

### Introduction to Chapter 7

Adam—as the representative for all humanity—underwent a time of probation to determine whether he would accept his position of power under God, his emperor. The Lord accomplished this by presenting him with what seemed to be an arbitrary command (Gen 2:16–17).<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the serpent sought to thwart the expansion of the kingdom of God through the disqualification of the Lord’s ambassadors (Gen 1:26–28).<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the man and woman’s innocent nakedness (*arummim*), the snake was shrewd (*arum*) (Gen 2:25–3:1).<sup>3</sup> Aside from the fact that the serpent spoke,<sup>4</sup> the text gives no hint that it was anything more than an animal made by God.<sup>5</sup> Moses did not state why the serpent addressed Eve,<sup>6</sup> why she misunderstood what the Lord had said, nor why Adam failed to assist her in countering the snake’s assertions.<sup>7</sup> By twisting God’s words, the serpent snared Eve into allying herself with him in her quest for divine wisdom, causing her to covet the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:2–5).

From there, events cascaded rapidly: “And she took of the fruit, and she ate, and she gave [it] also to her husband [who was] with her, and he ate” (Gen 3:6). Each fell because of the other, in unity yet carrying the entire burden of guilt. In one respect the serpent told the truth. Their eyes were opened, but to a shocking discovery. They were naked!<sup>8</sup> With their innocence replaced by shame, they quickly made coverings for themselves out of fig leaves (Gen 3:7).

Well-aware of what they had done, the Lord came to Eden in “the wind of the storm.”<sup>9</sup> Adam and Eve saw and heard evidence of impending judgment and hid themselves (Gen 3:8).<sup>10</sup> In his attempt to evade answering God’s question, Adam immediately indicted himself by declaring that he knew he was nude. The divisive effects of sin quickly emerged. Adam blamed Eve as well as God for creating her. Eve admitted she was deceived and pointed to the serpent (Gen 3:9–13). Thus, sin obliterated the harmony between God and humanity, men and women, and people with animals (Gen 2:18–24).<sup>11</sup>

### God Curses the Serpent

**1) Gen 3:14:** This verse comprises the beginning of the center of the A-B-C-C-B-A chiasm concerning God’s interrogation of the guilty and his decree of judgment (Gen 3:9–19).<sup>12</sup> Thus, the focus of the entire passage falls upon Gen 3:14–15. Unlike with Adam and Eve, the Lord neither questioned the serpent nor permitted him to explain his behavior (Cf. Gen 3:9–13).<sup>13</sup> Only to the serpent and to Cain did God pronounce, “Cursed are you” (Gen 4:11).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 104–5.

<sup>2</sup> Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:1.

<sup>3</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 90.

<sup>4</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 204.

<sup>5</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 105.

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 188.

<sup>7</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

<sup>8</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 206.

<sup>9</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 224.

<sup>10</sup> Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:8.

<sup>11</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 78.

<sup>12</sup> In this case, it forms an A-B-C-C-B-A pattern.

<sup>13</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

<sup>14</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 78.

The crafty (*arum*) one is now cursed (*arur*).<sup>15</sup> As a result, snakes consist of the archetypal unclean animals (Lev 11:41–45).<sup>16</sup>

The mandate “You must be holy (*qadhosh*) because I am holy” frames the command that “You must not make yourselves unclean with all the swarming things which creep upon the earth” (Lev 11: 44–45).<sup>17</sup> This implies that we must give our allegiance to the Lord, rather than with to serpent.

Spells within the Egyptian Pyramid Texts from the second half of the third millennium BC were designed to force a serpent to “fall down and crawl away,”<sup>18</sup> keeping its face on the ground so could not rear up and strike.<sup>19</sup> In Egypt, this concept persisted until at least 311 BC. Devised to control the monster who swallowed the sun every night and his horde of attendant demons,<sup>20</sup> this incantation says:

“Get thee back, Apep (Apophis), thou enemy of [the sun god] Ra, thou winding serpent in the form of an intestine, without arms [and] without legs. Thy body cannot stand upright so that thou mayest have therein being, long is [thy] tail in front of thy den, thou enemy; retreat before Ra. Thy head shall be cut off, and the slaughter of thee shall be carried out. Thou shalt not lift up thy face, for his (i.e., Ra's) flame is in thy accursed soul.”<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, God’s curse in Genesis 3 limits the aggressive nature of snakes. It does not suggest that they once walked.<sup>22</sup> This verse employs symbolism, as we know of no ancient writer who believed that serpents truly ate dust.<sup>23</sup> Not only does eating dust represent humiliation and total defeat (Ps 72:8–9),<sup>24</sup> it also depicts the grave, where dust fills the mouths of the dead. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, Enkidu dreams on his deathbed about the netherworld as a dark place “where dust is their fare and clay their food.”<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the Descent of Ishtar to the Nether World describes “the land of no return...the dark house...the house which none leave who have entered it... wherein the entrants are bereft of light, where dust is their fare and clay their food.”<sup>26</sup>

**a) Read Gen 3:14.** How would Moses's original readers have understood the effect of the Lord’s curse upon the serpent in this verse?

<sup>15</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 196.

<sup>16</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 73.

<sup>17</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁדָד” (*qadhosh*), *BDB*, 872–3, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/872/mode/2up>. This word also means “set apart” and “consecrated.”

<sup>18</sup>Ramadan B. Hussein, “Recontextualized—The Pyramid Texts ‘Serpent Spells’ in the Saite Contexts,” *Institut Des Cultures Mediterraneennes et Orientales de L’Academie Polonaise Des Sciences* 26 (2013): 274–90, 289n 50,

[http://www.academia.edu/5240927/Recontextualized\\_the\\_Pyramid\\_Texts\\_Serpent\\_Spells\\_in\\_the\\_Saite\\_Contexts](http://www.academia.edu/5240927/Recontextualized_the_Pyramid_Texts_Serpent_Spells_in_the_Saite_Contexts).

<sup>19</sup> Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 3:15.

<sup>20</sup>E.A. Wallis Budge, *Legends of the Gods: The Egyptian Texts, Edited with Translations* (London: British Museum, 1912), 2, [https://archive.org/details/pdfy-xdlRmtA\\_vlvJ9uLy/page/n3](https://archive.org/details/pdfy-xdlRmtA_vlvJ9uLy/page/n3).

<sup>21</sup>Budge, *Legends of the Gods: The Egyptian Texts*, 76, [https://archive.org/details/pdfy-xdlRmtA\\_vlvJ9uLy/page/n77](https://archive.org/details/pdfy-xdlRmtA_vlvJ9uLy/page/n77).

<sup>22</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 225.

<sup>23</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 196.

<sup>24</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

<sup>25</sup> “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” *ANET*, lines 4:33–7, 87.

<sup>26</sup>E. A. Speiser, trans., “The Descent of Ishtar to the Nether World,” in *ANET*, obv. lines 1–8, 107.

### The First Good News

**b) Gen 3:15:** This is one of the most famous verses in all of Scripture.<sup>27</sup> Early Christian commentators, beginning with Justin Martyr (ca. 160 AD) and Irenaeus (ca. 180 AD), called this inaugural Old Testament messianic prophecy the Protoevangelium (“first good news”).<sup>28</sup> The Lord said to the serpent, “And enmity I will put between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head and you will strike his heel.”

In his grace, the Lord intended to convert Eve’s inclinations toward Satan to righteous desire for himself (Cf. Gen 3:1–6).<sup>29</sup> God’s counterattack started with the woman, where the serpent’s assault began.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the Lord ordained conflict between the serpent’s seed and the seed of the woman.<sup>31</sup>

Like in English, we can translate “zera” (seed) as either singular or plural. It refers to an immediate descendant, distant offspring, or a collective group of descendants.<sup>32</sup> Here Moses developed and merged all three nuances.<sup>33</sup> “Seed of the serpent” consists of people living in rebellion against God (Matt 12:34; Matt 23:33; John 8:44).<sup>34</sup> It does not denote physical snakes or demons. Angels—even fallen ones—do not procreate (Matt 22:30). Everyone who unites against the Lord will fight against God’s people. This struggle forms a major theme of the remainder of Genesis (e.g. Gen 4:1–8).<sup>35</sup>

The serpent and his descendants shall share the same fate. Since the serpent symbolized sin, death, and malevolence, the curse upon him envisaged a long struggle between good and evil, with redeemed humanity triumphing.<sup>36</sup> While the seed of the woman incline their hearts toward God, hostile unbelief characterizes the seed of the serpent (Matt 13:24–30, 36–43). Moses’ unspoken question to the reader is, “Whose seed are you?”<sup>37</sup>

To accomplish God’s plan of redemption announced in Gen 3:15, the Lord allows the serpent to test the faithfulness of each generation. This teaches God’s covenant people to vie against Satan and his followers. It also fits with the nuance of the “seed” as a plural.<sup>38</sup> However, the oldest Jewish interpretations understood this verse as the serpent being vanquished by a single messiah. For example, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible utilized a singular noun (*spermatos*) to describe him.<sup>39</sup> While all of God’s people participate in the fight, this would ultimately result in a battle of champions,<sup>40</sup> much as David and Goliath each represented their armies in single combat (1 Sam 17:8–10, 48–50).

<sup>27</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 197.

<sup>28</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81.

<sup>29</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

<sup>30</sup> Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 133.

<sup>31</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 198.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “זֵרָע” (*zera*), *BDB*, 282–3,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/282/mode/2up>.

<sup>33</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

<sup>34</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93–4.

<sup>35</sup> Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 108.

<sup>36</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 79–80.

<sup>37</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93–4.

<sup>38</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93–4.

<sup>39</sup> Brannan, et al., *The Lexham English Septuagint*, Gen 3:15.

<sup>40</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

Regarding what they would do to each other, both verbs are the same word (*shuph*), appearing in a form which implies repeated attacks by both sides.<sup>41</sup> Thus, their enmity would be ongoing, with repeated skirmishes.<sup>42</sup> Among the translation options for this verb are “bruise,”<sup>43</sup> “crush,” “snap at,” “snatch at,”<sup>44</sup> and “strike at.”<sup>45</sup> Since the parallelism employed dictates translating these words the same way,<sup>46</sup> the most suitable option is, “He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

While not all serpents produce venom, those which do tend to be the most aggressive. Thus, people in the Ancient Near East considered an attack by a snake a potentially mortal blow.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, grievous wounds would afflict the messiah (Isa 53:4–5),<sup>48</sup> even to death. Both the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent would attack the most vulnerable part of the other.<sup>49</sup> Based upon the body parts involved, it appears that the serpent would strike as the seed of the woman stepped on him, resulting in both injuries occurring at once.

**Read Gen 3:15.** What is the difference between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent? How would you characterize yourself? Why? What happens to someone whom a viper strikes on the heel?

### The Accuser

**2) Job 1:6–11 and Job 2:1–7:** The setting of the book of Job corresponds to an era before the time of Moses. However, linguistically the book fits the time-period just before the exile.<sup>50</sup> It offers tantalizing clues of what was to come in redemptive history.

The story begins with Satan living up to his nickname “the Accuser” (Rev 12:10). He charged that Job served the Lord only because God had blessed him. Yet, Job proved true. Despite incredible suffering inflicted by the devil, he emphatically insisted, “Even now, behold, in the heavens is my witness, and my advocate is on high” (Job 16:19).<sup>51</sup> Job trusted that a member of the divine council would intervene with God for him (Cf. 1 John 2:1–2; 1 Tim 2:5).<sup>52</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Marten H. Woudstra, “Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15,” *CTJ* 6, no. 2 (November 1, 1971): 194–203, 200–1, [https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted\\_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/woudstra\\_gen3\\_15\\_ctj.htm](https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/woudstra_gen3_15_ctj.htm).

<sup>43</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שׁוּפַח” (*shuph*), *BDB*, 1003, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1002/mode/2up>.

<sup>44</sup> Holladay, “שׁוּפַח” (*shuph*), *CHALOT*, 364.

<sup>45</sup> Woudstra, “Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15,” 202, [https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted\\_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/woudstra\\_gen3\\_15\\_ctj.htm](https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/woudstra_gen3_15_ctj.htm).

<sup>46</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 197.

<sup>47</sup> Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 3:15.

<sup>48</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

<sup>49</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 226.

<sup>50</sup> James L. Crenshaw, “Job, Book of,” *ABD* 3:858–68, 863.

<sup>51</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שׁוּפַח” (*edh*), *BDB*, 729, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/728/mode/2up>.

