

Jesus on the Mountain, and Matthew's Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20

Matthew 28. What we call Matthew's Great Commission is mostly about the deity of Christ. Three Scriptures set up the final meeting with Jesus. We'll go over those, and then we'll look at what happens on the mountain in seven parts. Each of these seven uses language the OT uses of God, YHWH, to speak of Jesus. But first, Matthew sets up this meeting three times.

1. Matt 26:31-32 - *Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." <sup>32</sup> But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."*

We tend to go right by v32 here, the meeting after, because there is so much intensity in the moment. Judas will betray Jesus, the twelve will leave Jesus, Peter will deny Jesus. But at least notice that Jesus sets up a meeting afterward. *I will go ahead of you into Galilee.*

2. Matthew 28:5-8 - *The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go **quickly** and tell his disciples: '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> So the women **hurried** away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and **ran** to tell his disciples.*

The angel urged the women to speak to the disciples to confirm the meeting Jesus set up. Go quickly and tell the disciples. Behold, he's going ahead. Behold, I have told you.

"Behold" is like putting an exclamation mark at the beginning of a sentence. The emphasis is on Jesus going ahead. The last line of the angel is curious, *Behold I have told you*. It was very important to the angel to relay this message. Someone told the angel, "You make very clear to those women what they shall do. VERY clear. DON'T forget." *Behold, I have told you.*"

3. Matt 28:9-10 - *Suddenly Jesus met them (the women). "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and **worshiped** him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my **brothers** to go to **Galilee**; there they will see me."*

"My brothers," kind words to the scattered sheep. Worship: this is a God thing. This is obviously right worship, it is right to worship Jesus. Deity of Jesus implied here.

The emphasis again is that the women will remind the disciples about the meeting with Jesus in Galilee, the one he set up. The angel talks to the women, then Jesus talks to the women, both to make sure the disciples meet Jesus in Galilee. Important meeting.

In Luke and John, Jesus appeared to the disciples on that first Easter Sunday, on the same day he rose. Matthew almost certainly knows about that, but ignores it, because he's teaching something different. Matthew teaches that meeting the risen Jesus means this Galilee meeting.

In Matthew, to properly meet the resurrected Jesus means to meet him *as the eleven met him in Galilee*. What Jesus teaches in these last five verses is bound up with the resurrected Jesus and meeting the resurrected Jesus. The resurrected Jesus means these next 7 points, in Matthew.

Now we'll go through this important meeting, Matthew 28:16-20. There are seven details (by my count) that use OT God language, mostly from God in Exodus, to refer to Jesus.

1. *Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.*

We learn here that the disciples will meet on a mountain, and that Jesus had already told them where to meet him, and Jesus had previously said that it will be on a mountain.

In the Bible, mountains are God places. God met Israel at Mt Sinai, and there God gave commands. Moses went up to meet God on the mountain, and God spoke to Moses on the mountain. Moses never spoke to Israel from the mountain. Jesus is not like Moses. God spoke directly to Israel from the mountain, or God spoke to Moses on the mountain and Moses came down and told Israel. Here at the end of Matthew, the disciples are as Moses, and Jesus as God.

In Exodus 3, Moses met God: *Moses led Jethro's flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Mt Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush.* They meet at a mountain. Later in the conversation, God says to Moses, *when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.*

Even in Matthew, mountains are God places. Why is the sermon on the Mount called the sermon on the mount? Mt 5:1 *Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the mountain.* Afterward, 8:1 *When Jesus had come down from the mountain.* The words of God from the Mountain.

The Mount of transfiguration, Matt 17, where God speaks to the disciples: *"This is my beloved Son, I am pleased with him. Listen to him."* Disciples heard God on the mountain.

The point here is the deity of Jesus. In the OT, they went to the mountain to meet God, Moses met God at the mountain, later Israel met God at the mountain.

Jesus meeting the disciples on a mountain does not make the OT connection certain. Perhaps the mountain is just a landmark. At this stage, the Sinai connection is a probable meaning. But we'll see 6 more connections between Jesus here and God in Exodus, so soon there will be no doubt.

