

Matthew 28:18-20

- He has got all authority on earth! -

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Introduction

- ❖ These words of Jesus: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (...) And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age,” encourage Christians all over the world and especially those who suffer hardships and persecutions, due to their faith in the Lord.
- ❖ Presidents come and go. Some try to stay in office for more than two or three or even four terms. But even powerful presidents become men of age and eventually die or have to resign. A new president needs to be elected. None of the presidents in office has all power or authority in this world. The Christian community has, therefore, an astonishing claim. Jesus Christ said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). And this authority has not been given for one or two terms as a general secretary of the United Nations, or even a third term. He said: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:20).
 - Jesus Christ didn’t acquire his power and authority through election, nor by revolution, nor by inheritance. His power has given by God, God-given authority, by his heavenly Father, the Creator of heaven and earth.
- ❖ This impressive declaration has far-reaching consequences:
 - Religious > there is no other God, then the NAME, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He is the God of the living (Mt 22:32).
 - Political > “for there is no authority except that which God has established” (Rom 13:1). Christ is the ruler of the kings of the Earth (Rev 1:5).

- Societal > the teachings of Jesus Christ (Mt 28:19) will change societies when people put his words into practice. Christian communities are believing, loving, caring and merciful communities of hope, living in communion with God, through baptism and the Spirit.
 - Personal > to acknowledge the authority of Jesus Christ means that everyone who will call upon his NAME, will be saved (Acts 2:21). The Holy Spirit will transform the life of each individual believer because he/she is already a new creation (Eph 4:24).
- ❖ The authority of Christ is a realized authority, which means that he is presently ruling this earth till the end of this age. He has all power, which he doesn't share with other "powers". His authority is visible in this world. Christians are found across the continents, from Canada to Europe, Siberia, and China, from Argentina to South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Even in predominantly Islamic and Hinduist countries, there are vivid Christian communities found.
 - ❖ This outline will focus on the authority of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. Questions concerning the mode and moment of Baptism will not be discussed.¹
 - While preaching on these words of Jesus, the preacher should focus on one or two aspects. At the end of this outline, some examples are given.
 - ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of Matthew. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a "stand-alone". You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

- ❖ Matthew 28:18-20 is the conclusion of the Gospel of which the opening verse reads:
 - "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt 1:17)
 - David: "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; **your throne will be established forever**" (2 Sam 7:16).
 - > "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
 - Abraham: "and through your offspring **all nations on earth will be blessed**, because you have obeyed me" (Gen 22:18).
 - > "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations."
 - Matthew made clear that Jesus Christ is the true son of David and the true son of Abraham. He is the promised ONE.

¹ Dockery, D. Baptism. In Green, J. (1992, p. 55-58)

- ❖ Jesus preached about this Kingdom:
 - A summary of his preaching is found in the Sermon on the Mount. He referred to this sermon when he said: “make disciples... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19). This is also illustrated by the fact that he summoned his disciples to go back to “the mountain.”
- ❖ He already expressed his authority:
 - His authority was already seen in expressions like: “**But I tell you** that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment” (Mt. 5:22).
 - And in: “Not everyone who says **to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’** will enter the kingdom of heaven, but...” (Mt. 7:20).

Form and structure

- ❖ The structure of Matthew 28:18-20:

<i>Situation</i>	(After the resurrection) Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.
<i>Declaration of the Kingdom of God:</i>	Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
<i>The realization of the Kingdom of God:</i>	Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.
<i>The promise of the Kingdom of God:</i>	And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

- ❖ To worship = “**προσκυνέω**” (κυνέω ‘to kiss’) is used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment, the ground, etc.; to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure, (fall down and) worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to, welcome respectfully. (...) The risen Lord is especially the object of worship.²

² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 882-883).

