



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 28:16–20

Gospel of Matthew

“An Unlimited Scepter, a Boundless  
Commission, and Immanuel!”

TRANSCRIPT

For the Scripture reading this morning, we are turning to the last few verses, the last five to be exact of the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28 verse 16 through verse 20. You’ll notice, incidentally, and I may just introduce the Scripture reading with this. You’ll notice that in the Matthean account of the Gospel, very little attention is given to a number of things that you might expect to be treated here. For example, Matthew says nothing about the ascension of our Lord. Now of course he does give us these last words from a mountaintop, and the indications of this are that the ascension would follow, but nothing is said about the ascension.

Very little is said about the personal appearances of our Lord after the resurrection. A number of things are omitted, and the reason for this it seems to me is simply that Matthew’s intent is to present our Lord as the king, the messianic king, and he chooses out of the materials available in the Christian tradition the things that are suitable for his purpose, and it is very, very true to his aim to give us these last words of our Lord from a mountaintop.

The next step, of course, is the ascension to the right hand of the Father and the assumption of his place as King. So these words are extremely important. They are intended by Matthew to be a climactic feature of his Gospel. We read in verse 16 then,

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“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. (Incidentally the meaning of that is not that they went to the same mountain where they had been appointed apostles, but they went to the place where Jesus had commanded them to go. That’s probably the meaning of the words; they are capable of a double force.) And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All authority 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 Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen.”

Before I have a word of prayer with you, let me say just a word concerning verse 19 and the first part of verse 20. Now in the message I will try to say a few things that relate to what I’m saying, but I think it would be helpful for us right now as we are reading, to make just a few comments concerning those verses.

When the Lord Jesus says go ye therefore and teach all nations, one might get the impression from the Authorized Version text which I’m reading that the going is as significant as the teaching. But in the original text the finite verb is the verb, teach, and another meaning for it and a better meaning in this context is, “to make disciples.” I’ll say more about that in the message. The going is participial in form, and participles in Greek just as in English, have less emphasis than the finite verb in a sentence.

Now there are three participles: going, baptizing and teaching. And these participles are designed to express the manner by which the making disciples is accomplished. Let me render this as it should be rendered: “Having gone therefore, disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name of

the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. So the important thing is the making of disciples. The others are the means or the manner by which that commission is accomplished. May the Lord bless this reading and brief exposition of his word.

The subject in our last of our studies in the Gospel of Matthew is “An Unlimited Scepter, a Boundless Commission, and Immanuel!” The Gospel of the king has reached its natural consummation in these last five verses that we have read for our Scripture reading. The king has been raised, a rulership over the universe, the nation Israel and the nations have repulsed him. Nevertheless, a little flock has been gathered around him as his heralds. To support them, he says he will cast around their feebleness the armor of his perpetual undying presence.

It is clear that our Lord speaks from the standpoint of his resurrection. There was a church historian of the 19th century who said once, “As soon as I can persuade myself of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ I shall tear in pieces the modern view of the world.” Well the Scriptures do give us a very convincing portrait of a risen Christ, and when the Holy Spirit brings that home to our hearts, we do come to a conviction concerning his resurrection, and it is true that our whole world and life view becomes transformed.

This concluding paragraph is best known by its so-called, “The Great Commission.” This morning as I was coming in at the earlier service someone said, “This is the last message isn’t it?” I said, “Yes.” “It’s on the Great Commission isn’t it?” That I think is the way most of us know these last few verses of the Gospel of Matthew. It is not however in my opinion, the Great Commission. If we were looking through the Bible for the Great Commission, I don’t think that we would give this one first place. I think that we would rather give the one in the Epistle to the Galatians in the 4th chapter in the 4th and 5th verses, where the Apostle Paul, speaking concerning our Lord Jesus Christ says, “But when the fullness of time was come God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

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The commissioning by the Father of the Son to carry out the work of redemption is undoubtedly the greatest commission. It is true, however, that this is a great commission. Surely anything that our Lord said, any commission that he gave, would be a great commission, and this is a great commission, and we must go, we will agree with that. And I think all of us who are Christians will admit that there has been something implanted in our hearts when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ that makes us truly want to go. We do want to go.

