

2007-09-24 Missions - Matthew ch28 v16-20 (Ignite UK)

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:16-20 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION

- For those of you who have not been here the past two weeks we have been going through a three part series on the Ignite mission statement. At Ignite our mission is to worship God, to globally lead people to faith in Christ, and to grow together to be like Him. Two weeks ago Chandler preached from John 4:16-24 on worship and last week Jon Canler preached from II Corinthians 4:15 on discipleship. Which leaves me with world missions.
- Before we move to really examine this text I am going to briefly speak on how world missions relates to worship and then once we dive into this text the relationship between world missions and discipleship will be clear.
- *How then does worship relate to world missions?*
- One of my favorite authors has written, and I am sure those of you in Nick Cooper’s fuel group are quite aware that “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. It’s the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God’s glory.”¹ Furthermore, I would add that worship is the fuel for missions in that you cannot export to the nations what you do not rightly possess here. Only the individual who is completely satisfied in Christ can go to the middle of nowhere Africa and sacrifice his health and possibly his life and the lives of his family so that some person who he has never met before can worship the one true living God who they otherwise would not have known. Therefore, we see that worship stands as both the beginning and the great end of missions.
- Now let us focus in on the text. Looking back to verse 16 we read, “Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.” At first glance, it would appear that the eleven were the only ones there; however, in I Corinthians 15:6 Paul informs us that Jesus “appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time.” In Matthew 28 and Mark 16, the angel’s words to the women at the empty tomb also seem to indicate that they would see

¹ John Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God In Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 17.

Him in Galilee as well. So here, we are within a week or two of his ascension in Jerusalem and Jesus appears to His disciples and a large crowd in Galilee, which is not surprising as many of His followers were located there. In fact, the eleven remaining disciples were from Galilee.

- Christ appears before this crowd and the eleven disciples “And when they saw him they worshiped him” they fell and prostrated themselves before Him; “but some doubted” we are not given any hints as to the specific nature of this doubt and so I am not going to spend time speculating about it. What this does is testify to the integrity of Scripture as Matthew honestly records these historic events as they occurred. Continuing on to verse 18 we will now look at . . .

I. The Sovereign Reign of Christ

v.18: And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

A. Absolute Authority

1. Christ stands before His disciples and the gathered crowd and proclaims that He has been given “*All authority*” Christ has absolute power; nothing exists over which he does not rule.

B. Universal Authority

1. Furthermore, He continues to speak of Himself explaining that He has this authority “*in heaven and on earth*” It is not just that Christ has absolute authority in a given realm, He has absolute authority everywhere. There is nothing outside His jurisdiction and nothing outside of His control. As the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper has so clearly stated, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”²
2. “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent” (Colossians 1:16-18).
3. If you want to read more on this, I have listed several cross-references in your notes (Psalm 2:8; Daniel 7:13-14; John 5:22-23; Philippians 2:8-11).

C. As we continue into verse 19, we could potentially miss one word that unlocks the whole meaning of this passage and the foundation upon which the Apostles built the Church. The word is “*therefore*,” and we must, as many people have said, find out what therefore is there for. This passage does not present two separate thoughts, “*Christ has authority*,” and “*Go make disciples*.” It presents

² Abraham Kuyper, “Sphere Sovereignty,” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998) 488.

one thought, “*Go make disciples, because of Christ’s absolute universal authority.*”

D. As I study this text, I can think of two ways in which this word “therefore” brings unity to the thought of this passage. First, upon His authority; only the sovereign God can demand, can require, the worship of the nations. Second, upon His worth; only the sovereign God deserves the worship of the nations. If the purpose of missions, or more specifically making disciples, is drawing the nations into the white-hot worship of God, then intrinsic within that is the nature of the God who is worshipped. We cannot separate the worship of God from the God who is worshipped. Which is why Chandler stressed that worship must be in spirit and in truth.

E. Now that we understand the unity of this passage, we can examine “The Supreme Command of Christ” (which is Roman numeral two for those of you taking notes). The Supreme Command of Christ? But isn’t the greatest commandment ““You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself?” I do not see these passages as being at odds but rather see the Great Commission as the immediate application of the Greatest Commandment. In loving God we must love what God loves, namely His glory manifested to the nations and the greatest act of love towards ones neighbor must be teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded. Continuing on to verse 19 we read . . .

II. The Supreme Command of Christ

v.19-20a: 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 observe all that I have commanded you.

A. Make Disciples

This is the central verb of this passage and the rest of Christ’s command focuses on achieving this goal. The focus of this command is not merely on one who learns; it is often used of a pupil or an apprentice and in that sense, you can begin to understand the breadth of this term. As is speaks of one who not only learns but who follows; this is not merely a training of the mind. It profoundly affects the whole of life, a fact that is clear as the disciples of Jesus followed Him everywhere seeking to be conformed to His likeness.

Not only was this a call to learn and a call to follow, it was a call to die. “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). Rome came to power in Judea in 63BC and it is estimated that they crucified 30,000 during their rule. Furthermore, Judas of Galilee, who helped found the Zealots, led a revolt against Rome, which resulted in nearly 2,000 men being crucified along the roads of Galilee,³ an event that many of Christ’s hearers would have vividly remembered.

³ John MacArthur, *Hard to Believe: The High Cost and Infinite Value of Following Jesus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 135.

