

CHAPTER 28

In the foregoing chapters, we saw the Captain of our salvation engaged with the powers of darkness, attacked by them, and vigorously attacking them; victory seemed to hover between the combatants; nay, at length, it inclined to the enemies' side, and our Champion fell before them; behold, God has delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies' hand. Christ in the grave is like the ark in Dagon's temple; the powers of darkness seemed to ride masters, but then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine, ~~PS~~ Psalm 78:61, 65. The prince of our peace is in this chapter rallying again, coming out of the grave, a Conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror, leading captivity captive; though the ark be a prisoner, Dagon falls before it, and it proves that none is able to stand before the holy Lord God. Now the resurrection of Christ being one of the main foundations of our religion, it is requisite that we should have infallible proofs of it; four of which proofs we have in this chapter, which are but a few of many, for Luke and John give a larger account of the proofs of Christ's resurrection than Matthew and Mark do. Here is,

- I.** The testimony of the angel to Christ's resurrection (v. 1-8).
- II.** His appearance himself to the women (v. 9, 10).
- III.** The confession of the adversaries that were upon the guard (v. 11-15).
- IV.** Christ's appearance to the disciples in Galilee, and the commission he gave them (v. 16-20).

~~MT~~ MATTHEW 28:1-10

THE RESURRECTION

For the proof of Christ's resurrection, we have here the testimony of *the angel*, and of *Christ* himself, concerning his resurrection. Now we may think that it would have been better, if the matter had been so ordered, that a competent number of witnesses should have been present, and have seen

the stone rolled away by the angel, and the dead body reviving, as people saw Lazarus come out of the grave, and then the matter had been past dispute; but let us not prescribe to Infinite Wisdom, which ordered that the witnesses of his resurrection should see him *risen*, but not see him *rise*. His incarnation was a mystery; so was this *second incarnation* (if we may so call it), this *new making* of the body of Christ, for his exalted state; it was therefore *made in secret*. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*. Christ gave such proofs of his resurrection as were *corroborated* by the scriptures, and by the *word* which he had *spoken* (~~246~~ Luke 24:6, 7-44; ~~416~~ Mark 16:7); for here we must *walk by faith, not by sight*. We have here,

I. The *coming* of the *good women* to the *sepulchre*.

Observe,

1. *When they came; in the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week*, v. 1. This fixes the time of Christ's resurrection.

(1.) He arose the *third day* after his death; that was the time which he had often prefixed, and he kept within it. He was buried in the evening of the sixth day of the week, and arose in the morning of the first day of the following week, so that he lay in the grave about thirty-six or thirty-eight hours. He lay so long, to show that he was really and truly dead; and no longer, that he might not *see corruption*. He arose the third day, to answer the type of the prophet Jonas (ch. 12:40), and to accomplish that prediction (~~306~~ Hosea 6:2), *The third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight*.

(2.) He arose *after the Jewish sabbath*, and it was the passover-sabbath; all that day he lay in the grave, to signify the abolishing of the Jewish feasts and the other parts of the ceremonial law, and that his people must be dead to such observances, and take no more notice of them than he did when he *lay in the grave*. Christ on *the sixth day finished* his work; he said, *It is finished*; on the seventh day he rested, and then on the first day of the next week did as it were begin a new world, and enter upon new work. Let no man therefore judge us now in respect of *the new moons*, or of the *Jewish sabbaths*, which were indeed a shadow of good things to come, but the *substance* if of *Christ*. We may further observe, that the time of the saints' lying in the grave, is a sabbath to them (such as the Jewish sabbath was,

which consisted chiefly in bodily rest), for there they *rest from their labours* (^{<3817>}Job 3:17); and it is owing to Christ.

(3.) He arose upon the *first day of the week*; on the first day of the first week God *commanded the light to shine out of darkness*; on this day therefore did he who was to be the Light of the world, shine out of the darkness of the grave; and the seventh-day sabbath being buried with Christ, it arose again in the first-day sabbath, called the *Lord's day* (^{<4111>}Revelation 1:10), and no other day of the week is from henceforward mentioned in all the New Testament than this, and this often, as the day which Christians religiously observed in solemn assemblies, to the honour of Christ, ^{<4319>}John 20:19, 26; ^{<4407>}Acts 20:7; ^{<4542>}1 Corinthians 16:2. If the deliverance of Israel out of the land of the north superseded the remembrance of that out of Egypt (^{<2217>}Jeremiah 23:7, 8), much more doth our redemption by Christ eclipse the glory of God's former works. The sabbath was instituted in remembrance of the *perfecting* of the work of creation, ^{<4111>}Genesis 2:1. Man by his revolt made a breach upon that *perfect* work, which was never perfectly repaired till Christ arose from the dead, and the *heavens and the earth were again finished*, and the disordered *hosts of them* modelled anew, and the day on which this was done was justly *blessed and sanctified*, and the seventh day from that. He who on that day arose from the dead, is the same by whom, and for whom, all things were at first created, and now anew created.

(4.) He arose *as it began to dawn* toward that day; as soon as it could be said that the *third day* was come, the time prefixed for his resurrection, he *arose*; after his withdrawals from his people, he returns with all convenient *speed*, and *cuts the work* as *short in righteousness* as may be. He had said to his disciples, that though within a little while they *should not see him*, yet again *a little while*, and they *should see him*, and accordingly he made it as little a while as possible, ^{<2547>}Isaiah 54:7, 8. Christ arose *when the day began to dawn*, because then the day-spring from on high did again visit us, ^{<4178>}Luke 1:78. His passion began in the night; when he hung on the cross the sun was darkened; he was laid in the grave in the dusk of the evening; but he arose from the grave when the sun was near rising, for he is the *bright and morning Star* (^{<4626>}Revelation 22:16), the *true Light*. Those who address themselves early in the morning to the religious services of the Christian sabbath, that they may take the day before them, therein follow this example of Christ, and that of David, *Early will I seek thee*.

2. Who they were, that came to the sepulchre; *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary*, the same that attended the funeral, and *sat over against the sepulchre*, as before they *sat over against the cross*; still they studied to express their love to Christ; still they were inquiring after him. Then shall we *know*, if we thus *follow on to know*. No mention is made of the Virgin Mary being with them; it is probable that the *beloved disciple*, who had taken her to his own home, hindered her from *going to the grave to weep there*. Their attendance on Christ not only *to the grave*, but *in the grave*, represents his like care for those that are his, when they have *made their bed in the darkness*. As Christ in the grave was beloved of the *saints*, so the saints in the grave are beloved of Christ; for death and the grave cannot slacken that bond of love which is between them.

