

## **Matthew 28:16-20**

### **Introduction**

This morning we come to the conclusion of Matthew's Gospel. But it's way more than just a conclusion. It's a new beginning. It's the final *application* of *all* that we've seen and heard about the Messiah and about His kingdom.

As we look back, we remember first of all that Matthew built his Gospel around five major discourses (or sermons) of Jesus (see Matthew outline; "When Jesus had finished"). Each one of these sermons was concerned with a specific aspect of what it means to live as followers of Jesus and citizens of His kingdom (see Matthew outline). But even in the narrative interspersed between the sermons we've seen over and over again the power and coming of the kingdom in the person of Jesus Christ – in His miracles, in His interactions with the disciples, in his conflict with the religious leaders, and finally in His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead.

Matthew's Gospel has been all about the powerful coming and presence of the *rule* and *reign* of Jesus in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. But we're not quite finished. Until now there's a sense in which the kingdom has been present only in a *provisional* manner. The kingdom has been here, but only in *seed* form. So now we read in verse sixteen of chapter twenty-eight:

**I. Matthew 28:16** — Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

We remember now that Matthew didn't just build his Gospel around the five sermons of Jesus. Matthew also built his Gospel around a "tension" between Galilee in the north and Jerusalem in the south. Matthew emphasizes this tension by leaving out *at least* four round trips that Jesus made between Galilee and Jerusalem. So Matthew has thirteen uninterrupted chapters of Jesus' ministry in and around Galilee (see Matthew outline – II. and Mat. 4:12, 17). But then over the course of four chapters we quite "suddenly" see Jesus journeying south towards Jerusalem where He warns His disciples that rejection, and suffering, and death await Him – and also resurrection (see Matthew outline – III. and Mat. 16:21; 17:22; 19:1; 20:17-18). Finally, Jesus arrives in Jerusalem (for the first and only time in Matthew), and over the next eight chapters we witness the conflict, and rejection, and suffering, and death on the cross that Jesus foretold – *followed by resurrection*, which He *also* foretold (see Matthew outline – IV. and Mat. 21:1, 10; 23:37).

So now what? Galilee was the place where it had all begun – "Galilee of the nations" (4:15). Galilee was the place where the disciples had known so much hope and so much optimism concerning the coming of Messiah's kingdom. Jerusalem was the place where Messiah had been rejected and killed. Jerusalem was the place where the disciples had all fallen away in fear and despair. Now Jesus has been raised from the dead in victory and triumph over the grave. Now what? *Where to go now? What to do now?* Just before Jesus went to the cross, He said to His disciples:

- ✓ Matthew 26:31–32 – You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.” But after I am raised up, ***I will go before you to Galilee.***

The angel of the Lord said to the women at the tomb:

- ✓ Matthew 28:7 – Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, ***he is going before you to Galilee;*** there you will see him.

And then Jesus Himself met them and said to them:

- ✓ Matthew 28:10 – Do not be afraid; go and ***tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.***

Galilee was the place where it had all begun. Galilee was the place where the disciples had been so full of hope and optimism. Galilee was the place where they had gone about proclaiming and preaching the gospel of the kingdom: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (4:17; cf. 4:23; 10:5-7). So when Jesus promises His disciples that He will go before them to Galilee, it’s the promise of a ***new beginning***. It’s a sign that now the kingdom will come as it never has before. Now the sovereign rule and reign of Jesus, Messiah, will come as it never could have before.

“Now the eleven disciples ***went to Galilee***, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.”

**II. Matthew 28:17** — And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

Matthew seems to be saying that all eleven of the disciples bowed down in worship when they saw Jesus, but that some who worshiped also doubted. But how can *worship* be possible if they’re still doubting that this is really Jesus? The Greek word for “doubted” is found only one other time in the entire New Testament. In Matthew fourteen Jesus took hold of Peter as he was sinking beneath the waves and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you *doubt*?” (14:31) This was not an intellectual doubt about some *fact*. It was a wavering and a turmoil inside of Peter in light of the circumstances. Peter had stopped *trusting* in Jesus because the reasons for fear felt so overpowering. “Why did you doubt?” – “Why did you waver in your heart?” So also here in Matthew twenty-eight, the point doesn’t seem to be an intellectual doubting of whether this is really Jesus (He’s already appeared to the disciples at least twice in Jerusalem), but rather an inward *wavering* between fear and trust (cf. France; YLT). The disciples worshiped Jesus, even as some of them struggled with the fear that they could never be a part of any new beginning. The disciples bowed down before the risen King even as some of them were filled with doubt that they could ever have a place in His kingdom.

