

The Supremacy of Christ in Evangelism

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

Amen.

(Mat 28:18-20)

What is the motive for evangelism? Many books you read make the motive to be solely that of the amount of lost souls. Certainly this is a reality. Certainly this is a tragedy – millions marching onto a Christless eternity. But is this the main reason for evangelism? Not according to the text. Perhaps it is because evangelising will hasten the return of the Lord. While this teaching is widely believed, there is no Scripture to support this idea, only some verse taken out of context. Perhaps the motive is to take over the world for Jesus. Perhaps the idea is to make it a Christian world. That's not what the text says.

The reason, the motive for evangelism is contained in the word 'therefore'. Someone has said, when reading the Bible, whenever you see a 'therefore', ask what it's there for. Jesus said, Go ye therefore. Therefore – because of – in light of what I have just said – go and evangelise. On the basis of my statement in verse 18 – verse 19 – go and teach and baptise. So what is the statement that Jesus made in verse 18 that He uses as the basis for evangelism?

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" That short statement is the reason for the evangelism of the church. Jesus is literally saying – 'Because all power has been given to me in heaven and in earth – you go and evangelise.'

Well, what does that statement mean? The word 'power' is the Greek *exousia* – which means authority, the right to rule, dominion. Jesus is stating His supremacy. Having risen from the dead, He has been given all authority. The New Testament is filled with verses reiterating what Jesus said in this one sentence:

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

(Eph 1:20-22)

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

(Col 1:16-18)

“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living”.

(Rom 14:9)

Much of the first part of the book of Hebrews is devoted to showing that Christ is supreme- superior to Moses and the angels, and the Levites.

Jesus Christ – the Eternal Son of God, has truly been shown, through His atonement, to be supreme. He is greater than any human, past or present. He is greater than any angel, good or evil. He is the highest authority, all must bow to Him. He is the King of Kings – the Lord of Lords. His name is now the most important name in the universe. All of reality hinges on what you do with the name of Jesus. He is Supreme.

So when Jesus says to the disciples – all authority has been given to me – He is announcing the basis of the Gospel. What He is saying will give them the motive for evangelism. It will give them the means for evangelism. It will provide the basis of their message in evangelising. Now think about why this message would provide a motive for the disciples, and for all Christians to evangelise. Why should the message – Jesus is Supreme motivate us to witness?

The Supremacy of Christ as our Motivation for Evangelism

Focusing on His supremacy gives us humble confidence

Picture yourself as a recruiting agent for the most successful, invincible soccer team in the world. Their supremacy over other teams fills you with confidence when recruiting players. You do not feel like you have to justify recruiting players – the fact that your team is so successful speaks for itself. It is an honour and privilege to present the opportunity for people to join the winning side. As believers, we are on the winning side announcing certain victory. That does not make us cocky, or filled with the kind of proud, dominion

Focusing on His Supremacy fills us with joy and hope.

He is the Victorious King. He won over sin. He won over death. He is coming back. This is a message of hope for anyone who believes the reality of sin, righteousness and judgement. It is always a joy to share good news of optimism, of a better future, of an improvement, of something better to come.

Focusing on His Supremacy fill us with boldness.

Because of the fact that He is Supreme and has authorised us, we know all opposition is futile. If Jesus is exalted above even the demonic powers that oppose Him, it is certain that nothing we can face can change the course of His victory. This is exactly what the disciples prayed and rejoiced in after they experienced opposition by the Jewish rulers.

“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy

child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, (Act 4:24-29)”

They were quoting Psalm2 – which is a Psalm speaking of the Supremacy of God and His Son over opposition. The disciples are saying – God – no one can oppose you. You are supreme. We’re just reporting your supremacy.

There is no need to be ashamed of being part of the ultimate victory. You can be timid to the degree that the one who sent you lacks power. You can be ashamed to the degree that the country you represent is shameful. Remembering “All authority has been given to Christ’ fills us with boldness.

Focusing on His supremacy fills us with urgency.

