

**“Teaching Them to Observe” – Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Timothy 1:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:1-2
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My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. (Hosea 4:6)

Matthew, in 26:57-68, records Jesus’ trial before Caiaphas, the High Priest of Israel – who was in fact a false priest facing the true High Priest who would one day judge him. In v. 63 Caiaphas, his plans to destroy Jesus frustrated by a complete lack of evidence, abandons legal procedure and places the accused under oath:

"I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26:63-64)

The curtain is now drawn back and Jesus reveals Himself to be not a trouble making preacher who can be done away with but the Judge of all the earth. It is an unmistakable reference to Daniel 7:13-14, one of the highest Messianic prophecies in the entire OT: *I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)*

Neither Caiaphas nor the Great Sanhedrin of Israel over which he now wields such powerful influence believe Jesus’ claim; in fact they treat it as the conclusive evidence they have been looking for against Him. They condemn Him, little knowing they are acting according to the express plan and foreknowledge of God, who is giving His only Son as the sacrifice, to save His people from their sins. But by His glorious, earth-shaking resurrection on the third day, Jesus proved that He is who He told them He was.

So we come to Matthew 28:18 as we did last night, to a mountain in Galilee. Here Jesus, as the Messiah, the only Savior and the rightful world Ruler, what is rightfully His – not only that all people everywhere be told about Him and called to believe in Him, but that they also be taught to obey Him. Jesus commands, desires, and deserves the obedience of all people everywhere to all He has commanded.

The general command: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.* The “therefore” is all-important. Because of who He is as Messiah, we are commanded to bring people from all nations to Him to become His. We are not called to make Christian nations – there is no such thing as a Christian nation, except for the Kingdom of God, consisting of those who are native born, as it were, by the new birth which is a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. But notice that although Jesus has taught that it is a work of God who convicts, draws, and regenerates lost and spiritually dead sinners, yet Jesus also assigns us to “make disciples.” He calls us to bring individuals from every nation under heaven to become disciples, believers in and followers of the Lamb who was slain.

Christ then elaborates this command into two aspects. The first is that we are *to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. Baptism represents the very beginning of the Christian life. It speaks and signifies outwardly the inward reality of new birth, forgiveness, conversion, and adoption into the family of God. Again, we are not to baptize them those born into Christian nations, as under the Old Covenant all those born into Israel were circumcised, but we are to baptize those persons who become disciples of Jesus. This means that they must have heard the Law which declares us all sinners, and the Gospel which points to Jesus as the only way, the truth and the life, who died for our sins and was raised again and is Lord of all. If they are baptized with an understanding of what is meant by this ordinance, they must be baptized with understanding. They must have been taught the foundational truth of the Triune God in whose name they are baptized, of the meaning of the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. They must understand that they are baptized having come to know God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. In short even the command to baptize is a command to preach and to instruct by the Word of God.

Then Jesus says that we are *to teach them* (disciples from all nations, who have been soundly converted and baptized) *to observe all that I have commanded you*. So the Christian life begins with people being instructed from the Word of God, and it continues with people being instructed with the same Word of God.

Notice that it is instruction in obedience, because they are disciples of Jesus, who saves by grace, and who is Lord.

In 1989 John MacArthur came out with one of his most controversial books, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, in which he declared that there is no salvation for those who reject the lordship of Jesus Christ. He was quickly attacked by a host of otherwise conservative theologians and preachers who claimed that salvation by faith alone meant that Jesus can be received as Savior without being received as Lord – a position that is a caricature not only of the Reformation doctrine but of the New Testament and of the very words of Paul the Apostle who denounced such teaching directly in His letters.

A.W. Tozer combated this kind of teaching for years – and he died in 1963. It has been around a long time. And it has done, as false teaching always does, untold damage.

But this obedience is not just, as we sometimes suppose (perhaps without saying it in so many words), a mere assent to the idea that Jesus is Lord. Here hearts can deceive themselves. It is one thing to say, as a matter of doctrine, that I believe in Jesus not just as Savior but as Savior and Lord, and that I consider it a terrible error to teach that Jesus can ever be received as Savior without being known as Lord, and it is another thing to actually obey whatsoever things He has commanded.

Part 2: Basic aspects of the missionary task

1 Timothy 1:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:1-2

Deal with false teachers. (3-4, 6-7)

Establish doctrinal standards in the church, including negative standards: Not only standards of what must be taught, but also commanding those who teach false doctrine to cease and desist. Confront individuals when necessary. (3)

Deal directly with speculative and syncretistic theologies. Pass on the Gospel of which you are a steward. (4)

Recognize and deal with impure motives and spiritual ignorance in self-proclaimed Christian leaders. (6-7)

Focus on genuine holiness and purity among the people to whom you are sent. (5)

Genuine Christian love

Pure hearts

Good consciences – assurance of salvation

Sincere faith – genuine trust in Christ and belief in the true doctrines of Scripture

Pass on the Word of God to qualified ministers of the Gospel

Pass on the truth you have learned that comes from God's revealed Word

Entrust it to believing, trustworthy, mature, proven men

Entrust it to men who are capable of teaching and who can be counted on to pass it on to others.