**III. Matthew 28:18a** — And Jesus came and said to them...

In response to their wavering in doubt and uncertainty, Jesus came near to the disciples. His coming near was a wonderful sign of comfort and hope for the disciples. But it should also be a source of comfort, and hope, and strength for us.

Literally: “And Jesus came, and spoke to them, saying...” Sometimes there is a redundancy in Greek that’s just the redundancy of style, and so instead of always translating the redundancy (“spoke to them, saying” – no one talks like that in English), we just translate more simply and with less words (“said to them”). But sometimes the redundancy is not just a matter of Greek style. Sometimes the point is to set us up for the magnitude, and the power, and the beauty of what is about to be said – of the words we’re about to hear – of the truth that’s about to shake the very foundations of heaven and earth. He came near, and spoke to them, saying:

**IV. Matthew 28:18b** — “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

Almost six hundred years earlier, the prophet Daniel described what he had seen in the night visions:

- ✓ Daniel 7:13–14 — And behold, *with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days* and was presented before him. And *to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him*; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Six times already in Matthew, Jesus has looked ahead and spoken of His own future power and glory using language borrowed from Daniel chapter seven.

- ✓ Matthew 10:23 — Truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel *before the Son of Man comes*.
- ✓ Matthew 16:28 — Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the *Son of Man coming in his kingdom*.
- ✓ Matthew 19:28 — Truly, I say to you, in the new world, *when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne*, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones...
- ✓ Matthew 24:30 — Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and *they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*.
- ✓ Matthew 25:31 — *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne*.
- ✓ Matthew 26:64 — I tell you, *from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven*.

Always, Jesus spoke of a *future* glory, and power, and kingdom, and authority. Always He spoke of something future, and not yet *here*. Always – until now. Now Jesus borrows one more time from the language of Daniel chapter seven. And now for the *first time* – for the first time *ever* in Matthew – He speaks not of something still future, but of something *already here*. The glory, and power, and kingdom, and authority of Jesus is no longer still to come. It’s right now. It’s here. “All authority in heaven and on earth *has been given* to me.” Can any of us begin to fathom the breathtaking scope of these words?

We said at the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel that his theme is the theme of fulfillment – of *Jesus* who is the “telos”—the goal and the end—of all the types and shadows and prophecies of

the Old Testament. And now here begins the *final* fulfillment. Here is the fulfillment of what Daniel wrote six hundred years earlier: “And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom.” Jesus can speak of this fulfillment even before His ascension to the throne of God because His resurrection was the guarantee of His ascension. His resurrection *must* lead to His *enthronement* at God’s right hand.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” It is a fuller, more flourishing, more robust knowledge and awareness of this truth that the church of Jesus Christ needs today – and has always needed. It is a fuller, more flourishing, more robust knowledge and awareness of this truth that *we* so desperately need – that *I* so very badly need. This verse and what follows has come to be known as the Great Commission, but sometimes what happens is we forget the *One* who *commissions*, and so we end up more depressed than empowered, more guilt-laden than assured, and inspired, and strengthened. Most Christians know the Great Commission, but very few know that the Great Commission spells out the triumphant fulfillment of Daniel’s vision in Daniel chapter seven. The *key* to the Great Commission is the one who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. The *key* to the Great Commission is the one who has been given dominion and glory and a kingdom. We know this because it’s what Jesus Himself says: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...”

**V. Matthew 28:19a** — “Go *therefore*[!!!] and make disciples of all nations.”

Go *therefore!!! Because* all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me, *therefore* go and make disciples of all nations. Can we hear Him speaking to us today? Because I have *already* been given dominion and glory and a kingdom, therefore go in the sure and certain hope of *triumph and victory*.

In Daniel 7, the one like a Son of Man actually *represented* all the *saints* of the Most High. So in verse 14, Daniel saw one like a Son of Man receiving the kingdom to possess forever and ever. But in verse 18, the angel explained to Daniel:

✓ Daniel 7:18 — The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.

