



## **Matthew 28:9-20**

### **“He’s Alive! So What’s Next?”**

(Study and Application Questions Included)

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### **“Following Christ From City Center!”**

MATTHEW 28:9-20  
"HE'S ALIVE! SO WHAT'S NEXT?"

**A) 28:9-20 APPEARANCES, FRAUD, AND THE GREAT COMMISSION.**

*Them* = Mary Magdalene, "the other" Mary, Only In Mt.

**1) v.9 First Encounter Of The Women With The Risen Christ: Worship + Mission.**

9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "All Hail!" (All Rejoice!) **Appears To The Obedient! //Jn. 20:14-18 (7 Pts.)**  
And they **came** up and took hold of his feet and **worshiped** him. **Worship Only God, Ex. Of Magi**  
**Confirms Angel, No Fantasy: Corpse Transfigured**

**2) v.10 Mission Speech: Go And Tell The Brethren (Evangelize The Church!).**

10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; **Repeats vv.7-8, Forgiven/Restored**  
go and tell 'my brethren' to **go** to **Galilee**. **12:46-50, Test Of Obedience, Follow Women? **COMMAND****  
and there they will see me." ****PROMISE OF APPEARANCE****  
**Empty Tomb Assumed As Fact By Mt.**

**B) 28:11-15 GUARD STORY II: "THE EASTER-GATE COVERUP". //27:62-66**

**Alternative Explanation For Empty Tomb//Jn. 20:2**

**1) vv.11-12 The Plan Is Hatched: Soldiers And Money. 2 Messages From One Empty Tomb!**

11 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city  
and told the chief priests all that had taken place. **Corrupted By Self-Interest**  
12 And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel,  
they gave a sum of money to the soldiers <sup>13</sup>and said,

**3 Levels: Resurrection, Jewish Claim, Mt.'s Counter-Claim**

**2) v.13 You Tell The People: Less Embarrassing Than A True Resurrection.**

"Tell people, **Laughable, How Refute What You Did Not See**  
'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'  
**A Corpse Would Refute The Message**

**2') v.14 We Will Tell The Governor.**

14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, **Political Trouble**  
we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."  
**Jesus Overcame Death/Stone/ Guards/Lies**

**1') v.15 The Plan Is Dispatched: The Soldiers And Money.**

15 So they took the money and did as they were directed;  
and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. **Tells Us How Story Arose //Justin Dialog 108**  
**Key Issue Between Jewish/Christian Synagogues: Was Jesus Raised?**

**A') 28:16-20 APPEARANCE TO THE ELEVEN AND MISSION SPEECH.**

**Jn. 21 For Galilee Appearances**

**1) vv.16-17 Encounter With The Risen Jesus: Worship + Mission.**

16 Now "the eleven" disciples went to **Galilee**, **Mt 27:3-10 (Judas Now Dead), Promise Of 26:32**  
to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. **Place Of Revelation 4:8 (Satan), 5:1, 8:1, 15:29, 17:1, 9; 24:3, 28:16**  
17 And when they saw him they **worshiped** him; **4:9-10, 14:33 (Boat), By Prostration = Absolute Submission**  
but some (they) doubted (were hesitant). **Worship & Waver! Hesitant To Offer Worship As Divine, Jesus Accepts It**  
**From Jewish Renewal Movement To A New World Faith**

**2) vv.18-20 Mission Speech: Make Disciples Everywhere Among All The Peoples.**

18 And Jesus **came (approached)** and said to them, **Dan. 7:14, Ps. 2:7-8, Words Of The Risen Jesus**  
**Past Basis** "All authority in heaven and on earth has *been given* to me. **Deity, Vice-Regent Of Cosmos, 7:28, 11:27, 21:23-27**  
**26:64, Jesus Now Personally Vindicated**

19 (As you) **Go**, therefore, **We Exist For Outsiders! Mission/World Vision/Get A Passport!**  
**Trust** make disciples of all nations **10:5-6, 15:24, Rom. 15:8, *panta ta ethne* = All Language Groups, **COMMAND****  
**8:11-12, The Offer Of Salvation Is Universal**

**Identify** baptizing them **Single Initiation, Tri-Personal Divine Name Brought Together**  
in the name (sg.) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **3:13-17, Sacraments**