3. What they *came to do*: the other evangelists say that they came to anoint the body; Matthew saith that they came to *see the sepulchre*, whether it was as they left it; hearing perhaps, but not being sure, that the chief priests had set a guard upon it. They went, to show their good-will in another visit to the dear remains of their beloved Master, and perhaps not without some thoughts of his resurrection, for they could not have quite forgotten all he had said of it. Note, Visits to the grave are of great use to Christians, and will help to make it familiar to them, and to take off the terror of it, especially visits to the grave of our Lord Jesus, where we may see sin buried out of sight, the pattern of our sanctification, and the great proof of redeeming love shining illustriously even in that *land of darkness*.

II. The appearance of an angel of the Lord to them, v. 2-4. We have here an account of the manner of the resurrection of Christ, as far as it was fit that we should know.

1. There was a *great earthquake*. When he died, the earth that *received him*, shook for fear; now that he arose, the earth that *resigned him*, leaped for joy in his exaltation. This earthquake did as it were *loose* the bond of death, and *shake off* the fetters of the grave, and introduce the *Desire of all nations*, ^{<3016>}Haggai 2:6, 7. It was the *signal* of Christ's victory; notice was hereby given of it, that, when the *heavens rejoiced*, the *earth* also might be *glad*. It was a *specimen* of the *shake* that will be given to the earth at the general resurrection, when mountains and islands shall be removed, that the earth may no longer *cover her slain*. There was a *noise and a shaking* in the valley, when the *bones were to come together, bone to his bone*, ^{<3501>}Ezekiel 37:7. The kingdom of Christ, which was now to be set up,

made the earth to quake, and *terribly shook it*. Those who are sanctified, and thereby raised to a spiritual life, while it is in the doing find an earthquake in their own bosoms, as Paul, who *trembled* and was *astonished*.

2. The *angel of the Lord descended from heaven*. The angels frequently attended our Lord Jesus, at his birth, in his temptation, in his agony; but upon the cross we find no angel attending him: when his Father *forsook him*, the angels withdrew from him; but now that he is resuming the glory he had before the foundation of the world, now, behold, the *angels of God worship him*.

3. He came, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. Our Lord Jesus could have *rolled back the stone* himself by his own power, but he chose to have it done by an angel, to signify that having undertaken to make satisfaction for our sin, imputed to him, and being under arrest pursuant to that imputation, he did not *break prison*, but had a fair and *legal discharge*, obtained from heaven; he did not break prison, but an officer was sent on purpose to *roll away the stone*, and so to open the prison door, which would never have been done, if he had not made a *full satisfaction*. But being delivered for our offences, to complete the deliverance, he was *raised again for our justification*; he died to pay our debt, and rose again to take out our acquittance. The *stone* of our sins was *rolled* to the door of the grave of our Lord Jesus (and we find the rolling of a great stone to signify the *contracting of guilt*, ^{OR} 1 Samuel 14:33); but to demonstrate that divine justice was satisfied, an angel was commissioned to roll back the stone; not that the angel *raised him from the dead*, any more than those that *took away the stone* from Lazarus's grave raised him, but thus he intimated the consent of Heaven to his release, and the joy of Heaven in it. The enemies of Christ had sealed the stone, resolving, like Babylon, not to *open the house of his prisoners; shall the prey be taken from the mighty?* For this was *their hour*; but all the powers of death and darkness are under the control of the God of light and life. An angel from heaven has power to *break the seal*, though it were the *great seal of Israel*, and is able to *roll away the stone*, though ever so great. Thus the *captives of the mighty are taken away*. The angel's *sitting upon the stone*, when he had *rolled it away*, is very observable, and bespeaks a secure triumph over all the obstructions of Christ's resurrection. There he sat, defying all the powers of hell to roll the stone to the grave again. Christ erects his seat of rest and seat of judgment upon the opposition of his enemies; *the Lord*

sitteth upon the floods. The angel sat as a guard to the grave, having frightened away the enemies' *black guard*; he sat, expecting the women, and ready to give them an account of his resurrection.

4. That his *countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow*, v. 3. This was a visible representation, by that which we call *splendid and illustrious*, of the *glories* of the invisible world, which know no *difference of colours*. His look upon the keepers was like *flashes of lightning; he cast forth lightning, and scattered them*, ⁽⁴¹⁶⁾Psalm 144:6. The *whiteness* of his raiment was an emblem not only of purity, but of joy and triumph. When Christ died, the court of heaven *went into keep mourning*, signified by the *darkening of the sun*; but when he arose, they again put on the *garments of praise*. The glory of this angel represented the glory of Christ, to which he was now risen, for it is the same description that was given of him in his transfiguration (⁽⁴¹⁶⁾Matthew 17:2); but when he conversed with his disciples after his resurrection, he drew a veil over it, and it bespoke the glory of the saints in their resurrection, when they shall be *as the angels of God in heaven*.

5. That *for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men*, v. 4. They were *soldiers*, that thought themselves hardened against fear, yet the very sight of an angel struck them with terror. Thus *when the Son of God arose to judgment, the stout-hearted were spoiled*, ⁽⁴¹⁶⁾Psalm 76:5, 9. Note, The resurrection of Christ, as it is the joy of his friends, so it is the terror and confusion of his enemies. *They did shake*; the word *eseisthesan* is the same with that which was used for the earthquake, v. 2, *seismos*. When the *earth shook*, these *children of the earth*, that had their portion in it, *shook too*; whereas, those that have their happiness in things above, *though the earth be removed, yet are without fear*. The keepers became *as dead men*, when he whom they kept guard upon became alive, and they whom they kept guard against revived with him. It struck a terror upon them, to see themselves baffled in that which was their business here. They were posted here, to *keep a dead man in his grave* — as easy a piece of service surely as was ever assigned them, and yet it proves too hard for them. They were told that they must expect to be assaulted by a company of feeble faint-hearted disciples, who for fear of them would soon *shake* and become *as dead men*, but are amazed when they find themselves attacked by a *mighty angel*, whom they dare not look in the face. Thus doth God *frustrate his enemies by frightening them*, ⁽⁴¹⁶⁾Psalm 9:20.

III. The message which this angel delivered to the women, v. 5-7.

1. He *encourages them against their fears*, v. 5. To come near to graves and tombs, especially in silence and solitude, has something in it *frightful*, much more was it so to those women, to find an angel at the sepulchre; but he soon makes them easy with the word, *Fear not ye*. The keepers shook, and became as dead men, but, *Fear not ye*. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, for there is cause for it; but, *Fear not, Abraham*, nor any of the faithful seed of Abraham; why should the daughters of Sarah, that *do well*, be afraid *with any amazement*? ^{<4086>}1 Peter 3:6. "*Fear not ye*. Let not the news I have to tell you, be any surprise to you, for you were told before that your Master would rise; let it be no terror to you, for his resurrection will be your consolation; fear not any hurt, that I will do you, nor nay evil tidings I have to tell you. *Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus*. I know you are friends to the cause. I do not come to frighten you, but to encourage you." Note, Those that *seek Jesus*, have no reason to be *afraid*; for, if they seek him diligently they shall *find him*, and shall find him their *bountiful Rewarder*. All our believing enquiries after the Lord Jesus are observed, and taken notice of, in heaven; *I know that ye seek Jesus*; and shall certainly be answered, as these were, *with good words, and comfortable words*. *Ye seek Jesus that was crucified*. He mentions his being crucified, the more to commend their love to him; "You seek him still, though *he was crucified*; you retain your kindness for him notwithstanding." Note, True believers love and seek Christ, not only *though he was crucified*, but *because he was so*.

