

**Motley Crew Matthew Bible Study**  
**Matthew 28:11-20**  
**The Final Verses**  
**September 7, 2011**  
**A journey that began on July 15, 2009!**  
**The Questions**

**Matthew 28:11-15 – The Guards' Report**

1. Matthew alone records this account. Why?
2. The chief priests heard about the resurrection before the disciples. What do you make of this irony?
3. I wonder how they slept through the earthquake? I guess one good lie deserves another at this point.

**Matthew 28:16-20 (*Talk about the home stretch*) – The Great Commission**

4. Do you get the feeling that mountains are important to God?
5. Verse 17 always causes me to ponder – how could any of the 11 doubt?
6. What does verse 18 teach us?
7. What does this teach us about baptism?
8. What does the word *baptize* mean?
9. Who is responsible for the great Commission?
10. What does the last sentence mean to you?
11. What do you remember most about the Gospel of Matthew?

*All citations from the Holy Bible are from the New International Version, used with permission.*

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**A journey that began on July 15, 2009!**  
**Some Suggested Answers**

We opened with prayer.

This will be the last class about the Gospel of Matthew. Next week, we will begin the four-week course “The Way of a Worshiper.” During that time, we should pray and talk about where we should go next as a group.

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**Matthew 28:11-15 – The Guards' Report**

11 While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. 12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, 13 telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ 14 If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” 15 So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

1. Matthew alone records this account. Why?

Matthew was writing for Jewish readers, while Mark and Luke were writing for other audiences (the Romans and the Greeks). John, of course, had a very different focus.

It was interesting that the Guards did not report directly to Pilate, but, instead, to the chief priests, who then bribed the guards to lie about what happened.

2. The chief priests heard about the resurrection before the disciples. What do you make of this irony?

God is still using His enemies to carry out His plan and message. God still loves them – they were the ones who needed the message of salvation the most, although they got the least benefit.

Dr. Lenski observed

God sent the message of Jesus' resurrection to these high priests through their own witnesses, the soldiers they themselves had posted, the most unimpeachable witnesses possible. Nor do the high priests dare to question this witness, they accept it as being entirely true. But what is the

effect produced upon these high priests? Do they yield to this sure testimony? Does it go home to their hearts that Jesus promised to arise on the third day, and that he had now indeed arisen, and that angels from heaven had revealed the empty tomb? Not for one moment! Only one thought fills the heart of the high priests: to nullify this true testimony; and they are prepared to go to all lengths to do this. This is that same wilful resistance which these high priests have all alone offered to Jesus. *Lenski*, pp. 1162-63.

They had the same chance of redemption as did the second thief. The difference was that the thief repented, but the high priests did not. The thief was in Paradise *that very day* with Jesus. The high priests? We don't know.

The disciples, of course, were hiding out, afraid of the authorities. We remembered that Jesus had told them that the authorities would do worse to them than to Jesus ... and this came to be.

In Matt. 24:9 Jesus said: "...you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me."

Likewise in Luke 21:16-17, Jesus said "You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. 17 Everyone will hate you because of me."

But there is also the promises that those who maintain their faith to the end will be saved, and will reign with Christ in heaven forever.

We talked about those who do not have Jesus or the church in their lives, but that even so, God has put the essence of Truth in them. In Romans 2:14 we read "Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law."

3. I wonder how the guards slept through the earthquake? I guess one good lie deserves another at this point.

13 ... "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'"

It is all a lie – a fabrication – and one that is still repeated in some places today. As we have so often seen, a lie that is repeated over and over becomes the truth in the minds of some, especially if they have never heard the Truth.

... by a formal resolution the ruling body of the Jewish nation [the Sanhedrin] determines on the rankest lie and the most flagrant bribery. Their moral decadence is absolute. Of course, those who perpetuated murder would not recoil from lying or other crimes. *Lenski*, p. 1163.

