

Majesty and Mission - Jesus is Lord! - the meaning of the Resurrection

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bible reading today, and we come to the end of our little study in the Passion story, as proclaimed to us in Matthew's Gospel. And so we're reading today in Matthew chapter 28, and our focus is on just the last five verses, 16 to 20 of Matthew's Gospel, but we're going to read the whole chapter, beginning at verse 1, so that we understand the context.

Matthew 28, if you have a church visitor's Bible, it's page 835. End reading at verse 1. Now, after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.

And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the woman, Don't you be afraid? For I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified.

He's not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. And then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. And behold, that he is going before you to Galilee, and there you will see him.

[1 : 20] See, I've told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, Greetings.

And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. And then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.

While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, Tell the people his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.

And if this story comes to the governor's ears, we'll satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

But the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him.

[2 : 29] But some doubted or hesitated. And Jesus came near and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. You go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Amen. And God bless to us this His word. Please turn with me then, if you would, to Matthew 28. And our focus, as I've said, is on this very last section of Matthew's Gospel. From the very beginning of Matthew's Gospel, He presents Jesus to us as the great King, as the promised Messiah, the Son of David, who has come at last to establish His kingdom.

And in doing that, He will bring everlasting blessings, not just to the people of Israel, but to all the nations on the earth, just as God promised to Abraham right back in the very beginning.

And that's why, when we get to the very end of Matthew's Gospel, all Matthew's focus is on Galilee. Did you notice?

[3 : 58] Galilee of the nations, where in chapter 4, He first announces His coming kingdom. So verse 7 here, the angel says, Go to Galilee. In verse 10, Jesus Himself says, Go to Galilee.

That's where they'll see me. In Galilee, where Jesus first proclaimed His coming kingdom, He will now assure His followers of His unmistakable majesty.

And in Galilee, where His saving mission began, they will see that far from ending, they are now going to share in that unparalleled mission, a mission to the whole wide world.

And these last words of Jesus that Matthew shares with us here are there for a wonderful declaration of majesty and mission. Last week in Easter Sunday, we saw how the message of the resurrection is, Jesus is risen.

And it led to great rejoicing, even though that was surrounded by an awful lot of resistance and rejection. But here, we are seeing more clearly the meaning of the resurrection.

[5 : 03] That Jesus is Lord. And that means, therefore, despite all opposition, victory is secured. That's why it's better to read that first word of verse 16, as but, as I did, because the point there is that it's a total contrast to all the hostility in the opposition of the Jewish leaders and the Gentile soldiers.

In total contrast to that, here we have majesty and mission that cannot possibly be hindered. And Matthew wants us to understand the last and the climactic revelation of Jesus' earthly ministry. And that's the significance of verse 16. They're to go to the mountain to which Jesus directed them. They're to go to the mountain of revelation. Remember back in Matthew 5, it was when they went up on the mountain that Jesus taught them all about the ways of his coming kingdom, the Sermon on the Mount.

In Matthew chapter 15, it was up on the mountain in the Gentile territory by the Galilee that Jesus healed many and he fed thousands, many of them Gentiles, and they all glorified the God of Israel. Then in chapter 17, remember the transfiguration, up on the mountain, where they got a glimpse of him as he truly was, shining with glory like the sun. And now, in his risen power, he now reveals to them, finally his glorious majesty over all the world and what that means in terms of his glorious mission for the whole world.

[6 : 40] See, the majesty of the risen Jesus and the mission of the risen Jesus go together. The end of chapter 27, verses 57 to 61, Matthew shows us Jesus is regal in his death.

He's wrapped in fine linen. He's laid in a new tomb, the tomb of a rich, rich man. But now, in this very last paragraph of the gospel, he's showing us the Lord Jesus regal in life.

And that is the meaning of the resurrection. Jesus is Lord. He is mighty in majesty. And that means his mission is over all.

So I want us to look at these verses under three headings because it's more than just the great commission. First of all, we have in verses 17 and 18 the great coronation.

