

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

1. Each of the Gospels ends in a distinctive way.

- a. _____ focuses on the empty tomb and the fear of the first witnesses;
- b. _____ on the appearances of the risen Jesus to the disciples, his ascension, and their preparation as witnesses
- c. _____ on a series of appearances of the resurrected Christ, especially to Peter.
- d. _____ depicts the resurrected Jesus' commissioning the disciples for mission. What does this ending tell us about that mission?

2. See Gospels

Luke 24:36-53 (and Acts 1:1-8);

Mark 16:15-20 (longer ending)

John 20:19-23

Matthew 28:16-20 is often called "The G_____ C_____"

3. Disciple to Apostle

A disciple (μαθητης) is one who F_____)

(is an adherent, learner or apprentice; it describes one who follows Jesus.)

An apostle (αποστολος) is S_____

4. The Four All's of this text - The text frames the basis for the communal identity and life together for the movement that will become the church. Four elements emerge that draw our attention.

- a. All A_____ -
- b. All N_____ -
- c. All that He C_____.
- d. Al_____ w_____ us.

Answers

- 1. a. Mark b. Luke c. John d. Matthew
- 2. Great Commission – What is a commission? How is it used today?
- 3. a. follows b. sent - sent/dispatched on a mission for someone, as a messenger or envoy.
While Matthew uses this word in the Greek - only in 10:2, our present passage is clearly a "sending" text.
- 4. a. authority b. nations c. commanded d. always with us - *see below for more study*

Deeper study - Verse by Verse

v. 16: From 12 to 11 – 10:1, 5; 11:1; 20:17; 26:14, 20, 47 vs. see 27:3-10; cf. Acts 1:15-20

Which Gospels tell us what happened to Judas?

What are the chief priests saying about these disciples? - Matthew 28:11-15

Up to this point Jesus' closest associates had been called "the twelve" or the/his "twelve disciples" (10:1, 5; 11:1; 20:17; 26:14, 20, 47). Now they are called "the eleven disciples" because Judas was no longer with them (see 27:3-10; cf. Acts 1:15-20).

“The eleven disciples,” however, are neither paralyzed by the loss of Judas nor intimidated by further machinations of the chief priests who fabricate a story about the disappearance of Jesus’ body (cf. Matthew 28:11-15). On the contrary, they do as they

were instructed and go to a specific — but unnamed — mountain in Galilee (cf. Matthew 26:32; 28:7, 10).

The 11 disciples (Judas was dead, having hanged himself, an event recorded in the gospels **only by Matthew, 27:3-5**; see also Acts 1:12-26)

v. 16 Why Galilee ? 2:22, 4:12, 4:15-17

Galilee (28:7,10), a region of much prominence in Matthew's gospel. Beginning with Jesus' childhood (2:22), Galilee emerges in the gospel as a place of security (4:12) and an unexpected center of messianic preaching (4:15-17).

The symbolic importance of such a venue as the epicenter of the gospel of universal salvation, at some remove from Jerusalem, the center of biblical and post-biblical Judaism and site of Jesus' rejection and execution, would be obvious for the evangelists.

Two factors make the shift in focus from Jerusalem to Galilee at the conclusion of the story of Jesus somewhat surprising. The first is that whatever historical traditions there were surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus and the culmination of his ministry, those traditions are invariably located in Jerusalem, making Jerusalem the obvious place from which to launch the new religious movement.

Second, and perhaps more important, are the various traditions from biblical Israel pointing to Jerusalem as the center from which worldwide messianic restoration would emanate (see especially Isaiah 2:2-3). As the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus could reasonably be expected to make the capital of the kingdom of God and the capital of the holy commonwealth one and the same. That he did not do so, according to Matthew, is a striking theological statement.

Although Galilee symbolized the point of departure for the new Christian mission, there is little solid textual or archaeological evidence (aside from the hypothesized Q) to indicate extensive activity of the Jesus movement in Galilee after his death.