Picture a company undergoing a management change. You are charged with telling all employees the new terms. All employees are to sign a form accepting the terms of the new management by a certain date. If they do so, they will receive benefits they had never dreamed of under the previous management. But if they do not, they will lose their jobs, and lose all the benefits they thought they had. The supremacy of the new management means not only great benefits for those who submit to it, but great harm to those who do not. You will be filled with urgency as you see the days creeping closer to the deadline and see employees blasé and careless. You will plead with them, urge them. You will go to them repeatedly, showing them both the foolishness of rejecting the new management, and the benefits of receiving it. The Supremacy of Christ is just this announcement. The Universe is under Christ’s management. Submit to Him – and you will receive immeasurable kindness. Reject Him, and you will receive immeasurable torment. To the degree that Christ’s supremacy is a wonderful thing to those on His side, it is a terrible thing to those who are His enemies. That same supreme power which blesses His people, will take wrath on those who despise it.

The Supremacy of Christ is the ultimate motive for evangelism. He is the King – and every knee must bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. We announce this with confidence – it is true and will happen. We announce it with joy. It is merciful, gracious news for mankind. We announce it with boldness – all opposition to Him and His message will fail. We announce it with urgency. Christ supremacy is a wonderful, but also awesomely serious thing. It is the most important reality of all time, and it has catastrophic consequences for those who are indifferent to this fact.

Certainly we must be motivated by love for people and a deep sense of the need. But these are not the primary motives. The primary motive is that Christ is Supreme and will be glorified. This is both wonderful and terrible news. It is joyful tidings to the humble and repentant. It is terrifying news to the rebellious.

But the truth of the Supremacy of Christ is not only the motive for evangelism– it is also the means.

Christ's supremacy makes Him not only the glorious as the object of our announcement; it also glorifies Him as the all-sufficient means by which we evangelise.

The Supremacy of Christ as our Means for Evangelism

If we understand the Supremacy of Christ, we may well be filled with joy, and hope and a sense of urgency to tell people. But what authorises us to do so? I may admire a particular sports team, and believe in its victory – but does that authorise me to recruit people for it? No – but Christ does just that. He seems to be not only giving us the motivation here – but the means. He is saying – since all authority is now in my hands, I now authorise you to go and give out the Gospel. He is saying what He said in John 20:21: *“as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. In the same way that my Father – who has all authority sent me on His mission to save sinners, so now, that He has handed all authority over to me, I send you on my mission to declare my victory and offer of pardon to all”*.

Now why should that give us confidence that this will accomplish the task? I mean – a general could authorise his soldier to attack a bridge – that doesn't mean he provides the ability to do so. But with God it is different. What God commands, he enables. When God says – in my name – go; He is equally saying with all my resources go. If God authorises you to represent Him, He will provide you with all things necessary to adorn that message. He provides you with the message itself. He gives you wisdom as you speak. He provides you with boldness and courage. He provides you the opportunity itself. In fact, in the New Testament you see all of these things as prayer requests – praying for doors of opportunity, for boldness, for wisdom. That suggests again – God provides it. We must still go before Him in humility and ask for it – but we see Christ's supremacy as the means for our evangelism. All power has been give to me. All this power and authority will now be exercised on behalf of the humble saint. Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:19 that Christians would come to an illuminated understanding of the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Imagine being appointed special assistant to the president. Do you worry about resources, about ability, about credibility? You know that the wealth of the country as at your disposal. You know that you stand and present yourself in the name of the highest office in the country. The Supremacy means the Sufficiency. But I believe Christ's supremacy goes further to encompass not only the Motive and the Means, but also the message itself

The Supremacy of Christ as our Message for Evangelism

Jesus said: therefore in light of my supremacy – go and do what? Here's the main verb – make disciples. Making disciples is the direct output from the input thought of 'Christ is supreme'. Now, how do the two thoughts relate? How does Christ's supremacy add up to 'make disciples'? The answer is in the biblical definition of a disciple. Here is where we have often departed from the biblical definitions. Is a disciple a God-lover or a hell-escaper? So often the Gospel has been preached in a way which suggests a disciple is little more than one who has escaped the consequences of their sin through Jesus Christ. But this is not how Jesus Himself defined a disciple. Examine some verses regarding Christ's definition of a disciple and you will be surprised how the supremacy of Christ keeps coming up.

Luke 14:26: *“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”* Here Jesus is saying the same thing as He said in Matthew 10:37: *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”*

Notice the meaning of disciple is someone who loves Christ supremely. Christ is his supreme love – He loves Christ more than parents, more than spouse, more than children, more than brothers and sisters, more than self. He is a Christ-lover.

