



# *Following Jesus on the Mountain*

SUMMER 2025



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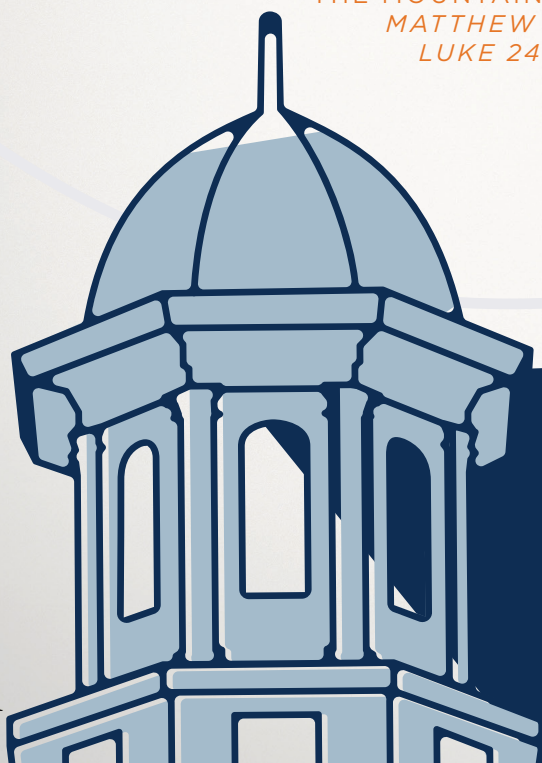
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# 1

## SESSION ONE

# *Thin Places & Sacred Spaces*

JOHN 4:21, 23-24 (ESV)

## *Session One Verses*

### **John 4:21, 23-24 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. . . . <sup>23</sup>But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

*How do the key events on mountains in the Bible reveal God's presence and purpose? How can these experiences impact your relationship with God today?*

## *Introduction*

### *I. In the Old Testament, many of the most important events in the history of Israel took place on mountains:*

- Noah's ark rested on Mount Ararat (Gen. 8)
- Abraham took his son Isaac to Mount Moriah to sacrifice to God (Gen. 22)
- Moses saw the burning bush on Mount Horeb (Exod. 3)
- Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19, 24, 34)
- Moses saw the Promised Land, died, and was buried on Mount Nebo (Deut. 32)
- Elijah battled the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18)
- Mount Zion was technically not a mountain, but as the highest hill in Jerusalem, it had the most prominent position in the life and worship of Israel.

# 1

## SESSION ONE

### *II. Mountains played a very important role in the life and ministry of Jesus:*

- Solitude and Prayer (Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12 (all night long); Luke 9:28; John 6:15)
- Teaching (Matt. 5:1; Mark 13:3; John 6:3)
- Healing (Matt. 15:29; Mark 5:5)
- Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1)
- Ascension (Acts 1:12)

### *The “mountain motif” that guides the structure and plot of the Gospel of Matthew (Donaldson):*

- Mountain of Temptation (Matt. 4:8)
- Mountain of Teaching (Matt. 4:23-8:1)
- Mountain of Feeding (Matt. 15:21-39)
- Mountain of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-9)
- Mount of Olives (Matt. 21:1; 24-25)
- Mountain of Commissioning (28:16-20; the apex; the highest peak)





# *Faith Obedience Revelation*

*Three of these mountain experiences were especially crucial to understanding the Person and Work of Jesus (Donaldson):*

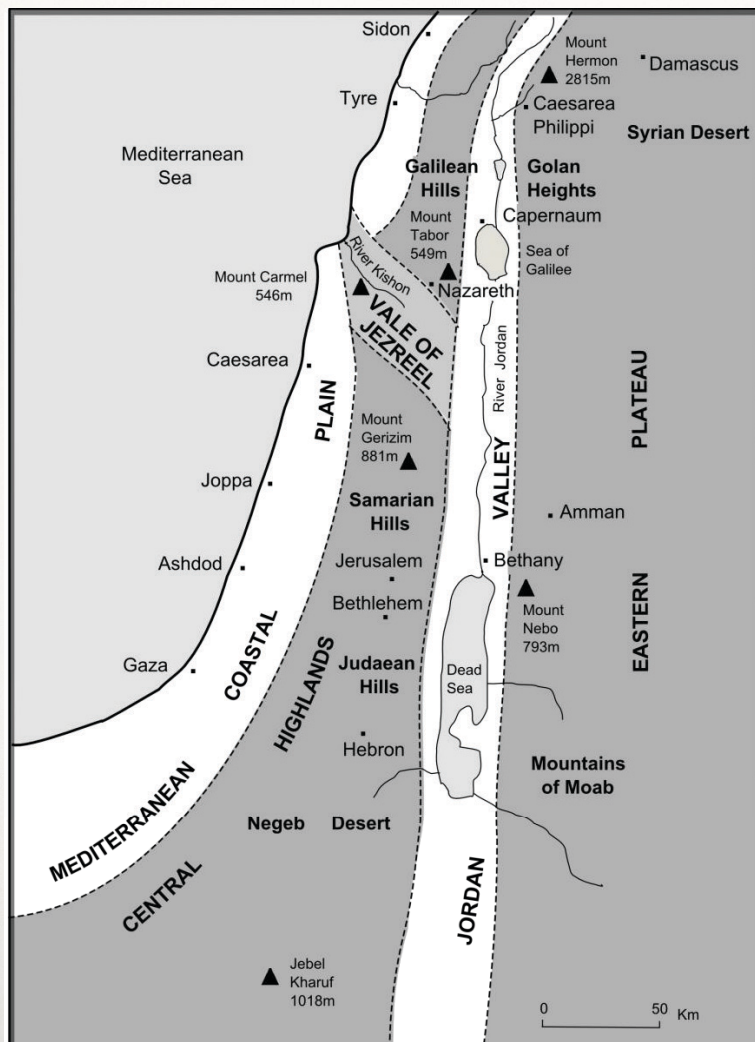
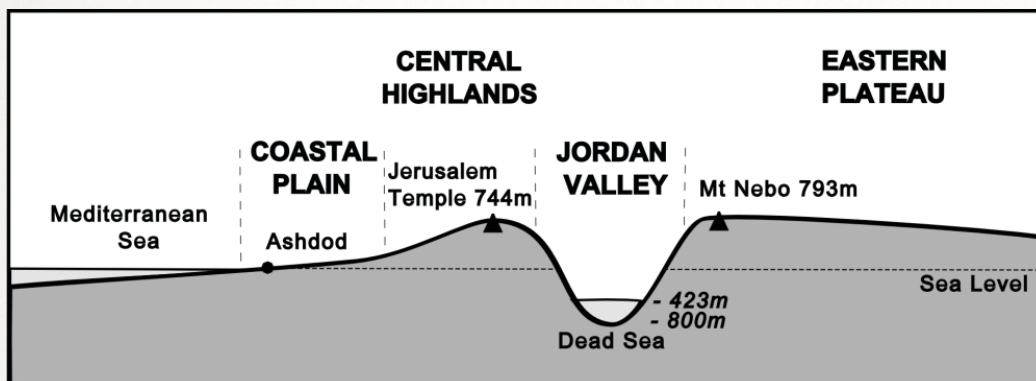
- The Temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13)
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# 1 SESSION ONE



