

The Life of Christ, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 13: He Is Risen: The Living Lord and His Commission

Matthew 28:1-20

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This final lesson brings the study to its triumphant goal: the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the commission of His church. Two doctrinal themes carry the lesson, and both must be handled with clarity and conviction. The first is the resurrection itself as a real, bodily, historical event. Matthew presents an empty tomb, an angelic announcement, physical appearances of the risen Jesus whom the women take hold of and worship, and even the authorities' attempt to cover it up, which itself testifies that the tomb was empty. The resurrection is not a symbol, a legend, or a feeling that arose in the disciples' hearts; it is the historical fact on which everything stands. As Paul says, if Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile (1 Corinthians 15:17). The resurrection vindicates all of Jesus' claims, proves Him to be the Son of God, and guarantees the hope of His people.

The second theme, which comes to its fullest weight at Question 9, is the Great Commission and the plan of salvation it contains. The risen Christ, holding all authority, commands His disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all He commanded. Take care to teach this as Scripture presents it. Entrance into Christ comes through a believing, repentant response that includes baptism; the commission binds belief to baptism, as Jesus says elsewhere, whoever believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16), and as Peter preached at Pentecost, repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism here is not an optional extra but the God-appointed point of entrance into Christ, uniting us with His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). And this entrance is the beginning, not the end: it is followed by a lifelong walk of discipleship, learning to observe all that Christ commanded. The whole commission rests on the resurrection; only because Christ is risen and holds all authority can He send His people with such a charge and promise His presence to the end of the age.

Formationally, this lesson calls the class to live in the light of the empty tomb: to let resurrection hope conquer their fears and failures, to recover resurrection joy, to rest the weight of their lives on the risen Lord, to submit to His universal authority, and to take their place in His mission. As you close the study, help each person respond personally to the living Christ, whether by coming to Him in obedient faith and baptism for the first time, or by recommitting to follow and to make disciples. The Lord whose life they have traced from the manger to the empty tomb is alive, holds all authority, and is with them always.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Matthew 28:1–7, the women come to the tomb and are told, “He is not here, for he has risen, as he said” (v. 6). Why is it essential to our faith that the resurrection of Jesus is a real, bodily, historical event, and not merely a symbol or a feeling in the hearts of His followers?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Establish first what Matthew actually reports: an empty tomb, a rolled-away stone, an angelic announcement, and the explicit claim that the crucified Jesus has risen. The angel even invites the women to come and see the place where He lay. This is presented as an event in the real world, with physical evidence and witnesses, not as a private spiritual experience.

Explain why the bodily, historical character is essential. Some try to reduce the resurrection to a symbol of new beginnings or to the disciples’ rekindled faith. But the New Testament will not allow it. Paul stakes everything on the historical fact: if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is in vain and our faith is futile, and we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17). A merely symbolic resurrection saves no one. Only a real, bodily resurrection means that death has actually been conquered.

Show what the resurrection accomplishes. It vindicates Jesus’ claims, declaring Him to be the Son of God in power (Romans 1:4). It proves that His sacrifice was accepted and His work of redemption complete. And it guarantees the future resurrection of His people; because He lives, those who are His will live also. The empty tomb is the Father’s great “Amen” to the cross.

Bring it to assurance and worship. Our faith does not rest on wishful thinking or inner feelings but on a Lord who really rose and was really seen. Let the class feel the solid ground beneath their faith: the tomb is empty, Christ is risen, and everything He promised is therefore sure.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The resurrection as a real, bodily, historical event with witnesses
- The futility of faith if Christ is not raised (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17)
- The resurrection vindicating Christ’s claims and deity (Romans 1:4)
- The resurrection guaranteeing the future hope of His people
- Faith resting on historical fact, not feelings

Discussion Prompts

- What physical evidence does Matthew report at the tomb?
- Why does Paul say our faith is futile if Christ is not raised?
- What does the bodily resurrection accomplish and guarantee?

Question 2

Student Question:

The resurrection means that death and apparent defeat did not have the final word over Jesus, and need not have the final word over us. Where in your life are you living as though defeat, fear, or death has the last word, and how does the empty tomb speak to that?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question applies the resurrection to the student's fears. The empty tomb declares that death, the ultimate defeat, has been overcome. If the greatest enemy has lost, then no lesser defeat is final for those who belong to the risen Christ.

Help the class name where they live as though defeat has the last word. For some it is the fear of death itself, their own or a loved one's. For others it is a sense of failure, a past they think defines them, a sin they think cannot be overcome, a discouragement that has settled in. We often live as Saturday people, in the gloom between cross and empty tomb, as if the story ended at the grave.

