

All Authority, All Nations

Matthew 28:16-20

MAIN IDEA: Because Jesus Christ possesses all authority, His church is sent to all nations to make disciples—not merely converts—by going, baptizing, and teaching, with the unshakable confidence that He is with us always.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT: Matthew 28:16–20 is not an appendix tacked onto the end of the Gospel; it is its climax. Jesus has died, risen, and decisively defeated sin and death, accomplishing everything the Father sent Him to do. The disciples who stand before Him are not models of exceptional faithfulness—they have failed Him, fled from Him, and struggled with doubt even after the resurrection. Yet it is precisely to these men that the risen Christ draws near, calls them again, claims them as His own, and commissions them for His work. This passage is therefore not merely a missionary text; it is the marching orders of the church until Christ returns. Matthew’s Gospel opens with the declaration that Jesus is Immanuel—*God with us* (1:23)—and it closes with Jesus promising, “*I am with you always.*” The mission of the church flows directly from the resurrection: a risen Savior now sends a redeemed people into a dying world.

1. THE AUTHORITY THAT SENDS US (vv. 16-18a)

A. The Setting: Worship Mixed with Weakness

- Christ sends real people, not spiritual superheroes. The disciples worship, yet some doubt. Jesus does not wait for perfect faith. Notice that He commissions worshippers who struggle.

B. The Source of the Mission: Christ’s Authority

- Jesus does not begin with a command—He begins with a claim: “*All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.*”
- This authority is universal (heaven and earth), absolute (no rival/limitation), and resurrection-grounded (confirmed by His victory over death)
- The *Great Commission* is not based on our confidence, our strategy, or our cultural influence. It is based on Christ’s kingship.

C. Application: We can obey without fear.

We do not evangelize and make disciples because we are bold in our own strength. We do so because Jesus reigns, and if Christ has all authority, no government can stop His gospel, no culture can silence His truth, and no heart is beyond His reach. Fear fades when His authority is remembered.

2. THE COMMISSION THAT DEFINES US (vv. 18b-20a)

A. The Central Command: Make Disciples

- There is one main verb in the passage: *make disciples*.
- The church is not commanded merely to “go,” to attract crowds, to win arguments, or to collect decisions. The mission is *disciple-making: life-on-earth transformation into Christlikeness*.

B. The Scope of the Commission: ALL NATIONS

- The scope is not just Israel, one culture, or people “like us.” *All nations* means every ethnicity, every language, every neighborhood. It is global. *All* means *all*.

C. The Means: Three Particles (Going, Baptizing, Teaching)

- “Go” assumes movement. Evangelism is not just confined to pulpits, mission trips, or programs. It happens at work, in neighborhoods, across dinner tables, in ordinary faithfulness—anywhere, and at anytime.

- Evangelism and discipleship are two sides of the same coin. We don’t wait for the world to come to the church—we go to the world with Christ.
- “Baptizing” is a call to public allegiance to Christ. It is an entry into Christ’s covenant community (also known as *the church*). It is an act of obedience to Christ’s command. Disciple-making includes calling people to exhibit an open allegiance to Jesus Christ.
- “Teaching” concerns obedience, not just information. Jesus says explicitly: “*teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.*” Jesus does not say, “*Teach them everything you know.*” He says, “*Teach them to obey.*”
- Discipleship: changed lives, obedient hearts, and Christ-shaped character.

D. Application: Let Jesus define faithfulness. A faithful church is not measured only by attendance, budgets, and buildings, but by disciples being made, obedience being cultivated among its people, and Christ being increasingly formed in people for the glory of God and the advance of His kingdom.

3. THE PRESENCE THAT SUSTAINS US (v. 20b)

A. The Promise of Christ’s Presence

- “*I am with you.*” This is covenant language. Jesus, who calmed the storms, cast out demons, and conquered death, now goes with His people on mission.

B. The Permanence of His Presence

- He’s not with us just sometimes, or when things go well, or until you fail. “*Always... to the end of the age.*” Which means His church is never alone.

C. Application: Have Courage for the Mission.

When gospel conversations feel awkward—remember, *Jesus is with you*. When obedience in telling someone about Christ costs you something—remember, *Jesus is with you*. When results seem slow—remember, *Jesus is with you*. And remember, the mission is not sustained by our self-endurance, but by His abiding presence in us.

WHAT IS TRUE (SUMMARY): The Great Commission Tells Us:

- Who sends us (the Risen King with all authority)
- What defines us (making disciples of all nations)
- What sustains us (Christ’s unending presence / Holy Spirit).

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US: This is not optional Christianity.

- The question is not: *Will the gospel advance?* It will.
- The question is: *Will we make disciples of the Savior who sends us?*
- This is everyday Christian obedience.

WHAT TO DO — HOW WE SHOULD RESPOND TO

- Don’t be a Christian who only watches** — Going to church is good, but it’s not the goal. Jesus calls us to live out our faith and make disciples.
- See where you live as where you are sent.** Your home, neighborhood, job, and school are not accidents (see Acts 17:26-27). God has placed you there so others can see and hear about Jesus through you.
- Talk about Jesus when God gives you the chance.** You don’t need fancy words. Share what you know, be honest, and trust God to work via simple conversations.
- Encourage people to follow Jesus openly.** Help others take concrete steps, such as baptism and church membership, as signs of their commitment to Christ.
- Live like this mission really matters.** Use the days God gives you to point others to Jesus, trusting that He will use your faithfulness. Help them grow in following Jesus, not just saying yes once. Remember: you are never doing God’s work alone.