- ❖ Authority = “ἐξουσία” is 1. a state of control over something, freedom of choice, right. 3. **the right to control or command, authority, absolute power, warrant** of the risen Christ.³
 - Jesus exercised his authority by teaching the people: “the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Mt 7:28–29).
 - Jesus already expressed his authority by: “But so that you may know that **the Son of Man** has **authority** on earth to forgive sins...” (Mt 9:6). His authority is the authority of the Son of Man...
 - “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Mt 12:8). He will give true rest.
 - “The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil” (Mt 13:41).
 - “For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done” (Mt 16:27).
 - “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left” (Mt 25:31-33).
 - “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Mt 26:64; Dan 7:13-14).
- ❖ In the NAME = “εἰς τὸ ὄνομα” means that a person by baptism is brought “into an existence that is fundamentally determined by and ruled by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”⁴
 - The NIV translates: “baptizing them *in* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” and gives also the alternative: “baptizing them *into* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (see Acts 8:16; 19:5; Romans 6:3; 1 Cor. 1:13; 10:2 and Gal. 3:27.)

³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 353).

⁴ Hagner, D. (1993a, p. 888)

Exposition

Verse 16-17

- ❖ After his resurrection from the dead and the first appearances, Jesus told his disciples to go back to Galilee and especially the mountain (= τὸ ὄρος) of the sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-2, 8:1). Which is probably also the mountain of the feeding of the five thousand (Mt 14:13-21) and of the four thousand (Mt 15:29-39). Finally, at this mount, the transfiguration took place (Mt 17:1-13).
- ❖ **“When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”**
 - Jesus said to Satan: “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” (Mt 4:9)
 - Did some of the disciples doubt because they couldn’t accept yet that Jesus was their Lord and God? (Compare this with the reaction of Thomas in John 20:28).
 - They were worshipping the Son of Man, who had received ALL authority in heaven and on earth!

Verse 18 Declaration of the Kingdom of God:

- ❖ All authority:
 - He “dethroned” Satan, the usurper of this world. Compare Matthew 4:8-9 with verse 18:
 - “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”
 - Jesus Christ was not sent into this world in order to receive the splendor but to save sinners. Satan showed Jesus the marvelous temples of the Roman Empire, the gold, the marble, the statues. Satan showed Jesus the palaces of the rulers of this earth. He didn’t show Jesus the red light districts, the slaves, the poor, the sick, the refugees of this world.
 - Daniël 7:13–14 is one of the most fundamental passages in Scripture:
 - (Daniel:) “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was **one like a son of man**, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.
He was given authority, glory and sovereign power;
all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away,
and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan 7:13-14)

- How does the exalted Christ establish his authority? It is not by violence, not by election, not by revolution but by: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zach 4:6)
- He has the authority to save and to judge this world:
 - “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”
 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. (...) And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man” (Jn 5:21–27; Acts 2:36).
- He has the authority to reveal:
 - “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Mt 11:27).
 - “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:1-2).

Verse 19 *The realization of the Kingdom of God:*

- ❖ This is often called the great commission. The verbs are marked by different colors:

“Therefore go
 and make disciples of all nations,
 baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”⁵

 - The main verb is “make disciples.” To carry out this commission, the disciples or apostles need to go into the world, to all nations.
 - The initiation of becoming a disciple is by baptism into the NAME. And a disciple will start learning from and obeying the commands of Jesus in a lifelong process.

⁵ Wallace, D. (1996, p 642, 645)

- ❖ A major transition has taken place in comparison with Matthew 10:5-7:
 - “These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’”
 - When the people of Israel stayed at the mount Sinai, God declared:
 - “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Ex 19:5–6)
 - From now on, the disciples will go to all nations, including the Jewish people (Ac 1:6-8).
 - “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then all nations will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (See also 1 Pt 2:9 and Rev 1:5-6).
 - **“This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”** (Eph 3:6; Ga 3.26-29; 1 Cor 12:13)

Verse 20 *The promise of the Kingdom of God:*

- ❖ “All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, **and they will call him Immanuel**”—which means, **“God with us.”** (Mt 1:22; Isa 7:14)

Application

Many sermons can be delivered from these words of Jesus. Therefore, the preacher should focus on one or two major aspects.

