

Bible Insights

Jesus' Resurrection Day Commission to His Disciples

After Jesus was resurrected from the dead, he commissioned his disciples on several occasions. We usually think of the Great Commission when Jesus appeared to his disciples on a mountain in Galilee recorded in Matthew 28. But actually, Jesus began commissioning his disciples on the day he was resurrected. In fact, he commissioned them a number of times during those 40 days between his resurrection and his ascension. There is a hint of it in his High Priestly prayer that is recorded for us in John, chapter 17, v. 18: "*As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*" This commission is issued to the 12 apostles, and by implication to all who would have come to faith in him through the witness of the 12 apostles. Jesus includes in this prayer these words, *I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their message.*

On Resurrection Day, the very evening Jesus arose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples in the upper room where they were locked away, *for fear of the Jews.* We find this account in the Gospel of John, chapter 20, and in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 24.

Listen to these accounts of what happened. First from Luke 24:33-43. After Jesus had appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and had sat down to eat with them and revealed himself to them, they got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "*Peace be with you.*"

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "*Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.*"

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked

them, “*Do you have anything here to eat?*” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

In other words, Jesus demonstrated the physicalness of his resurrection for his disciples. He was raised from the dead in his body, the body in which he was crucified, the body that had been born of Mary. That’s the body in which he was raised from the dead. And that’s the body, now glorified, the body in which he ascended back into heaven.

These are Jesus’ words: “*These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.*” (In other words, what we call the Old Testament or the First Testament – all of its parts speak about the Lord Jesus Christ.) Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, (my, I wish I’d been there), and said to them, “*Thus it is written, that the Christ, the Messiah, should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations* (that is, all people groups), beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:44-49). Now that’s Jesus, on resurrection day evening, with his disciples, telling them that the gospel should be proclaimed to all nations.

Now John, who was one of the people there, records the following in John 20:

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews,^[a] Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. **As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.**” (Those are the same words that he had prayed to the Father in John 17). And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld” (John 20:19-23).

Those are two accounts, one has a fuller account of the words Jesus spoke on that occasion, and the summary promise of the Spirit coming upon them

in power. But John records that even though he gives this summary promise, audibly to them, he also demonstrates something to them. He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The commission of Jesus to his disciples is imperative, it's of supreme importance, because it is what the church's mission is from the time Jesus rose from the dead until the time he comes again in power and glory. ***What then is Jesus' commission to his disciples?***

Essentially it is this: we're to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of God that he established in his own person and work that he will bring to full completion at his return. We are to announce to all people the arrival of this kingdom and the terms for entering it. We are to announce to people that they are commanded by God to repent of their sins and to turn in faith to God as he is revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In proclaiming him we're to expound the meaning of the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms as they testify to who Jesus is and what Jesus accomplished in his person, in his work, in his ministry. We're to demonstrate from the Word of God that Messiah himself must suffer and die for the sins of people, and on the third day rise from the dead.

Considering this we summon men and women to repent so they might receive the forgiveness of their sins. They repent by turning in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ as the object of their trust.

Now that this is the proper meaning is demonstrated for us on the Day of Pentecost itself, on the day when the Holy Spirit came upon these disciples, on the 120 in great power and glory. After the Holy Spirit had descended, Peter spoke to the crowds that had gathered and heard his famous Pentecost Day sermon. When he comes toward the conclusion of it, the people cry out, "What must we do?" And Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And then with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them..."

How do we open the Kingdom of God to people? Well, we open it by using the keys of the kingdom, which is the proclamation of the gospel, summoning men and women to repentance of sin, and turning in faith

toward God...and placing their trust in Jesus Christ alone as the Savior of sinners. As the outward sign of God's forgiveness and their confession of Jesus as Lord and Savior, believers are baptized.

In his Day of Pentecost sermon Peter exemplifies the words that Jesus had spoken to them on Resurrection Day Evening. He began to fulfill the commission Jesus had given to the disciples by proclaiming the Gospel to the crowd in Jerusalem.

Luke's account is the first instance of the commission that Jesus gives his disciples. It's very important: the mission is that we're to announce to people that they can have their sins forgiven, they can become subjects of God's kingdom, and they can enter into the Kingdom of Light, into the kingdom of God.

All who would enter must turn from their idols to serve the living God. They must turn from those things that keep them from embracing Jesus Christ, and they must place their faith in him as the Savior of their souls.

When we announce these things of Jesus the Christ – people to people – then Christ himself in the power of the Holy Spirit opens the doorway for them into his kingdom and they receive the great benefits of his work.

It's all grounded in the proclamation of the Word of God, found in both the First Testament, what we call the Old Testament scriptures, and their fulfillment that's found in the pages of the New Testament.

Now, in a subsequent message, we'll look at the commission as it's given to us in Matthew, where Jesus spoke to the crowds at a mountain in Galilee. And we'll look again at the commission as given to the disciples on the day or close to the day of Jesus' ascension into heaven.

This has been Wayne Conrad with Bible Insights. Until next time, remember, we have a mission - Christ has sent us on it.

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