

All Authority

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." MATTHEW 28:18-20

For many people, "authority" is a negative concept. The post-modern man does not want anyone to hold authority over his/her life. Modern society, at its best, is becoming increasingly individualistic, incapable of trusting any one. Once, while sharing the gospel, I asked a man if he would follow the Lord if I could prove to him that God existed and that Jesus was the only way to God. He surprised me with a truly honest answer, "Even if you prove it all, I will not submit to such authority because I want to live my life my way, no matter what". As a whole, we are very resistant to give power to anyone, fearing that the good who rule over us will become evil; that somehow, those who had sought our best interest would change to those who sought their own self interest over the better good.

In 1887, Lord Acton wrote, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." History substantiates this axiom as we observe the great evils propagated by people who exercise such power and absolute authority. The only historical exception to this axiom is seen in the person of Jesus: the One who holds absolute authority, the One who is absolutely free from corruption, the One who would always seek the best interest of each individual while also seeking the best for all mankind. Without the understanding of the nature of the person of Jesus, the true "authority", how difficult it is for the modern man to accept Him. Truly, the Lordship of Jesus is one of the greatest stumbling blocks to overcome, simply because we want to do it our way, in our time, and to our liking. We are unwilling to simply trust one having all authority.

Today, when we study leadership, the subject of authority often comes up. Generally, there are two types of authority that are discussed; Personal Authority and Positional Authority. Personal authority is the authority that comes from a knowledge and experience base and is able to produce results. Positional authority simply comes from the position or title one holds in a government, company or other organization. Personal authority can be exercised because people see that one possesses a gift, power, knowledge, viewpoint, expertise, etc. that will make the common goals more likely to be achieved. Positional authority is exercised by the power of

the organization to bring forth reward or punishment as necessary to achieve the desired goals of the organization.

In most cases, Jesus tended to use His personal authority. Jesus' ministry is full of examples of His use of personal authority. When He tells Peter to throw the net on the other side of the boat, Peter obeys (with much doubt), not because of any position that Jesus holds, but because he sees Jesus' knowledge demonstrated as a great teacher. The results produce further submission to Jesus' authority because Peter witnesses a power not demonstrated by anyone else.

Without proclaiming His positional authority (Son of Man, Son of God, Messiah of Israel), Jesus "taught as one having authority"; He cast out demons, healed the sick, raised the dead. Though He possessed positional authority (and occasionally it was recognized, mostly by demons [Mark 1:24-26], and gentiles [Mark 8:8-13]), He simply did the Will of the Father, being obedient in all things. As people recognized His personal authority, they followed.

His personal authority so overclouded his positional authority that it raised many questions such as: "Who do people say that I am?" (leading the disciples to recognize His position) and ""By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?" (Mark 11:28)

Even Jesus' teachings seem to emphasize personal authority (servant leadership) rather than positional authority.

MARK 10:42-45 - Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials *exercise authority* over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (italics added for emphasis)

To be clear, Jesus always possessed His positional authority and even clarified that He possessed it. However, He doesn't seem to see the need of proclaiming it to accomplish His purposes.

After Jesus has built on his personal authority and has even risen from the dead, He proclaims his positional authority before giving this command: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go..." Clearly, there is a definite shift in the way Jesus leads in the Matthew 28 verses. We need to look deeper to understand this variation. First of all the authority that Jesus claims is unlimited... "All authority". To clarify, in case there is doubt, this is not just authority in heaven or authority on earth, but both. It also has no time limit. In proclaiming His right to command, there can be no question He both has the right and authority

to command and He is now exercising that authority. This authority is given; it was not taken. It is legitimate. This is not some idea that He came up with after His resurrection, but rather it is part of the Divine plan that was prophesied and then demonstrated during His ministry on earth. It is the authority of the "Son of Man". John proclaims that the Son of Man has the authority to judge.

JOHN 5:26-27 For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.

He demonstrated that He has the authority to forgive sin in the passage where He heals the paralytic.

MAR 2:8-12 Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'? "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home." And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

Clearly, Jesus' authority to execute judgment and to forgive, and His willingness to do both, is a central tenant of our faith, indeed our salvation.

The authority of the Son of Man is also spoken of by the prophet Daniel when he says,

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." [Daniel 7:13-14]

Clearly, in all heaven and earth, there is no authority that is more legitimate, more unquestionable, or that requires us to obey more than this authority which is possessed by Jesus. He has all authority in Heaven and on Earth. This authority was prophesied, explained, proclaimed and in this verse, claimed.

What is so important that Jesus used this time to pronounce His unparalleled authority? The importance lies in the command, "GO!" Going is not a recommendation, nor is it a guideline. It is a command from He who possesses "ALL authority in Heaven and on Earth". There is no getting around it, there are no loop holes, there is no explaining it away. There is only obedience or disobedience.

This week, we will continue to look at "all nations", "all that Jesus Taught" and "always".

I believe that the command to "Go", is really a continuation of the command to "Go" given to Abraham. The promises that were given to Abraham when he was told to "Go" from your country included the promise that "in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed", later restated as "all the nations of the earth be blessed". We know that this promised seed is Jesus who brings salvation to all

the nations. Now that He has come, the “Go” command is to take this Gospel to all nations, to all peoples. It is great that the salvation was given, but without its proclamation, salvation will not be realized.

Romans 10:12-15 says, “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

Now, to whom was this command given? Was it not to the early church? Was it not to the Jewish church? Clearly, at the time the command was given, there were not yet any Gentile believers. We in the Messianic Movement love to quote Romans 1:16, “ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Rightly, we defend the promises that God made to Israel from being taken by the church through replacement theology. Yet we do understand that the church has not replaced Israel, yet they may hold to many of the promises as having been grafted in to the common wealth of Israel.

Why isn't it that we defend the commands that God gave at the same level? This command to “go” certainly belongs to the church also as having been grafted in. Perhaps, we should also read this command in the same way we read Romans 1:16, I am not ashamed of the command to Go, for it is the power of God for Salvation of all who believe, given first to the Jew and also to the Greek.

If we do not build this command into the DNA of the Messianic movement, then we are being disobedient to He who holds “All authority on Heaven and on earth”. It is the Messianic Movement that must take the Gospel out to others. Yes, we must reach out to the Jewish communities in Israel and throughout the Diaspora, but we dare not forget the command to take the gospel to “all nations”. Brothers, this includes even our enemies. Jonah was sent to the Assyrians. Perhaps we cannot reach them in the countries where we are not allowed to go, but perhaps we can reach them in the countries where there remains a Jewish Diaspora. We have not been commanded to fear. We have not been commanded to judge. We have not been commanded to make excuses. We have been commanded to “Go”.

Only one question remains. Will we be obedient or not? Will we “Go”?

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