2. He *assures them of the resurrection of Christ*; and there was enough in that to silence their fears (v. 6); *He is not here, for he is risen*. To be told *He is not here*, would have been no welcome news to those who sought him, if it had not been added, *He is risen*. Note, It is matter of comfort to those who seek Christ, and miss of finding him where they expected, that *he is risen*: if we find him not in sensible comfort, yet *he is risen*. We must not hearken to those who say, *Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there*, for he is not *here*, he is not *there*, he is *risen*. In all our enquiries after Christ, we must remember that he is *risen*; and we must seek him as one *risen*.

(1.) Not with any *gross carnal* thoughts of him. There were those that *knew Christ after the flesh*; but now henceforth know we him so no more, ^{<4186>}2 Corinthians 5:16. It is true, he had a body; but it is now a *glorified*

body. They that make pictures and images of Christ, forget that *he is not here, he is risen*; our communion with him must be spiritual, by faith in his word, ^{<516>}Romans 10:6-9.

(2.) We must seek him with great *reverence* and *humility*, and an awful regard to his glory, for *he is risen*. God has *highly exalted him*, and given him a name above every name, and therefore every knee and every soul must bow before him.

(3.) We must seek him with a *heavenly mind*; when we are ready to make this world our home, and to say, *It is good to be here*, let us remember our Lord Jesus *is not here, he is risen*, and therefore let not our hearts be here, but let them rise too, and seek the things that are above, ^{<311>}Colossians 3:1-3; ^{<310>}Philippians 3:20.

Two things the angel refers these women to, for the confirmation of their faith, touching Christ's resurrection.

[1.] To his word now fulfilled, which they might remember; *He is risen, as he said*. This he vouches as the proper object of faith; "He said that he would rise, and you know that he is the Truth itself, and therefore have reason to expect that he should rise; why should you be backward to believe that which he told you would be?" Let us never think that strange, of which the word of Christ has raised our expectations, whether the sufferings of this present time, or the glory that is to be revealed. If we remember what Christ hath said to us, we shall be the less surprised at what he does with us. This angel, when he said, *He is not here, he is risen*, makes it to appear that he preaches no other gospel than what they had already received, for he refers himself to the word of Christ as sufficient to bear him out; *He is risen, as he said*.

[2.] To his grave now empty, which they might look into; "Come, see the place where the Lord lay. Compare what you have heard, with what you see, and, putting both together, you will believe. You see that *he is not here*, and, remembering what he said, you may be satisfied that *he is risen*; come, see the place, and you will see that he is not there, you will see that he could not be stolen thence, and therefore must conclude that he is risen." Note, It may be of use to affect us, and may have a good influence upon us, to come, and with an eye of faith see the place where the Lord lay. See the marks he has there left of his love in condescending so low for us; see how easy he has made that bed, and how lightsome, for us, by lying

in it himself; when we look into the grave, where we expect we must lie, to take off the terror of it, let us look into the grave where the Lord lay; the place where *our Lord* lay, so the Syriac. The angels own him for *their* Lord, as well as *we*; for the *whole family*, both in heaven and earth, is *named from him*.

3. He *directs them to go carry the tidings* of it to his disciples (v. 7); *Go quickly, and tell his disciples*. It is probable that they were for entertaining themselves with the sight of the sepulchre and discourse with the angels. It was good to be here, but they have other work appointed them; *this is a day of good tidings*, and though they have the *premier seisin* of the comfort, the *first taste* of it, yet they must not have the *monopoly* of it, must not hold *their* peace, any more than those lepers, ~~119~~ 2 Kings 7:9. They must go *tell the disciples*. Note, Public usefulness to others must be preferred before the pleasure of secret communion with God ourselves; for *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. Observe,

(1.) The *disciples* of Christ must first be *told the news*; not, Go, tell the *chief priests* and the *Pharisees*, that they may be *confounded*; but, Tell the *disciples*, that they may be *comforted*. God anticipates the joy of his friends more than the *shame* of his enemies, though the perfection of both is reserved for hereafter. *Tell his disciples*; it may be they will believe your report, however tell them,

[1.] That they may encourage themselves under their present sorrows and dispersions. It was a dismal time with them, between grief and fear; what a cordial would this be to them now, to hear, *their Master is risen!*

[2.] That they may enquire further into it themselves. This alarm was sent them, to awaken them from that strange stupidity which had seized them, and to raise their expectations. This was to set them on seeking him, and to prepare them for his appearance to them. General hints excite to closer searches. They shall now hear of him, but shall very shortly see him. Christ discovers himself *gradually*.

(2.) The *women* are sent to tell it to them, and so are made, as it were, the *apostles of the apostles*. This was an honour put upon them, and a recompence for their constant affectionate adherence to him, at the cross, and in the grave, and a rebuke to the disciples who forsook him. Still God chooses the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty, and puts the treasure, not only into *earthen* vessels, but here into the *weaker*

vessels; as *the woman, being deceived* by the suggestions of an evil angel, *was first in the transgression* (~~5424~~ 1 Timothy 2:14), so these women, being duly informed by the instructions of a good angel, were first in the belief of the redemption from transgression by Christ's resurrection, that that reproach of their sex might be rolled away, by putting this in the balance against it, which is their perpetual praise.

(3.) They were bid to *go quickly* upon this errand. Why, what haste was there? Would not the news keep cold, and be welcome to them at any time? Yes, but they were now overwhelmed with grief, and Christ would have this cordial hastened to them; when Daniel was humbling himself before God for sin, the angel Gabriel was caused to fly *swiftly* with a message of comfort, ~~2321~~ Daniel 9:21. We must always be ready and forward;

[1.] To obey the commands of God, ~~1330~~ Psalm 119:60.

[2.] To do good to our brethren, and to carry comfort to them, as those that felt from their afflictions; *Say not, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give;* but now quickly.

(4.) They were directed to appoint the disciples to *meet him in Galilee*. There were other appearances of Christ to them before that in *Galilee*, which were sudden and surprising; but he would have one to be solemn and public, and gave them notice of it before. Now this general rendezvous was appointed in Galilee, eighty or a hundred miles from Jerusalem;

[1.] *In kindness* to those of his disciples that remained in Galilee, and *did not* (perhaps they *could not*) come up to Jerusalem; into that country therefore he would go, to manifest himself to his friends there. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest*. Christ knows where his disciples dwell, and will visit there. Note, The exaltation of Christ doth not make him forget the meaner and poorer sort of his disciples, but even to them that are at a distance from the plenty of the means of grace he will graciously *manifest himself*.

