

Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2020 4:39 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 28

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth! Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age!" (Matthew 28:18-20)

Last week, "grasping" at Matthew 27, we "were treading (as David Platt of McLean Bible has put it) on the most holy ground in all of Scripture--with Christ's death on the cross, the climax of Matthew's Gospel," and the point toward which everything has been moving (and not only in our study of Matthew, but in the whole Bible--and, in fact, in all of history--beginning with the creation story in Genesis)! Revisiting--and re-visualizing, and personalizing--the horrors of the crucifixion, the hard-to-figure emotions and actions, and reactions, of people (including the highest Jewish religious officials--and "passers-by" of Golgotha, and the centurion!), and of the seeming response of nature itself to all that was happening on that day of days! Darkness across the land (from 12 to 3 p.m.), the veil of the temple torn in two, the earth shook, and tombs opened, and bodies of saints roaming! Wow! And the incredible words of Jesus on the cross--including His crying out: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (as the Father's wrath was poured out on Him for the "sins of the world")! And so much more taking place on that day!

And the reason for it all, in a passage of Scripture familiar to all of us--John 3:16-17--taking on new significance: "For God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him!"

Matthew 27 closes with a somber burial scene! Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, who had become a "disciple" of Jesus (and whose name will live in infamy) requests the body of Jesus and buries Him in a tomb he had prepared for Himself! And a great stone is rolled in front of the tomb! But the chief priests and Pharisee see to it that the tomb is guarded and secured lest Jesus' disciples "come and steal Him away and say to the people that "He has risen from the dead" (as He had said He would)!

How can we ever forget the words of the song Luckson quoted as part of his closing prayer in our small group session? The song titled: "And Can It Be?" with words written by Charles Wesley: "How can it be that I should gain, an interest in the Savior's blood...Died He for me, who caused His pain...For me, who Him to death pursued...Amazing love! How can it be? That thou my God shouldn't die for me!" What more could one say?

And with that memory lingering on--last nite, we approached Matthew 28!

As dawn breaks, after the Sabbath, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary "came to the tomb"--and got what must have been the greatest surprise of their lives! Matthew writes: "Behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled away the stone and sat upon it"! And then uttered some of the most

memorable words ever spoken! "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified! He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said! Go and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee...and there you will see Him"! And, on their way, Matthew says that Jesus "met them and greeted them," and that they "took hold of His feet and worshipped Him"!

All four gospels shed added light on what happened! Mark 16:9 says Jesus "first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out demons...and that when she reported to His disciples that He was alive and that she had seen Him, they "refused to believe it"! Luke and John record that "although the words they heard appeared to them as nonsense," they both ran to the tomb and saw the linen wrappings only--and that "the other disciple (speaking of John, who arrived first) saw and believed" (what about Peter?), although "they as yet did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead!" Still didn't get it!

Matthew 28:17 says that "the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had designated" and that "when they saw Him, they worshipped Him, but that some were (still?) doubtful"! (The word doubtful, in the Greek, means "hesitated," according to Dr. Constable! MacArthur suggests more than 11 were present and that these were those who may have doubted, or hesitated)!

Jesus appeared to many more after His resurrection! Paul, in I Corinthian 15, would later write: "I delivered to you, as of first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all to me also..."!

The resurrection is, without question, central to Christian theology! David Platt writes that "Christianity rises or falls on the resurrection of Jesus Christ! That doesn't minimize anything else that Jesus did--and especially the cross! But we can only see the significance of the cross and the rest of Christ's perfect work through the lens of the resurrection!" Well said!

Returning to what Scripture says in I Corinthians 15--That "if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our preaching is vain, and our faith is vain...If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied! But now Christ has been raised from the dead...For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive...Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we will also bear the image of the heavenly...Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is your victory? Where is your sting? Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord!"

All of which sets us up to appreciate, maybe as never before, the significance--and application for us--of the closing verses of Matthew! The Great Commission, that Jesus gave us in Matthew 28:18-20! "Shepherd's Notes" notes that it is "sandwiched between a truth and a promise-- which, taken together, more than equips disciples (and that would include "us"!) for carrying out

the commission! The truth is that all authority in both heaven and earth has been given to Jesus! And that the promise is that this One who has all authority will be with His disciples (and again, that includes us!) always! Not only now but until the end of the age!"

But Matthew doesn't give us the "rest of the story"! It continues for the disciples (and for us!) in Acts 1, where the writer records how that "when they (the disciples) had come together (back in Galilee), they were asking Jesus whether it was "at this time, that He (Jesus) was restoring the kingdom of Israel"? (Wow, would you believe it?) And Jesus would reply: "It is not for you to know the times and epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority, but that you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth"!

It continues! "And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking up and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold two men in white clothing stood beside them, and said: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven!" Wow!

And so, does that put it all together? Well mostly, right? Seems to make God's plan of redemption for the world all fit together! And makes us all part of the story!

Men always remember! He (Jesus) has all authority, in heaven and on earth, and is with us always!

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