

Who Do I Say That I Am?

Matthew 28:16-20

Matthew 26. This is called, “Who do I say that I am?” In Matthew 16, Jesus asked the disciples: “who do people say that I am?” Then he asked the disciples, “who so you say that I am?” But Jesus has never openly answered his own question. But at the end of Matthew Jesus answer his own question. Jesus tells the disciples who he says he is.

The end of Matthew is about the deity of Jesus. He tells them that he’s God. Jesus does that this way: he sets up a scene in which he treats the eleven disciples like God treated Moses at Mt. Sinai, and lets the disciples figure it out what happened. We are doing this on Easter Sunday because in Matthew, that first Easter Sunday already aims the disciples at this mountain scene.

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. In each of these seven Jesus uses language the OT uses of God, YHWH, to speak to the disciples. But first, Matthew sets up this meeting 3 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.’³² But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”*

We tend to go right by *I will go ahead of you into Galilee*, the meeting after, because there is so much intensity in the moment. Judas will betray, Peter will deny, and the twelve will all leave. 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. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ 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.”⁸ 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.*”

There you will see him. [You won’t see him before this. Others will, but not you disciples.]

3. Matt 28:9-10 - *Suddenly Jesus met them (the women). "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and **worshipped** him.¹⁰ 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. And the women worshipped Jesus. This is a God thing. This is obviously right worship, it right to give him what only God receives.

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.

And again, *there they will see me*. Others see Jesus before the Galilee meeting, but not the disciples. In Luke and John, Jesus appeared to the disciples on that first Easter Sunday, 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 see the resurrected Jesus means to see him *as **the eleven sawt him in Galilee***. 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. v16 *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 this. So far, we have just been told "Galilee," but here we learn that back in Matt 26, before he arrest, Jesus told them this would happen on a mountain, and which mountain it would be.

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*, then we have the Sermon on the Mt. After the Sermon, 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 himself speak on the mountain.

The point in Mt 28 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.

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

2. v17 *When they saw him, they worshipped 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, because he is God.

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 advice about doubts that I've heard:

- 1, Don't be proud of doubts, as if they show you to be more thoughtful than those without;
- 2, if we have doubts, don't pretend we do not. If the Bible is not ashamed, why should we be?
- 3, let's carry them, they are a burden, carry them until we meet the Lord.

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.* Just like the disciples worshipped Jesus on the mountain.

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

3. v18 *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 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. 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. v19 *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 Messiah, 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.

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 all nations owe service. He is their Lord and ours, and has a right to their service and ours. 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 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, the revised Name.

When Peter preached his great Pentecost Sermon, he said, “*God made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.*” “*What should we do?*” “*Repent and be baptized, and you will receive the Holy Spirit.*” When we come to Jesus, we are dealing with all three: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Let us never fear that if we worship Jesus, we are ignoring the Father or ignoring the Holy Spirit. When we worship Jesus, we are doing just what the Father and Holy Spirit want.

The baptismal line is again about deity of Christ. 1, he met them on the mountain; 2, they worshiped him; 3, he is now 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. v20 *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 from the mountain. Now who gives commands to his people? Jesus does.

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

When we come to the risen Jesus, we come to One who commands, the One to obey.

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.*”

Who is it *now* that is with 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's 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. God is using Matthew to encourage and comfort us here, today. Matthew ends this way on purpose.

Jesus' last words to us in Matthew are: *Behold [exclamation mark], I am with you always. To the end of the age.* I often doubt this. I fear that when I see him, I will find out that the Lord of heaven and earth was with me all along, to a degree I could not imagine, always with me.

I will say to him, "I didn't know you were always with me like that." And he will say, "what should I have said differently to convince you?" And I will have no answer, he had said it all.

If the eleven do exactly what Jesus said, what words come out of their mouths? One, the baptismal announcement, in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Two, the commands of Jesus that shall be obeyed.

Who do I say that I am? Even in these seven points, Jesus still does not answer this directly. He sets up a scene, on a mountain. From the mountain he speaks to the disciples by paraphrasing what God said to Moses on the mountain, acts like God, and lets the disciples figure it out.

How did Jesus tell Jerusalem he was king? He set up a scene. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. He let them figure it out. We can figure this one out, because the Gospel writers are kind enough to quote the OT that this fulfills. But often they do not quote the OT that is fulfilled.

John the Baptist wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt, and ate locusts and wild honey. This echoes what 2 Kings 1 says about Elijah, but none of the Gospels quote 2 Kings. For years I never got it, just though JnB had weird clothes and food.

The Gospels are telling us that JnB was the Elijah that Malachi said would come. But I didn't read 2 Kings, so I didn't get it. What happens at the end of Matthew is like that.

As Jesus earlier entered Jerusalem on a donkey to say he was the king, so Jesus here acted like YHWH on a mountain, to say he was God. He spoke to the disciples the way God spoke to Moses. Do we get it? Only if we know Exodus. Matthew is the one Gospel most designed for Jewish believers, and I am sure they knew Exodus 3 and they got it pretty fast. Now we do, too.

Let's pray:

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 and obey you.

Risen Lord Jesus, when we are baptized, you bring us 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 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.

Appendix: What about “go”? As in, “Go and make disciples.” Is Jesus telling the disciples to go somewhere?

I think probably not. In Matthew (and elsewhere, but I'll mostly stick to Matthew), instructions often begin with “go” or “get up,” but this opening word could be omitted without the instruction changing in a meaningful way. The opening “go” or “get up” often functions more like “get ready for action.”

Mt 2:13 “*Getting up*, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt.” If we took “getting up” out of that sentence, what Joseph needs to do does not change.

Mt 2:20 “*Getting up*, take the child and his mother and enter Israel.”

Acts 22:16, Ananias speaking to Paul: “*Get up*, be baptized and have your sins washed away, calling on his name.”

If we remove “get up,” the instruction is not different.

Mt 11:4 Jesus to the disciples of John: “*Going*, report to John what you have seen and heard.” No change if we omit “going.”

Mt 21:28 “*Go* today and work in the vineyard.” There is some “going” involved, but “work in the vineyard” dominates, and would stand alone without changing the essence.

In each of these, the first word is a general call to action; omitting it changes the *pace* of the story, removes some *urgency*, but does not much affect the basic instruction, and it would be a mistake to stress that first action word. The emphasis always falls on the next verb.

In Mt 21:2, Jesus begins, “*Go* into the village ahead of you.” Here there is a stated destination, “the village ahead of you,” so “go” could not be omitted. But in the five earlier examples, we do not put emphasis on the first word. “*Going*, make disciples by baptizing and teaching,” probably belongs in that earlier category.

One could argue that “all the nations” provide the destination and thus “make disciples” requires actual going and travel, putting more emphasis on “go.” But “the nations” is racial not geographical. The Lord does not mention *gospel* or *preach*, but *baptize* and *teach*. If “go and make disciples” means travel, it puzzles me that the first thing the eleven do when they arrive is baptize. *Gospel* and *preach* imply evangelism, but are not mentioned; *baptize* and *teach* imply church life, and evidently as the method of discipling. That they shall baptize and teach shapes how we understand *go*. *Include* appears to be Jesus' overall intent, which yields: “Make disciples, *include* all the nations in your baptizing and teaching.” First century Jews always had gentiles living around them. So I do not put emphasis on “go.”

Matthew 9:37-8 // Luke 10:2 provides a better teaching of Jesus on which to build going: *Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”* The “send out” takes center stage without ambiguity, the words require real *going*.