

Matthew 28:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

Analysis

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. Narrative shifts from the guards' deception to the disciples' obedience. 'The eleven disciples' (οἱ δὲ ἐνδεκά μαθηταί/hoi de hendeka mathētai)—no longer twelve since Judas's betrayal and suicide (Matthew 27:3-5). This detail underscores the tragedy of apostasy: one who walked with Jesus, witnessed His miracles, heard His teaching, ultimately fell away. Yet Christ's purposes prevail despite human failure; the eleven became foundation of His church.

'Went away into Galilee' (ἐπορεύθησαν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν/eporeuthēsan eis tēn Galilaian)—they obeyed the angel's and Jesus's instructions (Matthew 28:7, 10). This obedience despite confusion and fear marked their transition from scattered, frightened fugitives to apostles. True discipleship involves obeying Christ's word even when understanding is incomplete.

'Into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them' (εἰς τὸ ὄρος οὗ ἐτάξατο αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς/eis to oros hou etaxato autois ho Iēsous)—Jesus had predetermined this meeting place and time. The verb ἐτάξατο (etaxato) means to arrange, appoint, order. Christ sovereignly orchestrates events; He is never caught off guard or improvising. His resurrection appearances were planned, purposeful encounters designed to commission and equip His church.

Mountains hold significance in Matthew's Gospel: the Sermon on the Mount

(Matthew 5-7), the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8), and now the Great Commission. Mountains represent places of divine revelation and encounter. This unnamed mountain in Galilee becomes the site of Christ's final instructions to His apostles before ascension.

Historical Context

Galilee, about 80-100 miles north of Jerusalem, was the region where Jesus conducted most of His ministry. Most disciples were Galileans (Acts 1:11, 2:7). Returning to familiar territory where Jesus had taught, performed miracles, and called them to discipleship was fitting for this climactic encounter.

The specific mountain is unidentified. Some suggest it was the Mount of Beatitudes where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, creating bookends for His public ministry—beginning with kingdom ethics (Matthew 5-7) and ending with kingdom mission (Matthew 28:18-20). Others propose Mount Tabor (traditional site of Transfiguration) or mountains near Capernaum. The location's anonymity may be intentional; what matters is not the site but the commission given there.

This appearance to 'the eleven' likely corresponds to Paul's reference in 1 Corinthians 15:6: Jesus 'was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.' The mountain gathering may have included the eleven plus many other disciples who had followed Jesus during His Galilean ministry. The convergence of Gospel and Epistle testimony strengthens historical reliability.

The forty days between resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:3) involved multiple appearances in different locations (Jerusalem, Emmaus road, Galilee), teaching about the kingdom. This Galilean appearance was likely near the end of that period, shortly before the ascension from the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem (Luke 24:50-51, Acts 1:9-12).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does the specification of 'eleven disciples' (not twelve) teach us about the sobering reality of apostasy and the need for persevering faith?
2. How does Jesus's appointment of the meeting place demonstrate His sovereign control over His church and mission, and how should this shape our confidence in ministry?
3. Why is it significant that the Great Commission was given on a mountain, recalling other mountain revelations in Jesus's ministry?

Interlinear Text

Οἱ δὲ ἐνδεκά μαθηταὶ ἐπορεύθησαν εἰς τὴν
G3588 Then the eleven disciples went away into G3588
G1161 G1733 G3101 G4198 G1519
Γαλιλαίαν εἰς τὸ ὄρος οὐ ἐτάξατο αὐτοῖς ὁ
Galilee into G3588 a mountain where had appointed them G3588
G1056 G1519 G3735 G3757 G5021 G846
'Ιησοῦς
Jesus
G2424

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 26:32 (Parallel theme): But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Matthew 28:10 (References Jesus): Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Matthew 28:7 (Parallel theme): And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

Mark 16:14 (Parallel theme): Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

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