Here’s the glorious truth – Because of the triumph and enthronement of Jesus at God’s right hand, we as His followers now *share* in that triumph. That’s the fulfillment of Daniel chapter 7. “*Because* all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me, *therefore* go and make disciples.” If the royal sovereign of all the world has commissioned us and sent us out, then that means that we go with a royal mandate. We go with the full backing and authority of the already triumphant and victorious *King* of kings and *Lord* of lords.

If Jesus has been given all authority *in heaven and on earth*, then we can especially understand why God says what He does in Isaiah 49:

✓ Isaiah 49:6 (NASB) — It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of *the nations* so that My salvation may reach *to the end of the earth*.

“Go therefore and make disciples,” Jesus said, “of *all nations*.” And here again we see the triumphant fulfillment of the triumphant vision of Daniel chapter seven: “Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that *all peoples, nations, and languages* should serve him.” “Go therefore and make disciples,” Jesus said, “of *all nations*...”

**VI. Matthew 28:19–20** — “...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.”

This is what it *means* to make disciples. It’s not getting people to pray a prayer (though prayer is the natural expression of a repentant and believing heart); it’s first of all baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It’s not getting people to raise their hands or go forward at the end of an evangelistic service, it’s baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.\* There’s a very real sense in which a true disciple has not been made until he or she has been baptized. Outwardly, it’s not the “sinner’s prayer” that marks the beginning of our new life as disciples and followers of the King of kings, but rather *baptism*. Baptism assumes the preaching of the Gospel of the *kingdom*, and of how all the saving blessings of Jesus’ *rule* and *reign* are received by grace alone, through faith alone in what Jesus alone has already accomplished on the cross. And *therefore*, baptism also assumes a glad-hearted surrender and submission to the absolute sovereignty and lordship of the King. In other words, baptism assumes the *rest* of what it means to make disciples. As Jesus goes on to say:

“Teaching them to *observe all* that I have *commanded* you.” Or we could translate: “Teaching them to *obey and put into practice and daily live out* all that *I* have commanded you – *I*, who have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.” *Once more*, we see the triumphant fulfillment of the triumphant vision of Daniel chapter seven: “And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages *should serve him*.” Or in the language of Matthew: ...that having received baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, all peoples, languages, and nations should observe all that Jesus has commanded.

We have not been commissioned to peddle some watered down message about a sentimental Jesus who can make us feel happy inside. This message lacks any royal mandate, and so there can never be any authority or power behind it. Could this explain why sometimes we feel so weak and fearful and anemic in our evangelism? Could this explain why sometimes we do more “tentative sharing” than “bold and joyful proclaiming” – whether to the unsaved outside or to the saved who sit in the pews? What we’ve been commissioned to proclaim to the nations and to teach in the Church is the sovereignty of the King of kings and Lord of lords, and how the *saving blessings* of His rule and His reign are received today and *every* day by grace alone, through faith alone in what He has accomplished on the cross. Truly, in all of the Scriptures, there is no text,

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\* This phrase is so incredibly rich that it could easily and very profitably take an entire message to explore and unpack. But I don’t think that’s needful here in light of the simple point that Jesus is making.

anywhere, more full of **TRIUMPH**... than the Great Commission. The Great Commission doesn't *just* tell us our responsibility – it gives us strength, and power, and hope, and joy, and exhilaration in the task, *no matter* how overwhelming or daunting that task may ever seem to be.

And so this brings us to the end of the Great Commission, and also to the end of Matthew's Gospel. One last time, we hear the word "behold," and never has there been a time when it felt more wonderfully "right."

**VII. Matthew 28:20** — "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

This is comfort that surpasses all other comfort that we could ever know. Once again, here is strength, and power, and hope, and joy, and exhilaration for the task. Here is the final **TRIUMPH** of the Great Commission.

Daniel wrote: "And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And *to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom.*"

Jesus said: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*"

Daniel wrote: "To him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that *all peoples, nations, and languages* should serve him."