<sup>52</sup> John H. Walton and Kelly L. Vizcaino, *Job* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 215.

After enduring further attacks from his friends (eg. Job 18), Job voiced his desperation, feeling that the Lord had hemmed him in on all sides. Nevertheless, he asserted, “I know that my redeemer lives, and one coming after me shall arise [to vindicate me]. And after this skin of mine has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25–26). Job built his confession of the resurrection upon the logic which would later form the cornerstone of Christian faith (John 5:28–29; 1 Cor 15:20–23, 50–55).<sup>53</sup> God’s restoration of Job’s fortune illustrates this in an amazing way. When we compare Job’s material and relational wealth as listed in Job 1:1–3 with his blessings in Job 42:12–13, we can see that every amount doubled except for the number of his children.

**Read Job 1:6–11 and 2:1–7.** What evidence do we see that the Lord has reined in the devil’s ability to strike? Why did Job stand firm? How does Job receiving the same number of children after his great trial illustrate his confession of the resurrection of the dead? What encouragement does the book of Job give you?

### Satan Addresses the Heavenly Council

**3) Zech 3:1–5:** This passage paints a strong picture of Satan’s desire to disqualify God’s priests and thus thwart the Lord’s purposes. In response to this attack by the devil upon the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), Yahweh created a new social and religious structure which would affect not only Judah but the world. What happened in heaven would soon occur on Earth (Gal 3:27–28; 1 Pet 2:4–10).<sup>54</sup> It will recur in the New Jerusalem (Rev 3:1–6; Rev 22:3–4). Joshua, whose name means, “Yahweh is salvation,” served as the first post-exilic high priest.<sup>55</sup> Shortly after returning from exile in Babylon,<sup>56</sup> the prophet Zechariah experienced an incredible vision in which the heavenly council focused upon Joshua.<sup>57</sup>

This meeting meshes with the Ancient Near Eastern concept of the gods consulting with one another before rendering decisions.<sup>58</sup> In Enuma Elish, “Marduk summoned the great gods to Assembly; presiding graciously, he issues instructions. To his utterance the gods pay heed.”<sup>59</sup> However, the Lord consulted with angels rather than with other gods.

As occurred with Job, Satan participated in this council as Joshua’s accuser (Job 1:6–11; Job 2:1–7; Rev 12:10).<sup>60</sup> Given the priest’s filthy clothing, this denunciation concerned Joshua’s

<sup>53</sup>John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 297.

<sup>54</sup>Carol A. Newsom, “Angels: Old Testament,” *ABD*, 1:251–3, 251.

<sup>55</sup>George W. Ramsey, “Joshua (Person),” *ABD* 3:999–1000, 999.

<sup>56</sup>Stanley E. Porter, “Joshua (Person),” *ABD* 3:1001.

<sup>57</sup>Mark J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 251.

<sup>58</sup>Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Zech 3:4.

<sup>59</sup>Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, 68.

<sup>60</sup>Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 199.

unworthiness to perform the duties required of his office (Exod 28:1–4, 36–41).<sup>61</sup> Since God had chosen Israel for himself (Deut 4:37–38), the Lord rebuked the devil and said to the priest, “See, I have taken away, from upon you, your sin and shall clothe you with stately robes.” After being dressed in new garments, Joshua received a clean turban to restore his priestly dignity, rendering him fit to approach the Lord.<sup>62</sup>

**a) Read Zech 3:1–5.** What was Satan doing? Based upon the state of Joshua’s clothing, was the devil correct in his assessment? How was Joshua made fit to serve as the high priest? What parallels do you see with your own experience?

### God’s Servant, the Branch

**b) Zech 3:6–10:** After promising Joshua free access to God’s presence if he would walk in the Lord’s ways and faithfully serve him, the Angel of the Lord made an astounding statement. He said, “Hear me, Joshua the high priest, you and the men sitting before you are a sign that...I am going to bring forth my servant, the Branch.” Joshua’s name means, “The Lord is Salvation.” The Greek version of that title is “Ἰησοῦς,”<sup>63</sup> which we translate as “Jesus.” “The Branch” (*tsemakh*) refers to the rightful heir of David’s dynasty. He would merge the priestly and royal offices (Zech 6:11–13).<sup>64</sup> Scripture recognizes Jesus as our prophet, priest, and king (Matt 21:1–11; Heb 7:24–8:2; Matt 2:1–2).

Verse 9 remains enigmatic, as we can also translate the “seven eyes” (*ayin*) as “seven springs.”<sup>65</sup> If the latter, on the day when God cleanses the land from sin, seven gushing springs will water it, signifying an era of peace and prosperity.<sup>66</sup> Bolstering the case for “seven eyes,” Zech 4:10 says, “They shall rejoice and shall see the plumb stone in the hand of Zerubbabel, these seven eyes of Yahweh, they go roving about in all the earth” (Cf. Rev 5:6).<sup>67</sup>

The reference to “one stone with seven eyes” alludes to the Ancient Near Eastern tradition of overlaying a foundation stone with gold or silver and encrusting it with gems.<sup>68</sup> A Hittite ritual states:

“When they rebuild a temple that had been destroyed...Beneath the four corner(stones), each one of them, he deposits as follows: 1 foundation stone of silver, 1 foundation stone of gold,

<sup>61</sup> Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 251.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 200.

<sup>63</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “יהושוע” (*yehoshua*), *BDB* 221, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/220/mode/2up>.

<sup>64</sup> Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 257.

<sup>65</sup> Brown, Driver, Briggs, “עֵינַי” (*ayin*), *BDB*, 744–5. <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/744/mode/2up>.

<sup>66</sup> Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 202.

<sup>67</sup> Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 322.

<sup>68</sup> Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Zech 3:9.

1 foundation stone of lapis, 1 foundation stone of jasper, 1 foundation stone of marble, 1 foundation stone of iron, 1 foundation stone of copper, 1 foundation stone of bronze, 1 foundation stone of diorite. The four corner(stones) are (each) provided with these in the same way. While doing so he speaks as follows: ‘See! This temple which we have built for thee, the god (he mentions the name of the god for whom they build it)—it is not we who have (really) built it, all the gods have built it.’<sup>69</sup>

According to this passage, “The Branch” shall make the Day of Atonement obsolete when “he shall remove the sin of this land in one day” (Lev 16:29–34).<sup>70</sup> This cleansing will usher in an age of plenty, with everyone sitting under their own grape vines and fig trees in the kingdom of God (Mic 4:1–4).<sup>71</sup>

**Read Zech 3:6–10.** How was Joshua a sign that the Lord shall fulfill the promise of Gen 3:15? What comfort does this passage give you?

### Satan Tempts Christ

**4) Matt 4:1–4:** Immediately after Christ’s baptism confirmed his status as God’s Son (Matt 3:16–17; Mark 1:12), Jesus prepared himself for public ministry with an extensive time of communion with his Father.<sup>72</sup> He ventured into the Judean wilderness close to where John baptized him.<sup>73</sup> People in the Ancient Near East (ANE) considered the desert haunted by evil spirits, as it lay beyond the bounds of civilized society.<sup>74</sup> According to 1 Enoch (second century BC–first century AD), God commanded this regarding a leader among fallen angels, “Bind Azazel hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert which is in Dudael and cast him therein.”<sup>75</sup>

On the Day of Atonement, a designated man led Israel’s scapegoat into the wilderness “to Azazel” (Lev 16:8–10, 20–22, 26),<sup>76</sup> an inaccessible wilderness area inhabited by demonic forces. Once the scapegoat returned the people’s sins to the site where evil originated, those transgressions no longer bound them.<sup>77</sup>

Several centuries after Christ, Antony of Egypt (AD 251–356) lived in seclusion for twenty years, even dwelling in a tomb in the desert.<sup>78</sup> His biographer recounted these events:

<sup>69</sup>Albrecht Goetze, trans., “Ritual for the Erection of a House” in *ANET*, obv. lines 1–31, 356.

<sup>70</sup>Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 258.

<sup>71</sup>Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 202.

<sup>72</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 154.

<sup>73</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 63.

<sup>74</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 354.

<sup>75</sup>Charles, trans., *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, 10.4, 22–3,

<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924067146773#page/n137/mode/2up>.

<sup>76</sup>Joanne K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, “Demons: Old Testament” in *ABD* 2:139–40, 139.

<sup>77</sup>John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1992), 241.

<sup>78</sup>Bradley Nassif, *Bringing Jesus to the Desert: Uncover the Ancient Culture, Discover Hidden Meanings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 43–4.

“He had requested one of his acquaintances to bring him bread at long intervals. He then entered one of the tombs, the man locked the door on him, and he remained alone within. This was too much for the Enemy to bear, indeed, he feared that he would presently fill the desert too with his asceticism. So, he came one night with a great number of demons and lashed him so unmercifully that he lay on the ground speechless with the pain.”<sup>79</sup>

Jesus, too, entered the desert to confront the Lord’s enemy. Since the Spirit led Christ into the wilderness, ultimately God initiated this confrontation.<sup>80</sup> This trial tested Jesus’s ability to obey Deut 6:4–5,<sup>81</sup> a passage repeated by devout Jewish people twice daily even today.<sup>82</sup> Christ did not engage in spiritual arm-wrestling by pitting the power of the Holy Spirit within him against Satan. Since temptation involves twisting reality, the best defense comes from Scriptural truth.<sup>83</sup> Many Jewish rabbis of that era employed the format of this debate.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, reciting bible verses provides a helpful pattern for us to follow when dealing with sinful enticement.<sup>85</sup>

All three texts Christ quoted in Matt 4:1–10 consist of commands the Lord gave to Israel in the wilderness.<sup>86</sup> By undergoing these temptations, Jesus replicated the experiences of both Adam and Israel yet did not succumb to desire (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:1–6; Num 21:4–5).<sup>87</sup>

Satan chose to attack after Jesus fasted for forty days, when he was physically weakest.<sup>88</sup> He aimed to disqualify Christ as a sinless savior and obedient son to disrupt God’s plan to redeem humanity (Phil 2:5–11; Heb 4:14–16; 2 Cor 5:16–21).<sup>89</sup> While some Bible versions use the word “if” in verse 3, a better translation is, “Since the son of God you are...”<sup>90</sup> Just like the demon in Mark 1:23–24, the devil knew Jesus’s identity (Cf. James 2:19).<sup>91</sup> He was saying, “We both know you’re the Son of God, now prove it by helping yourself.”<sup>92</sup>

Would Christ exercise his messianic power to avoid the pain of a normal human life?<sup>93</sup> Or would he accept the path before him of suffering and eventual death?<sup>94</sup> Jesus responded by quoting Deut 8:1–10.

**a) Read Matt 4:1–4.** How is this temptation like what Adam and Israel experienced (Gen 3:1–6)? Do you think that the Lord used Satan to fulfill his own purposes? Why or why not? How can we use Jesus’s method of defense when we undergo temptation?

<sup>79</sup>Athanasius, *The Life of Saint Antony* (Meyer, Robert H., trans. (ACW; New York; Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 1978), 26, <https://archive.org/details/lifeofsaintanton00atha/page/26>.

<sup>80</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 360.

<sup>81</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 131.

<sup>82</sup>Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 181.

<sup>83</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 161.

<sup>84</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 352.

<sup>85</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 157.

<sup>86</sup>Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 4:1–11.

<sup>87</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 156–7.

<sup>88</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 64.

<sup>89</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 157.

<sup>90</sup>Danker, et al., “εἶ” (*ei*), *BDAG*, 277.

<sup>91</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 65.

<sup>92</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 132.

<sup>93</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 158.

<sup>94</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 65.

### A Second Temptation

**b) Matt 4:5–7:** For the next two temptations, the devil transported Jesus from the wilderness in a vision. No mountain vista can provide a view of “all the kingdoms of the world” at once (Matt 4:8).<sup>95</sup> Satan expertly used Scripture to tempt Christ to sin, quoting Ps 91:11–12.<sup>96</sup> For Jesus, this would have been a jump to safety, as God would have sent angels to rescue the messiah.<sup>97</sup>

The temptation was two-fold: 1) to test his Father’s love, and; 2) to make a spectacular display in order to gain a messianic following without proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and suffering the consequences (Matt 16:13–23).<sup>98</sup> Christ responded by reciting Deut 6:16, another text from Israel’s journey through the wilderness.