20 teaching them **Lifelong Job, 5 Great Discourses In Mt. //Didache 7:1-3**  
**Conform/** to observe (obey) all that I have commanded you; **Teach/Preach/Model Total Jesus' Lifestyle**  
**Replicate** **Jesus Is Always Ministering To Us "From the side of God"**

**and lo (behold)**, I am with you always (all the days), **1:23, 18:20, 26:29, Protection/Power In The Mission**  
to the close of the age." **14:23, Is. 41:10, Dt. 31:23, **PROMISE OF PRESENCE****  
**Jesus Is Raised, Therefore Vindicated By God**

**High Christology: 1) All Authority, 2) Commission, 3) Baptism Formula, 4) Teach His Material, 5) Ongoing Presence, 6) New World**

## HE’S ALIVE! SO WHAT’S NEXT?

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations....”*

A huge, global, messy, costly unfinished mandate.

### M A T T H E W 2 8 : 1 9

**T**he first peacetime draft occurred October 29, 1940. President Roosevelt and Secretary of War Henry Stimson sat on stage in a crowded Washington auditorium. In the preceding weeks all males aged 21 to 35 had been given draft numbers; all the numbers were in 365 cobalt capsules in a large fish bowl. The Secretary was blindfolded with a strip of yellow linen cut from a chair used at the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Stimson reached in and pulled out the first capsule. He handed it to the President who read into an array of microphones before him, "The first number is 158." In her book *No Ordinary Time*, Presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin writes:

“No sooner had the president spoken than a women's scream was heard. Seated in the middle of the auditorium, Mildred Bell gasped. Her 21-year-old son, Harry, who was supposed to be married the following week, held number 158. His future was now linked to that of his country. Number 158 was held by some six thousand registrants in different precincts throughout the country, including Cleveland welder Michael Thompson, father of three children; Jack Clardy, a one-armed Negro banjo picker from Charlotte, NC; an unemployed James Cody of Long Island City. In New York, the surnames of those bearing number 158 told a story in themselves: Farrugia, Chan, Re, Weisblum, Tsatsarones, Stoller, Clement. Some were proud to be the first called, others said they'd make the best of it, others were upset at their bad fortune.”<sup>1</sup>

With citizenship comes the obligation to serve, and with the knowledge of Jesus Christ comes the call to serve; they are inseparable. No deferments, no one to pay to take your place. We're all called to live out the truths of our faith in a confused world, serve those in need, represent the Lord in the various places of our deployment, tell people what God has done for all people in Jesus Christ, and go where he sends us, which may be as close as

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<sup>1</sup> Edited from PreachingToday.com search under Mt. 28:1-20.

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across the street or as far as around the world. The call to follow Jesus is the commission to be an agent of divine grace. In other words, you are either a missionary or a mission field! Which is it? A believer without a mission is a door without a knob! Something's missing!

Two women- Mary Magdalene and *the other Mary* went early Sunday to *see the sepulchre*, the borrowed tomb where Jesus was buried. As eyewitnesses from Friday onward, they viewed the horror of the crucifixion and saw the corpse taken down and buried, so it was not the wrong but the right tomb to which they went thirty six hours later. They went to mourn, to be near a dead friend as was the custom, but were quickly confronted with and commissioned by the angel as resurrection preachers, "He is not here... Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead." Which they did, "So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. They were, as someone said, *epistles to the apostles!* In a moment the whole world changed, and for a little while, they were the only ones who knew it. Friday had not been a failure but the secret purpose of God to break the powers of sin and death by stealth.

Their initial commission by the Lord's angel was confirmed by a surprise appearance of the risen Lord who expanded their orders in verse 10, "... go and tell my brethren to *go to Galilee*, and there they will see me." The two Marys believed, not only because they had been told by a heavenly messenger but because the risen Jesus himself had come to them, stepping from his world into theirs. His body was not a ghostly phantom; they had taken hold of his feet. His risen form, his resurrection body, was touchable. What was initially a report based on good authority was now personally confirmed. Women preachers receiving divine insight from angels and the risen Jesus has been part of God's plan for the church since Day 1! It is to those who love and obey that God gives fresh insight.

