

Rich Lusk

Easter 2011: Death Trampled Down (Matthew 28)

Sermon Notes

The original outline for the sermon:

1. Resurrection realities: the angel, the guards, the disciples
2. Resurrection results: courage, joy, worship
3. Resurrection responsibilities: go, baptize, teach
4. Resurrection reassurances: no fear, "I am with you"

I obviously had to rearrange what I wanted to say for the sake of time, but perhaps we can revisit the aspects of the narrative and its implications that I omitted at another time.

The end of Matthew brings us full circle in all kinds of ways. Just as Jesus came forth from Mary's womb at the beginning, so now Mary meets him at the empty tomb. Just as the magi came to worship him, so now his disciples worship him. Just as he began his public ministry in Galilee, so now he returns to Galilee. Just as Satan took him up on a mountain and offered him the kingdoms of the earth in exchange for worship, so now Jesus is worshipped on a mountain as he claims the kingdoms for himself.

The resurrection means Jesus is king and his kingdom has come. His kingdom is not of this world, but it invades the kingdoms of this world and transforms them.

Easter means death never gets the last word. For the Christian, death is not a dead end. It's more like a tunnel. It takes us to a glorious destination (heaven)...where we await an even greater glory (the resurrection of the body and the perfected new creation). Easter

means the triumph of life over death. Easter means God has won the victory. Easter means we always have a reason to rejoice.

Nobody does Easter better than N. T. Wright:

So how can we learn to live as wide-awake people, as Easter people? Here I have some bracing suggestions to make. I have come to believe that many churches simply throw Easter away year by year; and I want to plead that we rethink how we do it so as to help each other, as a church and as individuals, to live what we profess. I am speaking here particularly from, and to, the church I know best. Those who celebrate in other ways will, I think, be able to make appropriate adjustments and take whatever they need to apply to their own situations.

For a start, consider Easter Day itself. It's a great step forward that many churches now hold Easter vigils, as the Orthodox church has always done, but in many cases they are still too tame by half. Easter is about the wild delight of God's creative power – not very Anglican, perhaps, but at least we ought to shout Alleluias instead of murmuring them; we should light every candle in the building instead of some; we should give every man, woman, child, cat, dog, and mouse in the place a candle to hold; we should have a real bonfire; and we should splash water about as we renew our baptismal vows. Every step back from that is a step toward an ethereal or esoteric Easter experience, and the thing about Easter is that it is neither ethereal nor esoteric. It's about the real Jesus coming out of the real tomb and getting God's real new creation under way.

But my biggest problem starts on Easter Monday. I regard it as absurd and unjustifiable that we should spend forty days keeping Lent, pondering what it means, preaching about self-denial, being at least a little gloomy, and then bringing it all to a peak with Holy Week, which in turn climaxes in Maundy

Thursday and Good Friday . . . and then, after a rather odd Holy Saturday, we have *a single day* of celebration.

All right, the Sundays after Easter still lie within the Easter season. We still have Easter readings and hymns during them. But Easter week itself ought not to be the time when all the clergy sigh with relief and go on holiday. It ought to be an eight-day festival, with champagne served after morning prayer or even before., with lots of alleluias and extra hymns and spectacular anthems. Is it any wonder people find it hard to believe in the resurrection of Jesus if we don't throw our hats in the air? Is it any wonder we find it hard to *live* the resurrection if we don't do it exuberantly in our liturgies? Is it any wonder the world doesn't take much notice if Easter is celebrated as simply the one-day happy ending tacked on to forty days of fasting and gloom? It's long overdue that we took a hard look at how we keep Easter in church, at home, in our personal lives, right through the system. And if it means rethinking some cherished habits, well, maybe it's time to wake up. That always comes as a surprise.

And while we're about it, we might write some more good Easter hymns and take care to choose the many good ones already written that celebrate what Easter really is rather than treating it as simply our ticket to a blissful life hereafter. Interestingly, most of the good Easter hymns turn out to be from the early church and most of the bad ones form the nineteenth century. But we should be taking steps to celebrate Easter in creative new ways: in art, literature, children's games, poetry, music, dance, festivals, bells, special concerts, anything that comes to mind. This is our greatest festival. Take Christmas away, and in biblical terms you lose two chapters at the front of Matthew and Luke, nothing else. Take Easter away, and you don't have a New Testament; you don't have a Christianity; as Paul says, you are still in your sins. We shouldn't allow the secular world, with its schedules and habits and parareligious events, its cute Easter bunnies, to blow us off course. This is our greatest day. We should put the flags out.

In particular, if Lent is a time to give things up, Easter ought to be a time to take things up. Champagne for breakfast again – well, of course. Christian holiness was never meant to be merely negative. Of course you have to weed the garden from time to time; sometimes the ground ivy may need serious digging before you can get it out. That's Lent for you. But you don't want simply to turn the garden back into a neat bed of blank earth. Easter is the time to sow new seeds and to plant out a few cuttings. If Calvary means putting to death things in your life that need killing off if you are to flourish as a Christian and as a truly human being, then Easter should mean planting, watering, and training up things in your life (personal and corporate) that ought to be blossoming, filling the garden with color and perfume, and in due course bearing fruit. The forty days of the Easter season, until the ascension, ought to be a time to balance out Lent by taking something up, some new task or venture, something wholesome and fruitful and outgoing and self-giving. You may be able to do it only for six weeks, just as you may be able to go without beer or tobacco only for the six weeks of Lent. But if you really make a start on it, it might give you a sniff of new possibilities, new hopes, new ventures you never dreamed of. It might bring something of Easter into your innermost life. It might help you wake up in a whole new way. And that's what Easter is all about.

Wright:

The resurrection of Jesus is Christianity. And this means that it becomes the starting point for all Christian thinking and living, challenging all other possible starting points.

Wright:

Take it away, and Karl Marx was probably right to accuse Christianity of ignoring the problems of the material world. Take it away, and Sigmund Freud was probably right to say that Christianity is a wish-fulfillment religion. Take it away,

and Friedrich Nietzsche was probably right to say that Christianity is a religion for wimps. Put it back, and you have a faith that can take on the postmodern world that looks to Marx, Freud and Nietzsche as its prophets; you can beat them at their own game with the Easter news that the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Wright:

...God is taking the world somewhere. He's got plans. Apparently he's promised to do for all of us what he did for Jesus after he died, and for the whole world too. Yes, that really blows me away. This God really does love the whole world, and wants to make it all alive in a new way, like he did with Jesus on the first day of the week....And when he does that we'll meet Jesus himself! He'll be there. He'll come back to us--or maybe I should say, we'll be there with him.....this is the point: when we take the bread and break it and eat it, when we take the wine and share it around, it isn't only that we seem to be there with him at his last supper. We are there with him in his new world. What we do seems to bring all the past--all the story of Jesus--and all the future--the time when he comes back again, when God makes the whole world new--all together into one moment.

Wright points out that the resurrection is not an odd blip in the old world, but the foundational event of a new world.

On Christ's present reign, see Tom Wright, *Matthew For Everyone*, 207.

The resurrection is a surprising event passed along by surprising witnesses.

Should we trust the early Christians who passed along news of the resurrection? There are many reasons, philosophical, theological, and historical, to believe their claims. But maybe the most important thing is to remember that these witnesses had everything to lose and nothing to gain by testifying. As Pascal said, "I am inclined to believe witnesses who are willing to have their throats cut."

Knowing Christ is risen means we have nothing to fear - nothing to fear from the state, from an angry boss, from dashed dreams, from sickness, from the gay lobby, from the ACLU, from the mass media, from those who think Christians are crazy. Remember, Christians in other parts of the world pay dearly every day for their convictions. But they stand firm by living with the power and courage of the resurrection. Let us not let our civic freedoms lull into the complacency or spiritual sleep. We need to know and model the joy and power of knowing the risen Christ as well.

The speech of the angel is full of interesting details. The angel refers to Jesus as crucified one, meaning that the risen one is *still* to be identified by his death; that is to say, the implications of his crucifixion carry forward into the new age, as the benefits won by his crucifixion inhere in his resurrected person. The cross only makes sense as a redemptive event if Christ was raised from the dead; and the resurrection only has meaning if Jesus really and truly died for our sins.

Note that angel is described in terms reminiscent of Jesus at the transfiguration. This visible glory is fitting for messenger from heaven. Just as the angel has come from heaven to announce the glad tidings of the resurrection, so in the resurrection, the kingdom of heaven is invading earth.

The angel is himself a messenger, but makes the women into messengers. They have been called "the apostles to the apostles." The

angel gives their mission a sense of urgency: “go *quickly*.” Presumably that same sense of urgency is to characterize our fulfillment of the greater commission given by Jesus in 28:18-20.

The angel says Jesus is “...going before you...” The Savior continues to blaze a trail. By going before he us he has not only won our salvation, but guaranteed that we shall follow him into resurrection glory as well.

The fact that the angel tells them they will “see” Jesus is proof of the bodily, physical nature of the resurrection. Of course, the empty tomb is as well.

The women leave the tomb scene with a mixture of fear and joy. Their fear probably stems not merely from the sight of the angel, or the implications of Christ’s resurrection for his followers in light of Jewish and Roman opposition, but probably also a sense of apprehension about meeting The One who has been raised. Will he receive them or judge them? Usually bodies coming back from the dead is the stuff of horror movies, and until the disciples were certain that the risen Lord would graciously welcome them, they had ample reason to wonder what he would do.

Perhaps the most important words the angel says to the woman are in verse 6, “as he said.” These words are at least a mild rebuke of all the disciples. The angel is reminding them that the cross, and now the resurrection, have happened just as Jesus predicted repeatedly (found earlier in Matthew’s gospel). Had they believed they either would have been waiting by the tomb for Jesus to burst forth, or they would have gone on to Galilee expecting him to show up there. But they would certainly not have scattered in fear and disappointment.

The resurrection means we have an unbelievable claim to make and unbelievable story to tell. What makes the claim and story intelligible is a community of joyful people living in the power of the

resurrection. Christian apologetics is fundamentally ecclesial apologetics.

The deception of the chief priests and guards reminds us that the gospel is under constant attack, and must be vigilantly defended. It's like the old saying: Lies get halfway around the world before truth even gets out of bed in the morning. When Christians do nothing, falsehoods get the upper hand very quickly. And today, just as back then, those falsehoods are well financed. The conspiracy to suppress the truth of the resurrection is not organized and explicit like it was back then, but it's still going on.

