

So Will You Be My Disciples

By George Davis

As the time of Christ's departure from earth grew near, He said to His followers who had been with Him from the beginning, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, 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 things, which I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20 WEB)

The commission to go and "make disciples" (literally, make learners) of all nations is based upon the power and authority given to the risen Christ by the Father. In Ephesians 1:18 through 23 we see that the "greatness of God's power toward us, operates according to [or in accordance with] the power that He worked in Christ." That power and authority had a twofold manifestation. One: He raised Christ from the dead. Two: He made Christ "to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."



Because of Christ's obedience and exaltation, God "put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be HEAD OVER ALL THINGS for the

assembly, which is His body." To the end, that God might fill all things with His Son, who fills all in all. (See Ephesians 1:18-23, 4:10). In the kingdom of God all authority operates in accordance with this single objective.

All authority has been given to Christ that He might be head over all things. The concept of delegated authority does not apply here. Authority is not given to make us head of anything but power is given to enforce His headship and authority over all things. God's Spirit is ceaselessly working toward this end. So when Christ said, "all authority has been given unto Me. . . go and make disciples, it is clear that it was with this end in view. That He might be all and in all--Lord, teacher and King, and that all things in our lives and ultimately in the world be brought to a kneeling position at His feet. He

did not send anyone out to rule in His absence. This will become crystal clear as we go along. The perverted human tendency to take these scriptures and read into them the idea that Christ gave authority to individuals so they could rule over others in His name is antichrist and dangerous.

Historically, we are led to believe that the apostles went forth and set up schools of discipleship, over which they presided like village schoolmasters. Timothy is said to be Paul's disciple, Polycarp is said to be John's disciple and so forth. To the honest historian this is clearly a revisionist view. As legitimate as this reasoning may seem, it is clear from the teachings of Christ and the apostles that the discipleship Christ spoke of is something very different. Failure to understand this discipleship has led to great harm and disorder among God's people and has resulted in a general climate that is antagonistic to the nature and outworking of the new Covenant. Before we can understand true discipleship, we must first understand the limitations and demands that the New Covenant places upon it.

When Jesus cried from the cross "It is finished," certain things were done away with and a new and different covenant, constituted upon better promises was established. An understanding of the differences between the old and the new covenants is imperative if we are to make disciples of Christ. The Old Covenant was facilitated and maintained by intermediary anointed prophets and special priests. In the New Covenant, the anointing of priests is poured out upon all believers. Under the old covenant the prophetic anointing was poured out on a select few prophets. Under the New Covenant the prophetic anointing is poured out upon sons and daughters (see Acts 2). Under the Old Covenant there were many intermediary priests. Under the new covenant there is only ["one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"](#) (1 Timothy 2:5). He is ["The mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises"](#) (Hebrews 8:6). Christ is one mediator among many. He is the mediator the only one. In the new covenant all believers are priests and can come boldly into the presence of the Lord, in the Holy of Holies. We enter by a new and living way consecrated by the blood of the holy Lamb of God (Hebrews 4:16, 10:19-20). ["For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father"](#) (Ephesians 2:18). Under the Old Testament the schoolmaster was the law, which was taught in a scholastic manner. Under the new covenant, God himself is the Teacher. The author of the book of Hebrews makes this point by quoting the following passage from Jeremiah.

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days," says the Lord; "I will put my laws into their mind, I will also write them on their heart. I will be to them a God, And they will be to me a people. They (Israel) will not teach every man his fellow citizen, every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' For all will know me, From the least of them to the greatest of them" (Hebrews 8:10-11; see also Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Who does the teaching in this new covenant? The One who established the Covenant. It is God who writes on the minds and hearts of men. The promise to the faithful is that their children will be taught by the Lord (See Isaiah 54:13).

Regarding this teaching, God said, "I will. . .They will not. . ." Man is not the teacher under the New Covenant. He is merely a herald declaring that school is in session, pointing to Him who leads believers into all truth. The work of God is greatly hampered where it is considered necessary for man to continually say "know the Lord." If we were fully living out what Christ died to purchase on our behalf, such language would be about as silly as a stranger introducing my wife to me at a dinner party. I already know her! Our hearts are joined. I know her innermost thoughts and aspirations. For many years we have wept and laughed together. Likewise God desires that all His children should know Him in an even deeper and more lasting bond. This intimate knowledge of God cannot be revealed by flesh and blood for only the Spirit of God knows the things of God. Only the finger of God can write them upon the hearts and minds of men. If God's children fully understood and embraced this truth, much superfluous teaching and sermonizing would be dispensed with. The desperate need of this hour for all God's children is that we would be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man, so that we could comprehend and know what no man can teach. To the end that we could know Christ's love, which surpasses knowledge and be filled with all the fullness of God (see Ephesians 3:16-19).