Luke 14:27: *“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”*

Here Jesus means – a disciple is willing to march to his own execution to follow Christ. He is willing to absolutely put sin and self to death in the atonement of Christ, and follow Christ in obedience. Christ becomes his supreme goal. To accept Christ’s death as your own death, and His resurrection as your new life – this is being a Christ-lover. You want to follow Him more than you want to live.

Luke 14:33: *“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”*

Here Jesus means – you must value nothing more than me. There must be nothing that you value so much that if you had to choose between Him and it, you would choose it over Christ. He must be supreme in your esteem.

This is a Biblical disciple. One who loves Christ supremely; one who follows Christ supremely; one who values Christ supremely. Now you can understand the link between v18: ‘I am supreme’, with v19: ‘make disciples’. Since I am supreme, go and make Christ-lovers. Go and make people, whose heartbeat is for the supremacy of Christ, Christ-lovers.

Sadly, some have made an artificial distinction between salvation and discipleship. They maintain that you only become a disciple when you get really committed to God, but you can be saved and not be a disciple. This teaching is false and finds no basis in Scripture. The Bible considers believers to be disciples, and disciples to be believers.

Well, how do we do make disciples? Well, firstly it’s clear that making a God-lover must be a work of God. Anyone can make a selfish hell-escaper. Anyone can water-down the Gospel into being purely a matter of bad consequences needing a remedy which Christ provided. But for someone to come to a point where they see their sin as an offence against God and seeing God as good and desirable – this must be a work of God. That’s why when Jesus said it was hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, the disciples asked, *“Who then can be saved?”*

Matthew 19:26 says: *“But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”* God must do the work.

But, as Romans 10:13-15 says: *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful*

are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

” So, it’s God’s work, but we must declare it. Jesus mentions three things which make up the call to make disciples. Go, baptise and teach. You cannot separate them, or make them into separate stages, distinct from each other. There’s the going. As we are going in our places of work, education, shopping, or even at leisure – we are to be sharing this message of Christ’s supremacy as the King, who offers pardon and forgiveness to all who will submit to Him and receive His grace by faith. Going also implies leaving your comfort zone – getting out there to share the message. Declare it where it has not been declared. Declare it to those who do not know. Share the Gospel that Christ is supreme and therefore the only way. He is the point of life. Eternal life – real life is in Him. Go and tell people to call on His name for salvation.

To those who call upon His name – we are to baptise them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism is not what saves – but it represents that act of personal repentant faith that an individual has already expressed. It outwardly displays an individual’s personal identification with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.

The third part of making disciples is to teach them all things that Christ commanded. This includes not only His commands in the Gospels, but all the things He commanded through His inspired Word, through the prophets and apostles that He spoke through, that were recorded into the written Word of God today. Making a disciple means taking this raw God-lover, and shaping them into understanding and obeying all of God’s commands. A disciple is not just a decision for Christ. A disciple is not just a baptism. A disciple is a converted person, who now grows into more and more of a God-lover – who regards obeying Christ as his or her supreme priority.

These commands presuppose the local church. Going, baptising and teaching can only make disciples sensibly if done through God’s appointed means in this period – His local church. The shaping of a disciple needs the love, encouragement, discipline, accountability and shepherding that a local church is to provide. Disciples are not born through a whirlwind evangelistic campaign that breezes through town, preaches some sermons, and then leaves people high and dry regarding spiritual growth. Disciples must be brought out from sin, but then brought into the church, and then brought under the systematic exposition of the Word of God through the preaching, teaching and discipleship ministries of the local church. This is God’s appointed means of making disciples.

Jesus closes off His command with an encouragement: *‘I am with you always – even unto the end of the world – to the end of this age’*. Christ’s supremacy does not mean He is aloof. His being above all, does not mean He is not with His people - He is. He encourages His children. My exaltation does not mean I forget about you. Instead – I am even nearer to you than before. I am behind your message, I will provide you with grace – I will be with you.

The Supremacy of Jesus Christ is the message of the Gospel. It is also the motive for the Gospel, and the means for spreading its message. May we deeply ponder the true depth of the meaning of the words: *“All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth. therefore go, and make disciples’*.