

The Risen King's Commission

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[0 : 0 0] You realise. So chapter 28, verse 16. 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. All right. Good morning, church. How are you all doing?

Good. Good. And hello to those part of our church who's also on holidays and watching YouTube. Very welcome. My name is Kelvin. For those that we haven't met, I'm Cindy's husband.

And Cindy's over there in the back. And we are one of the helpers here at Grace Church. Yeah, would you please bow with me as we come to God's Word?

Yeah, let's pray. Yeah, Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that every year we get to have this special season to think about your Son.

[1 : 3 0] Not that it should be done once a year, but it should be done every day. But you really allow this to be something that we can just refocus.

Look at his birth. And today, as we come to your Word and looking at how he has overcome death and has come to life, the hope that brings and the purpose that brings for your world.

Lord, help us have open hearts and minds and hands and feet and just the whole of us that we can be open to you. Please give your people the years to hear your Word and not mine.

And if there are anything, Lord, that are not pleasing that I speak, please forgive and please protect. And all these things we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Yeah, so... Yeah, I want to start with this little analogy, and that is whales. Just as whales are made to live underwater, we are made to live under God, right?

[2 : 3 9] We need whales to survive. I mean, we need water to survive. So when Adam and Eve went autonomous, which literally means self-rule, we as a race basically became beached whales.

We separated ourselves from our source of life and took the entire creation that God has put under us with it. Although we might be loving it on the beach for a while, and I noticed last week many of us did, soon we find ourselves struggling for breath, and eventually we all die, both physically and spiritually, unless there is a plan of rescue.

The entire Old Testament shouts that God has a rescue plan. Time after time, God promised Israel that he will send his anointed king, a Messiah, a descendant from the line of David, to restore everything that is broken, including you and me.

And his plan is not just for Israel, but for all humanity. The good news Matthew reported in this book called the Gospel of Matthew is that the promised king is here, and his name is Jesus, which literally means Yahweh saves.

Israel should be the first to repent, followed by the rest of humanity, because the kingdom of heaven is here. But no matter how amazing and awesome this king's Jesus, his teaching and his miracles were, Israel's leaders just wouldn't budge.

[4 : 26] They took the good news as fake news, and rejected Jesus as God's anointed king, and he even killed him on the cross.

So imagine, you're one of the remaining 11 disciples. You've been following Jesus for three whole years. Your rabbi and friend has died, but now he really came back to life.

You've seen him, you've touched him, you've eaten with him. Incredible. What question would you ask him if you were one of those disciples? Here's the question the disciples, his disciples asked Jesus, and we can see that in Acts 1.

What's happening with that kingdom God has promised Israel? What's happening with that kingdom? In other words, what is next, Lord?

Today, through Matthew 28, we will look at what's next with God's kingdom under three headings. Authority, assignment, and assurance.

[5 : 37] These are in your bulletin. Let's hear them together, because we, the church, God's kingdom people, can only make sense when we know who is in charge, what Christ came for, and once done, and how.

Are we ready? Yes? All right. Let's begin. First, authority. In Australia, people might debate who is the greatest cricketer there ever existed.

Right? I don't know if you're Shane or Steve or whatever, you know. I've got a book on some of them. I've never read it yet. Among the Jews, the supremacy of Moses' authority was really not a subject of debate.

He was not only the lawgiver, but he was also the supreme judge. His power, his authority, actually lasted for generations, even after he died. So when God was preparing this guy Joshua to succeed Moses, this actually became a bit of a problem.

In Numbers 27, and we printed that little snippet in your bulletin as well, God had to tell Moses to do an in-person handover commissioning ceremony in front of the entire nation of over a million people.

[6 : 58] So imagine the MCG, right? Filled with people. I don't know how many of that. Like all that people needs to come together and look at and see this ceremony.

Why? Because God knew that unless he made it really very public, this commissioning, Israel would not obey Joshua when Moses was gone.

And part of the text is printed in the bulletin, so please check it out. Fast forward to Jesus' time, God actually gave some of the Jesus' disciples a preview that Israel must start listening and submitting to Jesus, not Moses.

Do you remember that transfiguration story that we saw in Matthew 17? They were on a high mountain. Jesus was glowing like the sun in front of Peter, James, and John. And then Moses and Elijah also appeared chatting with Jesus.

And of course, Peter was making a fool of himself. And then God spoke through a bright shining cloud. And what did God say? This is my beloved son, with whom I'm well pleased.

[8 : 13] Listen to him. Listen to him. Who need to listen to Jesus here? Surely, Peter, James, and John, right?

But wasn't Moses and Elijah also up on that mountain at that time? Jesus is the one Israel must obey, past, present, and future.

When Jesus summoned the eleven disciples up on the mountain and said to them in Matthew 28, all authorities on heaven and on earth has been given to me, this is not like Jesus had some missing authority and just picked up a new badge and said, here you go, this is my new one.

