

***Teaching Them to Obey All that I Commanded You:  
A Holistic and Integrative Approach to Training Kingdom Disciples***

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***Abstract***

The final command in Matthew's Great Commission, "teaching them to obey all I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20), provides an inductive exegetical window into kingdom discipleship. In this paper we examine those commands broadly related to three categories: the righteousness of the kingdom, the power of the kingdom, and the cross and the kingdom – categories which readily emerge from Matthew's gospel, yet remain roughly equivalent to the three sub-themes of the conference: justice, power and the cross. For Matthew, works of righteousness, works of power, and the work of Christ on the cross are all important complementary manifestations of the gospel of the kingdom, thus demonstrating a holistic and integrative approach to kingdom ministry.

The theme of this conference, “Kingdom Theology and Practice: Justice, Power and the Cross,” was chosen by the conveners to stimulate the thinking of the Vineyard toward a greater holistic and integrative kingdom perspective.<sup>1</sup> In order to make a contribution to this important issue, I have chosen a narrow exegetical window into the topic: the last component of Jesus’ last command: “teaching them to obey all I have commanded you” (Matt 28:20).<sup>2</sup> Unlocking the meaning of this clause opens the door to comprehensive kingdom discipleship.

Jesus’ commands in Matthew offer an inductive approach to the topic that will demonstrate a holistic and integrative approach to extending the kingdom.<sup>3</sup> However, even this narrow exegetical window demands a book-length reflection.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it is necessary to select certain commands illustrate our topic.<sup>5</sup>

Before we examine Jesus’ commands in Matthew, we need to make a few preliminary comments on this famous Great Commission passage and especially how it relates to the rest of Matthew’s gospel (Matt 28:18-20).<sup>6</sup> First, Jesus’ authority provides the basis or justification for the commission. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”<sup>7</sup> *Therefore, go ...*” As all authoritative King, the risen Jesus declares his global purpose for his people. In other words, “mission is a logical consequence of Jesus’ induction as sovereign Lord of the universe” (Bosch 1993:78).

The actual commission entails four activities: go, make disciples, baptize and teach. “Make disciples” is an imperative,<sup>8</sup> while going, baptizing and teaching are participles – though they function as imperatives syntactically.<sup>9</sup> Thus, we make disciples by going, baptizing and teaching. The word “all” dominates this mandate. All authority has been given to Jesus. All nations must be discipled. All the commands provide the content of discipleship. And Jesus promised to be with his disciples, literally, “all” the days.<sup>10</sup> This commission *is* great!

This commission, and especially the command to “teach” in Matt 28:20 must be understood in light of the whole of Matthew’s gospel. The literary artistry and complexity of Matthew’s gospel have led to many differing views about its structure, but there is virtual consensus on one point most relevant to our topic.<sup>11</sup> Matthew has structured his gospel around five major discourses, each of which ends with the words “when Jesus had finished ...” (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). These five major discourses describe what kingdom disciples are called to be and to do.

The first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), describes *the Righteousness of the Kingdom*. Jesus teaches his followers kingdom ethics – the blessings, demands and life of the kingdom. The second discourse describes *the Mission of the Kingdom* (Matt 10). Jesus wants his followers to imitate his ministry and extend his kingdom. Thus he sends them out on a short-term training mission to preach and heal. The third discourse centers on parables – *the Mysteries of the Kingdom* (Matt 13). These parables describe the presence of the kingdom, the expansion of the kingdom, the future of the kingdom and the supreme worth of the kingdom, helping his followers live within the tension of the “already-not yet” of kingdom life. The fourth discourse describes *the Community of the Kingdom* (Matt 18), highlighting the priority of humility, accountability, reconciliation, discipline and forgiveness among Jesus’ followers. The fifth and final discourse describes *the Consummation of the Kingdom* (Matt 23-25); Jesus is helping his followers steward their gifts and live their lives in light of the future kingdom and coming judgment.