It's fitting also that this last glimpse of our Lord in the Gospel of Matthew should be from a mountaintop. This Gospel began in a sense in the valley, and the prophecy of our Lord's birth that is forthcoming is set forth. There are indications of his kingly glory in that description of his birth, but nevertheless it begins in a kind of valley with the story of his birth. But it ends on the highest summit, a mountain which is a short flight to the royal throne at the right hand of the Father.

Many of the events that transpired in our Lord's resurrection days are not given us in the Gospel of Matthew, because that is not the purpose of this Gospel, as I mentioned in the Scripture reading. He wants us to conclude on the note of a risen Savior who has, on the top of the mountain, announced his complete and universal sovereignty and given his heralds a commission to evangelize and disciple the nations promising them his undying presence with them. What a beautiful way to finish a book. We shall say more about it in just a moment.

You may remember that in the 26th chapter of this gospel the Lord Jesus had made reference to the fact that he would go before them to Galilee. It was not, then, a surprise that the eleven disciples went away into Galilee into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. Where it was we do not know. By the way, in the original text it is into the mountain and two other times in this Gospel reference is made to the mountain in which it is not described. In the 14th chapter in the 23rd verse and in the 15th chapter in the 29th verse, both of which are translated “a mountain” in our Authorized Version but which the original text has as “the mountain,” suggesting that it was some well-known hill in northern Galilee or in Galilee. Probably it was by the Sea of Galilee, where so many of the events that touched our Lord's life occurred.

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Isn't it interesting that some of the greatest events in our Lord's life occur on the mountaintop? He gave his Sermon on the Mount on a mountain. That'd be a good question for kids. Where did our Lord give his Sermon on the Mount? Like on what day of the week did the Cotter's Saturday night take place? Those were the kinds of question I found difficult to answer when I was young. [Laughter] The Sermon on the Mount occurred on a mountain and it was there that he gave his great sermon.

The Transfiguration also took place on a mountain. The greatest prophecy that he ever gave the prophecy on Olivet also occurred on a mountain. So the greatest commission in this Gospel is also given from a mountaintop, all suggestive of the dignity of the king.

The reason for this commission no doubt is to let us know that now historically the message to the Christian church is that they are to go out to the four corners of the earth and seek to disciple all the nations, and not simply Israel. When our Lord was here in the flesh he had said, “Go not to the Gentiles. Do not go to the Samaritans. Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But this change has taken place. Call it a dispensational change if you like. It is, nevertheless, the teaching of the Word of God. The patterns have changed because of the rejection of the Son by the nation Israel. And so now the natural branches being cut off of the olive tree, the unnatural branches of the Gentiles are to be grafted in.

And what we have seen down through the years is the Christian church, which began as a Jewish church, has now become a predominantly Gentile church. We must not understand of course our Lord's commission here to mean that the disciples were not to preach the gospel to the Jews. If you turn to the book of Acts, you will see that the pattern was to the Jew first and then to the Greek. So it is not to be understood as meaning that the Jewish believer is not a member of the body of Christ, nor a fit subject of evangelization. He is. But it is evident that the minister now is breaking the bounds of the nation Israel and going out to all of the nations of the earth.

We read in the 17th verse, “And when they saw him they worshiped him but some doubted.” That's a puzzling sentence in some ways. Only two times incidentally did the apostles ever

worship our Lord Jesus, according to the Gospel of Matthew. One time they worshiped him because of his power over the waves when he calmed the storm and also walked upon the water. Here he is worshiped because of his power over the grave. But some doubted. What does that mean? In the first place, who are the “some”? And second what, was the occasion of their doubt?

