

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD
IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THE CHURCH LIFE**

(Lord's Day—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight

**Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom
and Discipling All the Nations
for the Spread and Development of the Kingdom of God**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 1:14-15; 1 Thes. 2:12

- I. “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the nations”—Matt. 24:14:**
- A. The kingdom of God is a divine sphere for God to work out His plan; it is a realm where God can exercise His authority to accomplish what He intends—Mark 1:15; John 3:3, 5; Matt. 12:28; Rev. 11:15.
 - B. The fundamental problem in the universe is rebellion against the authority of God—Isa. 14:12-14:
 - 1. Satan intends to violate God's sovereignty, usurp God's authority, overthrow God's throne, and establish his own kingdom—Matt. 12:26; Eph. 2:2.
 - 2. When man fell, he rebelled against God, put God's authority aside, denied God's authority, and rejected God's rule—Gen. 3:6, 11; Rom. 5:12; 1 John 3:4.
 - C. Through the gospel of the kingdom, God brings people under the ruling of the heavenly authority so that they may become His kingdom, those who are ruled by His authority—Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:5-6:
 - 1. The New Testament preaches the gospel in the way of the kingdom; because the kingdom of God is the real gospel, to know the gospel requires that we know the kingdom—Mark 1:14-15; Acts 8:12.
 - 2. The gospel is for the kingdom, and the gospel is proclaimed so that rebellious sinners might be saved, qualified, and equipped to enter into the kingdom of God—Mark 1:14-15; Matt. 4:17; Acts 8:12:
 - a. The gospel of life, the gospel of grace, and the gospel of salvation are all for the kingdom; the kingdom is the center, the hub—John 3:16; Acts 20:24; 4:12.
 - b. The gospel of the kingdom brings people not only into God's salvation but also into the kingdom; the emphasis of the gospel of the kingdom is on the heavenly ruling of God and the authority of the Lord—Matt. 24:14.
 - c. The gospel of the kingdom brings the believers into the realm of the divine ruling so that they may participate in the blessings of the divine life in the divine kingdom—1 Thes. 2:12.
 - D. God commands everyone to repent for the kingdom—Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Acts 17:30:
 - 1. To repent means that originally we were rebellious and against God, but now we turn back to the Lord in submission—Matt. 3:2; 4:17.
 - 2. To repent is to have a change of mind issuing in regret, to have a turn in purpose—Luke 3:3, 8; 5:32; 17:3; Acts 17:30-31.

3. Repentance is mainly for us to enter into the kingdom of God; unless we repent—that is, have a change of concept—we cannot enter into the kingdom—Mark 1:15; Matt. 3:2; 4:17.
- E. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the nations before the end of this age—24:14:
1. This preaching, signified by the white horse of the first seal in Revelation 6:1-2, will be a sign of the consummation of this age.
 2. The gospel of the kingdom must be brought to the whole inhabited earth through the churches in the Lord's recovery—Matt. 24:14; 1 Thes. 1:8.
- II. "Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"—Matt. 28:19:**
- A. In His divinity, as the only begotten Son of God, the Lord had authority over all; however, in His humanity, as the Son of Man and the King of the heavenly kingdom, authority in heaven and on earth was given to Him after His resurrection—vv. 1-10, 18.
- B. Because all authority has been given to the resurrected Christ, He sent His disciples to disciple all the nations; they go with His authority—vv. 18-19:
1. We have been sent by the Lord not only to bring people to salvation but also to disciple the nations; this is a matter of the kingdom.
 2. To disciple the nations is to make the heathen the kingdom people for the establishing of His kingdom, which is the church, even today, on the earth—1 Thes. 1:9; 2:12; Rev. 1:5-6, 9; 5:9-10.
 3. The intrinsic purpose of our preaching the gospel is to bring people of the nations into the Triune God in order to make them the citizens of the kingdom of the heavens—Matt. 24:14; 28:18-19.
- C. After Christ as the last Adam had accomplished His ministry on earth, passed through the process of crucifixion, entered into the realm of resurrection, and had become the life-giving Spirit, He came back to His disciples in the atmosphere and reality of His resurrection to charge them to make the heathen the kingdom people by baptizing them into the name, the person, the reality, of the Divine Trinity—v. 19:
1. *Into* in Matthew 28:19 indicates union; to baptize people into the name of the Triune God is to bring them into spiritual and mystical union with Him.
 2. There is one name for the Divine Trinity—v. 19:
 - a. The name is the sum total of the Divine Being, equivalent to His person.
 - b. To baptize someone into the name of the Triune God is to immerse him into all that the Triune God is.
- D. According to Matthew, being baptized into the reality of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is for the constituting of the kingdom of the heavens—v. 19:
1. Unlike an earthly society, the heavenly kingdom cannot be formed with human beings of flesh and blood—1 Cor. 15:50.
 2. God's heavenly kingdom can be constituted only with people who have been immersed into the union with the Triune God and who have been established and built up with the Triune God, who has been wrought into them—Rom. 6:3-4; 14:17; Gal. 3:26-27; 4:19; 5:21; Eph. 3:14-19; 5:5.

