

## BIBLE BACKGROUND

Matthew 28:16-20

Verses 16,17

Verses 18-20

**When Jesus came to [them] he addressed them saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make all nations disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them everything that I have commanded you. Be clear about this, I am with you every day until the close of the age.”**

Jesus met the disciples in Galilee on some mountain and reminiscent of the transfiguration, they worshipped him. We can speculate that they were some distance from him. After this moment of adoration, **Jesus came to them. Addressed them** ἐλάλησεν could be translated as speaking but what follows makes clear that what the Lord was about to say was a solemn pronouncement and a revelation of the significance of his resurrection.

**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me** indicates that from the resurrection onwards, the Father has given the earthly Jesus a new position encompassing power in heaven and on earth (Dan 7:14; Phl 2:9; Rev 12:10). Heaven, is the hidden realm of God’s kingdom that now enfolds the earth and all the governments there (6:10). The kingdom prayed for in the Lord’s Prayer is now in place, though not visibly. The Father’s bestowal of **authority** ἐξουσία is the very authority that he has so that Father and Son (as well as the Holy Spirit), have a shared authority. What is significant is that Jesus, from the perspective of the disciples, is a mere human being. In virtue of completing the Father’s will successfully (26:39), Jesus as the Son of God, has earned this status.

What follows in Jesus’ address to the disciples flows from this authority connecting verses 18 and 19 with the adverb, **therefore**. Following therefore, is the command or the commission to **go** πορευθέντες, an aorist middle tense. The disciples are to depart forthwith and engage in the work of mission. There can be no hesitation or reluctance on their part. It is not permissible given the authority that the Lord has gained through the battles and travails of his ministry.

In what way is the Lord exercising **authority** through mission? First, he has redeemed all through his cross and resurrection. Next, he has saved them from Satan’s dominion (12:28; Lk 10:18). Thirdly, he has made all the universe his possession and has dominion over all things. Thus, the act of mission is to claim the territory that has already been won. People have already been won by Christ and are under his Lordship. Now, they need to be made disciples so that they can receive the good news and acknowledge the Lord.

The risen Lord does not say, make disciple of all nations but literally, **make all nations disciples. All nations**, is in the accusative tense, not genitive. Of course, as our Lord experienced in his own ministry, not all people wish to receive his eternal salvation and healing from sin. But this wording indicates that his lordship is over all nations. Verse 18 supports this translation.

The Trinitarian formula indicates the fixed form of the baptismal rite practiced in the early church. Firstly, we notice that this is not a ritual action. A person becomes a disciple through baptizing. Baptizing is a sacrament granting the special status of **disciples** μαθητεύσατε to those submitting to it, in exactly the same way that our Lord called people to literally follow him. It should not be overlooked that through baptism, the Lord is drawing each human being to himself. As the words, Father, Son and Holy Spirit indicate, God is not dealing with people on the basis of power but bringing them into his being so that they are exalted, honoured, made pure, blessed and loved.

Secondly, baptism is clearly the work of God, for **in the name of** has two meanings. It means by authorization of. Probably the more rudimentary formula was **in the name of Jesus**. Healings and

baptisms were carried out by the power and authority of Christ in the book of Acts (2:38; 3:6 et al). Verse 18, once again, supports this. The risen Christ is with the disciples acting through them with his great power (v. 20). It also means that a person has entered into the ownership of the Lord. In the commercial arena, to deposit money in the name of a person meant that it went into that person's account. Each disciple enters into God's account. Disciples really do belong to the Lord, understanding possession here, as the action of the gospel. One is safe with the Lord, in his possession and under his right of ownership. God will do all to keep what he owns (Isaiah 43:1).

Thirdly, God has names. What he wants us to know of his identity is contained in these special names: **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. He grants us this identity for we are baptized in his name. He names us with his name and therefore we truly become his children. Our identity has to shift from our created, family identity to the redeemed identity located in the being of God. This being is clearly experienced by us as one God in three persons. It is not at all unrelated that our Lord Jesus is declared to be the beloved Son when all three persons of the Trinity are present at the Jordan for Jesus' baptism (3:16,17). As his status as the Son of God was affirmed at his baptism, so our position as children of the Lord is granted by entry into the Lord's name.

Finally, the names of God's personhood, the three persons, each being God, sharing the same substance and truly being the one God, have significance. Through the redeeming action of Christ we come to know the Father as we are drawn to him by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells with the baptized and grants faith, enlightening the mind with his gifts. We see Jesus as the Saviour and behind Jesus the one who sent him, the governor and origin of this universe.

In summary, baptism in the name makes us disciples, it has power and brings us into the Lord's possession, it names us as his children and the Lord reveals himself to us through his name.

Teaching. 5:19)

The promise of being with the disciples (18:20; Acts 18:10; Hag 1:13)