[2.] In consideration of the weakness of his disciples that were now at Jerusalem, who as yet were *afraid of the Jews*, and durst not appear publicly, and therefore this meeting was adjourned to Galilee. Christ

knows our fears, and considers our frame, and made his appointment where there was least danger of disturbance.

Lastly, The angel solemnly affirms upon his word the truth of what he had related to them; “*Lo, I have told you*, you may be assured of it, and depend upon it; *I have told you*, who dare not tell a lie.” *The word spoken by angels was stedfast*, ^{<301>}Hebrews 2:2. God had been wont formerly to make known his mind to his people by the ministration of angels, as at the giving of the law; but as he intended in gospel times to lay aside that way of communication (for *unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come*, nor appointed them to be the preachers of the gospel), this angel was *now* sent to certify the resurrection of Christ to the disciples, and so leave it in their hands to be published to the world, ^{<401>}2 Corinthians 4:7. In saying, *Lo, I have told you*, he doth, as it were, discharge himself from the blame of their unbelief, if they should not receive this record, and throw it upon them; “*I have done my errand*, I have faithfully delivered my message, now look you to it, believe it at your peril; whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, *I have told you*.” Note, Those messengers from God, that discharge their trust faithfully, may take the comfort of that, whatever the success be, ^{<402>}Acts 20:26, 27.

IV. The women's *departure* from the *sepulchre*, to bring notice to the disciples, v. 8. And observe,

1. What frame and temper of spirit they were in; They *departed with fear and great joy*; a strange mixture, fear and joy at the same time, in the same soul. To hear that Christ was risen, was matter of joy; but to be led into his grave, and to see an angel, and talk with him about it, could not but cause fear. It was good news, but they were *afraid* that it was too *good* to be true. But observe, it is said of their *joy*, I was *great joy*; it is not said so of their fear. Note,

(1.) Holy fear has joy attending it. They that serve the Lord with *reverence*, serve him with *gladness*.

(2.) Spiritual joy is mixed with trembling, ^{<501>}Psalms 2:11. It is only perfect love and joy that will cast out all fear.

2. What haste they made; *They did run*. The fear and joy together quickened their pace, and added wings to their motion; the angel bid them *go quickly*, and they *ran*. Those that are sent on God's errand must not

loiter, or lose time; where the *heart is enlarged* with the glad tidings of the gospel, the feet will *run the way of God's commandments*.

3. What errand they went upon; They ran, to *bring his disciples word*. Not doubting but it would be joyful news to them, they ran, to comfort them with the same comforts wherewith they themselves were comforted of God. Note, The disciples of Christ should be forward to communicate to each other their experiences of sweet communion with heaven; should tell others what God has *done for their souls*, and spoken to them. Joy in Christ Jesus, like the ointment of the right hand, will betray itself, and fill all places within the lines of its communication with its odours. When Samson found honey, he brought it to his parents.

V. Christ's appearing to the women, to confirm the testimony of the angel, v. 9, 10. These zealous good women not only heard the first tidings of him, but had the first sight of him, after his resurrection. The angel directed those that would see him, to go to Galilee, but before that time came, even *here also*, they *looked after him* that lives, and sees them. Note, Jesus Christ is often better than his word, but never worse; often anticipates, but never frustrates, the believing expectations of his people.

Here is,

1. Christ's surprising appearance to the women; *As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them*. Note, God's gracious visits usually meet us in the way of duty, and to those who use what they have for others' benefit, more shall be given. This interview with Christ was unexpected, *or ever they were aware*, ²¹¹²Song of Solomon 6:12. Note, Christ is nearer to his people than they imagine. They needed not *descend into the deep*, to fetch Christ thence; *he was not there, he was risen*; nor *go up to heaven*, for *he was not yet ascended*: but Christ was *high them*, and still in *the word is nigh us*.

2. The salutation wherewith he accosted them; *All hail* — *chairete*. We use the old *English form of salutation*, wishing *all health* to those we meet; for so *All hail* signifies, and is expressive of the Greek form of salutation here used, answering to that of the Hebrew, *Peace be unto you*. And it bespeaks,

(1.) The good-will of Christ to us and our happiness, even since he entered upon his state of exaltation. Though he is advanced, he wishes us as well as ever, and is as much concerned for our comfort.

(2.) The freedom and holy familiarity which he used in his fellowship with his disciples; for he called them *friends*. But the Greek word signifies, *Rejoice ye*. They were affected both with *fear* and *joy*; what he said to them tended to encourage their joy (v. 9), *Rejoice ye*, and to silence their fear (v. 10), *Be not afraid*. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people should be a cheerful joyful people, and his resurrection furnishes them with abundant matter for joy.

3. The affectionate respect they paid him; *They came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him*. Thus they expressed,

(1.) The *reverence* and *honour* they had *for* him; they threw themselves at his feet, put themselves into a posture of adoration, and *worshipped him* with humility and godly fear, as the Son of God, and now exalted.

(2.) The *love* and *affection* they had *to* him; they *held him, and would not let him go*, ^{<2004>}Song of Solomon 3:4. How *beautiful* were the *feet of the Lord Jesus* to them! ^{<2005>}Isaiah 52:7.

(3.) The *transport of joy* they were in, now that they had this further assurance of his resurrection; they welcomed it with both arms. Thus we must embrace Jesus Christ offered us in the gospel, with *reverence* cast ourselves at his feet, by faith *take hold* of him, and with love and joy lay him near our hearts.

4. The encouraging words Christ said to them, v. 10. We do not find that they said any thing to him, their affectionate embraces and adorations spoke plainly enough; and what he said to them was no more than what the angel had said (v. 5, 7); for he will *confirm the word of his messengers* (^{<2006>}Isaiah 44:26); and his way of *comforting* his people, is, by his Spirit to speak over again to their hearts the same that they had heard before from *his angels*, the ministers. Now observe here,

(1.) How he rebukes their fear; *Be not afraid*. They must not fear being imposed upon by these repeated notices of his resurrection, nor fear any hurt from the appearance of one from the dead; for the news, though strange, was both *true* and *good*. Note, Christ arose from the dead, to silence his people's fears, and there is enough in that to silence them.