Well now, if you look at the context and pay attention only to the context, you would probably conclude that since in verse 16 reference is made to the apostles, the eleven disciples, that it must have been the apostles who doubted. Many commentators do not accept that interpretation because they cannot conceive of the apostles doubting. After all, have they not seen him in his resurrection? And even Thomas who had doubted for a time, finally came to a belief in our Lord Jesus as a risen Savior, fell down before him and acknowledged him as his Lord and his God—one of the great texts on the deity of Jesus Christ. How is it possible then for apostles to doubt?

And so in the light of that they are inclined to think that this is the resurrection appearance that the Apostle Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians when he says that above five hundred brethren saw him at once. And we do read in verse 10, “Then said Jesus unto them be not afraid. Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee and there shall they see me.” It is possible, of course, that “some” is a reference to part of that much larger group that did see our Lord at one time and this might well be the occasion that the Apostle Paul refers to.

On the other hand it is possible for us to conceive of the apostles doubting even though they believed in the resurrection. For example our Lord must have come from a distance toward them and they may have looked off and doubted that it was really he. So it is possible for them to doubt in that sense. In fact, even in his very presence it may have been that since he appeared in glorified form that there was some question that it was really our Lord Jesus Christ. They didn’t doubt the resurrection. They did not doubt that he had been raised from the dead. They may have for a moment doubted that this person standing before them was the Lord Jesus Christ. What is meant, of course, ultimately we cannot tell.

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One of the reasons I mention this is because one of the theories in explanation of the resurrection by our liberal critic friends has been that what the apostles were subject to were hallucinations. We referred to that last week. Now the theory of hallucination does not in my opinion fit the psychological circumstances of our Lord’s resurrection. To be subject to hallucinations, generally speaking, a person must be susceptible to that which he sees or which is his hallucination. He must be prepared for it. As a matter of fact, he must even desire it—very much occupied with it.

Now if there is one thing that is true of the apostles, it is that they were totally surprised by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. They were not fit subjects for hallucinations. They were not the kind of soil in which hallucinations might grow. In fact, the Apostle John even went down into the tomb of our Lord Jesus, through the opening in the tomb and did not believe until he saw the linen clothes lying. The impression you get from the Gospel accounts is that they were very difficult to convince of a resurrection.

So I must say that it is not the apostles who were subject to hallucinations; it is the critics who are subject to hallucinations. They have wanted to believe that our Lord Jesus really did not rise from the dead, because if he did rise from the dead, it’s obvious that the truth that he proclaimed is the truth, and the truth that the liberals proclaim must be discarded as untrue. So wanting very strongly to disprove the veracity of the Word of God, they have been subject to their own kinds of hallucinations. And so they have sought to proclaim that one of the explanations of the resurrection accounts is that the apostles saw hallucinations.

But when you look at the theories of the critics—oh what faith it takes to believe them. Why do you know that the person who really studied the New Testament, and then studied the theories of the critics, and particularly in this instance, he would have to be the kind of person who would believe in Mickey Mouse or the tooth fairy or R2-D2 or something like that [laughter] to believe the theories that the liberal critics have given us concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. No, the apostles were not fit subjects for hallucinations.

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These theories, incidentally, revive after a few years, after the believers effectively counter them, they die out until a new generation or two comes on the scene and thinks that they can catch us again by these ancient explanations. There are no new explanations for the resurrection of Christ. We just read every now and then of the rephrasing of some of the old ones. They all suffer, because they do not agree with the texts that we have.

Well having said all of that now, we turn to the last part of the passage which contains the universal commission of our Lord Jesus. I should have mentioned this. It is clear to us as we read through these last accounts, and I think this is true of the last chapters of all of our Gospels, that our Lord appears from time to time with the apostles, instructs them, encourages them, comforts them, gives them some commission or command, and the impression you get from the things that happened during our Lord’s resurrection appearances is that he is trying to teach them.

Now he had been with them. Usually, when they went from Judaea to Galilee he was with them. When they went from Galilee to Jerusalem he traveled with them. But now in the resurrection appearances we hear of him saying, you go into Galilee and he does not go with them. But he does appear to them in Galilee.

