

After Jesus' glorious resurrection from the dead, He appeared to His disciples to show them He had risen from the dead. While some of them had trouble believing their own eyes, Jesus was alive and He had a message for them that would forever change their lives.

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "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."(Matthew 28:18-20)

His disciples may have thought their work was finished when Christ was crucified on the cruel cross, but they found out their work has just begun. Jesus had prepared His disciples earlier for this momentous occasion as He sent them out on a limited commission to the Jews only (Matt. 10:5ff). Now the command was to go out to all nations which would include both Jew and Gentile.

Let's take a closer look at Jesus' words. First, He said "All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth." In this statement Jesus is showing His divine nature and that He is the Son of God. The word "authority" comes from the Greek word "exousia" which means, "the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed" (Thayer). Only Jesus could make such a statement as He gave up the riches of His heavenly home to become human (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5ff; John 1:1ff) and to be tempted, yet He did not sin (Heb. 4:15). He remained faithful to God the Father all the days of His life including the intense suffering and shame He endured surrounding His crucifixion (Phil. 2:8ff). As proof of His faithfulness, God raised Him from the dead, which is why He can now say He has all authority over heaven and earth. This means that every person is subject to Jesus' authority except for the Father (1 Cor. 15:27). When Jesus ascended to the Father, He sat down at His right side. Then He poured out the Holy Spirit onto His Apostles which proved that His reign as King had begun (Acts 2:1-36). The church/kingdom began on the day of Pentecost and Jesus is its head on both the earth and

in heaven (Eph. 1:22-23). This means that we should not have earthly headquarters as some in the religious world do because Christ is our head and authority. Also, there are those that claim that Jesus' kingdom is still yet to come. However, that is not logical because Jesus has all authority over heaven and earth and is called "King of Kings and Lord or Lord's" (1 Tim. 6:15). If His kingdom is still in the future then what does He have authority over? What is He King of? The scriptures make it clear that He is reigning over His kingdom right now with all authority and that He will hand over His kingdom to the Father when He comes again (1 Cor. 15:24ff).

Now that Jesus had proved His authority, He commanded His disciples to "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." While Jesus directed this command to His disciples of that day, this same command is to be followed by all Christians. Every Christian should be doing what they can to reach the lost and lead people to Christ. Please notice the command is to "go and make disciples." The word "disciple" comes from the Greek word "matheteuo" which means, "to be the disciple of one; to follow his precepts and instruction; to teach" (Thayer). Simply put, a disciple is one who is taught and follows the teaching of another. From this basic principle it is easy for us to understand that a person must be taught before they can become a disciple of Christ. This is exactly what we see prophesied by Jeremiah.

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 'No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Under the Law of Moses a Jew was born a child of God and a male child was circumcised on the 8th day (Gen. 17:12-13). As he grew up, he was taught about God and how he needs to obey His commands. However, Jeremiah is teaching us that this system under the old covenant was going to change under the new covenant that we are under now. Under this new covenant, no one is born a child of God. Instead, they must learn about God first, then choose to accept God's grace by obeying His commands. Therefore, one must be taught before one can become a disciple of Christ. To prove this principle further, consider the following points:

- A person must have faith to be pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6).
- A person can only have faith in God if they hear the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).
- Jesus says, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)
- Jesus says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. (John 6:44-45)

Many other passages could be given, but these are enough to show that one must be taught before they can become a disciple of Christ. This fact alone shows us that infant baptism is invalid and unscriptural. Neither an infant nor a young child has the cognitive ability to be taught in such way for them to understand what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

Jesus told His disciples to make disciples of "all nations." This would include all nationalities because God doesn't show partiality (Acts 10:34-35; Gal. 3:28ff). He wants all humans to come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). These verses can also be used to show that Calvinism's doctrine on selective grace is not true. At first Jesus' disciples didn't fully understand that all nations included the Gentiles until several years later. God revealed this truth to Peter and his companions

at the conversion of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10). From that point forward the Word of God was eventually preached to everyone (Col. 1:6,23).

As we get back to Jesus' commands, we find out that teaching is not the only thing necessary for becoming a disciple. He also made baptism necessary as well. He commanded them, "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." From the English language it should be easy to see that both teaching and baptism are necessary to become a disciple of Christ. We can further confirm this from the grammar of the original Greek as well. Both Greek words for "baptizing" and "teaching" are present participles. This indicates both of these actions take place at the same time as the main verb which is "make disciples". This means that both teaching and baptizing are necessary to complete the action of the main verb "make disciples." The Pulpit Commentary explains it this way, "The present participle denotes the mode of initiation into discipleship. Make them disciples by baptizing them." As you can see, both languages clearly show that Jesus' commanded His disciples to both teach and baptize to make a disciple.

