

## **THE BOOK OF MATTHEW**

### **Lesson 96, Chapter 28 END**

Today, we shall conclude what amounts to a 2-year study of the Gospel of Matthew. Although there are some additional facts and events surrounding Christ's death, resurrection is far and away the central matter of chapter 28, as it ought to be. Open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 28.

#### **READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 28 all**

Before we start studying these inspired words, I must first give you some information about which most Bible students aren't aware. Nearly every modern and even earlier Christian scholar I've researched begins with a similar premise that all 4 Gospel accounts are to be divided into Pre- and Post-Easter events, instructions, and narratives. And that what happened before Jesus's death and resurrection matters considerably less than what happened afterward. Essentially the mindset is that His resurrection changed circumstances so greatly that whatever He said and taught prior to His crucifixion must not be given as much weight... nor His instructions be understood as something that Christians are necessarily bound to... as to what He said after He arose. Further that whatever part of His life, speech and behavior is overtly Jewish in its tone and flavor is to be disregarded as not for members of the Christian Church since although He died a Jew, He was no longer a Jew when He arose and shortly after ascended to Heaven. This premise is necessary because Christianity is, as admitted by Church authorities since the 4<sup>th</sup> century, not a religion for Jews but rather only for gentiles. To sum it up: the underlying assumption of the institutional Church as regards His resurrection is that it opened a new chapter that essentially greatly modified or even abolished most of what came before, up to and including what Christ did and said.

This is so important to be aware of that I'll say it again in different terms: the mindset is that it's not only that the relevance of the Old Testament and its teachings and commands are said to be not for Christians, it is that the relevance of much of Yeshua's pre-crucifixion and resurrection instructions have been largely superseded. This is why various Bible scholars over the past couple of centuries confess that what we have today in Christianity is not actually a Church of Christ, but rather a Church of Paul. Part of the reason that this happened is the realization that several of Yeshua's teachings, and especially the Sermon on the Mount, are problematic for a gentiles-only brand of Christianity... and we have discussed several of those matters over the past 2 years. So, the companion premise is that because of the resurrection Paul re-interpreted those earlier teachings of Jesus that happened before His crucifixion.

I cannot accept this traditional position and it has much to do with why Seed of Abraham Ministries exists in the first place. I hope after our deep dive into the Book of Matthew (that I also hope was preceded by your study in the Torah with me) that the age-old position of the Church dividing the relevance of Christ's teachings into Pre- and Post-Easter periods finally becomes unacceptable for you as well. I also want to make it clear that my goal has never been to create an anti-Church or anti-cross mentality. Rather it is my hope that some hopelessly inappropriate doctrines that have crept into our faith over the centuries can be exposed to the light of day, repented over and rooted out, before the End arrives and Our Lord returns. Let's move on.

The opening words of chapter 28 tell us when the events of the next few verses occurred: it was on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week (what the Western world calls Sunday). Because the CJB is what is known as a dynamic translation (whereby in some cases the alleged meaning substitutes for the literal words), then the words "1<sup>st</sup> day of the week" are (at the author's discretion) not included. Nonetheless, the day after the weekly Sabbath is the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week and we find that bit of information expressed in virtually all other English Bible versions.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Matthew 28:1** *Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.*

"Towards dawn" is a general term that nicely equates to the common English term "at sunrise". Biblically, and as understood and practiced by Jews, Shabbat had ended several hours earlier at the previous sunset and so at that point the

day had advanced from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week.

Miriam of Magdala (Mary Magdalen) and the woman called “the other Miriam” (the one in the previous chapter identified as the mother of Jacob and Joseph... who may or may not have been Yeshua’s mother) went while it was still dark to visit the tomb where the wealthy disciple Joseph of Ramatayim had placed Christ’s corpse. These same 2 women were, among other Jews, present at the site of the crucifixion as Jesus hung dying upon the cross. That it was 2 **women** that are mentioned only adds to the historic evidence that this account is true as the world in that era was a network of male dominated societies, and especially the Hebrew faith placed men in the leading roles. So, the heavy involvement and mention of women is a bit of a surprise. Although as Daniel J. Harrington notes in his research on ancient Judaism, it was the custom at that time for family and friends to keep watch over the tomb of a loved one for 3 days to be sure that the person entombed wasn’t actually still alive, but had accidentally been judged as dead!