**Read Matt 4:5–7.** Why do you think the devil stopped before reciting Ps 91:13? How does this event demonstrate the necessity of reading Scripture in context? What can you do to protect yourself from false or misleading interpretations of the Bible?

### The Third Temptation

**c) Matt 4:8–11:** Technically, the devil made a false claim that the earthly realm belonged to him (Dan 4:32; Dan 7:13–14). Instead, he operates by usurping human hearts (Matt 13:19; 2 Tim 2:24–26).<sup>99</sup> Just as in the test failed by Adam and Eve, this temptation involved a choice between the will of God versus the plan of the serpent (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:1–13).<sup>100</sup> Satan asked Jesus to shift his allegiance, achieving the right end by the wrong means. Just before quoting Deut 6:14, Christ gave a curt dismissal of the tempter, proving that the devil remained under his control.<sup>101</sup>

Jesus fulfilled what Adam, the first son of God, did not accomplish (Luke 3:38). While the first Adam failed under the best conditions, the last Adam succeeded in the worst (Gen 2:7–15; Matt 4:1–2). This victory set the stage for Christ to make atonement for his people (Heb 2:11–18),<sup>102</sup> resulting in the eventual recovery of paradise (Rev 21:1–7).<sup>103</sup> However, the devil would continue to attempt to derail Jesus from his mission of redemption (Luke 22:1–6).

**Read Matt 4:8–11.** What was the nature of this temptation? Why did Jesus succeed where both Adam and Israel failed? Does this encourage or discourage you? Why?

<sup>95</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 131.

<sup>96</sup> Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 4:5–6.

<sup>97</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 67.

<sup>98</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 160.

<sup>99</sup> Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 4:8–9.

<sup>100</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 68.

<sup>101</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 135.

<sup>102</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 156.

<sup>103</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 356.

### A Murderer from the Beginning

**5) John 8:37–44:** In approximately 150 BC, the Pharisees created a lay movement which developed the view that members of God’s covenant people could be identified by their adherence to the Mishnah. This commentary on the five books attributed to Moses formed a hedge around the Mosaic Law (*m. Avot* 1:1),<sup>104</sup> in violation of Deut 4:1–2 and Deut 12:32. For example, the Mishnah contains twenty-four chapters dedicated to Sabbath regulations alone (*m. Shabbat*).<sup>105</sup>

Although the Pharisees did not descend from a priestly lineage, the members of this sect strictly maintained the Mishnah’s tradition of oral laws regarding purity, tithing, and the Sabbath intended for those serving in the temple. They took great care to separate from the impure “people of the land” who failed to avoid contaminating themselves (Matt 9:10–11; Luke 7:36–39).<sup>106</sup> However, Pharisees intended to practice Judaism in every area of life where they lived, rather than form a community which withdrew into the desert, as the Essenes did.<sup>107</sup>

Furthermore, Pharisees believed that the messiah would come to usher in the kingdom of God only when every Israelite fully obeyed all of the Mishnah’s interpretation of the Law of Moses.<sup>108</sup> Consequently, Jesus’s teachings and behavior enraged them (Cf. Matt 12:1–8; Mark 7:1–15).<sup>109</sup> They concluded that Christ not only prevented Israel’s messiah from coming to rescue them, his popularity would result in more oppressive Roman domination (John 11:38–53).

The author of John’s gospel also wrote, “The one who continually practices sin is from the devil, because from the beginning the devil sins” (1 John 3:8). As Jesus testified, a person’s behavior and values attest to one’s spiritual sonship.<sup>110</sup> John the Baptist held a similar view, for he called Israel’s religious leaders “offspring of vipers” (Matt 3:7).

**Read John 8:37–44.** Why did the Pharisees hate Jesus? What makes their conclusion about him ironic? How do the verses cited here relate to the declaration of Gen 3:15?

### Betrayed

**6) Luke 22:1–6:** Passover memorializes Israel’s deliverance from the final plague upon the gods of Egypt (Num 33:1–4).<sup>111</sup> At that time the Lord’s angel of death passed over the homes

<sup>104</sup> Stephen Westerholm, “Pharisees,” *DJG* 609–14, 609.

<sup>105</sup> *m. Shabbat*.

<sup>106</sup> Anthony J. Saldarini “Pharisees.” *ABD* 5:300–3, 300.

<sup>107</sup> Roland Deines, “The Pharisees Between ‘Judaisms’ and ‘Common Judaism,’” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Volume 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien, and Mark Seifrid; Tübingen; Grand Rapids: Mohr Siebeck; Baker Academic, 2001), 498.

<sup>108</sup> Philip S. Alexander, “Torah and Salvation in Tannaitic Literature,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Volume 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien, and Mark Seifrid; Tübingen; Grand Rapids: Mohr Siebeck; Baker Academic, 2001), 275.

<sup>109</sup> Marinus De Jonge, “Messiah,” *ABD* 783–8, 783.

<sup>110</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 352–3.

<sup>111</sup> David E. Garland, *Luke* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 845.

covered by the blood of lambs and spared Israel’s firstborn sons (Exod 12:1–14).<sup>112</sup> Due to the deaths of many of their people, the Egyptians begged Israel to leave. This ended their enslavement (Exod 12:33–36).<sup>113</sup> Jesus would achieve the salvation that feast day commemorates (1 Cor 5:7).<sup>114</sup>

As one of three required festivals in God’s presence, the population of Jerusalem swelled from about 70,000 to 250,000 each year during Passover (Exod 23:14–17).<sup>115</sup> Since the festival embodied themes of national liberation, those gatherings could provoke civil disturbances, upsetting the leaders of the Roman occupation.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, Christ’s opponents acted secretly to keep the throngs of festival pilgrims ignorant of their actions.<sup>117</sup>

However, these were not merely human schemes. Satan himself intervened,<sup>118</sup> although he had always been lurking in the shadows (Luke 4:12–13; Luke 22:31–33; John 8:37–44).<sup>119</sup> When one of Christ’s disciples decided to defect, popularity with the people would no longer protect Jesus from the religious leaders.<sup>120</sup> Judas seems to have experienced satanic direction and influence,<sup>121</sup> rather than outright possession.<sup>122</sup> Thus, the right moment Judas sought to betray Jesus coincided with Satan’s own scheme.<sup>123</sup>

Once the religious leaders involved the government, they completed the trinity of evil set against Jesus.<sup>124</sup> Ironically, those who appeared to control Jesus’s arrest, trial, and crucifixion did not. Christ permitted them to proceed. Not only did he know what Judas was doing,<sup>125</sup> Jesus wielded enough power to frustrate their plans (Matt 26:20–25, 48–54).

**Read Luke 22:1–6.** What role did the serpent play in the betrayal of Christ? How can we avoid participating in Satan’s schemes?

### A Most Cruel and Ignominious Punishment

**7) Matt 27:26–37:** Cicero (106–43 BC) called crucifixion, “a most cruel and ignominious punishment.”<sup>126</sup> The Roman government employed it to control mutinous troops, to subdue

<sup>112</sup>Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 545.

<sup>113</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 845.

<sup>114</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 545.

<sup>115</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 755–6.

<sup>116</sup>Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 752–3.

<sup>117</sup>John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 1030.

<sup>118</sup> Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 752.

<sup>119</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 845.

<sup>120</sup> Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1029.

<sup>121</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 545.

<sup>122</sup> Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1029.

<sup>123</sup> Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 753.

<sup>124</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 845.

<sup>125</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 544.

<sup>126</sup>M. Tullius Cicero, *Against Verres*, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), 2.5.165,

[Http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0018%3Atext%3DVer.%3Aactio%3D2%3Abook%3D5](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0018%3Atext%3DVer.%3Aactio%3D2%3Abook%3D5).

conquered peoples, to wear down rebellious cities, and to punish criminals from the lower classes, especially slaves.<sup>127</sup> Quintilian (ca. 35–96 AD) asserted, “Whenever we crucify the guilty, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this fear.”<sup>128</sup>

In Greco-Roman society, those engaging in polite discourse forbade even speaking the word “cross.”<sup>129</sup> Due to aesthetic considerations—not to the rarity of this practice—descriptions of crucifixion rarely appear in ancient literature.<sup>130</sup> According to Josephus (37–100 AD), in 70 AD, Titus’s army in Jerusalem whipped, tortured, and crucified five hundred men a day until “their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses and crosses wanting for the bodies.”<sup>131</sup>

In 1986, *JAMA* published a detailed article with this summary of the process: “Jesus of Nazareth underwent Jewish and Roman trials, was flogged, and was sentenced to death by crucifixion. The scourging produced deep stripe-like lacerations and appreciable blood loss, and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock, as evidenced by the fact that Jesus was too weakened to carry the crossbar...to Golgotha. At the site of crucifixion, his wrists were nailed to the [crossbar], after the [crossbar] was lifted onto the upright post...his feet were nailed to [it]. The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respirations. Accordingly, death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Jesus's death was ensured by the thrust of a soldier's spear into his side. Modern medical interpretation of the historical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross.”<sup>132</sup>

Confirming the gospel accounts of crucifixion, building contractors discovered an ossuary in northern Jerusalem. It contained the bones of an adult male who had been crucified between the onset of the first century AD and the mid-60s. His executioners had pierced his right heel with an iron nail and broken his shins (John 19:32).<sup>133</sup>

**a) Read Matt 27:26–37.** How does the Roman practice of crucifixion fulfill Gen 3:15? Why did ancient literature rarely mention this form of execution? How does knowing that Jesus willingly died this way affect your view of him?

<sup>127</sup>Gerald G. O’Collins, “Crucifixion,” *ABD* 1:1207–1210, 1207–8.

<sup>128</sup>Quintilian, *The Lesser Declamations* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 274.

<sup>129</sup>Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 150.

<sup>130</sup>Joel B. Green, “Death of Jesus,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, 2nd ed. (DJG)* (ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. H. Marshall; Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 147–63, 147.

<sup>131</sup>Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (trans. William Whiston; Auburn and Buffalo, NY: John E. Beardsley, 1895), 5.11.1, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D5%3Awhiston+chapter%3D11%3Awhiston+section%3D1>.

<sup>132</sup>William D. Edwards MD, Wesley J. Gabel MDiv, and Floyd E. Hosmer MS, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” *JAMA* 255, no. 11 (21 March 1986): 1455–63,

<http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=403315>.

<sup>133</sup>Green, “Death of Jesus,” *DJG*, 147.

### Forsaken

**b) Matt 27:38–49:** Virtually all of Jesus’s followers abandoned him. Only his mother, John, and “many women” kept vigil at the cross (Matt 27:55). Those who passed by the three crosses heckled him. Darkness covered the whole land as an expression of God’s wrath.<sup>134</sup> However, this did not result from an eclipse. Passover occurs during a full moon (Lev 23:5), and eclipses can appear only during new moons.<sup>135</sup> Since God had plagued Egypt with darkness (Exod 10:22), the Jewish leaders should have recognized this apocalyptic image of mourning and judgment (Joel 2:1–2, 31–32).<sup>136</sup>

Most crucified men gradually lost their strength and consciousness.<sup>137</sup> Yet, Jesus cried out “with a loud voice, saying, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” Those who heard him misunderstood his words as an appeal to Elijah. This seems to be why Matthew translated Christ’s name for God into Hebrew (*eli*) rather than precisely quoting Jesus’s call of desolation, which he uttered in Aramaic (*eloi*, as in Mark 15:34), the commonly spoken language in Israel at that time (Mark 5:41).<sup>138</sup> This cry of complete devastation comes from Ps 22:1.<sup>139</sup>

Horrible as crucifixion was for anyone, until that time Jesus had experienced the perfect fellowship of the Trinity. Therefore, we cannot accurately assess the true depth of his distress.<sup>140</sup> Christ bore divine retribution and the punishment for our sin (Isa 53:3–6). In fact, “the one who did not know sin, on our behalf became sin” (2 Cor 5:21). He was damned by God, for “Cursed is one who is hanged on a tree” (Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13).<sup>141</sup>

The cry, “My God” indicates that Christ’s lament did not express a loss of faith but rather a temporary deprivation of contact.<sup>142</sup> During that era, pious Jewish households recited the psalms as their prayer book.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, Jesus’s enemies should have recalled that Ps 22 ends with the sufferer’s vindication (Ps 22:25–31).<sup>144</sup> In our day, “A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away” evokes much more than that simple phrase for anyone familiar with Star Wars. Thus, by citing the first verse of this psalm of desertion, Christ also looked forward to the vindication which he would receive at his resurrection (Heb 12:1–2).<sup>145</sup>

**Read Matt 27:38–49.** How do we know that this darkness was not a natural phenomenon? What did it portend? Why did God forsake Jesus? How does the ending of the psalm Christ quoted provide you with hope?