(2.) How he repeats their message; “Go, tell my brethren, that they must prepare for a journey into Galilee, and there *they shall see me.*” If there be any communion between our souls and Christ, it is he that *appoints the meeting*, and he will observe the appointment. Jerusalem had forfeited the honour of Christ's presence, it was a *tumultuous* city, therefore he adjourns the meeting to Galilee. *Come, my beloved, let us go forth,* ^{<21>}Song of Solomon 7:11. But that which is especially observable here, is, that he calls his disciples *his brethren*. Go, tell *my brethren*, not only those of them that were akin to him, but all the rest, for they are all his brethren (^{<42>}Matthew 12:50), but he never called them so till after his resurrection, here and ^{<41>}John 20:17. Being by the resurrection himself declared to be the *Son of God with power*, all the children of God were thereby declared to be *his brethren*. Being the *First-begotten from the dead*, he is become the *First-born among many brethren*, even of all that are planted together in the likeness of his resurrection. Christ did not now converse so constantly and familiarly with his disciples as he had done before his death; but, lest they should think him grown strange to them, he gives them this endearing title, *Go to my brethren*, that the scripture might be fulfilled, which, speaking of his entrance upon his exalted state, saith, *I will declare thy name unto my brethren*. They had shamefully *deserted* him in his sufferings; but, to show that he could forgive and forget, and to teach us to do so, he not only continues his purpose to *meet* them, but calls them *brethren*. Being all *his brethren*, they were *brethren* one to another, and must love as brethren. His owning them for his brethren put a great honour upon them, but withal gave them an example of humility in the midst of that honour.

^{<41>}MATTHEW 28:11-15

THE RESURRECTION

For the further proof of the resurrection of Christ, we have here the confession of the adversaries that were upon the guard; and there are two things which strengthen this testimony — that they were *eye-witnesses*, and did themselves see the glory of the resurrection, which none else did — and that they were *enemies*, set there to oppose and obstruct his resurrection. Now observe here,

I. How this testimony was *given in* to the chief priests (v. 11); *when* the women *were going* to bring that news to the disciples, which would *fill their hearts with joy*, the soldiers went to bring the same news to the chief priests, which would *fill their faces with shame*. *Some of the watch*, probably those of them that commanded in chief, *came into the city*, and brought to those who employed them, the report of their disappointment. *They showed to the chief priests all the things that were done*; told them of the earthquake, the descent of the angel, the rolling of the stone away, and the coming of the body of Jesus alive out of the grave. Thus the *sign* of the prophet Jonas was brought to the chief priests with the most clear and incontestable evidence that could be; and so the utmost means of conviction were afforded them; we may well imagine what a mortification it was to them, and that, like the enemies of the Jews, they were *much cast down in their own eyes*, ^{<4466>}Nehemiah 6:16. It might justly have been expected that they should now have believed in Christ, and repented their putting him to death; but they were obstinate in their infidelity, and therefore sealed up under it.

II. How it was baffled and stifled by them. They called an assembly, and considered what was to be done. For their own parts, they were resolved not to believe that Jesus was risen; but their care was, to keep others from believing, and themselves from being quite ashamed from their disbelief of it. They had put him to death, and there was no way of standing to what they had done, but by confronting the evidence of his resurrection. Thus they who have sold themselves to work wickedness, find that one sin draws on another, and that they have plunged themselves into a wretched necessity of *adding iniquity to iniquity*, which is part of the curse of Christ's persecutors, ^{<4467>}Psalms 69:27.

The result of their debate was, that those soldiers must by all means be bribed off, and hired not to tell tales.

1. They *put money into their hands*; and what wickedness is it which men will not be brought to by the love of money? They *gave large money*, probably a great deal more than they gave to Judas, unto *the soldiers*. These chief priests loved their money as well as most people did, and were as loth to part with it; and yet, to carry on a malicious design against the gospel of Christ, they were very prodigal of it; they gave the soldiers, it is likely, as much as they asked, and they knew how to improve their advantages. Here was *large money* given for the advancing of that which

they knew to be a lie, yet many grudge a little money for the advancement of that which they know to be the truth, though they have a promise of being reimbursed in the resurrection of the just. Let us never starve a good cause, when we see a bad one so liberally supported.

2. They *put a lie into their mouths* (v. 13); *Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept*; a sorry shift is better than none, but this is a sorry one indeed.

(1.) The sham was *ridiculous*, and carried along with it its own confutation. If *they slept*, how could they know any thing of the matter, or say who came? If *any one* of them was awake to *observe it*, no doubt, he would awake them all to *oppose it*; for that was the only thing they had in charge. It was altogether improbable that a company of poor, weak, cowardly, dispirited men should expose themselves for so inconsiderable an achievement as the rescue of the dead body. Why were not the houses where they lodged diligently searched, and other means used to discover the dead body; but this was so thin a lie as one might easily see through. But had it been ever so plausible,

(2.) It was a wicked thing for these priests and elders to hire those soldiers to tell a deliberate lie (if it had been in a matter of ever so small importance), against their consciences. Those know not what they do, who draw others to commit one wilful sin; for that may debauch conscience, and be an inlet to many. But,

(3.) Considering this as intended to overthrow the great doctrine of Christ's resurrection, this was a sin against the last remedy, and was, in effect, a blasphemy *against the Holy Ghost*, imputing *that* to the roguery of the disciples, which was done by *the power of the Holy Ghost*.

But lest the soldiers should object the penalty they incurred by the Roman law for *sleeping upon the guard*, which was very severe (^{412b}Acts 12:19), they promised to interpose with the governor; "*We will persuade him, and secure you. We will use our own interest in him, to get him not to take notice of it;*" and they had lately found how easily they could manage him. If really these soldiers had slept, and so suffered the disciples to steal him away, as they would have the world believe, the priests and elders would certainly have been the forwardest to solicit the governor to punish them for their treachery; so that *their* care for the soldiers' safety plainly gives the lie to the story. They undertook to *secure* them from the sword of

Pilate's justice, but could not secure them from the sword of God's justice, which hangs over the head of those that love and make a lie. *They* promise more than they can perform who undertake to save a man harmless in the commission of a wilful sin.

Well, thus was the plot laid; now what success had it?

[1.] Those that were *willing to deceive*, took the money, and did as they were taught. They cared as little for Christ and his religion as the chief priests and elders did; and men that have no religion at all, can be very well pleased to see Christianity run down, and lend a hand to it, if need be, to serve a turn. They *took the money*; that was it they aimed at, and nothing else. Note, Money is a bait for the blackest temptation; mercenary tongues will sell the truth for it.

The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God, is, his resurrection, and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers had; they saw the angel descend from heaven, saw the stone rolled away, saw the body of Christ come out of the grave, unless the consternation they felt hindered them; and yet they were so far from being convinced by it themselves, that they were hired to belie him, and to hinder others from believing in him. Note, The most sensible evidence will not convince men, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit.

[2.] Those that were willing to be deceived, not only credited, but propagated, the story; This *saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day*. The sham took well enough, and answered the end. The Jews, who persisted in their infidelity, when they were pressed with the argument of Christ's resurrection, had this still ready to reply, *His disciples came, and stole him away*. To this purport was the solemn narrative, which (as Justin Martyr relates in his dialogue with Typho the Jew) the great sanhedrim sent to all the Jews of the dispersion concerning this affair, exciting them to a vigorous resistance of Christianity — that, *when they had crucified, and buried him, the disciples came by night, and stole him out of the sepulchre*, designing thereby not only to overthrow the truth of Christ's resurrection, but to render his disciples odious to the world, as the greatest villains in nature. When once a lie is raised, none knows how far it will spread, nor how long it will last, nor what mischief it will do. Some give another sense of this passage, *This saying is commonly reported*, that is, “Notwithstanding the artifice of the chief priests, thus to

impose upon the people, the collusion that was between them and the soldiers, and the money that was given to support the cheat, were commonly *reported* and whispered among the Jews;” for one way or other *truth will out*.

