

Matthew 28B

- On January 25, 2018, we began a verse-by-verse study of the gospel of Matthew
 - And after 129 lessons over 153 weeks and totaling 11,827 minutes of teaching, we are finally ending our study today
 - I listed these statistics for one reason only: to remind you there is no limit to how much we can learn from a study of Scripture
 - John tells us at the end of his Gospel that there aren't enough books in the world to hold all that Jesus said and did
 - So though we took a while to finish this study, still we only scratched the surface of what could be understood
 - Yet because we spent that time together, we changed. Each of us changed in some way through what God taught us in this study
 - That's the power and purpose of studying God's word. It transforms and renews us Paul says
 - We become someone new and better spiritually and even physically by God's power working through His word
 - So if you're into making New Year's resolutions, consider this one: studying the Bible more in 2021
 - Because that's the way to change everything else in your life
 - Peter says it this way

1Pet. 1:25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”

And this is the word which was preached to you.

1Pet. 2:1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

1Pet. 2:2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation

- In fact, if you study Scripture long enough, you may become unrecognizable to family or friends who knew you before
 - Better that we change that way than in other ways

A middle-aged woman had a heart attack and was taken to the hospital. While on the operating table she had a near death experience. Seeing God she asked, "Is my time up?" God said, "No, you have another 43 years, 2 months and 8 days to live."

Upon awaking in the hospital bed, the woman decided if she was going to live that much longer, she decided to make the most the time. She arranged to stay in the hospital longer to have a face lift, lip implants, botox, liposuction and a tummy tuck. She even changed her hair color.

After the work was done, she looked like a new woman, and as she was released from the hospital she crossed the street and was immediately hit by a bus and died. Arriving in Heaven and standing before God, she demanded an explanation from God. "I thought you said I had another 43 years?! Why didn't you pull me out of the path of that bus?"

God replied, "I didn't recognize you."

- So let's finish Matthew, returning to verse nine as Jesus makes His first appearance to His disciples to prove His claims to resurrect after three days

[Matt. 28:9](#) And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.

[Matt. 28:10](#) 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."

- As we've seen, Matthew continues to abbreviate the story of Jesus' resurrection appearances
 - In just a few verses, he moves from Jesus' burial to His resurrection and then to the end of the story
 - But across the four Gospels, we have the full account of what took place and I can summarize what Matthew overlooked
- We know Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden near the tomb, and she reported that encounter to the disciples
 - The Lord told Mary to instruct the disciples to leave for Galilee where Jesus would greet them
 - But, when the eleven men heard her story, they thought Mary was hysterical and so they didn't believe her and didn't go

- Then later that same day in the afternoon, Luke tells us Jesus appears to two unnamed male disciples leaving Jerusalem for Emmaeus
 - Jesus walked with these men for a distance but the men were prevented from recognizing Jesus initially
 - Then as evening was approaching, Jesus broke bread with them, and in that moment God allowed them to recognize Jesus
 - Immediately, these men run back to Jerusalem to report what they saw to the eleven apostles still huddled in Jerusalem
- So by the time we get to verse nine, the eleven have received multiple testimonies of Jesus risen and alive, both from women and from men
 - Mary, mother of Jesus, told them of the angel's testimony, Mary Magdalene reported seeing Jesus, and now two men report the same
 - Moreover, Peter and John saw the empty tomb for themselves
 - But despite the mounting evidence, the eleven refuse to believe and remain fearful and hiding in Jerusalem
 - And therefore, they aren't willing to go to Galilee
 - So because they won't go to Galilee to find Jesus, Jesus must come find them in their hiding place
 - Late on Sunday night, the same day He rose from the grave, Jesus appears to the eleven disciples
 - That's the moment Matthew is now describing in vs.9, and John gives us a detailed description

[John 20:19](#) So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."

[John 20:20](#) And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

[John 20:21](#) So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

[John 20:22](#) And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

[John 20:23](#) "If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."