<sup>134</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1075.

<sup>135</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 1037.

<sup>136</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 844.

<sup>137</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1075.

<sup>138</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 844. Note that “*i*” at the end of a Hebrew noun means “my.”

<sup>139</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1076.

<sup>140</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 844–5.

<sup>141</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 902–3.

<sup>142</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1076–7.

<sup>143</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 625.

<sup>144</sup> Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 27:46.

<sup>145</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 1037.

### The Death of God

**8) John 19:28–30:** The apostle John wrote, “Jesus, knowing that already all had been completed, in order to complete the Scripture said, ‘I thirst.’” (Ps 69:21).<sup>146</sup> Significantly, John used the verbal root *teleō* twice to indicate completion,<sup>147</sup> rather than the word *plēroō* employed in the usual formula “to fulfill the Scripture” (John 12:38; John 13:18; John 19:24).<sup>148</sup> In fact, the apostle recorded *teleō* only three times in his gospel, all in this passage.<sup>149</sup>

Nevertheless, Jesus did experience real thirst. After being scourged and left bleeding, he developed extreme dehydration (John 19:1).<sup>150</sup> How ironic that the source of living water thirsted (John 6:35).<sup>151</sup> Unlike the drugged wine Christ had earlier refused, this cheap sour wine vinegar offered by the soldiers should have prolonged his life and, consequently, his pain (cf. Matt 27: 33–34, 48).<sup>152</sup> Indeed, in Ps 69:13–21, that drink comprised part of the torment inflicted upon the righteous sufferer.<sup>153</sup>

While on the brink of death, Christ wanted the crowd to hear him, so he called for a drink to moisten his dry mouth.<sup>154</sup> After sipping the wine from a sponge, Jesus uttered his last word of triumph, “It has been accomplished!” (*tetelestai*, the perfect tense of *teleō*).<sup>155</sup> In the Greek of that era, a verb in the perfect tense denoted a past action which results in a state of being which continues into the present without an end point.<sup>156</sup> Christ had completed his mission,<sup>157</sup> purchasing our salvation through the cross.<sup>158</sup> Ancient Greek receipts often included the word *tetelestai* to indicate that the amount due had been “paid in full.”<sup>159</sup> Visitors can see an example of this on shards of pottery in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted, “Christ and Christ’s adversary the devil are mutually exclusive opponents, but in such a way that even the devil, unwillingly, must serve Christ, and, willing evil, must ever again do good, so that the kingdom of the devil is always only under the feet of Christ.”<sup>160</sup>

In describing Jesus’s death, John used a term (*klinō*) associated with going to sleep,<sup>161</sup> indicating that he voluntarily bowed his head.<sup>162</sup> Then, he “handed over” (*paradidōmi*) his spirit, a phrase which typically refers to giving something to a successor. Thus, at his death,

<sup>146</sup>Danker, et al., “τελέω” (*teleō*), *BDAG*, 997–9, 997.

<sup>147</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 620.

<sup>148</sup>Danker, et al., “τελέω” (*teleō*), *BDAG*, 997.

<sup>149</sup>Result of Logos 7 word studies of *plēroō* and *teleō*.

<sup>150</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 618–9.

<sup>151</sup> Burge, *John*, 530.

<sup>152</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 620.

<sup>153</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, 351.

<sup>154</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 720.

<sup>155</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, 352. This is *teleō* in the third person singular perfect tense.

<sup>156</sup>Robert Crellin, “The Semantics of the Perfect in the Greek of the New Testament,” in *The Greek Verb Revisited: A Fresh Approach for Biblical Exegesis* (ed. Steven E. Runge and Christopher J. Fresch; Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), 450.

<sup>157</sup> Burge, *John*, 529.

<sup>158</sup>Gerhard Delling, “τελέω” (*teleō*), *TDNT* 8:57–61, 59.

<sup>159</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 904.

<sup>160</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Clifford J. Green, ed., Reinhard Krauss, et al., *Ethics* (DBW; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 65.

<sup>161</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 720–1.

<sup>162</sup>Danker, et al., “κλινω” (*klinō*), *BDAG*, 549.

Christ bestowed his ministry to the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–23).<sup>163</sup> Since Jesus retained the authority to lay down his life, no one took it from him (John 10:17–18).<sup>164</sup>

**Read John 19:28–30.** Why do you think the Apostle John chose to use the verb for completion, rather than for fulfillment, in this passage? What are the implications of Jesus’s last utterances for us? How did the serpent unwittingly serve the cause of Christ? Why did Jesus hand over his spirit? How does that delegation to the Holy Spirit impact your calling?

### God Rends the Barrier

**9) Matt 27:50–51:** For several chapters of Matthew’s gospel, God the Father has seemed aloof. However, upon Christ’s death, he immediately began to vindicate his son with a series of astonishing miracles.<sup>165</sup> This signaled his approval of Jesus and his indignation with those behind Christ’s execution.<sup>166</sup>

Most likely, the curtain of the temple which tore was the inner curtain which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place, rather than the outer curtain which covered the temple’s entrance (Exod 26:1–3, 31–33; Heb 6:19–20; Heb 9:1–5, 8).<sup>167</sup> This inner curtain, embroidered with lions and eagles,<sup>168</sup> measured sixty feet high by thirty feet wide.<sup>169</sup> Women had woven it from seventy-two twisted plaits of twenty-four threads,<sup>170</sup> making its destruction a formidable task.

The verb indicating that the curtain “was torn (*schizō*) from top to bottom” appears in the passive tense.<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, the rending of the veil from above points to an act of God.<sup>172</sup> Matthew employed the same verb for the “tearing” of the curtain and the “splitting” (*schizō*) of the rocks,<sup>173</sup> so perhaps the Lord used the divine judgment of the earthquake to rend the veil (Amos 8:8–10). Ironically, this event occurred shortly after those who saw Christ on the cross mocked him for having predicted that he would destroy the temple and then rebuild it in three days (John 2:19–22; Matt 27:39–40).<sup>174</sup>

Since the Most Holy Place could be entered only by the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:2, 34), this rupture signified that the sacrificial system had reached its

<sup>163</sup> Burge, *John*, 530.

<sup>164</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 621.

<sup>165</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 629.

<sup>166</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 684.

<sup>167</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 848–9.

<sup>168</sup> Michael O. Wise, “Temple,” *DJG* 813–7, 813.

<sup>169</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 905.

<sup>170</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 905.

<sup>171</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 849.

<sup>172</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1080.

<sup>173</sup> Danker, et al., “σχίζω” (*schizō*), *BDAG*, 981.

<sup>174</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 630.

end.<sup>175</sup> It also portended God’s judgment upon Israel’s priests.<sup>176</sup> By this one act, God simultaneously foreshadowed the destruction of the entire temple in 70 AD and expressed that access to God comes through Jesus.<sup>177</sup> Now all the Lord’s people can enjoy bold, unrestricted access into God’s presence (Heb 10:19–22).<sup>178</sup>

**a) Read Matt 27:50–51.** What does the tearing of the temple’s curtain from top to bottom signify? How does the passage in Amos add to our understanding of the earthquake? What difference does the destruction of the veil make in your life?

### The Resurrection of the Righteous

**b) Matt 27:51–53:** Another testimony affirming Jesus’s innocence consisted of raised bodies.<sup>179</sup> This resurrection of the righteous alludes to Ezek 37:12–13.<sup>180</sup> In Dura Europos, Syria, archaeologists discovered a synagogue from 244 AD with many intact frescoes.<sup>181</sup> Three of these depict Ezekiel’s vision,<sup>182</sup> verifying that the Jewish people interpreted that prophecy as a promise of the bodily resurrection of the faithful in the last days.<sup>183</sup>

The Babylonian Talmud states, “And should you ask, in those years during which the Almighty will renew his world, as it is written, ‘And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. What will the righteous do? The Lord will make them wings like eagles,’ and they will fly above the water...Ezekiel resurrected the dead in the valley of Dura” (*b. Sanhedrin 92b*).<sup>184</sup>

Returning to Matthew’s gospel, we will consider two pages of the Codex Vaticanus.<sup>185</sup> The beginning of Matt 27:52 appears at the bottom of one page. The second half of the verse occurs at the top of the next page. A scribe wrote the Greek text in capitals, running continuously with neither breaks between words nor punctuation.

THISISNOTASDIFFICULTTOINTERPRETASITMIGHTSEEMINFACITISUSPECTTHAT  
MANYOYOUAREHAVINGNOTROUBLEREADINGTHISPAPYRUSWASEXPENSIVE  
SOSCRIBESDIDTHISTOSAVESPACE.<sup>186</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 849.

<sup>176</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 905.

<sup>177</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1080–1.

<sup>178</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 849.

<sup>179</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 905.

<sup>180</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 1045.

<sup>181</sup> Paul Post, “Dura Europos Revisited: Rediscovering Sacred Space,” *Worship* 86, no. 3 (1 May 2012): 222–44, 224, 233. Sadly, this site appears to have suffered great damage by members of the Islamic State.

<sup>182</sup> Wikimedia Commons, “Category: Dura-Europos Synagogue Painting,”

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Dura-Europos\\_synagogue#/media/File:Ezekiels.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Dura-Europos_synagogue#/media/File:Ezekiels.jpg).

<sup>183</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 1045.

<sup>184</sup> [http://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin\\_92.html](http://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_92.html).

<sup>185</sup> The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, “Codex Vaticanus,”

[http://csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA\\_03](http://csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_03).

<sup>186</sup> Joel Harlow, personal communication, 3/15/2012.

As a result, we have several translation options based upon the punctuation we select. The best choice for making sense of the time frame for Matt 27:51–53 is to place a period after “and the rocks were split, and the tombs were opened.” Then the next sentences say, “And the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised. And coming out of the tombs with (META) his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many [people].”<sup>187</sup>

Matthew merged the earthquake on Good Friday with the resurrection of the saints on Easter Sunday. He regarded the death and resurrection of Jesus as a single salvation-historical event,<sup>188</sup> for the combined effect of these two milestones broke the power of death and raised us up with Christ (1 Cor 15:3–5; 14–17, 52–57; Eph 2:1–7).<sup>189</sup> These holy people were likely Old Testament heroes and martyrs. They testified to the effect of Christ’s resurrection in a foretaste of the eternal life which all believers can eagerly anticipate (John 5:25–29).<sup>190</sup>

Consider this analogy. When an enormous boulder falls upon the soft sands of the seabed, the resounding thud reverberates in all directions, making ripples in the sand. When Jesus rose from the dead, that momentous event affected everything in the cosmos. Both the past and the future, including the era in which we live, have been forever changed (John 8:56–59).<sup>191</sup>

None of the other gospels discuss this incident, leaving many unanswered questions.<sup>192</sup> Did these saints have resurrection bodies like Jesus’s? Or were they, like Lazarus, in resuscitated bodies and subject to die again (John 11:41–44; 1 Cor 15:20–22, 42–44)?<sup>193</sup> Did they stay on earth, or were they taken into heaven after appearing?<sup>194</sup>

**Read Matt 27:51–53.** How do you think the people of Jerusalem reacted to seeing these resurrected people? Why did this series of events vindicate Christ? What hope does it give to you?

### Conversion of an Executioner

**c) Matt 27:54:** At the time of Christ, a Roman centurion represented the most powerful military on earth. After overseeing the flogging, mocking, and crucifixion of Jesus, this commander and his men observed the supernatural darkening of the sky (Matt 27:33–37, 45–49).<sup>195</sup> They saw that “in this way he breathed his last” (Mark 15:39),<sup>196</sup> and they experienced the earthquake (Matt 27:50–51).

<sup>187</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 906.

<sup>188</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 1045.

<sup>189</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 850.

<sup>190</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 906–7.

<sup>191</sup> Edward T. Oakes S.J., “The Apologetics of Beauty,” in *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts* (ed. Daniel J. Treier, Mark Husbands, and Roger Lundin; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 220.

<sup>192</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1081.

<sup>193</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 850.

<sup>194</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 634.

<sup>195</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 920–1.

<sup>196</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1083.