## A. Physical Geography of Israel During the Ministry of Jesus;





What are the sacred spaces in our lives? How do we seek them out?



## ***B. Spiritual Geography:***

1. Jesus stated that true worship is independent of location (John 4:21-25). Worship is a matter of the heart: we worship the God who is Spirit in spirit and in truth. That doesn't mean, however, that location doesn't matter, that space cannot be "sacred."
  - "Sanctuary"—a place to create awareness of the holiness (sanctity) of God
2. The function of sacred spaces:
  - Communicate the presence of God:
  - Teach something about the nature of God:
  - Foster solitude for reflection and prayer:
  - Foster community for encouragement and ministry:
3. Celtic Christians: "Thin Places"
  - a. Christian tradition in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland in the 5th-10th centuries. Very different from Roman Christianity with a unique approach to spirituality, worship, and discipleship. Among those distinctives:
    - Faith is in close dialog with nature;
    - The presence of God can be felt and discerned in the natural landscape;
    - Incarnational theology: an emphasis on physicality and the material world;
    - A focus on "place": chapels, shrines, woodlands, lakes, rivers, springs, mountains, coastlines, islands... "a divinity of place."
  - b. A "Thin Place" is a location where the distance between heaven and earth seems to be very close, allowing people to feel especially close to God: the veil between the worlds of heaven and earth seems especially sheer, and the worlds discernibly close to each other.

"Truth makes its home in these broken-open places, and we often receive the gift of new insights and memories. In thin spaces we get a glimpse of heaven, right here on earth. Therefore, we need to create ample time and space for reflection and silence, which are necessary conditions for our souls to breathe." (Julianne Stanz, *Braving the Thin Places: Celtic Wisdom to Create a Space for Grace*)

What are the sacred spaces in our lives? How do we seek them out?



# 2 SESSION TWO

## Spiritual Warfare - Battling Temptation

MATTHEW 4:1-11, MARK 1:12-13, &  
LUKE 4:1-13

### Introduction

#### Matthew 4:1-11 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." <sup>4</sup>But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" <sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple <sup>6</sup>and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" <sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup>And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" <sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

#### Mark 1:12-13 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup>The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

***"But he answered, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"***

#### Luke 4:1-13 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness <sup>2</sup>for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." <sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" <sup>5</sup>And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, <sup>6</sup>and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. <sup>7</sup>If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." <sup>8</sup>And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'" <sup>9</sup>And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup>for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' <sup>11</sup>and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" <sup>12</sup>And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" <sup>13</sup>And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.



# I. The Context

## A. The textual setting:

1. Recorded by all three of the Synoptic Gospels
  - Mark's account is very brief with few details; Mark is the only one who mentions the wild animals;
  - Matthew and Luke have a different order for the temptations: Bread, Temple, Mountain (Matthew); Bread, Mountain, Temple (Luke).
2. Preceding verses: Jesus's baptism (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22)
  - Spirit of God: the "Anointed One"—announcing his messiahship;
  - Voice of God: "This is my beloved Son"—affirmation of his divinity;
  - Beginning of his public ministry.

## B. The theological setting:

1. Key to understanding background is the three scriptures that Jesus quotes: Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, and 6:13
  - Deuteronomy 6-8 "Take care lest you forget the Lord your God" (8:1-20);
  - Jesus fasted 40 days; Moses and the children of Israel wandering 40 years in wilderness (8:2); Moses 40 days on Mt. Sinai (9:11, 18, 25);
  - Whereas Moses and Israel ultimately failed the test, Jesus was victorious over the temptations of Satan (Hebrews 5:7-9; 3:1-11; "Jesus greater than Moses").
2. The prophets in the wilderness: Moses (Ex. 3:1-2), David (1 Sam. 24:13), Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:4-8), John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-4); "Jesus greater than the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

## C. The historical setting: What was the nature of this experience?

1. Three options:
  - Inner spiritual struggle?
  - Literal physical struggle?
  - Combination of the two?

## C. The contemporary setting:

1. Key question one: Who is Jesus? (Identity) What kind of Messiah is Jesus? What does it mean to be the Son of God?
  - "The devil tried to shape Jesus's understanding of his Sonship and his ministry according to worldly models of power." (Keener)
2. Key question two: How does this equip the followers of Jesus to face temptation?