~~486~~ MATTHEW 28:16-20

THE APOSTOLIC COMMISSION

This evangelist passes over several other appearances of Christ, recorded by Luke and John, and hastens to this, which was of all other the most solemn, as being promised and appointed again and again before his death, and after his resurrection. Observe,

I. How the disciples attended his appearance, according to the appointment (v. 16); *They went into Galilee*, a long journey to go for one sight of Christ, but it was worth while. They had seen him several times at Jerusalem, and yet they went into Galilee, to see him there.

1. Because he appointed them to do so. Though it seemed a needless thing to go into Galilee, to see him whom they might see at Jerusalem, especially when they must so soon come back again to Jerusalem, before his ascension, yet they had learned to obey Christ's commands and not object against them. Note, Those who would maintain communion with Christ, must attend him there where he has appointed. Those who have met him in one ordinance, must attend him in another; those who have seen him at Jerusalem, must go to Galilee.

2. Because that was to be a public and general meeting. They had seen him themselves, and conversed with him in private, but that should not excuse their attendance in a solemn assembly, where many were to be gathered together to see him. Note, Our communion with God in secret must not supersede our attendance on public worship, as we have opportunity; for *God loves the gates of Zion*, and so must we. The place was a *mountain in Galilee*, probably the same mountain on which he was transfigured. There they met, for privacy, and perhaps to signify the exalted state into which he was entered, and his advances toward the upper world.

II. How they were affected with the appearance of Christ to them, v. 17. Now was the time that he was *seen of above five hundred brethren at once*, ~~416~~ 1 Corinthians 15:6. Some think that they saw him, at first, at some distance, above in the air, *ephthe epano* — *He was seen above, of five hundred brethren* (so they read it); which gave occasion to some to doubt, till he *came nearer* (v. 18), and then they were satisfied. We are told,

1. That they *worshipped him*; many of them did so, nay, it should seem, they all did that, they gave divine honour to him, which was signified by some outward expressions of adoration. Note, All that see the Lord Jesus with an eye of faith are obliged to *worship him*.

2. But *some doubted*, some of those that were then present. Note, Even among those that *worship* there are some that *doubt*. The faith of those that are sincere, may yet be very weak and wavering. They *doubted*, *edistasan* — *they hung in suspense*, as the scales of the balance, when it is hard to say which preponderates. These doubts were afterward removed, and their faith grew up to a full assurance, and it tended much to the honour of Christ, that the disciples *doubted* before they *believed*; so that they cannot be said to be credulous, and willing to be imposed upon; for they first *questioned*, and *proved all things*, and then *held fast* that which was *true*, and which they found to be so.

III. What Jesus Christ said to them (v. 18-20); *Jesus came, and spoke unto them*. Though there were those that doubted, yet, he did not therefore reject them; for he will not *break the bruised reed*. He did not stand at a distance, but *came near*, and gave them such convincing proofs of his resurrection, as turned the wavering scale, and made their faith to triumph over their doubts. *He came, and spoke familiarly to them*, as one friend speaks to another, that they might be fully satisfied in the commission he was about to give them. He that *drew near* to God, to speak for us to him, *draws near* to us, to speak from him to us. Christ now delivered to his apostles the great charter of his kingdom in the world, was sending them out as his ambassadors, and here gives them their credentials.

In opening this great charter, we may observe two things.

1. The commission which our Lord Jesus received himself from the Father. Being about to *authorize* his apostles, if any ask by what authority he doeth it, and who gave him that authority, here he tells us, *All power is*

given unto me in heaven and in earth; a very great word, and which none but he could say. Hereby he asserts his universal dominion as Mediator, which is the great foundation of the Christian religion. He has *all power*. Observe,

(1.) *Whence* he hath this power. He did not assume it, or usurp it, but it was *given* him, he was legally entitled to it, and invested in it, by a grant from him who is the Fountain of all being, and consequently of all power. God *set him King* (~~496~~ Psalm 2:6), inaugurated and enthroned him, (~~413~~ Luke 1:32. As God, equal with the Father, all power was originally and essentially *his*; but as Mediator, as God-man, *all power* was *given him*; partly in *recompence* of his work (because he humbled himself, therefore God thus *exalted him*), and partly in *pursuance* of his design; he had this *power* given him *over all flesh*, that he might *give eternal life to as many as were given him* (~~492~~ John 17:2), for the more effectual carrying on and completing our salvation. This power he was now more signally invested in, upon his resurrection, (~~413~~ Acts 13:3. He had power before, *power to forgive sins* (ch. 9:6); but now *all power* is given him. He is now going to *receive for himself a kingdom* (~~492~~ Luke 19:12), to sit down *at the right hand*, (~~491~~ Psalm 110:1. Having purchased it, nothing remains but to take possession; it is *his own* for ever.

(2.) *Where* he has this power; in *heaven and earth*, comprehending the universe. Christ is the sole universal Monarch, he is *Lord of all*, (~~496~~ Acts 10:36. He has *all power in heaven*. He has power of dominion over the angels, they are all his humble servants, (~~491~~ Ephesians 1:20, 21. He has power of intercession with his Father, in the virtue of his satisfaction and atonement; he intercedes, not as a suppliant, but as a demandant; *Father, I will*. He has *all power on earth* too; having prevailed with God, by the sacrifice of atonement, he prevails with men, and deals with them as one having authority, by the ministry of reconciliation. He is indeed, in all causes and over all persons, supreme Moderator and Governor. *By him kings reign*. All souls are his, and to him *every heart and knee must bow*, and *every tongue confess* him to be the *Lord*. This our Lord Jesus tells them, not only to satisfy them of the authority he had to commission them, and to bring them out in the execution of their commission, but to take off the offence of the cross; they had no reason to be ashamed of *Christ crucified*, when they saw him *thus glorified*.

2. The commission he gives to those whom he sent forth; *Go ye therefore*. This commission is given,

(1.) To the *apostles* primarily, the chief ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, the architects that laid the foundation of the church. Now those that had followed Christ in the regeneration, were *set on thrones* (^{<223>}Luke 22:30); *Go ye*. It is not only a word of command, like that, *Son, go work*, but a word of encouragement, *Go, and fear not, have I not sent you?* Go, and make a business of this work. They must not *take state*, and issue out summons to the nations to attend upon them; but they must go, and bring the gospel to their doors, *Go ye*. They had doted on Christ's *bodily presence*, and hung upon *that*, and built all their joys and hopes upon *that*; but now Christ discharges them from further attendance on his person, and sends them abroad about other work. *As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young*, to excite them to fly (^{<521>}Deuteronomy 32:11), so Christ stirs up his disciples, to disperse themselves over all the world.