As a result, the members of the execution team recognized their victim’s true identity.<sup>197</sup> Taking the title used to mock the dying man in Matt 27:40, these gentiles made it the confession of their hearts.<sup>198</sup> They recognized Jesus’s innocence and repented for their complicity in his death.<sup>199</sup> Thus, they acted as the “two or three witnesses” required for official testimony (Deut 19:15; John 8:14–18).<sup>200</sup>

Normal Roman usage of the term “son of God” referred to a semi-divine hero or the son of a deity, such as the Roman emperor.<sup>201</sup> For example, the Priene Inscription (9 BC) notes that “the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings (*euangelion*) for the world.”<sup>202</sup>

However, the Greek structure of the sentence indicates that the centurion confessed that Jesus was *the* Son of God.<sup>203</sup> Some sects hold that the lack of a definite article “the” (*ho*) before “God” (*theos*) means that the centurion confessed, “This was *a* god.” However, in Greek grammar, nouns without “the” (*ho*) occurring before “to be” verbs (*ēn*) express the nature or character of the subject. In other words, Jesus had the same nature as God,<sup>204</sup> and he perfectly reveals God to us (Cf. Phil 2:5–11).<sup>205</sup> When a creature has the characteristics and nature of a duck, it is a duck.

The soldiers concluded that truth was on the side of Christ rather than with his mockers.<sup>206</sup> Thus, Jesus’s death became the definitive event which proclaimed his true status.<sup>207</sup> Matthew had hinted at the inclusion of gentiles within God’s people from the very beginning of his gospel. Except for Mary, he included only gentile women (Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth) in the genealogy of Christ (Matt 1:1–16). Nevertheless, this pronouncement by the soldiers accentuated Jesus’s post-resurrection command to “make disciples of all the people-groups” (Matt 28:19).<sup>208</sup>

**Read Matt 27:54.** How were the Roman centurion and the soldiers with him affected by what they had witnessed? Why did Matthew include them in his account of Jesus’s death? When did you recognize the divinity of Christ?

<sup>197</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 688.

<sup>198</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 635

<sup>199</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 852.

<sup>200</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1083.

<sup>201</sup> Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 27:54.

<sup>202</sup> Evans, “Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to Greco-Roman Gospel,” 69, [http://www.jgrchj.net/volume1/JGRChJ1-5\\_Evans.pdf](http://www.jgrchj.net/volume1/JGRChJ1-5_Evans.pdf).

<sup>203</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 1047.

<sup>204</sup> Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1,” *JBL* 92, 87, <http://digilander.libero.it/domingo7/H7.jpg>.

<sup>205</sup> Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1,” *JBL* 92, no. 1 (3 January 1973): 75–87, 75, <http://digilander.libero.it/domingo7/H1.jpg>.

<sup>206</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1084.

<sup>207</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 688.

<sup>208</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 921.

### A New Dawn

**10) Matt 28:1:** As foretold in Gen 3:15, Christ’s conquest of the serpent came via his execution. Nevertheless, few people in Israel expected their messiah to die (Cf. Deut 21:23; John 12:31–34; 1 Cor 1:22–23). Imagine how forlorn and forsaken Jesus’s followers must have felt (Matt 27:50, 54–61; Luke 24:17–21).<sup>209</sup>

In keeping with the other gospel writers, Matthew simply announced Christ’s resurrection.<sup>210</sup> He did not describe how or even exactly when it occurred.<sup>211</sup> The familiarity of his original audience with this event may account for our lack of insight.<sup>212</sup> Ancient writers felt little inclination to pay a scribe to record what their intended readers already knew. In that era, a scribe earned twelve days’ unskilled wages for penning a scroll equal to the length of Matthew’s gospel.<sup>213</sup>

Every resurrection account in the four gospels varies considerably. In the case of Luke 24, the author may have wished to fill the remaining space on his costly scroll. This resulted in a long, detailed report.<sup>214</sup> Matthew dictated one of his shortest narratives when discussing the resurrection,<sup>215</sup> likely due to the constraints of scroll length, rather than for theological purposes.<sup>216</sup> A standard papyrus scroll twelve feet long cost the equivalent of eight days’ wages for an unskilled laborer, just for the materials. People also avoided scrolls over thirty feet long as too unwieldy.<sup>217</sup>

Each author wrote of this event from a perspective familiar to him, without concern about matching someone else’s details.<sup>218</sup> This points to independent narratives based upon eyewitness traditions circulating in the first century. They broadly converged on the crucial facets of the circumstances of that day:<sup>219</sup> several women visited Jesus’s grave on Sunday morning; they encountered one or more angels; then discovered that Christ no longer inhabited the tomb, for he had risen from the dead.<sup>220</sup> We have no sense of coordinated deception from the gospel writers.<sup>221</sup> Only reliable testimony of Jesus’s bodily resurrection can explain the explosive growth of early Christianity (Acts 4:1–4; 1 Cor 15:1–8).<sup>222</sup>

Matthew began his account of Easter morning by writing, “Now, after the Sabbath, at the dawning of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.” Early Christians celebrated Jesus’s resurrection on the first day of each week,<sup>223</sup>

<sup>209</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 933.

<sup>210</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1097

<sup>211</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 867.

<sup>212</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 933.

<sup>213</sup>E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 168–9. I calculated this by comparing the length of Matthew to that of Romans in the Codex Vaticanus ([http://www.csntm.org/Manuscript/View/GA\\_03](http://www.csntm.org/Manuscript/View/GA_03)).

<sup>214</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 697–8.

<sup>215</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 933.

<sup>216</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 18 note 48.

<sup>217</sup>Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*, 51–2.

<sup>218</sup>Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (PNTC; Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1992), 733.

<sup>219</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 702.

<sup>220</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1097.

<sup>221</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 697.

<sup>222</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 934.

<sup>223</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 868.

calling it “the Lord’s day” (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:1–2; Rev 1:9–10).<sup>224</sup> The *Didache* (ca. 50–120 AD), also known as The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, provides us with the earliest extra-biblical record of Christian practices.<sup>225</sup> It says, “But every Lord’s day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.”<sup>226</sup>

Close to the same era, the Epistle of Barnabas (80–120 AD) states the rationale for gentiles changing the day of the Sabbath (Gen 2:1–3). It proclaims: “[W]hen there is no more sin, but all things have been made new by the Lord, then we shall be able to keep it holy because we ourselves have first been made holy. Furthermore, he says to them, ‘Your new moons and your Sabbaths, I cannot away with’ [Isa 1:13]. Do you see what he means? The present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but that which I have made, in which I will give rest to all things and make the beginning of an eighth day, that is, the beginning of another world. Wherefore, we also celebrate with gladness the eighth day in which Jesus also rose from the dead, and was made manifest, and ascended into heaven.”<sup>227</sup>

In his First Apology (ca. 150–160 AD), Justin Martyr described a service early in church history:

“On the day called Sunday, all who live in the cities or the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits; then when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then, we all rise together and pray...when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying ‘Amen’; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well-to-do and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, or those, who through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.

“But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world [Gen 1:1–5]; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For he was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to his apostles and disciples, he taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.”<sup>228</sup> The arrival of dawn on that Sunday morning ushered in a new era in human history.<sup>229</sup>

<sup>224</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 698.

<sup>225</sup>Larry W. Hurtado, “Christology: Didache” in *DLNT*, 181.

<sup>226</sup>M. B. Riddle, trans., “The Didache: The Lord’s Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations,” in *ANF 7*. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds. (New York: Christian Literature, 1886), 381, <https://archive.org/details/antenicenefather071913robe/page/380>.

<sup>227</sup>Lake, trans., “The Epistle of Barnabas,” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 395–6, <https://archive.org/stream/theapostolicfath00unknooft#page/334/mode/2up>.

<sup>228</sup>Justin Martyr, “The First Apology of Justin Martyr: With Text and Translation,” in *ANF 01* (trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, rev A. Cleveland Coxe; New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1913), 67, 186, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefather01robe#page/186/mode/2up>.

<sup>229</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 664.

In each of the four gospels, Mary Magdalene emerges as a primary witness to the events at the garden tomb.<sup>230</sup> The “other Mary” refers to the mother of James. Matthew did not mention at least two other women, either for stylistic purposes or due to the slight differences inherent in eyewitness accounts (Cf. Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1, 9–10; John 20:1).<sup>231</sup> All of them had watched Jesus during his crucifixion, helped with preparations for his burial, and observed his entombment (Matt 27:55–61; Mark 15:40–47).<sup>232</sup> Now, they returned to Christ’s grave, likely to express their grief in prayer.<sup>233</sup>

Pope Gregory the Great (540–604) first merged Mary Magdalene’s identity with that of a prostitute in a homily dating to 591. He said, “She whom Luke calls the sinful woman [Luke 7:36–50]...we believe to be the Mary from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark [16:9]” (Cf. Luke 8:2).<sup>234</sup> No evidence exists that Mary Magdalene had ever worked as a prostitute, either within the gospels or in extra-biblical records.<sup>235</sup>

**Read Matt 28:1.** Why didn’t Jewish people expect their messiah to die, especially by crucifixion? How do the variations in the four gospel accounts of Christ’s resurrection point to the reality of this event? Why did early Christians begin meeting together on Sundays? How would you characterize the people who first visited Jesus’s tomb that morning?

### Rolling Away the Stone

**b) Matt 28:2–4:** Matthew continued his account of Easter morning by noting a series of spectacular signs (Matt 28:1). By employing the conjunction “for” (*gar*), Matthew emphasized the apocalyptic nature of this event.<sup>236</sup> He wrote, “And behold, a great earthquake occurred, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and he moved to and rolled away the stone, and he was sitting on top of it.”

It remains unclear whether this earthquake refers to an after-shock of the one described in Matt 27:51–54 or to an entirely separate cataclysm.<sup>237</sup> He cited the angel’s activity as the primary cause of the upheaval (Cf. Rev 8:5; Rev 16:17–19).<sup>238</sup> Just as “an angel of the Lord” announced Christ’s birth, here one proclaimed his resurrection, book-ending Matthew’s gospel (Matt 1:18–25).<sup>239</sup>

Archaeological evidence reveals that Jerusalem’s graveyard of that era contained numerous tombs carved in soft rock, trees and plants, and pathways leading to the individual burial sites.<sup>240</sup> By the first century BC, prominent Jewish people constructed large, elaborate tombs

<sup>230</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 937.

<sup>231</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 702.

<sup>232</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 936–7.

<sup>233</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

<sup>234</sup>Michelle J. Morris, “Mary Magdalene” in *Lexham Bible Dictionary (LBD)*. John D. Barry et. al, eds. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), no pages.

<sup>235</sup>Raymond F. Collins, “Mary (Person)” in *ABD* 4:579–81, 580.

<sup>236</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

<sup>237</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

<sup>238</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1099.

<sup>239</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 937.

<sup>240</sup>Rachel Hachlili, “Burials: Ancient Jewish,” *ABD* 1:789–94, 789.

to convey their familial authority and grandeur. This practice continued into the first century AD, even after they no longer wielded political power under Rome’s domination.<sup>241</sup>

Two styles of rock-hewn graves predominated in Jerusalem during that era. Some, called *arcsolias*, consisted of one room with three arches, each surrounding a shelf large enough to hold one body.<sup>242</sup> More commonly, Jewish families created tombs called *loculi*, which permitted them to remain together while buried individually.<sup>243</sup> Such graves could hold up to a dozen corpses, each with its own room.<sup>244</sup>

A large wheel covered the entrance to Jesus’s tomb (Matt 27:57–60). These stones typically rested in a track, allowing those attending to the body to push the wheel aside and wedge it in place to keep the entrance open. Removing the wedge closed the door.<sup>245</sup> Possibly by means of the earthquake,<sup>246</sup> in an act of supernatural triumph, the angel rolled the enormous stone to the side and sat upon it.<sup>247</sup> However, neither the stone nor the seal kept Christ inside (Cf. John 20:19–20).<sup>248</sup> The angel rolled it away to enable the women to see that Jesus had already departed.<sup>249</sup>

Regarding the angel, Matthew reported, “His appearance was like lightning and his clothing [was] white like snow.” This description typically applies to visions of God and the glorified Christ (Cf. Dan 7:9–10, 13–14; Dan 10:4–6; Matt 17:1–2; Rev 1:12–18).<sup>250</sup> The angel’s appearance reflected that of the resurrected Lord.<sup>251</sup> Lightning and the color white symbolized power and holiness.<sup>252</sup>

When the soldiers at the cross experienced miraculous darkness and a great earthquake, they had responded in faith (Matt 27:45–54).<sup>253</sup> The military men whom Pontius Pilate posted at the tomb reacted very differently (Matt 27:62–66). Using the verb related to the term for the earthquake (*seismos*), Matthew noted, “but from the fear of him, the guards shook (*seiō*) and they became like dead men.”