- ❖ FOCUS on the authority of Jesus Christ (verse 18):
 - Some major questions arise, which should be thoughtfully addressed:
 - If Christ has all power, why doesn’t he intervene in all the conflicts of this world? Or more personally, why doesn’t he intervene in the adversities I am coping with?
 - Answer:
 - He did intervene by humbling himself and becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:8).
 - He identified himself with mankind (Isa 53; Jn 19:5).
 - Romans 8:17-39 is very illustrative at this point.

- His authority has been prophesied in the Old Testament:
 - The Psalms:
 - Psalm 2 (verse 7-9):
“I will proclaim the decree of the Lord:
He said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.
Ask of me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.
You will rule them with an iron scepter;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”
 - Psalm 110 (verse 1):
The Lord says to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”
 - (Psalm 89:27; also Rev 11:15)
 - The Prophets:
 - Isaiah 9:6-7:
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on
and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.
 - 2 Samuel 7:16 (Lk 1:32-33):
“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will
be established forever.”
 - Daniel 7:13-14 (see above).
 - The church is called to proclaim the authority of Christ and his salvation, as Paul
summarized:
 - “That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in
Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the
heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and
every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to
come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head

over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Eph 1:19–23).

- He has the authority to:
 - Forgive sins: “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” Then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” (Mt 9:6) He has the authority to:
 - Give eternal life: “For you (Father) granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him” (Jn 17:2).
 - To judge this world (Mt 25:31-46; Rev 20:1-10).
 - To rule this world (Rev 11:15-19).
- His authority is based on:
 - “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father” (Joh 10:17-18).

❖ Other examples to focus on:

- FOCUS on “making disciples” (verse 19) – the great commission:
 - Why should someone become a disciple of Christ? The preacher can contrast earthly authorities and the authority of Christ, who became a servant:
 - “When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (Jn 13:12-17; Phil 2:5-11).
 - What will happen when someone becomes a disciple?
 - He will acknowledge the authority of Christ.
- FOCUS on “teaching” (verse 19):
 - There is a strong connection between the great commission and “the sermon on the Mount.”

- It is very instructive to study all the passages of the sermon on the Mount in which Jesus is teaching about the Kingdom, such as Mt 5:3-10; Mt 6:33.
- FOCUS on “in the NAME of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (verse 19):
 - This theme will be elaborated in another sermon outline.
- FOCUS on “prayer” and “worship” (verse 17):
 - The Lord’s prayer (Mt 6:10–13):
 - your kingdom come,** < all authority.
 - your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** < teaching them to obey.

(The promise of the Kingdom – I am with you:)
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’
for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. < all authority.
- FOCUS on “baptizing” (verse 19):
 - This theme will be elaborated in another sermon outline.
- FOCUS on “authority and persecution” (Mt 5:10-12; Mt 10:5-42)(verse 20):
 - “On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. **At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you**” Mt 10:18-20).
 - The theme of persecution is often overlooked, but at the same time prominently present in the Gospel of Matthew and the sermon on the mount in particular: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Mt 5:43-45).
 - To love the enemies and to pray for those who persecute you, is possible because a Christian believes the authority of Christ.

Quotes⁶

- ❖ “Nothing strengthens authority so much as silence.” (Leonardo da Vinci)
- ❖ “I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven.” (A.W. Tozer)
- ❖ “The day the power of love overrules the love of power, the world will know peace.” (Mahatma Gandhi)
- ❖ “[God says] Discipleship is not limited to what you can comprehend - it must transcend all comprehension. Plunge into the deep waters beyond your own comprehension, and I will help you to comprehend even as I do. Bewilderment is the true comprehension. Not to know where you are going is the true knowledge. My comprehension transcends yours.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*).

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