Just as there had been an earthquake at the moment of Yeshua giving up His spirit and succumbing to the horrible execution experience of the Roman death stake, so now another earthquake occurs around the time of the women’s arrival at the tomb. Matthew explains that the earthquake was directly connected with a representative of God (an angel) arriving on scene, whereby the rock closing the opening to the tomb was rolled away, exposing the entrance. The angel, quite visible and no doubt frightening in appearance, sat upon the stone that had been moved to the side. Saying that the angel’s appearance was like lightening must be referring to the suddenness of it rather than a description of what he looked like. What he looked like was summed up with the words: “his clothes were white as snow”.

The Gospel of Mark, however, tells a somewhat different version of these same happenings.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Mark 16:1** *When Shabbat was over, Miryam of Magdala, Miryam the mother of Ya'akov, and Shlomit bought spices in order to go and anoint Yeshua. <sup>2</sup> Very early the next day, just after sunrise, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup> They were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?" <sup>4</sup> Then they looked up and saw that the stone, even though it was huge, had been rolled back already. <sup>5</sup> On entering the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right;*

***and they were dumbfounded.***

Since neither Matthew nor Mark were eyewitness, and both were writing at least 30 years after the fact, then clearly they were getting their information from different sources (that is the nature of all the Synoptic Gospels). In Mark no earthquake is mentioned, 3 women and not 2 went to the tomb, there is no direct explanation for how the tomb had been opened, and there was a young man dressed in all white sitting NOT outside but rather inside the tomb next to where Yeshua had been laid. We're left to decide who this "young man" is. It is nearly universally agreed that this "young man" was an angel. I'm not so sure. Why wouldn't Mark simply say "angel" if that's the case? When we read a little more of Mark, my suspicion increases that the "young man" wasn't an angel.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Mark 16:6-9** <sup>6</sup> ***But he said, "Don't be so surprised! You're looking for Yeshua from Natzeret, who was executed on the stake. He has risen, he's not here! Look at the place where they laid him.*** <sup>7</sup> ***But go and tell his talmidim, especially Kefa, that he is going to the Galil ahead of you. You will see him there, just as he told you."*** <sup>8</sup> ***Trembling but ecstatic they went out and fled from the tomb, and they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.\**** <sup>9</sup> ***When Yeshua rose early Sunday, he appeared first to Miryam of Magdala, from whom he had expelled seven demons.***

It seems to me that in Mark's Gospel the intent of referring to the "young man" is not to an angelic being but rather is more likely to be Jesus. Even though this "young man" says "He's not here", and "He is going to the Galilee ahead of you", Yeshua regularly spoke of Himself in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, especially when He talked about the Son of Man. This could explain Mark's otherwise rather confusing verse 9 about Christ first appearing to Mary Magdalen that seems out of place. My speculation is that Mark is writing about what the appearance of this being was to the 3 women (a young human male) and not what his substance was or who he actually turned out to be. If this is the case, then it differs significantly from Matthew's account.

I don't think we need to fret much over any of these differences; for one reason we can't pepper the original authors with questions, so the why and wherefore can be nothing but our guesses. Yet to pretend that there aren't differences is not intellectually honest. The precise details of the tomb opening and why the women came, and even how many women were present (in Mark's version it was 3 women who intended to complete the funeral process of putting aromatic

spices within the folds of the linen covering that envelops the dead body) aren't crucial to the point of the story, which is the empty tomb. So, as we continue in Matthew we have the mention of guards (Roman guards) that had witnessed the earthquake, the stone being rolled away, and the sudden presence of this terrifying apparition that Matthew says is an angel. Saying the guards became like dead men simply means they became frozen in fear.

