

The Life of Christ

Lesson 13: He Is Risen: The Living Lord and His Commission -- Matthew 28:1-20

On Friday it had looked like the end. The Teacher was dead, the tomb was sealed, a stone was rolled across the entrance, and soldiers stood guard. The disciples were scattered and shattered, hiding behind locked doors, their hopes buried with the body. Saturday was the longest, quietest day in the history of the world, a day of silence and grief, of a God who seemed to have lost. And then came the first day of the week, and with it the sunrise that changed everything.

As dawn broke, the women came to the tomb to grieve and to tend a body, and instead they met an earthquake, an angel like lightning, and a stone rolled away. The angel spoke the words that are still the heartbeat of the Christian faith: "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." The tomb was empty. Not because the body had been stolen or moved, but because the dead man was dead no longer. He had risen, bodily, truly, just as He had promised.

And then they met Him. As they ran from the tomb with fear and great joy, Jesus Himself met them, alive, and they took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. This was no ghost, no vision, no comforting memory. It was the same Jesus who had been crucified, now living, His body raised and glorified. Death, the last enemy, the foe before whom every human power finally fails, had been defeated. The grave had done its worst and lost. The crucified King was alive, and nothing would ever be the same.

On a mountain in Galilee, the risen Lord gathered His disciples and spoke words that still ring out over the whole world. "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." The risen Christ holds all authority. He sends His people to make disciples, to baptize them into Christ, and to teach them to follow Him for life. And He promises His presence every step of the way. This final lesson stands at the empty tomb and on the mountain of commission, to behold the living Lord, to receive His command, and to take our place in the story He is still writing.

Group Discussion: Everything in the Christian faith depends on whether Jesus actually, bodily rose from the dead. Why is the historical reality of the resurrection so essential, and how does the empty tomb change the way we face our own fears, failures, and even death itself?

Personal Reflection: The risen Jesus promised, "I am with you always, to the end of the age." Where in your life do you most need to know the presence of the living Lord right now, and how would living in the light of His resurrection and His presence change the way you face this week?

Read Matthew 28:1–20

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?

6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: 1 Corinthians 15:3–8, where Paul lists the many eyewitnesses to the risen Christ; 1 Corinthians 15:20–22, where Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep; Mark 16:15–16, where Jesus says whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; Acts 2:36–41, where the crowd at Pentecost is told to repent and be baptized, and about three thousand respond; Romans 6:3–5, where baptism unites us with the death and resurrection of Christ.