*What does Jesus' victory in the wilderness teach us about His mission?*

# 2

## SESSION TWO


### *II. The Text*

#### A. Introduction: Matt. 4:1-2; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-2

1. “Led by the Spirit,” (Matthew); “Spirit drove (compelled) him,” (Mark); “Full of the Holy Spirit,” “Led by the Spirit” (Luke)
  - Why? “To be tempted by the devil”
  - Larger purpose: to prepare for his public ministry (see about fasting and praying below);
  - But Jesus prayed, “Lead us not into temptation”; James 1:13 says that God does not tempt us. How could he be led by the Spirit?
  - This temptation also reveals Jesus’s humanity (was it possible for Christ to sin?).
2. “Into the Wilderness”
  - This would be the Wilderness of Judea, which stretches from Jericho in the northern part to the end of the Dead Sea in the southern part:
  - Mark mentions that “he was with the wild animals”—a very interesting detail. Why does Mark mention the animals? The Old Testament vision of Isaiah saw the coming kingdom of God as a place where there was no fear of wild animals (Isaiah 11:6-7; 35:9; 65:25);
  - The wilderness was a place of evil and danger in the view of first century Jews. Jesus battles the devil on Satan’s own turf;
  - The wilderness was also the place where so many of the Old Testament prophets received their revelations and commissions.







3. “To be tempted” – important to understand the full biblical definition of temptation. The Greek word (verb and noun forms) can be translated “tempt, temptation; tempter,” or “try, trials,” “test, examine, or prove,” depending on the context. These are used in three senses in the New Testament:

- **General trials:** the circumstances of life that distress, discourage, and hinder us; the struggles of life; the consequences of living in a fallen world:
- **Testing:** “to put on trial” or “to prove.” This includes two kinds of tests:
  - Negative: to trick, to trap, “set up to fail;” for example, Jesus and the Pharisees (Matt. 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35); This is always Satan’s purpose: he is “the thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10); God never does this (James 1:13);
  - Positive: to strengthen, fortify, encourage, prepare for mission, maturity in Christ (James 1:2-3, 12). See Genesis 50:20 (“you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good”).
- **Temptation:** “tempting to fail, to sin, to disobey God”
  - It results from the fall and all of us are subject to temptation to sin (1 John 2:16; “For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”);
  - It is the primary tool of Satan (“The Accuser”), who is the author of temptation from the beginning of humanity (“Has God said?” “Did God actually say?” Gen. 3:1);
  - God never tempts us in this way—in fact, he works to deliver us from temptation (James 1:13; 1 Cor. 10:13).

# 2

## SESSION TWO



4. “By the devil” (Matt. 4:1, 5, 8, 11; Luke 4:2, 3, 5, 13); “the tempter” (Matt. 4:3); “Satan” (Matt. 4:10; Mark 1:13)

- Affirm the existence of an invisible, spiritual, supernatural universe that includes created spirits, both good and evil;
- Affirm the existence of Satan and evil spirits; the Gospels depict Satan as a literal, personal, spiritual being who can take physical form;
- Scriptural descriptions of Satan:
  - Satan: “adversary,” “opponent,” “accuser,” “enemy,” “the hater”
  - Devil: *diabolos*; “hairy one, goat,” “spoiler,” “destroyer,” “accuser”
  - Abaddon/Apollyon: “destroyer” (Rev. 9:11)
  - Beelzebul/Beelzebub: “lord of flies,” “lord of the dung heap” (Matt. 12:24); “the prince of demons”
  - Belial/Beliar: “worthless” (2 Cor. 6:15)
  - Lucifer: “light-bearer,” “shining star,” “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14; see also Isa. 14:12)
  - Serpent/Dragon (Rev. 12:9, 20:2; Rev. 12:3-17)
  - Liar/Father of Lies (John 8:44)
- The prince of this world (John 14:30; 16:11; 17:15-16; Eph. 2:2, 6:12); God has allowed Satan limited powers in the present age, yet God remains sovereign over the devil and his spirits.

5. “Fasting 40 days and nights, he was hungry”
  - Fasting in Scripture refers to abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. The normal means of fasting involved abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water.
  - What is the spiritual purpose of fasting?

### B. Temptation One: “Stones into Bread” (Matt. 4:3-4; Luke 4:3-4)

1. The temptation: turn these stones into bread—prove that you are really the Son of God! Prove that God your Father really cares about you and will provide for you!
  - Background of ancient ideas about magic:
  - Satan’s strategy is to get Jesus to question the providential care of his Father and take matters

into his own hands—provide for his own needs. Satan’s purpose was “to incite Jesus to dissatisfaction, impatience, and self-will” (Geldenhuys);

- Jesus was really hungry and very weak; Satan knows humanity’s weaknesses and attacks us where we are most vulnerable.

### 2. Jesus’ response:

- “It is written”: to fight temptation, Jesus does not depend on his own resources. He draws his strength from God’s word:
- Quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, which referred to God feeding the children of Israel in the wilderness with manna. God provided for Israel; God will provide for Jesus;
- Then communicates a higher truth: obedience to God is more important than satisfying physical needs. He refuses to live on a purely physical level:
  - “My food is to do the will of my Father” (John 4:34)
  - “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:32)

### C. Temptation Two: “Throw Yourself Down” (Matt. 4:5-7; Luke 4:9-12)

1. The temptation: throw yourself off the pinnacle of the Temple—prove that God really loves you and will protect you! Show-off your powers and prove in a miraculous way that you are the Messiah!
2. “The pinnacle of the Temple”
  - Either in the mind (a spiritual vision), physical transportation (not bound by time or space), or physical presence at the Temple?
  - Literally, “Little Wing” of the Temple; we don’t know exactly what this is. Many commentators identify this as the “Royal Colonnade” that looks over the Kidron Valley. We have a first century description of this from Josephus.



## Jesus chose obedience to God's way as his path.



- Josephus (Antiquities): “The ravine itself was so deep that no one could bear to lean over and look down to the bottom from above; but above it stood also an immensely high portico so that anyone who looked down from the top of its roof, with the two heights combined, would become dizzy as he looked into the depths, his eyesight begin unable to reach the bottom of such an unfathomable drop.”