A failure to understand this basic New Testament principle has led to great intermediary interference by those who mistakenly believe that their continual teaching (which more resembles nagging) is necessary for others to truly know the Lord. Certainly we should preach the gospel at every opportunity. Some teaching is required also, but only enough to introduce the new believer to the real Teacher. For only one Teacher is equipped to lead them into all truth, and that teacher is Christ. As Jesus taught His disciples about the evils of exalting themselves through honorific titles, He

offered the following reason for not calling one another Rabbi or Teacher. "But don't you be called 'Rabbi,' for one is your Teacher, the Christ, and all of you are brothers [siblings]" (Matthew 23:8).

Siblings are best taught by their parents. When they teach each other it usually leads to mischievousness, bullying and insobriety (a prideful view of ones self).

This very problem pervades contemporary Christianity, because the system has ignored the teachings of Jesus on this matter and has reconstructed the old intermediary system and special priest class that raises one man into the status of the ever-present and all-knowing mediator and dispenser of truth. To further facilitate this disorder, forbidden honorific titles are lavishly and freely bestowed upon ambitious men. And as usual, the victim of this megalomania is brotherhood. How sad! This disorder effectively shuts up the kingdom of heaven against men, in that it neither enables nor allows anyone to go in. Rather than allowing the sheep of God's fold to "go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9), as the Good Shepherd does, these elevated men pen Christ's sheep up under their own control and dole out stale crusts of bread, calling it a banquet.

Real discipleship consists of one beggar showing another beggar where to find food, not setting up soup lines over which power-hungry men bogart the ladle.

George Warnock wrote,

"The purpose of all ministry that proceeds from the exalted Christ is to so minister the Truth that the sheep of God's pasture might come into direct, unhindered personal union with the Lord. Ministers of the New Covenant are not to be "mediators" as Moses was, or as Jesus is. They are rather "servants" (Greek, "doulos" or "bond-slave") Slaves have no right to call anything their own... not even the ministry that God gave them. . .It is simply a trust that has been given into their care. They make disciples for Christ, but they must have none of their own." (*Feed My Sheep*)

How do you make disciples and yet have none of your own?

We are not commissioned to go and make our own disciples that are taught by us continuously, but to make disciples that are taught directly, moment by moment, by the living Christ. Paul warned the Ephesian elders that after his departure there would be a

falling away or apostasy which would result in men rising from among the brethren and teaching perverse things in order to draw away disciples after them (See Act 20:30). These vicious wolves, as Paul called them, would come in the spirit of him who first thought to exalt his throne above the mount of the congregation (Isaiah 14:13), who, in leading away a third of the hosts of heaven, was the first to make disciples to himself. This is the mystery of iniquity, in which man follows the spirit and example of Satan and "exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sits as God in the temple of God, setting himself up as God" (See 2 Thessalonians 2:4). Men who ambitiously desire to lead away disciples after themselves are predators. A wolf is a voracious predator that lives by preying on other, weaker animals, such as sheep. What place or function does a wolf have in a flock of sheep? Make no mistake about what Paul is saying here! Those who attempt to lead away disciples after themselves are predators, not pastors. The perverse teachings or doctrines of demons that are offered as a justification for such actions make up much, if not all, of the doctrinal teachings in some Christian circles today. Many have written volumes to justify this disorder.

Our job is to do only what is required to bring disciples into living union with Christ and encourage His preeminence in their lives, not to supplant the Holy Spirit by leading them away after us. We are not to be preeminent or sit as God in the temple of God, but to place all things at the feet of Him who has all authority. Like the four and twenty elders, we ought to passionately cast all crowns before Him and to chime in with the hosts of heaven, in singing "To him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb be the blessing, the honor, the glory, and the dominion, forever and ever! Amen!"

What is True Discipleship?

Now let's take a brief look at discipleship as Jesus taught it.

In John chapter fifteen verses five through eight, Jesus taught his followers what true discipleship is.

"I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man doesn't remain in me, he is thrown out as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, you will

ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you. In this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; and so will you be my disciples."

Discipleship is much, much more than simply being taught about Christ. True discipleship is being taught directly by the life of Christ within us. The Father is glorified only in the produce that He plants and cultivates. As we abide in Christ, the Vine, and He abides in us, the life of the vine flows through us, we are discipled, transformed and made fruitful unto God. In this is the Father glorified.

As we abide in Christ and He in us, only then are we the Disciples of Christ. Only then are we living the New Testament life. Such were the disciples that the early apostles went forth to make. Jesus makes it very clear that in this way we will be His disciples. "So (in this way) will you be my disciples."