Because Matthew is proclaiming us Jesus is king of the world. He has sovereign power over earth and heaven. And he is Lord over all his people forever.

[7 : 44] And the disciples got it. Verse 17 is clear. When they saw him, they worshipped him. That is, they fell down on their knees before the only one they knew they could ever worship.

That is the Lord, the God of Israel. No Jew could worship anyone other than the Lord alone. Not even angels who worship. They didn't worship the angel at the tomb. He wouldn't let them.

Maybe that's why we're told that some hesitated or some doubted. The word doesn't mean unbelief here. It means hesitation. It's hard to believe that any of the 11 could still be in doubt after they'd seen Jesus.

We know Thomas doubted or disbelieved in fact at first. But that was quite some time before this. It could be that some who hesitated were others than the 11.

Matthew often says about the 11 or the 12 and then he clearly makes plain that he understands others were there. This may be one of those times when Jesus appeared to many, many hundreds of the disciples as Paul mentions.

[8 : 45] Or it might just be that Jesus was at a distance at first. And so at first they weren't sure it really was him because in verse 18 it's more accurate to say then Jesus came near.

He came near to reassure them by speaking to them. And when they saw him near when they heard his familiar voice then there'd be no such hesitation. Just a very human touch isn't it?

It's like when you're sitting at home and the door opens and you hear somebody come in and you just see out of the corner of your eye and you're not quite sure. And you say hello is that you? Yes,

yes it's me I'm home.

And immediately you're reassured. And that's the way it is here. Jesus' voice his presence risen from the dead gives them that great assurance that they need. And they did need it.

Think of the emotional turmoil these people had been through. They'd followed Jesus for three years years that had totally changed their whole lives. They'd listened to his teaching.

[9 : 41] They'd seen his extraordinary works. They'd heard all about his kingdom all about his plans and purposes. And then of course there'd been the horror of his trial his crucifixion.

And of course their terrible desertion of him. And then all of a sudden this extraordinary miracle of the resurrection and the command go to Galilee and there you will see him.

And now here he is alive and glorious. And verse 6 is true. He is risen as he said. Jesus had repeatedly taught them hadn't he that he was the Christ he was the Messiah King who must suffer but would rise from the dead.

And he'd said to some of his followers once remember that some of you standing here will not die you'll not see death until you see with your own eyes the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

And now here is Jesus drawing near and their eyes do see the same Jesus but now he has risen he is victorious and he is saying to them I rule over the whole of earth and heaven.

[10 : 52] All authority in heaven and earth is mine. I am king of the world. All his claims verified. Even death couldn't hold him as is proven by this glorious risen humanity standing before them having passed through death and conquered death.

All authority in heaven and earth is his as a result of his mission as the promised Messiah it is now fulfilled God's way. Do you remember how at the beginning the devil had tempted Jesus and said to him I'll give you all the kingdoms of the earth if you'll bow down to me.

But now you see Jesus has received all power and all authority God's way he has been proclaimed king of the whole world the exalted son of God with power through his resurrection it's a great coronation the long promised crowning of the son of David as lord over all the son of man crowned with glory and honor at last as Daniel saw do you remember in his prophecy the son of man receiving his eternal dominion the kingdom which will never be destroyed they all knew exactly what Jesus meant by these words all authority in heaven and earth is given to me he Jesus whom they knew whom they loved he is lord over all forever and this is the great coronation that they've been waiting for all through the ages it's not that of course Jesus didn't have authority before all through his earthly ministry he taught with authority he healed with authority every sickness every disease every demon even nature itself bowed to his authority the wind and the waves but until his work was accomplished until his resurrection pronounced his victory and the achievement of his great salvation everything was still waiting it was in a way curtailed so when he cleansed the leper way back in