The conspiracy against the resurrection reminds us that if we do not disciple people in truth, the culture will disciple them in lies.

As Chris Wright has pointed out, the Great Commission is an ecclesial commission. God's whole mission is for God's whole people to the whole world. But not everybody can do everything, and so the body needs a division of labor. See Wright's excellent work, *The Mission of God*. See also Michael Goheen's *A Light to the Nations*, especially 114ff. Goheen points out that the Great Commission is not just a task assigned to isolated individuals, but an identity given to a community. The Great Commission must be understood at its root as a continuation of Jesus' mission; that is to say, our mission has all the dimensions and scope of Jesus' mission. The Commission makes no sense apart from this Christological basis. Of course it also a pneumatological commission; Goheen makes the point that Christ's most overt promises of the Spirit are in the context of his instruction to his disciples about mission.

The Great Commission means disciples are also disciple makers. We are both a gathered community and a gathering community.

Some neat insights into Matthew 28 from Peter Leithart's blog:

Some of the guards from the tomb go back to the city to report to the chief priests "*all* that had happened." Presumably, they said, "there was a severe earthquake, and an angel descended from heaven, and rolled away the stone, and he looked like lightning with garments like snow, and we fell down like we were dead. Then some women came and the angel told them that Christ has risen" (cf. Matthew 28:2-7).

That is, the soldiers turn evangelists of the Risen Christ.

Matthew underscores the irony by using the verb *apaggello*, which obviously contains the word *aggelos*, "messenger." This is the fourth time Matthew has used the verb in a few verses.

The women run away from the tomb to "be angels" to the disciples (28:8); as they run along to "be angels" (28:9), Jesus stops them and tells them to "be angels" to the brethren. And while they are rushing off to do that, the soldiers are entering the city to "be angels" to the chief priests. Four uses, a hint that there will be angels to the four corners of the world, spreading the report about Jesus' resurrection.

Some preach from envy, some from strife, some from selfish ambition. But, in pretense and in truth, Christ is proclaimed, which is a cause for joy (Philippians 1:15-18).

In the "great commission," Jesus instructs His disciples to "teach" the nations to keep all that He has commanded and taught them. From the first, Matthew shows, there is an alternative gospel, with an alternative form of discipleship, an alternative teaching. Just as Jesus instructs the disciples to do all He commands, so the Jewish leaders "teach" the soldiers to proclaim an alternative gospel, that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body.

Mary and the other Mary come to the tomb on the day “after the Sabbath,” which is the first day of the new week. It is beginning to dawn and light is beginning to shine. Now, a new week begins, new light breaks.

But Matthew’s phrasing is even more emphatic on this point. Literally, the text says that they come to the tomb “after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first of the Sabbaths.” The word Sabbath is used twice, once to describe the last day of the week, the Jewish day of rest and worship, and once to describe the week itself. That usage is not unique here; we find it elsewhere in the New Testament. But it is significant. This is the day after the Sabbath, but, at the same time, it is also the first of a new Sabbath.

Sabbath doesn’t just mean rest in Scripture. Within the life of Jesus, of course, the Sabbath was a controversial issue. The Jews observed the Sabbath by surrounding it with precise rules about what constituted work and what kind of rest was required, and they thought Jesus was breaking the Sabbath by His activities. Jesus saw the Sabbath as a day for healing the sick, for giving life to the weak and dead, for granting rest to the weary and heavy-laden. If His resurrection marks the first of the Sabbaths, then it marks the first day of a new age of healing, resurrection life, of rest and relief to the oppressed and down-trodden.

Jesus’ body is placed in a tomb and a “great stone” rolled in front of it. Can He move the stone?

That is to say: Is He truly a greater Jacob, who set up a stone where angels descended (Genesis 28:18), who rolled away a large stone to open a well for Rachel the shepherdess (Genesis 29:10)?

That is to say: Is He truly able to tear down temples, leaving not one stone on another? Is He greater than Solomon, who can cut and form stones for a new temple?

Easter answers Yes: This Jesus, the rock that the builders rejected, can move whatever stones He likes.

Heaven and earth are key themes in Matthew's gospel (see Jonathan Pennington's *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew*). The two words are used in combination eight times in the gospel, and those uses fall out into a nearly chiasmic pattern:

- A. Heaven and earth pass away, 5:18
- B. Will done on earth as in heaven, 6:10
- C. Praise Father, Lord of heaven and earth, 11:25
- D. Keys of kingdom of heaven
(heaven/earth/heaven/earth/heaven), 16:19
- D'. Binding and loosing
(earth/heaven/earth/heaven/earth/heaven), 19:18-19
- C'. Call no one father but Father in heaven, 23:9
- A'. Heaven and earth pass away, 24:35
- B'. All authority in heaven and earth to Jesus, 28:18

If this structure works, then the authority given to Jesus is authority given to fulfill the prayer of 6:10. Jesus receiving authority means that the will of the Father is beginning to be done; Jesus receives authority so that the will of the Father will be done more and more.

Further, if, as Pennington argues, the heaven and earth language is intended to signal a "new creation" theme, then that new creation is more emphatically realized in the resurrection of Jesus and the transfer of authority to Him. As the structure suggests, the old heaven and earth *has* passed away, and a new one, ruled by Jesus Christ, has moved in. (This is partly inspired by my student, Timothy van den Broek, who this week read a paper on quotation patterns in Matthew.)

Jesus said, Go therefore and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I've commanded.

One of the great sins of Manasseh was an assault on the "Name" of Yahweh. Back in the days of Moses, Yahweh promised to choose a place within the land and set His "Name" there, and told Israel that once He did that, the place of His Name would become the one place for sacrificial worship. That is what the temple became, as the Lord promised Solomon to "set His name there."

What does it mean to have the "Name" of Yahweh in the temple? There are various possibilities, but in the light of the New Testament, we can say that the "Name" refers to the Second Person of the Trinity. Throughout the New Testament, the apostles preach the "name" of Jesus, heal and do miracles in His "name," and call people to believe on His "Name."

Christians are to pray in the Name of Jesus, act for the sake of Jesus' Name, because Jesus does all He does in the Father's Name and He makes known the Father's Name. We have life in the Name of Jesus, because there is no other name under heaven by which we may be saved. The Jewish leaders forbid the apostles to continue speaking in Jesus' Name, but the apostles instead consider it a glory to suffer for the sake of His Name. Paul is a specially chosen instrument to bear and to suffer for the Name of Jesus. According to the apostles, the Name of God - His presence, His character, His revelation - is Jesus. Judah's palace was the house of Yahweh's human son, the Davidic king; next door, in the temple, His only-begotten Son was enthroned above the cherubim in the glory of the Spirit.

Baptism is done in this powerful Name. In Matthew, Jesus said to baptize in the Triune Name, and throughout Acts the apostles are said to baptize in the "Name of Jesus." Paul confronts the Corinthians by saying that they have been baptized in the Name of Jesus and not in the name of Paul, and reminds the Corinthians that they were washed, sanctified, and justified "in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Baptism means becoming associated with the Name, having the Name attached to us, beginning to bear the Name of Jesus.

Against the Old Testament background, we see that baptism in the Name means that through baptism we become temples of

the living God. The Name of God dwells with us and is in us. We are the place where God has chosen to set His Name. We are consecrated as temples of the living God because the Name of God, which is Jesus, dwells with us through His Spirit. Today, through this washing and through the work of the Spirit, Judah becomes a temple of God.

That is a great privilege, but comes also with great responsibility and great danger. Sinners who do not bear the Name are still sinners. But someone who bears the Name and continues in sin, or acts in unbelief, or wanders away from the Lord has greater responsibility. Putting an Asherah in the house of Asherah was idolatry; but putting an Asherah in the house of Yahweh was far worse, an abomination that ultimately brought desolation to the land of Judah.

So, as you remind Judah of his baptism, remind him that he is a temple of the Spirit, that the living God dwells in him, that he bears the Name of Jesus. Remind him of the great privilege he has to bear the Name of His Lord, and to be consecrated as a holy place. And remind him too that His baptism is a sign that he is not his own, but a temple of the Spirit, bought with a price, bearing the Name of Jesus, called to glorify God in His body.

The angel rolls away the stone from Jesus' tomb and takes a seat on it. It's an enthronement, but there's something more. In Exodus 17, Moses sits down on a stone while Aaron and Hur hold up his hands. Joshua fights in the valley below, filling the ground with Amalekites.

So too, the angel sits on a stone, surrounded by guards who are like "dead men," as the greater Joshua conquers death.

INTRODUCTION

Two Marys, Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary," the mother of Jesus, have stayed with Jesus through His death and

burial. They are back after the Sabbath, and become the first witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

THE TEXT

“Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. . . .” (Matthew 28:1-10).

NEW WEEK

Matthew has carefully traced the evenings and mornings from the night of the Last Supper through the death of Jesus (cf. 26:17, 20; 27:1, 57, 62). It is now the day after the Sabbath (28:1), the dawning of a new week (28:1). But this is no ordinary new week. This eighth day is the first day of a new age of human history, marked by Jesus’ triumph over death.

ANGELS AND GUARDS

Early in Matthew’s gospel, angels spoke to Joseph to identify the baby Mary bore and to direct Joseph to escape from Herod (1:20, 24; 2:13). Angels appeared in the birth narratives to preserve the infant Jesus’ life. After Jesus overcame Satan in the wilderness, angels ministered to Him (4:11). Another angel now appears to open the tomb and announce not just Jesus’ preservation from death but His victory over it (28:2-7). Joseph does what he can as a man, rolling a stone in front of the tomb; but the angel from heaven comes with power from God, the power to break open tombs. There was an earthquake at Jesus’ death, and the world began to be shaken down and built back up, and there is an echoing earthquake at His resurrection, as heaven invades earth to renew it (28:2). The angel resembles Jesus in His transfiguration (17:2), bright like the sun or like lightning, garments as white as snow (28:3). Mighty Roman guards are so frightened that they fall to the dust all but dead (v. 4). When heaven comes to earth, even the greatest earthly powers cower.