Despite belonging to the Roman Army—one of the most effective military forces on earth—nothing equipped these soldiers to face such a terrifying entity.<sup>254</sup> The men tasked with protecting a dead man fell to the ground like corpses.<sup>255</sup> Even after that encounter, they failed to believe (Luke 16:19–31; Matt 28:11–15).<sup>256</sup>

<sup>241</sup>Andrea M. Berlin, “Power and Its Afterlife Tombs in Hellenistic Palestine,” *NEA* 65, no. 2 (1 April 2002):138–48, 147.

[https://www.academia.edu/381520/Power\\_and\\_Its\\_Afterlife\\_Tombs\\_In\\_Hellenistic\\_Palestine](https://www.academia.edu/381520/Power_and_Its_Afterlife_Tombs_In_Hellenistic_Palestine).

<sup>242</sup>Byron R. McCane, “Burial Practices: Jewish,” *DNTB*, 173–175, 174.

<sup>243</sup>Hachlili, “Burials: Ancient Jewish,” 1:793.

<sup>244</sup>McCane, “Burial Practices: Jewish,” 174.

<sup>245</sup>George W. Buchanan and PHEME PERKINS, “Tomb of Jesus,” *HBD*, 1058.

<sup>246</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1066.

<sup>247</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 701.

<sup>248</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1097–8.

<sup>249</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 937.

<sup>250</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1100.

<sup>251</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1066.

<sup>252</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 938.

<sup>253</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 666.

<sup>254</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 938.

<sup>255</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1100.

<sup>256</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 701.

**Read Matt 28:2–4.** What spectacular signs occurred on Easter morning? Why were the soldiers so terrified? What effect did that experience have upon them? How do you think you would have reacted?

### Apostles to the Apostles

c) **Matt 28:5–7:** Ignoring the guards,<sup>257</sup> the angel of the Lord directed his attention to a selective audience (Matt 28:1–4).<sup>258</sup> Matthew reported, “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not *you* be afraid, for I know that you are seeking Jesus, the crucified one. He is not here, for he has been raised, even as he said. Come! See the place where he was lying.’”

Due to the soldiers’ reactions, the angel made an emphatic statement,<sup>259</sup> adding the grammatically unnecessary word “you” (plural of *su*).<sup>260</sup> Heavenly messengers typically found it necessary to reassure the people they visited (Cf. Luke 1:13, 30; Luke 2:10).<sup>261</sup> No doubt the women initially responded with the same terror the guards experienced.<sup>262</sup>

In Koine Greek, the perfect tense denotes a past action which has ongoing consequences. For example, “I had been in the Air Force” implies that one’s past military service influences life today and into the future. By calling Jesus “the one who had been crucified” (*estaurōmenon*)—a term which appears as a perfect participle—the angel announced that the past effect of Christ’s sacrifice would continue in the future (Gal 3:13; Phil 2:5–11).<sup>263</sup> When an enormous boulder falls upon the soft sands of the seabed, the resounding thud reverberates in all directions, making ripples in the sand. When Jesus rose from the dead, that momentous event affected everything in the cosmos. Both the past and the future, including the era in which we live, have been forever changed (Exod 3:13–14; John 8:56–59).<sup>264</sup>

Although the women had seen Jesus buried in the tomb, the angel triumphantly revealed that he no longer there resided there in death (Matt 27:45–50; John 19:30–31).<sup>265</sup> The passive verb “has been raised” (*ēgerthē* from *egeirō*) indicates that God himself physically resurrected his son from death.<sup>266</sup> The tomb remains empty.<sup>267</sup>

Just as Jesus predicted, the Son of Man spent three days and three nights “in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12:40; Matt 16:21; Matt 17:22–23; Matt 20:17–19).<sup>268</sup> The Jewish reckoning of

<sup>257</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1100.

<sup>258</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 702.

<sup>259</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

<sup>260</sup>William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek, 3rd Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 0209), 135.

<sup>261</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

<sup>262</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1066.

<sup>263</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 938.

<sup>264</sup>Oakes, “The Apologetics of Beauty,” in *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts*, 220.

<sup>265</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 869.

<sup>266</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 939.

<sup>267</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 870.

<sup>268</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1098.

a “day” (*yom*) began at twilight and lasted until the following evening (Gen 1:5; Lev 23:5, 32).<sup>269</sup> Even a portion of a day counted. Christ died at approximately 3:00 pm on Friday, remained in the grave on Saturday, and was raised from the dead early on Sunday morning, fulfilling his prophecies (Matt 27:45–50; John 19:30–31).<sup>270</sup>

Ironically, Jesus’s enemies recognized the implications of what Christ had taught, while his own followers did not (Matt 27:62–66; John 20:19).<sup>271</sup> By raising Jesus from the dead, God thoroughly affirmed his claims of deity and vindicated him of any wrongdoing (Dan 7:13–14; Matt 9:27–34; Matt 26:59–67; Matt 28:16–20). As people who put our trust in Christ’s sacrificial death on our behalf, we all look forward to receiving resurrected bodies in the age to come (1 Cor 15:20–23, 50–55).<sup>272</sup>

The angel invited the women to enter the tomb to verify his claim for themselves.<sup>273</sup> Then, he charged them, “Now, quickly go, say to his disciples that he has been raised from the dead, and behold, he is going before you into Galilee. There you will see him. Behold, I told you.” In that era, Greco-Roman and Jewish authorities regarded the testimony of women with suspicion.<sup>274</sup> Concerning one Vestal Virgin, the Greco-Roman philosopher Plutarch (46–122 AD) noted, “Now Tarquinia was a holy virgin, one of the Vestals, and received great honors for this act, among which was this, that of all women her testimony alone should be received.”<sup>275</sup> In general, men in those societies considered females easily-deceived.<sup>276</sup> For example, Philo (ca. 20 BC–40 AD) called women “by nature light-minded.”<sup>277</sup>

The Jewish historian Josephus (37–100 AD) promoted this view: “But let not a single witness be credited, but three, or two at the least, and those such whose testimony is confirmed by their good lives. But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.”<sup>278</sup>

Had the apostles fabricated the events of Easter morning, they would have chosen very different messengers to deliver the news that Jesus had risen.<sup>279</sup> On the other hand, the gospel authors delivered a powerful theological statement by preserving these accounts (Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–10).<sup>280</sup> God selected the same group of women who witnessed Jesus’s death and burial to proclaim his resurrection (Matt 27:55–61; Mark 15:40–47).<sup>281</sup> In this new era of God’s kingdom, the gospel overcomes traditional gender and social limitations (Gal 3:28; Acts 1:14; Acts 2:1–4, 16–21; Rom 16:1–12).<sup>282</sup>

<sup>269</sup>W. Von Soden, J. Bergman, and M. Sæbø, “יִוִּם” (*yom*), *TDOT* 6:7–32, 23–4.

<sup>270</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 936.

<sup>271</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1067.

<sup>272</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 939.

<sup>273</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 870.

<sup>274</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 698–9.

<sup>275</sup>Plutarch, “Publicola,” in *Plutarch’s Lives, Vol 1*. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1914), 8.4, 523, <https://archive.org/details/plutarchslives01plut2/page/522>.

<sup>276</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 698 note 283.

<sup>277</sup>Philo, “That Every Good Person is Free,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus, Vol. 3* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: Bohn, 1855), 18, 532, <https://archive.org/details/theworksofphiloj03yonguoft/page/532>.

<sup>278</sup>Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 4.8.15,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D4%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D8%3Awhiston%20section%3D15>.

<sup>279</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1067.

<sup>280</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 699.

<sup>281</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 939–40.

<sup>282</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 698, 702.

An “apostle” (*apostolos*) consists of a person formally sent to convey a specific message with the full authority of the sender.<sup>283</sup> This made the women who received the angel’s proclamation and saw the empty tomb apostles to the apostles (Cf. Luke 24:9–10).<sup>284</sup> Concerning Mary Magdalene, Thomas Aquinas (1224/6–1274) wrote this: “Notice the three privileges given to Mary Magdalene. First, she had the privilege of being a prophet because she was worthy enough to see the angels, for a prophet is an intermediary between angels and the people. Secondly, she had the dignity or rank of an angel insofar as she looked upon Christ, on whom the angels desire to look. Thirdly, she had the office of an apostle; indeed, she was an apostle to the apostles insofar as it was her task to announce our Lord’s resurrection to the disciples. Thus, just as it was a woman who was the first to announce the words of death, so it was a woman who would be the first to announce the words of life.”<sup>285</sup>

The women’s testimony of Christ’s resurrection comprises the cornerstone of the Christian faith (Acts 2:22–36; 1 Cor 15:1–8; Rom 10:9–13).<sup>286</sup>

Finally, the angel delivered instructions for the remaining disciples to return to Galilee, where Jesus had lived and often ministered (Matt 2:19–23; Matt 3:13; Matt 4:12–25; Matt 19:1–2).<sup>287</sup> There the risen Christ would meet them. Once they arrived, Jesus spent forty days preparing them for their crucial role in spreading the good news of the kingdom of God (Matt 28:16–20; John 21; Acts 1:1–3).<sup>288</sup>

Except for John, the eleven disciples had fled when the Jewish leaders arrested Jesus (Matt 26:56; John 19:25–27). In contrast, these faithful women who remained with Jesus to the end would not have to wait to see the risen Lord (Matt 26:56; Matt 27:55–61; Matt 28:8–10).<sup>289</sup>

**Read Matt 28:5–7.** Why did the angel emphasize that the women should not be afraid? How does Greek grammar indicate that the effects of Christ’s crucifixion continue even today? Why do we say that Jesus was in the grave for three days, when it was less than 48 hours? What did Jesus’s enemies understand about his predictions that even Christ’s disciples missed? How did God upend gender limitations by having the angel deliver his message to the apostles via these women? What credibility does that act give to the resurrection accounts?

<sup>283</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “ἀπόστολος” (*apostolos*), *TDNT* 1:407–44, 421.

<sup>284</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 870.

<sup>285</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (trans. Fabian L. Larcher; Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1998), John 20, 2519, <https://dhspriority.org/thomas/english/John20.htm>.

<sup>286</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 870.

<sup>287</sup>Sean Freyne, “Galilee: Hellenistic/Roman Galilee” *ABD* 2:895–9, 899.

<sup>288</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 939–40.

<sup>289</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1098.

### From Terror to Adoration

**d) Matt 28:8–9:** After encountering the angel of the Lord at Christ’s empty tomb, the women followed his directions and ran to share the news of Jesus’s resurrection (Matt 28:1–7). In these verses, they received conclusive evidence of the angel’s proclamation and responded in worship. Matthew wrote, “And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and they ran to give an account to his disciples. And, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Good morning!’”

Despite the angel’s admonition not to fear,<sup>290</sup> their alarm likely derived from the angel’s appearance, the urgency of their task, and the knowledge that the authorities who executed Jesus would not perceive this message as good news (Matt 27:62–66).<sup>291</sup> At the same time, the women rejoiced in Christ’s victory over death.<sup>292</sup>

Notably, at the ending of the most reliable manuscripts of Mark’s gospel, the women experienced only fear (Mark 16). Manuscript evidence for Mark 16:9–20 does not exist prior to the fifth century.<sup>293</sup> Experts remain divided over whether Mark 16:1–8 formed the original conclusion of that gospel or if,<sup>294</sup> coming at the end of a scroll, it was lost.<sup>295</sup> The additional verses read like a composite of materials from the gospels and Acts (e.g. Acts 27:42–28:8). Given the abruptness of finishing at Mark 16:8, it appears that scribes formulated the two alternatives to provide a more satisfying ending.<sup>296</sup>

Contradicting the restrictions upon women giving testimony in that era,<sup>297</sup> the women in Matthew’s account went on their way to deliver (*apangellō*) an official proclamation imbued with sacred substance.<sup>298</sup> Suddenly, Jesus himself met them. Given that the last time they saw Jesus they watched his burial (Matt 27:57–61), Matthew’s matter-of-fact description seems like an understatement.<sup>299</sup> Christ simply greeted them as one would on any typical day (Matt 26:49).<sup>300</sup> “*Chairete*” (from *cairō*) carries a double meaning. In addition to “Hello” it can mean “Rejoice” (Matt 27:27–29; Phil 4:4).<sup>301</sup> Here, the term implies both nuances.<sup>302</sup> Unlike the disciples on their way to Emmaus, the women immediately knew Jesus (Luke 24:13–18, 30–35). John provided a more detailed account in which Mary Magdalene recognized Christ when he spoke her name (John 20:11–16).<sup>303</sup>

Matthew reported, “And after coming to him, they held his feet and they worshiped him.” The women did not encounter a mere vision.<sup>304</sup> Being able to grasp Jesus’s feet points to a

<sup>290</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 873.