Let the resurrection speak. Because Christ is risen, the believer's failures are not final, fears are not the last word, and even death has become a defeated enemy and a doorway to life. Invite each person to name one area where they have surrendered to defeat and to consider how the empty tomb changes it. Resurrection hope is not denial of hard realities; it is the confidence that, in Christ, those realities do not get the final word.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The resurrection as the defeat of death, the ultimate enemy
- No lesser defeat being final for those in the risen Christ
- Living as "Saturday people" as if the grave were the end
- Resurrection hope confronting fear, failure, and discouragement

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you living as though defeat or fear has the last word?
- How does the empty tomb speak to that area of your life?
- What would it look like to live this week in resurrection hope?

Question 3

Student Question:

When the risen Jesus met the women, they took hold of His feet and worshiped Him (v. 9). What does their worship, and the resurrection itself, reveal about who Jesus is and about the truth of everything He had claimed?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Notice the physicality and the worship together. The women take hold of His feet, which underscores again that this is a real, bodily Jesus, not a ghost. And they worship Him. Jesus receives their worship, as only God may rightly do. The risen Christ accepts worship without rebuke.

Draw out what the resurrection reveals about His identity. Throughout His ministry Jesus made staggering claims, to be the Son of God, the bread of life, the resurrection and the life, the One with authority to forgive sins and to judge the world. The resurrection is God's public vindication of all of it. A dead teacher's claims die with him; a risen Lord's claims are confirmed. The empty tomb declares that everything Jesus said about Himself is true.

Connect worship to the resurrection. Because He is risen and is who He claimed to be, worship is the only fitting response. The women fell at His feet; so should we. The resurrection turns the crucified One into the worshiped One, not because He was not worthy before, but because now His identity is openly displayed and vindicated.

Apply it to the class. The living Christ stands before them, worthy of their worship and their trust. Everything He claimed has been confirmed by His rising. Let the class join the women in falling at the feet of the risen Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The risen Jesus receiving worship, as only God may
- The bodily reality of the risen Christ
- The resurrection vindicating all of Jesus' claims about Himself
- Worship as the fitting response to the risen Lord

Discussion Prompts

- What is significant about Jesus receiving the women's worship?
- How does the resurrection confirm everything Jesus claimed?
- Why is worship the only fitting response to the risen Christ?

Question 4

Student Question:

The women left the tomb "with fear and great joy" and ran to tell the others (v. 8). Do you carry the joy of the resurrection, and a readiness to share it, or has the wonder grown faint? What would rekindle resurrection joy in you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Notice the women's response: fear and great joy, and an urgent running to tell. The resurrection produced in them an overflowing joy that could not be kept quiet. This is the native response to the news that Christ is risen, and it ought to mark His people still.

Hold up the contrast with our own hearts honestly. For many believers, the wonder of the resurrection has grown faint through familiarity. We affirm it every Easter and most Sundays, yet the great joy has cooled into routine, and the readiness to tell others has faded. This question gently asks whether the joy is still alive in them.

Point toward rekindling. Joy is rekindled as we return to the reality of the empty tomb, as we remember what it means that our Savior lives and that death is defeated, and as we ask God to restore our wonder. Often joy returns precisely as we begin to share the news, as the women did. Invite each person to consider what would rekindle resurrection joy in them, and to take a step toward both renewed wonder and glad witness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Resurrection joy as the native response to the risen Christ
- The fading of wonder through familiarity
- Readiness to share the good news of the resurrection
- Rekindling joy through remembrance, prayer, and witness

Discussion Prompts

- Do you still carry the joy of the resurrection, or has it grown faint?
- What has caused the wonder to fade?
- What would rekindle resurrection joy and a readiness to share it?

Question 5

Student Question:

In verses 11–15, the authorities pay the soldiers to spread a false story that the body was stolen, showing that even the witnesses to the empty tomb tried to explain it away. What does this account suggest about the historical evidence for the resurrection and the lengths people will go to in order to avoid its truth?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Look closely at what the cover-up admits. The authorities do not deny that the tomb is empty; they invent a story to explain the empty tomb away. The very existence of the stolen-body story is a backhanded testimony that the tomb was indeed empty. If the body had still been in the tomb, the simplest refutation would have been to produce it.

Draw out the strength of the evidence. The empty tomb, the inability of the authorities to produce a body, the transformation of the frightened disciples into bold witnesses willing to die for their testimony, and the many eyewitnesses to the risen Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3–8) together form a powerful historical case. The resurrection is not a leap in the dark but a reasonable conclusion from the evidence.

Note the human tendency to explain away unwelcome truth. The authorities had evidence enough, yet they chose a lie because the truth was too costly to accept. People still do this. The issue is often not a lack of evidence but an unwillingness to face the claims that the risen Christ makes on a life. This prepares the personal question that follows.