NO FEAR

The angel’s first word is “Do not be afraid” (28:5), which will also be the Risen Jesus’ first word (v. 10). The women need the reassurance, because they are filled with fear as well as joy when

they hear the report of the angel (v. 8). Yet, they don't react like the Roman soldiers. The soldiers fall to the ground as dead men; the women fear, and draw near, falling down to worship at the feet of Jesus (v. 9). They can't wait to take the message, leaving the empty tomb "quickly" at a run (v. 8). When heaven comes to shake the earth, faithful women are braver and swifter than well-armed soldiers.

TO GALILEE

The angel sends the women out to gather the disciples to Galilee (v. 7), and Jesus later appears to reiterate the mission (v. 10). Galilee of the Gentiles lay in darkness (4:15-16), but Jesus had brought light by His ministry of teaching, healing, and exorcism. Now He was going to bring even brighter light by making Galilee the launching point for the mission of His disciples.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' death was not the end of His ministry, and neither is His resurrection. He rises to commission His disciples to carry on His work to the Gentiles. "Go" said the angel; "go," Jesus repeated to the women; now, again, "Go" (28:7, 10, 19).

THE TEXT

"Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. . . ." (Matthew 28:11-20).

FALSE REPORT

Jesus' resurrection is undeniable. There was an angel, an earthquake, and the stone was rolled away, and the guards witnessed it all. Only those determined to ignore the obvious could deny the resurrection, but the Jews are determined. Money has been a potent force for evil in the Passion story. Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and now the Jews pay off the soldiers to spread a false report about the disappearance of Jesus' body (28:11-15). Jesus gave only one sign to "this generation," the sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:38-41). But the men of Nineveh were more responsive than the Jews,

for they repented when Jonah rose from the death waters and preachers to them. The Jews don't. They conspire to make sure that no other Jews know about the sign.

THEY WORSHIPED HIM

As instructed, the disciples go to Galilee, where Jesus comes to them. The Magi were the first to worship the king of the Jews (2:2, 11). Now that Jesus has been raised, the eleven remaining disciples join in (28:16). This is no ordinary bow; they prostrate themselves in total submission to Jesus, acknowledging that he is God. He was identified as "Immanuel" at the beginning of the gospel (1:23), and now He promises that His divine presence will remain with the disciples forever (28:20; cf. Deuteronomy 31:23)).

ALL AUTHORITY

In Daniel 7, the prophet sees a vision of one like the Son of Man inheriting all authority of all the nations. The Risen Jesus is that Son of Man. His death and resurrection have changed everything. Matthew hammers on the point with the repetition of the word "all": Jesus has all authority, sends His disciples to make disciples of all nations, tells them to teach all His commandments, and promises His presence through all ages (vv. 18-20). These "alls" are linked: Because Jesus has all authority, He sends His disciples to all nations, and all His commandments are weighty.

GO!

Matthew's gospel recapitulates the history of Israel. Here in these last verses, Jesus is the great World Emperor, the new Cyrus, who commissions His disciples to "go" (cf. 2 Chronicles 36:22-23). Instead of returning to their homeland, however, Jesus sends them *out*, to places they've never been before. They can go with confidence: Wherever they go, He'll be waiting for them; wherever they go, they'll be in a place under His dominion. Throughout the gospel, Jesus has had disciples, He has been making disciples. Now that He's risen, He spreads out this task. Disciples will henceforth make disciples of all nations, by baptizing and teaching all them all that Jesus taught. All that to say: Go!

It's a stretch, but: Matthew uses the word *pneuma* 19 times, and uses the word with reference to the Holy Spirit 12 times (1:18, 20; 3:11, 16; 4:1; 10:20; 12:18, 28, 31, 32; 22:43; 28:19). That's neat: A twelfefold Spirit for the twelve tribes of Israel.

But then there's the ambiguous 27:50. When Jesus dies, He lets go of, sends out His *pneuma*. This could simply be a way of describing death, but in the presence of references to Elijah it seems plausible that Matthew intends more. The verb (*aphiemi*) might also suggest something more deliberate.

If so, then we've got 13 references to the Spirit, rather than 12.

Number 12 is at 27:50, when Jesus dies as King of the Jews and releases His Spirit. Use number 13, which breaks out of the twelve tribes, is in the great commission, the command to disciple all the *ethnoi* in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, with the assurance that Jesus, who yielded His Spirit, is with them to the end of the age.

Matthew 28 is arguably constructed with two intertwine chiasms. The first covers verses 1-8, and the second goes from verse 9 through the end of the chapter.

The first follows this pattern:

- A. Women arrive at grave, v 1
- B. Angel descends from heaven, vv 2-3
- C. Guards become like dead, v 4
- B'. Angel speaks to women, vv 5-7
- A'. Women leave the tomb, v 8

The length of the angel's speech (vv 5-7) and the fact that the women pick up the fear of the guards (vv. 4, 8) might suggest an alternative structure in which vv 5-7 is central, with the contrasting responses of guards and women flanking. In that case, the first section might stretch to verse 10:

- A. Women arrive at grave, v 1
- B. Angel descends from heaven, vv 2-3
- C. Guards become like dead men for fear, v 5
- D. Angel speaks to women, vv 5-7

C'. Women leave with joy and fear, v 8

B. Jesus greets them, v 9

A'. Jesus sends women away to the disciples, v 10

On either outline, the fear of the guards is being highlighted, either by being at the center of the structure or by being contrasted with the fear-joy of the women. What makes the difference is the word of the angel. The guards see the angel and fall dead; the angel *speaks* to the women, announces the resurrection, and commissions them, so that the women's fear is mingled with living joy. They see the angel of the Lord and live.

The second half of the chapter appears to be structured as follows:

A. Jesus appears to the women; they worship, v 9

B. Jesus speaks to the women: Do not fear; go, v 10

C. Guards and chief priests plot a response, vv 11-15

A'. Jesus appears to the disciples; they worship

B'. Jesus speaks to the disciples: Go, vv 18-20

Again the guards are central to the story; their fear at the angel is softened by a false report. The structure also highlights the connection between Jesus' appearance to the women and His appearance to the disciples. In both cases, Jesus arrives; in both cases, He is worshiped; in both cases, He gives a commission beginning with the command to "Go."

The contrast between the two sections is also important. Jesus sends the women to report to the disciples. Since His death, the women have formed the inner ring around Jesus, the nucleus of His new Israel. They have been marginalized, but after Jesus' death they assume the center. The movement of the disciples has been in the opposite direction. After spending most of the gospel in the intimacy of Jesus' company, they've scattered and fled to the edges. Now the women are being sent to the disciples so that the disciples can be gathered to form again the nucleus of the missionary church.

Perhaps we are to see here, on a micro-scale, the pattern of the later mission of the early church. Under the Old Covenant, Israel was near and Gentiles at a distance. Jesus shook the world, brought Gentiles near. As Gentiles are brought close,

they produce jealousy among Yahweh's earlier intimates, the Jews, who are brought near again.

The last sections of Matthew 27 link up with Matthew 28 to form a chiasmic closure to the gospel:

A. Jesus' burial, 27:55-61 (itself a chiasm, as I showed in a post last week)

B. Jews request a guard on the tomb to avoid deception, 27:62-66

C. Jesus rises from the dead, 28:1-10

B'. Jews perpetuate a deception about the resurrection, 28:11-15

A'. Jesus meets with His disciples in Galilee and commissions them, 28:16-20

Several notes on the structure:

First, the A and A' sections both include references to Galilee (27:55; 28:126) and both use the word "disciple" (27:57; 28:15).

The A section mentions the mother of the sons of Zebedee, while the sons of Zebedee are themselves implicitly present in A'. Second, the B sections are ironically juxtaposed. The only alternative to belief in the resurrection is fraud, the kind of fraud that the Jewish leaders say they wanted to prevent. At the center, appropriately, is the account of Jesus' resurrection itself, the angel's appearance to the women, and Jesus' appearance to the disciples.

Alternatively, chapter 28 can be broken down into two sections: 28:1-8 and 28:9-20. Each of these has an internal structure of its own. 28:1-8 is chiasmically arranged:

A. Women go to the tomb, 28:1

B. The angel's descent with an earthquake, 28:2-3

C. The guards "die," 28:4

B'. The angels speaks to the women, 28:5-7

A'. The women leave the tomb to report to the disciples, 28:8

Jesus' appearance interrupts their flight to the disciples, and He reiterates the angel's instruction to tell the disciples to gather in Galilee (vv. 9-10). Verse 11 begins "while they were on their way," referring to the women heading to meet the disciples,

and the episode of the chief priests is embedded within the story of their report to the disciples. Thus: Jesus commissions the women -> women go to the disciples -> interlude: the Jewish reaction -> disciples (who have heard from the women) gather in Galilee -> Jesus commissions the disciples. Or, arranged as a chiasm:

A. Jesus greets the women, they worship Him, He instructs them to tell the disciples to come to Galilee, 28:9-10

B. Guards report to chief priests, 28:11

C. Chief priests decide to say that the disciples stole the body, 28:12-14

B'. Guard paid to tell the lie, 28:15

A'. Jesus greets His disciples, they worship Him, He instructs them to go to the Gentiles, 28:16-20

Matthew is up to something with his use of two different words for "tomb" in the narratives of Jesus' burial and resurrection.

The two words are *mnemeion* and *taphos*, and the 9 uses in the closing chapters of Matthew are deliberately patterned:

mnemeion, 4x: 27:52, 53, 60 [2x]

taphos, 4x: 27:61, 64, 66; 28:1

mnemeion, 1x: 28:8

That is: First four uses of *mnemeion*, then four of *taphos*, then a final use of *mnemeion*. The change in terminology occurs as soon as Jesus' body is placed in the tomb and the tomb closed.

Tombs open in 27:52-53, and Joseph's tomb is a *mnemeion* until he rolls the stone in front of it. In the next verse (27:61), Matthew suddenly changes the terminology, and continues to use *taphos* until the women come to the tomb, expecting Jesus' body is still there. What they run away from is an empty *mnemeion*, not an empty *taphos*. Why?