Matthew chapter 8 Jesus said say nothing to anyone and he healed the blind man in the next chapter see that no one knows the transfiguration even with the three disciples on the mountain they saw his dazzling glory what did Jesus say tell no one until the son of man is risen from the dead he's saying it's not yet time it's not yet finished only when Jesus is raised is the proof is the certainty that he has triumphed and he has absolute power as the Lord of glory forever but now he is risen and therefore look at verse 19 the time for that silence is now ended now all the world must hear this great truth we'll come to that mission in a moment but don't miss the clear message of these verses that are proclaiming a great coronation that Jesus alone is Lord of earth and heaven he was worshipped at his birth remember by the Gentile

Magi he was worshipped as the king of the Jews by then and now here he is as the risen Lord being worshipped by believing Jews as king of the world do you see that he alone is Lord of Jew and Gentile of Arab and of Asian of European and of African and therefore the only appropriate response that there is is to do as the disciples did then to bow down and worship him and no other ever ever again the true worship is an exclusive thing the one you worship and serve he owns you he possesses you and you can't serve God made known in Jesus Christ and any other can you whether that's an imagined deity of man or whether it's some force or some desire that your own life is devoted to and if Jesus really is the sovereign power the only power in earth and in heaven then you have to ask yourself don't you have I really reckoned with that but at the same time don't think that that to bow down and to worship

[15 : 17] Jesus is a burden they worshiped him with joy and it is a supreme joy this is the Jesus who said didn't he everyone everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother

or children or lands everyone who has left these things for my sake will receive a hundred fold and will inherit eternal life Jesus great coronation in glory promises glory for every single one who will follow him we shall see his risen glory also not on that mountain in Palestine as these disciples did then but yes when he appears to reign and when we see him then do you remember what the apostle says we shall be like him like him in glory it's a great coronation we see in these verses it's glorious for Jesus but it's glorious for all believers because it's the declaration of the glorification of humanity forever it's the promise of everlasting resurrection life it's the climax of all

God's purposes for this whole creation and it's assured because Jesus is risen and glorified God has accomplished all he promised all authority in heaven and earth has been given to him the son of man he is lord it's a great coronation and that's why you see there is in verses 19 and 20 this great commission go therefore and make disciples of all nations these verses proclaim not only that Jesus has sovereign power over all the nations but that he has a saving purpose among all the nations notice the therefore therefore go and make disciples why does it follow that the resurrection and glory of Jesus necessitates a mission to to the whole world and not just for example to Israel well all through Matthew's gospel there are hints aren't there of

God's great generosity to those beyond just the Jews to the Gentiles the Gentile centurion way back in chapter 8 there's others who come and are blessed by Jesus and now Matthew is saying look this is the climax of all of God's entire saving plan from the beginning of all his promise to Abraham God chose Abraham didn't he and his whole line of promise the Jews not just for themselves but as his plan of salvation for the whole world in you all the families of the earth will be blessed he said and in Jesus death and resurrection now this is being fulfilled at last on a truly global scale now that Jesus is risen in power his people the people of the risen king renewed and restored and faithful as God's true Israel at last they are going to fulfill that destiny as ambassadors of

God the savior to the whole wide world they are going to go and carry the king's glorious rule to the ends of the earth remember what Jesus said way back in the sermon on the mount you are the salt of the earth you are the light of the world well God's people had always had that calling that wasn't you they were to be a missionary nation Isaiah the prophet said you are my witnesses you are the people I formed for myself that they might declare my praise but of course the problem was as Isaiah said so often that they had been blind servants deaf servants not walking in his ways not obeying his commands and so leading the world not to praise God but to blaspheme his name but God promised again and again through Isaiah through the other prophets promised that at last his true servant would come to bring light to the world the Messiah the Christ his servant and when he came and triumphed and opened the gate of

God's glory to all nations in that day God promised Isaiah that at last God's renewed people will be called priests of the Lord they shall speak of you as ministers as servants of God true and faithful witnesses at last to God's glory in the world and that's exactly what Jesus was calling his followers to be in Matthew 5 let your light shine your light so that the world will see you don't think I've come to abolish the law and the prophets and that call to my people to be witnesses to the ends of the earth no no no I've not come to abolish that but to fulfill them and this great commission you see is the beginning of that worldwide fulfillment to bring to all the nations the obedience of faith that comes through the good news of Jesus Christ because all authority in earth and heaven belongs to the risen Christ therefore therefore great responsibility has been given to his renewed church to go and to make disciples for the risen king in all the world you might remember that when

