

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide
SB 03.31.2024

HE IS RISEN – MATTHEW 28:1-15

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

A few years ago, *TIME* magazine featured an article ranking the 100 most influential people of all time. Not surprisingly, Jesus came in first. Second place wasn't even close. His undeniable impact on history is something even secular historians and atheists agree on. The celebrated author and avowed atheist H.G. Wells once said, 'I'm a historian, not a believer, but I must confess that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history.' Jesus is so significant that we literally divide human history by events that happened either before or after He came. Those things that happened before He came are said to have occurred B.C. or before Christ and the things that have happened since He came are said to have occurred Anno Domini or 'in the year of our Lord.' Time counts down in reverse like a giant alarm clock until His arrival and then marches forward after His birth. Every time you write the year, you are acknowledging, whether consciously or unconsciously, how impactful Jesus was. Let us delve into our study.

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What stood out to you about Pastor Daniel's message and this passage?
2. What is the most memorable funeral you've ever been to? Why?

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 28:1-7

Grieving the loss of those we love is one of the most heart-wrenching trials we can undergo on earth, even if we can claim full confidence and hope in his or her eternal destination. Similarly, when the women somberly traveled to Jesus' tomb on resurrection morning with spices, they did so in great sorrow, intending to wrap Jesus' dead body properly before saying goodbye.

1. What did the women expect to find at the tomb on resurrection morning? What might this indicate about the way they viewed the finality of Jesus' death?
2. In what way did God change the women's hearts and faith through all they saw that morning at the tomb? How did it affect their witness and lives as followers of Jesus?

As the women traveled to the tomb to wrap Jesus' body, they did so peacefully as mourners. But peace and quiet was far from what they experienced there. Instead, the women encountered an earthquake, an angel, stunned guards, and a commission to carry the message of Jesus' resurrection ahead to Galilee. Here, God answered the unspoken questions of Jesus' followers and the spoken question of Jesus Himself on the cross—why He had forsaken His son. As a result, the God who appeared silent on Good Friday had the final word on resurrection morning.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 28:8-18.

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus called His disciples to follow Him. He expected His disciples to obey His radically new teachings out of their love for the Father and their trust in His unfailing goodness and even greater love for them. As He taught, Jesus prepared the disciples for the time He would no longer be with them in human form. These themes reach a climax in the final verses of Matthew 28, when Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples following His resurrection.

ENCOUNTER GOD IN 2024

1. Why did Jesus lead His command with a statement of His authority? In what is His authority rooted? (See Phil. 2:5-11.)
2. What do you think it means for Jesus to have been given all authority “in heaven and on earth”? How should this affect the way we follow Him today?

Jesus told His disciples He had received all authority “in heaven and on earth.” Jesus’ resurrection validated His teachings and deeds and proved to the disciples that all authority over everything rested with Him. As a result, the disciples knew the true nature of Christ. Hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, Daniel had prophesied that the Messiah would be given “dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him” (Dan. 7:14). The scope of His authority encompasses everything in heaven and on earth.

3. What did the authority of Jesus do to the confidence level of His disciples?
4. In what way did it give them purpose and hope for this life and the life to come? How should it give us the same as followers of Jesus today?

To carry out the Great Commission Jesus was about to give, the disciples had to clarify and solidify their understanding of Him, believing deeply that the “man” standing resurrected before them was more than just a man. Jesus truly was and is God in flesh, God in power, and God in authority. And as His disciples today, we have been given the same command of following Him; understanding and belief in the authority of Jesus must precede our obedience. In verses 19-20, Jesus detailed what following Him involves. He mentioned three specific things that together become the method of discipleship: evangelism, baptism, and teaching.

1. Of the three aspects of the Great Commission—evangelism, baptism, and teaching—which is the most natural for you? Which is the most difficult?
2. What is the purpose of baptism? What happens to a person through that expression of faith?

We are called to go and tell others the good news both next door and to the nations. We are also called to encourage others to accept baptism as an outward display of their new lives in Christ. In baptism, we recognize and acknowledge the fullness of God, providing and working our salvation as followers of Jesus.

1. How does Jesus’ promise of His presence influence our mission and purpose as followers? What does it speak into our fears, anxieties, or doubts?
2. How does Jesus remain with us today? (See John 14:25-26.)
3. In what way does this make Him more than just a good historical figure? How does it distinguish Jesus from all other religious leaders, whose graves we can visit here on earth?

Jesus’ authority and presence empowers His followers then and now to fulfill His ultimate commission. But Jesus’ first followers did not attempt to fulfill this Great Commission through their own strength. The Spirit of God worked in their weaknesses to provide courage, love, and joy—the same way He empowers us today as we seek to proclaim His truth throughout our community and to the very ends of the earth.

Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

The resurrection means your future can be forever. Everyone is afraid to die, yet death is the fate we all share. By conquering the grave, Jesus made it possible for us to know with certainty where we will spend eternity. Job said, 'I know my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes – I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!' If you place your faith in Jesus today, you can live with that same confidence. You don't have to wonder or guess where you'll spend eternity or hope that your good deeds outweigh your bad ones. You can know that you are a child of God and that your name is written in the Lamb's book of Life.

1. How are our daily encounters with Jesus today different than those of the women on resurrection morning? What can we do to be just as close to Jesus today until we too have the chance to meet Him face-to-face?
2. How can we explain to others the way we are enabled to meet and know Him in the Spirit, worshiping and learning from Him, tasting and seeing that He is good? Can we do so through our own efforts, or by grace alone?
3. What role must our personal relationships with the living God play in our lives as followers of Christ? How does the world often tempt us to isolate or contain this relationship instead?
4. What does Jesus' eternal presence and resurrection indicate about the hope we can have in this life? What hope does it give us for the life to come?

PRAYER: Thank God for the all-satisfying intimacy we are offered in Christ and the spiritual empowerment of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives through grace—not through works, so that none of us can boast. Pray that all will have the faith and courage to share that gospel of salvation, freedom and life to the full with others.

"I know my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes – I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27).