

Exegetical Notes, Matthew 28:16-20

“The Pastor’s Favorite Text”

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Matthew 28:16-20

Verse 16-17

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

- The women accomplished the commission that Jesus had given them; to go and tell the disciples that he was risen and that he would meet them in Galilee. See Matthew 28:10. The disciples went to Galilee, as they were told to do, to see Jesus.
- The disciples went to the “mountain where Jesus had told them to go.” Apparently, in his pre-crucifixion teaching, Jesus had told the disciples where he would meet them if, for any reason, he was separated from them. So, they went to that place to wait for him after the women told them the news of his resurrection. And, in fact, Jesus did come to them there.
- When they saw Jesus, they recognized him and they worshiped him. Jesus’ form was not altered by death. He appeared to his disciples in the same body that had died.
- Even so, some of the disciples were unsure. Resurrection from the dead is not normal, nor logical. Despite what they saw, it was hard to credit the facts. How could someone return from the grave? For many people today, this remains the stumbling block. But if this is not true, then the Bible lies, Christians are misguided, and there is no life after death.

Verse 18

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

- Verses 18-20 are called the Great Commission. They describe the purpose of the Church in every age and time. While this Great Commission is most fully explained in the Gospel of Matthew, it is repeated in all four Gospels and in the book of Acts.
- In his opening remarks, Jesus establishes his right to so commission the Church. “All power,” the word translated “authority” in the NIV, means power. The word “all” means that no power has been withheld from Jesus. Because God has invested him with unlimited power, he has the authority to commission the Church. Jesus’ power is not limited to the Kingdom of God, heaven. It extends over all the “earth,” over all other kingdoms and authorities.

Verse 19

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- The “therefore” refers to the fact stated in verse 18. Namely, that Jesus now has all authority or power.
- The grammar in this passage is extremely important to understand if we would understand the commission that Jesus gave to the Church.
 - + The word “go” in the English text appears to be a command. However in the Greek text it is a participle. Therefore, it is correctly translated, “going.” It simply means that while Christians are going about the routines of everyday life they are to make disciples.
 - + The words, “make disciples” are the command. What Jesus commands the church to do is to go out into life and, while living life, make disciples. **THIS IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH, TO MAKE DISCIPLES.**
 - + **The first step in the process of disciple making is “baptizing.”** The word is properly translated baptizing, for like the word “go” in verse 18, it is a participle. It is a word that indicates process. It means that the first step in disciple making is to help a potential disciple to understand who Jesus is and what Jesus came to earth to do. When the potential disciple knows these things and professes faith in Jesus, we baptize him/her to indicate that they are now believers, disciples,

Christians. But this is only the first step in the process of making a disciple.

+ **The second step in the process of disciple making is “teaching.”**

This word, too, is a process word, a participle. After a person becomes a disciple they need to be taught how to be a disciple. They are not expected to know everything that they need to know about discipleship from the beginning. Those who have learned more are to instruct the initiates even as they themselves learn more about being a disciple, themselves. The goal is to teach beginning disciples everything that Jesus taught. This will require a lifetime of learning. The goal of this learning is obedience to the entire word of God.

- At the close of the Gospel of Matthew the promise of Jesus’ birth is repeated. Immanuel! God will be with us as we engage in the process of making disciples, and he will stay with us as we do so until the close of the age, until the time when disciple making is over because He has returned to gather the faithful into the millennial kingdom of God.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Pastor’s Favorite Text*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)