

Crown of Glory  
Matt 27:62-28:20

KV 28:18 “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’”

In the beginning of the book of Matthew, we see the genealogy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It shows how he was descended from the line of David, Israel’s greatest king. He had royalty in his blood, and had full legal right to be the King of the Jews. Yet yesterday we saw that the Jews mocked him, spit on him, and crowned him with the crown of thorns; thorns – the symbol of God’s curse on the ground, was placed on the head of Jesus. He was sentenced to death on the cross, and was lifted up for all to see. Truly, it was a horrible and tragic event, but those with eyes of faith can see that this was also a glorious event and an amazing display of the grace of God. With eyes of faith we see Christ, up there, as a Substitute for us, taking our sin and our shame, and bearing our punishment, even to death. In his death he was crowned with thorns, but today, we will see that in his resurrection, he was crowned with glory. And according to the key verse, Christ is also crowned as king over heaven and earth. Do you recognize him as the King? Do you recognize him as your King? Will you give him the glory? Just as Matthew proves he descended from kings, he proves in this passage that Jesus Christ is beyond a doubt the king of kings.

In this passage we will find facts that prove the authenticity of the resurrection. Do you believe that Christ, literally and truly rose from the dead this day (Easter Sunday) more than 2000 years ago? Is Jesus Christ really the king of kings? If he is, then he must have really come back from the dead in a tomb outside Jerusalem. We begin this passage on the second day after Jesus’ death – it is the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday. The Sabbath is supposed to be a day of rest, however, as the old saying goes, there is no rest for the wicked (Isa 48:22). Look at v.62-63, “The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate. ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘we remember that while he was alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’” Notice what bothered the Pharisees: Jesus’ claim that after 3 days, he would rise again. This was one of the core teachings of Jesus’ ministry – that he had to suffer under the hands of the elders, chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again on the third day. Now why was that? It was because the resurrection would verify that he is truly the Son of God, and the chief priests and elders would need to be subject under him, which they despised.

The concept of the resurrection was so powerful that even if it was not true, it could cause major problems if the word got out. If the disciples managed to steal the body and claim he was resurrected, this deception would be worse than the first. So they went to Pilate and asked if he could secure the tomb. Pilate gave the order, and he had the tomb sealed up and gave them a guard. A tomb seal would consist of a cord that stretched from one side of the stone that covered the entrance to the other, and in the middle would be the seal of the governor on it. It was a decree this tomb was officially sealed, and if anyone broke the seal it would be punishable by death. Notice also that Pilate sent a guard. A guard consisted of more than one person. Some sources say they can range from 16 to 60 people. The guard consisted of the most elite Roman soldiers, and their duty was to guard the tomb. In a guard of 16, for example, 4 soldiers would stand near the tomb entrance ready for battle. The rest of the guard formed a semi-circle around the tomb, and were relaxed, but alert. If anyone stole the body, it would be considered a failure

of their duty, and could be punishable by death. The Pharisees and Pilate made every effort to prevent the “resurrection,” but instead, they unwittingly placed witnesses to the resurrection. If the resurrection happened in some remote tomb where no one could see, the Pharisees could always deny anything happened. But here, there were at least 16 people, and the seal on the tomb, that would testify to the resurrection, if it happened by the hand of God.

From Ch. 28, we will now witness the arrival of the king. This is now the first day of the week, a Sunday, and the third day after Christ was crucified, dead and buried. Look at v.2, “There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.” There was no respect for Pilate’s seal, the angel just came down, broke the seal, and rolled the stone away. Then he sat on it. He probably sat there so all of the soldiers would be able to see him. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. All of the guards, at least 16 of them, fainted at the sight of the angel. If I ever met anyone whose face was like lightning, I’d be terrified too.

Jesus just didn’t sneak back into earth quietly, he made a grand entrance when he returned. Have you ever seen a grand entrance at a wedding reception? First, they announce the bridal party, and everyone comes in to cheers and applause. Then finally, the everyone rises, applauding and cheering, and the bride and groom come in to a standing ovation. The earth trembled when Jesus came back, and an angel of light came to roll back the stone – and there were all of the soldiers, strewn about on the floor, fainted from fear. The risen Jesus was able to walk away undetected among the guard. Although it is a little different from a grand entrance at a wedding, the point is, the heavens and earth declared the arrival of the risen Son of God.