Jesus was telling the eleven disciples that they need to put some new glasses on, like I have, and be able to see who is actually in charge all along. Not Moses, for Jesus is the ultimate prophet.

Not Caiaphas, for Jesus is the ultimate high priest. And definitely not Caesar or Herod, because Jesus is the ultimate king. As Christ's disciple, have we put on these new glasses on?

[9 : 28] Does the way we spend our time, energy, and worries reflect that Jesus is truly in charge? Or are we letting our screens and our own desires take that place?

Another thing the eleven needed to learn is that the kingdom of heaven is not exclusive to Israel. In Matthew 10, Jesus did tell his disciples, do not go to the Gentiles and Samaritans, but go only to the Lord's sheep of Israel to announce the kingdom of heaven.

Why? Because God had different plans for different parts of Jesus' mission, before and after his death and resurrection.

Do this before the cross and do this after the cross. Plan was different. Jesus was nailed as the king of the Jews, but he rose as the king of heaven and earth.

From the highest to the lowest, to the greatest to the nearest, to the tiniest, the nearest to the furthest, from invisible to visible, all things in the universe answers to Jesus.

[10 : 47] Include those ones, those weird ones, who do not like doughnuts. That's me, by the way. All authorities on heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus.

There is no exception. That is the new perspective the 11 disciples needed. But what's Jesus doing with all this massive power?

He says, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. With the greatest power ever that anyone had ever in the whole universe, Jesus sends out his disciples, not to start a global war, but to all the people groups of all the world to call them into his kingdom.

No one is excluded, for God so loved the world of which all peoples are part of, that he gave his only son. Christ's disciples are not called to form an exclusive local club with people who are just like them by their own initiatives.

They are commanded to make disciples of people regardless of their backgrounds, wherever they are at. That is how our risen king wants disciples to exercise his universal authority.

[12 : 07] What a job it is. Once upon a time, there were three guys who was on a game show interview, and the first guy was asked, Who do you work for?

And this guy dressed in this fancy black suit says, I work for Elon Musk, the richest man in the world. And then he turned to the second guy and says, Hey, what do you do for a living?

And he says, Oh, I work for Taylor Swift, the most popular musician there is over paper probably in all times. And then the host turned to the third guy.

He says, How about you, mate? The guy stood tall and answered, I'm a Christian. I work for Jesus, the most powerful person in the entire universe.

Jesus' disciples are divine, royal ambassadors, representative servants of the highest king of heaven and earth, not mere volunteers.

[13 : 11] Their mission is to make disciples for the king. And what is making disciples? That brings us to our second point, the assignment.

In God's kingdom context, discipleship is not a course you finish, it is a life you enter. Verse 19 says this, 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.

Very familiar words, right? For almost 40 years, I've always thought, when you baptize someone, you have to call on the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, because that's what this verse says.

I was baptized that way, and I've baptized people for years that way. But having searched through the Bible recently, I discovered that no one in the New Testament actually used that wording when they're baptizing people.

I'm not saying, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying this Trinitarian wording so many churches have been using for God knows how many years is wrong. But if you look at Acts chapter 2, 8, 10, and 19, where people were all baptized, they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, without mentioning the Father or the Holy Spirit.

[14 : 37] When I saw this, I was really struggling. I had to go back to check again and again. I did it over a month, just to make sure I'm not seeing things wrongly. And even more interestingly, we go deeper into Acts 19, and please take a look in your spare time.

In 19, Romans 6, and Galatians 3, they all say believers are baptized into Christ. Not in Christ, into Christ, or into the name of Christ.

Which gives us kind of like a sense of a movement thing. And when I looked at the Greek, I don't really like Greek, but I have to look at it. That's what Jesus is saying here in Matthew 20, 18.

Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and so on. And some of you, if you have an ESV Bible or other version, it actually has a footnote saying, you know, all into kind of thing. So what does that mean, into the name of the Father?

To baptize someone, and many of us already know, what is it? It is to wash, or to dip, or to dunk, or to plunge, you know, something into liquid. You know, hopefully it's clean water, right?

[15 : 46] But into the name, what's the technical phrase? Like used in legal documents, like John would love. You know, that signifies a transfer of ownership, of allegiance, or identity.

Like if I sold my car, and I don't want to sell my car yet, I need to go to Services New South Wales and do what? I need to transfer my car's name into the name of the new owner.

So when Jesus told his disciples to baptize people into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, what's happening? He's referring to lives being transferred, being plunged into God's new ownership.

Not so much about the ritual, or the ceremony, which other verses actually talks about in the Bible. Romans 6 says that we are baptized into Christ's death, and resurrection, with the new purpose of living a new life.

Matthew 28 says, discipleship is a complete transfer of identity, ownership, and new relationship. These are overlapping biblical truths.