### 3. Again, “If you are the Son of God”

- To doubt whether the Father who had called him would really enable him to fulfill his vocation/mission. Satan: “don’t you need some kind of miraculous, spectacular sign of your divinity?”
- Augustine: “throw yourself down” commentary—“Satan can only suggest; only the tempted person can do the wrong act” (the devil made me do it doesn’t work).

### 4. This time, Satan quotes scripture (Psalm 91:11-12), but out of context: the passage promises angelic protection for events that happen to God’s servants, but this is not an excuse to seek out such dangers!

### 5. Jesus’ response:

- Jesus responds again with scripture (Deut. 6:16), but Jesus makes sure to quote it in its proper context:
  - The Old Testament reference is to Israel’s sin at Massah (or Meribah); see Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:1-13;
  - “Is God among us or not?” (Deut. 17:7) In a display of lack of faith and trust in God, Israel demanded miraculous confirmation of God’s presence and providence.
- Jesus assured Satan that God would take care of his Son—he did not have to test God’s providence by forcing a miracle.

### D. Temptation Three: “All the Kingdoms of the World” (Matt. 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-8)

#### 1. The temptation: establish your kingdom (rule)

without going to the cross! “To bid farewell to the path of suffering” (Geldenhuys). This would be Jesus’s “greatest and most persistent temptation” (Tasker; see Jesus’s Gethsemane prayer; Matt. 26:39, 42, 44).

#### 2. “took him to a very high mountain”

- Again, this could be a physical, mental, or spiritual experience;
- If physical, what mountain could this be?
  - Christian tradition identifies a mountain above the city of Jericho as the “Mount of Temptation”; Jebel Quruntul (Mt. Quarantine) 1300 ft;
  - Mt. Nebo is nearby and would be consistent with the biblical and theological themes of this event.

#### 3. “and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.” Offered Jesus political domination of the world: earthly power, wealth, and glory; Satan: “I can give you what you want: King of kings and Lord of lords!”

#### 4. “I will give you these if you bow down and worship me”

- End justifies the means: to obtain universal sovereignty no matter how it was achieved? The temptation is to avoid the cross. Satan offers a way out.
- Two problems:
  - The kingdoms of the world were not Satan’s to give;
  - Satan did not understand the nature of God’s kingdom:



# 2

## SESSION TWO

E. Afterwards: (Matt. 4:11; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:13)

1. “the devil left him” “until an opportune time” (Luke) (“for a season”)
  - Jesus would be tempted throughout his ministry (John 4:34; Matt. 16:3, 23; Luke 11:13; Mark 8:32-33); “Get behind me Satan;”
  - Jesus remained faithful to God and resisted the temptations:
    - Heb. 2:17-18 (17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.)
    - Heb. 4:15-16 (15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.)
    - Heb. 5:8-9 (8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. 9 And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him).
2. “the angels were ministering to him”
  - “ministering spirits” (Psalm 103:20-21); 1 Kings 19:5-8 (angels ministering to Elijah in the wilderness);
  - At very least the angels provided Jesus with food, drink, and companionship (comfort and encouragement);
  - Jesus is victorious. Satan is repelled. Jesus is affirmed and sustained. God can be trusted. Jesus is revealed as the wholly obedient Son of God who now begins his ministry and work of redemption fully committed to the will of God.

### *III. The Application*

#### A. Facing Temptation

1. Every Christian will face temptation throughout their whole lives (Jas 1:14; 1 Pet. 2:11; 1 John 1:8):
2. We are most often tempted when we are physically weak, tired, stressed, and vulnerable (1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 4:27):
3. God is present with us in the midst of our temptation (Heb. 4:16; 2 Pet. 2:9):
4. God provides the resources for us to fight temptation (1 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 6:10-18):
5. God will forgive us when we give in to temptation and will restore us to a loving relationship (1 John 1:9; 2 Cor. 7:10):



## This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. In the four corners, there are faint, light-orange curved lines that form parts of larger circles, creating a decorative border effect. The overall appearance is that of a clean, unused piece of stationery or notebook paper.



# Spiritual Authority - Listening to Jesus

MATTHEW 17:1-13; MARK 9:2-13;  
LUKE 9:28-36

## Matthew 17:1-13 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup>And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. <sup>3</sup>And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. <sup>4</sup>And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>5</sup>He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." <sup>6</sup>When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. <sup>7</sup>But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." <sup>8</sup>And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. <sup>9</sup>And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." <sup>10</sup>And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" <sup>11</sup>He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. <sup>12</sup>But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." <sup>13</sup>Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

## Mark 9:2-13 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup>And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup>and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup>And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup>For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup>And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." <sup>8</sup>And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. <sup>9</sup>And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup>So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. <sup>11</sup>And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" <sup>12</sup>And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? <sup>13</sup>But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."



This is my beloved Son,  
with whom I am well  
pleased; listen to him.



## Luke 9:28-36 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup>Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup>And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup>And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup>who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup>Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup>And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup>As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup>And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” <sup>36</sup>And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

## I. The Context

### A. The textual setting:

1. Recorded by all three synoptic Gospels. Matthew and Mark’s accounts are almost identical. Luke gives us a few more and different details:
2. Preceding verses: the Good Confession and the Way of the Cross
  - Jesus questions his disciples about their understanding of his identity: Who do people say that I am?
    - “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!” (Matt. 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-20);
    - “Don’t tell anyone!” (Matt. 16:20; Mark 8:30; Luke 9:21; compare with Matt.17:9; Mark 9:9; Luke 9:36).
  - Jesus foretells his death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21-23; Mark 8:31-33; Luke 9:21-22);
  - Jesus commands his disciples to take up their cross and follow him (Matt. 16:24-28; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:23-27).