Before moving on lets not miss the profound statement being made here. Until this point, a disciple or an apprentice was dedicated to their teacher and now a dramatic shift takes place; because Christ is no longer physically present to make disciples but through the teaching of His Word, He continues to transform individuals and conform them to His likeness.

In this text, Christ gives three specific means by which disciples are to be made.

1. Going

- a. While in your English text this word appears as the imperative “go” it is actually a participle and can be translated “going” or “proceeding” and it indicates a point of departure.
- b. This verse is often referenced in pleas for specific destinations, “go to Africa,” “go to Asia,” or “go to South America” and specific destinations are fantastic, however, the destination is not the point of this passage, the departure is.
- c. His concern is not specifically where you go, it is that that you go somewhere. Do you see the difference? One focuses on destination and the other departure. Christ is not saying, “Do this” He is saying “just do something.”
- d. To be even more specific it could be translated “having gone” or “having traveled” and in that sense, it expresses what they are already in the habit of doing. This is clear throughout the Gospels and the book of Acts; they are always going somewhere. Which is one of the things you have in common these eleven disciples. In Acts we read of Paul who “. . . reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:17). They were constantly on the move; however, wherever they went or whatever they were doing their focus remained the same. You come into contact with thousands of people on this campus and in this city every day and if you hope to be an effective witness your focus must be the same as theirs.

2. Baptizing

- a. First, it is clear both symbolically and semantically that baptism is by immersion. Symbolically in that, only baptism by immersion accurately pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Semantically in that, the normal use of the word baptism (βαπτισμός) or any of its derivatives is immersion.
- b. Second, this serves as a public testimony to the Gospel and a personal identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
- c. It is especially important to note that baptism is “*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” which both

identified the triune oneness of God by the use of the word “name” in the singular, as opposed to “names” in the plural, and it was a open admission to the deity of Christ.

d. For more on this see Romans 6:3-4 and Galatians 3:27.

3. Teaching them to Obey

a. Of all the aspects of the Great Commission, this is by far the least understood and arguably the most important to the vitality of the church. The modern church is inundated with discipleship programs, discipleship classes, discipleship curriculum, and discipleship camps but I am convinced that we do not understand what it means to make disciples nor what it means to be a disciple.

b. This is not merely a call for Gospel proclamation, for evangelism, or for short-term mission trips. This is a call for a lifelong commitment. Just as a disciple is dedicated to his teacher so must you be dedicated to teaching others.

c. Even at that, this is not merely a call to teach but to teach obedience. It is not enough that men know who Christ is or that they know what Scripture teaches, they must know how obey it, to submit themselves to it, and to apply God’s Word to their lives and the lives of others.

d. This is exactly what Jon Canler was focusing in on last week “For all things are for your sakes, that the grace, being multiplied through the many, may cause the thanksgiving to abound unto the glory of God” (II Corinthians 4:15 ASV). The grace is not multiplied by the church and then directed to the many, it is multiplied through the many; individual disciples of Christ just like you are responsible for this multiplication.

e. One of the central themes of the Protestant Reformation was the priesthood of believers (I Peter 2:9). Now by this the reformers were not talking about the postmodern idea of the priesthood of believer where you are a church in and of yourself, but rather that we are priests to each other as we minister to the body of Christ, which is the church.

f. This is exactly what we see occurring throughout the early church. Let us take a quick look at Thessalonica. “And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything” (I Thessalonians 1:6-8). The Thessalonians imitated Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy and the Lord, and in doing so they themselves became an example,

a model, a pattern which believers throughout Macedonia and Achaia could follow. They were teaching them to observe and to obey all that Christ has commanded.

g. I have given you a handout that helps to explain the way this works so take some time this week and study that handout and Ephesians 4:11-16 to see how you can begin fulfilling that command to make disciples.

B. We have examined Christ's Sovereign Reign upon which He has the authority to issue His Supreme Command and now He offers us one of the most encouraging passages in the whole of Scripture . . .

The Sure Promise of Christ

v. 20: And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

C. Every word used here is emphatic, He even repeats Himself to further emphasize the nature of this promise saying, "And behold [He is basically saying look, listen up, pay attention], I Myself am with you all the days until the completion of the age" (authors translation).

D. This promise is not a new thing. God has dwelt among His people throughout the ages. In II Samuel 7, David desires to build a house for the Ark of the Covenant to which the Lord replies, "Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling."

E. Christ both has the authority to command the Great Commission and through His continual presence He will bring it to fulfillment through disciple making disciples like you and I.

CONCLUSION

- Just as God created the man and woman in His own image and commanded them to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28) so to He commands you, His disciples, His new creation (II Corinthians 5:17), to be fruitful and multiply yourselves in the likeness of His Son (Romans 8:29-30).
- LETS PRAY
- On this unknown mountain in Galilee Christ did not offer an invitation to change the world. Invitations can be accepted and invitations can be denied. Christ stood before the gathered crowd and delivered an ultimatum. As college students in the twenty-first century, you have opportunities that were unknown to generations past. You will be offered jobs all over this state, nation, and world. You have unparalleled opportunities to travel. Will you see these opportunities a merely a means to financial prosperity or as a means to make disciples of the nations? Right now the nations are at your doorstep will you seize this divine opportunity and make disciples on this campus?