This all probably took place before dawn, before the women arrived – but imagine their shock at the scene. They did not think that Jesus would rise from the dead. They had not been there since Friday night, and they get to the tomb, see the unconscious bodies of numerous soldiers, the tomb now wide open, and an angel that looked like lightning sitting on the stone. I bet they were ready to run the other way as fast as they could, but look at v.5, “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.’” And after comforting them, tells them the good news in v.6, “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.” (Let’s all read v6. again together) Jesus has risen, just as he said. Why was this good news? Because it means that Jesus has triumphed over death; he was won the victory. It means that we now can have a real hope in eternal life and entering into the kingdom of heaven. In Ch.27 v.63, the Pharisees called Jesus a deceiver who said he would rise again after 3 days, but here we see that Jesus told the truth – he had been telling the truth all along, and that Jesus’ word has authority.

The angel continued to tell the women to go quickly and tell Jesus’ disciples: “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.” Notice how the women respond in v.8, “So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.” How did the women respond? The women responded with faith. They did not see Jesus, but they believed what the angel said, and ran and hurried to tell the disciples. There was fear, perhaps from seeing such a strange and fearful vision of the angel, but it was mixed with joy, because they believed the good news. Some of the other

disciples did not believe so quickly when they heard the good news. The women went back to tell the other 11 apostles, but they did not believe the women because their words seemed to them like nonsense (Luke 24:11). Jesus would later rebuke 2 of these disciples, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! (Luke 24:25)” We can learn something about the faith of the women here. They believed, even before they had seen Jesus. In this day, Jesus has risen to the right hand of God. We have not seen Jesus with our eyes, but the evidence is recorded in the Bible, and we have heard the testimony of other believers. Can we believe with the same faith as the women? We should believe in Jesus, based on the truth, even if we have not seen him with our eyes.

The first time we meet with the risen Christ in this passage is in v.9 while the women were hurrying back, “Suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him.” This was remarkable. In the 3 years they had spent with Jesus, they had never worshipped him, but here, almost instantly, they fall to his feet and worship. They were there at the crucifixion. They saw him bloody and disfigured. The women were at the tomb when Jesus was being embalmed by Joseph of Arimathea. They saw his dead body being laid in the tomb – but right now, right here was their precious teacher, living, breathing, walking and talking and they came to one conclusion: This must be the Son of God. Who else can come back to life? The other thing here is that Jesus accepts their worship. No one should accept worship except for God. When John tried to worship an angel in Rev 22:8-9, the angel said to John, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of the scroll. Worship God!” Even an angel instructs that we are to worship God. What can we conclude here? The same thing the centurion concluded after he saw Jesus die on the cross, “Surely he is the Son of God.” The risen king is God, and God requires our worship.

In v.11, we shift back to the guard, most of whom may have woken up by now. Some of them went into the city to report to the chief priests everything that had happened. They would have told of the earthquake, and the angel, and some of their cohorts fainting. Again, all of the Pharisees best efforts to suppress the resurrection ended up creating witnesses that could not deny the resurrection. Even the chief priests could not deny the story. They had to accept it, and meet with the elders to devise a plan. They decided to bribe the soldiers with a large sum of money, and force them to tell a lie anytime someone asks. The lie was, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’” If this report ever got to Pilate, they said they would “satisfy him (v.14)” and to keep the soldiers out of trouble. What this meant is that they would bribe Pilate too. And it seems that they were successful, because at the time of Matthew’s gospel, which was at least 15 years after the resurrection, the story was still circulating.