### B. The theological setting:

1. The Jews divided the Old Testament into two sections: The Law and the Prophets. Moses (who established the Law) and Elijah (the first of the great prophets) represent the Old Covenant with Israel. The Messiah (Christ) would become the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Jesus is the new Moses and the greatest prophet, establishing and proclaiming the New Covenant (Matt. 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:44; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23; Rom. 3:21; Heb. 1:1-2).



***“The Messiah, however, will establish God’s kingdom through sacrificial love.”***

2. The Messiah, however, will establish God’s kingdom through sacrificial love. God’s anointed prophet, priest, and king will announce a spiritual, not a political, rule of God that will be initiated by the Messiah’s sacrificial death for the forgiveness of sins and glorious resurrection to new life for God’s community of faith.
- C. The contemporary setting:
1. Key questions: Who is Jesus? Why should I listen to him? How do I best listen to Jesus?

## II. The Text

### A. Introduction: Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2a; Luke 9:28

1. “after six days” (Matthew, Mark); “after eight days” (Luke)
  - Why the discrepancy?
  - A better way to express this would be, “in about a week.”
2. “took Peter, James, and John” (Matthew, Mark), “Peter, John and James” (Luke)
  - The inner circle. See also Mark 5:37; Matt. 26:37; Gal. 2:9;
  - Peter refers to this experience in his second epistle:
    - “<sup>16</sup>For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” <sup>18</sup>we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.” (2 Pet. 1:16-18);
  - Eyewitness testimony: the experience is described in verse 9 as a vision, but it is vividly narrated in empirical terms; “heaven has invaded earth and the superhuman glory of the Messiah has been revealed” (France).
3. “up on a high mountain”

- This would be in the region of Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:13); Galilee (Matt. 17:22) and Capernaum are also mentioned in the chapter (Matt. 17:24); there was a Jewish crowd present when they came off the mountain (Mark 9:14);
- The highest mountain in that region is Mt. Hermon; Mt. Tabor is the traditional site, but seems quite a bit out of the way given the other geographical references; Mt. Meron, the highest mountain in Galilee, would be a logical choice since it is in the vicinity of Capernaum;
- Recalls Moses on Mt. Sinai (glory, cloud, voice, shining face);
  - Moses took Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu with him up on the mountain (Exod. 24:1, 34:29);
  - Jesus is “a prophet like Moses” and the “one greater than Moses” (Acts 3:19-26; Heb. 3:1-6).
- 4. “to pray” (Luke)
  - Only Luke records the primary purpose for the hike up the mountain: for prayer (Luke 9:32) He also suggests that the disciples were sleepy, so it probably was at night (compare with Gethsemane);
  - The Gospel of Luke contains an emphasis on the prayer life of Jesus, who faithfully prayed before many of the key events in his life and ministry: see Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:18; 9:28; 22:41.



*The  
Transfiguration  
points to the  
path of the  
cross—God’s  
kingdom  
comes through  
sacrifice, not  
power.*

**B. Four Dramatic Occurrences (Stedman):**

1. **Glorious change in the person of Jesus:** (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2b-3; Luke 9:29)
  - Transfigured (from the Latin *transfigurare*, “to change the shape of”); the Greek word is *metamorphosis*:
    - A transformation that is outwardly visible;
    - Used in Rom.12:2 and 2 Cor. 3:18 as an inward and spiritual transformation (translated “transformed”);
    - A glorious change in the person of Jesus himself—a supernatural change; “slipped back into eternity” (Stedman).
  - The transformation included:
    - His face shone like the sun: the glory of God in OT described as bright light; recalls Moses’s face shining (Exod. 34:29-30);
    - His clothes became white as light; brighter than any fuller could bleach them (white clothes were not common in the ancient world).
  - John 1:14: “The Word became flesh... and we beheld his glory, glory as of the Father’s only Son”; “The true transfiguration, the metamorphosis, had been at Bethlehem” (Cole; see Phil. 2:6-7).
2. **The appearance of the heavenly visitors:** (Matt. 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30-31)
  - Moses (the Great Lawgiver) and Elijah (the First and Greatest Prophet): representing the two great divisions of the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets. See Matt. 7:12, 11:13, 22:40; Luke 16:16, 24:44; John 1:45; Acts 13:15, 24:14, 28:23; Rom. 3:21.
  - Matthew and Mark tell us that they were “talking with Jesus” but it is Luke who tells us what they were talking about: “spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31):
    - Greek word for “departure” is an unusual, uncommon Greek word for “death”—*exodos*;
    - They were discussing the way of the cross. Remember the context of the transfiguration: Jesus foretells his death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21-23; Mark 8:31-33; Luke 9:21-22).

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### 3. Peter's bold interruption and proposal: (Matt. 17:4; Mark 9:5-6; Luke 9:33)

- Impetuous Simon Peter—"he just had to say something" (Stedman); Luke tells us "not knowing what he said" (9:33); drowsy, scared, and clueless, Peter says the first thing that enters his mind!
- Let's build three tents (booths, tabernacles) in honor of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah: Why?
  - Was it simply practical?
  - Was it religious? A place to honor and worship them?
  - Recalled the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths), which celebrated God's provision to Israel during the wilderness wanderings.
- Note how Jesus is addressed: "Lord" (or "Sir"; Matthew; a formal address); "Rabbi" (or "Teacher"; Mark; keeps the original Aramaic word); "Master" (or "Lord"; Luke; Greek address).
- The problem with Peter's suggestion is that it puts Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah.