It was the women and only the women who provided the important continuity of eyewitness testimony from the cross to the occupied tomb to the angelic announcement to the empty tomb to the risen Lord to the hiding disciples. They saw it all. They are now the guarantors of the truth that Jesus was indeed dead, that the tomb was identified, that God and no one else was the graverobber because they both saw the empty tomb and were met by the risen Lord. Our faith rests on their eyewitness testimony, later confirmed by the men.

The men, now called *the eleven* rather than *the twelve* because of Judas' absence and suicide, were rightly frightened. They might be next for arrest and execution. But not a band of Galilean women. They could stand and watch the cross and follow the events without drawing official attention. After all, they were only women, and no one in that culture took them seriously; they were no threat at all. It was not until later that it was understood how absolutely critical was their role as those who confirmed all that happened between Friday

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afternoon and Sunday morning. Their dogged personal devotion, and then their faith in the risen Lord, is the foundation of our own. It was the same Jesus who was killed who was buried, and the same Jesus who was buried who was raised and appeared. It was precisely because they were so easily ignored that they could function as eyewitnesses. It was their gender that made the men hide, and it was their gender that allowed the women view the chain of events. You may not like women preachers, but apparently Jesus does! Will someone please tell the Baptists and Catholics the Methodists have something right!

To do business with the risen Lord is to be given share in his mission; anything less is a disconnect. They trekked back north to Galilee, and- as promised- Jesus again came to them. He stepped out of his realm into theirs. A blink, and he was there; a blink, and he was gone.<sup>2</sup> And from the same place where it began years earlier, *Galilee of the Gentiles*, a world mission was launched by a Jesus who now occupies the pinnacle of divine authority, “All authority in heaven and on earth, as been now delegated to me.”

First his mission was to Jews only, but now to the world, to every piece of the vast human mosaic, all its culture and languages. We are his agents to go, to tell his story, to invite people to enroll as his disciples, to be plunged into the life of the Triune God in baptism, to learn over time to obey him in the details of his teaching, encouraged by the promise that he is always with his people in the midst of our worship and mission. From the beginning the vindication of all that Jesus was in resurrection has been linked to the call to share and extend his influence. A risen Lord makes life unpredictable.

So why is mission seen as an optional extra and not basic equipment? Is it because we have lowered the bar and not instructed people in the high cost and his privilege of being Christ’s followers in the modern world?<sup>3</sup> We have called for decisions for Christ without helping people become actual disciples. And when we in the church lowball it, why should we be surprised when others ignore it? That Jesus is alive is incredible news! I don’t want to improve on it; I just want to get in on it in a bigger way!

Columnist Joel Rosenberg recounts former Ohio Congressman Tony Hall’s words at the 2005 National Prayer Breakfast. When Hall first went to Washington, he felt hollow. "I didn't know God," he said, "I was tired of my ambition." He shared how he attended a prayer breakfast, heard others describe the process they had gone through to begin a personal

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<sup>2</sup> See Luke 24:13-35, the Emmaus story, for an example.

<sup>3</sup> A good book on making disciples is Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006). See p. 15 for a table of contrast.

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relationship with Christ, and how that event set him on a spiritual journey that led him and his wife to become Christians.

Hall urged men and women of both parties not to be shy about bringing faith to the office and be part of who they are in public. He described a trip to an Islamic country where he was greeted by the U.S. ambassador at the airport. "Congressman Hall, I want to remind you you're in a Muslim country. Don't talk about religion, or it could really set back what we're trying to accomplish here." Hall nodded politely.

When they arrived at the office of the Muslim leader, Hall was asked why he had come. "I would like to be your friend," Hall said. "I would like our countries to be friends. And I would like to invite you to the National Prayer Breakfast, in the name of Jesus."

The Muslim leader got excited. He slapped his knee and said, "That is remarkable. You have come all this way to be my friend and to talk to me about Jesus. My mother used to talk to me a lot about Jesus when I was a child. We should talk about Jesus more often." Then the leader turned to the Ambassador and said, "Why don't you talk about Jesus?"<sup>4</sup>

If you believed he was alive, how would we know it? Do you speak about him with love and excitement? Have you found your place in his mission? If not, then you are the door without the knob. Something's missing! You do not yet understand what this faith means. You may have gotten a piece, but the meaning and adventure has somehow escaped you. What would it mean if Jesus was alive, not just as an ancient piece of information, but in your life?