These five blocks of teaching center on the theme of the kingdom of God. Thus, according to Matthew, every dimension of discipleship is kingdom-oriented, every aspect of our lives impacted by the kingdom, every aspect of our lives manifesting the kingdom. One of the

overall purposes of Matthew was to collect and compile a comprehensive summary of Jesus' teaching to lead his followers into the depth and breadth of kingdom ministry.<sup>12</sup>

Next, a word about exegetical methodology. Our purpose in this paper is to understand what Jesus meant when he commissioned his followers to teach people "to obey all that he commanded." While these five discourses outline the "big picture" of discipleship, we still have to do the painstaking work of examining those commands.<sup>13</sup> At first blush it seems like a rather straightforward method: find all the commands in Matthew, synthesize the results and you end up with a "red letter discipleship manual!"<sup>14</sup> A grammatical search in Bible Works (a Bible Software program) indicates that there are 292 imperatives in Matthew. But a cursory reading of these 292 commands indicates that many are unrelated to discipleship in general. Commands are often spoken to individuals and do not carry the weight of a command for all of God's people all of the time (e.g., "Take your mat and go home" Mark 2:11), so they must be excluded.

Moreover, there are Greek constructions that function like an imperative but don't show up in a Bible Works search. For example, Jesus says in Matthew 4:19: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." The word translated to "Come" is an adverb that functions as a hortatory particle (see also Matt 11:28).<sup>15</sup> In addition, some commands are in the future tense (e.g., "You shall love the Lord your God" ... "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" Matt 22:37, 39). And what about implicit commands in Jesus' teaching? The Beatitudes are a case in point. When Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers" surely this is comparable to saying "be peacemakers".

For the purposes of this paper, I will examine only those commands broadly related to three categories: The righteousness of the kingdom, the power of the kingdom, and the cross and the kingdom – categories which inductively emerge from Matthew's gospel and yet remain

roughly equivalent to the three sub-themes of the conference: justice, power and the cross. Because of this, Jesus' commands related to prayer, moral purity and intimacy with God (personal discipleship and spiritual formation) will be omitted.<sup>16</sup>

### ***The Righteousness of the Kingdom***

The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew's first discourse, provides the context for Jesus' famous command in Matt 5:16 – "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." This command functions as a broad summary statement regarding Jesus' view of righteousness and its role in extending the kingdom. The context of this command points out the universal scope of our mission: we are the salt of *the earth* and the light of *the world* (Matt 5:13-15). These good deeds are visible and done in such a way that they evoke praise to God the Father,<sup>17</sup> pointing beyond themselves to God as their source. Finally, the context of this command (as we hope to demonstrate in the following paragraphs) indicates that the good works commanded refer to the "righteousness" of the kingdom stressed throughout the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>18</sup>

Righteousness is the theme of two preceding beatitudes: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matt 5:6). "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness" (Matt 5:10).<sup>19</sup> Next Jesus warns his disciples, "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:20). Jesus also commands his followers to "be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them" (Matt 6:1). Finally, Jesus commands his followers to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt 6:33).

The nature of this righteousness is illustrated throughout this discourse – first in His

famous six antitheses (“You have heard that it is said ... but I say to you ...” Matt 5:27-48) regarding anger and reconciliation, adultery and lust, divorce and adultery, vows and honesty, eye-for-an-eye justice and non-retaliation, and loving neighbor and enemy. In these six concrete examples Jesus radicalizes and internalizes the meaning of the law. As Gundry notes, Jesus carries out the tendencies of the law “to their divinely intended ends” (1994:83).<sup>20</sup>

It is noteworthy that three of the six antitheses illustrate what Jesus meant when he said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matt 5:9): reconciliation (5:21-26), non-retaliation (5:38-42), and loving ones enemies (5:43-48). The importance of the “righteousness” of peacemaking becomes apparent elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount in Jesus’ teaching about forgiveness (6:12,14,15), the command about not judging others (7:1-5) and the command to do to others what you would have them do to you (note:“in everything!” Matt 7:12).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Jesus’ commands about peacemaking in the church (Matt 18:15-17) and the kingdom parable about forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35), along with the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39)<sup>22</sup>, further underscore its significance.