(2.) It is given to their successors, the ministers of the gospel, whose business it is to transmit the gospel from age to age, to the end of the world in time, as it was theirs to transmit it from nation to nation, to the end of the world in place, and no less necessary. The Old-Testament promise of a gospel ministry is made to a succession (^{<252>}Isaiah 59:21); and this must be so understood, otherwise how could Christ be with them always to the *consummation of the world*? Christ, at his ascension, gave not only apostles and prophets, but *pastors and teachers*, ^{<411>}Ephesians 4:11. Now observe,

[1.] How far his commission is extended; to *all nations*. Go, and disciples *all nations*. Not that they must go all together into every place, but by consent disperse themselves in such manner as might best *diffuse* the light of the gospel. Now this plainly signifies it to be the will of Christ, *First*, That the covenant of peculiarity, made with the Jews, should now be cancelled and disannulled. This word broke down the middle wall of partition, which had so long excluded the Gentiles from a visible church-state; and whereas the apostles, when first sent out, were forbidden to go into the way of the Gentiles, now they were sent to *all nations*. *Secondly*, That salvation by Christ should be offered to all, and none excluded that did not by their unbelief and impenitence exclude themselves. The salvation they were to preach is a *common salvation*; whoever will, let him come, and take the benefit of the *act of indemnity*; for there is no

difference of Jew or Greek in Christ Jesus. *Thirdly*, That Christianity should be twisted in with national constitutions, that the kingdoms of the world should become Christ's kingdoms, and their kings the church's nursing-fathers.

[2.] What is the principal intention of this commission; to *disciple* all nations. *Matheteusate* — “Admit them disciples; do your utmost to make the nations Christian nations;” not, “Go to the nations, and denounce the judgments of God against them, as Jonah against Nineveh, and as the other Old-Testament prophets” (though they had reason enough to expect it for their wickedness), “but go, and *disciple them*.” Christ the Mediator is setting up a kingdom in the world, bring the nations to be his subjects; setting up a school, bring the nations to be his scholars; raising an army for the carrying on of the war against the powers of darkness, enlist the nations of the earth under his banner. The work which the apostles had to do, was, to set up the Christian religion in all places, and it was honourable work; the achievements of the mighty heroes of the world were nothing to it. They conquered the nations for themselves, and made them miserable; the apostles conquered them for Christ, and made them happy.

[3.] Their instructions for executing this commission.

First, They must *admit disciples* by the *sacred rite of baptism*; “Go into all nations, preach the gospel to them, work miracles among them, and persuade them to come in themselves, and bring their children with them, into the church of Christ, and then admit them and theirs into the church, by washing them with water;” either dipping them in the water, or pouring or sprinkling water upon them, which seems the more proper, because the thing is most frequently expressed so, as ^{244B}Isaiah 44:3, *I will pour my Spirit on thy seed*. And, ^{301B}Titus 3:5, 6, *Which he shed on us abundantly*. And, ^{262B}Ezekiel 36:25, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you*. And, ^{252B}Isaiah 52:15, *So shall he sprinkle many nations*; which seems a prophecy of this commission to *baptize the nations*.

Secondly, This baptism must be administered *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. That is,

1. *By authority from heaven, and not of man*; for his ministers act by authority from the three persons in the Godhead, who all concur, as to our *creation*, so to our *redemption*; they have their commission under the great

seal of heaven, which puts an honour upon the ordinance, though to a carnal eye, like him that instituted it, it has *no form or comeliness*.

2. *Calling upon the name* of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Every thing is sanctified by prayer, and particularly the waters of baptism. The prayer of faith obtains the presence of God with the ordinance, which is its lustre and beauty, its life and efficacy. But,

3. It is *into the name (eis to onoma)* of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; this was intended as the *summary* of the first principles of the Christian religion, and of the new covenant, and according to it the ancient creeds were drawn up. By our being baptized, we solemnly profess,

(1.) Our *assent* to the scripture-revelation concerning *God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*. We confess our belief that there is a God, that there is but *one God*, that in the Godhead there is a *Father* that *begets*, a *Son* that is *begotten*, and a *Holy Spirit* of both. We are baptized, not into the *names*, but into the *name*, of *Father, Son, and Spirit*, which plainly intimates that *these three are one*, and *their name one*. The distinct mentioning of the *three persons* in the Trinity, both in the *Christian baptism* here, and in the *Christian blessing* (⁴⁷³⁴2 Corinthians 13:14), as it is a full proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, so it has done much towards preserving it pure and entire through all ages of the church; for nothing is more great and awful in *Christian assemblies* than these two.

(2.) Our *consent* to a covenant-relation to God, *the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*. Baptism is a *sacrament*, that is, it is an *oath*; *super sacramentum dicere*, is to *say upon oath*. It is an oath of *abjuration*, by which we renounce the world and the flesh, as rivals with God for the throne in our hearts; and an oath of *allegiance*, by which we resign and give up *ourselves* to God, to be *his*, our own selves, our whole selves, *body, soul, and spirit*, to be governed by his will, and made happy in his favour; *we become his men*, so the form of homage in our law runs. Therefore *baptism* is applied to *the person*, as *livery* and *seisin* is given of the premises, because it is the person that is *dedicated* to God.

[1.] It is into the name of *the Father*, believing him to be the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* (for that is principally intended here), by *eternal generation*, and *our Father*, as our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, to whom therefore we resign ourselves, as our absolute *owner* and *proprietor*, to actuate us, and dispose of us; as our supreme *rector* and

governor, to rule us, as free agents, by his law; and as our *chief good*, and *highest end*.

[2.] It is into the name of *the Son*, the *Lord Jesus Christ*, the *Son of God*, and *correlate* to the Father. Baptism was in a particular manner administered *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, ~~486~~ Acts 8:16; 19:5. In baptism we *assent*, as Peter did, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God* (~~486~~ Matthew 16:16), and *consent*, as Thomas did, *My Lord, and my God*, ~~488~~ John 20:28. We take Christ to be our Prophet, Priest, and King, and give up ourselves to be taught, and saved, and ruled, by him.

[3.] It is into the name of *the Holy Ghost*. Believing the Godhead of the Holy Spirit, and his agency in carrying on our redemption, we give up ourselves to his conduct and operation, as our sanctifier, teacher, guide, and comforter.

Thirdly, Those that are thus baptized, and enrolled among the disciples of Christ, must be taught (v. 20); *Teaching them to observe all thing, whatsoever I have commanded you*. This denotes two things.

