

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

I'm afraid this part of Jesus' story has become so familiar to us that it loses its impact when we read it. But try to imagine the surprise and joy of the women who visited His grave that Sunday morning. Imagine, for example, going to the gravesite of one of your departed loved ones and seeing that person sitting on his tombstone, alive and well! That would be a real shocker!

We have to appreciate the fact that Jesus first appeared to women rather than men after His resurrection. It is troubling to Christianity's "men-only club" that those women were commissioned by an angel to teach men something they didn't know. And to add insult to injury, Jesus Himself entrusted those women with instructions for some men to go to Galilee (28:7, 10)! Perhaps we should keep these incidents in mind when we come to the New Testament verses that are so often used to keep women "in their places" in the church!

The story that the Roman soldiers spread about Jesus resurrection would have raised more questions than it answered in the minds of thinking people. First, why were they sleeping when Roman law demanded the execution of soldiers caught sleeping while on guard duty? If they were sleeping when Jesus' body was stolen, why weren't they executed? How is it that they were not awakened when the disciples supposedly moved the heavy grave stone? If they were sleeping (eyes closed and unconscious), how did they know it was the disciples who stole Jesus' body?

Jesus declared that He had been given "all authority in heaven and on earth" (28:18). If Jesus has it all, that means the devil doesn't have any. This destroys the modern theory that Satan has the authority that God once gave to Adam, and because of that, God can't stop Satan from doing what he wants. Tragically, that nonsensical theory is a foundation within several streams of the modern church. And when the foundation is faulty, everything built upon it is unsound.

Note that very important word---therefore---found within the Great Commission. It tells us that what is about to be said is based on what was just said. It is because Jesus has all authority that He can command His disciples to go and make disciples, and it is because Jesus has all authority that every disciple should obey all of His commandments. Clearly, what Jesus wants is a people who obey Him. That should be our goal---to obey Him and to lead others into an obedient relationship with Him. The value of everything that is done under the banner of Christendom should be judged by this criterion.

That being so, we quickly see that the very gospel that is so often proclaimed falls short. If we only call people to "accept Jesus as Savior," if we tell them that salvation is by a grace that makes works of no effect, then we're not making disciples. Tragically, it is commonly believed within many evangelical circles that one can be a believer in Christ without being a disciple of Christ.

The truth is, however, that the call to salvation is a call to discipleship. If you study the book of Acts, it becomes clear that the word disciple does not describe a Christian who has a higher level of commitment than the ordinary Christian. No, the word disciple is synonymous with the word Christian. If you aren't a disciple, you aren't a Christian. If you aren't a disciple of Christ, you aren't truly born again.

Finally, notice that Jesus wants disciples to be made of all nations. The word translated nations is the Greek word *ethne*. From it we derive our modern word *ethnic*. *Ethne* does not refer to geo-political nations, but rather to ethnic groups that are distinguished from each other by language, culture, geography and so on. It has been estimated that there are as many as 16,000 *ethne* in the world today, of which at least 6,000 have no witnessing church within their culture to reach them. Making disciples within every ethnic group in the world is something in which we should all be involved.