

**National Ministries Conference
“For the Sake of the Name”**

III John PART 3

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May grace and peace be multiplied to each of you again tonight in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. If you would take your copy of God's Word and be turning to the Gospel of Matthew. While you're turning, permit me to take a moment to again express what a blessing it has been to be with you these days. I am a local pastor with some itinerant ministry. When I get home, I'm inevitably asked, how did it go? And, one primary way these days, rate how it went. There are some events that I go to when come home drained, and there are other events. I go home refreshed and renewed. It has been spiritually refreshing to be among you these days. I have fallen. you all are going to have to. I know this breaks polity, but you all have to accept me now as an extended member of this church family. I'm grateful and thankful for the entire leadership and membership of this church. And I want you to know that as we part ways tonight, we will be continuing to cover you and believe in prayer in the days to come. And my prayer for you is what I pray for my own congregation back home, that your dreams will be even greater than your memories, and that God will continue to do great things through the life and work of this church.

Matthew 28:6 - 20. I'm reading again tonight from the English Standard Version of the Bible, and they're in God's Word reads.

Now the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him. But some doubted. Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Amen.

When you get to the end of Matthew chapter 27, Jesus is dead and buried.

But that is not how the story ends. In Matthew 28, women go to the tomb to perform proper burial rites on the body of Jesus. In verse six they are told he is not here, for he is risen. The angel instructs them to go tell the disciples that Jesus is alive and will meet them in Galilee. On their way they run into the risen Savior himself, who also instructs them to go tell the disciples that he is alive and will meet them in Galilee. After that brief report of the resurrection, the rest of Matthew chapter 28 records two responses to the resurrection of Jesus. Verses 11 through 15 record the unbelievers response to the resurrection. The religious

leaders bribed Roman soldiers to say that the disciples had stole the body from the tomb as they slept. It was a ridiculous lie. But verse 15 editorialized this.

This story has been spread among the Jews to this day. The 16th through the 20th verse records the believer's response to the resurrection of Jesus, which climaxes in Coleman with what we know as the Great Commission. But I want you to feel the tension of the text. There are two ways to respond to the risen Savior, Jesus Christ. You can stubbornly refuse to believe the resurrection of Jesus, or you can boldly proclaim the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. And so the passage begins here in verse 16 by saying, the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. Note that the 12 are now 11. Judas is no longer with them. The Bible says, the one who betray Jesus. Matthew 27, verse five hanged himself. And yet it is 11, because Peter is still with them. Peter denied the Lord three times, but by God's rescuing grace his failure was not final. The 11 then go to a predetermined but unidentified Galilean mountainside to await the arrival of Jesus. Verse 17 says, when they saw him, they worshiped literally. They fell down prostrate before him. It's the same way the women responded to the risen Savior earlier in verse nine. It is a reminder that Jesus is more than a wise rabbi, more than a miracle worker, more than some religious zealot. The crucified Savior is the risen Lord who is worthy of our worship. Verse 17 says, as they worship some daily.

I don't know what to do with that. I have read commentator after commentator who's tried to explain or explain that phrase away. I just accept it as, at face value. That awkward statement affirms the unapologetic truthfulness of the biblical record. Shocked by the reality of the resurrection as they worshiped, they are still coming to grips with the fact that it is really Jesus alive again.

And at that point, the scene shifts. Verses 18 through 20 just goes on to tell us how Jesus responds to the 11. He issues what we call the Great Commission. It is not the Great Commission because it is the last command of Jesus or the most important command of Jesus. It is the great Commission because, as Matthew presents it here in the progression of this narrative, it is the proper response to the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. The risen Savior commissions his disciples to make disciples. And so the question on the table tonight is, how can this congregation continue to be a great commission? Church? How are we to fulfill the Great Commission? Three answers. I hope you will see that right out of the passage itself. How are we to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ?

First of all, submit to the authority of Jesus. Verse 18 is not a commission. It's a claim. It is an audacious claim of sovereign. Authority. Jesus declares all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. What a declaration. Authority here is more than power. It is absolute power. It is jurisdiction. It is freedom of action. It is the legal right to use power.

But tonight you have a couple of NFL football games on well-paid, highly trained, greatly skilled athletes will be on the field doing their thing, but none of them - I don't care what their name, what their contract, what their reputation will be the most important person on the scheme, on

the field, are more important than the skill of the athletes, will be the authority of the referees. They don't have fan following. They don't have big contract, they don't have signature shoes. But the referees have a whistle. And the authority of the referee can disqualify the skill of the athlete. And the authority that the referee has on the ball field is the authority that Jesus claims to have over the universe. Except no instant replay, no Fans protest or Commissioner's ruling can overthrow or overrule the authority of Jesus Christ.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Notice the scope of it. All of it.