The answer might have something to do with the different meanings of the terms, a distinction apparently evident in 23:29, where both words are used. Pharisees build the tombs (*taphoi*) of the prophets and adorn the monuments (*mnemeia*) of the righteous. The first term refers to the physical structure,

while the second term, a member of the word group for “memory,” highlights the memorializing function of the tomb. From time immemorial, people have memorialized the dead by building tombs, performing rites at tombs, decorating tombs with signs of honor. Those memorial terms contained the remains of the dead person. At the close of his gospel, however, Matthew refuses the word *mnemeion* for the tomb of Jesus as long as Jesus is still in the tomb. If he is just another dead prophet, there is nothing here to commemorate. In fact, he would be a false prophet, since he promised to rise from the dead.

But an *empty* tomb. Now, that’s something to memorialize. That’s something to remember and report.

Following up a suggestion from my colleague, Toby Sumpter: It seems that there’s a chiasm stretching from the beginning of the crucifixion scene to the end of Matthew:

- A. Jesus mocked as king of the Jews, 27:27-31
- B. Soldiers and Jewish leaders at the cross, 27:33-44
- C. Jesus cries for His Father, 27:45-49
- D. Earthquake, resurrection, and frightened soldiers, 27:50-54
- E. Women from Galilee, 27:55-56
- F. Joseph of Arimathea approaches Pilate, 27:57-60
- G. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, 27:61
- F’. Jewish leaders approach Pilate, 27:62-66
- E’. Mary and the other Mary at the tomb, 28:1
- D’. Earthquake, resurrection, and frightened soldiers, 28:2-8
- C’. Jesus speaks to the women, 28:9-10
- B’. Soldiers and Jewish leaders respond to resurrection, 28:11-15
- A’. Jesus has authority over all; worshiped sincerely, 28:16-20

Israel's calling was to be the focal point of Yahweh's battle against sin. This is evident from the context of Abraham's call in Gen. 12. Yahweh promised earlier He would no longer flood

the earth. After Babel the nations have been scattered and He will no longer deal with them directly. Yet, He did not resign himself to a world under the dominion of sin. Instead, He pursued His holy war against sin within the house of Abraham. This paradigm also means that Israel's history is exemplary of the history of the human race in a particular way: The warfare that Yahweh carried on against Israel in the Old Testament is now being waged everywhere. In the past, the New Testament tells us, God "winked" at Gentile sin and rebellion, and (as it were) concentrated all His energies on Israel. No more: Now, He is after every nation, and He will not rest until all the nations of the earth have died and risen in Jesus, the true Israel.

There's been a good bit of discussion recently asking whether the Jews are included in the "all nations" to which Jesus sends His disciples. Is Matthew suggesting that Jesus has abandoned the Jewish mission, and now turns to the Gentiles? Or are the Jews included among the *ethne*?

I think the latter. After all, Matthew has gone to some lengths in the course of his gospel, and especially in his passion narratives, to show that the Jews have lost their distinctiveness and have become one of the nations.

It begins with Herod, a new Pharaoh. It continues through all the allusions to Psalm 2 in the Passion narratives, all the "gathering together" and "plotting" that occupies the chief priests and elders. "Why are the nations in an uproar, and why do the peoples imagine a vain thing?" is not a bad summary of Matthew's passion narrative. So when Jesus instructs His disciples to disciple the nations, the Jews are among them.

Jesus has been lost to the grave, but three days later reappears with all authority in heaven and on earth. His brothers (28:10) follow Him to Galilee, and find Him on a mountain, where the eleven bow down and worship (28:17). Some doubt. Well they

might, and not just the resurrection itself. They might be doubting Jesus' intentions. After all, the last time He saw them, He saw their backsides as they fled from the garden. They've all abandoned Him. Are they about to hear a "Depart from Me, I never knew you"?

No. They are about to hear a "What you intended for evil, God intended for good, to save all these alive." Jesus is the new Joseph, lost and found, humiliated and exalted, now surrounded by His *eleven* brothers, who prostrate themselves before Him (cf. Genesis 37:9). He is the new Joseph, revealed to His guilty brothers, reconciled.

The Hebrew Bible ends with Cyrus' decree. It ends with a new beginning.

Matthew ends with Jesus' riff on Cyrus' decree, the great commission. It too ends with a new beginning.

The Bible ends with the cry of Maranatha.

Though the canon is closed, and the Bible promises a consummation. But the Bible also continually frustrates our desire to close too quickly. It continuously opens up again just when we expect closure. Like an open tomb.

Matthew 28:18-20: ¶ Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I command you. And, behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. ¶

Today is Trinity Sunday, the beginning of the long season (or ¶ off-season ¶ of the church calendar that stretches between Pentecost to Advent. In many churches, this Sunday is devoted to meditations and teaching on the Triune character of God. I did not preach on the Trinity thus Sunday, but it's fitting that we consider the Trinity a bit here at this baptism.

In fact, it's almost more fitting that we meditate on the Trinity at a baptism than that we listen to a sermon on baptism. The Trinity is of course a Christian doctrine that all Christians must believe. But if we simply treat it as a doctrine to be believed, as something to check off the list of necessary Christian beliefs, we have not grasped the real significance of the Bible's teaching. It is striking that the most obvious formulations of the name of the Trinity in the New Testament appear in relation to Christian practices. In Matthew 28, the Triune Name is the Name into which we baptize, and elsewhere in the NT, the Trinity is invoked as the Name by which we bless. The Trinity is not something merely to be believed in the head. The Triune Name is applied to believers in water and in benediction.

What does this mean, and specifically what does it mean for our understanding and practice of baptism? To unpack this entirely would take an eternity or perhaps two, but we can make a start in three directions. First, the Trinity is related to baptism because baptism is a Triune event. In a few moments, I'm going to pour water on Samuel's head and he will be baptized. But that visible rite is not the most important thing going on here, and I'm not the most important actor in this rite. Instead, the Trinity is at work in this event. Because this baptism is authorized by Christ, when I performed this act with water, what is really happening is that the heavenly Father is engrafting Samuel into His Son through the power of the Spirit. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, which is the body of Christ. The church is not a social organization. It is the people who are united to the Son of the Father through the Spirit. By the sheer grace and mercy of God, we have been taken up into the Triune fellowship. And today Samuel joins that fellowship.

Second, the Trinity is involved because Samuel is being baptized in the Triune Name. From this day on, he is wearing a uniform, a badge, the badge that bears the name of Father, Son, and Spirit. As long as he's in that uniform (which is forever — this is a uniform that can't be removed), he's expected and

required to trust in God for everything and to walk in newness of life. He's supposed to do honor to his uniform. Wearing the uniform and the Name is a privilege, but this privilege can turn into a judgment. If he turns away from following Christ he will bring on himself the curses of God.

Third, because we confess that God is Triune, we confess that God does not need us. Father, Son, and Spirit existed eternally in perfect fellowship, joy, delight and love. Out of the overflow of that love, the Triune God created the world. But the world did not fill up something that was missing in God's life. God does not need anything that He has made. The name that Samuel will bear is the name of this sovereign God, a God who does not exist to satisfy our wants and desires.

Teach him that he is baptized, that he has the privilege of communion in and with the Triune God. Teach him that he wears the name and badge of the Triune God, and is therefore called to walk in faith and obedience. Teach him about the God he is called to worship and serve, the sovereign God of perfect Love, the God who is sovereign Love. Teach him that he was baptized into the Name of the Trinity, on this Trinity Sunday.

In making a structural point about Matthew's references to "worship" of Jesus last week, I skimmed a bit too lightly over the details. Reader Ronald Man caught me, and offered these comments:

There is no indication that the Magi (or Herod) recognized Jesus' deity; rather it is clearly stated that they were coming to pay honor to a "King." While Matthew certainly has the perspective of Christ's deity, it seems to be reading back to consider worship being in view in this context. "Pay homage" is in fact the rendering in Phillips, NRSV and NEB. See also: "Worship" need not imply that the Magi recognized Jesus' divinity; it may simply mean "do homage. Their own statement suggests homage paid royalty rather than the worship of Deity.

But Matthew, having already told of the virginal conception, doubtless expected his readers to discern something more – viz., that the Magi worshiped better than they knew.” (Don Carson’s commentary, p. 86; see also p. 89).

“Although some English versions view this action as ‘worship’ (AV, RSV, NIV), the statement of the Magi in verse 2 suggests that the meaning is homage paid to royalty rather than the worship of deity (so Phillips, NEB; cf. 1 Sam 25:23; 2 Kings 4:36). Of course, Matthew’s opening chapter has pointed to Jesus’ divine sonship and the evangelist no doubt intended his readers to discern that this homage had a greater significance than the visitors from the East could have imagined. Their attitude to Jesus anticipated the submission of the nations to the risen Lord, which is the essence of discipleship according to Matthew 28:16–20. The immediate context in Matthew 2, however, does not demand that worship of Jesus as Son of God is yet in view.” (David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, pp. 84-5)

Another perhaps significant effect of reserving the translation of “worship” for a clearer contextual warrant would be that the *first* use of proskuneo in the NT with the clear meaning of worship would be in Matthew 4:9-10—with its cosmic proclamation of the Second Adam (in contradistinction to the refusal of the first Adam to “glorify God as God” [Rom 1:21; cf. 1:22-25]), which is reflective of both the first commandment AND the Great Commandment.

[B]aptism is a naming ceremony. In baptism, we are all given the same family name, the family name of the ultimate family, the Triune family of Father, Son, and Spirit. What happens when we get a name?

Names identify us with an in-group. The fact that we all receive the same name is important for Paul as he addresses the divisions of the Corinthian church: You were not baptized into the name of Paul, or Peter, or Apollos, he says, but into the one Name of Jesus, who is the Son united to His Father in the Spirit.

Marked by the name of the Triune God, we are all members of one another.

Names connect us to a past. Our surnames come from our parents, and even our Christian names are often names that have a family, a national, or a biblical history. Our baptismal name also implants us into a heritage and gives us a history. By baptism, we are given a past that includes Abraham, the exodus, the conquest, King David, Nehemiah, and especially Jesus in His death and resurrection.

Names are also imperatives that direct us toward the future. Parents give their children names that express their hopes for them. We name children after an admired uncle, a biblical hero, a former President. Children are named in hope, hope that they will live up to their names. Our baptismal names also direct us toward a future, the future hope that God has promised in the gospel.

Names are badges that we wear when we leave our own family and house and venture into the world. When you meet someone new, someone outside your normal circle of acquaintance, you give a name. It's your identifying label for the outside world. And your baptismal name is also an identifying label before the world. All the baptized receive the name of God, and we are all called to bear the weight of that name, not to bear the name of our Lord lightly.