Finally, we must ask if Jesus’ command to Peter – “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword (Matt 26:52) – has any abiding relevance for peacemaking. It would be reading too much into this command to say that it unequivocally teaches pacifism. However, it does seem to strongly imply that the kingdom should not be extended by violence. John’s version of this story seems to support this view: “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm’” (John 18:36).<sup>23</sup>

However Matt 26:52 is interpreted, it is abundantly clear that the righteousness of the kingdom puts a major priority on peacemaking and reconciled relationships.<sup>24</sup>

As noted earlier, Jesus commands his followers not to practice “acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them” (Matt 6:1). These acts of righteousness include giving to the poor, praying and fasting – three main areas of traditional religious devotion (Matt 6:1-18). If we combine these three acts of righteousness with the previous acts mentioned in the six antitheses, it is clear that righteousness includes both personal piety (purity of heart, honesty, prayer, fasting) and social engagement (peacemaking and giving to the poor).

Jesus further describes the social dimension of righteousness with his emphasis on justice and mercy.<sup>25</sup> Matthew portrays the messianic mission of Jesus in terms of justice.<sup>26</sup> “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.<sup>27</sup> He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory (Matt 12:18-20).” Jesus also teaches that justice is one of the “weightier provisions” of the law (Matt 23:23 NASB).

In addition, Jesus followers are commanded to “go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners (Matt 9:13).” He then repeats this quotation from the OT: “If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent” (Matt 12:7).” Finally, he describes mercy as also being one of the weightier provisions of the law (Matt 23:23 NASB).<sup>28</sup>

The final command to explore regarding the righteousness of the kingdom is Jesus’ shrewd response to the Pharisees and Herodians when asked about paying taxes to Caesar: “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They

brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription? 'Caesar's,' they replied. Then he said to them, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's'" (Matt 22:18-21).<sup>29</sup>

Implicit in this statement is the truth that followers of Christ have a dual allegiance. We are citizens of heaven and citizens of earth – with responsibilities to both, but with ultimate loyalty to God.<sup>30</sup> Peter and Paul regard the ruling powers as instituted by God and as worthy of honor, support, and intercession (e.g., Rom 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17; 1 Tim 2:1-7). However, Scripture also affirms some cases of civil disobedience by God's people (Ex 1:15-20; Daniel 3:9-18; 6:6-10); the most obvious case illustrated by the apostles who boldly affirmed before the religious authorities: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).<sup>31</sup>

In summary, the righteousness of the kingdom includes both personal piety and social engagement. It involves peacemaking, demonstrating mercy and working for justice. It also engages with the government – both in a supportive and a prophetic role.<sup>32</sup>

### ***The Power of the Kingdom***

Jesus' explicit commands to do works of power (or power ministry) are found in the second discourse on the Mission of the Kingdom (Matt 10).<sup>33</sup> First, he *gave* the disciples "authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness" (Matt 10:1). Then he *sent* them to "heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons" (Matt 10:8).<sup>34</sup> On this short-term training mission they were commissioned to preach the kingdom, demonstrate the power of the kingdom, and face persecution.<sup>35</sup>

Evangelical scholars often do not take these commands to heal and cast out demons as relevant to modern disciples. For example, there is no mention of commands related to “power ministry” in John Piper’s *What Jesus Demands from the World*, although the book explicitly seeks to describe all the commands that Jesus taught us to obey. By contrast, Robert Gundry notes, “To his disciples Jesus gives authority to replicate his ministry in word and deed. They are to teach by word and example the righteousness which surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees and to heal the sick and cast out demons. Thus Matthew pictures the disciples as Christian scribes ... and as Christian healers and exorcists” (Gundry 1994:8; cf. Williams 1989:131). The Johannine Great Commission further underscores the abiding relevance of Jesus’ command to heal and cast out demons in Matthew. Note the comparative: “As the Father has sent me, *I also send you*” (John 20:21). At the very least this implies that preaching and healing are to characterize the ministries of Jesus’ followers.

