not in it and so to the heart of the matter the public demonstration before one witness like Philip in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch or before a thousand in a way is not important what matters is the recipient's heart before God his or her saviour that encounter at the foot of the cross is their recognition of such personal poverty of spirit that he or she can bring nothing to the table but their sin and guilt and cast themselves on God's mercy and on his love expressed in giving his son his one and only so that they should not perish but have everlasting life so when this baptism this spiritual drenching takes place this is a beautiful expression of true identification with Christ and indwelling of God the father and son through the spirit a trinitarian masterpiece in a broken life that has been reborn but however we administer baptism it is not an optional extra to be chosen by us at our will under

[29 : 11] God's providence circumstances may dictate that baptism cannot physically be performed but if that's not so then it's a clear command of God that we should obey teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you please note the sequence here you make the disciples you baptize them and you teach them but this is fundamental not teaching them in the first instance theology nor Greek participles nor church history but teaching them to obey to observe all that Jesus has commanded us this passage from John 14 covers this so beautifully I'll read it to you if you love me you will keep my commandments and I will ask the father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you

I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you yet a little while and the world will see me no more but you will see me because I live you also will live in that day you will know that I am in my father and you in me and I in you whoever has my commandments and keeps them he it is who loves me and he who loves me will be loved by my father and I will love him and manifest myself to him Judas not Iscariot said to him Lord how is it that you'll manifest yourself to us and not to the world and Jesus answered him if anyone loves me he will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him whoever does not love me does not keep my words and the word that you hear is not mine but the father's who sent me so as naturally as day follows night and night follows day if we become disciples and are baptized we learn to observe all that the Lord

Jesus himself has commanded for his words are spirit and they are life and they are our joy and he has and we're not disciples and baptized to then go our own way do our own thing our lives are surrendered to the loving service of our saviour who gave his all for us and how gracious is that saviour he doesn't leave us to our own devices to flounder around trying to do right and inevitably doing wrong because we're fallen he gives us instructions commands lovingly consistently with divine insight into our needs and feelings and we have that whisper behind us this is this is the way this is the way walking it when we turn to the right or the left and finally what a wonderful message to leave with these traumatised disciples in the conclusion the ending of the ending of Matthew's gospel it's as if

Jesus has left the best to last the rest was good enough but it's even better and behold I am with you always to the end of the age now this is another unbreakable promise and what a promise it is Jesus flags it up for us as if we'd been a little distracted might have missed it behold take note listen up people I am every time Jesus says these simplest of words they have a deeper layer of significance that stirs me for I am as the name of God given to Moses and there's no doubt Jesus is saying I am with you just as we might say I am with you but when you realize that God the Son is with us the second person of the Trinity is with us we must register the enormity of this promise God the Son with us with you with me this is very personal

God with me how often how long will it last always always yes always never never never no never will he leave us nor forsake us to the end of the age to eternity nothing my friends absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord and just what a pair of bookends we have to Matthew's Gospel chapter 1 we read that the child to be born to Mary is Emmanuel which means God with us and we finish the 28th chapter with the same message behold I am with you isn't God consistent the message about the presence of God with his people pervades the whole of scripture this presence matters so much that the

[34 : 53] Lord Jesus died to ensure it and the Holy Spirit is a living proof of it the actuality the outworking of it but let's not forget as we close that this is a working man and a working woman's promises here the presence of our saviour is 100% guaranteed as we make disciples baptise teach to obey those who are called according to his purpose what a privilege we have to play even a tiny part in our heavenly father amazing salvation plan this is still today the day of salvation we have no knowledge how long this gracious state of affairs will last and if you have never given your heart to the lord Jesus please please do that today now because we do not know what a day or an hour will bring about let's pray together holy

Thank you.