This morning your children are being named in all these four dimensions. By the baptismal Name of Father, Son and Spirit, they are being grafted into a past, and directed toward a future; they are identified with a family, the family of God, and they are called to bear the name toward the outside world.

Your calling as parents is to train them to wear their names well, to live up to their names. Remind them of their heritage, and stir up their hope for the future. Teach them that they belong to Jesus, and are members of His people, and that they are called to enter the world as witnesses for Him.

Every day, you will call them by their given names. As you do that, remember to call them by their baptismal names – the name they receive here, the name of the Triune God.

Matthew 28:19: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Jesus gives this commission as the greater Cyrus, the new world emperor, whose authority extends not only to every kingdom under heaven but to heaven itself. He commissions His church to make disciples of the nations, and tells us that we do this by baptizing in the Triune Name and teaching the nations to observe His commandments.

Both the context and the phrasing here indicate something of the nature of baptism. To be baptized "in the name" means to come under another's authority. That's the way the phrase is used in ancient Greek. And the larger context also indicates that as well: Being baptized means becoming a disciple of Jesus, the Jesus who has all authority in heaven and on earth. To be baptized means to come under His command, under His Lordship.

The rest of the commission fills this out. When the church baptizes, it makes disciples of those who are baptized. Baptism, of course, is not the end of the process, but the beginning. The baptized are disciples of the great Lord, Jesus, and as disciples the baptized are to learn the commandments of the Lord, Jesus. Being a baptized disciple means learning Jesus' commands, and not only learning them but learning to observe and do what Jesus commands. Baptism places Jesus' easy yoke on our shoulders.

One of Jesus' commands is the command to "Go" and "make disciples." Baptized disciples of Jesus are to obey this command along with all the others. When we are baptized, we not only come under the authority of the Lord of heaven and earth, but we are commissioned to participate in His mission. Baptism is a kind of ordination that commissions us as servants of the world for Christ's sake. The waters of baptism are the living waters

that flow from the temple of God, and in baptism we are caught up in the current that takes us to the ends of the earth.

We take up this commission with the promise of Jesus' presence. We go, as the baptized disciples of Jesus, obeying His command, and the Lord of heaven and earth, the one who has all authority, is with us always. We don't go in our own authority. We need not be our own defenders. We need not fear any enemy. Jesus, the Greater Cyrus, is with us.

Though the two being baptized today are in a different stage of life, baptism essentially means the same for both of you. Both are becoming disciples of Jesus, and must be diligent to learn and observe all that Jesus commands. Both are being caught up into the mighty stream of the church, and will be carried by the waters of baptism to play a part in spreading the gospel of Jesus to the nations.

Leithart, with a brilliant meditation on baptism and the "Immanuel" promise in Matthew 28:

The great commission contains one of the most important New Testament statements about baptism. It is the only place in the New Testament where we learn that baptism is into the name of Father, Son, and Spirit. "Into the name" means "into the service of" or even "into ownership of." When one is baptized into the Triune Name, God marks and brands him as His own property, as the slave of Christ.

But the commission does not simply say that baptism marks us as God's property, His holy land, His servants. The great commission also implies that baptized disciples are incorporated into the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. We not only receive God's name; we become part of that name.

This comes out in the final clauses of the commission. Jesus promises to be "with" the disciples until the end of the age. If we translate the Greek more woodenly, we would get this

awkward phrase: "I with you I am." The pronoun "I" comes first, then the phrase "with you" and then the first-person verb, "I am." That's not an unusual Greek sentence, but in the context, it is full of significance.

First, Jesus' promise to be present with His disciples is framed by the divine name. Long before Jesus stood on the mountain with the eleven, Yahweh appeared on a mountain to Moses and from the burning bush revealed His name, the covenant name, the name "Yahweh," or "I am." In promising to be with His disciples, Jesus simultaneously unveils His identity. He declares that He is the God of Moses, the God of Israel, the God of David. He is the God who *is*, "I am."

But, second, Jesus not only declares who He is, but also indicates something about the disciples' relation to Him. The Greek, again, could be: "I with you I am." In the Greek text, the words "I am" surround the words "with you." Matthew is doing a little word-painting, arranging the words of the sentence to reinforce the meaning of the sentence. In effect, the eleven are included *within* the I am.

Jesus is not only "I am," but "I-am-with-you." We know from the outset of Matthew's gospel that He is Immanuel, God-with-us. That is His identity, and it means that God has incorporated "us" into His name. We become part of God's own identity. God did not need to do this. The sovereign Creator freely, graciously determined, in an election from all eternity, that He would be God only as the God of His people, that He would so identify with Israel that He would take the name, "God of Israel." Triune God that He is, He refuses to be God alone: He determines to be "God with us." Triune God that He is, He refuses to be "I am" in splendid divine isolation: He is "I with you am."

That is what Jesus' resurrection means. By the resurrection, the God of life triumphs over death. By the resurrection, the God of justice vindicates Jesus, who had been falsely accused. By

the resurrection, the Father rewards the Son's obedience. And by the resurrection, the God of Israel demonstrates that not even death can thwart His purpose to be true to His name, the name "I-am-with-you."

And that astonishing reality is signified and sealed in baptism. Through baptism, one is being branded with the name Father, Son, and Spirit. But this is not a "mere" name. Through baptism, the baptized is being included in the "you" that is included in the "I am." He is being incorporated into the company of disciples who have been incorporated into the life of the living God. Even as he receives the name of the Triune God in the water of baptism, he begins to participate in that name.

No matter where one goes in life, no matter what he ends up doing, no matter what threats or dangers confront him, he will be secure so long as he trusts in the promise made to him in baptism and lives out the reality of his baptism. And that's because wherever he goes, whatever he does, whatever dangers confront him, he will be enclosed and surrounded by the consuming fire, the living God, the God revealed as Immanuel, who has taken the name "I am with you."

Compare the end of 2 Chronicles (the end of the Hebrew Bible) to the end of Matthew:

"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up'" (2 Chron. 36:23)

"Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" (Matt. 28:18-20)

Both Cyrus and Jesus claim that they have been given kingly authority (by God) over the whole earth. Both Cyrus and Jesus commission a group of people to leave their homes to build a temple (in one case the second temple in Jerusalem, in the other the temple of the church). Both promise that God will be with them as they go.

Karl Barth (not sure what I think about a lot of this):

The *secret* of Easter, on which something must be said in conclusion, can in its substance be none other than that of Good Friday - which again is that of Christmas. There is only *one* secret of Christian faith: God and man in their community through God's free grace. What in particular makes, in this instance, this one secret the mystery of Easter is, to put it in the simplest way, this: that all we have recognised as the mystery of Good Friday is, as God's decree, will and deed, *true* and *valid*. At the beginning we said one cannot believe in the Cross of Christ otherwise, and one cannot understand the Cross otherwise, than from His resurrection. All that in the crucifixion of Christ was done by God in a hidden way is by the resurrection set in the *light* and put into *force*. If what happened there is not hidden from us, then that is because Christ is risen. Because Christ is risen, and that is, because God goes His way in the Incarnation of His Word right to the *end* and because this end of His way means a *new beginning* for this flesh, i.e. for the human existence and destiny that God made His own in Jesus Christ. If this new beginning is *manifest* to us, then the significance also of the beginning of that way right up to the *sepultus* is by no means hidden. It means that what there befalls human state and fate, curse, punishment and ordeal, is a *divine killing*, but that, with what happened there, there was also

carried out a *divine quickening*: an acquittal, a redeeming sacrifice, a victory for man. The new beginning, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, has nothing to add to that. The resurrection only *reveals* it, reveals that this is the way God has actually gone in the concealment of His surrendered, humiliated and suffering Son. The resurrection reveals it, in other words, says to us that this is true and therefore true *for us*, that it is *for us* that God has gone this way in His Son. It is no bold surmise, no dialectic sophistry, no religious arrogance if we believe – believe in the face of sin, evil, death and devil – that God’s wrath does not fall upon us, that we are righteous, that we are free, that is, that we are God’s and that the peace that passeth all understanding may be our consolation. In all that we are arrogating nothing to ourselves. Not for a moment do we forget that our whole being and all our thoughts, words and works are liable to utter damnation. But we ask: “Who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ that died, yea rather, That is risen again” (Rom. viii. 34). It is because He is risen again, because the self-surrender of God completed itself in the dawn of a new time, because the dawn of this new time was proclaimed to us, and because we can no more forget it, it is on this account that we put the question so defiantly. With that question, we are merely allowing God to be God! In allowing God to be God, the God Who in Christ went this way, in giving Him His place in faith as the God Who in Christ has killed us, too, and made us alive, we are new men “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Pet. i. 3). It is *free* grace that is the mystery of Easter. For most certainly in going thus to the end of His way, God has shown Himself as the free Lord over human existence and destiny. Most certainly this could bring Him no qualification to make such an exaltation possible nor of course any merit to make it necessary, although, on the other hand, it certainly put no hindrance in His way that could make it impossible. It is to this *freedom* of grace that the miracle of the resurrection points, and not otherwise than by this sign do we have this “matter,” do we have this gracious freedom of God and therefore the mystery of Easter before our eyes. And this mystery is *grace*. For most certainly that free

undeserved act of God's sovereignty – possible only with God, but with God not impossible – in His Son as the first-born among many brethren affects us....

Easter and the forty days were not a miracle tossed down by chance into the midst of human history, but the sign of what shall come to pass and be at the final end as the aim and meaning of all history. It is the message of the Kingdom of God which has not only come near, but which, when all other kingdoms have been done away, is the one and eternal Kingdom...

The *resurrection of the flesh* of which the symbol speaks, is the abolition of this position which is ours amid that contradiction between the grace and the gracelessness of our own existence as such. Resurrection of the flesh means that the question, "Who will separate us from the love of God?" – which here and now is certainly not one for which we are at a loss to find an answer – ceases in any sense to become a question.

Resurrection of the flesh does not mean that the man ceases to be a man in order to become a god or angel, but that he may, according to I Cor. xv. 42 f., be a man in *incorruption, power and honor, redeemed* from that contradiction and so *redeemed* from the separation of body and soul by which this contradiction is sealed, and so in the totality of his human existence *awakened* from the dead. Resurrection of the flesh means very simply that the man will be in himself what he already is in Christ, new creation (2 Cor. v. 17); that the garment of unrighteousness drops away from him and the garment of righteousness which he has for long been wearing secretly becomes visible.