[16 : 58] They don't conflict, but with different emphasis. Or emphasis? Emphasis. But why Father, Son, and Spirit? Why didn't Jesus just say God?

Well, some of our brothers sitting up the back there actually reminded me last week, salvation is indeed from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit.

One God, three persons. Being co-equal, they coexist in self-giving love centered on, not themselves, but the other person in the Trinity.

Some Christian authors have described the Trinity as like a three-people dance. No one ever claims the center. They're just dancing around each other. Is it like a bush dance kind of thing?

Yeah, a little bit like that. The Father and Son and Holy Spirit would never say, I'm here, you go around me. No. So, this is basically what the disciples' new life is, centered on God and others, which is pretty much the opposite of autonomy, separation, and death.

[18 : 03] being baptized into our new identity and life with God then is being transferred into God's own divine community, the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit.

1 John 1 says that the apostles were the first to enter into this divine community or dance or fellowship. Then, the church follows them into this same community.

being immersed into community with our real source of life is the essence of Christian discipleship and kingdom citizenship.

With the new identity comes a new way of living. So, how? Our Savior King says this in verse 20, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Although disciples are 100% God-made, who are plunged into their new kingdom identity, sorry, although disciples are 100% God-made, all who are plunged into their new kingdom identity need to be taught.

[19 : 12] To our westernized minds, it sounds like endless lectures, sermons, and Bible studies. All that I have commanded you, that's what Jesus said, also sounds like mission impossible, doesn't it?

Who on earth can remember all that Jesus has ever commanded? If we teach or learn Christ's commands by just listening and reading, some studies have shown, and all you teachers out there can correct me, that our retention rate is about 5% to 10%.

Just sitting there listening, listening, that's 5%. So, by the end of today's sermon, that's what you're going to get, 5%. Not so great. But, if you're part of a small group and engage in a group discussion, what happens?

Retention rate would go up to how much? What's it, Alex? 6%. Oh, dear. Mate, you're killing me here.

Well, the study that I looked at by the NTL.org, no, says it actually can go up to 30% to 50%. It's a lot better, isn't it? 5%, you know, 30%, you know.

[20 : 25] But still not great, right? Who wants a 50% ATAR if you're doing your HSC, right? But, if we do what Jesus did with his disciples, okay, so, besides teaching them, a lot of teaching, you know, there are five big chunks of teaching in Matthew, he also taught through practical training, sending them out, and then maybe, you know, coaching them afterwards.

Studies have shown that retention rates can go up to how much, Alex? That's good, right? He gave up. Yeah, 80% or 90%. But, if you actually go do it, you know, try it out, do it, it goes up a lot.

You know, that's how you, oh, this past is amazing, you know, how can they remember so much? Because they actually do it, I mean, you know, and not just pastors. Many, many godly Christians, like, you know what John Patterson says, good Protestants out there, you know.

It's, you know, it's great. It can't go up. So, in Jesus' culture, once a disciple is accepted by the rabbi, he would follow the rabbi everywhere, often without asking the rabbi where he's going.

You can see that in Matthew 8, 19. The disciple, the usual disciple, is the deepest desire, is actually just to follow the rabbi so closely that he would become like the teacher, like a mini-me, you know, following around.

[21 : 43] And Jesus says this in Luke 6, 40 as well. Jesus says, a disciple is not above his teacher, that's the rabbi or master he's referring to, but everyone fully trained will be like his teacher.

So, a disciple would rarely leave his rabbi's side because they don't want to miss out copying his teacher. They follow him everywhere and they copy everything they do, the way they drink tea and whatnot, you know, that's what they do.

And that's why when Jesus walked on water, what did people do? Peter do? You know, he had a bit of a FOMO, you know, like a fear of missing out moment, you know, so he tried copying Jesus, you know, oh, you walk, I walk, you jump, I jump, you know, that's what the disciple do.

Not because he was an idiot, you know, but that isn't just the way, you know, the way of the old days, you know, nobody does that anymore, you know, it's an Israel thing, you know, it's like 2000 years ago, how can we do it?

Life's busy here. To become a qualified electrician in New South Wales, and we've got a couple of them here, where's Brendan? I'm sweating.

[22 : 49] Yeah. In New South Wales, to become a licensed electrician, the current requirement says you need to complete an apprenticeship, is that right? Yeah. Okay, good. It typically requires about four years of training, yeah, roughly, yeah, and approximately 8,000 hours of not lectures, but supervised on the job practical experience alongside formal classroom trainings.

That's today in New South Wales. Why so many hours of practical training? Well, because this way, hopefully, we have more electricians that can remember and actually do, you know, what the law of physics actually says, and, you know, we have less dead electricians, I guess.

The same way it goes with Christian discipleship, formation on top of information, on-the-job training and off-the-job training are equally important.