Jesus not only commands His followers to do works of power, he also calls them to discern between true and false power practitioners. Turning back to the first discourse, Jesus warns, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them” and “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt 7:15-23; cf Matt 24:24).

The way to distinguish between the true and the false power worker, according to Jesus, is the character of the power worker. You will know them by their fruit. True power workers will demonstrate both the power of the kingdom and the righteousness of the kingdom. Godly

character, social engagement and supernatural power are all complementary manifestations of kingdom ministry!<sup>36</sup>

### ***The Cross and the Kingdom***

Matthew's teaching about the cross is not found in any of the five major discourses. Although the passion of Christ is predicted four times (Matt 16:21; 17:22–23; 20:18–19; 26:2), the actual *meaning* of the cross is mentioned only twice in this gospel (Matt 20:28; 26:19–30). Neither of the two texts provides a full-orbed biblical “theory” of the atonement as articulated later by theologians, but they do describe elements of these different atonement theories. For the sake of brevity I will use the names of these “theories” as shorthand.<sup>37</sup>

In keeping with our focus on “obeying the commands of Christ” we shall begin with the Last Supper – the celebration of the cross. These commands to partake of the Last Supper put the cross at the center of kingdom discipleship and unfold the meaning of Jesus' mission. The focus of this text is on “remembrance” of the cross as an act of worship. However, Matthew's readers would eventually link this cross-centered worship with kingdom-focused witness. In other words, the death of Christ became part of the proclamation of gospel of the kingdom.<sup>38</sup>

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘*Take and eat; this is my body.*’ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘*Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom*’ (Matt 26:26–29 commands italicized).<sup>39</sup>

The context for understanding the Last Supper is the Passover meal (Matt 26:17-19).<sup>40</sup> According to Matthew (and other New Testament authors), Jesus' messianic mission signifies a new Passover.<sup>41</sup> Jesus had become the Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7).

The theology of the Passover informs the meaning of the Lord's Supper in two ways.<sup>42</sup> First, the judgment of God "passed over" the Israelites because of the blood of the Passover lamb splashed on their doorway. The theology of the Passover as a backdrop to understanding the cross eventually leads to what is known as the substitutionary view of the cross.

Second, the Passover also celebrates a great deliverance. God delivered Israel from Egypt *and* judged the gods of Egypt. "For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments – I am the Lord" (Exod 12:12).<sup>43</sup> Whether this would readily come to the minds of the disciples or not, this passage indicates that the meaning of the Passover implies more than substitutionary atonement. It clearly alludes to the *Christus Victor* theme of the cross; Jesus defeated the powers of darkness on the cross.

Next we will examine Jesus' actual words about the Last Supper. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Three phrases highlight the meaning of Jesus' death. First, the phrase "blood of the covenant" alludes to Ex 24:8: "Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you..." Next, "poured out for many" echoes Isaiah 53, especially vs. 12: "... he poured out his life unto death, and ... he bore the sin of many.")<sup>44</sup> Finally, the themes of covenant and forgiveness of sin point to Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34, especially in light of the parallel passage in Luke 22:20). These words, in light of their OT background, underscore the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death on the cross.

Jesus also links the Last Supper with the coming kingdom: “I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you *in my Father's kingdom.*”<sup>45</sup> This implies that his death inaugurates the present in-breaking of the kingdom on earth in anticipation of the future coming of the kingdom. “The blessings of the kingdom, inaugurated through the finished work of Christ on the cross, are a permanent reminder that he is coming again to bring the final establishment of the kingdom to those who await his fellowship” (Wilkins 2004:838). The mention of the kingdom seems to point to the *Christus Victor* theme of the cross.