Resurrection of the flesh means therefore that our existence as *carnal* existence, our heaven and earth as theatre of *revolt*, our time as time of Pontius Pilate, will be dissolved and changed into an existence, into a heaven and earth, into a time, of *peace* with God without conflict, of that peace which, hidden from our eyes in the flesh of Christ, is always a reality.

Torrance:

The kind of time we have in this passing world is the time of an existence that crumbles away into the dust, time that runs backward into nothingness. Hence the kind of historical happening we have in this world is happening that decays and to that extent is illusory, running away into the darkness and forgetfulness of the past. As happening within this kind of time, and as event within this kind of history, the resurrection, by being what it is, resists and overcomes corruption and decay, and is therefore *a new kind of historical happening* which instead of tumbling down into the grave and oblivion rises out of the death of what is past into continuing being and reality. This is temporal happening that runs not backwards but forwards, and overcomes all illusion and privation or loss of being. This is fully real historical happening, so real that it remains happening and does not slip away from us, but keeps pace with us and, as we tumble down in decay and lapse into death and the dust of past history, outruns us and even comes to meet us out of the future. That is how we are to think of the risen Jesus Christ. He is not dead but alive, more real than any of us. Hence he does not need to be made real for us, because he does not decay or become fixed in the past. He lives on in the present as real live continuous happening, encountering us here and now in the present and waiting for us in the future.

Torrance:

The resurrection of Jesus as act of God is a decisive event, a final judgment, which affects the entire state of human existence, the whole situation in which we have our being and as such affects every human being. It is this concentration of universal significance in the resurrection of Jesus that is so very important for the whole of the Christian message. The New Testament does not teach a doctrine of individual resurrection first, in the sense that each man is to rise again because he is made of a body and an immortal soul, a resurrection mainly

because of some interior principle in his creation. It is the fulfillment of God's covenant mercies in the incarnation and resurrection that confers immortality. Christ only has immortality and we receive out of his fullness. The general resurrection is absolutely dependent on the resurrection of Jesus Christ himself, for it is in his death and resurrection that God has dealt with death and guilt and hell once and for all.

Gustav Wingren (not sure what I think of this):

The first Christians neither lived nor thought in terms of a [church] year; they lived in terms of a week and they thought of the work of redemption in terms of a week. In this way concentration on the cross and the resurrection was even more marked than it has ever since succeeded in being. Where the Early Church made a new beginning from the point of view of the calendar was the keeping of *Sunday*, the first day of the week, the day following the Sabbath. Sunday was a day of gladness, because Christ rose at dawn on that day, the first working day of the Jewish week (Mark 16.1 f.). Every week the earliest Christian congregations met for an Easter festival. Continually, with the interval of only a few days, Easter returned anew

[...but,] in the faith of the Early Church the resurrection is linked with the cross and with death. Therefore the suffering of Christ was given a place in the weekday and the Christian community early in its history came to regard Wednesday and Friday as two 'station days' in his suffering. Wednesday was the day of the betrayal, Friday the day of the death.

Accordingly, the *Didache* and *Hermas* (beginning of the second century) speak of the keeping of these two days. In this way the whole week is devoted to Christ's death and resurrection.

Station days are the feast of the cross, Sunday is the feast of the resurrection. On station days the rule was to bow down and bend the knee, on Sunday to stand up and look towards heaven, in free and erect position, singing praise.

Rushdoony:

But the Bible is not a devotional manual: it is a battle plan and a prescriptive word, a command word, and therefore a law word. The “spiritual” preachers deserve not even a yawn: they are putting the church into the sleep of death. God’s servants will declare, “Thus saith the Lord”, and His word covers every aspect of our lives, our work, our family life, our sexuality, politics, economics, farming, business, social and personal lives and all things else.

Toby Sumpter:

The True Mass

There has been a glorious instinct throughout the history of the church to use the Great Commission at the end of the liturgy to remember what the Lord Jesus calls us to. We are not merely done at the end of the worship service. We are divinely dismissed and sent out. We are commissioned. We have been summonsed here by the King to receive His orders, to renew our allegiance to Him, to feast with Him and be assured of His care of us, and to receive His blessing. And then we are sent out to carry out His mission in the world. In the ancient church the liturgy ended with the pastor saying, “Ite, missa est,” which means, ‘Go, you are dismissed or sent out.’ But it was this final phrase ‘missa est’ that eventually morphed into the name of worship known today in Roman Catholic churches as “mass.” The name of the service came to be called by its final words, the declaration that the people were dismissed, sent out. And this recognizes that the entire service is a “missa est;” the entire service is a dismissal or better, a commissioning, a sending out. We are gathered here week by week in order to be scattered, in

order to be sent by our King into the world. We gather here to eat this one loaf and drink this one cup to be strengthened in the body and blood of the Lord, in order that we might be broken and given for the life of the world. You are coming to this table now in order to be sent back out to love and die for your wife. You are being fed at this table now by the risen Christ in order to be sent back into the world to respect and honor your husband. You are being nourished here by your heavenly Father that you may be sent out to love and nourish your children in the Lord. You are all being gathered here in order to be sent out to be Christ to your neighbors, to your roommates, and to your enemies. This is the mass, the true mass, the sending out, the commissioning of your King, our Lord Jesus. So come: eat, drink, and then go.

In Matthew 28, Jesus famously declares that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. This answers the temptation in Matthew 4 where Jesus was offered all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if he would only fall down and worship the devil. Jesus refused the devil's offer and responded by insisting in the words of Scripture that we are only to worship the Lord and serve Him alone. Jesus not only said this, He did this. And because He did this, He became the heir of all things. As has been pointed out many times, Jesus exemplifies for us patience like no other. When Jesus tells His disciples that the way to greatness is through becoming servants, that is not a backhanded way of dismissing the desire to be great. Jesus wants to be great, and He wants His people to be great. But He insists on true greatness. And so He refuses the devil's offer, waiting for it all to be given. We need to grow up into this kind of wisdom, this kind of patience. Whether its gifts we want given or situations we want to change: Whether children, whether a spouse, whether a job, whether the salvation of a neighbor or a loved one, whether political turmoil, whether sickness, whether wars, whatever. There are any number of ways to grasp after good and noble things

before they have been given, any number of ways to be fearful or frustrated when circumstances are difficult or painful. But authority comes to those who serve; true glory comes to those who die. But notice how the authority of Jesus works. The authority and glory and nobility of Jesus is shared with us now. The disciples themselves were coming off a week of epic fails, a week of denials, hiding, and fleeing from their Master. And Jesus is commissioning them not because they are great and noble, but because He has been given all authority and glory. Authority and glory gives and shares and bestows, and Jesus sends us in our weakness, in our fumbling and stumbling ways. The Lordship of Jesus is our authorization to go, to work, to love, to live, to be the bearers of the gospel, evangelists in every sense of the word in every area of our lives. And so we are commanded to go, go with His glory, the glory of His resurrection; go in His authority, in His name, and wait on Him. Wait for Him to give all good things, wait for Him to subdue our enemies with His grace, wait for Him to raise us up to glory.

Peter Leithart, again

(<http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2010/04/04/a-new-beginning/>):

Virtually every detail of Matthew's account takes us back to the beginning of his gospel story. In the end is the beginning, because in the beginning is the end.

Two Marys come to the tomb on the first day of the week. One of them is Mary Magdalene, but the "other Mary" is the "mother of James and Joseph," the mother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55). Mary was there when Jesus first emerged from her womb, and Mary is there again as he emerges newborn from the tomb.

An angel appears, descending from heaven to roll away the stone and to announce that Jesus is risen, and this too takes us back to the beginning. Angels appear to Joseph several times at the opening of the gospel, telling Joseph where to go to escape the Herods who want to kill Jesus.

Jesus carried out His early ministry in Galilee, but after His transfiguration he set His face toward Jerusalem and left Galilee behind. Now that he is raised, he is heading back to Galilee again, and he instructs the women to tell His disciples to follow him there.

Early on, the gospel story followed this sequence: Jesus battled Satan in the wilderness, proving Himself the true Son, the true Israel of God. When he was finished, angels appeared to him and strengthened him. Then he withdrew into Galilee, and began preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

At the end of the gospel, Satanic temptations are back. In Jerusalem, Jesus' enemies challenge His claim to be Son of God, just as Satan did. In Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders ask for a sign, just as Satan did. In Jerusalem, the chief priests mockingly demand that Jesus come down from the cross, just as Satan tempted him to avoid the cross altogether. Jesus' trials and death in Jerusalem are a second entry into the wilderness, and now that he has emerged victorious, an angel appears, he goes to Galilee, appears to His disciples in Galilee of the Gentiles, and beyond to all the nations of Gentiles throughout the earth. Jesus' ministry hasn't ended with His death. Because of His resurrection, His ministry is reset.

Easter is not, however, simply a return to the beginning of the gospel. Matthew reaches back beyond the beginning of his own story to the beginning of all beginnings, to the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. More than any other gospel, Matthew emphasizes that Jesus' coming constitutes heaven's invasion of earth. According to Matthew, Jesus proclaims the "kingdom of heaven," a phrase never found in the other gospels.

The Bible is largely a history of the estrangement of heaven and earth, of earth's rebellion against heaven. But the gospel announces that heaven has not left earth to its own self-ruination. Through Jesus, heaven comes to earth,

so that God's will *will* be done on earth as in heaven. Jesus spent His life overturning powers – the power of disease, death, the devil, and when an angel descends from heaven to open the tomb on Easter morning, heaven displace the powers of earth more fully yet. All the powers of the world conspire to kill Jesus, and to keep him dead. A Roman governor crucifies him, and a guard stands at the tomb. Jewish leaders manipulate and pressure Pilate into condemning an innocent man. Jesus is rendered utterly powerless, and when Joseph rolls the stone over the tomb, Death, which ruled earth since Adam ate the fruit, seems to have its final triumph. – The first week of the world ends with the corpse of the Son of God lifeless in the tomb.

