

THE RESURRECTION STORY
Matthew 28:1-20

Intro: I am turning aside from our study of 1 Corinthians today to speak on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will get back to 1 Corinthians.

Many times in dealing with the resurrection of Christ as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, we take just the first part and do not relate it to the last part. Matthew apparently wanted us to see the connection between the resurrection of Christ and our mission in the world. Thus, He related Christ's resurrection to our service--to the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, and to the effectiveness of that mission.

Let me explain what I mean.

One of the great verses in the NT on serving the Lord is 1 Corinthians 15:58. (Quote: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, . . .") But, as we do with many verses, we usually lift that verse out of 1 Corinthians and consider it by itself. We do not pay attention to the word, "Therefore." Remember that this is a connecting word. It is there for a purpose. It shows the result of what the Apostle Paul had been teaching in the chapter.

Why do we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord?

It is because of the resurrection of Christ!

If Christ had not been literally, physically, in His body, raised from the dead, we would have no Gospel, and therefore we would have no message for the world, no mission in the world! It is because Jesus Christ was actually raised from the dead, never to die again, that we have a Gospel message, and, therefore, have a mission to the whole world in every generation!

Look at the book of Acts.

The resurrection of Christ was the very heart of the preaching of the Apostles in the early Church.

An example: Peter's message on the day of Pentecost--in Acts 2:22-24:

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. Why was not impossible that Jesus Christ would have been held in the grave by death?

— One of the many reasons given in Scripture is that He had to be raised because the Holy Spirit enabled David to predict 1,000 years before in Psalm 16 that He would be raised! And the Scriptures cannot be broken!

But the point I am making is that the very heart of the Gospel message, which is the message of salvation, is that Christ both died, and He was raised from the dead! Without either one of those great truths the Church today would be without any message.

If you will read the first 4 verses of 1 Corinthians 15 you will see that this is the Gospel which Paul preached, just like the other Apostles and preachers in the early church:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

That is the Gospel!

Remember that anyone who denies the real, physical resurrection of Christ, or His actual death for the sins of His people, has no Gospel to proclaim.

Now let us see what our text has to say, and how this is related to our service as believers in Christ.

Note in verses 1 through 8 who it was who first declared that Christ had been raised from the dead. It was . . .

I. THE MESSAGE OF AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN (Matt. 28:1-8).

Observe very carefully that this angel, an angel of the Lord, declared both the death of Christ, and His resurrection!

A moment ago I gave you one reason why Christ had to be raised: because it was prophesied in th OT that He would be raised. Now I give you another: Because Jesus Christ Himself had predicted His resurrection. See the words in verse 6, "as he said."

— What confidence this ought to give us in any word from God, or from the Lord Jesus Christ! "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said, Come see the place where the Lord lay."

The resurrection of Christ was such an amazing event that God sent an angel from heaven with a spectacular appearance to declare this message for the first time.

But notice secondly:

II. THE LORD'S APPEARANCE TO THE TWO MARY'S (Matt. 28:9, 10).

They saw Him. Paul made a major point of those who saw the Lord in His resurrection body when he spoke of Christ's resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15.

Note what Matthew said about the women: And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him." You do not hold a spirit by the feet. This is evidence of a bodily resurrection.

The third thing that we see here is . . .

III. HOW THE WORLD HANDLED THIS TRUTH (Matt. 28:11-15).

The Jews rejected it. And they began to spread a rumor which has persisted to this day--that our Lord was not really raised from the dead. They said that His disciples took His body away, and said that He was raised!

Oh, the blindness of the human heart! Man is so depraved because of his sin that he will rather believe a lie than to believe the truth by which he could be saved. Cf. Rom. 10:9, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth . . ."

No one can be a true Christian who denies the resurrection of Christ!

Now we come to the last part of the chapter:

IV. THE LORD'S APPEARANCE TO THE ELEVEN APOSTLES (Matt. 28: 16-20).

Some still had reservations in the mind, but the Lord was there. And, as Luke said in the beginning of the book of Acts, it was to them that

. . . he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

But what did the Lord say to them?