They are like little fledgling birds that he is pushing out of the nest, seeking to get them to begin to live in the assurance of his invisible presence, but no longer as the visible present Messiah. They are like little infants that fathers take by the hands and seek to aid them in walking, and as they take step after step, finally, father—it’s usually father that does this, not mother—he takes his hand off of the child to see whether the child is able to take at least one step by himself and then as he collapses he catches him.

They are like little plants that have been supported by helps and a good planter, a good horticulturalist, will not let his plant rest without support immediately, but will seek to give it some support, so finally, it can learn to grow by itself. The apostles you see are men who are used to the personal presence of our Lord, and through the forty days of his resurrection appearances in which



he appears to them at least ten times, he is trying to prepare them for the time when he will not be here in his visible presence.

We turn now to this triplet of sayings with a fullness of meaning that guarantees their genuineness. Never man spake like this man. They said concerning the Lord Jesus—and there is no passage in the Bible that bears on its face more authenticity than this one. Statement number one: all authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Statement number two: having gone, disciple all nations. Statement number three: lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Let’s look at them.

The prerogatives of our Lord Jesus first, in verse 18: All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. What a simple statement that is. All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. It is simple no question about it; but it is majestic and inexhaustible in its claim of unrestricted universal sovereignty. All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Why do you know when a human mind seeks to comprehend what is meant by that, that the human mind loses itself in seeking to understand all that is involved in that simple statement? That I think is one of the greatest statements; probably the greatest statement our Lord ever made concerning the sovereignty that belongs to him as the Son of God and the Messiah and King of Israel and the nations. It is greater than the great statement he made when he wrote to the church at Thiatyra through the angel, “And he shall rule them with a rod of iron as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers even as I received of my Father.” There he says that he has authority to govern the nations.

It’s greater than anything the Apostle Paul wrote, and Paul wrote some great things concerning the Lord Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of the whole creation. In him all things have been created, whether things in heaven on earth, whether thrones, dominions, principalities or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. By him all things consist or hold together. What a magnificent statement the apostle made concerning him.

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Then he said also that because he had been obedient unto death God has highly exalted him and given him a position that is above all in the universe. It's doubtful even that that statement is as direct and comprehensive as this one. All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Perhaps the closest parallel is the statement in the 11th chapter and the 27th verse of this Gospel in which he says, All things have been delivered over to me; no man knows the Father except the Son, no man knows the Son except the Father, and no man knows the Father except the Son in sovereign grace gives that person to know the Father. What an amazing statement.

He claims to be the only one who knows God and also sovereign in the dispensing of the knowledge of God. You can almost sense a growing authority in our Lord's statements as you read through the Gospels. In the beginning, he says, The Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins. Then later on you hear him saying in the Gospel of John, all judgment has been delivered into my hand. Then you hear him say that the Son of man has authority over all flesh. But here you hear him saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and upon the earth—universe-wide, magnificent, universal authority. That statement, I think, is so important for the two that follow, because when we are told to go out and disciple nations, it is because we have someone with us who has universal unrestricted sovereign power.

Why should we be afraid to preach the gospel of Christ? Why should we be afraid to speak to our fellow men about our Lord Jesus Christ, when the authority of the Son of God stands behind us in the proclamation of his truth? Why should we be ashamed to make mention of our Lord Jesus to our neighbors and friends, our business associates, when we have the assurance of the personal presence of him who has unrestricted universal sovereignty? What cowards we are, or else blind to the truths of Holy Scripture.

Now I notice that word in verse 19, therefore, because I think it has some significance. There are, incidentally, some manuscripts that do not have it, but I think it is genuine. Go ye, therefore. That is because all authority is given unto me; disciple all nations. What we have is an ecumenical commission supported by an ecumenical authority.

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Now you notice, if you have an Authorized Version as I have, that in verse 19 there are two words for teaching here, two references to the English word, teaching, I should put it. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, then verse 20, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

Now in the original text there are two different words. The first one is the word from which we get the word, disciple. It really means “to disciple” or “to make a learner.” Let’s translate it that way. Having gone, disciple, make disciples, make learners of all the nations.