Jesus' resurrection is an earthquake that shakes the powers until they shatter. **One by one, the powers that conspired to kill Jesus are toppled. When the angel descends from heaven, the large, hefty grave stone is rolled away, bold and battle-scarred guards fall in fear as dead men, and the conspiracy of Jew and Gentile to kill Jesus and to keep him dead unravels. Most importantly, *the* power, Death, is dethroned. For the first time in history, Death yields up a victim; for the first time, a man is raised to life beyond the reach of Death. The powers that have oppressed earth are overthrown by an invasion of heaven's King.**

What looked like strength is exposed in its impotence, while, on the other hand, what looked like defeat and weakness is transformed to power. Passive women are mobilized and dash off to tell the disciples, knowing that the whole mission of the church depends on their getting a message to the disciples. A crucified man, still bearing the scars of His execution, appears in a garden to Mary, walks through doors, eats fish with His disciples, claims to have inherited all authority in heaven and on earth. Men have always dreamed of a new beginning. They have always wished that time could be run in reverse and we could have a new start on the sorry spectacle of

history. Those who pursue that dream usually end up with more of the same, only worse. The old week of human history ended in a cross, and the dream of going back to Day One has ended with guillotines and Gulags. But that sobering reality should not lead to despair. We cannot reverse time, return to Eden, and make sure that this time round Adam stays clear of that tree until it's time. *We* cannot, but God *can*, and Easter announces that he *has*.

Kallistos Ware:

It is only by being a prisoner for religious convictions in a Soviet camp that one can really understand the mystery of the fall of the first man, the mystical meaning of the redemption of all creation, and the great victory of Christ over the forces of evil. It is only when we suffer for the ideals of the Holy Gospel that we can realize our sinful infirmity and our unworthiness in comparison with the great martyrs of the first Christian Church. Only then can we grasp the absolute necessity for profound meekness and humility, without which we cannot be saved; only then can we begin to discern the passing image of the seen, and the eternal life of the Unseen.

On Easter Day all of us who were imprisoned for religious conviction were united in the one joy of Christ. We were all taken into one feeling, into one spiritual triumph, glorifying the one eternal God. There was no solemn Paschal service with the ringing of church bells, no possibility in our camp to gather for worship, to dress up for the festival, to prepare Easter dishes. On the contrary, there was even more work and more interference than usual. All the prisoners here for religious convictions, whatever their denomination, were

surrounded by more spying, by more threats from the secret police.

Yet Easter was there: great, holy, spiritual, unforgettable. It was blessed by the presence of our risen God among us – blessed by the silent Siberian stars and by our sorrows. How our hearts beat joyfully in communion with the great Resurrection! Death is conquered; fear no more, an eternal Easter is given to us! Full of the marvelous Easter, we send you from our prison camp the victorious and joy-ful tidings: Christ is risen!

An excerpt from one of my all-time favorite Easter sermons, by Douglas Harink (<http://faith-theology.blogspot.com/2009/04/one-more-easter-sermon-early-on-first.html>):

Easter is not a season in nature's cycle. Resurrection is not a stage in the circle of life. The kingdom of God is not a hidden potential in this world. There is no power within us that will bring about the new creation. In fact, there is *nothing* natural in any of the events of these days. On Good Friday all of Jesus' natural human powers – and at the age of about 30 years those would be at their peak – all of his natural human powers are abruptly interrupted, halted, snuffed out: he is arrested, tried, and brutally executed. He is truly dead and buried. On the next day, the Sabbath, Jesus is not resting, as a faithful Jew should. No, he is dead, lifeless, empty – a corpse. His life has come to an end; he has no inner resources of renewal, there is no vital force of nature that can bring him back. And so Easter is in no sense an awakening; it is not a rejuvenation; it is not a resuscitation, it is not even a miraculous reversal of death. Resurrection is not simply the next thing that Jesus does, or the next thing that

happens to him in the natural course of things. No. Resurrection is *something else* altogether, something wholly other, something from beyond, something purely *unnatural*. Resurrection is *God*. "All of this is *from God*," Paul declares in our text. If Good Friday is about Jesus' *life* being brutally interrupted, captured and destroyed by the powers of sin and death, Easter is about Jesus' *death* being even more brutally interrupted, captured, and destroyed by God. Resurrection is the unimaginable power of God's very own eternal life coming upon the lifeless, empty body of Jesus. Life swallows death. Think on that image for a moment. God's life *swallows* the death of God's Son, destroying death by consuming it. Easter is about Jesus' dead body being taken up into the indestructible life of God, and being given back to us as the transfigured body of his living glory. Resurrection is the Father's eternally living YES spoken over the faithful life and death of his only Son in the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. Resurrection is Jesus' death swallowed up in divine victory. Easter is *God*. And that is why Paul must speak of a *new creation*. Jesus Christ lives because God has called forth a new reality from the nothingness of death. The powers of this age cannot bring about a new world. No amount of effort on our part can generate a new humanity. Trying harder, planning strategically, employing best practices, gaining more control, moving the agenda forward, being purpose-driven, taking out the competition, defeating the enemy – those are the ways that we get from here to there, from today to tomorrow, from failure to success, from defeat to victory, in our various worlds of family, work, community and nation. They are driven by the fear that there is never enough life to go around, that it is a scarce commodity, that death finally wins. And so we desire and acquire and hoard and defend the means of life for ourselves: water and land, crops and cattle, gas and oil, gold and uranium, drugs and hospitals, weapons and warships – mine, all mine, because there is never enough of life to go around, and I

must survive even if no-one else does. Everyone else is potentially an enemy of my life. Does even God want his share? Forget about it! But the new creation and the resurrection life of God can never be acquired by winning the competition over the scarce resources of life, nor even more gently, by trying harder, planning strategically, employing best practices, gaining more control, moving the agenda forward, being purpose-driven. There is *no way from here to the new creation*. There is *no way from here to the kingdom of resurrection*. The kingdom can only *come*. The new creation can only be *given*. And the kingdom does come *from God*. The new creation is *given* by God. It pours forth from God's own inexhaustible excess of life. While we are trying desperately to grasp after life, as much of it as possible – and don't let anyone get in my way, or have any of what I've got – while we are doing that, God is pouring life out freely upon everyone – no limits, no stinginess. “All of this is from God,” declares Paul. And it is all from God through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It comes *to us* from God, only because God has made all of us, the whole of humanity, *sharers* in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *In Christ* we have already died. When Christ died, we died with him. “One has died for all; therefore all have died,” says Paul. We have to grant that this is a strange thought. What can it mean? It at least means this: not even death can separate us from Christ. He himself was truly dead, and we ourselves have already truly shared in his death. The death which will still inevitably come upon us has already come upon Jesus – and yet it could not hold him. We have already died with Christ. How can death hold us in fear and bondage, if we have already been to hell and back with Jesus? Death is still real, but it has no real power, no power to bind, no power to destroy finally, and therefore no power to terrify. For Jesus Christ himself, once dead, has been raised up and now lives eternally with the very life of God. Death cannot hold us, not now, not ever. “He

died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them." Easter is God's life poured out on the crucified and buried Jesus; and poured out also on us, because our life, like our death, happens first *in* Jesus. A whole new human reality comes into being when Jesus is raised from the dead. He himself is *the* Human One, the very reality of human being fully alive with the life of God, living for God. If you want to know human being in all its truth, look to Christ. He is the new creation. If you want to know your friends or your neighbours or your fellow citizens or your enemies in all their truth, look to Christ. In him they are created anew. "From now on," Paul declares, "all of the old standards of judgment are gone. If anyone is in Christ the new creation has already dawned; the old no longer has power; the new is all there is." Christ alone is the measure not only of *what* we see, but also of *how* we see. There is no human being who has not already died in Christ; there is no human being who is not already being called to life in Christ. That is how we are to know and live with every person whom we now encounter. We are not in a fierce competition with either friend or enemy for resurrection life as a scarce commodity. Easter inaugurates the economy of God's life in abundance. Even if I share all that I think I have with another, I have not made a dent in the supply. The root of reconciliation with God, and reconciliation with my neighbour, is sunk deep in the inexhaustible soil of resurrection life. Easter calls us to life, to be alive in that very power of divine life which raised Jesus from the dead. *In* him we live; *for* him we live; *to* him we live. Do I need to spell out in detail what that life looks like? I don't think so. Would it not look like life lived according to the vision of the Sermon on the Mount, as Jesus tells us? Would it not look like life bearing the fruits of the Spirit, as Paul tells us? Would it not look like the life of holy love and practical care that we read about in the letters of John and James? Would it not look like a life of patient

suffering in the face of persecution of which Peter writes? But before all, and above all, and in all, would it not look like the very life which Jesus Christ himself lived from the day of his baptism to the day of his crucifixion? He is the way, the truth and life; and this is the life given for us and to us; this is the life we are called into; this is life beyond the reach of death. Each of the four gospels records that the risen Jesus appeared at dawn, early on the first day of the week. I believe that is much more than a note about the calendar. In those three days of Easter – the sixth day of the week, Good Friday; the seventh or Sabbath day, Holy Saturday; and the first day of the week, Resurrection Day – in those three days we find ourselves on the very hinge of creation, time and history. In the first creation, on the first day of the week the light shines in the darkness and the story of creation moves out from there. The whole week of creation finds its culmination in the seventh day, in the Sabbath of God's delight. But through human sin and cosmic catastrophe that first creation is now in bondage to decay and death. The cross of Christ now stands as the emblem of the whole week of creation in bondage. The Sabbath is no longer the emblem of divine rest and delight, but of the deathly silence of the Word made flesh, who takes his place among the dead. Will God abandon his Holy One to the grave, and in him all the work of his hands from the very beginning until now? No! "Early on the first day of the week," God renders judgment. This one who was crucified *shall live* with the very life of God. All of creation in its bondage to death, and all of humanity in its bondage to sin, shall be gathered up into this one human body. Nothing shall be left behind. All things, contracted to this span, shall in him now explode with the light and life of God himself. Early on the first day of the week, *this day*, the day of resurrection – early on the first day of the week, creation begins again, humanity begins again, life begins again. "All this is from God." We do not live *toward* this day, as we once lived toward the Sabbath. We live *from* this day.

Or rather, we live *in* this day. "Look," says Paul, "*now* is the acceptable time; look, *now* is the day of salvation!" Early on the first day of the week, the day of resurrection, the day of new creation, the day of the LORD - that's *today*! Live in it.