Christian tradition says surprisingly little about Galilee as a center of thought or leadership in the first several centuries of the life of the church, and the bulk of documentary evidence from the New Testament (especially Acts) suggests that tension continued for some time between locating the center of the Jesus (now unmistakably Christian) movement at Jerusalem under Peter, and locating it somewhere in the itinerant ministry of Paul in Asia Minor; Galilee does not really figure in this debate. *Galilee's significance in the gospel tradition after the death of Jesus, therefore, while by no means fictional, is more symbolic than historical.*

v. 16 – What is it with Mountains in Matthew: 4:8, 5:1 (chapters 5-7), 14:23, 15:29, 17:1-13, 26:30

As so often before in Matthew, the setting is an unnamed mountain (28:16, cf. 4:8, 5:1, 14:23, 15:29, 17:1), which Matthew associates especially with the revelation of divine presence and authority. Matthew also refers prominently here to “heaven and earth”

After Jesus' resurrection, the eleven had gone to Galilee (the area of most of Jesus' ministry) to meet him on a mountain "to which Jesus had directed them" (v. 16). See 26:32; 28:5-10. Mountains are significant in Scripture, both before Jesus and also to Jesus and his followers: E.g., Mount Sinai/Horeb, where Moses received God's covenant commandments for the people of Israel, and later where Elijah the prophet had met God after fleeing from Jezebel. Jesus was tempted on a mountain (4:8); he delivered the "Sermon on the Mount" (5-7); he was transfigured on a mountain (17:1-13); and he was on the Mount of Olives (26:30 ff.) when he was betrayed and arrested the evening before he was crucified.

v. 17 - Worshipped Him – same word as 14:22-33 – verb proskunesai -

Upon seeing the risen Christ, the disciples "worshipped" him (v.17), as the magi had paid homage to the infant Jesus (only in Matthew's gospel, 2:2, 11), and as the disciples had honored Jesus on previous occasions in Matthew's gospel (e.g., his walking on and stilling of the Sea of Galilee, 14:22-33).

The verb, *proskunesai*, is a favorite of Matthew's, occurring some 13 times in his gospel (compared to two occurrences in Mark and three in Luke). The action depicted by the verb - prostrating oneself before someone or something holy and kissing the person's or object's feet, garment hem or surrounding ground - is contained in the word's etymology: *pros* "toward" and *kunesai*, "to kiss." The custom appears in Persian (and, later, Greek) contexts, which Matthew utilizes in his unique account of the Magi, who came from the east (i.e., from the direction of Persia).

v. 17 Doubt in the Gospels - see John 20:19-29; Mark 16:10-14; Luke 24:8-11, 37-48

1 Corinthians 13:12

Yet it was these same tentative folks whom Jesus entrusted to carry out his work!

Most English translations of 28:17 leave the impression that the disciples included some worshippers and some doubters (e.g., “doubting Thomas” in John 20:24-29), but the Greek may also be translated, perhaps more naturally, to suggest that the whole group of disciples both worship and doubt.

The Greek word *distazo* carries a sense of standing in two places at the same time or being of two minds. Jesus commissions not perfect disciples, but people who both

As the Son of Man, Jesus already displays the divine authority to forgive sins. He heals a paralyzed man not only for the man's sake but "so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6). Because the power to forgive resides with God alone, the scribes think Jesus has committed blasphemy. But Matthew presents Jesus as the one who rightly claims this authority because he is the Son of Man.

Jesus also has the Son of Man's authority to judge. After teaching his disciples to "deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me," Jesus adds: "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done" (Matthew 16:24-27). Having initiated the reign of God, Jesus stands as judge over all (13:41-42; 19:28; 26:64).

John pointed to one "more powerful than I" who "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (3:11-12).

A Roman army centurion, whose servant Jesus would heal, told him, "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes" (8:9). The same word for authority (εξουσια) is the word Jesus uses in 28:18: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Similarly, see Revelation 5:11-14; Daniel 7:14; Isaiah 9:6; John 3:35; 13:3; 17:1-2; Philippians 2:9-11; Ephesians 1:20-23).

v. 19 Baptism – 3:11 - Corinthians 1:14-17 - Acts 2:41

The tradition of baptism in the gospels derives from John (Matthew 3:11), and one of the striking features of the practice is that there is no record of Jesus administering the rite of baptism himself. That baptism quickly became both widespread and controversial in the early Christian movement is abundantly attested, especially in Paul's letters (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:14-17; cf also Acts 2:41).