- E. In Matthew 28:20 the Lord charged us to teach the newly baptized ones to observe all that He has commanded us; this is for the discipling of all the nations—v. 19.
- F. “Behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age”—v. 20:
 1. The heavenly King is Emmanuel, God with us—1:23.
 2. He has promised us that in His resurrection He will be with us all the days, with all authority, until the end of this age—28:20.
 3. Whenever we are gathered into His name, He is in our midst—18:20.
- G. In His resurrection the Lord is present, and we have His authority, commission, and position to disciple the nations for the spread and development of the kingdom of God—6:10, 33; 13:18-23; 28:18-20.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

**THE DISCIPLES GOING TO GALILEE
TO MEET WITH HIM ON THE MOUNTAIN**

Matthew 28:16 says, “The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus directed them.” The constitution of the kingdom was decreed on a mountain, the heavenly King’s transfiguration transpired on a high mountain, and the prophecy concerning this age was also given on a mountain. Now, for God’s economy of the New Testament, the disciples needed to go to the mountain again. Only on the high level of a mountain can we realize the New Testament economy.

**APPEARING TO THE DISCIPLES
AND BEING WORSHIPPED BY THEM**

Verse 17 continues, “And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him, though some doubted.” When the disciples saw the resurrected King, they did nothing but worship Him; yet some among them still doubted, or hesitated, wavered, in recognizing Him in His resurrection.

**DECLARING THAT ALL AUTHORITY
HAS BEEN GIVEN TO HIM IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH**

Verse 18 says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” In His divinity as the only begotten Son of God, the Lord had authority over all. However, in His humanity as the Son of Man to be the King of the heavenly kingdom, all authority in heaven and on earth was given to Him after His resurrection.

Matthew’s account of the resurrection is very different from John’s. According to John’s record, after His resurrection the Lord met with His disciples in a room where the doors had been shut (John 20:19). The disciples were frightened, being afraid of the Jews. Because they needed to be strengthened by life, the Lord came to them as life, breathed upon them, and told them to receive the holy breath (v. 22). How different is Matthew’s account! According to Matthew, the Lord charged the disciples to go to a mountain in Galilee. Surely He met with them on that mountain during the day, not during the night. Furthermore, when He met with them on the mountain, He did not breathe upon them and tell them to receive the holy breath. Instead, He said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” In Matthew it is not a matter of breath but a matter of authority. John’s concern was for life, and life requires breath. But Matthew’s concern was for the kingdom, and the kingdom requires authority. The Gospel of John reveals that we need life to care for the little lambs

and to feed the Lord's flock. But in Matthew 28 there is no word about feeding the lambs. In Matthew the Lord commands the disciples to disciple all the nations (v. 19) to make all the nations part of the kingdom. This requires authority. Therefore, in John resurrection is a matter of life, power, breath, and shepherding. However, in Matthew it is a matter of righteousness, authority, and discipling the nations.

CHARGING THE DISCIPLES TO GO AND DISCIPLE ALL THE NATIONS

Verse 19 says, "Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Because all authority had been given to Him, the heavenly King sent His disciples to go and disciple all the nations. They go with His authority. To disciple the nations is to cause the heathen to become the kingdom people for the establishment of His kingdom, which is the church, even today on this earth.

Notice that the Lord did not charge the disciples to preach the gospel but to disciple the nations. The difference between preaching the gospel and discipling the nations is that to preach the gospel is simply to bring sinners to salvation, but to disciple the nations is to cause the Gentiles to become the kingdom people. We have been sent by the Lord not only to bring people to salvation but also to disciple the nations. This is a matter of the kingdom.