While it's pretty widely recognized that C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* is highly allegorical at points (e.g., Aslan's death on the stone table = Jesus' death on the cross), J. R. R. Tolkien denied he was writing an allegory in his epic *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Christian themes and symbolism yes, but allegory, no. However, when you come across something like this "victory song" in *Return of the King*, following the defeat of evil, it makes you wonder if perhaps Tolkien was more allegorical than he would admit. At the very least this proves that his story is indeed "akin to the gospel," as he once said:

The shadow departed, and the Sun was unveiled, and light leaped forth; and the waters of the Anduin shown like silver, and in all the houses of the City men sang for the joy that welled up in their hearts from what source they could not tell. And before the Sun had fallen far from the noon out of the East there came a great Eagle flying, and he bore tidings beyond hope from the Lords of the West, crying:

Sing now, ye people of the Tower of Anor, for the Realm of Sauron is ended forever, and the Dark Tower is thrown down.

Sing and rejoice, ye people of the Tower of Guard, for your watch hath not been in vain, and the Black Gate is broken, and your King hath passed through, and he is victorious.

Sing and be glad, all ye children of the West, for your King shall come again, and he shall dwell among you all the days of your life.

And the Tree that was withered shall be renewed, and he shall plant it in the high places, and the City shall be blessed. Sing all ye people!

And all the people sang in all the ways of the City. The days that followed were golden.

Torrance:

The very life process of the church is the resurgence and expansion of the new creation in Christ, right in the midst of the critical situation brought about by the cross in the world. Here that life process runs parallel to the expansion or the 'catholicising' of the person of Christ from a historical to a cosmic significance which took place at the cross where the redeeming love of God in him was at last universalised and made free to the whole world. It was the death of Christ, so to speak, that emancipated his gospel for the whole world. The cross catholicised or universalised Christ, and so it necessarily universalises or catholicises the believer at the cross and who by the cross becomes joined to Christ and therefore joined to a new universal humanity. Thus the cross introduces into the Christian outlook, the notion of universal expansion or world mission, in which all barriers of race and language are broken down, and the Christian is constrained to proclaim reconciliation to all and to live it out, for it is by that same motion of universal reconciliation that he and she have themselves been redeemed in the cross. That is why the Christian faith is necessarily missionary, because the word of the cross lodged in its heart is the word of an infinitely expanding redemption that must reach out to

the uttermost bounds of the universe, embracing every tongue and tribe and people.

The resurrection of Jesus as act of God is a decisive event, a final judgment, which affects the entire state of human existence, the whole situation in which we have our being and as such affects every human being. It is this concentration of universal significance in the resurrection of Jesus that is so very important for the whole of the Christian message. The New Testament does not teach a doctrine of individual resurrection first, in the sense that each man is to rise again because he is made of a body and an immortal soul, a resurrection mainly because of some interior principle in his creation. It is the fulfillment of God's covenant mercies in the incarnation and resurrection that confers immortality. Christ only has immortality and we receive out of his fullness. The general resurrection is absolutely dependent on the resurrection of Jesus Christ himself, for it is in his death and resurrection that God has dealt with death and guilt and hell once and for all.

Newbigin on the mission of the church:

The mission of the Church is to be understood, can only be rightly understood, in terms of the trinitarian model. It is the Father who holds all things in his hand, whose providence upholds all things, whose tender mercies are over all his works, where he is acknowledged and where he is denied, and who has never left himself without witness to the heart and conscience and reason of any human being. In the incarnation of the Son he made known his nature and purpose fully and completely, for in Jesus "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell"

(Col. 1:19). But this presence was a veiled presence in order that there might be the possibility of repentance and freely given faith. In the Church the mission of Jesus is continued in the same veiled form. It is continued through the presence and active working of the Holy Spirit, who is the presence of the reign of God in foretaste. The mission of the Church to all nations, to all human communities in all their diversity and in all their particularity, is itself the mighty work of God, the sign of the inbreaking of the kingdom. The Church is not so much the agent of the mission as the locus of the mission. It is God who acts in the power of his Spirit, doing mighty works, creating signs of a new age, working secretly in the hearts of men and women to draw them to Christ. When they are so drawn, they become part of a community which claims no masterful control of history, but continues to bear witness to the real meaning and goal of history by a life which - in Paul's words - by always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus becomes the place where the risen life of Jesus is made available for others (2 Cor. 4:10).

John Chrysostom's famous Easter meditation:

Are there any who are devout lovers of God?
Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival! Are there any
who are grateful servants?
Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord! Are
there any weary with fasting?
Let them now receive their wages! If any have toiled from
the first hour,
let them receive their due reward;
If any have come after the third hour,
let him with gratitude join in the Feast!
And he that arrived after the sixth hour,
let him not doubt; for he too shall sustain no loss.

And if any delayed until the ninth hour,
let him not hesitate; but let him come too.
And he who arrived only at the eleventh hour,
let him not be afraid by reason of his delay.
For the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the
first.
He gives rest to him that comes at the eleventh hour,
as well as to him that toiled from the first. To this one He
gives, and upon another He bestows.
He accepts the works as He greets the endeavor.
The deed He honors and the intention He commends.
Let us all enter into the joy of the Lord! First and last alike
receive your reward;
rich and poor, rejoice together!
Sober and slothful, celebrate the day!
You that have kept the fast, and you that have not,
rejoice today for the Table is richly laden! Feast royally on
it, the calf is a fatted one.
Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of
faith.
Enjoy all the riches of His goodness! Let no one grieve at
his poverty,
for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one
mourn that he has fallen again and again;
for forgiveness has risen from the grave. Let no one fear
death, for the Death of our Savior has set us free.
He has destroyed it by enduring it.
He destroyed Hell when He descended into it.
He put it into an uproar even as it tasted of His
flesh. Isaiah foretold this when he said,
"You, O Hell, have been troubled by encountering Him
below."
Hell was in an uproar because it was done away with.
It was in an uproar because it is mocked.
It was in an uproar, for it is destroyed.
It is in an uproar, for it is annihilated.
It is in an uproar, for it is now made captive. Hell took a
body, and discovered God.

It took earth, and encountered Heaven.
It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see. O death, where is thy sting?
O Hell, where is thy victory? Christ is Risen, and you, O death, are annihilated!
Christ is Risen, and the evil ones are cast down!
Christ is Risen, and the angels rejoice!
Christ is Risen, and life is liberated! Christ is Risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead;
for Christ having risen from the dead,
is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be Glory and Power forever and ever.
Amen!

G. K. Chesterton how the death of Jesus ended the old world of antiquity and his resurrection brought forth a new creation:

"They took the body down from the cross and one of the few rich men among the first Christians obtained permission to bury it in a rock tomb in his garden; the Romans setting a military guard lest there should be some riot and attempt to recover the body. There was once more a natural symbolism in these natural proceedings; it was well that the tomb should be sealed with all the secrecy of ancient eastern sepulcher and guarded by the authority of the Caesars. For in that second cavern the whole of that great and glorious humanity which we call antiquity was gathered up and covered over; and in that place it was buried. It was the end of a very great thing called human history; the history that was merely human. The mythologies and the philosophies were buried there, the gods and the heroes and the sages. In the great Roman phrase, they had lived. But as they could only live, so they could only die; and they were dead.

"On the third day the friends of Christ coming at daybreak to the place found the grave empty and the stone rolled away. In

varying ways they realised the new wonder; but even they hardly realised that the world had died in the night. What they were looking at was the first day of a new creation, with a new heaven and a new earth; and in a semblance of the gardener God walked again in the garden, in the cool not of the evening but the dawn."

The resurrection, like the cross, is accompanied by an earthquake. When Jesus dies, graves are rocked open, and many saints came forth, as a prelude and pointer to the resurrection (Matt. 27:51ff; cf. Zech. 14). When Jesus is raised from the dead, again the earth quakes.

Of course, those saints who were raised when Jesus died, died again, like Lazarus. The case of Jesus is different. Jesus rose never to die again. Up to this point, death had been undefeated. Death had never lost a battle. But now death loses a victim and can never get him back. In the resurrection of Jesus, death is humiliated and defeated.

Matthew 28 shows us the relationship of worship and mission. The same pattern occurs twice. When the women first meet the risen Lord, they worship him (28:9). Then he commissions them to go and tell others. Worship empowers and gives rise to mission (28:10).

We find the same relationship when Jesus meets with a larger group of disciples. First they worship him (28:17), then he gives them their missional mandate, the Great Commission (28:18-20).

This shows us something vital about the Christian life. Mission is the liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission is the outflow of worship, and mission returns in worship. We cannot scatter for mission until we have been gathered for worship. Worship is central and foundational to all we do. Jesus rose on the first day of the week, the new day for special worship in his presence. The rest of our week arises from

what we offered and received in Jesus' presence. Having been blessed by him, he goes with us as we go, so we can share that same blessing with those all around us.

Worship strengthens us so that we have the courage to carry out the truth. Worship makes woman stronger than Roman soldiers. Worship enables us to tell the truth, even against the world's most potent lies. Worship drives us to take the gospel to the nations so others can share in the joy of worshipping the risen Lord with us.

We see in Matthew 28 how the conspiracy of the wicked unravels. The seal is broken. The stone is rolled away. The guards become like dead men. High finance lies are concocted. But nothing the Roman or Jewish forces could do had the power to stop Jesus from coming forth from the grave. And so it is today. The secular media, with its lies; the gay agenda; the ACLU; Allah and Islam; the cults – nothing out there can stop the risen Christ from conquering and growing his kingdom. Because Christ has risen, everything has changed. A new power has exploded into world history and things can never go back to how they were before.

All the gospel accounts agree, in various ways, that the resurrection of Jesus is a new beginning, a new creation. For example, in John's gospel, we see the Lord once again walking in the garden in the cool of the day (cf. Jn. 20 and Gen. 3). All the gospel accounts call attention to the fact that he rose at the dawn of the first day – a new creation week. All the gospel accounts call attention to Jesus meeting the women – the new bride is brought to the new Adam. Matthew's gospel ends with a commissioning that matches the end of the Hebrew Bible – clearly indicating that old covenant world order has been eclipsed by a new world order under the reign of Jesus. And so on.