

### The Great Commission of Our Lord to Evangelize the World

#### Matthew 28:11-20

Matthew 28:11-30 - *"Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. <sup>12</sup> When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, <sup>13</sup> saying, 'Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' <sup>14</sup> And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." <sup>15</sup> So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*

*<sup>16</sup> Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain that Jesus had appointed for them. <sup>17</sup> When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.*

*<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

#### Background Notes

The Lord appeared to the disciples and others a number of times between His resurrection and His ascension. During the first week after the resurrection His appearances were in Jerusalem. Then the Lord appeared to them in Galilee after the disciples returned to Galilee, where a number of them lived.

This was exactly according to plan. Before the crucifixion he Lord promised them: *"After I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee"* (Matthew 26:32). And the angel directed the disciples to go to Galilee after the resurrection: *"Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him..."* (Matthew 28:7). And the Lord Himself said to the women: *"Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."*

*"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them"* (v16). The exact mountain is unknown, but if we did know, I can assure you that all Holy Land tours would stop at this mountain! And there would surely be several churches built on this site!

*"When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted"* (v17). What about the phrase, "but some doubted"? There are a couple of possible explanations of this phrase. In one of the Lord's post- resurrection appearances, *"...He was seen*

*by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present..."* (1 Corinthians 13:6). The appearance mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15 may have been at the mountain in Galilee in Matthew 28. If so, it's possible

that some of the 500 believers had a few doubts at first. Maybe they were like Thomas. Before the Lord cleared up his doubts, Thomas doubted that the other disciples had actually seen the risen Lord. However, if the “they” in verse 17 refers only to the eleven disciples, then the point may be that some of them did not **worship the Lord** immediately. They saw the risen Lord, and they didn’t doubt the resurrection, but they had not yet have **worshipped** Him. Perhaps they were not convinced until He gave them the “Great Commission” (v18-20).

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The resurrection of Christ has resulted in committed skepticism.

*“Some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, ‘Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept’ (v11-13).*

When the Jewish leaders were confronted with the evidence of the resurrection, they weren’t just skeptical of the evidence. **They conspired to hide the clear truth!** They were “committed skeptics”! They bribed the soldiers with a large sum of money to lie about the empty tomb.

Notice - they didn’t pay the soldiers to go out and find the Lord’s body. That would have been the logical thing to do, if they were truly convinced that there had not been a resurrection. No, the Jewish leaders paid the soldiers to lie! They instructed the soldiers to say that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus while they were asleep. Now does that make a lot of sense? The disciples who ran away when Jesus was arrested suddenly had the courage to steal His body from a tomb that was sealed with an official Roman seal? And guarded by soldiers? And **all** the soldiers were sleeping? Not a single one awoke when the heavy stone was rolled away? And how would the soldiers know what had happened if they were asleep? In fact, it seems that the Jewish authorities even arranged protection for the soldiers, because soldiers could be executed for sleeping on their watch!

So the soldiers took the money and propagated the lie that the disciples had stolen the body while they were sleeping. Now if the soldiers had really thought the disciples had stolen the body, what would they have done? They would have gone out and found the disciples, and then they would have made the disciples “talk.” (Roman soldiers had ways to find people, and they had ways of “making them talk”!)

The lie that the disciples stole the body is still being propagated today, and there are a lot of other skeptic theories that attempt to explain away the resurrection of Christ. These theories are not the result of not ordinary skepticism – they are the result of **committed** skepticism! The evidence of the empty tomb is so overwhelming that skeptics have to come up with **some** kind of explanation, no matter how foolish and flimsy it is. And rather than accept the overwhelming evidence and believe the miracle of the resurrection, they conspire to deny the evidence! They **will not** believe that Jesus is the

Son of God. They **will not** believe that He is alive today. They are **committed** skeptics. The resurrection of Christ has resulted in committed skepticism.

## 2. The resurrection of Christ has resulted in committed evangelism.

*“And Jesus came 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 of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen” (v18-20)*

This is the well-known “Great Commission” given by our Lord to His disciples. It is not “The Great Option” – it’s “The Great **Commission**.” It is the **command** to go and spread the good news of Jesus, and make disciples in all nations.

What a change we have here! In Matthew 10 the disciples were told to go and preach only to the lost Jewish people: *“These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’” (Matthew 10:5-7).* Now, 18 chapters later, the disciples were commanded to go to the entire world! They were definitely told to go to the Gentiles, because they were to go to **all nations**, not just to the Jewish people.

What had changed in those 18 chapters? Answer: The King and His offer of the Kingdom were rejected by the nation of Israel, so Israel had to be set aside temporarily from the place of favor. And now the good news of God’s grace is to go out to the entire world. Believers from all nations are being incorporated into the one true Church, the Body of Christ!

This is the only way to logically explain the complete shift from evangelism of Jews only in Matthew 10 (before the death and resurrection of Christ), and the command to evangelize the whole world in Matthew 28 (after the death and resurrection of Christ). So the resurrection of Jesus Christ has resulted in evangelism for the entire world. Without the resurrection of Christ, there would be no basis for worldwide evangelism.

The Christian faith stands or falls based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The basis of the Christian faith is not just the teachings of Jesus. Jesus’ teachings are wonderful teachings, but the basis of the Christian faith is not just the **teachings** of our Founder. Any moral leader can say, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” The basis of our faith is the events that took place in **His life**, culminating in the most significant events - the most important events – the crucial events: **His death and resurrection!** The Christian faith is based on the **sacrificial death** of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, taking the penalty for the sins of the world, and His **bodily resurrection** - proof that the debt for our sins has been paid, and God is completely satisfied.

Now, as believers, we have the great privilege of sharing this good news with people around the world. We have the Lord's supreme authority to back us up. *"Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth'" (v18)*. In addition, we have the Lord's abiding presence with us: *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (v20)*. What a promise!

These great truths have resulted in committed evangelism around the world. I trust that all of us are committed evangelists, wherever the Lord has placed us. In your family – in your workplace -- in your neighborhood -- in your school! We're there to be **salt** and the **light** in this world, wherever the Lord has placed us. The resurrection of Christ has resulted in committed evangelism.

## Practical Application

### Did you realize the Trinity is taught in "The Great Commission"?

The doctrine of the Trinity is that there is One God, eternally existing in three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Where is that doctrine taught in the Bible?

The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, but the doctrine of the Trinity is certainly taught in the Bible. There are a number of Scriptures that teach that the Father is God, and that the Son (Jesus) is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God. But if someone were to ask you for one verse in the Bible where the doctrine of the Trinity is taught, you could show them Matthew 28:19: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* Notice, "in the **name** of" - not "names," but "name" (singular) of the Father and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. There is One God, existing in three Persons.

In this verse all three Persons are seen as co-equal, and all are in the unity of the "Godhead." The doctrine of the Trinity is implicit in "The Great Commission." So you can share this truth with any of your friends who may not realize that the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in "The Great Commission."