Obviously He must have said a great deal in 40 days. This is the reason that you have the writers of the Gospels saying different things. But they all amount to the same

thing. The Lord spoke about getting this Gospel message out to the people of every nation--not that every person in every nation would believe it, but that in every generation and in every nation there would be those who would hear, and who would believe.

But let us see why the Apostles could be so sure that their message would be believed. Or, to think of Paul's words, why could they know that their labor would not be in vain?

There are three things in these last three verses that we need to see.

A. The authority of Christ (Matt. 28:18).

Here we are talking about the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ. How extensive is it?

It includes every being, every event, "in heaven and in earth."

Now since this true, let me ask you a question: Cannot our Lord, then, accomplish all that He intends to accomplish? Or, to state it another way, Can He not save all whom He has designed to save? Does this not mean that if all men are not saved, then this was not His purpose?

On the other hand, we can be sure all people in all nations in every generation whom the Lord has chosen for salvation will without a single exception be brought to know Christ as Saviour!

If the Jews who were living then denied the resurrection, and the disciples had trouble believing it, what hope can we have that our message of a crucified, risen Saviour would be believed by anyone if we could not rely on the sovereign authority of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The sovereignty of a risen Christ! Our mission in the world would be futile without this.

But notice next

B. The will of Christ (Matt. 28:19, 20a).

There are 4 things here:

1. "Go" to "all nations."
2. Make disciples.

3. Baptize those who become disciples.

4. Teach--a different word from that used in v. 19.

We are not to wait for people to come; we are to go to them. And we are to go everywhere, to all nations. There are people in every nation who, because of the sovereign power of Jesus Christ, will believe that His death and His resurrection was to save them from their sins.

And they are to be baptized, not into the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but into the name of . . . Water baptism symbolizes our participation in all that the Father is, all that the Son is, and all that the Holy Spirit is--the unity of the Trinity!

And those who have been so vitally related to the Godhead will live their lives in obedience to the words of Christ.

Now in its context, we see that their message had to do with a risen Christ, which means that they also had to be concerned with the purpose of His death.

Again let me say that the Gospel has to do with a crucified and risen Christ. The Gospel is not a message telling people to be good, but it is a message of salvation, telling how God through Christ has made full provision for the forgiveness of our sins so that we can be righteous in God's sight!

But then notice this final point:

C. The promise of Christ (Matt. 28:20b).

"With you" not only means that He will be present with us wherever we may go preaching the Word, but it means that He will be on our side, working with us, guiding us, making sure that our labor is not in vain.

What a promise! And again, how hopeless would be the work of evangelizing the world without these great truths at the end of Matthew 28!

But, before I close, let me call your attention to that expression, "the end of the world."

A more literal translation of the words in the original would be, unto the consummation of the age.

What is an age? It is a period of time. What is a

consummation? It is the completion of something.

Now when you put these two words together we realize that in this period of time in which we are living God is doing something, and that when that work is completed, the end will come, and time will be no more!

This past week in our BMA verses Lucille and I and Dorothy McCaskey (I think we are the only ones working on Book 10) had a very important passage in Acts 15: verses 14-18. Please turn and look at it with me. (Read.) This was the decision of the council in Jerusalem, expressed by James, regarding the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

You see, from the beginning God has known what He is doing, and when He is finished, the end will come.

Concl: What a privilege to have a part in that work! This sovereign Lord Jesus Christ is in absolute control over our lives, determining where and when we would be born, the families we would be in, the country of our birth, our relatives, our neighbors, our work, our abilities, guiding us, giving us the godly desires we have--all for one purpose: that His work in this world might be fully accomplished in every generation!

But it would all be meaningless, the heart would be taken out of it, if we did not have a risen Saviour to proclaim to a lost world.

Do you see the connection?

If you really believe in the resurrection of Christ, that is a miracle of God's grace! He has given you that knowledge. It through Him, and through the preaching of His Gospel that you have been saved. Now "go" and tell others. You are serving a sovereign Saviour Who has promised that He is on your side, to guide you and bless you and use you in reaching others whom He intends to save. Your labor will not be in vain in the Lord, and we can be assured by God that that is true. May we bear testimony to the Gospel in the absolute assurance that the work of the Lord cannot, and will not, fail!