Now it’s clear from that then that he is not talking simply about salvation. When he says, make disciples, he means more than simply give the gospel so that they believe and are delivered from the penalty of sin. To make a disciple refers to that initial work, but it also comprehends the word of sanctification that follows. So he is not saying, now I want you to sanctify people. He’s not saying I want you to save people. He’s saying I want you to make disciples, which involves the preaching of the gospel and then the cultivation through the ministries of the Word and the Spirit, the cultivation of the individual so that he grows into the fullness of spiritual life that the Father would have the saints come to. So it is very important then I think to lay great stress upon that.

Having gone, make disciples of all the nations. Incidentally, when he says, make disciples of all the nations, does he mean that it is the Father’s purpose that all nations be saved, that everybody be saved? Of course not. This is one of those instances in which all does not mean all. There are many cases in the New Testament of that. The all is not the all of universality; it is the all that distinguishes some from others. Let me explain.

What I mean by this is that it was the Father’s intention that the discipling be a discipling of all the nations, but not necessarily every individual in all the nations. Otherwise we should have universalism. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations would then mean that everybody should be saved.

Well I know that there are people who say that was the Father’s intention, but we have frustrated his purposes. No we don’t have a God who can be frustrated. We have a sovereign God.

Do we not read all authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth? We all acknowledge that salvation is ultimately the work of God, do we not? Do we not say when we come to Christ that we come to Christ because we have been brought by our Lord Jesus Christ? We have been drawn by the Father to the Son and the work of salvation is the work of the Godhead. If the Godhead is sovereign, and we believe that do we not? And if it is his intention that all be saved, well then everybody would be saved. We do not have the kind of God who can be frustrated.

It is obviously not true to say that it was his intention or purpose that all the nations and every individual in them be saved, but it was his intention that the gospel go out to all the nations and that some from these all the nations shall be saved, and if you're a student of the Bible your mind will immediately go to passages in the Word of God which confirm the fact that his purpose shall be accomplished. In the 7th chapter of the book of Revelation, in the midst of those visions that John the Apostle had, he sees a great multitude which have come from every tribe, kindred, tongue and nation. The Word of God says, This vast multitude that no man could number.

Now you've heard me say before there are people who think that Calvinists, whoever they are, believe that there is just going to be a little handful of people in heaven, and they are going to be surprised when they get there to find that there are others there also. How foolish. How foolish. Those who believe in the sovereignty of God have never believed that. They have believed that there is by the grace of a mighty sovereign God to be a vast multitude of chosen ones in heaven, so vast that they cannot be numbered.

We believe that the salvation of men shall encompass a vast multitude of people. We do not believe that when we say we believe in the doctrine of election that there are a few people who will be saved and the rest damned. The Bible teaches that there shall be a vast multitude there. They shall come from every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation, and it is true when we get there we shall praise God, that his commission given through the Lord Jesus to make disciples of all the nations shall have been fulfilled: a sovereign God who accomplishes his purpose. And there shall be some there from

every tribe, kindred, tongue and nation. That’s what he means. Make disciples of all the nations, means to universally proclaim the gospel of Christ. That’s what we believe. That’s what we affirm.

That’s why we say it’s important to go out with the truth. Well how shall we do this? I said those three participles explain to us why. First, going. It’s necessary to go. We don’t say to people, come to church. We go to them with the gospel. The whole world, incidentally, is the field—that includes people in North Dallas, people in Dallas, people in Texas, people in the United States, people in Mexico, Canada, to the four corners of the earth. That’s the field. The field is not simply a foreign field. The whole field is foreign from the standpoint of our citizenship, for our citizenship is in heaven. We must go.

That means it is possible for you to go right here in this auditorium. There are people in this auditorium usually who do not know Christ as Savior. They may be sitting right next to you. To go is to go to all with whom we come into contact with the message.