[20 : 43] Jesus sent out his disciples on mission back in Matthew chapter 10 he said a strange thing to him to our ears he said don't go anywhere near the Gentiles or the Samaritans only to the lost sheep of Israel but not so any longer do you see Jesus own personal mission was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel he says that plainly in Matthew chapter 15 but he came so that through him there might be a mission to the whole wide world through his church it is his great mission it is his saving power alone of course but he spreads his saving lordship through his church but what is the mission of the church then well look at verse 19 it's very very clear to make disciples of all nations that's a controlling verb make disciples so you go wherever you need to go in order to do that to make disciples but what does that mean well again we're told very plainly you make disciples by baptizing them into that's better than into the name the name the one name alone of the true

God the triune God Father Son and Holy Spirit and by teaching them to obey the Lord Jesus Christ notice he does not say go into all the world and create interesting Christianity or go into all the world

and create a Christianized culture or even go into the world and seek decisions for Christ converts for Christ no he says go and make disciples those visibly belonging to Christ and therefore to his church through baptism and visibly behaving as Christians and therefore as his church in obedience disciples are those who come to a real relationship with Christ and come under the real rule of Christ is what he's saying that's so important isn't it when we remember that Jesus repeatedly says it's not those who say Lord Lord Lord but rather those who hear his words and do them who are real disciples real faith is visible it's tangible it's obedient faith so we need to dwell in verse 19 and 20 here for a bit first of all notice discipleship means visibly belonging as a follower of Jesus which means sharing in his life through the apostolic church we're to baptize into the name of the father son and spirit and therefore into the life of his visible family here on earth Christianity is not a philosophy not a particular way of thinking it's a belonging it's a relationship of commitment to God and his people it's baptism into a relationship with God coming to the father the son and the holy spirit and therefore a relationship with his family being a son and daughter of the father's household in heaven but belonging to the father's household in heaven always means commitment and belonging to Christ's family here on earth do you see that that's what baptism signifies it's a public declaration of belonging and that belonging for the new testament is essential to salvation there's no conception anywhere in the new testament of a secret faith of just a personal highly individualized faith quite apart from commitment to the church no apostle apostle Paul is just as clear in Romans chapter 10 he says it's with the heart one believes and is justified but with a mouth one confesses and is saved you see the true faith that justifies with God is the tangible faith that joins with God's people discipleship means visibly belonging as a follower of Jesus sharing in his life through the apostolic church nothing else and secondly you see here discipleship means visibly behaving as a real follower of Jesus which means submitting to his lordship through the apostolic commands believing to Jesus and belonging to Jesus means obeying him teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you that's the task of the church that's the commission from the risen Lord to make disciples who truly worship him that is who share fully in the life of his church and who submit fully to the lordship of his command that's what it means to spread the

Christian faith again Paul says the same thing in Romans chapter 1 Jesus he says is declared to be the son of God with power through the resurrection chapter 1 verse 4 and therefore this means verse 5 we the apostles have received grace and apostles to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among the nations that's the church's commission to bring people to the obedience of faith and to be people marked out by that obedient faith who obey all that Jesus commanded us through his apostles that's an obvious challenge there isn't it I mean we need to know all that Jesus commanded them the apostles in order to disciple others don't we remember Jesus in the upper room he said that after his resurrection he spoke to his disciples his apostles and said when the holy spirit comes he will remind and teach you my apostles all the truth that is needed for the church's mission and he did and we have it here in the new testament the apostle peter says in 2 peter 3 and 2 we have the commandment of our lord and savior through your apostles and he urges the church to devote itself to that in the future and to the old testament scriptures the words of the prophets and taken together he says god has therefore given you everything you need for life and godliness to be disciples and to make disciples that's why obviously any church that is going to be able to make disciples must have a relentless bible teaching ministry that's obvious because only the taught can teach others of course it's not just intellectual knowledge don't mistake it not just didactic teaching that makes disciples that's essential of course but it's life teaching isn't it people learn