It was observed that the guards fainted but then woke up, so there was a germ of truth in the lie that they were "asleep."

Matt. 28:2-4: There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

[I wonder how much money the guards got. Of course, the Sanhedrin did have those 30 pieces of silver that Judas had just thrown back into the Temple. Wouldn't that be ironic?]

Did you notice the implied threat that accompanied the bribe?

14 If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.”

**Matthew 28:16-20 (Talk about the home stretch) – The Great Commission**

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

4. Do you get the feeling that mountains are important to God?

In the Bible, God uses mountains numerous times, including

- Mount Sinai
- Mount Zion
- Mount Moriah
- Mount of Olives | Mount Olivet
- The mountain upon which Satan tempted Jesus
- The Sermon on the Mount
- The Mount of Transfiguration
- Jesus often went up on a mountain to pray, as in this week's Gospel, Matthew 14.23, “After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.”

(According to Pastor Eddie, it sounds like a plug for deer hunting & an outdoors ministry.)

Several mentioned how very peaceful it is when we spend time in the mountains, and that it is a great place to pray and meditate. His creation is a great inspiration, and its magnificence has led many to Him (for example, many of the scientists who participated in the Hubble project).

5. Verse 17 always causes me to ponder – how could any of the 11 doubt?

17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

They are human. It does seem to mar the occasion, but it doesn't last.

Notice that it is only some, not all.

Beth pointed out that these men were shell-shocked. In the last three years, much of what they had been taught by the most respected men in their culture had been obliterated by Jesus' teachings and His lifestyle. Many “sacred cows” had been slaughtered. In addition, in the last three days, their beloved Teacher had been betrayed, arrested, mocked, tortured, crucified and buried. Their hope for their future – a Messianic Jesus who would lead them out of the tyranny of Roman occupation – had been dashed to the ground. Utterly and completely destroyed. They were simply overwhelmed.

They were only human ... but it didn't last long. The women, led by Mary Magdalene – afraid yet filled with joy – had given them the first ray of hope. Peter and John raced to the tomb, and found it empty – and knew that they had not done this. They saw and believed, although they didn't yet understand from

Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead (John 20:9). And then, several times over the next 40 days, Jesus would appear to them and to many, convincing even the skeptical Thomas (and the skeptics among us 2,000 years later). In the four Gospels, we see Jesus teaching them the final truths of His ministry before His ascension, and then, ten days later, the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, who would make all things clear to them. From this tiny band of human, frail, fallible disciples would rise the largest religion in the world, and the fastest growing. The promised Kingdom is being made real before our very eyes, on earth as it is in heaven.

We, of course, have the advantage of 20-20 hindsight, coupled with 2,000 years of inspired teaching and example by many, many men and women of faith.

And, by the way, we will probably be shocked when He comes again ... since we only understand in part (1 Cor. 13:12), our limited understanding cannot comprehend the glory of that coming, and we will be overwhelmed, as were the first disciples.

Speaking of “sacred cows,” one member mentioned the book *Growing Up Lutheran* by Janet Letnes Martin and Suzann Nelson ... which cleverly and humorously lampoons many of our Lutheran practices. It was the winner of the Minnesota Book Award for Humor of 1998. Check it out. The summary at Barnes and Noble included this description:

If you search for the word "coffee" in the Bible, if you're pretty sure that all the pairs of animals in Noah's Ark were married, and if you think tuna hotdish is okay but fishsticks are a little too ecumenical, you'll love "Growing Up Lutheran." ... Endearing, often hilarious stories shine a light on Lutheran life from baptism ("And His Name Shall Be Called Gilman Einar Stedje") to death ("He Is Not Gone, He Is Only Away"). In between, you'll learn about Sunday School, Christmas pageants, a.k.a. "bathrobe pageants," Bible Camp, Confirmation, and Lutheran weddings. You'll get the inside scoop on the Lutheran Church Basement Women, Lutefisk suppers, pew protocol, Haybelly Hanson's views on clapping in church, and much more.

