

Jesus Commissioned His Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to worship the Father for sending His Son to die for our sins and showing that He was satisfied with this payment by raising Jesus from the dead. In this topic, we will learn about the commission Jesus gave to the disciples and all future followers when He met on the mountain in Galilee with the disciples after His resurrection.

We saw in the last topic that the Roman soldiers became like dead men when the angel came and rolled the stone from the door of the tomb. Matthew 28:11-15 says, “Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, ‘Tell them, “His disciples came at night and stole Him *away* while we slept.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.’ So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.” The Roman soldiers really had no choice but to tell the chief priests exactly what had happened. They could face death for failing to guard the tomb.

Once the chief priests heard that Jesus had risen, they had to decide what to do. They immediately called the Sanhedrin together to decide how to respond to the resurrection. We see that the chief priests and elders decided to pay a large amount of money to the soldiers to get them to tell a lie in order to try to deny the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead. The religious leaders paid the soldiers a large amount of money to say, “His disciples came at night and stole Him *away* while we slept.” The religious leaders also gave the soldiers a promise, “If this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” The promise meant more to the soldiers than the money.

A Roman soldier who went to sleep while guarding someone, or something, was put to death. The soldiers all knew that they would die if Pilate heard they had gone to sleep while guarding the tomb. This is illustrated in Acts 12:18-19, where we read, “Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed *there*.” Herod had become the governor by the time of Acts 12 and we see that he ordered the death of all of the soldiers guarding the prison when Peter escaped.

The soldiers faced death either way so they had to choose to tell the lie the religious leaders wanted them to tell because their only hope of survival was the promise of the religious leaders. In addition, they would receive a large amount of money for telling that lie. However, the story the religious leaders suggested made no sense. First, all of the soldiers would not go to sleep since they knew that meant death. Second, how could they know what happened if they were asleep. They chose to take the money and tell the lie. We see that among the unbelieving Jews, this story continued to be repeated, even at the time that the book of Acts was written.

Matthew 28:16-18 says, “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” We saw in the last topic that it was more than a week before the disciples followed the instructions to go to Galilee. However, we see that they did go to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. We do not know for sure if the events at the Sea of Galilee, recorded in John 21, happened before or after they went to the mountain. However, it is possible that they went fishing first. John 21:15 says, “So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’” The very fact that Jesus asked Peter if he loved Jesus more than he loved the fish might indicate that they went fishing first.

The time that Jesus spent on the mountain in Galilee probably included more than just the eleven. 1 Corinthians 15:6 says, “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” It is very possible that the meeting on the mountain included this group of more than five hundred followers. We see that some who saw Jesus on the mountain doubted until they saw Jesus. The eleven had their doubts answered while they were still in Jerusalem. John 20:25-28 says, “The other disciples therefore said to him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ So he said to them, ‘Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace to you!’ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’ And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”

We see that those on the mountain worshiped Jesus. Those who doubted had their doubts turned to belief when they saw Jesus on the mountain. As a result, the five hundred all became witnesses of the resurrection. Jesus gave what has become known as the Great Commission to those who were gathered on the mountain. However, before giving the commission, Jesus reminded those present of the authority the Father had given to Him. Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” The word translated “authority” means *the power of choice, authority or rule of government*. Here, we see that the Father has given Jesus all power to rule over everything that is in heaven or on earth. Colossians 1:15-16 is speaking about Jesus, when those verses say, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” Christ is the Creator who has been given authority over all things.

Based on the authority given to Him by the Father, Jesus went on to say, in Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Here, we see that the commission given to the disciples, and all future Christians, has one command and three participles that tell how to carry out that command. The one command in these final two verses of Matthew is: Make

Disciples. We see that we are to make disciples in all nations. The word translated “nations” (ethnos is the Greek word from which we get the word ethnic) means *a multitude of people of the same group*. Here, we see that disciples are to make more disciples among every ethnic group in the world. Jesus made it clear by this statement that the command is for all future Christians.

The three participles, which tell how to carry out that command, are going, baptizing and teaching. The first part of verse 19 could be translated, “as you are going”. In this phrase, we see that, as Christians, we are to be sharing the Gospel with those we come in contact with in our daily lives. Jesus then said, just before He returned to heaven, in Acts 1:8, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” To take the Gospel to our Jerusalem (the people we know), we have to yield to the Holy Spirit to cross the barrier of fear. To take the Gospel to our Judea (the people of our culture we do not know), we have to cross the barrier of making contacts. To take the Gospel to our Samaria (the people of another culture, religion or ethnic group), we have to learn to cross the barrier of understanding another culture, religion or ethnic group. To take the Gospel to the end of the earth (the people of another language), we have to learn how to cross the barrier of another language.

The second participle, “baptizing”, means that we are *to help those who become Christians identify themselves as followers of Christ*. We also want to help them to become a part of a local church (family of Christians). The third participle, “teaching them to observe” (obey) all that I have commanded you, means that we *walk alongside all those who become Christians, teach them the Word of God and then show them how to obey it*. The word translated “observe” means *to carefully guard or to make certain you do it*. Here, we see that we are to pass on the Word of God to those we are helping become disciples by showing them how to fully obey all that Jesus has commanded. Matthew 13:52 gives us the definition of a disciple when that verse says, “Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old.’” The word translated “instructed” is the command to make disciples. In this verse, we see that a disciple has become the head of a spiritual household (is leading a spiritual family). A disciple has a treasure (the Word of God). A disciple brings out of that treasure new things (he or she is continuing to grow in his understanding of the Word of God). A disciple brings old things out of that treasure (he is able to help other Christians grow in their understanding of the basics of Christianity). We also want to continually remind Christians that Christ is with them.

We see that the book of Matthew concludes by giving every Christian a real purpose in life. We want to show our physical and spiritual children, by our example, how to Make Disciples as we help them become reproducing disciples. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to become reproducing disciples.