Listening to God, the gospel-centered preaching, reading books and study Bibles together are all very, very, very good things. We must do them and continue to do them with vigilance.

But the more we live out Christ's commands together, repenting, forgiving, seeking the fathers in prayer together, loving enemies together, giving to the marginalized together, calling the unreached and sending out the equipped together, the more we become like Christ.

[24 : 13] Students, disciples, becoming our ultimate rabbi, Jesus. Discipleship is not a course we finish, it is a life we enter.

So in Matthew 28, our king has given his authority, has given us his assignment, but what can we, but can we really do it?

That's where our king's assurance, our third and final point comes in. In God's kingdom, the king's assurance is both mission and also comfort.

Jesus says, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. That's in verse 20.

This is not a rugby coach giving his team a pep talk before a big game. Go get them, boys, you got this. This is not what it is. This is our king declaring to his first kingdom people, look, I'm here, I got your back.

[25 : 20] Christ has all the authority, wants people of all backgrounds disciplined, and has given orders to get them trained to live according to all his commands.

None of this universal kingdom mission depends on our strength or stamina. Christ is the one who works through his people, and it says here, always, which is translated from the Greek, all the days.

all day, every day. There was an ad called Hayong Day, actually. Always. Jesus never calls in sick.

He doesn't even pretend to work from home. Though our king has surely ascended physically, his spirit remains present in us, in the church, individually, collectively, and we are his kingdom people.

The king is really here. When Jesus says, I'm with you always, he means every ordinary, messy, fearful, painful, but also hopeful day.

[26 : 32] This matters because human effort alone can only produce hype, not fruit. When the right skills, with the right skills and the right charisma, you can easily fill a stadium with cheers, with tears, with applause, and even sinners' prayers.

But unless Jesus is present, doing all the inner work, the seed can just not grow. when Jesus said to his disciples in John 15, apart from me, you can do nothing, it was not a threat, that is the gospel's realism.

Discipleship is not an eight-week course. It is the spirit of Jesus forming kingdom people through his kingdom people, turning taught truths into transformed hearts.

And don't miss the death of this promise. When Jesus says, I am with you, the words is basically Emmanuel, God with us.

Matthew begins and ends his good news with that awesome name. Sin had driven God and humanity apart. Adam was kicked out of the garden, the pillar of fire in the wilderness with Israel.

[27 : 52] It was, yes, bright and warm at night, but it tells Israel to keep a distance. Mount Sinai, the big one, became a kill switch, touch it and you die.

The tabernacle and the temple invites Israel to worship, but massive thick curtain says keep up, keep out, holiness is inside. Without Jesus, there can be no Emmanuel.

Because of Jesus, God is with us. God says, keep out. With Jesus, God says, come in.

So the king's assurance is both commission and also comfort. Commission because his mission is not primarily about our strength. It's about Christ's presence working through us.

Comfort because he draws us in and near and we are never sent out alone. Matthew 28, 17 says that the 11 disciples were doubting.

[28 : 59] If you look at the verse, it says they were doubting. What were they doubting about? They've seen the recent Lord already. Thomas has also seen him in the room.

So what are they doubting? Well, the word also translates to hesitating. They hesitated in bowing down to worship Jesus. But our king did not hesitate to assign them to his kingdom's mission.

Jesus is not looking for perfect Christians to be rock stars in his kingdom. He's calling for the weak, the unworthy, the broken jars of unclean clay through which his presence and power are revealed.

Authority, assurance, and assurance, all these things hold together. Our king rules, our king reigns, our king works in and through us.

Isn't he wonderful? Yes, he's wonderful. Is there anything on earth that is more purposeful? Why are we doom scrolling?

[30 : 10] Why are we watching Netflix? It's okay, actually. Do a little bit of relaxation. But it kills a lot of time and a lot of life. How much life have you got?

I don't know. I often say to my wife, if I die next week, here's the bank account. Get your access. Someone says, if you lay your life out, the number of days left on a spreadsheet, that thing called Excel or Google sheet, whatever, and all the boxes, there's actually not that many boxes left.

You can actually see it. We are very, very incredibly privileged to be called to become a royal ambassador for him.

Very privileged. And so this week, I want us to ask ourselves and also ask God, what small step can I take to enjoy more of him and his presence first, and then be sent to do his kingdom work right here or wherever he wants us to go?

The question is not, hey God, I'm great at this, would you send me? No, don't ask that question. It's like, Lord, my hands and feet and arms and hearts are open.

[31 : 34] Would you please send me? Just whatever you want us to do, give me the spirit, give me the skill, I've got your word, I've got everything I need. Let's pray.

O King Jesus, may your authority reorder our loyalties, your assignment shapes our priorities, and your assurance gives us comfort and courage to serve you and obey you every single day and every single moment.

Amen. Yeah.