



grow. pray. study.

April 5, 2026 *He's Been Raised! Therefore Go!*

Scripture: Matthew 28:8-10, 16-20 (CEB)

The Earthquake, the Angel, and the Empty Tomb

MONDAY 4.6.26 Matthew 28:1-7

Matthew's gospel reported Jesus' resurrection more compactly than Luke or John. There may have been a practical reason: "Ancient writers liked to make optimal use of the entire length of their scroll, and sometimes simply ran out of room to include more detail." * But the compactness also made Matthew's scene "the most dramatic of the four: an earthquake, an angel, guards stunned into a swoon, and messages about Jesus going ahead to Galilee." **

- The earthquake and the angel were not idle details. In the Hebrew Scriptures, they were signs that God himself was acting. As one scholar noted, "The God who seemed to remain silent on Good Friday is having the last word. He is answering the unspoken questions of Jesus' followers, and the spoken question of Jesus himself on the cross." *** How does knowing the resurrection was God's doing, not human effort, give you a stronger basis for hope than any amount of mere human optimism?
- Equally key was identifying the first witnesses. All four gospels said women were the first to witness the resurrection—"a fact that no conspirator in the first century would have invented," as Philip Yancey noted. **** Jewish courts wouldn't accept female testimony. A deliberate cover-up would have featured Peter, John, or Nicodemus—not women. What does God's choice of women as the first witnesses reveal about his kingdom values? What "givens" in your life do God's values shift?

Prayer: Lord God, in Psalm 16 David declared, "You won't abandon my life to the grave." Because you actively fulfilled that promise for Jesus, I trust you will fulfill it for me, too. Amen.

* Craig Keener comment on Matthew 28:1 in *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 8947). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

** Wright, N. T., *Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16-28* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 197). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

*** *Ibid.*

**** Yancey, Philip, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (p. 212). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Fear and Excitement: The Women Meet Jesus Alive

TUESDAY 4.7.26 Matthew 28:8-10

The resurrection accounts consistently include a mix of “fear” and “excitement”—utterly true to life for meeting Jesus alive after seeing him die on the cross. As one scholar noted, the accounts “go back to genuine personal memory, told again and again to incredulous friends and neighbors, in the tone of voice of someone saying, ‘I know—I almost couldn’t believe it myself! It still seems totally amazing. But this is how it was.’” *

- Author Philip Yancey noted that the resurrection witnesses’ lack of “slickness” made them more credible. “Accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb sound breathless and fragmentary. The women were ‘afraid yet filled with joy,’ says Matthew; ‘trembling and bewildered,’ says Mark. Jesus makes no dramatic, well-orchestrated entrance to quell all doubts; the early reports seem wispy, mysterious, confused.” ** Have you ever struggled to share an amazing, life-changing event? How does the witnesses’ breathless confusion make their testimony more believable?
- Most of us are used to the Easter story (whether we’ve always believed or not). But those first witnesses saw nothing ordinary about it. Scholar N. T. Wright said Matthew “clearly intended to write of something that had actually happened, something that had not only changed the women’s hearts but had torn a hole in normal history. This event had changed the world forever.” *** In what specific ways is your view of life completely different because Jesus defeated hatred, evil, and death?

Prayer: Living Lord, you told your disciples, “Because I live, you will live too” (John 14:19). That promise includes me. Thank you for decisively shattering death’s tyranny. Amen.

* Wright, N. T., *Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16-28* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 198). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

** Yancey, Philip, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (p. 213). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

*** Wright, N. T., *Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16-28* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 199). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Protecting Old Assumptions Against God's New World

WEDNESDAY 4.8.26 Matthew 28:11-15

This report of the plot to falsely deny Jesus' resurrection was unique to Matthew. One scholar noted, "The guards' report is not very plausible. Tomb robbers were not common in Judea, but when they did strike they looted goods, not bodies. Guards would not sleep through the commotion of rolling away the stone, and guards who slept on duty faced severe penalties—in a case like this, potentially death." * The religious leaders' desperate cover-up showed they knew what was at stake: Jesus' resurrection meant their old world was ending and God's new world was breaking in.

- The Jerusalem powers—both Judean and Roman—saw Jesus as a threat. He claimed greater authority than theirs and said God's world works on self-giving love, not brute force and blind tradition. The crucifixion was their effort to end that threat. If Jesus was alive again, all their assumptions were shattered. When have you seen people—in a company, community, or church—struggle to protect old assumptions that were no longer true? What made letting go of those assumptions so threatening?
- The rulers who bribed the soldiers were the first to deny Jesus' resurrection, but hardly the last. It's not enough to keep the resurrection abstractly "long ago." Scholar N. T. Wright said believers "also need... to be sure that they are allowing the resurrection to blow constantly like a fresh breeze through their own lives, thoughts and imaginations. There's no point defending and explaining God's new world if you're still living in the old one yourself." ** How does your thinking, relating to others, or making choices show that you're living in God's new world, not the old one?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the frightened rulers understood that your resurrection meant God was ending the "business as usual" they wanted to preserve. Blow that fresh breeze through my thinking and assumptions as well. Help me truly live in your new world. Amen.

* Craig Keener, comment on Matthew 28:13 in *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 8948). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

** Wright, N. T., *Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16-28* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 203). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Meeting the Risen Christ: Faith and Questions

THURSDAY 4.9.26 Matthew 28:16-17

Matthew's gospel reported a limited number of times when people saw Jesus alive after the resurrection, though other gospels added more accounts (e.g., [Luke 24:13-43](#)). Matthew included the significant note that when the eleven disciples saw him, they worshipped him, “but some doubted.” He gave no more detail, but made it clear that questions or doubts need not preclude faith.

