

# Sermons on Matthew

## The Great Commission

Part Eight  
I Am With You Always  
*Matthew 28:18-20*

*With Study Questions*

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# The Great Commission

## Part Eight

### I Am With You Always

*Matthew 28:18-20*

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”<sup>-19-</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>-20-</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen (Matthew 28:18-20).**

## Introduction

As a father, coach, or pastor, if there is something I am about to say to which I want special attention given, I might preface my comment with “now listen” or “pay attention.” To little children who often find it difficult to stay focused, I might even gently turn their face toward my own.

Jesus would bring special attention to something He was about to say by prefacing the statement one, of a couple of ways. He might say “verily” or “assuredly” which can also be translated “amen.” Another word used by Jesus that might cause otherwise inattentive listeners to dial in is the word translated here “lo” or “behold” or “look.”

Matthew records the final words of Jesus with that preface. As if all Jesus had said prior to this needed to be understood in light of these last twelve words—**“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

## Review

In reviewing this portion of scripture known as the Great Commission we see that it begins with a preamble. Before Jesus gives the church its mission, He declares the success of His own mission. **“All authority”** was given to Him. Having been raised from the dead, Jesus is at the right hand of the Father **“far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named”** (Ephesians

**1:21).** In assurance of this authority Christians are called to **“make disciples of all the nations”**.

The **“go”** in the Great Commission means ‘wherever we find ourselves’ and the means by which disciples are made is through the preaching of the gospel. The target audience for the gospel is **“all the nations”** which means everybody. The outward ratification of one who has been made a disciple is baptism. Baptism is a sign and seal of ingrafting into Christ, rebirth, remission of sins and duty to new obedience.

Obedience to **“all things”** that Christ commanded is the final portion of the Great Commission in terms of our response. We will be pursuing this in the months to come by examining the commands or laws of God. This morning we complete the Gospel of Matthew by meditating upon the glorious promise of the continual presence of Christ with His church.

### **With Us Daily**

Jesus had been crucified. The resurrected Savior, the conqueror of death, then continued for a time with His church. But soon He would ascend to the Father and no longer remain with the church in bodily form. This, Jesus tells us, is to the advantage of His church and its mission (which we will speak of momentarily). It was and is critical for the followers of Christ to know that there is no disadvantage in serving an ascended Savior.

When Jesus promises to be with us, the promise is emphatic! A more literal translation *‘ego meth humon eimi’* would read **“I with you I am”** and could be understood, **“I myself am with you”** as if pledging the full benefits of His presence and authority.

And there is no delay in the promise. He does not say **“I will be with you”** but **“I am with you.”** And the present tense of the promise is elevated even further when one considers the language Jesus uses which is often translated **“always”** but is more literally *‘pasas tas heūmeras’*—**“all the days.”**

The wedding vows I generally use contain the promise, **“I will thank my God always that He has given you to me.”** It once said, **“I will thank my God daily”** but one couple thought it was an unrealistic vow to make—suppose they miss a day! **“Always”** is a looser, weaker word than **“daily.”** Jesus can make that promise without equivocation and we can trust that a moment does not pass when He is not scrutinizing our path.

**\_Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? <sup>8</sup> \_If I ascend into heaven, You are there; \_If I**

make my bed in \_\_hell, behold, *You are there.* <sup>9</sup> *If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,* <sup>10</sup> *even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.* <sup>11</sup> *If I say, “Surely the darkness shall \_\_fall on me,” even the night shall be light about me;* <sup>12</sup> *Indeed, \_the darkness \_\_shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You (Psalm 139:7-12).*

## With Us in the Mundane

Although there is a unique context for the promise of Christ’s presence—a context of mission (our next point)—we must recognize the presence of Christ in terms of the mundane as well. By mundane I am not speaking of boring (how the word is often used) but in terms of earthly experience. It was after His ascension that Jesus reminded Paul of His presence with him through his fear of being attacked.

**Now \_the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; <sup>-10-</sup> \_\_for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.” <sup>-11-</sup> And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them (Acts 18:9-11).**

It is also worthy to note that the means by which Christ was with Paul was via “many people in this city.” Certainly the presence of Christ promised in the Great Commission is a spiritual presence in the context of a spiritual mission; nonetheless, it also includes His power as King, as taught in the Westminster Larger Catechism, in

...restraining and overcoming all (our) their enemies, (1 Cor. 15:25, Ps. 110:1–2) and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, (Rom. 14:10–11) and (our) their good; (Rom. 8:28) and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel. (2 Thess. 1:8–9, Ps. 2:8–9)”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Westminster larger catechism: With scripture proofs. 1996 (Question 45). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

God raises and subdues kings and kingdoms **“in order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men” (Daniel 4:17b).**

Jesus is with His people in the large and small things. The presence of Christ is not reserved for kings alone or for events the world would evaluate as significant enough to notice.

**God is our \_\_refuge and strength, \_\_a \_\_very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).**

By the power of His Spirit and might of His providence, Jesus is with His faithful followers in every event—no matter how big or small.