Apply it to confidence and compassion. The class can hold their faith with confidence, knowing it rests on solid historical ground, and can also approach doubters with compassion, recognizing that resistance to the resurrection is often more a matter of the will than of the evidence.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The cover-up as backhanded testimony to the empty tomb
- The historical evidence for the resurrection (empty tomb, witnesses, transformed disciples)
- The human tendency to explain away costly truth
- Resistance to the resurrection as often a matter of the will

Discussion Prompts

- What does the stolen-body story unintentionally admit?
- What lines of evidence support the historical resurrection?
- Why do people explain away the resurrection even when faced with evidence?

Question 6

Student Question:

People still offer alternative explanations and competing stories to avoid the claims of the risen Christ. When doubts arise, in you or in others, how will you respond, and what would it mean to rest the whole weight of your life on the reality of the risen Lord?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question addresses how we handle doubt, our own and others'. Doubts will come, and competing explanations of the resurrection are still offered. The question is not whether we will encounter them but how we will respond.

Encourage a faith that is both honest and grounded. Honest faith does not pretend doubts away; it brings them into the light and examines them. Grounded faith rests on the solid evidence and testimony of Scripture, the empty tomb, the eyewitnesses, the transformed church, the word of God. We are not asked to believe against the evidence but in accordance with it. Encourage the class to know why they believe, so that doubts do not topple them.

Press the deeper issue of resting our whole lives on the risen Lord. It is one thing to assent that the resurrection happened; it is another to stake everything on it, to order our lives, hopes, and eternity around the living Christ. Invite each person to consider what it would mean to rest the full weight of their life on the risen Lord, and how they will respond to doubts, whether by

seeking answers, returning to the Scriptures, or coming to the living Christ Himself, who is able to meet honest seekers.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Handling doubt honestly and on solid ground
- Knowing why we believe in the resurrection
- Faith in accordance with the evidence, not against it
- Resting the whole weight of life on the risen Lord

Discussion Prompts

- How will you respond when doubts arise, in you or in others?
- What does it mean to rest the whole weight of your life on the risen Christ?
- What helps you stand firm when competing explanations are offered?

Question 7

Student Question:

On the mountain the risen Jesus declared, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (v. 18). What does this reveal about the lordship and reign of the risen Christ, and how does it connect to the kingdom He proclaimed throughout His ministry?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Take in the sweep of the claim: all authority, in heaven and on earth, has been given to the risen Christ. This is not partial or local authority but total and universal dominion. The crucified One has been exalted, and as the risen Lord He now reigns over all things.

Connect this to the kingdom theme of the whole study. Back in Lesson 4 we saw Jesus announce that the kingdom of God was at hand. Here, after the resurrection, He declares that all authority has been given to Him, and soon, at Pentecost, He will be enthroned at the Father's right hand and His church, His kingdom, will begin. The risen Christ is the reigning King. The kingdom He proclaimed is established under His present rule, not awaiting some future earthly throne. He reigns now.

Draw out the implications of His universal authority. Because Christ holds all authority, His commission carries the weight of a King's decree, His promises are backed by the power of the One who rules all things, and His claim upon our lives is total. There is no realm, no nation, no corner of a human life over which He does not have rightful authority.

Lead toward submission and confidence. The universal lordship of the risen Christ calls for our wholehearted submission and grants us great confidence in His mission. We go to make disciples not in our own strength but under the authority of the One who reigns over heaven and earth.

This sets up both the personal question that follows and the Great Commission at the heart of the lesson.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The universal authority and lordship of the risen Christ
- The risen Christ as the reigning King over all things
- The connection to the kingdom proclaimed and now established (compare Acts 2:33–36)
- Christ's total claim upon every life and nation

Discussion Prompts

- What does “all authority in heaven and on earth” claim for the risen Christ?
- How does this connect to the kingdom Jesus proclaimed throughout His ministry?
- What are the implications of His universal authority for our lives and His mission?

Question 8

Student Question:

Jesus' universal authority means He has the right to command our whole lives. Where do you sense the risen Lord calling you to submit more fully to His authority, and what part is He giving you in His mission to make disciples?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question turns Christ's universal authority toward the student's own life and mission. If the risen Lord holds all authority, then He has the right to command every area of our lives, and no area can be rightly withheld from Him.

Invite honest reflection on areas of withheld submission. Most of us have corners of life we quietly keep under our own authority rather than Christ's, our finances, our relationships, our ambitions, our use of time, our private habits. Ask each person where they sense the risen Lord calling them to submit more fully to His rule.

Then turn to the mission. The same authoritative Christ who claims our lives also commissions us. Making disciples is not only the task of preachers and missionaries; every follower of Christ has a part. For one it is raising children in the faith, for another speaking of Christ to a neighbor or coworker, for another supporting and praying for the work of the church, for another teaching or serving in their congregation. Invite each person to name both an area of fuller submission and a specific part they can take in His mission to make disciples.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ's universal authority as His right to command our whole lives
- Identifying areas of withheld submission

- Every disciple having a part in the mission to make disciples
- Naming a specific role in Christ's commission

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you sense the risen Lord calling you to submit more fully?
- What corner of your life have you kept under your own authority?
- What part is Christ giving you in His mission to make disciples?