The second mention of the meaning of the cross in Matthew is found in the context of teaching about leadership and humility. Jesus affirms, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28). The phrase a “ransom for many” (*lu, tron avnti. pollw/n*) describes two dimensions of the cross. The focus of most evangelicals tends to be on the last element of the phrase: *avnti. pollw/n*. The preposition *avnti.*, which means “instead of, in place of or in behalf of,”<sup>46</sup> describes the substitutionary nature of Christ’s death – “on behalf of many”.

The word *lu, tron* (ransom) highlights another dimension of the cross that tends to be minimized by evangelicals. The word *lu, tron* is drawn from the background of purchasing the freedom of a slave or captive, used metaphorically to describe the meaning of the cross. It assumes bondage and, in light of the theology of the kingdom, implies that we were slaves to sin and Satan. Interpreted through the kingdom lens of Matthew, this term includes the “*Christus Victor*” theme of the atonement. On the cross Jesus has won the victory over the powers of evil.

In summary, both passages about the cross in Matthew highlight important dimensions of two models of the atonement (though perhaps with a greater emphasis on Christ as our substitute). The cross is both a substitutionary atonement and a great deliverance. Christ was judged on our behalf and at the same time defeated the powers of darkness.<sup>47</sup>

## *Conclusion*

Works of righteousness, works of power, and the work of Christ on the cross are complementary manifestations of the kingdom and define the demands of discipleship. Kingdom disciples live righteously – manifesting godly character, doing peacemaking, giving to the poor, demonstrating mercy and working for justice (including both a supportive and a prophetic role toward the government). They are given authority by Christ and sent to demonstrate the power of the kingdom through healing and exorcism. Finally, they are called to cross-centered worship, magnifying Jesus as lamb of God and conqueror of Satan – two themes which would also eventually become part of the proclamation of the kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> I was privileged to be part of this founding taskforce.

<sup>2</sup> The emphasis is on obedience and not primarily on “content,” transformation rather than information. “In discipleship the intellectual component is secondary” (Turner 2008:690).

<sup>3</sup> Like Matthew, the Gospel of John focuses on obedience, but provides a complementary perspective. In Matthew the emphasis on obedience stems from the *authority* of the risen Christ. In John it is an obedience that stems from *love*: “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to 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 abode with him” (John 14:21, 23; cf 1 John 2:5; 5:3; 2 John 6).

<sup>4</sup> John Piper’s *What God Demands from the World* (2006) illustrates how comprehensive this topic is.

<sup>5</sup> Some evangelicals may ask, “Where is the good news of grace in Matthew’s obedience-oriented discipleship?” First, note that Jesus proclaims the good news (*euaggelion*) of the kingdom (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14). It is the inauguration of the kingdom of God on earth, in the person of Jesus. And this kingdom is a kingdom of grace (Matt 20:1-15 cf. John 1:14). Secondly, this kingdom is received through repentance. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt 4:17). Repentance is thus the prerequisite of entrance into the kingdom. The first beatitude also stresses this: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs *IS* (present tense) the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:3). Humility and poverty of spirit assures entrance into the kingdom (see also Matt 18:3-4). You don’t “earn” the kingdom, you humbly “receive” it. Finally, it is worth noting that other authors of the NT also put a great emphasis on repentance, obedience and good deeds (John 14:21-23; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 19:4; 20:21; Rom 1:5; 2:4; 16:26; 2 Cor 7:9-10; 12:21; 2 Tim 2:25; Titus 1:16; 2:7,14; 3:8,14; James – the entire letter; 1 Peter 1-2; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:3; 5:3; 2 John 6; Rev 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19). Thus, Keener rightly notes, “the kingdom grace Jesus proclaimed was not the workless grace of much of Western Christendom; in the Gospels, the kingdom message transforms those who meekly embrace it” (2009: 162).

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<sup>6</sup> Most commentators agree that the Great Commission in Matt 28:18-20 summarizes the most important themes of Matthew's gospel (e.g., Keener 2009:715, France 2007:1107).