This brings us to another point. Since Jesus commanded these things to be done, this means that these actions are carried out by humans. After all, we can teach and we can baptize someone. The baptism being commanded here was to continue until the end of the age. The only kind of baptism this could be referring to is water baptism and not Holy Spirit baptism as some claim. Holy Spirit baptism was a promise (Acts 2:33) that Jesus would administer (Mat. 3:11) and we only have two recorded instances of this happening in the Bible. The first instance was on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the second one was at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10, 11). Since Holy Spirit baptism was a promise administered by Jesus it cannot be the baptism commanded in the great commission. You cannot obey a promise. However, we can baptize someone in water and this is exactly what you see happening throughout the book of Acts. There should be no doubt that water baptism is under consideration here.

The Great Commission

Matthew 28: 18-20

By Cougan Collins

There are several more interesting points that can be observed from Jesus' command to baptize "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". First, we need to look at this phrase, "into the name of" and what it means. The BDAG Lexicon defines it this way, "Those who are baptized become the possession of and come under the dedicated protection of the one whose name they bear." Also consider this quote, "In the Greek papyri, which is that from which we get the New Testament, "into the name of" was a common phrase for the transference of ownership" (Archaeology in the New Testament). These definitions show us just how important baptism is, because when a person is baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, they become God's possession and are now under His protection. Without baptism, this transfer of ownership and union with God cannot occur. This means that you cannot be a disciple of Christ without baptism which leaves you in a lost state.

Paul brings some clarity to this in 1 Corinthians 1 when he was teaching against dividing the Lord's church. He teaches there is only one church and then makes a statement about baptism.

For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:11)

Paul is stressing that Christ was crucified for us and we should not be trying to divide the one church He established. Also, we should not be exalting a human above Christ by calling ourselves after that person because the church belongs to the Lord (Mat. 16:18) and He purchased it with his own blood (Acts 20:7). Finally, Paul teaches us that baptism is what makes it possible for us to say, "I am of Christ" which means that we belong to Him.

The second interesting thing about Jesus command to baptize "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" is that it shows the Trinity of

the Godhead. This is even more obvious when you look at the original Greek language. In Greek grammar, the general rule is that when a definite article is present before a word it identifies it as an individual or a specific thing. However, when the article is absent before a word then it shows its nature or quality. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (John 4:9)

First, "the woman" shows that this specific woman is being referred to as individual. However, the second use of the word "woman" without the definite article "the" simply refers to any Samaritan woman. So, in our text, we can see all three persons that make up the Godhead have the definite article "the" in front of them. This shows us that each of them is an individual person that makes up the triune nature of God. Now if the passage had only said the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then all three of these would have been referring to one person. Since that is not the case, this is a great passage that refutes the doctrine that states the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all the same person.

Next Jesus commands, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." I have previously stated that teaching must occur before one can become a disciple of Christ and there are certain things that a person must know and understand to become a disciple of Christ. For instance, we must understand that we are sinners and are separated from God (Rom. 3:23; Isa. 59:1-2). We must understand Jesus' death, burial and resurrection and that He is the only way to heaven (John 14:6). Once we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and realize that we are lost without Him, we must be taught to repent (Luke 13:3) and turn away from our old lifestyle by living their life according to God's Word. We must also understand that we have to confess Jesus as our Lord (Rom. 10:10) and continue to confess Him as Lord. Finally, we must understand that we must be baptized in the name of Jesus or by His authority for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). We need to understand that at baptism is when we enter into the possession of God and are added to the one church by

Him (Acts 2:47). When we understand this basic principle of Christianity, then we have the knowledge and ability to become a disciple of Christ. Once we choose to accept God's plan of salvation by submitting to God's authority, we must continue to be taught and shown how important it is for us to learn as much as we can about God's commands (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18). We also need to be taught there is more to it than just knowing the commands of God because we must live by them faithfully until the day we die (Rev. 2:10).

Finally Jesus says, "*and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" While Jesus was speaking to His apostles here, this message applies to us today. It teaches us that Jesus is with us and He is watching over us until the end of the age when He comes again. These promises are made to Christians in several other passages as well (Rom. 8:28; Heb. 13:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:12). What a comforting thought to know that our God will always be there for us.

When you combine the commands Jesus gave at the great commission and compare them to the conversions in the book of Acts, you should have no problem understanding what it takes to become a disciple of Christ. You must hear the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn. 8:24), repent (Luke 13:3), confess Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10) and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). Dear reader, it is up to you to either receive these words with gladness and become saved or refuse them and remain in your sins separated from God. Choose this day whom will serve (Josh. 24:15).

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