

## The Cast | People Engaged In the Story of Jesus Christ

### *The Eleven Disciple-Makers*

Matthew 28.11-20

April 16, 2017

*Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. <sup>2</sup> And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. <sup>3</sup> And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. <sup>4</sup> The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. <sup>6</sup> "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. <sup>7</sup> "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you." <sup>8</sup> And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. <sup>9</sup> And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me."*

*<sup>11</sup> Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. <sup>12</sup> And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, <sup>13</sup> and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' <sup>14</sup> "And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble." <sup>15</sup> And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.*

*<sup>16</sup> But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. <sup>17</sup> When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came up 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 the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

For a few months, each Sunday Morning, we've looked at one or more of the secondary characters in the Story of Jesus Christ as found in The Four Gospels. Some of these cast members fly across the stage ONCE and we never hear from them again.

The characters we consider today have been on stage (so to speak) almost continuously since early in the narrative...and in many ways they've changed... and WILL CHANGE as we continue to read about them later in the New Testament.

They WERE TWELVE...but now specifically called “the eleven disciples”... ALL Galileans (Judas was NOT – but tragically he is not with them). They have been ordered BACK to Galilee (Matthew and John mention this); it’s difficult to construct an exact timeline of post-resurrection events...but apparently Jesus Christ plans a meeting with the eleven on a designated mountain in Galilee – almost surely the same mountain we read about in CH 17 where Jesus was “transfigured” before the eyes of Peter, James and John.

We looked at the middle of this same chapter LAST Easter and we read the WHOLE chapter today ...but I want to focus my comments on the last paragraph... it’s packed with HOPE for people who believe in Jesus Christ AND packed with TRUTH that should be convincing for those who DON’T YET believe...

Let’s look at 1) The Environment of Despair

2) The Authority of Adam

3) The Investment of Mission

The disciples...like all of us...have been hard to convince ...they’re bound by their preconceptions and their cultural programming and even though Jesus Christ repeatedly warned them of His impending death by crucifixion...they JUST didn’t see it coming and they are NOT expecting the resurrection.

Some Jewish people in that day believed in a universal resurrection at the end of history but no one believed in an INDIVIDUAL resurrection...and THAT was part of this environment of despair.

Even to the very end... (v. 17) “some were doubtful” – once again, NOT a flattering picture of these unbelieving believers! The founding members of the Christian Church were... weak...fearful...doubting and despairing... WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

Well, again, as we’ve seen... IF the disciples made up the resurrection... if it was a hoax they concocted in order to get rich or famous, THEN WOULDN’T THEY want to look good in the story they were writing?

But the fact that they DON’T look good...they’re about as unheroic as can be...THAT IS A MARK THAT THIS IS HISTORY...it’s a mark that it’s TRUE.

This was NOT a hoax and it was definitely NOT some sort of wish-fulfillment...the disciples didn’t expect it.

Additionally... it’s WOMEN who are the primary witnesses...AND as is often stressed, women were NOT considered to be reliable witnesses in the ancient world and were not acceptable as legal witnesses... Now, obviously in our MODERN sensibilities we’re all enraged at that kind of sexism... and YET the four Gospel-writers ALL mention women VERY prominently as the FIRST

witnesses... It's a fact that would've HURT their cause...and they would've had NO REASON to insert these women into the story if they had invented the story...UNLESS...they didn't invent the story! The women were actually the first witnesses – it's JUST THE WAY IT HAPPENED!

Then there's this little plot. The chief priests and elders wanted to ensure that the disciples didn't steal the Body and claim that Jesus had been raised (they were actually giving the disciples more credit than they deserved!) ...but Matthew records that there was an earthquake...and an angel opened the tomb so that it could be inspected...and the angel sat on the large stone and spoke to the women.

But WHY again would Matthew have recorded this whole sequence? Do you think Matthew had any interest in suggesting the idea that the disciples may have stolen the Body? It makes no sense!

And Matthew is writing into an environment where people had HEARD that the tomb was empty...and there would always be opponents who used the "stolen Body theory" to explain away who Jesus IS... SO they included what really happened... "even at the risk of putting ideas into people's heads rather than leave the accusation unanswered" (N.T. Wright, p.638) Everyone in the days, months and years following the resurrection KNEW that the TOMB was empty...it was an undisputed fact.

And when you add it all up – the disciples were doubtful (which made them look bad! NOT good if they were going to try to get rich or famous) added to the women witnesses and the inclusion of this guard story that answers the charge of body-stealing - add it all up and it's very convincing historical reporting.