**Meeting the risen Jesus is like Moses going to the mountain to meet YHWH.**

2. <sup>17</sup> *When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.* We'll get to the doubt in a minute. When they saw him, they worshipped him. The women also did this, back in v9. In Scripture, one worships only God. Jesus understands what they are doing, and he accepts their worship. It's right to worship him.

This means we were right to see the mountain as an OT God place, and we were right to understand that this Scripture wants us to see Jesus as doing now on the mountain with his disciples what God did in the OT with Moses.

Some doubted. In the next line, Jesus comes closer to them, they must be a little distance away here, so that most recognize Jesus but some have misgivings. It is these kinds of honesty in the resurrection story that make it sound like these people wrote down what actually happened, rather than make up a story to sound good.

What later Christian would make up a story about some of the Eleven doubting that this was really Jesus? No one would make that up. My brothers and sisters, it is normal to have doubts. Not pleasant but normal. I will pass on three pieces of good advice about doubts:

- 1, Don't be proud of doubts, as if they show you to be more thoughtful than those without;
- 2, if you have doubts, don't pretend you do not;
- 3, carry them, they are a burden, carry them until redemption.

Back to Exodus and the God mountain. At the burning bush, Moses worshiped God. God said (Ex 3:12), *Here is a sign: You will bring the people out of Egypt and worship at this mountain.*

**When we come to the risen Jesus, we worship him, as Moses worshipped YHWH at Sinai.**

3. <sup>18</sup> *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* Who has all authority in heaven and on earth? God does, no doubt about that. But now Jesus has it. Jesus did not take over, he did not fight for it or steal it or win it, rather it was given to him. God, the One with this authority, gave it to Jesus.

This is why we call him "Lord," as in "Lord Jesus." He's Lord means he has all authority in heaven and on earth. Earlier, Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of earth, all authority on earth, if Jesus would worship Satan.

Jesus did not do that, he waited and served his Father, and now he had all that Satan offered, as well as a whole lot more. Jesus now has the authority of God himself. Jesus is clear that he's still under the Father. This authority has been given to him. That's why he meets them on the mountain, and why he accepts their worship. Deity - 3 so far: mountain, worship, authority.

**When we come to the risen Jesus, we come to the Lord of heaven and earth.**

4. <sup>19</sup> *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations. “Therefore” connects directly to all authority in heaven and on earth. “If I am Lord of heaven and earth, then all people should be serving me. If I was just the Jewish Christ, the only Jews should serve me. But if I am Lord of heaven and earth, then all the nations owe me service.”*

This is in the OT about YHWH – all the earth should be praising God.

*Ps 96 Sing to the LORD [YHWH], all the earth, Sing to the LORD, praise his name. Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness, tremble before him, all the earth.*

*Ps 97 The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad, let the distance shores rejoice.*

*Ps 98 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music, for he will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples with equity.*

*Ps 100 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.*

*Worship the LORD with gladness, come before him with joyful songs.*

Jesus is now Lord of heaven and earth, has all authority in heaven and on earth, therefore all the nations should be serving him. But service to the Lord means to be a disciple. All the nations should be doing what the eleven have already been doing, following Jesus, being his disciples, because he now has all authority in heaven and on earth.

**When we come to the risen Jesus, we come to the one to whom all nations owe service. He is their Lord, and has a right to their honour. This is the risen Jesus we follow.**

5. *Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

Think about the *name* of God. When God called Moses at the burning bush, Exodus 3, Moses said to God, “*Suppose they ask me, ‘what is His name?’ What shall I tell them?*” And then God explains his *name* YHWH to Moses. And again in Exodus 6, God tells Moses that he’s explaining his *name* YHWH more fully.

So Jesus, on the mountain, meeting the eleven, who are the new version of Moses, and receiving worship from them, revises the *Name* of God. The God of the OT is now named *the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*.

And this happens in baptism. Baptism is how the nations are brought in to the family of God, brought into Christ. “Bring them into my people,” we could paraphrase, “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Until this point, it is not clear how YHWH fits into this. Jesus is now the Lord of heaven and earth, and all the nations should serve Jesus and be his disciples, that’s fine, but how exactly does the OT God fit into this? Jesus answers with the revised *name* of God: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. As it stands here, those three together are YHWH.