Question 9

Student Question:

In the Great Commission, Jesus commands His followers to “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” (vv. 19–20; compare Mark 16:15–16; Acts 2:38). How does this show that entrance into Christ comes through a believing, repentant response that includes baptism, that this is then followed by a lifelong walk of discipleship, and how is the whole commission grounded in the bodily resurrection of Jesus?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson and a fitting summit for the whole study, so teach it with care, clarity, and warmth. Begin with the structure of the commission itself. The central command is to make disciples of all nations. Jesus then describes how disciples are made, with two participles: baptizing them and teaching them to observe all He commanded. Making disciples involves bringing people to Christ, baptizing them, and then teaching them to follow Him for life.

Show how the commission binds belief to baptism for entrance into Christ. Jesus says disciples are made by baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He says elsewhere, whoever believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16). At Pentecost, when the convicted crowd asked what they must do, Peter answered, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). The consistent pattern is a believing, repentant response that includes baptism. Baptism is not an optional add-on or a mere symbol of a salvation already complete apart from it; it is the God-appointed point at which a penitent believer is united with Christ in His death and resurrection and enters into Him (Romans 6:3–5; Galatians 3:27). Present this plainly and biblically, letting the texts speak, so the class sees that the new birth into Christ comes through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, not through faith alone.

Then stress that entrance is the beginning, not the whole, of discipleship. Jesus does not stop at baptizing; He commands teaching them to observe all that He commanded. Baptism is the doorway; a lifelong walk of faithful obedience is the road. The disciple is one who, having been born into Christ, then spends a lifetime learning to follow Him in everything. This guards against

treating baptism as a finish line and against any notion that, once entered, the believer may live as they please. Salvation is entered through obedient faith and lived out in ongoing faithfulness.

Finally, ground the whole commission in the resurrection, which is where this lesson and study converge. The commission opens with the risen Christ's claim to all authority and closes with His promise of abiding presence. Only because He is risen and reigns can He send His people to all nations with such authority, command baptism into His name, and promise to be with them always. The bodily resurrection is the foundation on which the entire mission stands. Close by helping the class see their place in this commission: every believer is both a disciple who has entered Christ and one sent to help make other disciples, under the authority and in the presence of the living Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Making disciples as the central command, by baptizing and teaching
- Entrance into Christ through a believing, repentant response that includes baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)
- Baptism as union with Christ's death and resurrection, not an optional symbol (Romans 6:3–5; Galatians 3:27)
- Salvation not by faith alone but by an obedient faith that lays hold of Christ
- A lifelong walk of discipleship following entrance into Christ
- The whole commission grounded in the bodily resurrection and authority of Christ

Discussion Prompts

- According to the commission and Acts 2:38, how does a person enter into Christ?
- Why is baptism better understood as the doorway than as the finish line?
- How is the entire commission grounded in the resurrection of Jesus?

Question 10

Student Question:

Jesus closed with the promise, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (v. 20). Looking back over this lesson and the whole study of the life of Christ, name one specific way you will live this week as a disciple of the risen, present Lord, and one way you will take part in His commission to make disciples.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone closes both the lesson and the entire study, so let it gather the whole journey. The class has traced the life of Christ from the eternal Word and the manger, through His baptism, teaching, miracles, and grace, to the cross, the empty tomb, and the commission. Now the risen Lord promises to be with them always. Help them respond to the living Christ personally.

Discern the responses the class may need, for this is a fitting moment for decision. For anyone who has followed the whole study yet never entered Christ, the right response is to come to the risen Lord in obedient faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, being born into Him as the commission describes. Be ready to speak with such a person and to help them respond. For those already in Christ, the response is renewed discipleship: living this week under His authority and in His presence, and taking a real part in making disciples.

Invite two specific commitments and rest in His presence. Ask each person to name one concrete way they will live as a disciple of the risen Lord this week, and one specific way they will take part in His commission, whether sharing the gospel, raising children in the faith, serving the church, or coming to Christ themselves. Close the study where Matthew closes his Gospel: with the promise of the living Christ to be with His people always, to the end of the age. The Lord whose life they have studied is not a figure of the past but the risen, reigning, present Lord, and He goes with them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Responding personally to the risen, present Lord
- Coming to Christ in obedient faith and baptism for those not yet in Him
- Renewed discipleship under Christ's authority and presence
- Taking a concrete part in the commission to make disciples
- The abiding presence of the living Christ with His people

Discussion Prompts

- What one specific way will you live this week as a disciple of the risen Lord?
- What one way will you take part in His commission to make disciples?
- How does the promise "I am with you always" strengthen you to respond?