### 4. The appearance of the Shekinah glory and the declaration: (Matt. 17:5-8; Mark 9:7-8; Luke 9:34-36)

- The bright cloud (*photeinos*, "radiant," "full of light"); the Shekinah glory of God:
- In the Old Testament, the presence of God was often symbolized by a cloud: see Exod. 13:21-22; 19:9, 16; 24:15-18; 33:9-10; 40:34-38; 1 Kgs. 8:10-11;





- The voice “from out of the cloud” (all three Gospels): “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew); “This is my beloved Son, listen to him” (Mark); “This is my Chosen One, listen to him” (Luke):
  - God spoke audibly three times during Jesus’s ministry:
    - At Jesus’s baptism: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22);
    - At the transfiguration: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 17:5); “This is my beloved Son, listen to him” (Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35);
    - After the triumphal entry, Jesus acknowledged that “the hour had come” and he must suffer the cross. Jesus cried out, “Father, glorify your name!” God’s voice replied: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” (John 12:23-30).
  - “This is my Beloved Son” recalls Jesus’s baptism (Matt. 3:17) and Peter’s confession (Matt. 16:16);
  - “Listen to him!” God’s people of the new covenant are to hear the voice of God through the words of Jesus (see Heb. 1:1-4; John 14:6).
- The fear of the disciples: they were already afraid (Mark 9:6); after hearing the voice of God from the cloud, they were terrified (Matt. 17:6; Luke 9:34). Matthew tells us that Jesus “came and touched them” (17:7) and comforted them—a reassurance of the love of Jesus.

- Jesus alone—Moses and Elijah were gone. Jesus is the sole bearer of God’s new revelation, the author of the New Covenant, and the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets. “Jesus is the new Tabernacle of divine glory” (Lane).

### C. Postscript:

1. “Don’t tell anyone!” (Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:9-10; Luke 9:36); Why?
  - Would anyone really believe them?
  - Did Peter, James, and John understand what had happened? Not before the resurrection (Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:9);
  - Jesus had “set his face toward Jerusalem” (Luke 9:53) and he wanted to focus on the task ahead; he did not want to be distracted by the crowds who would hear of this and demand signs and miracles.
2. What about this Elijah thing? (Matt. 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13)
  - On the way down the mountain, the disciples had a burning question for Jesus: “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?”
    - Malachi 4:1-6 ( <sup>5</sup>Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes), The Old Testament ends with a great messianic passage that promises the “great day of the Lord” when “the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.” In preparation for that great day, Elijah will come to “turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers.”
    - The “Elijah Promise” was essential to the first century Jewish understanding of the coming of the Messiah;





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- The fact that the disciples asked about Elijah proves that they were convinced that Jesus truly was the Messiah. However, they were now confused about the coming of Elijah.
- Jesus responds in three ways:
  - First, he acknowledges that the scribes are correct: Elijah must come to prepare the way for the Messiah;
  - Second, he states that the scribes are incorrect in continuing to look for Elijah: the prophet has already come in the person of John the Baptist. This prophecy has already been fulfilled:
    - Luke 1:16-17 identifies John the Baptist with the one who would “turn their hearts...and make ready”
    - Matthew 11:7-15 declares that there is none greater than John and he is the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy;
    - John the Baptist is the “voice of one crying in the wilderness” (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:2, 7; Luke 3:4-6) in fulfillment of Isa. 40:3;
    - However, John does not identify himself as Elijah (John 1:6-8, 15, 19-28; 3:28, 30); is this a contradiction with Jesus?
  - Third, Jesus brings the conversation back to the real point of the transfiguration: the Messiah as Suffering Servant. Elijah’s rejection (the murder of John the Baptist) was a warning of the Messiah’s rejection and suffering.

*Why stay silent  
until after the  
resurrection?*



### III. Application

#### A. Listening to Jesus: Discernment and Obedience (John 14-17)

##### 1. Jesus is the absolute authority:

- 14:6-7
  - <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”
- 14:9-11
  - Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup>Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.
- 17:7-8
  - <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. <sup>8</sup>For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

##### 2. The Holy Spirit communicates the Word of God (the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments) and helps us understand their truths:

- 14:16-17
  - <sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup>even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.
- 14:25-26
  - <sup>25a</sup>These things I have spoken to you while I am still 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 that I have said to you.

##### • 16:13-15

- <sup>13</sup>When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup>All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

##### 3. Obedience is the key to listening to Jesus:

- 14:23-24
  - <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. <sup>24</sup>Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.
- 15:9-10
  - <sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.
- 17:17-19
  - <sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.



# 4 SESSION FOUR

## *Spiritual Purpose - Making Disciples*

MATTHEW 28:16-20; (SEE ALSO MARK 16:14-18; LUKE 24:44-49; JOHN 20:19-23;)

### *Introduction*

#### **Matthew 28:16-20 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup>Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

***"Go therefore  
and make  
disciples of all  
nations."***

### *I. The Context*

#### A. The textual setting:

1. The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus ("He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God" Acts 1:3):
  - Early Sunday morning near the empty tomb: Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:14-18); and the "other" Mary (Matt. 28:9); other women (Joanna is named along with the two Marys; and "other women"; Luke 23:55, 24:1, 10);
  - Later on Sunday morning: "appeared to Simon" (Luke 24:34; I Cor. 15:5);
  - Later on Sunday: on the road to Emmaus: "two of them" (Cleopas) (Luke 24: 13, 18); "appeared to two of them" (Mark 16:12);
  - Sunday evening: to "the disciples" in a locked room (John 20:19; Thomas not present);
  - Eight days later: in a locked room: to Thomas and the rest of the disciples (John 20:26);
  - No time indicated: "as they reclined at table": to the Eleven (Mark 16:14);
  - "After this" (no specific time indicated) by the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee): to Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, "and two others" (John 21:1-24);
  - No time indicated: the Eleven disciples on the mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16);
  - At the end of the forty days back in Jerusalem: to the disciples; the Ascension (Acts 1:6);
  - The Apostle Paul's list: Cephas (Peter), the Twelve, "more than five hundred at one time," James, all the apostles, and "last of all he appeared also to me" (I Cor. 15:5-8).



2. The “other” Great Commissions (Stedman: “Usually called the Great Commission, but no greater than those in any other of the Gospels or Acts”)
  - Matthew: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19);
  - Mark: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15);
  - Luke: “Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:47-48);
  - John: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” (John 20:21);
  - Acts: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8).