- Tenderly, Jesus allows the men to believe He is alive, and then Jesus tells them that they will receive the Holy Spirit
 - By the Spirit's power, they will be ambassadors of the Gospel message, offering forgiveness of sins
 - And that was the point all along...the mystery and power of Jesus' resurrection wasn't meant just to impress the disciples
 - Christ's resurrection was the key moment in God's plan to extend salvation and forgiveness to the world
 - And that's why it was so important that these men start moving to Galilee...there was Kingdom work to be done!
- But instead of moving forward in the mission, the disciples were still struggling to believe that Jesus was resurrected and alive
 - The mission was on hold because they were still wrestling with the meaning of Jesus' death and testimony that He was alive
 - These men were facing very unique circumstances, but they were also acting according to a pattern many have repeated
 - Many Christians early in their walk with Christ can get paralyzed or stuck on step one of their faith: trusting the resurrection
 - And by that I mean, they have trouble moving beyond believing in Christ, which is step one for everyone, and into *servicing* Christ
 - So many Christians I meet struggle for assurance that they are saved, or they worry they might somehow lose that salvation
 - As a result, they become paralyzed with resolving questions about salvation, and that keeps them from moving forward
 - It's hard to mature as a Christian or serve other Christians when you're distracted by the question of whether you are a Christian
 - Some Christians worry if they can sin their way out of salvation or stop believing one day and lose their salvation, etc.
 - And as long as they remain trapped by these unnecessary worries and doubts, they will stand still in their walk with Jesus
 - They are like the apostles sitting in that upper room debating whether the reports of Jesus' resurrection were really true

- Although all the evidence testified that Jesus was alive, the disciples couldn't believe and therefore they couldn't move
- Out of fear they did nothing, meaning the Kingdom work was waiting and so was Jesus
- Is that you this morning? Are you stuck on step one, still seeking assurances you are saved or worried that it might be lost somehow?
 - If so, then I'm also certain you aren't serving Jesus in Kingdom work, at least not as much as you could or should
 - You're probably like one of those 11 men in that upper room
 - You've heard the proof many times, but you just have to believe the testimony and move ahead in serving Jesus
 - The testimony of Scripture says if you believe that Jesus is Lord and died for your sins, then you are saved by your faith
 - To believe in that message is to be born again, and to be born again is to become a child of God, adopted into God's family
 - And to be adopted into the family of God is to become a fellow heir with Christ of the good things to come
 - The Bible testifies these things are true and unchanging and eternal
 - Nothing and no one can reverse that born-again spiritual change that God accomplishes in the heart of a person
 - No more can you be unborn spiritually than you can be unborn physically
 - No more can you sin your way out of God's family than you can sin your way out of your earthly family
 - Your eternal inheritance is reserved for you in Heaven by the power of God and nothing can take it away

1Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1Pet. 1:4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

1Pet. 1:5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

- I like to remind believers, you've been saved, now get over it and press on... let's go to Galilee, so to speak, into the world to begin our Kingdom work
 - And effective service requires we set aside doubts about Jesus' resurrection or the certainty of our own salvation
 - We also need to set aside fear of what might happen if we go
 - God didn't save us so we could hide in our homes from the scary world, just counting down the days until we die
 - Nor did He call us to collect inside church buildings so we can create "community" with no purpose
 - He saved us to represent Him to the world, to go out in the middle of whatever may be happening around us as His ambassadors
 - We are to be light to darkness bringing good news
 - And to do that, we have to operate with trust that Jesus is going ahead of us and will meet us in Galilee
 - And whatever happens, we know it was in God's purpose
 - And better to reach the end of our life in our "going" than to end alone and waiting
 - We come back to the topic of going in a moment, but meanwhile Matthew let's us know that Jesus' enemies continued to oppose Him

Matt. 28:11 Now while they were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.

Matt. 28:12 And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers,

Matt. 28:13 and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.'

Matt. 28:14 "And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble."