In verse 19 the Lord speaks of baptizing the nations into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is to bring the repentant people out of their old state into a new one, by terminating their old life and germinating them with the new life of Christ, that they may become the kingdom people. John the Baptist's recommending ministry began with the preliminary baptism by water only. Now, after the heavenly King accomplished His ministry on earth, passed through the process of death and resurrection, and became the life-giving Spirit, He charged His disciples to baptize the disciples into the Triune God. This baptism has two aspects: the visible aspect by water and the invisible aspect by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 41; 10:44-48). The visible aspect is the expression, the testimony, of the invisible aspect, whereas the invisible aspect is the reality of the visible aspect. Without the invisible aspect by the Spirit, the visible aspect by water is vain; and without the visible aspect by water, the invisible aspect by the Spirit is abstract and impractical. Both are needed. Not long after the Lord charged the disciples with this baptism, He baptized them and the entire church in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:4) and in the house of Cornelius (11:15-17). Then, based upon this, the disciples baptized the new converts (2:38), not only visibly into water, but also invisibly into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4), into Christ Himself (Gal. 3:27), into the Triune God (Matt. 28:19), and into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The water, signifying the death of Christ with His burial, may be considered as a tomb to terminate the old history of the baptized ones. Since the death of Christ is included in Christ, since Christ is the very embodiment of the Triune God, and since the Triune God is one with the Body of Christ, so to baptize new believers into the death of Christ, into Christ Himself, into the Triune God, and into the Body of Christ is to do just one thing: on the negative side, to terminate their old life and, on the positive side, to germinate them with a new life, the eternal life of the Triune God, for the Body of Christ. Hence, the baptism ordained by the Lord here is to baptize people out of their life into the Body life for the kingdom of the heavens.

The word *into* in Matthew 28:19 indicates union, as in Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27, and 1 Corinthians 12:13. The same Greek word is used in Acts 8:16; 19:3, 5; and 1 Corinthians 1:13, 15. To baptize people into the name of the Triune God is to bring them into spiritual and mystical union with Him.

There is one name for the Trinity. The name is the sum total of the Divine Being, equivalent to His person. To baptize anyone into the name of the Trinity is to immerse him into all that the Triune God is.

Matthew and John are the two books in which the Trinity is more fully revealed, for the participation and enjoyment of God's chosen people, than in all the other books of Scripture. John unveils the mystery of the Godhead in the Father, Son, and Spirit, especially in chapters 14 through 16, for our experience of life, whereas Matthew discloses the reality of the Trinity in the one name for all Three, for the constitution of the kingdom. In the opening chapter of Matthew, the Holy Spirit (v. 18), Christ (the Son—v. 18), and God (the Father—v. 23) are upon the scene for the producing of the man Jesus (v. 21), who, as Jehovah the Savior and God with us, is the very embodiment of the Triune God. In chapter 3 Matthew presents a picture of the Son standing in the water of baptism under the open heaven, the Spirit as a dove descending upon the Son, and the Father out of the heavens speaking to the Son (vv. 16-17). In chapter 12, the Son, in the person of man, cast out demons by the Spirit to bring in the kingdom of God the Father (v. 28). In chapter 16, the Son is revealed by the Father to the disciples for the building of the church, which is the life-pulse of the kingdom (vv. 16-19). In chapter 17, the Son entered into transfiguration (v. 2) and was confirmed by the Father's word of delight (v. 5) for a miniature display of the manifestation of the kingdom (16:28). Eventually, in the closing chapter, after Christ, as the last Adam, had passed through the process of crucifixion, entered into the realm of resurrection, and become the life-giving Spirit, He came back to His disciples, in the atmosphere and reality of His resurrection, to charge them to cause the heathen to become the kingdom people by baptizing them into the name, the person, the reality, of the Trinity. Later, in the Acts and the Epistles, it is disclosed that to baptize people into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit is to baptize them into the name of Christ (Acts 8:16; 19:5, Gk.) and that to baptize them into the name of Christ is to baptize them into Christ the person (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3), for Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God, and He, as the life-giving Spirit, is available any time and any place for people to be baptized into Him. Such a baptism into the reality of the Father, Son, and Spirit, according to Matthew, is for the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens. The heavenly kingdom cannot be organized with human beings of flesh and blood (1 Cor. 15:50) as an earthly society; it can only be constituted with people who are immersed into the union with the Triune God and who are established and built up with the Triune God who is wrought into them.

**PROMISING TO BE WITH THE DISCIPLES
ALL THE DAYS UNTIL THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE**

In Matthew 28:20 the Lord told His disciples, "Behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age." The heavenly King is Emmanuel, God with us (1:23). Here He promised to be with us in His resurrection with all authority all the days until the consummation of the age, that is, until the end of this age. Hence, wherever we are gathered into His name, He is in our midst (18:20).

In the four Gospels, the Lord's ascension is recorded only in Mark (16:19) and Luke (24:51). John testifies that the Lord, as the Son of God, even God Himself, is life to His believers. As such, He can never leave them and would never leave them. Matthew proves that He, as Emmanuel, is the heavenly King who is with His people continually until He comes back. Hence, in both John and Matthew, the Lord's ascension is not mentioned.

As the King in the kingdom with the kingdom people, the Lord is with us all the days until the consummation of the age. Today is included in all the days. The Lord is with us today, and He will be with us tomorrow. Not one day will be an exception. He will be with us until

the consummation of the age. This refers to the end of this age, which will be the time of the Lord's parousia, the Lord's coming. The consummation of the age, the end of the age, will be the great tribulation. We do not want to be here during that time. Rather, we prefer to be raptured into the Lord's parousia, into His presence. This is a matter of the kingdom.

In the Lord's resurrection with His righteousness the kingdom is present, and we have the authority, commission, and position to disciple the nations. In this way the kingdom is spreading. (*Life-study of Matthew*, pp. 826-831)

MATTHEW 28:19

In Matthew 28:19 the Lord charged His disciples to baptize people into the name of the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. At this point in Matthew the Triune God had been completed and consummated. For the Divine Trinity to be completed, to be consummated, He needed to go through a process to pick up humanity. If He had merely divinity, He would not be the consummated Triune God. To be the consummated Triune God, the completed Triune God, He needed humanity as well as divinity.

He also needed to pass through a beautiful, all-inclusive death. Death in Adam is ugly, terrible, and terrifying, but death in Christ is beautiful. We all have to be conformed to His dear death. The death of Christ is lovable and dear, and the Triune God needed it for His completion, for His consummation. The Divine Trinity is undoubtedly omnipotent, but if He were short of this beautiful death, He would not be able to solve our problems. In Him and with Him there is an all-inclusive death that can kill all the "germs" related to us. The Triune God is an all-inclusive dose within us with the killing element of the death of Christ. Within this all-inclusive dose there are many elements that can supply us in a positive way, and there is also the element of His death that can eliminate the negative things. The death of Christ on the cross took away all the "negative germs" in the universe. Such a death has been brought into the Divine Trinity. Praise the Lord for such an accomplished death!

After He had passed through the process of crucifixion, He entered into the realm of resurrection and became a life-giving Spirit. He then came back to His disciples in the atmosphere and reality of His resurrection to charge them to make the nations the kingdom people by baptizing them into the name, the person, the reality, of the Divine Trinity. Now that the Divine Trinity has been completed, consummated, people can be baptized into Him. The completed Triune God, the consummated Divine Trinity, is perfect, complete, and short of nothing. When we baptize people, we are placing them into the completed, consummated Triune God.

The name of the Triune God is a three-one name. This name is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit is the name of the Divine Trinity into whom we baptize people. The Lord revealed this divine title in the context of His desire to put the people who have received our preaching into the Triune God. The Triune God in His Divine Trinity is the very place where we should put those who have received Him.

We go to disciple the nations, baptizing them. The word *disciple* is a strong word. A number of messages would be needed to explain this word thoroughly. The disciples were to disciple the unbelieving nations by baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This means that discipling includes baptizing. We have to disciple people by baptizing them, putting them into a person, the Triune God. When they get into this person, they are disciplined. We should not preach the gospel to people without baptizing them. That is not scriptural. We should baptize people immediately after they have believed in the Lord. To disciple them by baptizing them is to make them the very citizens of the kingdom of the heavens. If we do not put them into the Triune God, we cannot bring them into

the kingdom of God. We must put them into God Himself. Then we place them into the kingdom of God. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1988*, vol. 1, "Living in and with the Divine Trinity," pp. 310-312)