Next, some of the most profound words of the entire New Testament are spoken by the "angelic" being. He says that the women shouldn't be afraid (no doubt referring to the nature of his own appearance), and that he knows why they came to the tomb, and that it was to look for Yeshua who had been crucified. He next says that Yeshua isn't there in the tomb BECAUSE He has been raised, just as He had prophesied. So, the angel provides the reason that Jesus isn't there; that is, His body wasn't taken, it had come alive again. The angel invites the women into the tomb to see that no one was there and that they were to quickly run to tell the 11 disciples about what has happened (no doubt meaning that the 11 disciples hadn't scattered but rather stayed as a downcast group nearby, but it also means the women knew exactly where they were). They are also to tell the disciples that Jesus is going to be in the Galilee (again, just as He had said He would be prior to His death).

What is described is so very brief, short on details, and leaves out perhaps the most puzzling matter that we'd all like to know about: the resurrection itself. We have no information on how it happened, or what it looked like as it unfolded inside that tomb. Resurrection is given as a fact and nothing more. We're not really told by Matthew that Jesus arose on that 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, only that the tomb opened on that day and that He was already gone. Even the prophecy of Jonah that Yeshua said He would fulfill as a sign doesn't necessarily state that He was dead for 3 days and nights; only (like Jonah in the belly of the great fish) He would be sequestered inside the tomb for 3 days and nights.

**CJB Matthew 12:38-40 <sup>38</sup> At this some of the Torah-teachers said, "Rabbi, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." <sup>39</sup> He replied, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign? No! None will be given to it but the sign of the prophet Yonah. <sup>40</sup> For just as Yonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the depths of the earth.**

Similarly, Mark doesn't say Christ arose on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. Luke, however, says

it **was** on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day that Jesus arose (meaning, came alive from the dead).

<sup>CJB</sup> **Luke 24:7** *'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be executed on a stake as a criminal, but on the third day be raised again'*

So, the ambiguity of the time of Christ's revivification in Matthew and Mark is settled by Luke. Let's consider the timeline of events. Using standard Western terminology for days of the week, this is the usual Christian timeline: Yeshua was killed and placed into the tomb on Friday and arose on Sunday. But how can that add up to 3 days and 3 nights to fulfill the prophetic sign of Jonah? Answer: it can't. At best it offers just a few minutes in the tomb on Friday, a full day on Saturday, and a little bit of a day on Sunday. But no amount of spin can ever give us 3 nights. Friday night and Saturday night are but 2 nights. The solution is simple but it shakes up standard doctrine; there must be one more day and night injected. The solution begins by returning to the fact that this was the Spring Festival period when 3 God-ordained feasts occurred in rapid succession: Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. When we view this from the only way we should (from the Hebrew/Jewish way) that **MUST** include accounting for the added feast sabbaths that are biblically ordained for the 1<sup>st</sup> and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Doing that we can reconstruct a timeline that works. Using the Hebrew model of days that changed at sunset (not at midnight), and using the Hebrew numbering system of days (not the Roman day naming system that we use), then we see that Yeshua died and was entombed on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the week, lay there for the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> days of the week, and arose on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of a new week. I'll say it a different way: He was placed in the tomb just before dark on the 5<sup>th</sup> day (which begins a new Hebrew day), remained entombed for the day and night of the 6<sup>th</sup> day (a festival sabbath day), and for the day and night of the 7<sup>th</sup> day (the weekly 7<sup>th</sup> day sabbath), and arose around daybreak of the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the new week. That gives us 3 days and 3 nights. All other formulas simply don't add up.

Further, my opinion is that just as when Yeshua died it was announced by an earthquake, so therefore was the moment of His resurrection announced by an earthquake, and we know this happened about daybreak. We'll deal a little more with this matter, shortly.