- Matthew had already reported the women's “great fear and excitement” (Matthew 28:8). Here, the presence of both doubt and worship speaks to “the shift in thinking required of Jesus' followers (e.g., [Matthew 16:21-23](#)) and to the need for ongoing development in belief.” The word 'doubt' elsewhere in Matthew is “associated with the disciples' weak faith” ([Matthew 14:31; 21:21](#)). * When have you had to shift your thinking to follow Jesus? Was that shift difficult? How did you move through doubts toward deeper belief?
- The earliest record of people meeting Jesus alive wasn't in the gospels. The apostle Paul, writing around AD 52 or 53, reproduced an established list of Jesus' appearances after his death (see [1 Corinthians 15:4-8](#)). As one scholar noted, “It is noteworthy that Paul treats most of these people as people who were alive and known in the early Christian communities.” ** Why does it matter that many people—not just one or two who might have been hallucinating—knew Jesus was alive? How does the number and variety of witnesses strengthen your confidence?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, honestly, I sometimes still struggle with doubt. But in the end, I always return to trust the many witnesses and join them in worshipping you as my living Lord. Strengthen my faith even in times of questions. Amen.

* From Eugene Eung-Chun Park and Joel B. Green, study note on Matthew 28:17 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 62-63 NT.

** Bauckham, Richard, *Jesus: A Very Short Introduction* (Very Short Introductions) . OUP Oxford. Kindle Edition.

All Authority Given: Go and Make Disciples

FRIDAY 4.10.26 Matthew 28:18-20a

Early in Matthew's story, the devil showed Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory," offering, "I'll give you all these if you bow down and worship me" ([Matthew 4:8-10](#)). Jesus refused—the source and price were more than he would accept. Now, having given himself a much harder path, he could tell his followers, "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth"—the authority to pursue God's mission to restore the world to its intended peace and beauty.

- Easter was a beginning, not an ending. As scholar N. T. Wright noted, "Jesus' resurrection is not about proving some point, or offering people a new spiritual experience. It is about God's purpose that must now be fulfilled." Seeing the risen Jesus meant being commissioned "to a new work, a new life, a new way of life in which everything he told them before will start to come true." * What new work and way of life has Jesus given you? How does knowing Jesus has "all authority in heaven and on earth" give you confidence to live out that calling?
- The central element in Jesus' commission to his disciples was that they were to make other disciples. "Jesus here commissions his followers to convert and train disciples from all peoples, climaxing a theme that runs through Matthew's Gospel (see [1:3-6](#); [2:1-2](#); [4:15](#); [8:5-13](#); [10:15](#); [11:21-23](#); [12:41-42](#); [15:22-28](#); [24:14](#); [27: 54](#))." ** That commission is foundational for [all that Resurrection aims to do](#). What does "making disciples" look like in your everyday life—at work, in your neighborhood, with family and friends?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you defeated death and gave your followers a world-changing mission. Give me the same courage to be your witness that you gave those first disciples, without whose faithfulness I might never have known you. Amen.

* Wright, N. T., *Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16-28* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 198). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

** Craig Keener, comment on Matthew 28:19 in NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (p. 8949). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Immanuel: God With Us Until the Age Ends

SATURDAY 4.11.26 Matthew 28:20b

Every Christmas we study how Matthew quoted Isaiah 7:14 (“she will name him Immanuel—or *God is with us*”) to show what Jesus' birth meant. Now, with all the results of that birth reported, Jesus' promise closed the circle: “I myself—Immanuel—will be with you every day.” As scholar William Barclay noted, nothing was outside the power of the one who had died and conquered death. “Now they were the servants of a Master whose authority upon earth and in heaven was beyond all question.” It must have been staggering for eleven humble Galileans to be sent forth to conquer the world. But “no sooner was the command given, than the promise followed. They were sent out—as we are—on the greatest task in history, but with them there was the greatest presence in the world.” *

- We are “sent out,” not just given leave to sit quietly basking in Jesus' presence. Matthew and the apostles believed Jesus is ruler and holder of authority **now**. But how can that be when the world remains broken? Scholar N. T. Wright explained: “The claim is not that the world is already completely as Jesus intends it to be. The claim is that he is working to take it from where it was—under the rule not only of death but of corruption, greed and every kind of wickedness—and to bring it, by slow means and quick, under the rule of his life-giving love. And how is he doing this? Here is the shock: *through us, his followers.*” ** Can you commit yourself to that commission every time you pray, “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”? What would it look like to live as if Jesus truly is working through you?
- Does Jesus' presence with us make any difference? Wright said it did and does: “In AD 25 nobody outside a small town in Galilee had heard of Jesus. By AD 50 there were riots in Rome because of him, and by AD 65 his followers were being persecuted by the emperor himself.... Jesus' claim to an authority higher than kings and emperors was made good over and over again in the lives, and often enough the deaths, of his followers.” *** What specific difference would trusting his presence make in for you? How might it alter how your faith community goes about sharing God's love?

Prayer: Dear God, you promised through Jesus to be with us every day. The great prayer says, “Make me an instrument of your peace.” Thank you for that promise, as I keep growing in my capacity to live out that prayer for your glory. Amen.

* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew—Volume 2, Chapters 11–28 (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 377.

** Wright, N. T., *Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16–28 (The New Testament for Everyone)* (p. 206). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

*** *Ibid.*, pp. 208–209.

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