Harold Barker, who was a preacher that lived about a generation ago, used to tell the story of a minister who preached on the topic, the recognition of friends in heaven. I don’t know why people preach on topics like that. Surely, if you know your friends down here, you’re going to know them in heaven. You’re not going to be dumber up there than you are down here [laughter]. But evidently he preached on the message and he got a letter the next week as is often the case. And the letter read, Dear Sir, I should be much obliged if you would make it convenient to preach to your congregation on the recognition of friends on earth, for I have been coming to your church for nearly six months, and nobody has taken any notice of me.

It is possible to do that in Believers Chapel because I’ve had a number of people say to me that that’s true. They have come here to this meeting for a half a dozen times or more and no one has ever spoken to them. And often we go out and talk about the Great Commission, when sitting right next to you is one of the member of one of these, all the nations and not a word has even been spoken to them.

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It's very simple to do that you know. We're happy to have you here. How did you hear about Believers Chapel? Are you a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? That wouldn't offend anybody. Well, I think it might offend them a little bit, but you cannot escape the offense of the gospel. Go. That's a go to all of us where we are. We don't have to go to Timbuktu to fulfill this commission, but we have to simply speak to someone next to us perhaps.

There's another story I like about a Korean Christian who came to this country. This is so true of us. It struck home to me. Someone came to him in the midst of this evangelical church and said to him, we'd like to have you give us a little talk on taking the gospel to the heathen, thinking that since he was a Korean it would be good, and he said, well do not your people know that you must take the gospel to the heathen, the Lord Jesus gave us that commission? And the Christian friend said, why yes we do but if it came from you perhaps they would listen more. He said, why they do not mind our Lord Jesus Christ, they surely will not mind me. How true that is. He said to us, having gone, disciple all the nations.

Now the second thing is rather surprising. In the discipling of nations, we could understand why it's necessary to go with the message—I'm sure that is understood, to go with the message—but then he says, baptizing them. Now we're inclined to think that baptism stands way down on the scale of discipleship, but according to our Lord Jesus it stands rather high. Go, baptize, teach.

Now I fully believe that one of the reasons it stands too low on the scale is because many of our evangelists, not associated with the life of a local church, have corrupted the simple preaching of the Word of God as found in the New Testament. They have preached the gospel, often truly, but then they have asked us to raise our hands in a meeting. Or they have asked us to sign a decision card. Or they have asked us to come down front and pray through, or do other things which are not taught in the Bible. And the result is that baptism which evidently stands rather high in our Lord's plans for discipleship, stands rather low, and there are people in our communities, our evangelical communities, who have been Christians for years and they have never been baptized in water. That's a strange thing, because they want to please the Lord. They talk about pleasing the Lord, but the

simplest thing in the world to do is to be baptized in water. It's very simple. We know that our Lord is pleased by it. Why should not we want to be baptized? It is important evidently in the sight of our Lord. It is a public testimony to our relationship to him in his death burial and resurrection.

Adolph Diesmann, the great student of Koine Greek in the earlier part of the 20th century gave a lot of evidence claiming that the word really meant, “to become the property of.” That's not far from the truth. It is a recognition of our identification with the Lord Jesus, and the fact that we have become a part of him and of his company of people. That's the second step in the discipling of men. The third is teaching, and how important that teaching is.

Now we've laid a great deal of stress on that. Incidentally, the second word for teaching in verse 20 is a word that means, “to instruct.” It means to take the things of the Word of God and to instruct the saints in them. John Calvin said, “The theologian's task is not to divert the ears with chatter, but to strengthen the conscience by teaching things true, sure, and profitable.” That's theology. It's to teach things true, sure, and profitable. That's what it is to teach theology, not to divert the ears with chatter. I love the way that man put a number of things, and I think that is very important. Teaching.

Now we believe that we are to teach the things that our Lord Jesus has commanded us. We are to observe them. That refers not only to the deeds that he spoke about, but also the thoughts that he gave us. And then he also told us that there were many things that you could not bear when you were with him in the flesh. He was going to send the Holy Spirit, and he would guide you in all truth. So to observe all the things that he has commanded us means that we not only study the gospel truth, but the rest of the New Testament truth, because that, too, is what he desires that his saints come to understand.