I have at my disposal an enormous amount of scholarly analysis of the resurrection narratives.<sup>5</sup> I understand the ongoing debates. And, when you get past the surface issues, one thing is clear. It's not so much what's there *in the text* as the lenses and philosophical commitments you bring *to the text* that determine how it is read. World view is critical.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Rosenberg, "Breakfast with the President," *National Review Online*, (2-4-05).

<sup>5</sup> For a defense of bodily resurrection, see Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2004); for debates among skeptical and orthodox scholars, see Robert Stewart, ed., *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2006), Paul Copan and Ronald Tacelli, eds., *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment? A Debate Between William Lane Craig & Gerd Lüdemann* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2000); for a popular treatment Lee Strobel, *The Case for Easter* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004); for a treatment by a Jewish scholar see Geza Vermes, *The Resurrection: History and Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 2008). My own contribution is titled *Resurrection: A Pastor's Reading of the Major New Testament Resurrection Passages* (Fort Valley, GA: Bristol, 2013) and will be available in January 2013.

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If you are a *philosophical naturalist*, meaning you believe there is no such being as the God of the Bible but only the mindless interactions of matter, or if you believe in the softer version that there might be a personal first cause, but not one who is involved with creation in an ongoing, personal sense, then you will explain away the resurrection stories as myths or legends or pious misunderstandings, even outright fraud because you know ahead of time what every sane person knows, which is that dead men don't rise. Miracles, by definition, do not and cannot occur.<sup>6</sup> Jesus may live on in the memory and preaching of his followers, but he is not alive in any independent personal sense. I find reading such authors instructive, not because I buy their skeptical package, but because they raise important questions about the coherence of the evidence that is worth answering. You have first to know your opponents in order to appreciate their concerns and separate the legitimate from the illegitimate. One way forward for such persons is to reexamine the considerable case for miracles as divine activity and perhaps to become a bit skeptical of their own skepticism.<sup>7</sup> I live in an ordered world of natural laws and processes, but also with a Living God who is always present to the creation, sometimes with surprising results.

But if, on the other hand, you come to the text with lenses that are biased towards there being the kind of God described in the Bible and pointed to in the life of Jesus, then you will read the resurrection narratives with a different kind of curiosity. You will read them appreciatively, not skeptically. Anyone who has experienced the power and grace of God will have much less skepticism towards the possibility of divine action. A clearly answered prayer will change the way you view the world. Someone listened and took action!

Because the church has found its life in Jesus Christ, with whom we believe we have ongoing interaction, we don't have nearly as much trouble with the elements that are offensive to modern forms of unbelief. Things like angels who appear and deliver messages, a mysteriously re-embodied Jesus who steps out of heaven into visibility, then vanishes again, and the notion he is with us at all times as we call others to become his followers and apprentices. In answer to the questions, What kind of world do we live in? And just what is possible? Christians give a different set of answers, all of which include the activity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as well as angels and demons. Ours is a highly

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<sup>6</sup> John Dominic Crossan is open about his commitment, "I do not think anyone, anywhere, at any time brings dead people back to life" (*Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* [San Francisco, CA: Harper, 94], 95).

<sup>7</sup> A massive case examining the historical, philosophical, and evidential issues has been recently built by Craig Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility Of The New Testament Accounts, Volume 1 & 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011); and, on the historicity of the resurrection accounts, Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downer's Grove, ILL: IVP, 2010).

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interactive Trinitarian world view and full of surprises. We live in a sophisticated, multi-level, highly interactive creation which is on its way towards a top-to-bottom restoration.

**TURNING TO THE TEXT**

If the church had made up these stories merely for propaganda, they never would have chosen women as the first witnesses, because the testimony of women was not generally taken seriously in Jewish courts.<sup>8</sup> The presence of women alone is also a reminder that the male disciples were not there, and that too is an embarrassment the men had to no doubt live down the rest of their lives. If the stories were rigged or contrived, you would have chosen better, more credible witnesses. Not women and cowards!