ISBN: 1886627053

6. What does verse 18 teach us?

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Jesus came to them, as He often has done (Matt. 14:31, “Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.”) This is Grace in action – the unearned and unearnable gift of the loving Triune God.

Also, “*all* authority” has been given to Him – in heaven and on earth, angels and archangels, powers, principalities, might, dominion, thrones and the saints in glory ... plus the evil spirit world, whose prince is conquered and despoiled, and whose hosts lie in abject submission beneath Jesus' feet! Never did a human army have such resources behind it. (See *Lenski*, p. 1170-72.)

He *is* God, and He has *all* authority over heaven, earth, and hell. And He puts all His power and all His authority behind the commission to evangelize the world. *Lenski*, p. 1172.

7. What does this teach us about baptism?

We are to “go and make disciples *of all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Baptize and teach everyone, without exception for age, race, ethnicity.

## 8. What does the word *baptize* mean?

Dip, immerse, wash, sprinkle, cleanse – in fact, the application of water in any form.

βαπτίζω, as all the lexicographers agree, has a variety of meanings. It may mean to dip, immerse, wash, lave, sprinkle, cleanse, in fact, refer to the application of water in any form. This unquestioned fact is not altered by a reference to the original etymology, which is then limited to the meaning to immerse. The word must be understood in the sense which it had at the time Jesus spoke, and the New Testament shows conclusively that βαπτίζω was used to designate all manner of application of water. *Lenski*, pp. 1173-74.

The Greek Lexicons define baptism as a washing, but especially one that implies a ceremonial cleansing or purification. The Greek word is βαπτίζω, baptizo (Strong's # 907-911), and we see this word several times in the New Testament.

Acts 22:16: “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be *baptized* and *wash* your sins away, calling on his name.” We see the action of cleansing here: “... and wash your sins away.”

“be *baptized* and *wash* your sins away”

The Greek is *αναστας βαπτισαι και απολουσαι*

The word *wash* here is based on the Greek *απολουο*, *apolouo* (Strong's #628), meaning to wash off or away.

Mark 7:4: “When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they *wash*. And they observe many other traditions, such as the *washing* of cups, pitchers and kettles.” (NIV) The words *wash* and *washing* are based on the Greek βαπτίζω, baptizo.

At the Bible Study Tools web site, there is this literal translation “they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.” Source: Bible Study Tools Web Site,

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/passage.aspx?q=Mark+7%3A4&t=na>

The word *cleanse* is based on the Greek *παντιζο*, *Rhantizo* (Strong's #4472), which means to sprinkle or to cleanse by sprinkling, hence to purify, cleanse. We see this word a great deal in Hebrews, Chapter 9, in connection with ceremonial purification by sprinkling of the blood of a sacrificed animal. The word *sprinkled* (that is to sanctify, to cleanse) occurs frequently, plus the word *purified*.

Thus, there is cleansing in many of the actions that they do, a theme we also see frequently in the Old Testament.

We earlier examined the issue of baptism in connection with the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan River (Matt. 3:1-17 on August 5, 2009). There we noted that the Greek word “Baptismo” is used for many things – to wash dishes, clothes, sins, etc. We should not be concerned with the manner. Just the content!

“Baptismo” did not require full-body immersion. It was one of several meanings for this word, including the sprinkling or pouring of water. R.C.H. Lenski in *The Interpretation of Matthew* writes that “Matthew's *ἐβαπτίζοντο* says absolutely nothing regarding the mode of baptism which the Baptist employed. ... the Christian practice must be explained by the purificatory rites used by the Jews since the days of Moses. Since none of these were immersions, immersion was not the mode of either the Baptist's or Jesus' baptism.” (p. 100)

Jewish purification rites with water included a number of types of actions, including sprinkling objects, washing the fingertips, washing the the hands, washing clothing, and full-body washing (immersion). Several chapter of Leviticus discuss ritual impurity.