It is ironic that the Pharisees had originally asked Pilate to seal the tomb and post a guard so that the disciples could not steal the body, but the report now going out was, “the disciples stole the body.” Although they were able to publish a deceptive statement, they could not prevent the resurrection. A closer examination will show that this statement is absolutely ridiculous. First of all, what are the chances of all 16+ soldiers asleep at the same time. Second, if they were asleep, wouldn’t they be able to hear the stone moving. The stones weighed anywhere from 1000-2000 lbs, and it would take a lot of time and make a lot of noise to move

something that large. Third, there were linens still inside the tomb. If the disciples were trying to steal the body, they would not have tried to take the time to unwrap it. Finally, the soldiers would not lie. Their lives were at risk if they failed to do their duties, so we can also rule out the possibility that the soldiers stole the body of Jesus for themselves.

The fact that the chief priests and elders had to make up a story, and the Pilate accepted the bribe shows that they could not deny the resurrection. If they believed there was no resurrection, what would be the point in paying so much money to cover it up? Now let's compare and contrast the Pharisees and Pilate with the women at the tomb. Both groups had ample evidence and testimony concerning the resurrection – but one group believed in Jesus, and that he was God; the other, despite the evidence, did not believe. They did not submit to the authority and rule of Christ, who is the Son of God. The women saw an angel, and an empty tomb – the Pharisees and Pilate had the testimony of the soldiers and the failure to secure the tomb. What was the difference between the two? The Pharisees and Pilate loved money. “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Tim 6:10).” You could also say they loved the world. The women loved Jesus, as exhibited by their desire to constantly seek after him, even after his death. Finally the Pharisees and Pilate had no fear of God. Both had condemned Christ to death. The women, on the other hand, had a right fear of the Lord, and fell down to worship Jesus when they saw him.

Thus far we have established 2 facts: the authenticity of the resurrection of Christ, and that the crown of glory belongs to the Son of God. From yesterday's passage, we saw that the death of Christ tore the veil in two, which separated man from God. Christ's death and resurrection has opened the door to the kingdom of heaven to all the ends of the earth. In his resurrection, Jesus was crowned with glory, and now that glory must spread over all the earth. When we advance God's kingdom, we are advancing his glory, and that's what Christ is now calling his disciples to do from v.16.

Look at v.16-17, “Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.” Notice now the disciples, or the apostles, are now in Galilee. They had spent a week in Jerusalem, and then they went up to Galilee as Jesus instructed them. Here again we see that the disciples worshipped Jesus, although it also says that some doubted. One explanation is that this could be the same event Paul talks about in 1 Cor 15:6 – when he appeared to 500 at the same time. The apostles might have gone back to Galilee, spread the word about the resurrection, and gathered everyone to the mountain. When they were on the mountain, out of the 500 perhaps many of them had not seen the risen Lord yet – and Jesus was coming in from farther away. Some might have believed the apostles, and perhaps some did not believe yet. When they saw Jesus though, their doubt would be erased. Remember Thomas, who said, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” Jesus appeared to him a week later, and presented his wound to Thomas. Jesus mildly rebuked him and said, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” These seem like Jesus' words to all who doubt: stop doubting and believe. Perhaps all those who eventually saw Jesus stopped their doubting. Thomas said to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me you have

believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Just like the women who believed, but had not seen the risen Christ yet, and given Thomas’ testimony, let us believe in “my Lord and my God,” even though we have not “seen” with our physical eyes.

Can we all please read v.18, “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’” When Jesus was here on earth, he humbled himself, and made himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant (Php2:7). He became obedient to God, and humbled himself to other authorities if it was part of God’s will, such as Pontius Pilate right before his crucifixion. After his resurrection, he has been raised to the right hand of God. God has put everything under his feet (except God himself) – so when he says he has authority over everything, he truly has authority over everything. I will name some, but this is by no means a comprehensive list. He has the power to give life, even eternal life (John 17:2). Jesus is the source of life. Whoever believes in him will have eternal life. He has the power to forgive sins. We sin every day, but daily we pray, forgive us our debts (our sins). And finally, Jesus has authority over our lives. We are given commandments, we are given the law to follow and obey. Granted, we can’t follow them on our own strength, but when Christ is in us, he can conform us to the image of himself. We may disobey Christ, and disobey the law of God, but we do that at our own peril.