But that is how it happened. The Gospels agree that women were first at the tomb, first to receive the good news and an appearance of the risen Lord. That's the way God wanted it! The male disciples- who would later confirm everything the women told them- needed a little adjustment in their attitude perhaps, a willingness to listen to women and respect their relationship with Jesus so that over time the church might have a chance to model something new, which we know from reading history, has been a mixed bag to this day. Men who learn to deal with women and intellectual and spiritual equals are, to me, moving towards the heart of Jesus Christ. Men who don't take this journey and learn its lessons and skills will be increasingly pushed to the edge of our world, at least in the non-Muslim West. There is mounting evidence that the skills women possess and the way they work is giving them an edge in our information world. They are coming into their own, and for many of the brothers getting adjusted to the new reality is a big step.<sup>9</sup>

We must remember that what follows the women's arrival at the tomb occurs not just within normal consciousness within the boundaries of space and time but at the edge of both where the divine realm is breaking into normal perception. We cannot pierce it from our side, but such encounters can come to us from the other side. Matthew's cue is the little phrase *And behold*, which is a signal of divine revelation, in the first case through the appearance of an angel, then from Jesus himself.

**28:9-10 A Confirming Appearance.**

We have the stories of the resurrection encounters, but it was not the story that was first but the actual experience. C.S. Lewis helps us get the order right:

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<sup>8</sup> D. Bock, *Jesus According To Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 394,

<sup>9</sup> The article that sparked the most recent debate is Hanna Robin, "The End of Men," *Atlantic Magazine*, July/August 2010.

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“The Resurrection and its consequences were the ‘gospel’ or good news which the Christians brought: what we call the ‘gospels,’ the narratives of our Lord's life and death, were composed later for the benefit of those who had already accepted the gospel. The miracle of the Resurrection, and the theology of that miracle, comes first: the biography comes later.”<sup>10</sup>

When Matthew says- almost as an aside in verse 9- that *Jesus met them*, it means that as the two women were headed away from the tomb, he appeared. The Lord stepped out of his invisible reality into their world, through some portal you might picture in a science fiction story, the physics of which we do not yet understand since it is the new laws of the coming kingdom that are operative.<sup>11</sup> This is one of the special properties of Jesus resurrection body, a one-of-a-kind prototype we shall one day share. It is not physical and less, not ghostly or ephemeral, but physical and more. Freed from the creaturely limits of space and time, able to locate at different points. Appear and disappear, pass through locked doors, and yet thoroughly embodied, able to be touched, to eat, to converse, not who we are and less but who we are and more.<sup>12</sup> A body fit for a new environment where sin and death and all their dreadful effects have been removed. And only one prototype so far, that of Jesus, with the wounds still visible as earthy credentials. No one else has one yet. They will be issued at the end of the age with the general resurrection of the dead, as we confess in the last words of the Nicene Creed, “We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.”<sup>13</sup> A new body for a new world. An industrial strength frame, sturdy enough for the ecstasies and serious joys of life in unending communion with the Holy Trinity. As a sign of love Jesus spoke to them the standard greeting among friends, “Rejoice!” Had he said, “Boo!” they’d have died on the spot!

The response of the two women is exemplary. They prostrate themselves and cling to Jesus’ feet in worship, which is Matthew’s way of instructing us that since only God is worthy of worship, that what the Jews said of the *Lord* must also be said of *Jesus*. He functions from within the realm labeled God, which we will learn in the next scene is now broadened from a unit into a complex inter-personal union of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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<sup>10</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Christian Reader*, Vol. 31.

<sup>11</sup> Robert John Russell, “Bodily Resurrection, Eschatology, and Scientific Cosmology,” in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, ed. Ted Peters, et. al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 2002), 3-30.

<sup>12</sup> Reading the resurrection accounts in Matthew, Luke, and John confirms these aspects of the resurrection body of Jesus.

<sup>13</sup> *The U.M. Hymnal*, No. 880.

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Christians are those who worship Jesus as full deity with the Father and the Spirit.