[27 : 21] Jesus commands and learn to obey him as other disciples embrace that and exhibit that in their own lives to be seen so that's quite a challenge isn't it that we all need to be in this all in together if we're to make disciples people who come to belong and to be real Christians with allegiance to him and to his people and to his ways not just spectators who are filling seats in church on a Sunday it's not that kind of observer that Jesus wants here when he says observe my commandments it's not observing him from the distance it's a bears it's committed members of the body of Christ committed visibly through baptism with Christ's family and submitted visibly living by God's words through them that's why we take church membership seriously sometimes people ask about that but you should take it seriously because if for whatever reason you decline to play a full and publicly committed part in the visible tangible family of Christ where you are if you're insisting just being on a spectator not a partner but a passenger in the church then according to

Jesus that is not being a disciple at all that's not what Christian belief looks like to him so let's be clear our task together as a church is to make disciples who commit publicly and who submit publicly and privately to the lordship of Jesus Christ over their lives by living under the authority and the rule of the apostolic faith and of course our task as a church family is also going to be our task in our own domestic families isn't it in our own households those of us who are married with families of course Jesus is talking here principally about those outside the people of faith but he's certainly not saying go and make disciples in all the world but not in your own families of course not the missionary task begins at teaching them from earliest days the way of the Lord to live in obedience to him not in obedience to this world not loving the world but loving the Lord their God with all their heart that's why we in this church baptize our children we're just being consistent we're being quite clear with them we're saying we're making disciples of you we're marking them publicly as belonging to Christ and calling them to behave in the way of consistency with the great privilege that God has given them to know Christ to know of his ways to be taught the grace of God in Jesus Christ from their earliest age and we have to exemplify that to them all of us whether parents or not that's God's command to his people all through the scriptures right from the beginning to bring up your children in the nurture the admonition of faith to show them the way of the Lord be absurd wouldn't it to think God wanted us to do any differently can you imagine Jesus saying don't make disciples of your own children of course not now the Lord Jesus was quite clear he urges all parents not to keep their little ones away from him but to bring them to him to teach them don't hinder them but as such belong the kingdom of heaven and our children who are brought up within the

Christian church they have an enormous privilege of being born into the household of faith of being nurtured in grace from the earliest days and that means that they and we as a church and especially as parents we have great responsibility don't we to teach them the way of discipleship from their earliest days baptizing them into the name of the father and the son and the spirit teaching them to obey all that the lord has commanded but in every way this is our great task the great commission of god's people from the inner circle of our family our own church fellowship our own friends even to the outer circle of the whole earth because Jesus is risen he is Lord and he has a saving purpose for this whole world and he calls us to be ambassadors of that rule to be making disciples of all the nations and don't forget the context of these verses remember we've seen haven't we just how the first disciples were surrounded by such hostility such opposition such unbelief on all sides but all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to our

Lord Jesus Christ and therefore his people can go in confident faith because he will build his church but it's we his people who are going to be those who carry that message who carry the keys that open the kingdom of heaven to people all over the world the apostolic gospel made known in scripture that's our task worldwide mission opening the kingdom of heaven to all the myriads of people this world over is that a task that people like us can possibly succeed in it seems very unlikely doesn't it it's such a struggle even being disciples ourselves never mind sharing the faith even with those who are in our innermost circles our families our friends our neighbors can we possibly be sufficient for such an extraordinary great commission well don't forget