1. The duty of *disciples*, of all *baptized Christians*; they must observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded, and, in order to that, must submit to the teaching of those whom he sends. Our admission into the visible church is in order to something further; when Christ hath *discipled* us, he hath not *done with us*; he *enlist* soldiers that he may *train them up* for his service.

All that are baptized, are thereby obliged,

(1.) To make the command of Christ their rule. There is a *law of faith*, and we are said to be *under the law to Christ*; we are by baptism *bound*, and must *obey*.

(2.) To *observe* what Christ has commanded. Due *obedience* to the commands of Christ requires a diligent observation; we are in danger of missing, if we take not *good heed*: and in all our obedience, we must have an eye to the command, and do what we do as unto the Lord.

(3.) To observe *all things*, that he has commanded, without exception; all the *moral* duties, and all the *instituted* ordinances. Our obedience to the laws of Christ is not *sincere*, if it be not universal; we must *stand complete in his whole will*.

(4.) To confine themselves to the commands of Christ, and as not to *diminish* from them, so not to *add* to them.

(5.) To learn their duty according to the law of Christ, from those whom he has appointed to be teachers in his school, for *therefore* we were entered into his school.

2. The duty of the apostles of Christ, and his ministers; and that is, to *beach* the commands of Christ, to expound them to his disciples, to press upon them the necessity of obedience, and to assist them in applying the general commands of Christ to particular cases. They must teach *them*, not their own inventions, but the institutions of Christ; to them they must religiously adhere, and in the knowledge of *them* Christians must be *trained up*. A *standing* ministry is hereby *settled* in the church, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ, *till we all come to the perfect man*, ^{401B}Ephesians 4:11-13. The heirs of heaven, till they come to age, must be *under tutors and governors*.

3. Here is the assurance he gives them of his spiritual presence with them in the execution of this commission; *And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*. This exceeding great and precious promise is ushered in with a *behold*, to strengthen their faith, and engage their observation of it. “Take notice of this; it is what you may assure yourselves of and venture upon.” Observe,

(1.) The favour promised them; *I am with you*. Not, *I will be* with you, but *I am* — *ego eimi*. As God sent Moses, so Christ sent his apostles, by this name, *I am*; for he is God, to whom past, present, and to come, are the same. See ^{401B}Revelation 1:8. He was now about to leave them; his bodily presence was now to be removed from them, and this grieved them; but he assures them of his *spiritual* presence, which was more expedient for them than his bodily presence could be; *I am with you*; that is, “My Spirit is with you, the Comforter shall *abide with you*, ^{436E}John 16:7. I am *with you*, and not *against you*: with you to take your part, to be on your side, and to *hold* with you, as Michael our prince is said to do, ^{471D}Daniel 10:21. I am *with you*, and not *absent from you*, not at a distance; I am a very *present help*,” ^{481E}Psalms 46:1. Christ was now sending them to set up his kingdom in the world, which was a great undertaking. And then doth he seasonably promise them his presence with them,

[1.] To *carry them* on through the difficulties they were likely to meet with. “I am with you, to *bear you up*, to plead your cause; with you in all your services, in all your sufferings, to bring you through them with comfort and honour. *When you go through the fire or water, I will be with you.* In the pulpit, in the prison, *lo, I am with you.*”

[2.] To *succeed* this great undertaking; “*Lo, I am with you*, to make your ministry effectual for the discipling of the nations, for the *pulling down* of the strong holds of Satan, and the setting up of stronger for the Lord Jesus.” It was an unlikely thing that they should unhinge national constitutions in religion, and turn the stream of so long a usage; that they should *establish* a doctrine so directly contrary to the genius of the age, and persuade people to become the disciples of a *crucified* Jesus; but *lo, I am with you*, and therefore you shall *gain your point*.

(2.) The continuance of the favour, *always, even unto the end of the world.*

[1.] They shall have his *constant* presence; *Always, pasas tas hemeras* — *all days*, every day. “I will be with you on sabbath days and week days, fair days and foul days, winter days and summer days.” There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, that day, that hour, they were undone. Since his resurrection he had appeared to them *now and then*, once a week it may be, and scarcely that. But he assures them that they shall have his spiritual presence continued to them without intermission. Wherever we are the word of Christ is nigh us, even *in our mouth*, and the Spirit of Christ nigh us, even *in our hearts*. The *God of Israel*, the *Saviour*, is sometimes *a God that hideth himself* (²³⁶⁵Isaiah 45:15), but never a God that absenteth himself; sometimes *in the dark*, but never *at a distance*.

[2.] They shall have his perpetual presence, even to *the end of the world*. There is a world before us, that will never have an end, but this is hastening towards its period; and even till then the Christian religion shall, in one part of the world or other, be *kept up*, and the presence of Christ continued with his ministers. I am with you *to the end of the world*, not with your persons, they died quickly, but, *First, With you and your writings*. There is a divine power going along with the scripture of the New Testament, not only preserving them in being, but producing strange effects by them, which will continue to the end of time. *Secondly, With you and your successors*; with you and all the ministers of the gospel in the several ages of the church; with all to whom this commission extends,

with all who, being duly called and sent, thus *baptize* and thus *teach*. When the *end of the world* is come, and the kingdom delivered up to God, even the Father, there will then be no further need of ministers and their ministrations; but till then they shall continue, and the great intentions of the institution shall be answered. This is an encouraging word to all the faithful ministers of Christ, that what was said to the apostles, was said to them all, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*.

Two solemn farewells we find our Lord Jesus giving to his church, and his parting word at both of them is very encouraging; one was here, when he closed up his personal converse with them, and then his parting word was, “*Lo, I am with you always; I leave you, and yet still I am with you;*” the other was, when he closed up the canon of the scripture by the pen of his beloved disciple, and then his parting word was, “*Surely, I come quickly. I leave you for awhile, but I will be with you again shortly,*” ⁽⁶²⁰⁾ Revelation 22:20. By this it appears that he did not part in anger, but in love, and that it is his will we should keep up both our communion with him and our expectation of him.

There is one word more remaining, which must not be overlooked, and that is *Amen*; which is not a cipher, intended only for a concluding word, like *finis* at the end of a book, but it has its significancy.

1. It bespeaks Christ's confirmation of this promise, *Lo, I am with you*. It is his *Amen*, in whom all the promises are *Yea and Amen*, “*Verily I am, and will be, with you; I the Amen, the faithful Witness, do assure you of it.*”
Or,

2. It bespeaks the church's concurrence with it, in their desire, and prayer, and expectation. It is the evangelist's *Amen* — *So be it*, blessed Lord. Our *Amen* to Christ's promises turns them into prayers. Hath Christ promised to be present with his ministers, present in his word, present in the assemblies of his people, though but two or three are gathered together in his name, and this *always, even to the end of the world*? Let us heartily say *Amen* to it; believe that it *shall be so*, and pray that it *may be so*: Lord, *Remember this word unto thy servants, upon which thou hast caused us to hope*.