<sup>291</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 940.

<sup>292</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1101.

<sup>293</sup>Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, 28. *Revidierte Auflage* (ed. Barbara Aland, et al.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 175–6.

<sup>294</sup>Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2001), 545.

<sup>295</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1102.

<sup>296</sup>David E. Garland, *Mark* (NAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 616–7.

<sup>297</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 7027

<sup>298</sup>Julius Schniewind, “ἀπαγγέλλω” (*apangellō*), *TDNT* 1:64–7, 65–6.

<sup>299</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1102.

<sup>300</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 874.

<sup>301</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 669.

<sup>302</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1068.

<sup>303</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 669.

<sup>304</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 940.

physical resurrection (Luke 24:36–43; 1 Cor 15:42–55).<sup>305</sup> They responded much like the gentile (<https://www.theopedia.com/gentile>) wise men had in the beginning of this gospel (Matt 2:1–2, 9–11).<sup>306</sup> In that era, people expressed their loyalty and adoration to a ruler by clasping his feet (Cf. Luke 7:36–38).<sup>307</sup>

The *Babylonian Talmud* recounts the story of Rabbi Akiba, who spent twenty-four years away from home with his wife’s consent while he studied. It says: “When he finally returned, he brought with him twenty-four thousand disciples. His wife heard [of his arrival] and went out to meet him...On approaching him she fell upon her face and kissed his feet. His attendants were about to thrust her aside, when [R. Akiba] cried to them, ‘Leave her alone, mine and yours are hers.’ Her father, on hearing that a great man had come to the town, said, ‘I shall go to him; perchance he will invalidate my vow.’ When he came to him [R. Akiba] asked, ‘Would you have made your vow if you had known that he was a great man?’ ‘[Had he known]’ the other replied, ‘[I would not have made the vow].’ He then said to him, ‘I am the man.’ The other fell upon his face and kissed his feet and also gave him half of his wealth.”<sup>308</sup>

Similarly, the first century BC Roman historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus reported a woman saying this after her son returned from an absence of many years to conquer his own people:<sup>309</sup>

“‘If it is right and lawful for a woman to grovel at the feet of her son, even to this and every other posture and office of humility will I submit in order to save my country.’ With these words, she threw herself upon the ground, and embracing the feet of Marcius with both hands, she kissed them.”<sup>310</sup>

Matthew used “worship” (*proskuneō*) to describe the women’s interaction with the risen Lord. The term connotes “prostrating oneself in total submission to a high-ranking figure in authority.”<sup>311</sup> Jesus previously said that people should worship only God. Therefore, Matthew’s positive portrayal of this act alludes to Christ’s divine status (Cf. Matt 4:9–10; Rev 22:8–9).<sup>312</sup>

John added some additional information in his gospel account regarding Mary holding Christ’s feet (John 20:17). He wrote, “Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father and my God and your God.”’”

Scholars debate whether Christ referred to an immediate rising to and returning from the Father in one day,<sup>313</sup> or if he wanted Mary to let go of him and run to share the good news with his disciples that he would ascend into heaven forty days later (Acts 1:1–3; Heb 10:11–

<sup>305</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 669.

<sup>306</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 703.

<sup>307</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 874.

<sup>308</sup>b. Kethubot 63a, [http://halakhah.com/kethubot/kethubot\\_63.html](http://halakhah.com/kethubot/kethubot_63.html).

<sup>309</sup>Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, Vol. 5 (trans. Earnest Cary and Edward Spelman; LCL; Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1945), 8.51.1–4, 151, <https://archive.org/details/romanantiquities05dionuoft/page/150>.

<sup>310</sup>Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities Vol.5*, 8.53.4–54.1, 157, <https://archive.org/details/romanantiquities05dionuoft/page/156>.

<sup>311</sup>Arndt et. al, “προσκυνέω” (*proskuneō*), *BDAG*, 882.

<sup>312</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1069.

<sup>313</sup>Beasley-Murray, *John*, 376.

17).<sup>314</sup> In one view, Jesus invited Thomas to touch him because he failed to believe that Christ had indeed risen from death (John 20:19–29).<sup>315</sup> Others hold that ascending immediately to the Father comprised an important aspect of Jesus’s saving work (Heb 9:11–14). John’s gospel equates news of the ascension with Matthew’s announcement of the resurrection. They assert that by the time Christ met Thomas a week later, his interim journey to heaven had ended.<sup>316</sup>

Matthew’s account indicates the women saw the Lord whom they loved after he rose from the grave. This transformed their terror into adoration.<sup>317</sup> Most of Christ’s other disciples experienced the same reaction after they followed the directive to meet Jesus in Galilee (Matt 28:16–17). A polite response to someone who rises from death seems inadequate.<sup>318</sup> Christ’s resurrection exonerated him of any wrongdoing and pointed to what all his people can anticipate in the age to come (John 2:13–22; 1 Cor 15:20–23).<sup>319</sup>

**Read Matt 28:8–9.** Why were the women simultaneously afraid and joyful when they left the angel? When did they recognize Jesus? What did grasping someone’s feet mean in their culture? What are the implications of Christ accepting the women’s worship? Do you believe that John 20:17 refers to an immediate ascension of Jesus or to the one which occurred forty days later? Why?

### A Restoration of Status

**e) Matt 28:10:** With emotionally-fraught events swirling around Mary Magdalene and the other women,<sup>320</sup> the risen Christ repeated the angel of the Lord’s comfort and directive, with one major difference (Cf. Matt 28:1–9).<sup>321</sup> The angel had referred to Jesus’s followers as his “disciples” (*mathētais*).<sup>322</sup> However, Christ said, “Do not be afraid. Go and speak to my brothers and sisters (*adelphois*) in order that they might go into Galilee. There they will see me.”

In Koine Greek, a masculine plural noun can include women in a group of mixed gender (Matt 12:48–50). During Christ’s arrest, trial, and crucifixion only John and “many women” had remained with him (Matt 26:55–58, 69–75; John 19:25–27; Matt 27:55–61). Jesus experienced desertion by most of his male disciples. Yet, he still included them among his

<sup>314</sup>Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 743.

<sup>315</sup>Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 644–5.

<sup>316</sup>Beasley-Murray, *John*, 377.

<sup>317</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 940.

<sup>318</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1102.

<sup>319</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 874–5.

<sup>320</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 941.

<sup>321</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 874.

<sup>322</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 874.

“brothers and sisters,”<sup>323</sup> even before they expressed contrition for abandoning him.<sup>324</sup> This indicates that Christ had already forgiven them.<sup>325</sup>

Jesus had lived and often ministered in Galilee (Matt 2:19–23; Matt 3:13; Matt 4:12–25; Matt 19:1–2),<sup>326</sup> so they likely knew exactly where he wanted them to reunite (Matt 26:31–32; Matt 28:16).<sup>327</sup> Matthew focused upon the gradual expansion of God’s kingdom to gentiles (Matt 2:1–2; Matt 8:5–13; Matt 27:50–54; Matt 28:18–20).<sup>328</sup> By employing female disciples as his envoys at this critical point in salvation history, Christ restored women to the status they originally occupied as equal and adequate partners (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 2:18–23; Rom 16:1–12).<sup>329</sup>

**Read Matt 28:10.** How did Jesus indicate his forgiveness for even the disciples who had abandoned him? Why did he choose Galilee as their place to reunite? How does this verse point to the renewed equality of male and female disciples of the Lord?

### A New Mandate

**11) Matt 28:18–20:** This final event in the gospel of Matthew provides the key to understanding the rest of the book.<sup>330</sup> Matthew restated and emphasized his most important theme.<sup>331</sup> With our loyalty belonging to Jesus our king, his ambassadors must expand his realm by making disciples all over the world (Cf. Gen 1:26–28).<sup>332</sup> After Jesus rose from the dead, the women he commissioned delivered his message. All his committed followers met in Galilee (Matt 28:5–10; 16–17).<sup>333</sup> Despite the abject failure of almost all the male disciples, Christ restored them to positions of trust (Matt 26:56; Matt 27:55–57; John 19:25–27; John 20:21–23).<sup>334</sup> In the midst of their bewildering circumstances and emotions, Jesus brought clarity to their new existence.<sup>335</sup>

This passage takes the form of a chiasm (A-B-C-B’-A’) with baptism as the central focus of emphasis.<sup>336</sup> Jesus used the word “all” (*pas*) four times,<sup>337</sup> pointing to the comprehensive extent of our mandate as Christians.<sup>338</sup> The lack of a verbal response by the disciples suggests that Christ expected them to fully receive and obey his command.<sup>339</sup> Matthew wrote, “And

<sup>323</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 703.

<sup>324</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1069.

<sup>325</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1102–3.

<sup>326</sup>Freyne, “Galilee: Hellenistic/Roman Galilee” *ABD* 2:895–9, 899.

<sup>327</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 942.

<sup>328</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1096–9.

<sup>329</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 942.

<sup>330</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 881.

<sup>331</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 950.

<sup>332</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 715.

<sup>333</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 881.

<sup>334</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1107–8.

<sup>335</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 950.

<sup>336</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 882.

<sup>337</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1109.

<sup>338</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 950–1.

<sup>339</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1112.

Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.’”

During his previous ministry in Israel, Jesus exercised his ability to heal the sick, to forgive sins, to raise the dead, and to disclose the will of his Father (Matt 9:1–8, 18–25; Matt 11:27–30).<sup>340</sup> In Christ’s time of trial in the wilderness, Satan had offered him “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory” in exchange for his worship (Matt 4:8–11).<sup>341</sup> Jesus passed the test, unlike the first son of God (Luke 3:38; Gen 3:1–7). While the first Adam failed under the best conditions, the Second Adam succeeded in the worst (Gen 2:7–15; Matt 4:1–2).<sup>342</sup> By refusing to short-circuit the plan devised within the Trinity, Jesus received far more than the devil promised (John 14:23–31; John 17:1–5; Matt 26:36–42; Acts 4:23–31).<sup>343</sup>

Using the divine passive “has been given,”<sup>344</sup> Christ asserted that the Father delivered universal dominion to his vindicated Son.<sup>345</sup> His promised status as the enthroned Son of Man who rules over heaven and earth now reflects reality (Dan 7:13–14; Matt 19:27–30; Matt 26:59–66).<sup>346</sup> Previously handed over to the power of earthly rulers, he now reigns over them all (Luke 22:1–6; John 18:29–19:16; Phil 2:5–11).<sup>347</sup> A new era had arrived in redemptive history,<sup>348</sup> with a world-wide expansion of Christ’s kingdom.<sup>349</sup>

Jesus authoritatively proclaimed,<sup>350</sup> “Therefore, after going, make disciples of all the people-groups, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all which I commanded you.” The Greek structure of this sentence consists of one main verb—the command “make disciples”—accompanied by three secondary verbs.<sup>351</sup> “Going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching” combine to describe the process of making disciples.<sup>352</sup> In this case, the terms also function as commands,<sup>353</sup> so Christ ordered all his followers to take up this mandate.<sup>354</sup> It applies to disciples who remain in Israel as well as to those who cross cultures (Cf. Acts 1:12–14; Acts 2:1–11).<sup>355</sup>

“To make/become a disciple” (*mathēteuō*) occurs only four times in the New Testament,<sup>356</sup> usually in the passive sense (Matt 13:52; Matt 27:57; Acts 14:21).<sup>357</sup> For example, in the verse in Acts, Luke referenced the word as resulting from evangelizing.<sup>358</sup> Only here in Matt 28:19 does it appear as a call to action.<sup>359</sup> Jesus invested considerable time and energy into recruiting his followers and training them to emulate his righteousness (Matt 4:18–25; Matt

<sup>340</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 951.

<sup>341</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1113.

<sup>342</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 156.

<sup>343</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1113.