Verse 8 continues with the women dutifully obeying the angel's instructions to run and find the disciples and to tell them the news. The women were shaken

and badly frightened by what they had just witnessed, but they were also conflicted in emotion as they were filled with unimaginable joy because the death of their Lord had seemingly turned to an unfathomable victory. Somewhere along their way to find the 11 disciples (it wouldn't have been a very long distance) Jesus suddenly appears to them. John's Gospel tells the story differently from Matthew's and Mark's.

CJB **John 20:11-17** <sup>11</sup> *but Miryam stood outside crying. As she cried, she bent down, peered into the tomb,* <sup>12</sup> *and saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Yeshua had been, one at the head and one at the feet.* <sup>13</sup> *"Why are you crying?" they asked her. "They took my Lord," she said to them, "and I don't know where they have put him."* <sup>14</sup> *As she said this, she turned around and saw Yeshua standing there, but she didn't know it was he.* <sup>15</sup> *Yeshua said to her, "Lady, why are you crying? Whom are you looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you're the one who carried him away, just tell me where you put him; and I'll go and get him myself."* <sup>16</sup> *Yeshua said to her, "Miryam!" Turning, she cried out to him in Hebrew, "Rabbani!" (that is, "Teacher!")* <sup>17</sup> *"Stop holding onto me," Yeshua said to her, "because I haven't yet gone back to the Father. But go to my brothers, and tell them that I am going back to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."*

So, in John's version it wasn't an angel that told the women to go find the 11 disciples, it was the risen Christ (and, there were also 2 angels present). So, the women weren't on their way to find the disciples when they saw Yeshua; instead, He was suddenly standing right there next to them just outside the tomb's entrance. Which of the 4 Gospel accounts gets the details of this event most correct? I'd vote for John's since he was nearby at the time, as one of the original 11. John would have heard the story directly from the mouths of the excited women eyewitnesses. John was the only Gospel writer that was part of Christ's first followers.

Much to unpack here but I want to begin with this: Jesus's words once again confound the co-equal Trinity Doctrine theory that is a mainstay for most of Western Christianity. That is, if one claims that the New Testament tells us that God manifests Himself ONLY as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (The Trinity), then all 3 natures or "persons" of God are co-equal with no hierarchy of authority, power or knowledge. Listen carefully to what Yeshua says.

<sup>CJB</sup> **John 20:17** *"Stop holding onto me," Yeshua said to her, "because I haven't yet gone back to the Father. But go to my brothers, and tell them that I am going back to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."*

Yeshua not only refers to "My Father" but also refers to Him as "My God". And by saying "My God and **your** God", He is putting His Father's superior God-status above Himself, the women, and the disciples.

Let's talk now about resurrection, which to my thinking must be the fulcrum upon which all belief in Yeshua as our Lord and Savior pivots. Paul says that without Yeshua's resurrection our faith is in vain. Yet it might surprise you to know that not all Christian denominations believe in resurrection. Some denominations don't believe in any kind of resurrection (not even of the disembodied soul), others believe that Jesus was resurrected but He's the only one that ever will be, and still others believe in resurrection of the soul and not body, and this even includes the absence of possibility of the bodily resurrection of Yeshua. For some of the older denominations (like the Baptists) there are splits in their resurrection beliefs that can be traced to the rise of the European Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Especially as we arrive at the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the idea of bodily resurrection (including of Jesus) within the various Western Church branches was on the wane. This is due to the modern era insistence that the Bible must agree with science; or better, must conform to science. From that view, scientifically speaking since resurrection is a miracle, and since miracles cannot be reproduced and proven in a laboratory, then there can be no such things as miracles. This issue is one of a small handful that defines the basic division between what the Church calls its Liberal versus Fundamental (or Conservative) denominations.