In Jesus, and particularly in his resurrection, we are given fresh insight into the complexity of God’s being. There is more to God than the Jews knew; Jesus is our window into the Triune mystery of God. It was precisely in these women’s willingness to obey the command of the angel that they were opened to further divine revelation. They were tested for obedience, and soon after visited by the risen Lord himself, whom they spontaneously worshiped. The information he gave was the same as the angel, since the angel got it from him in the first place!<sup>14</sup> What was new was that they were given the privilege of being the first worshipers of the risen Lord in addition to the first messengers of his resurrection. The only way to receive fresh revelation is to obey what you already have! And all that God has to offer us, the very best, is closeness to Jesus Christ. More about him is all God has to give!

**28:11-15 An Alternative Story.**

But theirs was not the only story or the only mission that first Easter morning. From that empty tomb two tales went out, one from the women and those who would later believe them, the other from the soldiers and those who would believe them right down to Matthew’s day, even all the way to ours. You’ve heard the ideas:

“Jesus was not raised. It doesn’t happen. The disciples came and stole the body, then lied about the whole thing. Just a big hoax, a deliberate religious fraud. That’s all the church has ever been, a big lie based on a big mistake!”

At one level, because we are committed to the idea that the resurrection of Jesus was an event that left behind a deposit of historical evidence and not just a myth or legend, we must be willing to deal with alternative accounts, however improbable, and this one is that. How can they know the disciples stole the body if they were asleep, which was itself apparently a capital offense? Admit to what could get you killed? I don’t think so. Money was earlier paid to Judas to betray Jesus. Here money is again paid to launch a lie about the body, because it is simply too costly to have to come to terms publicly with the fact that we, the religious leaders of the nation, killed the one whom God apparently raised!<sup>15</sup> But other forces were at work. Tradition, privilege, money, resentment, unbelief, all the same powers that keep people from coming to terms with the claim that in Jesus we meet God and that all other accounts are inadequate, if in fact Jesus has been raised.

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew 28:5-7.

<sup>15</sup> Peter’s point in his Pentecost sermon of Acts 2:23-24.

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**28:16-20 The Great Adventure Begins.**<sup>16</sup>

It is frankly difficult to correlate all the resurrection appearances in a consistent geography or strict chronology, the ones in and around Jerusalem and those in Galilee, those to individuals and those to groups over a forty day period. Some of the appearances have no narrative records, as Paul’s report of an appearance to more than five hundred at one time, or the appearance to the Lord’s unbelieving brother James.<sup>17</sup>

But if, as we have speculated, the nature of the resurrection body is such that it defies our conceptions of space and time, then it’s possible that appearances happened at different locations at the same time. Our best summary is that a batch of appearances around Jerusalem was followed by a second series in Galilee, as found here and in John chapter 21. Then back to Jerusalem for Pentecost. Then a later appearance to Paul, which the church counted as last of all.<sup>18</sup>

Why Galilee? Why make them trudge all the way back north? Why insert a long walk with lots of time for discussion and debate? It’s where it all started, and secondly because it was known as *Galilee of the Gentiles*, a slur term Jesus used to his advantage.<sup>19</sup> What he was about was as big as all the world, no longer limited to the lost sheep of Israel.

The disciples obeyed, and at a time of Jesus’ choosing, there he was again on the mountain of revelation. Verse 17, “And when they saw him, (like the women) they worshiped; but also were hesitant.” Not that it wasn’t him they were seeing, but the worship part. If you’re a faithful Jew and believe no one is to be worshiped but the invisible Lord God whom no one has seen, how do you mentally adjust to offering worship to one you’ve personally known for three years, even if he’s been raised and given special status? It is the violation of a strong emotional and cultural taboo against polytheism. No other gods, no images, but now Jesus is the image of that God in flesh. “They worshiped,” says Matthew, but they were also hesitant and of two minds.<sup>20</sup> They were doing it, but should they?

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<sup>16</sup> For an exploration of the forms of the great commission, see Mortimer Arias and Alan Johnson, *The Great Commission: Biblical Models for Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Abington, 1992), especially Chapter 1, “The Great Commission in Matthew,” 15-34.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Cor. 15:3ff.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 9:1-31.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 4:15.

<sup>20</sup> The Greek word for doubt here indicates more hesitation than unbelief.