<sup>7</sup> This passage echoes Daniel 7:13-14 regarding the exaltation of the Son of Man: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." It is noteworthy that Jesus refers to himself as Son of Man in Matthew thirty seven times.

<sup>8</sup> The verb form of make disciples (*maqhteuw*) is found only four times in the NT, three of which are in Matthew (Matt 13:52; 27:57; 28:19; Acts 14:21). The noun form (*maqthh, j*) is found 72 times in Matthew, 46 times in Mark and 37 times in Luke, showing the importance of the term for Matthew compared to the Synoptic gospels.

<sup>9</sup> Most scholars argue that these participles function as imperatives because of their dependence on the main verb. In *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace describes the first participle (*poreuge, nte j*) as a participle of "attendant circumstances," while he describes the other two (*bapti, zonte j* and *dida, skonte j*) as imperatives or as a modal, explaining how disciples are made (Wallace 1995:640-45, especially 645). According to Hagner, "The commission itself is given by means of one main imperative verb, μαθητεύσατε, 'make disciples,' together with three syntactically subordinate participles that take on an imperatival force (thus rightly Friedrich, 154) because of the main verb. Hagner, Donald A.: *Word Biblical Commentary : Matthew 14-28*. Dallas : Word, Incorporated, 2002 (Word Biblical Commentary 33B), S. 886. Turner notes, "The disciples' central responsibility is to reproduce themselves. The other tasks (going, baptizing, teaching) describe how disciples are made" (2008:689).

<sup>10</sup> Thus, Turner notes that the Great Commission is "bracketed by two Christological assertions ... Jesus universal power and perpetual presence provide the dynamic for Jesus' universal discipleship mandate (2008:687).

<sup>11</sup> Matthew structures his gospel topically (see my commentary above), chronologically and geographically. Chronologically, Matthew organizes the gospel into three sections with the phrase "From then on ..." (Matt 4:17; 16:21; 26:16). Geographically, the gospel of Matthew moves from Galilee, to Jerusalem and back to Galilee where Jesus gives his final commission.

<sup>12</sup> Keener notes, "The summaries of Jesus' teachings earlier in Matthew's Gospel (chs. 5-7; 13; 18; 23-25) work well as a discipling manual for young believers. Various passages in fact epitomize Jesus' commandments (7:12; 12:7; 22:37-40; 23:23), but the community still requires specific articulation of the older commandments in light of the kingdom (5:17-19; 13:52) (2009:720). According to Wilkins, these five discourses provide a "holistic presentation on the kind of discipleship that was to be taught to disciples as the basis for full-orbed obedience to Christ and became the basis for Christian instruction within the church" (2004:32).

<sup>13</sup> In my review of Matthew, I have noted approximately 47 literal commands that have abiding significance for the church. In a comparable study, John Piper summarized all the commands in about thirty categories, but he does not address any commands related to healing or exorcism (2006:35).

<sup>14</sup> This allusion comes from the Bible translations that put Jesus words in red.

<sup>15</sup> See BDAG Lexicon "'deute' adv. ..., **come here! come on!** mostly as hortatory particle."

<sup>16</sup> I note approximately 23 commands in this category.

<sup>17</sup> In this passage, Jesus contrasts doing acts of righteousness done for God's glory with acts of righteousness to be seen by men in Matt 6:1.

<sup>18</sup> As Hagner notes, "Letting one's light shine is living according to the perfection of the kingdom and thus manifesting the righteousness of the Torah according to its correct interpretation, examples of which are shortly to emerge" (Hagner 2002:100).

<sup>19</sup> "Extending mercy, being pure in heart, and working for peace are among the marks of righteousness for which one is seen as suffering here" (Nolland 2005:207).