As I have had the pleasure of researching the array of beliefs concerning resurrection both in documents and (over my lifetime) in talking with Christians of many denominations, it is sometimes a surprise to members of one side of this argument or the other that a different view even exists. I assure you that there aren't just 2 sides to the debate: there are many. We could probably spend a lot of time on all these various views, their nuances and their sources, but it would take us down a rabbit trail that is not appropriate for our purposes. So, I'll just state to you that because I take the Bible as inspired, truthful and literal (literal in its meaning and intent when taken within the context of the culture it was written) therefore, I can confidently tell you that Jesus died on the cross, His dead body



was placed into a tomb, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day the Father in Heaven miraculously revived Him both in body and soul. While so often this concept of resurrection is taught within the Church as a new Christian innovation (that is, very much new and apart from the Judaism of Christ's day) in fact that is not so at all. Such a thing was completely within the broad spectrum of Jewish theology of Yeshua's day and had been part of the Hebrew faith for centuries. Although, just as within modern Christianity, there were (and continue to be) many more than 1 stream of thought on the matter of resurrection that various Jewish groups adhered to. So, this is where we'll focus our attention for the next few minutes because it reveals the mindset of the Jewish people and of 1<sup>st</sup> century writers of the New Testament.

Of the several doctrinal disagreements between the Sadducees and Pharisees was the subject of resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in it but different groups of Pharisees variously believed either in spirit-only resurrection or in spirit **and** body. Therefore, the concerns of the Sadducee and Pharisee members of the Sanhedrin that convicted Yeshua and wanted guards placed at His tomb were different. The Sadducees truly believed that since resurrection was not possible, then the only way that Christ's body could go missing is if His disciples took it. The Pharisees, however, had mixed motives. While they were afraid that Jesus's disciples indeed might come and steal the body, they also couldn't dismiss the idea that He **could** be resurrected. And what would they do about a resurrected Jesus wandering around Jerusalem that would threaten their authority over the Jewish people even more than the sad remembrance of a dead and non-resurrected Jesus?

Going back to what many Jewish scholars think may be the first book of Bible that was written down, is the Book of Job. In it we read this:

**CJB Job 14:11-14 <sup>11</sup> Just as water in a lake disappears, as a river shrinks and dries up; <sup>12</sup> so a person lies down and doesn't arise- until the sky no longer exists; it will not awaken, it won't be roused from its sleep. <sup>13</sup> "I wish you would hide me in Sh'ol, conceal me until your anger has passed, then fix a time and remember me! <sup>14</sup> If a man dies, will he live again? I will wait all the days of my life for my change to come.**

So, from a very early date there was hope of a man being brought back to life by God after he had died. This is what resurrection amounts to even if the word itself had yet to be coined, and this because more formed thoughts about the subject

had not yet been brought together. Much of the source of resurrection thought actually revolves around the concept of monotheism (the concept that there is only one God). In other words, if there is only one God, and God is the Creator of life, and it is God who determines everything, then certainly the power of life and death and even renewed life lies within His capable hands. So monotheistic religions like Judaism, Christianity, and even Islam all believe in resurrection of one kind or another. Another element of this resurrection reasoning is that a human being was created as a moral unit. That is our body and soul form a unit, and so they can only be separated to a degree. It follows that in our alive state the condition of our soul will necessarily have a profound effect on our body, and vice versa and that resurrection necessarily must be of body and soul together. So, our basic belief in the One God is our best assurance that resurrection must be an immutable fact. Our hope in Christ, then, is not about resurrection itself (an already established fact), but rather the matter becomes our resurrection into what? It was therefore perhaps the “resurrection into what?” question that concerned and separated Hebrew thought into various groups and sects.