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Let's not minimize the emotional and cognitive difficulties of redefining one's concept of God. For a polytheist to become a monotheist makes the whole world look different. Only one God to please from here on out. Life gets simpler but more demanding. For an atheist to become a theist is to admit I'm always under divine surveillance. For a Jewish monotheist to become Jewish Trinitarian Christian because of an encounter with Jesus and his Spirit is also a major shift and must be carefully worked through. But in his presence they worshiped; their intuition was correct, though it would take the church three centuries to reach a consensus on the precise language to speak of such a Triune personal God.

For all their years together Jesus was the truth teller, the one with insight and the courage to speak. They knew he heard from the Father and operated in the power of the Spirit. Never had they caught him in a deception. If he would explain it, they would trust him. Which is what he began to do, starting with his own newly revealed relationship to the one they had knew as God, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Not *I have taken it*, but *it has been given to me*. Jesus shares in the power and authority that belongs to the one God. To say at the end in verse 20 that *I am with you always, to the close of the age* is a parallel claim to divine omnipresence. To share in the reign of God, *all authority*, and in the ability to be present with them when they are separated from one another, is to be *Emmanuel, God with us*. But there is an ever greater claim, and that is for Jesus to set the title *Son* as a clear self-reference in tandem with *the Father* and *the Holy Spirit*. All authority, complete omnipresence, and the right to a share in the divine name all belong rightly to Jesus. He is, as he church would later clarify in its Creeds, the second person of the Trinity assuming flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. Worship is rightly his.

And it is in this name- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit- that the church finds its way into every crevice of the human family to offer people the ultimate adventure of being enrolled as disciples of Jesus Christ and through his church- its sacraments and teaching of the Jesus lifestyle- to find their way home to God and finally into the kingdom that is ahead of us all.<sup>21</sup> To love Christ is nothing other than to worship him and to obediently find your place in his world mission towards the transformation of the world. William Temple said, "The church is the only cooperative society in the world that exists for the benefit of its nonmembers."<sup>22</sup> Easter is the rebirth of the Jesus mission through us.

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<sup>21</sup> On discipleship, see Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, Co.: NavPress, 2006); also Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings On Discipleship* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> PreachingToday.com search under Mt. 28:1-10.

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CONCLUSION

Larry Reed and his wife have found a way to practice resurrection. Here's their story:

'My wife and I have found a simple program that lets us reach out to our neighbors and feed the hungry at the same time. It's called *Neighborhood Connections Thru Canning Hunger*. It allows us to gradually build relationships with our neighbors by visiting them every two months to collect goods for people who are hungry.

First, we prayer-walk the streets, asking that God will move our hearts to be broken for these neighbors. Then we leave a door hanger at each home saying we are helping to feed hungry kids and their families in our area. It says we will be stopping by on a certain date to collect non-perishable food items and deliver them immediately to a local food bank. We include our names and address, along with a list of needed items and a packet of information about the program and the needs of the hungry.

One the specified date, we return to the house and knock on the door. We introduce ourselves and say we've come to collect the food. This gives us a chance to meet our neighbors face to face. After that, we go back every two months. When a neighbor has donated a third time, we say: 'Thanks again. By the way, at our church we pray for families who receive this food; we also pray for the families that give it. Is there anything we can pray about for you or your family?'

After a year of this program, we had a neighborhood Christmas party where the gospel was presented. We asked people if they would be interested in a neighborhood Bible study, and nearly everyone showed interest. It resulted in a men's Bible study that became evangelistic. We saw people come to Christ.

My family and I have just moved into a new neighborhood. We have little doubt God has moved us into this neighborhood to once again make connections that will help feed stomachs that are hungry for food- and fill hearts that are hungry for Jesus Christ."<sup>23</sup>

How will you worship the risen Lord and serve others? The Holy Spirit is very creative! There is a place for each of us in the mission of Jesus. Don't miss out on what you were created for. Jesus is alive, and he wants your attention!

**Phil Thrailkill, Main St. UMC, September 30, 2012**

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<sup>23</sup> Larry Reed, "Opening Doors in Our Neighborhoods," *Decision* (April 2006); ©2006 Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

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**STUDY AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

**28:9-10**

1. Think about the visual and audio implications of v.9a. The other world had broken into theirs. What might this feel like?
2. Discuss the implications of, “Do not be afraid.”
3. Why was this appearance and commission first given to women?

