

The church and the nations

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.”

1) Imparted authority

- After Jesus’ resurrection wasn’t the only time he spoke about his authority, or others spoke about his authority.
- People were amazed at the authority by which Jesus taught
 - Luke 4:31-32 Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.
- People were amazed at the authority by which nature obeyed him
 - Matthew 8:26-27 He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”
- He demonstrated his authority over the demonic
 - Mark 1:25-27 “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.
The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.”
- He asserted his authority to forgive sins by healing a man
 - Matthew 9:4-6 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.”
- The proof of his authority was to be his resurrection from the dead
 - John 2:18-19 The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”
Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”
- Even his death and resurrection was by his own authority
 - John 10:17-18 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life —only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”
- It is then after he had risen from the dead and said to his disciples before ascending into heaven:
 - “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go...
 - He sent them out by his authority to do what he commanded them to do.
- This wasn’t the first time he sent them out giving them authority to accomplish his purposes
 - Luke 9:1-2 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.
- Throughout his ministry Jesus was asserting his authority in various ways, and that authority was recognised by his disciples and others. It was obvious that he had authority.
 - We need to walk under the authority of Jesus at all times so that when he commissions us to do something important we will know that we will be doing it by his authority.
 - Jesus has commissioned us, his church, to take the Gospel of his kingdom to all nations by his authority

2) Commissioned to go to the nations

- Matthew 28:19-20 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.
- The commission is two-fold: Going and making disciples of all nations
- Going entails leaving the place where you are and going to another place.
- Doesn't it mean leaving the church building to go into the local community to bring the good news of the kingdom into our community?
 - Yes, it does but it also means that we have to look beyond our own community if we are to make disciples of all nations.
 - The word nations here doesn't mean political nations. It means ethnic groups, tribes.
 - Even within a political nation there are many different ethnic groups and religions.
- Abraham was told to leave his country and father's household.
 - Genesis 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you."
- With almost half of the world being unreached with the Gospel we cannot give up our responsibility to take the Gospel to those who don't have it.
 - Facts: There are 4515 unreached people groups consisting of 3.28 billion people in the world. That's 41.8% of the world's population.
 - Who will take the Gospel to them if those who have it don't?
- The second aspect of the commission is to make disciples, which also has two aspects to it: baptising and teaching
 - Baptising in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit indicates a conversion from their old way of life to a new life in Christ.
 - Teaching indicates a responsibility to raise those new believers to mature obedient disciples of Christ.

3) Only the obedient can teach obedience

- If we are to teach them to obey everything that Jesus commanded us to do then we need to first be obedient disciples of Jesus ourselves.
 - We can't teach others to do what we aren't doing.
 - We can't teach honesty if we are being dishonest ourselves
 - We can't teach generosity if we aren't generous.
 - We can't teach forgiveness if we are holding unforgiveness in our hearts
- Discipleship is the process of learning, doing and passing it on for others to do the same.
 - 2 Timothy 2:2-3 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.
- We will only impact our community and the nations when we are following the discipleship process ourselves first.
- Don't plan to go to another country as a missionary if you aren't doing anything where you are first.
- It is God's heart that the nations be saved, and the church is his means to do that.
- A congregation that is not deeply and earnestly involved in the worldwide proclamation of the Gospel does not understand the nature of salvation." (Ted Engstrom)