Matthew wants us to see - #1 – The Tomb was empty (how do you explain that?) and #2 – Jesus who was DEAD...was seen repeatedly alive and risen.

He's not depicting a metaphysical symbol or a vision... but an actual bodily resurrection...a Man who claimed He would die and rise again did ACTUALLY die and rise again... He wasn't a vision – HE HAD FEET...standing on the ground...not a ghost.

Second...The Environment of Doubt/Despair is pierced by The Risen Man – the authority of Adam is now restored to HUMANITY.

"Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'"

The authority once forfeited by Adam in the garden has NOW been reclaimed by a Second Adam... He showed that He had authority over sickness and evil and over the forces of nature but NOW He IS RISEN! He has power over the final enemy death itself - "ALL authority is given to

ME!" This is Man as God meant Him to BE...the start of a new humanity!

And His final words in this whole book of Matthew are "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" ... He is Man as man was meant to be, the Prime Minister of all creation AND He is God...He speaks as God spoke so often in the history of His people, "I AM WITH YOU"

The Book of Matthew begins with the charge to Joseph, "they shall call his name Immanuel, which translated means, "GOD WITH US." (Mat 1.23) and the book ends with, Jesus Christ, the God-Man saying "I am WITH YOU" – God with US!

Remember Jacob, the Patriarch of Israel, saw that ladder coming down from heaven and heard a Voice saying, "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west ... east ...north and...south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed...Behold, I am with you" (Gen 28.14-15) – Jacob heard the words of Jesus Christ.

Remember Jeremiah hears these words, "Do not say, 'I am but a youth,' because everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you (Jer 1.7-8) Those were the words of Jesus Christ.

The Prophet Haggai heard these words, 'Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke by the commission of the LORD to the people saying, 'I am with you,' declares the LORD.'" (1.13) Those TOO were the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The resurrection as Matthew records it has Jesus Christ – the Second Adam vindicated and His sacrifice is accepted – the strife is o'er the battle won... the Perfect Man and King of Creation AND the incarnation of God – this is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...the God who calls and commissions and who will reclaim the world. Jesus Christ.

The baptismal formula is another reinforcement – "baptizing them in the NAME (singular – not names but the ONE name) of Father, Son and Holy Spirit" The one raised from the dead is the embodiment of God who rules over all creation and dwells with His people forever! The Son is of one substance, equal in power and glory with Father and the Spirit: "baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Finally, the environment of despair, the authority of Adam and (3<sup>rd</sup>) the INVESTMENT of MISSION.

Jesus Christ...the NEW ADAM...the Perfect Man... the God who dwells with us always...HE IS NOW re-issuing the creation mandate, "Be fruitful and multiply!"

He invests the disciples (shaky and doubting as they ARE) He invests them with the mission of

spiritual reproduction... the making of disciples in the entire world. He had limited them: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mat 15:24)

But now He reminds them, I have other sheep (Jn 10.16) and in fact YOU disciples will comb ALL the nations...and multiply...disciples MAKING disciples!

You will baptize them INTO the Name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and will thereby introduce them into this NEW CREATION of which I am the beginning.

I died saying "It is finished" and on the Sabbath God rested from all His labors (I lay at peace in the garden tomb) and NOW on the First Day of the Week ...the New Creation begins! This is the Lord's Day – the Day of Resurrection and I want you to bring others INTO this new and living way.

They will MERGE with Me...be baptized into Me and into the upside-down kingdom. Teach them to live in this New Way where the first shall be last and those who serve are celebrities (greatest among you!) and where people FIND LIFE by losing their rights.

Show people THAT I HAVE gained forgiveness for anyone who believes... there is cleansing, baptism, NEW LIFE! There is resurrection for all sinners who simply come... Be fruitful and multiply!

And BOY...isn't that JUST what has happened?! Those eleven fishermen really did become fishers of men... 120 gathered in that upstairs room on Pentecost... then 3000 believed and were baptized... then Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth... TODAY, about 2.2 Billion people have been baptized into the NAME... like yeast dropped into a huge vat of flour...it keeps on spreading.

And THAT brings me...to YOU.

What about YOU...are you living by faith in Jesus Christ, God-With-Us, the Risen Man and rightful Lord of Creation? Are you knowing the joy of multiplying? Calling people to believe and receive forgiveness and NEW LIFE? This is the trajectory of history so get with it... we can't lose...He is with us always! He is RISEN!

Or maybe you're just checking Him out...well I hope we gave you some fuel...for a decision... come talk to me about NEXT STEPS...about what it means to belong to Jesus Christ... to enter the New Creation.

Become a member of the Cast... you'll NEVER regret it!