From all of this, we see that we dare not insist that one particular method of baptism be used, because God has not done so. This is like prayer – God did not insist on any particular way to pray, so we are free to pray standing up, bowing over, kneeling, prostrate, or flat on our backs in bed (where we are likely to hear some of the most heart-felt prayers).

In both baptism and prayer, all ways are acceptable in the eyes of the Lord.

#### 9. Who is responsible for the great Commission?

Just look in the mirror – for the crucifixion was necessary to cleanse me of the cost of sin – but also look past the self to the Source, Jesus. In verses 19-20 Jesus said “... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey *everything I have commanded you.*”

So, while my sin required the crucifixion, it was God and Jesus who jointly decided that the Son must be given as the payment required before reconciliation could occur, and the sign for and mark of that salvation is the sacrament of baptism.

Jesus gave the order and we are the ones who must do the follow-through. The authority comes from Jesus; He is sending us as His ambassadors of reconciliation (from last week's Epistle reading).

One of our senior and most respected members asked whether or not we were apostles, since we are being sent by the Lord, one of the definitions of the earliest Apostles. We talked about this as a group. One suggestion is that the 12 Apostles were Apostles with a capital “A” – while we might be called apostles, with a lower-case “a.”

#### 10. What does the last sentence mean to you?

20 ... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

We are never alone.

For several members, this verse is a source of great comfort, especially in times of difficulty. And this is an on-going gift, not a one-time shot. We are going with Him and in His direction.

#### 11. What do you remember most about the Gospel of Matthew?

There were as many important verses or themes as there were members, including:

- God caused the crucifixion, and Jesus agreed to it. They really love us.
- The 5,000 who were fed with so little – a reminder that we can do a lot with just a little, too.
- “I am with you always.”
- That God directed the crucifixion, even though it was our sin that created the need.
- When Jesus died, many of the saints were resurrected and walked through the city of Jerusalem – a powerful message of redemption.
- Peter ... our great role-model.

- That He was All-Powerful!
- That so much was done in just 2 ½ years!
- His loving healing of souls, and the healing of their bodies as a visible sign of the miraculous inner transformation.

We closed with prayer.

See you next week as we begin “The Way of a Worshiper,” by Buddy Owens. Books and study guides are still available. Check with the church office.

A DVD will be made available of all the notes that have been accumulated over the last 2 ½ years concerning the Gospel of Matthew, and a number of additional topics. Check with Doug.

### **Parallel Verses**

<p><b>The Eleven Assembled Together</b> <b>Matthew 28</b></p> <p>16Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.</p>	<p><b>The Eleven Assembled Together</b> <b>Mark 16</b></p> <p>14Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.</p>	<p><b>The Eleven Assembled Together</b> <b>Luke 24</b></p> <p>33They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."35Then the two told what had happened on the way [to Emmaus], and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.</p>
<p><b>The Great Commission</b> <b>Matthew 28</b></p> <p>18Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."</p>	<p><b>The Great Commission</b> <b>Mark 16</b></p> <p>15He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.16Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people,</p>	

	and they will get well."	
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## **Cited & Consulted Sources:**

Lenski, R.C.H., *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943)

*The Lutheran Study Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

The New Advent web site, Matthew 28, Greek-English-Latin.

<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/mat028.htm>

Bible Study Tools Web Site, Interlinear Greek-English Bible,

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/passage.aspx?q=Mark+7%3A4&t=na>

## **For Additional Study:**

The [Prayer And Study Resources](#) web page has a listing of [some research web sites](#) that I use. In addition, [Additional Research Resources](#) is a page with a more complete list of Bible and Lutheran resources, plus there is the [Research Resources Checklist](#), which is the web page I use when I first begin a Bible study. Both of these last two web pages are always growing, and please let me know if you are aware of other great sites.