While baptism emerged fairly quickly as the standard rite of initiation into the Christian church, it is by no means clear that this was the case with Jesus and his disciples. Similarly, the appearance of the explicit Trinitarian formula in verse 19 is rare in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 13:13 is the **first and only other** explicit reference to the three persons of the Godhead as a single concept), and probably reflects a later baptismal formula interpolated into the gospel of Matthew.

The "baptizing" and "teaching" (vv. 19-20) are from present participles; they likely indicate the *means* by which making disciples will be done: "Go ... make disciples, *by* baptizing and *by* teaching"

v. 19 Trinitarian Formula: 2 Corinthians 13:13 Ephesians 1:3-14

Baptizing was to be "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" Biblical scholars continue to debate the extent to which the tri-fold baptismal wording is "Trinitarian" (Also see 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 13:13; Ephesians 1:3-14.)

v. 20 Teaching - Like other Jewish teachers of his day, Jesus taught that the ten commandments were a shorthand for the entire law. "You shall not murder," for example, prohibited not only murder but also anger against a brother or sister (Matthew 5:21-22; compare to Exodus 20:13). Unlike the scribes and the Pharisees whom he criticizes, Jesus interprets the law in a way that embodies God's justice and mercy. The law, therefore, is not burdensome but a delight: "for my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

Concerning the second practice — viz., "teaching" — disciples are individuals who observe and obey Jesus' "commands." Though not exclusively, the gospel of Matthew preserves the majority of Jesus' "commands" in five lengthy discourses that are found in chapters 5-7, 10, 13, 18 and 24-25.

Teaching (v. 20a) is the common verb διδάσκω. The purpose of the teaching is that the learners would obediently keep paying attention to and doing everything that Jesus had commanded/ordered his disciples to do (see Deuteronomy 4:7-10; Matthew 6:9-10; 7:21-24).

The text frames the basis for the communal identity and life together for the movement that will become the church. Four elements emerge that draw our attention.

There are four "alls" in this text: Jesus has **all** authority given to him, we are to make disciples of **all** nations, we are to teach that we should obey **all** that he commanded during his earthly life, and the promise that closes is that he will be with us **always**. These four "alls" capture much of what the paragraph intends to communicate and also the central message of the Gospel of Matthew.

All authority: The incarnation and Jesus' life on earth were marked by his profound humanity. Apart from a glimpse of his glory during the Transfiguration, this is a Jesus we are not accustomed to. In this scene the authority that Jesus taught with and exercised in his healings and deliverances becomes positional. He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, and the disciples' teacher is now revealed as the Lord of all. The power of passages like Matthew 11:25-30 reside in the person of Jesus. Similarly, the commission that follows has little authority if Jesus were not the Son of God.

All nations: The purpose of God is to be reconciled with all humanity, which includes every nationality and race. Jesus' ministry was primarily limited to the Jewish people throughout Matthew's gospel, but here the boundaries are now expanded to include all humanity. Thus the commission has an international scope. Note, however, that the text

does not say to take the *gospel* to the nations, although it is implied. Jesus here actually says that they are to *make disciples* of all nations.

This is the primary verb of the section, and it is a command. Shallow evangelism is not Jesus' intent; rather, Jesus has in mind a task that is more robust. The disciples are students or pupils--learners. In this case, they are, like the twelve disciples in the gospel narrative, to become devoted followers of Jesus and together live out his teachings within broader society. Further, they are to baptize in the name of the trinity. This baptism becomes the initiation ritual that symbolically marks the movement from death to life.

All that he commanded: Of all the gospels, Matthew's is the most teaching oriented. Matthew structures his gospel in such a way that he includes five major sections of Jesus' teachings. The third part of the command is to teach those who become disciples to do everything that Jesus commanded. This follows Jesus' own instructions in 5.16 and 7.21-27, in which he underlines the necessity of doing what he teaches and not merely paying lip service. Our actions should reflect our beliefs. Statements of faith are important within communities, but Matthew reminds us that faith without appropriate behavior is empty.

Al-ways with us: Matthew closes with what is perhaps one of the most comforting statements in Scripture. Jesus, as Lord of all, promises to be with us, the church, always, even until the final consummation of everything. This continuing, abiding presence of Jesus is a profound promise. The gospel opens with a similar affirmation in 1.23, in which Jesus is named Emmanuel or "God with us". This ending reminds us of the person of Jesus in his earthly life--the one who shared space with people, lived, and was present with them, and showed us what God is like.