Matt. 28:15 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.

- Matthew's account makes it sound like after Jesus appeared on Sunday night, the disciples went immediately to Galilee
 - But John tells us that one of the 11 was missing from that initial meeting

- Thomas had been out of the room at the time, so later he returned and heard that Jesus had been there
- But Thomas wouldn't believe so he refused to go to Galilee, forcing the other men to waste time trying to convince him
- So eight days later, Jesus appears one more time to all 11 men, including Thomas, and this time Thomas believes Jesus is alive
 - Meanwhile, during those eight days, the news of Jesus' resurrection began to circulate among His followers in the city
 - At the same time, the Roman guards who watched Jesus' tomb had recovered and began talking
 - The guards had been witnesses to the earthquake and the angel moving the stone aside of the tomb and to Jesus being raised
 - The sight of these things rendered them paralyzed or unconscious but they remembered what happened
- Eventually, they reported what they saw to the chief priests, and the priests reacted much the same way as Jesus' disciples had done
 - They don't believe the reports, and that's no surprise, so rather than investigate to learn the truth, they conspired to pervert it
 - After consulting with the elders of the nation they give the guards a large bribe to change their story
- The official story would now be that the disciples came and stole the body, but that story would not have reflected well on those guards
 - They were the ones stationed specifically to prevent such a thing, so now they would tell everyone they failed in their assigned mission
 - Certainly, the guards would look like fools to repeat such a story, which is why they were bribed so richly
 - But that story would also get them in trouble with the boss, and probably bring death and no bribe was enough to compensate
 - So the chief priests told the Roman guards that they could handle their Roman superiors and an agreement is struck
 - So they guards take the money and the story of the disciples stealing the body would soon be shared widely

- Years after whenever Jesus' disciples preached the Gospel, the common rebuttal they heard was His body was stolen
- But that was fake news, and it didn't address the main part of their testimony
- Such a story might explain the disappearance of a dead body, but it couldn't explain His resurrection appearances
 - And Paul tells us that there were more than a few eye witnesses walking around in that day testifying Jesus was alive

1Cor. 15:3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

1Cor. 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

1Cor. 15:5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

1Cor. 15:6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

1Cor. 15:7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

1Cor. 15:8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

- Paul says that altogether there were over 500 first-hand witnesses who saw Jesus alive
- So that even in Paul's day over 20 years later, many of these witnessed were still alive and testifying
 - That's why the false story circulated by the chief priests couldn't stop the truth of the Gospel
 - The overwhelming evidence available to everyone proved Jesus was alive and that fact buried the conspiracy quickly
- And that's how the Gospel works. God's truth triumphs over the enemy's lies because God's word has power, Satan's doesn't
 - And that power will go forth and accomplish all that God desires
 - So consider what this means for our Kingdom work
 - Our work is to share a message with the world that tells the story of what Jesus did, *not* what we have done or can do
 - And our message is backed by the power of God to demonstrate its authenticity and trustworthiness

- Wherever we go, Jesus goes ahead working to prepare hearts to receive that message
- When we share the truth, the enemy will oppose it, of course, but his opposition stands no chance in the face of God's power
- So why wouldn't we go out serving Jesus? What is stopping us? Just our own fears, doubts, or perhaps laziness?
- And Matthew ends his Gospel with one of the better known passages of the New Testament to encourage us to overcome those obstacles
 - Beginning with the disciples making their way to Galilee at last

Matt. 28:16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.

Matt. 28:17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.