Because both Ezekiel and Jeremiah shared this view of resurrection as a given, and of humans as God-defined and created moral units of body and soul, and because of these Prophets’ messianic beliefs (that Jesus so much relied upon to explain Himself to others), then resurrection gradually came to be seen as a central part of the eventual reality of the coming Messianic Kingdom (what the Gospel accounts call the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God). Resurrection and the Kingdom of Heaven of course only extended for the most part to Israelites, and especially found its expression in Ezekiel’s famous dry bones (representing scattered and dead Israelites) coming back to life and being re-covered in flesh as living persons (as moral units). Daniel expressed a coming resurrection that differed slightly, perhaps, from Ezekiel’s and Jeremiah’s.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Daniel 12:1** *"When that time comes, Mikha'el, the great prince who champions your people, will stand up; and there will be a time of distress unparalleled between the time they became a nation and that moment. At that time, your people will be delivered, everyone whose name is found written in the book. <sup>2</sup> Many of those sleeping in the dust of the earth will awaken, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting shame and abhorrence. <sup>3</sup> But those who can discern will shine like the brightness of heaven's dome, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. <sup>4</sup> "But you, Dani'el, keep these words secret, and seal up the book until the time of the end. Many will rush here and there as*

***knowledge increases."***

The difference is that even Jewish scholars see this prophecy including the possibility (although not a certainty) that it might include resurrection of the dead even for some gentiles. But Daniel's prophecy also says that there will be general resurrection that will include not only the righteous but also the wicked. Therefore, we have the beginning of the issue I spoke about a couple of minutes ago: our resurrection into what? Daniel says for some it will be resurrection into everlasting life, and others resurrection into everlasting shame and abhorrence.

The later Ethiopic Book of Enoch (this is not a book in the Bible so don't go looking for it in your index) builds on Daniel's concept and proposes that ***She'ol*** (the grave or the underworld of the dead) is divided into 4 chambers: 2 that house the righteous dead, and 2 that house the wicked dead. I won't get into the details, but of the 4 classes of people who die and get divided up to live in those 4 different chambers, the 2 righteous classes plus 1 of the wicked ones (all living in their separate chambers) will be resurrected; the 4<sup>th</sup> won't be. The 3 resurrected classes were said to be fully body and soul (moral unit) resurrections.

On the other hand, the Slavonic Book of Enoch (another non-Biblical work) assumes that all will be resurrected, but only in spirit and never in body. The Pharisees and Essenes (in general) believed in resurrection of the body and spirit. However, both saw this as applying mainly or exclusively to Israelites. Over time, after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. and when the priesthood became disbanded, Rabbis became the new driving force of theology in Judaism. As one might expect, debates raged over who might be included in resurrection. For instance; Rabbi Eleazar Ha-Kappar said "As all men are born and die, so will they rise again". He and other Rabbis shared this view and placed the timing of the resurrection at the close of the Messianic era. Does all this sound familiar to you? It ought to. We find this same conclusion coming from Yeshua, Paul, and from John in the Book of Revelation.

<sup>CJB</sup> ***Revelation 20:1 Next I saw an angel coming down from heaven, who had the key to the Abyss and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan [the Adversary], and chained him up for a thousand years. <sup>3</sup> He threw him into the Abyss, locked it and sealed it over him; so that he could not deceive the nations any more until the thousand years were over. After that, he has to be set***

*free for a little while. <sup>4</sup> Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them received authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for testifying about Yeshua and proclaiming the Word of God, also those who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received the mark on their foreheads and on their hands. They came to life and ruled with the Messiah for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over.) This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is anyone who has a part in the first resurrection; over him the second death has no power. On the contrary, they will be cohanim of God and of the Messiah, and they will rule with him for the thousand years.*

So, when we read what Christ says, and even what Paul will later say, it is nothing particularly innovative within the Hebrew faith. What is new is announcing that the Messiah of the messianic era has arrived and His name is Yeshua of Nazareth.

Let's return to Matthew 28. Verse 11 explains that the Roman guards that had been frozen in fear went into Jerusalem and told a senior priest what had happened. The priest met with the Pharisee leadership and together they decided the best course of action was to bribe the Roman guards to say that indeed what they were guarding against had come to pass: some of Christ's disciples came and stole Jesus's body. And should this matter wind up on Pilate's desk, the Jewish religious leadership will go to defend the guards and smooth things over. Then we get verse 15 that is usually translated as we find it in the KJV.