<sup>344</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 951.

<sup>345</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 886.

<sup>346</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1112–3.

<sup>347</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 682.

<sup>348</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 886.

<sup>349</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 951.

<sup>350</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 886.

<sup>351</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 951.

<sup>352</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1115.

<sup>353</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1080.

<sup>354</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 954.

<sup>355</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 718–9.

<sup>356</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “μαθητεύω” (*mathēteuō*), *TDNT* 4:461.

<sup>357</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 952.

<sup>358</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 887.

<sup>359</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 952.

10:1–8; Matt 16:21–27).<sup>360</sup> In this passage, he commanded his disciples to repeat that pattern of making Christ-followers while this era of human history endures (Cf. Rom 8:29).<sup>361</sup>

The word *ethnos* depicts a group of people with common descent, a shared history, and a unified language.<sup>362</sup> Prior to this, Jewish people incorporated gentiles within Israel who desired to join them or welcomed them into their synagogues. Such gentiles had to seek to convert to Judaism; Jewish people did not actively evangelize them (Deut 4:5–8; Josh 2:1–14; Ruth 1:16–18; Ruth 4:9–12; 1 Ki 8:41–43; Matt 1:5–6; Matt 10:5–6).<sup>363</sup>

However, after his resurrection,<sup>364</sup> Christ expanded that mission to extend as wide as the universal dominion of the Son of Man predicted by Isaiah (Isa 11:10–12; Isa 42:5–10; Isa 49:5–7; Matt 24:14).<sup>365</sup> His call to reach all people-groups encompasses Jews and gentiles alike (Luke 10:1–2; Luke 24:46–47; Acts 1:8; Acts 13:13–16; 26–39, 43–49).<sup>366</sup>

During this era, gentiles who chose to convert to Judaism received baptism as a rite of initiation.<sup>367</sup> Regarding such an individual, the *Babylonian Talmud* states: “If he accepted, he is circumcised forthwith...As soon as he is healed arrangements are made for his immediate ablution (immersion in water), when two learned men must stand by his side and acquaint him with some of the minor commandments and with some of the major ones. When he comes up after his ablution he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects. In the case of a woman proselyte, women make her sit in the water up to her neck, while two learned men stand outside and give her instruction in some of the minor commandments and some of the major ones” (*b. Yebamoth* 47b).

The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (55–135 AD) also recognized baptism as an indicator of religious conversion.<sup>368</sup> He wrote, “When we see anyone wavering, we are wont to say, ‘This is not a Jew, but only acts like one.’ But, when he assumes the sentiments of one who has been baptized and circumcised, then he both really is, and is called, a Jew.”<sup>369</sup>

In the Great Commission, baptism represents the beginning of a new life as a Christian disciple (Cf. Rom 6:1–4).<sup>370</sup> It replaced the baptism of repentance, which anticipated the arrival of the kingdom of God (Matt 3:1–6; John 4:1–2; Acts 19:1–7).<sup>371</sup> Matthew provided almost no background information regarding the practice,<sup>372</sup> most likely due to his original audience’s familiarity with the rite (Acts 2:38–42; Acts 8:12, 30–38).<sup>373</sup>

<sup>360</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1080.

<sup>361</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 952.

<sup>362</sup>Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “ἔθνος (*ethnos*) in the NT,” *TDNT* 2:369–72, 369.

<sup>363</sup>Osborne, *Matthew*, 1079.

<sup>364</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 887.

<sup>365</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1114.

<sup>366</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 684.

<sup>367</sup>Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, Second Ed. (IVPBBCNT2)*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 125.

<sup>368</sup>Keener, *IVPBBCNT2*, 779.

<sup>369</sup>Epictetus, “Discourses,” in *The Works of Epictetus: His Discourses, in Four Books, the Enchiridion, and Fragments* (trans. Thomas Wentworth Higginson; New York: Thomas Nelson, 1890), 2.9,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0237%3Atext%3Ddisc%3Abook%3D2%3Achapter%3D9>.

<sup>370</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 952.

<sup>371</sup>Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 720.

<sup>372</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 887.

<sup>373</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1117.

Being baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” connotes belonging to and fellowship with the Trinity (Acts 9:10–19; Gal 3:26–29). The term “name” (*onoma*) occurs in singular form, pointing to one entity.<sup>374</sup> Grouping the resurrected Son with the Father and the Spirit elevates Jesus to equality with them and identifies him as worthy of our faith (Col 1:15–23; 2 Cor 13:14).<sup>375</sup>

The *Didache* (ca. 50–120 AD) provides us with the earliest extra-biblical record of Christian practices.<sup>376</sup> Regarding baptism, it says:

“And concerning baptism, thus baptize ye: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit in living [running] water. But if thou have not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, then warm. But if thou have not either, pour out water thrice upon the head into the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism, let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whatever others can; but thou shalt order the baptized to fast one or two days before.”<sup>377</sup>

Jesus also requires that his disciples help new believers to grow in faith by “teaching them to keep all which [he] commanded.” Christ calls each of his followers to adhere to this mandate.<sup>378</sup> Those with greater maturity should instruct others how to live in a way which emulates, obeys, and honors the Lord (Matt 5:17–20; Matt 7:15–29; Matt 12:46–50). Matthew intended his account of Jesus’s words and life to achieve that goal.<sup>379</sup>

In contrast to the convention of that era, this applies to every believer: both male and female (Acts 18:24–28; Rom 16:1–12; 1 Cor 11:4–6).<sup>380</sup> While some rabbis asserted that men should teach the Mosaic law to their daughters, others charged that doing so amounted to debauchery (*m. Sotah* 3.4). The Jerusalem Talmud went further, contending, “Let the words of the law be burned rather than committed to women” (*y. Sotah* 3:19).<sup>381</sup> Consequently, few Jewish women received training in the law,<sup>382</sup> although they did acquire some basic instruction to enable them to teach their children. Prior to Jesus’s ministry, women in Israel could neither travel with nor study under a formal religious instructor (John 4:25–27; Luke 8:1–3; Luke 10:38–42).<sup>383</sup>

This gospel concludes with a grand promise. Jesus proclaimed, “And behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the present age.” As we labor to live for Christ and accomplish the task of evangelizing every people-group, his presence goes with us.<sup>384</sup> He fulfills the meaning of the name Immanuel (Isa 41:10; Matt 1:23).<sup>385</sup> Through his power, we can accomplish his purpose for our lives as we await the day when Jesus returns to set all

<sup>374</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 685.

<sup>375</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1108.

<sup>376</sup>Hurtado, “Christology: Didache” in *DLNT*, 181.

<sup>377</sup>Riddle, trans., “The Didache: The Lord’s Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations,” in *ANF* 7, 7, 379, <https://archive.org/details/antenicenefather071913robe/page/378>.

<sup>378</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 888.

<sup>379</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 956–7.

<sup>380</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 956.

<sup>381</sup>John Lightfoot, *From the Talmud and Hebraica: A Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 580, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/lightfoot/talmud.vii.iii.html>.

<sup>382</sup>Keener, *IVPBCNT*, 1 Tim 2:11.

<sup>383</sup>Ben Witherington III, “Women: New Testament,” *ABD* 6: 957–61, 957.

<sup>384</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1119.

<sup>385</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 888.

things right (Matt 13:24–30, 36–52; Matt 25:31–46).<sup>386</sup> May all of us walk closely with Christ as we proclaim the good news of the kingdom among the nations.<sup>387</sup>

**Read Matt 28:18–20.** How do we know that the women who met Christ at the tomb delivered Jesus’s message? Why did the Father grant all authority to the Son? What process do we use to make disciples? How would you define a “people-group”? What does baptism signify? Why did Jesus indicate that the Father, Son, and Spirit share one name? What made Christ’s command about teaching radical for his era? How does Jesus’s enduring presence encourage you?

### Our Great High Priest

**12) Heb 2:14–18:** For God to nullify the work of the devil in Eden,<sup>388</sup> he had to become a Second Adam: flesh and blood, just like us in every way (Gen 3:1–13; Phil 2:5–11). Moreover, he had to live without committing sin from the time of his birth until his death (2 Cor 5:16–21; Heb 9:11–15).<sup>389</sup> Once again, Scripture portrays Christ as God’s champion engaged in single combat (Gen 3:14–15; Matt 4:1–11).<sup>390</sup>

As a result of his victory through death, Jesus has rendered Satan’s tyranny ineffective, making our salvation possible (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Pet 3:18).<sup>391</sup> God’s people still die. However, by covering our sin, Christ eliminated the devil’s ability to intimidate us with the threat of death (1 Cor 15:54–57).<sup>392</sup> No longer must that fear paralyze us like cowering slaves,<sup>393</sup> nor lead us to evade the reality of death. Jesus sets us free from the terrifying power of the grave (Gen 3:17–19; 1 Cor 15:21–26; 2 Cor 5:1–5).<sup>394</sup>

Due to his lifetime of faithful obedience to the Father, our great high priest has cleansed us from our sins. This enables us to enter into God’s presence (1 Cor 1:26–31; Heb 10:17–22).<sup>395</sup> By making atonement through his blood,<sup>396</sup> Christ has removed all the impurity of our rebellion against God (Eph 1:7–8; Col 2:13–14).<sup>397</sup> Jesus fulfills the promise of 1 Sam 2:35, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted according to our likeness yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).<sup>398</sup>

<sup>386</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1119.

<sup>387</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew*, 959.

<sup>388</sup>Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 110.

<sup>389</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. Ed. (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 84–5.

<sup>390</sup>William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 62.

<sup>391</sup>Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 110–1.

<sup>392</sup>Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 148.

<sup>393</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 61.

<sup>394</sup>Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 148.

<sup>395</sup>Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 150.

<sup>396</sup>Verbrugge, “ἰλάσκομαι” (*hilaskomai*), *TDNTWA*, 269.

<sup>397</sup>Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 151.

<sup>398</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 65.

**Read Heb 2:14–18.** Why was it necessary for Jesus to become a Second Adam? What did his sacrifice accomplish? How does this affect the way you view death?

### Satan Vanquished

**13) Rom 16:20:** This verse consists of a promise, rather than a prayer or a benediction.<sup>399</sup> The name Satan derives from the Hebrew verb which means “to accuse,” “to be an adversary,” and “to slander” (*satan*) (Ps 38:20; Ps 71:13; Zech 3:1–2).<sup>400</sup> In keeping with his name, the devil continually accuses us before God (Rev 12:10).<sup>401</sup> However, we serve “the God of peace.” Ultimately, division within the church comes from the devil (2 Cor 11:3–4; Jude 17–25). To achieve harmony among God’s people, we must partner with the Lord and with each other to deal decisively with Satan (Luke 10:17–20; Eph 6:10–18).<sup>402</sup>

This reference to Gen 3:15 alludes to the final end-time victory when God will throw the devil and his seed into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10, 14–15).<sup>403</sup> The metaphor of crushing Satan under foot fits well with Roman victory parades. Coins from shortly after Paul’s era depict the victorious emperor Trajan (98–117 AD) treading upon his vanquished enemies.<sup>404</sup>

D-Day during World War II provides a good illustration of inaugurated eschatology, the concept that the kingdom of God has come, is here, and has not yet come. We celebrate the anniversary of D-Day on June 6, 1944 as the decisive battle of WWII. However, not until May 8, 1945 did Germany declare defeat. In the interim, soldiers engaged in battle—with many losing their lives—despite the certainty of the outcome. For example, the Nazi regime executed the great German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer on April 9, 1945, one month before the war ended.

“It has been accomplished (John 19:28–30), yet we still encounter warfare. The kingdom of God in all its fullness shall not arrive until Christ returns (Rev 21:1–7). As members of God’s church, the Lord calls us to continually work toward a restoration of the conditions that existed in Eden prior to the fall (Gen 1:26–28, 31; Gen 2:8–15; 1 Cor 15:54–58).

**Read Rom 16:20.** Why do we still experience great difficulties? When will the curse upon the serpent be completely fulfilled? What does God call you to do until that occurs?

<sup>399</sup>Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:803.

<sup>400</sup>Victor P. Hamilton, “Satan,” *ABD* 5:985–9, 985.

<sup>401</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1998), 905.

<sup>402</sup>Ben Witherington III and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 398.

<sup>403</sup>Douglas Moo J., *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 932–3.

<sup>404</sup>Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trajan\\_Sestertius\\_116\\_833039.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trajan_Sestertius_116_833039.jpg).