**28:11-15**

4. Why would a divine revelation be so quickly followed by a conspiracy? Whose activity do you discern in the immediate background?
5. How is money often used to distort the truth? In the church? In the news? In political circles where power is carefully guarded?
6. What are some of the other explanations for the rise of the church?

**28:16-20**

7. Note the five terms that act as the boundaries of this thought unit. If vv.9-20 are meant to be read as one extended story, then why are vv.9-10 and vv.11-15 often omitted in discussions of *The Great Commission* in vv.16-20?
8. Could it be that justice issues in the church (vv.9-10), apologetics (vv.11-15), worship (v.17) and world missions (vv.18-20) are meant to be of a single piece?
9. How was the obedience of the eleven necessary to their meeting the risen Jesus?
10. How are vv.16-20 the marching orders of the church? Where have we substituted passive membership for active discipleship? (See the appendix)
11. What might it mean to be immersed into the Triune life of God and to learn to put into practice a lifestyle similar to that of Jesus?
12. How is the promise of his presence a pledge of his power to carry out the mission?

**PRAYER**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.** Let us pray:

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
in the resurrection of Jesus your new creation is already begun.  
Death has been marked for final destruction,  
and the kingdom of evil and darkness has been defeated.  
You have served the world notice that Jesus is Lord of all  
by raising him from the dead and vindicating all that he was.  
What you began in him, continue in us your church,  
that empowered by the Holy Spirit  
we may bear witness to the freedom of sins forgiven,  
to the joy of a life of love and service,  
and to the ultimate re-creation of all that you have made.  
Make of us a mission station and a colony of your kingdom.  
In the mighty name of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, we pray. Amen.** (All pray in silence)

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**Appendix I:  
Contrasting Biblical Discipleship And Modern Church (Club) Membership (Thrailkill, et. al.)**

<b>Ancient Christian Discipleship</b>	<b>American Church (Club) Membership</b>
Risky, High Cost	Safe, Low Cost
Contributor & Stakeholder	Consumer & Observer
<i>In The World As A Clear Alternative Community</i>	<i>Of The World With A Few Moral Variations</i>
Total Self Involvement	Segmented Self (Sunday Faith) “Come a little bit, do a little bit, give a little bit, and say a whole lot.”
Obey In Behavior	Assent In Beliefs/ Doctrine
Active, Involved	Passive, Observers
Always Serious, High Adventure	Mostly Casual, Low Demand, Minimal Adventure
High Supernatural Exposure: Miracles Expected	Rare Exposure To Supernatural: Skepticism Is The Norm
Always On The Move	Rarely On The Move
At The Vital Center Of Life	Around The Edge Of Life As A Possible Option
High Challenge	High Comfort
Group Orientation: <i>We First</i>	Individual Orientation: <i>Me First</i>
Allegiance: Tight Bond, Severance Required	Affiliation: Loose Bond, Easily Abandoned
Home As Hospitality, Place Of Teaching	Home As Refuge, Hiding Place, Entertainment
Offer Life And Substance	Pay Club Dues
High Expectation For Transformation	Low Expectation For Transformation
Intense Training, Change Expected	Observing/ Critique Expected
Largely Outdoors	Largely Indoors
Organic Bond: Shared Life	Institutional Bond: Shared Space In Buildings
Follow Jesus, Learn His Ways, Share His Ministry	Admire Jesus, Worship Him, Pay Others To Do Work
Jesus As Leader, Model And Mentor	Jesus As Savior From Sins Worst Consequences
Confrontive And Blunt: Being True!	Convivial And Affable: Being Nice!
High Accountability	Low Accountability
Intense Fellowship: 24/7 + Conflict	Occasional Fellowship: Coffee/Cookies + Avoidance
Disciples Often Look Bad, Goofy, Incompetent	Members Focus On Image-Management, Looking Good
Location: Front Lines	Location: Behind the Lines
Ministry By Amateurs (for the love of it)	Ministry By Professionals (career clergy)
All Are Spiritually Gifted Ministers	Pay The Professionals (Clergy + Staff) To Do It For Us
Jesus And His Kingdom Mission Draw Resources	Institutional Maintenance Draws Large Resources
Holy Spirit As Creative, Disruptive Presence	Low Tolerance For The Unexpected