Incidentally that is the philosophy that lies back of the strong emphasis on teaching and theology in Believers Chapel. We believe that in order to obey our Lord's words, we must teach in depth the revelation contained in the New Testament, the things that he spoke about in the Gospels, as well as the remainder of the New Testament, and the whole of the inspired Word of God. To

make disciples that is necessary. So, go, baptize, and then instruct in the great truths of the Word of God.

But who’s sufficient for these things? Well we are not of ourselves. Our sufficiency is of God. So it’s not surprising then that our Lord should say in a third word, lo I am with you always even to the end of the age. One of the commentators has said, “This is the greatest conclusion to a written work ever made.” How true it is. What a magnificent conclusion. Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Our companion. Our ally.

The Lord Jesus is not like a five star general who sits in headquarters sending out messages to men who are in the trenches through his lieutenants. He is one who is with us in the trenches. Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Have you ever wondered how the apostles were able to do what they did? If you think for one moment that they had special capabilities, you are sadly mistaken. They didn’t. Look at Peter. Look at John. He had a bad temper to start with. Look at the rest of the apostles. They were just ordinary men. They were fishermen. Just ordinary people. The thing that made the apostles what they were is not what God gave them originally, though he did give them a number of things that distinguished them one from another. There were certain capacities within them which by the ministry of the Holy Spirit came to their fruition, but in themselves they were ordinary men.

What was the secret? Do you conceive of our Lord’s work as when he finally reached his resurrection days, he then turned over the work to the apostles and said, now, like a man who reaches sixty-five and retires as chairman of the board, turning over the operations to someone else and goes into semi-retirement becoming simply a paid consultant? No, the Lord Jesus does not carry on his work like that.

Listen. If the Christian church had simply, with its own natural abilities, sought to carry out the work of God, even as born again men we wouldn’t have any Christian church today. If General Motors had been operated by the skills of men who are in the Christian church, their skills in the work of doing the work of the Lord, General Motors would have gone bankrupt decades ago. What



accounts for the existence of the Christian church today? We have blundered down through the centuries, but we are still here and vital, and as a matter of fact, many think even stronger at the moment than we were twenty-five years ago. What accounts for it? Why it is the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He did not turn over the work of God to the apostles as men who inherited work from him. He simply called them in to share the work that he was doing so that the apostles did not labor in any different way, except our Lord was not with them in bodily visible form. But they labored with him, under him and for him as of old, and they became convinced of that, and at times when their faith failed, he did appear to them as he did to Paul in Corinth, and he said to them, lo I am with you, Paul, and I have much people in this city. Do not fear to stand up and speak; I will protect you. Lo I am with you always. Not I *shall* be. I *am* with you. Did you notice that word always? In the original text it is literally “all the days throughout.”

Now what does that mean? Well that means that he is not simply with us today for a little while, and then tomorrow for a little while, and the next day for a little while, but it really means that he is with us all of every day; every twenty-four hour period. He is there every hour, every minute, every second. All the days throughout he is with us. Always with us. Not only with us throughout all the days, but all kinds of days, too. The good and the bad. The days of sunshine; the days of shadow. The days of prosperity; the days of adversity. The days of happiness and health, and the days of tragedy and death. He is with us. He is with us in all the experiences of life. What a magnificent promise that is.

I'm sure that when we get to heaven in spite of all of our doubt, we shall exclaim with Jacob, the God that fed me all the days of my life, and it's unto the end of the age. No limits to this glorious promise. Is it all valid? Why yes it's valid. If there is any verse in the Bible that has no vagueness to it whatsoever it's this. In fact, this whole section. All authority is given unto me in heaven and earth. Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.