[33 : 23] Jesus last sentence there in verse 20 we're not just shown a great coronation here we're not just given a great commission do you see the Lord Jesus leaves us in his very last words with a great great comfort behold I am with you always to the end of the age our Lord is not just a sovereign power who's king over his people he's not just got a saving purpose for people all over this world he himself is the strengthening presence who is with us forever wherever we are in all our ministry tasks whether it's at home with our children with our colleagues at work with our friends our neighbors or those far far away speaking different languages in a different culture we find hard to understand he is always with us he is Emmanuel he is God who is with his people to bring salvation there's nothing so comforting is there when you're facing something difficult and frightening and hard than to have someone that you know and trust with you when a child wakes up at night having a nightmare that's what they want isn't it just stay with me don't have to speak just stay with me when you're going to a difficult appointment at a doctor or a lawyer or something like that you want someone just to go with you don't you someone you know and trust just to know they're with you but this is our

God he's going to be with us in our midst seeing he loves to be with his people you see it all the way through the Bible story don't you he comes near and yet that nearest most intimate presence is

always impaired isn't it there's always a distance there's always a separation just because of people's sin but now you see at last it's altogether different it's altogether more wonderful remember the angel promised before Jesus birth that his name will be called Emmanuel God with us in the flesh to save and now you see his disciples can see that Jesus is saying I Jesus the one you know the one you have loved the one you understand I will be with you always because that barrier is gone do you remember the curtain in the temple dividing distancing sinful human beings from God and the spirit of God himself the risen Lord Jesus has gone out from that holiest place in the temple into all the world to dwell with his people forever yes Jesus would ascend bodily to the glory of heaven but the first thing that flowed from that ascension of Jesus was what the sending of the Holy Spirit the spirit now of the risen human glorified humanity of our Lord Jesus into the very hearts of believers forever guaranteeing the intimacy of the presence of God himself the Lord Jesus not just near us but within Emmanuel with us forever what what a difference that makes see that's what makes the great coronation of Christ so glorious for us and that's what makes the great commission of Christ possible for us frail human beings because he our Lord and Savior he is with us in the task and notice what Jesus says here it's as his disciples go and obey him in the task of making disciples that he says he will be with them that must be so mustn't it because that's what he's doing that's his unbroken focus as the risen Savior of men to bring salvation to the ends of the earth through his Holy Spirit and so if we are taken up with that then we must be walking with him and him walking with us you saw in verse 9 it was when the women met them on the way and we know that's true don't we it's always in the joy of obedience to Jesus in living out our gospel calling that we know his most intimate presence with us great preacher of the Victorian age Alexander McLaren puts it so well he says if you wish to keep Christ very near you and to feel him with you it doesn't happen by cultivating religious emotion it's not through filling your mind with books and songs no you will know him near you and with you on the dusty road of doing his will and keeping his commandments that's what Jesus said isn't it if anyone loves me he will keep my words and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him well here are Jesus last words in Matthew's gospel to us go therefore make disciples and behold I am with you always it's a great challenge isn't it because it is in obedience to his command that Christ proves us true real worship always has that go therefore it's not those who just say endlessly or sing endlessly lord lord lord who will enter the kingdom those who do the will of the father in heaven says

[39 : 13] Jesus a real challenge to us all you see it's when we grasp that challenge of the great commission that we therefore find it is also at the same time the great great comfort because it's also in obedience to Jesus command that we prove Christ true it's on that dusty road of doing his will that we discover that Jesus is with us always to bless us to strengthen us to comfort us to keep us and that will be so all of our days to the very end of the age says Jesus when he comes again so friends Matthew is leaving us with this final word this is the meaning of the death and the glorious resurrection of Jesus Jesus is Lord he is king of the world so bow to his sovereign power he is savior of the world so join in with his saving purpose and he is

Emmanuel for his people so you can rest in his strengthening presence that's what it means to be a disciple and to be a disciple making church and Matthew is saying to us friends that is no greater thing so may we understand the meaning of the death and the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and join him to the end of the age in this great commission amen let's pray oh God king of glory who has exalted thine only son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto thy kingdom in heaven we beseech thee leave us not comfortless but send to us thine holy spirit to comfort and strengthen us and grant us gracious Lord that by thy holy inspiration we may both think all things that are good and from thee and by thy merciful guiding may do them that our lives may truly serve thee and make thy gospel known in all this world throughout all our days through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen