

The Commencement

Matt. 28:18-20

Introduction:

1. On the websites of many major universities there is a section on “commencement ceremonies” (e.g. Yale, UC Santa Barbara, U of Buffalo, U of Michigan, Virginia Tech, et.al.).
2. Often we associate commencement ceremonies with graduation. However, on the National University website a distinction is made between “Commencement” and “Graduation.” They are trying to teach their students the difference.
3. They say, “Commencement refers to the ceremony, officiated by the President of the University, where you share the excitement and importance of your academic accomplishments with peers, family, and friends.”
4. “Graduation, on the other hand, is a three step process: 1) application; 2) completing all academic requirements; 3) settling all financial obligations.”
5. Their point? “Do not think that because you have gone through the commencement that you have graduated.” That is an important point for students!
6. And it is an important point for Christians.
7. In Matt. 28:18-20 Jesus said, “**All** authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. God therefore and make disciples of **all** the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe **all** that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you **all** the days, even to the end of the age.”
8. This is a statement about commencement. It is about the beginning of something, not the end. This great commission statement involves the beginning of four things. Each marked by the word **all**. What are they and what is their significance?

Discussion:

- I. The great commission commences with Jesus being given **all** authority (v. 18).
 - A. Jesus being enthroned as King of the Jews is a dominant theme in Matthew.
 1. It begins back in the first chapter with the introduction of Jesus descended through the royal lineage of King David (1:1-17).
 2. The magi of chap. 2 searched for “the king of the Jews” (2:1ff).
 3. Matthew uses the language of Messiahship (e.g. 4:15-16, cf. Isa. 9:1-2; 8:17, cf. Isa. 53:4; 16:16).
 4. Jesus rode into Jerusalem as royalty (21:1-11; cf. Zech. 9:9).
 5. He was convicted at His trial before Pilate as King of the Jews (27:11, 29, 37, 42).
 - B. One of the chief passages Matthew uses from the O.T. stresses this theme: Dan. 7:13-14.
 1. In 13:41-43 Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man who gathers out of his kingdom those who commit lawlessness, and separates them from the righteous.
 2. In 16:28 he refers to “some of those who were standing there who would not taste death until they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”
 3. In 19:28 he refers again to himself as the Son of Man sitting on His glorious throne in the regeneration.

4. In 20:21 he accepts the prospect of authority in His kingdom.
 5. In 24:30-31 he quotes Dan. 7:13 about the Son of Man coming and gathering His elect from the four winds.
 6. In 25:31-34 he describes himself as the Son of Man coming in glory sitting on His throne and judging the nations.
 7. In 26:64 following a request by the high priest to tell whether he was the Christ, the Son of God, he replied, "hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Dan. 7:13; Psa. 110:1).
- C. The great commission passage occurs immediately prior to Jesus' ascension into heaven and His taking His seat at the right hand of God (cf. Acts 2:34-36; cf. Psa. 110:1). It is the commencement of His kingdom and it involves the ingathering of His elect.

II. The commencement begins personally for **all** who are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (19).

- A. The commission involves Jesus' first order as King: "Go and make disciples of **all** the nations."
1. The invitation into the kingdom is not just for Jews, but for Gentiles too.
 2. It involves the making of disciples (Gk. *methētēs*, meaning a learner, one who follows Christ's teaching).
- B. Making disciples involves baptizing them.
1. Baptism is an enrollment or an initiation into the process of learning (Acts 2:38, 41-42; 8:12, 36-38; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:13-17, etc.).
 2. Baptism is not a graduation! It is not the end. It is not the completion, but the beginning, thus a commencement. Some act as if baptism is a graduation. Like misdirected students they ask, "Now that I am saved, do I have to come to class?" Can you imagine a individual enrolling in a university only to ask, "Do I have to study?" Baptism is an initiation into the process of learning.
- C. Baptism is associated with a new birth because it begins a new life (Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:4). We are transferred from the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of God (Col. 1:13-14).

III. This commencement begins an on-going process of learning and doing **all** that Jesus commands (20).

- A. What does Acts 2:42 say? "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." I say, If you don't want to be a student don't enroll in school!
- B. It involves an on-going transformation of the mind (Rom. 12:2).
- C. It is not just learning about Jesus, but about doing **all** He teaches.
- D. It is not a resistant learning, but a voluntary learning for our good and for our benefit. Inherent in the process is a voluntary and willing submission to King Jesus.
- E. Do you consider yourself a real student of the teachings of Jesus? Are you carrying the books but not opening them?

IV. This commencement begins the experience of Christ being with us **all** the days (20).

A. This suggests that Christ will always be with us.

1. Will He be with us until He returns again? Seems that is the promise.
2. Will we cease to be with Him when He returns? 1 Thess. 4:17 speaks of His second coming. It says, "We who are alive and remain will be caught up together with those resurrected to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."

B. The great commission commences a relationship with the Lord that reaches into eternity.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus has **all** authority.
2. **All** the nations should submit to it.
3. They should be taught **all** that He has commanded.
4. He will be with us **all** the days.
5. Are you ready to commence?