B. The theological setting:

1. Three theological themes:
  - The Supreme Authority of Jesus;
  - The Teaching Ministry of the Church;
  - The Second Coming of Christ.
2. The New Israel: a King for all the nations
  - Jesus’s mission was not just “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:9) but to all the nations. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28);
  - A new lesson about the nature of the kingdom of God.

C. The contemporary setting:

1. Key question: What is my purpose in following Jesus?

*“You will be  
my witnesses...  
to the end of  
the earth.”*



# 4

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### II. Text (*Matt. 28: 16-20*)

#### A. Introduction (vs. 16-18):

1. “Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them” (28:16)
  - Remember that when Jesus was betrayed and arrested, “all the disciples left him and fled” (Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:50; see also Matt. 27:55-56; John 19:25, 18:15, 27). The trip “to the mountain” was a regathering and restoring of the disciples in the place where much of Jesus’s ministry took place (Galilee).
  - Matthew mentions the eleven disciples (minus Judas, who had already hanged himself). It is also possible that there were others besides just the eleven. Some commentators believe that this is the occasion of the “more than 500 brethren at once” that Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 15.
  - Where is this mountain? We have the same problem that we did with the mountain of the transfiguration. Again, tradition claims that it was Mt. Tabor in southern Galilee. Mt. Meron in northern Galilee is also a possibility. The closest mountain to the northern Sea of Galilee (Tiberias) is Mt. Hermon, the tallest and most impressive of the mountains in northern Palestine.
  - When did Jesus direct them to go to Galilee? (Mark 14:28; Matt. 28:10; Mark 16:7). Several of the disciples, including Peter, traveled to Galilee shortly after the resurrection (and went fishing; John 21:1-3).





2. “They worshipped Him, but some doubted” (28:17-18a)

- Worshipped: *proskenuo* “to bow toward, to kiss the hand”;
- But some doubted. The word translated “doubted” is *distazo*, which is used only twice in the New Testament—here and in Matthew 14:31. It doesn’t refer to intellectual doubt (doubting the truth of Jesus’s identity and teaching) but means something like “uncertainty”—literally, “being in two minds,” or “conflicting instincts.” The disciples weren’t necessarily doubting Jesus, they were doubting their own standing before him. Can you imagine how they all felt about meeting Jesus again?
- Notice that the text says that “Jesus came and spoke to them” (Matt. 28:18a)—Jesus took the initiative to make things right, to alleviate their fears, to answer their doubts, and to get them back on track with their calling and mission.

3. “All authority in heaven and earth” (28:18b)

- The passage is filled with “Alls”:
  - All Authority
  - All Nations
  - All Commands
  - All the Time
- Begins with the supreme authority of Jesus Christ: throughout his ministry Jesus demonstrated authority over Satan, evil spirits, sin, sickness, death, nature, and religious leaders. Now he is given “all authority”: universal and eternal dominion; the true nature of Jesus’s authority is now revealed.
  - Greek word is *exousia* (“power”);

- Expressed in the confession, “Jesus is Lord” (Acts 2:36, 10:36; Rom. 10:9; 2 Cor. 4:5; see also Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:16-17; Matt. 4:8-10; Rev. 5:5-14);
- The commission to make disciples is grounded in the authority of Jesus.

- The structure of the next section of the passage is an imperative (direct command) supported by three present participles.

- Make Disciples (Imperative)
- Going (Supporting Participle)
- Baptizing (Supporting Participle)
- Teaching (Supporting Participle)

**B. The Imperative: “Make Disciples” (vs. 19)**

1. “make disciples”

- The most common description for followers of Jesus in the New Testament is “disciple.” Followers of Christ are only called Christians three times in the NT (Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16); they are called “disciples” over 30 times in the book of Acts.
- Common Greek word for “disciple” is *mathetos*; the verb form used here is *mathateuo*, in its imperative form (a command): disciple, teach, instruct...
  - KJV translated it “teach,” but this is not the common word for teach (*didasko*); *mathateuo* is used in its verb form only two other times in the New Testament (Matt. 13:52; 27:57):
- To disciple is more than just teaching. It includes leading someone into a relationship with Christ, committing his or her life to Christ, incorporation into the body of Christ, the church, and devotion to a lifetime of increasing holiness, maturity, and service.





# 4

## SESSION FOUR

- A disciple as learner in two senses: disciple as pupil; disciple as apprentice:
- 2. “of all nations”
  - *Panta ta ethne*; “to all ethnic groups” “to all people groups” “to all tribes, peoples, and nations”:
    - “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14);
    - “for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9);
    - “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Rev. 7:9-10).
  - A new lesson for the disciples?
    - Not if they had really paid attention to the Old Testament vision of the kingdom of the Messiah:
      - Isa. 2:2-3; 52:10; 61:9; 62:2; 66:18
      - Jer. 3:17, 19; Dan. 7:13-14; Zeph. 3:9
    - Not if they had really paid attention to the example of Jesus:
      - The Samaritan Woman (half-Jewish; John 4)
      - The 10 Lepers (at least one was a Samaritan; Luke 17:11-19)
      - The Syro-Phoenician Woman (Greek; Mark 7:24-30)
      - The Centurion Servant (Roman; Matt. 8:5-13)
      - Tax collectors and sinners (crossed economic, social, and moral boundaries; Matt. 9:10-13)
    - Not if they really understood the love of God: “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is

patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9)

- A lesson that was going to be very difficult for the early Jewish Christians to learn (See Acts 10 for Simon Peter’s struggle); a lesson that remains difficult for the church today.