## **With Us in Mission**

### **The “I”**

Of course the context of this great promise is the context of a mission—the Great Commission. It is in the context of making disciples, baptizing those disciples and teaching them obedience to all Christ commanded. It is here that the pronoun **“I”** must be front and center.

It is the **“zeal of the Lord” (Isaiah 9:7)** which accomplishes the advancement of His kingdom and the redemption of His creation. For men to seek to redeem and bring blessings to this world apart from the **“I am”** is a fool’s errand doomed to failure. The forcefulness of Christ’s announcement of His presence in their mission should lead His followers to ponder the limitations of their capabilities apart from the presence of their Master.

We must avoid the folly of Phinehas and Hophni who brought the Ark of the Covenant into battle apart from the command of God and, therefore, apart from God Himself. They lost the battle, their lives and the Ark (1 Samuel 4). For the church to engage in its mission apart from the presence of Christ is a meaningless and fruitless endeavor.

### **The “You”**

But in what respect can Christ not be with us? We must be careful not to mistakenly assume that the other pronoun *‘humon’* **“you”** means everyone. The Bible speaks of those who take rank against the Lord’s Anointed (Psalm 2:2). Jesus threatens to remove His lampstand from the church (Revelation 2:5). Churches that wax cold in their love for Christ or

neglect the preaching of His word and administration of His sacraments—acts which He has instituted as perpetual reminders of who He is and what He has done—will find a vacancy when it comes to the presence of Christ (in terms of His favor).

In a church besieged with Greek philosophy and confidence in man's abilities—the Apostle Paul puts the influence of rhetoric or human sophistry in its place:

**And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the \_testimony of God. <sup>-2-</sup> For I determined not to know anything among you \_except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:1, 2).**

Though Christ is the true and ultimate Prophet of God, for Jesus to remain in His church, His people must believe not only what He taught (loving God and neighbor) but in who He is and what He did—**“The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).**

## **The Message**

The presence of Christ, though with the initial disciples, also continues in their work—specifically their message. You'll sometimes hear of apostolic churches. All true churches are apostolic. Not that they're attended by living apostles (the last apostle died two thousand years ago), but that they embrace their message.

The presence of Christ continues in His church through His word.

**These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. <sup>-26-</sup> But \_the \_Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will \_send in My name, \_He will teach you all things, and bring to your \_remembrance all things that I said to you (John 14:25, 26).**

And it is through these words that the presence of the Christ continues to work through His Spirit—here referred to as the Helper:

**Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but \_if I depart, I will send Him to you. <sup>-8-</sup> And**

when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: <sup>-9-</sup> of sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>-10-</sup> of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; <sup>-11-</sup> of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

<sup>-12-</sup> “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. <sup>-13-</sup> However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. <sup>-14-</sup> He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. <sup>-15-</sup> All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.” (John 16:7-15).

Jesus is with His church as she faithfully pursues the mission for which she was appointed. In order for the Spirit of God to bring redemption to a lost and dying world, Christ must be glorified through His word and by His Spirit—the church must ever know her Master and Savior.

Hopefully we understand how critical it is that the church not be reduced to another relief organization, abounding in good deeds but neglecting the Good News. Holding fast to the word of God is not always natural and, at times, is counter-intuitive. The world, and even some within the church, will seek to diminish the importance of the doctrines of Christ. But Paul places special emphasis and honor on those who would “**labor in the word and doctrine**” (1 Timothy 5:17). It requires thoughtful effort. Therefore Jude exhorts us “**to contend earnestly for the faith**” (Jude 3).

### **With Us to Completion**

Finally there is the promise of a faithful and patient God—“**even to the end of the age**.” Men grow weary and discouraged. We lack vision and are easily side-tracked. But Christ is not plagued by such limitations.

**Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. <sup>29</sup> He**

**gives power to the weak, and to *those who have* no might He increases strength.<sup>30</sup> Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall,<sup>31</sup> but those who wait on the Lord shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:28-31).**

I remember seeing a documentary on a Japanese company that had a 250 year business plan. After about forty years they began to run into obstacles they could never have anticipated and the wheels began to come off the cart. This is not the case with God's plan of salvation. Even in the face of great adversity and discouragement, we can be assured of Christ's promise to be with those who walk in truth. And, as the Apostle Paul teaches, **"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"** (Romans 8:31)



## Questions for Study

1. Why would Jesus begin this last statement with the word “I” (page 2)?
2. Review the basic components of the Great Commission (pages 2, 3)?
3. Discuss the different ways Jesus’ presence with His church is emphasized (pages 3, 4).
4. How is Jesus with us in the mundane things? Can you give examples (pages 4, 5)?
5. Why must the “I” be front and center in the church’s mission (pages 5, 6)?
6. Does the “you” in the Great Commission mean everyone? Explain (page 6).
7. How is Christ with us in terms of the message (pages 6-8)?
8. How can we be assured on the church’s success (page 8)?

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