Jesus gives this command in v.19-20, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” We are commanded to make disciples – disciples of Christ and disciples of the word of God. This is how God’s kingdom expands. As disciples grow and mature, they can begin to disciples others, or their children. But why disciples? Why does Jesus specifically say to make disciples, and not “make new members.” It’s because disciples are those who study the word of God, grow in it, and live by it. How are disciples made? First, we have to go. We go wherever God leads us – whether that’s to IIT, a different state, or to the ends of the earth.

Second is baptism. We all have seen baptisms on TV, or youtube. Usually someone is in a tub, or a lake, and they get dipped in and pulled out. This is symbolic of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. When Christ came, John the Baptist said in Mark 1:8, “I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” This baptism of the Holy Spirit done by Christ unites us with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. We die to sin, and live for Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the baptism into His body, the church. This is the baptism we should seek – the conversion of the soul. An outward ceremony will not change our souls, but faith alone in Christ will. Acts 16:31 says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” We should seek to lead others to faith in Christ for their salvation, and allow the Holy Spirit to baptize them. There should be no obligation to the external ceremony of water baptism, but it can be done if that person is ready and willing. And it is a beautiful ceremony, but again, the external ceremony is no good without a real change of heart, so in this respect we should seek to lead others to a saving faith first.

Finally, we have the teaching. To make disciples by teaching them to obey everything Christ has commanded us to do. Jesus is God, and he has laws. There are the 10 commandments that we should obey. Do not have any other gods before God. Do not worship idols. Do not use

the Lord's name in vain. Honor the Sabbath. Honor your father and mother. Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not covet. Of course all of these can be summed up into 2 laws: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Teach them repentance toward God, and faith in Christ (Act 20:21). Teach them the word of God, and to obey it, so that they may live holy lives and present themselves perfect in Christ.

These tasks – to go, baptize and teach, to expand the kingdom of God, sound difficult to do. I intentionally gave examples from the Law of God in the teaching part. How are we to even do these things ourselves, let alone try to teach somebody? How can we submit to the authority of Christ, and to obey his commands? How can we go out to make disciples? How can we baptize in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit? How can we teach God's commands, and obey them ourselves? How can we have faith in the risen Christ, like the women did? With our own efforts, this is impossible, and I think Jesus knows that too. That's why he gave us a promise that we can depend on, and a promise we can hold on to. Look at v.20b, can we read that together: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Christ says, surely, he is with us always. Morning, noon, day, night, sunshine or rain, Jesus is with us. What can we expect when Christ is with us? (from John Gill's commentary) He will assist us in this work of advancing his kingdom. He will comfort us under all discouragements. He will supply us with grace. He will protect us from our enemies, and he will preserve us from all evils. He will give us wisdom for each day, strength when we need it. Even if we are in the deepest remotest island on the planet, he is there with us.

David Livingstone, perhaps one of the greatest missionaries, known as the "apostle of Africa," was invited to speak at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. He had the walk of a man who had walked 11,000 miles. His left arm was crushed by a lion, his skin dark brown from 16 years in the African sun. His face bore ravages from African fevers, he was half deaf from rheumatic fever. The students were stunned, and listened intently about his African adventures. Finally he said to them, "Shall I tell you what sustained me in the midst of all of those toils hardships and incredible loneliness? It was the promise of a Gentleman of the most sacred honor—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"" David Livingstone committed his life to God's word – his life depended on it, he put his life on that promise.

Is this your faith? Can you trust it with your life: can you have faith in God and his word, even if it costs your very life? Is Christ your hope? Is Christ with you always? Is he your authority? Are you Christ's disciple? Do you have an interest in advancing the kingdom of God, and seeing him glorified to the ends of the earth? Go, and make disciples. You know, the crown of glory was not just for Christ alone. If you notice in v.10, he says, go and tell my "brothers." We are not only Christ's disciples, we are his brothers. We are children of God, and through faith in Christ, we may share in his inheritance. 1 Peter 5:4 says, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." This crown is for the shepherds of God's flock. When he comes again, we will receive new, perfect resurrected bodies, we may even have an appearance like lightning. And he is with us, even now, until the day he comes again to take us to glory. How was all this made possible? Because Christ came, went to the cross and took the crown of thorns for our sake. The punishment that brought us peace was laid on him. Then he rose again in power, crowned with glory – and he lives forever.