This commission does not say anything about the gospel, or about preaching. “Go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” It sounds like when the eleven go, the nations are already lining up for baptism. Doesn't it sound like that?

Someone has to preach the gospel, if the nations are going to line up for baptism, but this commission does not speak about that. Jesus only sounds concerned about how the nations are baptized. That's the emphasis here.

The baptismal line is again about deity of Christ. 1, he met them on the mountain; 2, they worshiped him; 3, he has been made Lord of heaven and earth; 4, all the nations should serve him; and 5, when they come to him they are coming to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Christ's exaltation and deity are in all of these.

**When we come to the risen Jesus, and worship and are baptized, we come to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

6, <sup>20</sup> *and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

I was confused for years about the word “command” here. This is not how Jesus' teachings are usually presented in the Gospels, including Matthew. Jesus usually *teaches* people, not *commands* them. But think Exodus, and think God on the mountain, and think Mt Sinai.

All of a sudden “commands” makes more sense. In Exodus, God gave his people commands. Now who gives commands to his people? Jesus does.

As *Moses* urged *Israel* to obey *all the commands of God*,  
so the *eleven* will urge the *disciples from all nations* to obey *all the commands of Jesus*.

**When we come to the risen Jesus, we come to One who commands, and who shall be obeyed.**

7. *And behold I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*”

When God met Moses at the burning bush, Exodus 3, *Moses* said, “*Who am I, that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?*” And *God* said, “*I am with you.*”

At the end of Moses' life, Deut 31:6,8,23 Moses says to Joshua, “The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you, he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Who is it *now* that is with us and never leaves us? Jesus. The Lord of heaven and earth is *with us always, to the very end of the age*. That last line, *to the very end of the age*, shows that it is not just for the eleven, but for all his disciples, right until he returns. Even now, the Lord of heaven and earth is with each one of us every day.

Matthew does not record the ascension of Jesus. In Matthew, Jesus talks about leaving and returning, so we know it will happen. But it's not mentioned here. Matthew leaves us with the promise that the Lord of heaven and earth is with us every day.

What are the eleven supposed to do? Make disciples by baptizing and teaching obedience to Christ. Somewhere along the line it dawned on me that this is exactly what *pastors* do. This is how I serve our church. I make disciples of Jesus by baptizing them and teaching them. I am not an evangelist at all, yet I do just what this says, and so do other pastors and teachers.

But the NT does not tell us that every believer should baptize, nor does it tell us that every believer should teach. This is for church leaders and it shows the priorities of the whole church.

If the eleven do just what Jesus said, what words come out of their mouths? One, the baptismal announcement, in the name of the Father and Son and Spirit, and two, the teachings of Jesus.

If someone had only this Scripture, you could not blame them for ignoring the gospel altogether (we know from the rest of the NT that this is NOT true). In this Scripture, how does one make disciples? One starts by baptizing them a certain way, and then one teaches the baptized to obey all that Jesus commanded. What happens before baptism does not matter, *in this paragraph*.

Deity. The way all Mt 28 is written (and 26:32), with the emphasis by means of the women on this meeting between Jesus and the apostles, we do not grasp the resurrection of Jesus until we grasp all of this. It was crucially important to Jesus and to the angel that this meeting take place; this paragraph is what the disciples needed to know about the risen Jesus.

It is about Jesus himself, who he is, and the degree to which he is now in the place of God. In Matthew, this is bound up with his resurrection. The disciples did not get to see the resurrected Jesus without getting all of this. The resurrection changed things. God on Sinai invited Israel to serve him. Jesus on this mountain invites all the nations to serve him. That is Matthew's urgency.

Risen Jesus, we meet you on the mountain, where you waited, as Moses met the LORD, who waited for him at the burning bush.

Risen Jesus, we worship you, as Moses worshipped the LORD.

Risen Jesus, you have all the authority of the LORD over the heavens and the earth.

Risen Lord Jesus, because of this authority, it is right that all the nations follow you.

Risen Lord Jesus, when we are baptized, you bring to yourself with the new Name of God: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Risen Lord Jesus, as God commanded Moses, so you have commanded us. We will teach your commands and we will obey them.

Risen Lord Jesus, as God was with Moses, so you are with us every day, to the end of the age. And we give you praise and thanks.

Amen.