Jesus said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of *all nations.*"

Daniel wrote: "To him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should *serve him.*"

Jesus said: "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.*"

Daniel concluded: "His dominion is an *everlasting* dominion, which *shall not pass away*, and his kingdom one that *shall not be destroyed.*"

Jesus' closing words to us in the book of Matthew are these: "*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*"

And so Matthew's Gospel ends in **TRIUMPH**. Back in Galilee, we find the promise of a new beginning – a promise that now the kingdom will come as it never has before. Now the wonderful saving blessings of the sovereign rule and reign of Jesus will come to all the nations as they never could have before. And now we have been called and commissioned to be a *part* of His triumph. What the church needs to be doing today – what *we* need to be doing today – is hearing these words, and reading these words, and memorizing these words, and meditating on these words, and soaking in these words, and even reciting these words to one another, so that by faith we might know what it is to live every day in the triumph of our Lord's Great Commission. How could this not be our deepest *joy* and heart's *desire*?

## Outline of Matthew's Gospel

### **I. Introducing the Messiah (1:1-4:11; Bethlehem; Egypt; Nazareth of Galilee; JUDEA<sup>1</sup>)**

- Narrative... (1:1-4:11)

### **II. MINISTRY IN GALILEE<sup>2</sup> (4:12-16:20)**

- ✓ Matthew 4:12, 17 – When he heard that John had been arrested, he *withdrew into Galilee*... *From that time Jesus began to* preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

- ...Narrative (4:12-4:25)

- DISCOURSE #1 (The Sermon on the Mount / Living Righteously in the Kingdom – 5-7)  
“*And when Jesus had finished these sayings...*” (7:28)

- Narrative (Collection of Miracle “Stories” [Accounts] – 8-9)

- DISCOURSE #2 (Instruction for Kingdom Missions and Evangelism – 10)  
“*When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples...*” (11:1)

- Narrative (Miscellaneous – 11-12)

- DISCOURSE #3 (Parables of the Kingdom; the mystery of the “already” and the “not yet” – 13)  
“*And when Jesus had finished these parables...*” (13:53)

- Narrative... (Miscellaneous – 13:53-16:20)

### **III. JOURNEY FROM GALILEE to JERUSALEM (16:21-20:34)**

- ✓ Matthew 16:21 – *From that time (while they were far north in Caesarea Philippi) Jesus began to* show his disciples that he must *go to Jerusalem* and suffer many things...
- ✓ Matthew 17:22 – *As they were gathering in Galilee*, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men...”
- ✓ Matthew 19:1 – Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, *he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea* beyond the Jordan.
- ✓ Matthew 20:17-18 – *As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem*, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, “*See, we are going up to Jerusalem*. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death...”

- ...Narrative (Miscellaneous – 16:21-17:27)

- DISCOURSE #4 (Instructions on living *together* in the Kingdom Community – 18)  
“*Now when Jesus had finished these sayings...*” (19:1)

- Narrative... (Miscellaneous – 19-20)

#### IV. CONFLICT, DEATH, AND VINDICATION IN JERUSALEM (21:1-28:15)

- ✓ Matthew 21:1, 10 – They *drew near to Jerusalem* and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives... when he *entered Jerusalem*, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, *from Nazareth of Galilee*.”
- ✓ Matthew 23:37 – O *Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!

- ...Narrative (Conflict in Jerusalem – **21-23**)

- **DISCOURSE #5** (The Olivet Discourse; The Future Consummation of the Kingdom – **24-25**)  
“*When Jesus had finished all these sayings...*” (26:1)

- Narrative... (The suffering, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus – **26:1-28:15**)

#### (Looking ahead to a return to Galilee)

- ✓ Matthew 26:31-32 – Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, *I will go before you to Galilee*.”
- ✓ Matthew 28:7 – Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, *he is going before you to Galilee*; there you will see him. See, I have told you.
- ✓ Matthew 28:10 – Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and *tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me*.”

#### V. RETURN TO GALILEE<sup>3</sup> AND THE GREAT COMMISSION (28:16-20)

- ✓ Matthew 28:16 – Now the eleven disciples *went to Galilee*, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

- ...Narrative (The Great Commission – **28:16-20**)

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew leaves out a trip to Galilee

<sup>2</sup> Matthew leaves out at least two trips to Judea

<sup>3</sup> Matthew leaves out a return to Judea