- After eight days or so, the eleven apostles of Jesus finally make their way to Galilee, to a high place that Jesus designated
 - While they wait there, Jesus appears and they worship Him, but notice Matthew says some remain doubtful
 - At first reading, we may suppose that some still doubted that Jesus was resurrected, but that doesn't make sense...*He's there!*
 - Matthew is referring to the disciples doubts about what Jesus is telling them in Galilee
 - He's explaining how they are to serve Him in the Kingdom program, and some have doubts about fulfilling that mission
 - Remember everything these men have experienced, and you can sympathize with their doubts over moving ahead without Jesus
 - For three years they followed a rabbi they knew to be the Messiah, seeing miracles He was doing in crowds
 - But suddenly His opposition took control, they kill Him, and suddenly they were facing the end of all their hopes and dreams
 - And then, just as suddenly, Jesus was alive again but speaking of leaving and of powers to come, etc.
 - All this must have been thoroughly confusing and overwhelming

- And now in Galilee, Jesus is speaking of building a Kingdom by preaching His resurrection, and Matthew says some were doubtful
 - No kidding...who wouldn't be at this point? These men doubted many things, especially in their ability to convince others
 - Considering how hard it was for these men to believe Jesus was alive... how were they going to convince anyone else?
 - Have you ever felt that way? How are you going to convince someone to believe in the Gospel? We all know their doubts
- So because they were doubting, Jesus sought to reassure them that Kingdom work was going to be a lot easier than they imagined...
 - It's as simple as 1, 2, 3...just three steps, and collectively the body of Christ is responsible for doing all three
 - Individually, we don't necessary do all three steps ourselves, at least not all the time or with equal effort
 - We may do one or two exclusively, but together the Church makes all three happen
 - These three steps are often called the "Great Commission," and Jesus explains them in the last verses of the Gospel

Matt. 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Matt. 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Matt. 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

- Understanding the three steps of the Great Commission begins by recognizing these words were intended to reassure Jesus' disciples
 - It was given in response to their doubts about serving Jesus and sharing the Gospel
 - So Jesus' point is to give us confidence to know the mission isn't difficult
- It starts with knowing the Father has given Jesus all authority in Heaven and on Earth

- In other words, the power and authority to accomplish the Kingdom program is Christ's alone, so the outcome doesn't depend on us
 - We aren't responsible for reaching the world with the Gospel, Jesus is
 - We aren't responsible for convincing someone that the Gospel is true, Jesus is
 - We don't need to find the perfect words or have answers for all the objections or worry that we might mess it up...He's got this
- And when we face earthly obstacles, it will be Jesus who finds a way around government red tape and supplies our financial needs
 - Jesus will give us everything we need according to His purpose and timing because He has all authority in Heaven and on Earth
 - He doesn't need anything we bring to the table...He's fully capable of saving anyone at anytime and growing His Church
- And He's doing is inviting us to participate in that work, and that means all the pressure is off our shoulders
 - We can go fully confident that our participating in Kingdom work doesn't turn on ability, only on our availability
 - Not one less soul will be present in Heaven regardless of what we choose to do in serving Jesus...we're just along for the ride
- You might be tempted to ask, "Well, if Jesus has all the power and I contribute nothing to the Kingdom outcomes, why should I even bother participating?"
 - The answer is rewards...our service to Christ brings opportunity for God to reward our service, reward us both now *and* in eternity
 - In the present time, our service is rewarded with earthly outcomes like joy, wonder, love and spiritual maturity
 - And these things also lead to greater peace and contentment as our lives becomes more centered on Christ and His purposes
 - Ultimately, our service and spiritual maturity brings eternal rewards which Christ assigns based on how well we please Him
 - In the Kingdom, we will enjoy the fruit of our Kingdom work now, and you won't want to miss what God has prepared for you

