**Christ’s Authority in the Great Commission**

Jesus ascended to heaven after His death, burial and resurrection and was exalted to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33). But before He left this earth, He told His disciples, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). Nearly 600 years earlier, the prophet Daniel described a vision in which “One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14). Peter made it clear in Acts 2 that Jesus accomplished this when He ascended to heaven.

The logical consequence of Christ’s absolute preeminence is that every being in existence (except the Father, 1 Corinthians 15:27) is subject to Him. That means that every person on the face of the earth should submit to His authority and become His disciple.

Jesus made His proclamation of His ultimate authority on this occasion for a reason. In verse 19, He continued, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Mark’s account of Jesus’ remarks include, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16).

Men often refer to these commands of Jesus as the Great Commission. Other conclusions become evident in these commands considering the all-encompassing authority of Jesus.

**Discipleship is offered freely regardless of ethnicity or earthly citizenship.** The kingdom of Christ knows no geographic boundaries. Many of the prophecies concerning the Messianic kingdom emphasized that “all the nations will stream into it” (Isaiah 2:2-3) and that is certainly true of Christ’s kingdom today.

**By reason of His authority, Christ has the right to define the conditions for discipleship.** In His parting instructions to His apostles, Jesus made an inextricable link between making disciples and baptism. In Mark’s account, He made it crystal clear what it takes to be saved: faith and baptism. Of course, if a person wants to be condemned, all he must do is disbelieve. Those who try to disassociate baptism from Christ’s conditions for accepting His grace are resisting the absolute authority of the Son. Any teacher who refuses to quote Jesus should be ashamed.

**Verse 20 makes Jesus’ commission perpetual for every generation.** Once His apostles made disciples, they were to teach them “to observe all that I commanded you.” Of course that includes growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). But it also includes these instructions to spread the good news and make disciples! May every generation of Christians demonstrate Christ’s love for the souls of men by sharing the saving gospel with a lost and dying world.

**John McKee**

**West Murray church of Christ**