A couple of years ago, I wrote a book on worship, and I mentioned this verse. And after citing this verse, declare that if Jesus has all authority, no one else has any. They gave me a new editor who wrote me and said, you might want to change that sentence. I wrote her back and said, I definitely do not want to change that sentence there. Indeed, there is delegated authority. But Jesus has true freedom of action and true jurisdiction, full authority over everything. Friends don't discount this. This is one of the most important Christological claims in all of the New Testament.

Jesus declares that he has personal discretion to use divine sovereignty. He's in charge of everything. Since Louis is right, there's no middle ground. Either he is a liar or a lunatic, or he is Lord of all. But not only do you see in that verse the scope of his authority, we see the sphere of his authority. Where does this authority operate? In heaven and on earth? In heaven is the unseen spirit realm. He is saying that Michael and his army of angels and Satan and his army of demons must out, must all bow the knee to him. And then on earth, land and sea. Every government, every nation, state, every kingdom is under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The source of it is that it has been given to him, given to him by the father. John three verse 35 says, The Father loves the son, and has placed all things into his hands. I encourage you before the election in a few days, to go back and reread Psalm two and be reminded of where the Lord is on election night, while the nations rage and the people are in an uproar.

And as the rulers take counsel and set themselves against the Lord and the anointed Jesus. The Bible declares that the Lord is where he has always been on his throne. And the psalmist says in Psalm two, while the nations rage and the people plot in vain, he who sits in the heavens laughs. What a comfort that is. Human rebellion is divine comedy.

God laughs at man's puny attempts to get rid of him. And in Psalm two verse eight, he says to his beloved son, just ask of me, and I will give you the nations as your possession and the ends of the earth as your heritage. Here Jesus declares that he is the fulfillment of that prophetic prediction in Psalm two.

All authority belongs to Jesus. And so we carry out the Great Commission first by submitting to the authority of Jesus. Secondly, by obeying the the command of Jesus. Verse 19 says, go therefore and make disciples. The key word of verse 19 is that term therefore, which links verse

18 to verse 19. Verse 18 is a claim. Verse 19 and 20 is the commission, but they intricately go together.

If verse 18 is not true, then verses 19 and 20 are meaningless. The sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus Christ is the fuel and the force and the foundation of the Great Commission. What is the Great Commission, if I may present it this way, verses 19. Going into verse 20, Jesus says, make disciples. Mark disciples. Mature disciples. First he says, make disciples.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. A disciple is a follower. It's not so much a student in a class, but the follower of a rabbi. The disciple would join himself to the rabbi to be with the rabbi, to learn from the rabbi, to become like the rabbi. Once that disciple finished rabbinical school, he would be free to start accepting disciples of his own.

But Jesus here does not give the disciples that right. Disciples of Jesus are to make disciples of Jesus. I think maybe one of the best statements of discipleship in the scriptures is Matthew chapter 11, verse 29, where Jesus says, take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.

To follow Jesus is to learn from him. We believe in Jesus that we might belong to Jesus, that we may become like Jesus. And here he says that followers of Jesus are to help others, to follow Jesus. That's the singular command of the text. That's the great commission of the Lord Jesus. It is the gospel priority of the local church. Followers of Jesus are to help others, to follow Jesus. That's the biblical way of church growth. That's the proper way to advance the kingdom of heaven. That's the only way to truly reach the next generation, followers of Jesus, to help others, to follow Jesus. I'll move on. But let me ask you tonight. Who in your life are you helping to follow Jesus?

But of course, I cannot move on without saying here that we're to make disciples not just of our neighborhoods, but of the nations. Not just reaching our friends, relatives, associates, coworkers, classmates. No no no no no. We're to make disciples of all the nations. It's a work that is as small as your neighborhood and as large as 7 billion people. Nations here refers to ethnicities. It is a reminder. It is a reminder. That white supremacy, Black Lives matter, and any other race based agenda dishonors the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. I'm glad to announce tonight Jesus is a equal opportunity Savior. By his blood, he redeemed sinners from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people. And then where to mark disciples baptism.

The term here refers was used of the process of dyeing cloth. It identifies us with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is not merely some manmade tradition. It is a part of the instruction of Jesus by which we identify with his death, burial, and resurrection. It is how we go public with our faith.

To be baptized and watch the formula in the name of the father, son, and Holy Spirit. That is more than just a baptismal formula. It is a statement of faith. What must one believe about Jesus to be saved? In a word? Everything. No, you don't have to know or understand everything

to be saved. Some of us here have been walking with Christ for decades and still have so much to learn.

But you cannot reject the clear biblical revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then claim to trust him for salvation. Notice this bold statement of faith. It is not baptism in the names plural, but in the singular name of the father, son, and Holy Spirit. Matthew 11:27 Jesus says that. *No one knows the son except the father. And no one knows the father except the son, and whoever he chooses to reveal him to.*

In John 10:28 through 30, Jesus says, *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one can snatch them out of my hand. My father who gave them to me is greater than all. And no one can snatch them out of my father's hand. I and the father are one.* As the theme of this conference reminds us, We are to go out to make disciples for the sake of the name. But not only way to make disciples and mark disciples where to mature disciples. Teaching them in verse 22, observe all that I have commanded you. It's more than just some profession of faith. That step of faith must become a walk of obedience. John 8:31 and 32 says, if you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. There must be biblical teaching to make disciples.