<sup>KJV</sup> **Matthew 28:15** *So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*

The problem with this verse is the word "Jews"; it doesn't say that. The proper translation from Greek to English is not Jews, it is Judeans. That is, the Jewish residents of Judea. Thus, it is the Judeans who bought in to the lie told to the Roman guards and it is they who perpetuated it.

If the crux of the entire final chapter of Matthew's Gospel is resurrection, then the crux of the final 5 verses must be what the Church calls The Great Commission. Apparently Yeshua had not only told the disciples that He would meet them in the Galilee (something they clearly had not believed would happen), but also the

exact location, even though that is not documented in the Gospels. When they saw Yeshua they fell at His feet and worshipped Him; at least some of them did. Others held back; some probably dumb struck with who was standing before them, perhaps others fearful after having disowned Him if they would be still be welcomed, and others not sure what to make of the whole thing.

Yeshua tells them that all authority in heaven and earth is given to Him. This fulfills Daniel 7:14; or at least it does to a point.

**CJB Daniel 7:13-14 <sup>13</sup> "I kept watching the night visions, when I saw, coming with the clouds of heaven, someone like a son of man. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup> To him was given rulership, glory and a kingdom, so that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His rulership is an eternal rulership that will not pass away; and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.**

Nothing in Daniel prophecies Yeshua being in charge of Heaven and since the Hebrew term ***shamayim*** means both the universe (what's up in the sky) and the Heaven where God lives, one has to wonder which is actually meant. Can the Father really have just ceded control over Heaven to Yeshua? Or is it that Yeshua has been given control over the earth and the Universe? Does the opening credo "Our Father in Heaven" now change? I'm not sure I can answer those questions with complete conviction; however, what I think the meaning is that just as Jesus has been the Father's agent on earth, so now (sitting at the Father's right hand in Heaven) Jesus has also returned to Heaven and is His Father's agent in Heaven. Peter's Epistle might shed some light at least on how He understood this instruction.

**CJB 1 Peter 3:22 *He has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities and powers subject to him.***

What comes next is Yeshua's command to take the Good News of the Kingdom (that now includes news of His resurrection) to all nations. The Church has historically taken this to mean that gentiles are now added to the mix; and within a couple hundred years changed it to mean gentiles only, Jews excluded. But one has to wonder as we read the various Epistles if Christ's 11 disciples standing before Him that day, and the many more Jewish disciples that would become part of the fold in the next few years after His crucifixion, really took it that way, as opposed to meaning that they should take this message to the

Jewish Diaspora who lived scattered among the many nations outside the Holy Land? After all, well less than 10% of all living Jews at that time lived in the Holy Land. Considering the strange encounter that Paul had with the risen Yeshua a few decades later as he was sent by the Sanhedrin to hunt down Jewish followers who were indeed taking Christ's message to fellow Jews in the Diaspora, and then Paul being told that he was Yeshua's choice to take the same message to gentiles, the passage favors the likelihood that Yeshua's commission was at first misunderstood. It only became apparent after Paul's experience with Christ on the road to Damascus that worldwide evangelism of all humanity, Jews and gentiles, was what Yeshua had intended.

Therefore, this passage fulfills one of the oldest promises of God in the Bible; one made to Abraham.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Genesis 12:1** *Now ADONAI said to Avram, "Get yourself out of your country, away from your kinsmen and away from your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you are to be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed."*

Yeshua instructs that His disciples are to teach everyone all that He has taught them. And I would add, not just whatever it is He taught them **after** His resurrection. Perhaps one of the most comforting things that Yeshua could ever have said that has brought peace to so many hurting, persecuted, ill, and damaged Believers are the final words of the Book of Matthew:

<sup>CJB</sup> **Matt. 28:20** <sup>20</sup> *... And remember! I will be with you always, yes, even until the end of the age."*

Just as His Father did not create us and then abandon us to work our lives out on our own, so Christ did not do a new work in us and then abandon us to work out our Salvation on our own.

This concludes our study of the Gospel of Matthew.