- It's the best kind of reward system...everyone gets a trophy just for participating...*but you must be present to win*
- Knowing Jesus has all the power and authority means we have nothing to lose in serving the Kingdom program and everything to gain
 - And that program is just three simple steps, the first two steps are found in v.19 and the third is in v.20
 - The three steps are go, baptize and teach, and together they can be summarized by the phrase "make disciples"
- Collectively, Kingdom work is about making disciples of Jesus, and making disciples is a process of going, baptizing and teaching
 - Collectively, the Church is called to do all three things, but not all Christians will do all three equally...we each play a part
 - We don't all go in the same way or to the same degree
 - Nor do we all baptize or teach others to the same degree, but collectively we are all called to make these things happen
- The first step is to go, and we are all called to "go" as ambassadors of Christ reaching our world with the Gospel message, but we will go differently
 - Everyone has the opportunity to go to a next-door neighbor, to a workmate, to a family member, or to a stranger on the street
 - But some will go further and in greater ways than others, like a missionary to another country or a pastor into full-time ministry
 - Some will go in traditional ways like door-to-door evangelism, while others go in novel ways like on social media or YouTube
 - Some of us will "go" vicariously by funding those who will go or praying for those who have gone
 - But in all these cases, we are all participating, going out to reach the unsaved world, and that's an important footnote
 - The Great Commission requires we cultivate a concern for the unsaved, for those who don't have what we have in Christ
 - "Going" means evangelism, going beyond the gathering, beyond serving believers, beyond the church doors and to the world
 - Kingdom work is fundamentally being ambassadors

- The second step of the Great Commission is to baptize new believers in water, and this is fundamentally a step of building community
 - Water baptism is the way Christ calls His Church to confirm the arrival of the Gospel into a person's heart and to confirm that believer in the body
 - When we believe in the Gospel, we show it first by receiving water baptism
 - And as a person takes this act, the body of Christ receives them as such, and the community grows
 - This is why baptism requires two people...we cannot baptize ourselves, because the purpose is to unite us through witness
 - In modern times, some churches have used "altar calls" or other ways to encourage people to demonstrate their faith
 - But these newer methods are not the Bible's method...water baptism is the Bible's altar call
 - That's the only method to affirm a new believer's faith and to receive them into fellowship in the body
 - Water baptism must be conferred in the name of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) because all Three Persons made that moment happen
 - The Father chose us from before the foundations of the earth
 - The Son died to reconcile us to God and give us eternal life
 - And the Spirit brought us saving faith, caused us to be born again so that we would confess and become a child of God
 - So our baptism moment is a testimony to give glory to all Three
- Finally, we are called to teach these new believers to obey all that Christ commanded us, which is a reference to the entire Bible
 - That's why we teach the whole counsel of God's word, because that's what the Great Commission requires...it's teaching you to obey Jesus
 - Teaching is perhaps the hardest step of the three because it never ends and it's often overlooked
 - But without teaching Christ's disciples to obey, the rest of the process eventually breaks down

- By teaching, we prepare a new generation of disciple-makers, because eventually new disciples will be stirred by what they learn
 - Hearts are stirred to go, new disciples are made, more teaching takes place, and the cycle repeats by Christ's authority & power
 - That's why Church programs today don't need to be fancy or innovative...they just need to be faithful to these steps
- So as you attend here week after week, you are being prepared for this purpose, Kingdom work
 - Weekly, you come here to see step three of the Great Commission at work, as we teach believers to obey all Christ commanded us
 - And on some days we see step two at work, as we baptize new believers and welcome them into this body
 - But everyday of your life you should be participating in step one...going...being an everyday ambassador for Jesus
- Step one brings faith to the new believer, step two brings the believer into the Church, and step three brings the Church into obedience with the word
 - And in all these things, we are working in the power and authority of Jesus
 - We go because we know Jesus is directing us to those He desires to reach, giving us the right words and preparing hearts
 - We baptize knowing that Jesus has the power to unite a diverse group of humanity into a likeminded, loving community
 - And we teach knowing that Jesus by His Spirit will make all things clear so we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ
 - It's such a simple formula...just wash, rinse and repeat, as the label says
 - We don't need to invent a new way of "doing church"
 - So as we start a new year, it's the perfect time to change our thinking and our ways...change them *back* to the old ways
 - Set your mind in 2021 on Kingdom work, going to the world, welcoming new believers into our body, and teaching them to obey

- We've got an exciting year ahead...and we've got Jesus' power and authority to make it a great year for Kingdom work