“An Unlimited Scepter, a Boundless Commission, and Immanuel!” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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There are no exegetical problems in this passage. Isn't it an interesting thing? You know you hear people interpret the Bible, particularly if you go around the seminary. They'll say, now we come to verse 20, and we have a problem here. Why, here's a text that you don't have any problems with. No exegetical problems. Lo I am with you always. You have to search and seek, if you're teaching it in the Greek text, to find something worthwhile to say that the Greek says, that the English text doesn't say, and you can hardly find anything. It's all here. It's all plain. It's all clear. It's pellucid.

Well let me tell you a little story. I think I put it in the *Believers Bible Bulletin*. G. Campbell Morgan was speaking to a woman eighty-five years of age, and he was reading this passage to her and when he finished it he said, you know that's a passage with a great promise. And she looked at him and said sharply with something of the sanctified humor that characterized her, it's not a promise; it's a fact. Lo I am with you always even to the end of the age.

In 1896, Glasgow University conferred on David Livingstone the Degree of Doctor of Laws, which meant a great deal in Scotland in those days. He arose to speak and was received very respectfully by the people of Scotland. He was gaunt. He was haggard as the result of hardships in tropical Africa. His left arm had been crushed by a lion, and it hung helplessly at his side. And he announced to them his resolve to return to Africa without misgiving and with great gladness.

Some of you who have been to Scotland may have traveled to see Livingstone's place of birth where his family grew up in a little room about the size of six by eight (could hardly see how that many people could stand in the room, much less grow up in it). And this man became one of the great heroes of Scotland and the missionary world. But after he spoke to them for a few moments he said to the vast group there, would you like me to tell you what supported me through all the years of exile from a people whose language I did not really understand, and whose attitude toward me was always uncertain and often hostile? It was this: lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age. He said on these words I staked everything and they never failed. They will not fail.

But listen. Suppose when we reach the end of our days? What about then? There is a story I like about a—a doctor who used to make house calls, and he was with a friend that he had ministered

to, and this friend had had several attacks of a disease, and the third attack usually proved fatal, and he had just had the third attack, and he said to the doctor, I’m afraid to die, tell me what lies on the other side.

And the doctor said I don’t really know what lies on the other side. And the patient said, what, you a Christian man, and you don’t know what lies on the other side? The doctor had a great big dog that traveled with him, and he usually left the dog outside. And he was in the room and the dog was outside, and he heard a little scratching on the door and when he said to him, what you a Christian man and you don’t know what’s on the other side? The doctor who happened to be holding the handle of the door, just opened the door and let the dog in and the dog came in and bounded up against the doctor and jumped up on him and began to try to lick him.

And then the doctor turned to the patient and he said, do you see this dog? He’d never been in this room before, he had never seen it, didn’t know who you were, but he knew that I was in here, and he was happy to come. He said, going to heaven is like that. He said I don’t really know what is on the other side, but I know that the Lord Jesus Christ is there and knowing that he is there is enough for me. Lo I am with you always even to the end of the age and throughout all of the ages that shall follow we could well add.

Now my Christian friend let me ask you one question I know I’m being a little lengthy. Well that’s customary anyway [laughter]. Let me ask you one thing. If all power be our Lord Jesus Christ’s power, then can there be any power that can have success against his friends? If he has all power, do we need to fear, even if we have all weakness? No we don’t. All authority is given unto me. Therefore, preach the gospel. Lo I am with you always even to the end of the age. What a magnificent power and strength and commission and promise go with us as we seek to please him.

If you’re here this morning and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you to put your trust in him who has made an atonement that is for sinners, such as you are. And if by the Holy Spirit you have come to a conviction of your sin, you are a candidate for that salvation.

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May God in his wonderful grace so touch your heart that you see what you really need and that you turn and receive from him the gift of eternal life. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we know that it is impossible to do justice to these magnificent closing words of our Lord Jesus Christ. O God, help us to experience them in the fullness of Thy purpose, and O God if there are some here who have not come, even at this moment to the Lord Jesus Christ as the supreme sovereign of the universe, help them Lord to see their true condition and to flee to the remedy the blood that flowed at Calvary's cross.

May grace mercy and peace go with us.

For Christ's sake. Amen.