

The Commission
Matthew 28:16-20

April 23, 2017

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew reveals a movement by Jesus that is focused on going to Jerusalem. I would like to point out that there appears to be some difficulty in the disciples ability to understand what exactly is going on. This failure to fully understand the divine nature of Jesus is a human failure of the disciples. This by the way add credibility to the text because the author of Matthew does not try to hide any weakness of the disciples. Now in chapter 28 the disciples encounter the post resurrected Jesus. They are in a particular place that is dependent upon their belief.

In the Scripture we see eleven disciples because Judas is now out of the picture. The disciples went about 80 miles from Jerusalem to Galilee. According to Matthew Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, both followers and supports of Jesus, had gone to the tomb and discovered that it was empty. An angel of the Lord told them that he was not there but had been raised. The angel also instructed them to go tell the disciples that they will see him in Galilee. Now the Scripture takes place in Galilee. It shows confidence in the testimony of the women. They now see Jesus and they worship him. We are not used to seeing disciples worship Jesus. Most of the time the disciples are followers of Jesus that do not fully understand the divine but go along with him. Only in Matthew 14 do we see a such a scenario where Jesus walks on water and when he gets into the boat they worship him. Today we see they worshiped him again. It is when they recognize the power that Jesus has over nature that they realize his divine status.

Notice in the Scripture that some doubted. This adds credibility to Matthews testimony as the Gospel does not skew any of the information in order to gain favor. The Gospel reveals details that are both favorable and unfavorable. So, why did some doubt? I think it is because humans aren't used to seeing anyone or anything defy nature. The fact that Jesus was resurrected and they are encountering this resurrected Jesus goes against everything that they know is possible. It connects us with previous lessons of Matthew where Jesus told disciples repeatedly that he must go to Jerusalem where he will suffer, even die, and be raised.

Studying Matthew reveals the difficulty the disciples have in understanding this. All along their travels with Jesus they fail to fully recognize and understand his divine nature. Sometimes they get it and sometimes they don't. When Jesus entered Jerusalem they were not thinking of those lessons that Jesus told them about having to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die and be raised. When Jesus was suffering they were not think about him telling them that he was going to suffer. They didn't assume that he would be OK. When Jesus died they were not thinking he will be back. Now that Jesus has been raised we do not see a different character of the disciples. We see the same character of the disciples. We see that some doubt. If Matthew's goal was to take a human being and make him divine then Matthew would not show a failure of the disciples, he would cast the disciples as people prove his claim. Matthew's goal is to reveal the truth to the best of his ability. Therefore, Matthew shows a divine person that has to struggle with humanity which includes everyone his enemies and his closest allies.

It is obvious that Jesus knows all along exactly what is going on . He knows he will die and be resurrected. He knows that he needs the disciples to carry on the divine legacy; to spread

the word to the world. What happens in the text is that Jesus meets the disciples and explains his authority. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. Then Jesus commissions the disciples to go and make disciples of all the nations to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey his commandments. Remember that he will be with you always.

Jesus had a very important divine mission. The most important ever in world history. To offer himself as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of humanity. This is the perfect sacrifice or offering. Now, people often say that Jesus is the perfect because he is free of sin. But that is not the case. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice because he is the son of God. It is the flesh, blood, and bone of God that is the only thing that has high enough value to cover the sins of humanity. He is free of sin because he is the son of God.

The challenge for us is what our response is to the Gospel. If we are in denial, have doubt, or are lethargic then we need to realize that Jesus calls us to discipleship. Jesus encourages the disciples to teach the people to obey his commandments. The Scripture is a call for discipleship. To put this in perspective ask "what if the disciples were just like me?"

If we do not practice discipleship then the Good News does not get delivered. If the word is not delivered then there is no invitation. Salvation gets offered from Jesus through the disciples to the people throughout history to us today. It is the people that are called to make disciples. The commission to the disciples is a commission to us today. Go and make disciples of all nations, baptize them and teach them. Do not be afraid, do not hold back, Jesus is with you always. This means the power of the divine is with you. This is the commission to the disciples. This is the commission to us.