Music is wonderful. Programs have their place. Service is necessary. But spiritual transformation requires biblical teaching. *All Scripture*, II Timothy 3:16 says, *is breathed out by God in this profitable for teaching and for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.* Would you know? He doesn't say, teach them to observe selective commands. Teach them to observe it all.

The goal is to be able to say, as Paul says in Acts 20, verses 26 and 27, at the end of his ministry, he says to the Ephesian elders that I declare to you to this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men, because I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole council of God. And then teach them not just to know better, but to do better. Teach them to observe, to obey, to practice all that I have commanded you. How does the church become, or continue to be, or grow in being a disciple? Making church? You must submit to the authority of Jesus. You must obey the command of Jesus. And finally, I want to leave this word with you.

The third answer to how to be a great commission disciple making church is that you must believe the assurance of Jesus. Verse 20. And behold, I am with you always. To the end of the age. This assurance book ends the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew 12:3 says, *behold, the virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son, and he shall be called Emmanuel, which means God with us.* And now at the end of Matthew's gospel, the Emmanuel himself declares, behold, I am with you. If you're keeping score. This is the third claim of deity in the Great Commission. Verse 18. Jesus claims all authority. Then he, in verse 19 makes himself equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. And here he claims. Omnipresence. How I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 18 verse 20 says, where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst. He's with us when we gather. And now he says, I'm with you when you go. And I want

to tell you, this is not a wonderful promise. It's more than that. It's a blessed assurance. Jesus doesn't say, I will be with you. He says, I am with you. Aren't you glad about that? Aren't you glad that Jesus doesn't give this great assignment? And then says to the 11. I hope you all will be there for each other. No, he says, I am with you. I am with you. The I is emphatic. This is more than just a promise of the coming Holy Spirit. This is a statement of his personal devotion to those who trust in him. I am with you. How long are you with us? Always. Literally all the days. In fact, this is the fourth all inclusive statement in the Scripture here and the Great Commission we are given. He says, I have all authority. We're to make disciples of all the nations. We're to teach all that I have commanded. And he says, I am with you literally all the days. Even to the end of the age, the age that began with his crucifixion and resurrection and will conclude when he comes again. Only Jesus can talk like that. Until I come again, I am with you.

May that be a comforting word to you as a congregation. He is with you.

As a boy I read about a boy – that when he reached the second grade he made an announcement to his mother. He told his mother, I'm a big boy now, and I'm able and ready to walk to school by myself. His mother did not agree. But he pressed her. He's not a first grader anymore. I'm a second grader. I'm. I'm able to walk to school. What? Since his explanations didn't work. He tried negotiation. He said, mom, you pay that girl a quarter to walk me to school. If you let me walk by myself, I'll only charge you \$0.15. You can keep the dime for yourself. He kept pressuring until she consented. But some time later, at a family get together, the little boy is boasting and bragging to the family. What a big boy he is walking by himself until his mother could not take it. And she said, son, in front of everyone. I don't mean to bust your bubble, but you have never walked to school on your own. Every morning when you leave the house, mama waits for you to get a house to two ahead of me, and I would follow you all the way to school till I saw you get safely in the building. And then at 3:00, when the bell rang and you came out that door, mama would be right across the street behind the trees. And I would follow you every step of the way home to make sure you arrived safely.

Oh, Briarwood, please know that you are not walking alone. No matter how it seems, no matter how it looks, no matter how it feels. You are not walking alone. Our sovereign Lord, who has called you to this work, gives this assurance. I am with you always to the end of the age.

My mother taught me to sing...

I've seen the lightning flashing. I've heard the thunder roll.

I've felt sin's breakers dashing. Trying to conquer my soul.

But I've heard the voice of my Savior. Telling me to still fight on.

He promised never to leave me. Never to leave me alone.

No, we're never alone. Because he promised. Never to leave us alone.

Thank you, father, tonight for your word. Thank you for these days together. We pray, father, that you would help us to be all the more rooted and grounded in our faith. That we would be drawing near to you. That you would draw near to us. That we would grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. May every sphere of our lives be brought under the authority of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We pray that you would help this church to be fully committed to the Great Commission in every sphere of its life and work, and to walk in the days ahead with the assurance that you are with them. Bless this congregation. Hedge of protection around them. Cancel the plans of the enemy, fulfill their holy desires, and bring to pass the deeds prompted by their faith. Comfort their hearts. Strengthen their faith. Order their steps. Bless their labors to the praise of your glory. Amen.