### C. The Present Participles (vs. 19-20)

1. Going: “as you are going...” Assumption that Christians would bear witness to Jesus wherever they went (Acts 1:8).
2. Baptizing: “make disciples, baptizing them”
  - The nature of Christian baptism:
    - Union with Jesus through the testimony of his death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-11; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21);
    - Personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:27) “Baptism is the point of enrollment into a process of learning which is never complete” (France);
    - Assurance to the repentant believer of remission of sins and gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
    - Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4-6); It is this sense that is the emphasis in the Great Commission.
  - Baptized “into the name of” (*eis to onoma*):
    - “In the name of” implies “under the authority of”; “Into the name of” means “into the possession of” (I belong to Christ), or “into the circle of relationship of” (I am united with Christ);
    - It refers to the incorporation into the grace of the Father, the body of Christ, and the fellowship (shared life) of the Holy Spirit.
  - The Trinitarian formula: “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
    - Only place in the New Testament where this formula is used in connection with Christian baptism;
    - Usually “in the name of Jesus” (Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5, 22:16; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27);
    - The trinitarian theology, however, is present in the baptism of Jesus, where the Holy Spirit descended upon him and the



voice of the Father declared him as the Beloved Son;

- It is also important to note that the three Persons of God the Father, Son, and Spirit are spoken of as having a single Name;
- Both formulas are valid and interchangeable.

3. Teaching: “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”

- The teaching ministry became central to the life of the early church as one of the four characteristics of the first Christian community in Jerusalem: “they continued in the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42).
  - Following the example of Jesus, whose ministry was described as “preaching, teaching, and healing” (Matt. 4:23; 9:35), and the Apostle Paul, who devoted himself to teaching (Acts 15:35; 18:11; 20:20; 28:31), teachers emerged as one of the foundations of the leadership of the church. Paul listed teachers along with apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors in his description of those appointed by God “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:11-12;; see also 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:16).
  - Teachers will be judged with greater strictness because of the great priority and responsibility of their ministry (James 3:1).
- There are a variety of ways in which the church accomplishes its teaching ministry. In the local congregation, the elders have the responsibility to ensure that the teaching of the scriptures is accomplished:

**D. The Promised Presence (vs. 20)**

1. “I am with you always”

- Jesus is Immanuel: God with us (Matt. 1:23);
- Jesus promised his ongoing presence with his disciples through the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete—“One who comes along beside” (John 14:16-17, 25-26; 16:7) “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18). See 2 Cor. 3:17-18;
- “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” (Matt. 18:20);
- The experience of the Apostle Paul: 9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this

city who are my people.” (Acts 18:9-10);

- Note that the promised presence is conditional on “going...baptizing...teaching!” Jesus promises to be with us as we obey his imperative to make disciples.
2. “to the end of the age” (Eschatology: the first coming of Christ will be ultimately fulfilled in the second coming of Christ):
- God’s economy (“the arrangement or mode of operation of something”):
    - Eternity: God’s Pre-existence;
    - Creation: God’s Action in Space and Time;
    - Redemption: God’s Action Among Humanity;
      - Old Covenant: Israel (from Abraham to Jesus);
      - New Covenant: The Church (from the resurrection and ascension of Jesus to the Second Coming);
    - Consummation: God’s Kingdom Established in Eternity.
  - The “age” in this passage is the New Covenant Age, from the Ascension to the Second Coming of Christ; the Age of the Church;
  - Jesus’s teaching on the “end of the age” (Matthew 24; parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21):
    - There will be many trials and tribulations, but that is not the end of the age; followers of Jesus must endure and persevere (Matt. 24:4-13);
    - There will be an escalation of severe tribulation (“the abomination of desolation”) as the end of the age approaches; those days will be cut short by the mercy of God (Matt. 24:15-28);
    - This age will end with the glorious appearance of Jesus Christ “coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matt. 24:29-31);
    - No one knows when this will happen, not even Jesus (Matt. 24:36-44);
    - The task of the church, therefore, in light of the “end of the age” is to continue to obey the command of Jesus (Matt. 24:45-46); “Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.” (24:46) “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matt. 24:14).



# 4

## SESSION FOUR

### III. Application

**A. Making Disciples Jesus's Way:** Jesus was the Master Teacher and we have a clear picture of his method in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 4-10:

1. **Calling:** Jesus calls the first disciples and invites them to follow him (Matt. 4:18-25):
  - Learning through Relationship-building;
  - Leading people into a saving relationship with Jesus and commitment to discipleship.
2. **Teaching:** Jesus “takes them to school”—instructs them about the nature of the kingdom, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29):
  - Learning through Instruction: “They devoted themselves to the apostles doctrine” (Acts 2:42; “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17);
  - Leading people into Christian maturity through biblical instruction.
3. **Modelling/Mentoring:** Jesus demonstrates what it means to follow him and minister in his name. In chapters 8-9, Jesus cleanses a leper, heals the centurion's servant, heals Peter's mother-in-law and others, interacts with critics, calms a storm, casts out demons, heals a paralytic, calls other disciples, answers questions, heals the blind, lame, and mute, and makes the disciples aware of the great need around them (Matt. 8:1-9:38):
  - Learning through Observing: “Come, follow me, and I will make you...” (Matt. 4:19). “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (Phil. 4:9). “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” (1 Cor. 11:1)
  - Leading disciples into fruitful ministry by imitating the example of Jesus and other spiritually mature disciples. “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim. 2:2) .

4. **Sending:** Jesus sends the disciples out on their own to minister in His name. These are true apprentices who are following the teaching and example of their Master. (Matt. 10:1-42):
  - Learning through Doing: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” (John 20:21);
  - Leading disciples into effective, reproductive ministry; disciple-making disciples. The highest and greatest purpose for followers of Jesus.

#### B. The Levels of Christian Maturity (1 John 2:12-14)

1. **Little Children** (new and immature disciples):
  - <sup>12</sup>I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. <sup>13c</sup>I write to you, children, because you know the Father.
2. **Young Men and Women** (inexperienced disciples, but committed to Christian growth):
  - <sup>13b</sup>I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. <sup>14b</sup>I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.
3. **Fathers and Mothers** (mature disciples committed to making disciples):
  - <sup>13a</sup>I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. <sup>14a</sup>I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

**A Warning:** <sup>12</sup>For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, <sup>13</sup>for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. <sup>14</sup>But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)



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