<sup>20</sup> France notes, "Those who are to belong to God's new realm must move beyond literal observance of rules ... to a new consciousness of what it means to please God, one which penetrates beneath the surface level of rules to be obeyed to a more radical openness to knowing and doing the underlying will of 'your Father in heaven.' J.P. Meier describes Jesus' demand as 'a radical interiorization, a total obedience to God, a complete self-giving to neighbor, that carries the ethical thrust of the Law to its God-willed conclusion'" (2007:190).

<sup>21</sup> Jesus' use of the terms *opponent* (5:42); *gentiles* (5:47; 6:7; 6:42), *enemies* (5:43-44); *unrighteous* (5:45) and *persecution* (5:10,11,12,44) in the Sermon on the Mount indicate that peacemaking is not restricted to believers only. It takes place in an unbelieving world, beyond the boundaries of the Church. Other passages in the NT confirm this. Paul urges the church in Rome: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom

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12:18 NIV). The author of Hebrews exhorts Christ's followers to "make every effort to live in peace with all" (Heb 12:14 NIV). Children of God do peacemaking between believers *and* among unbelievers, both in the Church and in the public arena. Since Jesus mentions no qualifications to the nature of peacemaking, nor limits to the scope of peacemaking, it certainly relates to global challenges such as racism, poverty and war as well. We should interpret peacemaking as broadly as the Bible does.

<sup>22</sup> Keener notes regarding the importance of the two great commands, "Given Matthew's emphasis on keeping Jesus' commandments (28:20) and Jesus continuity with Moses' law (5:17-20), two commandments that epitomize the rest are clearly central to his ethics" (2009:532).

<sup>23</sup> "The way of the world is to assert its will on others through human power, even violence, and the way of the world is to retaliate against violence with violence. The inevitable consequence of championing violence is often one's own violent end. Jesus is not giving a blanket endorsement of pacifism, which would require broader scriptural support than this one saying. But he does reject the notion that God's will is advanced or should be imposed on others through violent means. A general principle to guide the use of force is that allegiance should be given to the goals of the kingdom of God (cf. 5:38 – 42). Peter's use of force is not guided by kingdom priorities but by the human desire to retaliate." (Wilkins 2004:859),

<sup>24</sup> The commands of Matthew provide a robust foundation for the Vineyard value of "Reconciling Community."

<sup>25</sup> The themes of justice and mercy are based on the OT in these texts, in keeping with Matthew's emphasis on the fulfillment of OT in Jesus.

<sup>26</sup> D.A. Carson defines justice in this passage as "righteousness broadly conceived as the self-revelation of God's character for the good of the nations" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Pradis CD-ROM:Matthew/Exposition of Matthew/IV. Teaching and Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom: Rising Opposition (11:2-13:53)/A. Narrative (11:2-12:50)/4. Jesus the prophesied Servant (12:15-21), Book Version: 4.0.2).

<sup>27</sup> The emphasis on "nations" once again highlights the scope of our mission.

<sup>28</sup> This emphasis on mercy has further support in the beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful" (Matt 5:7).

<sup>29</sup> This text served as the foundation for what later became known as the Lutheran two-kingdom theory.

<sup>30</sup> Regarding Jesus' attitude toward the state as described in Matt 22:21, Oscar Cullmann notes, "Above all, we insist that in Jesus as in the whole New Testament we find in their criticism of the State that duality of which we spoke at the start. On the one hand, we see that he certainly does not regard the State as in any sense a *final*, divine institution: on the other hand, we see that he accepts the State and radically renounces every attempt to overthrow it. In the book I wish to emphasize that this double attitude is characteristic of the entire New Testament" (1957:18-19).

<sup>31</sup> "The tone and demeanor of this Christian civil disobedience will be the opposite of strident, belligerent, rock-throwing, screaming, swearing, violent demonstrations. We are people of the cross. Our Lord submitted to crucifixion willingly to save his enemies. We owe our eternal life to him. We are forgiven sinners. This takes the swagger out of our protest. It takes the arrogance out of our resistance. And if, after every other means has failed, we must disobey for the sake of love and justice, we will first remove the log from our own eye, which will cause enough pain and tears to soften our indignation into a humble, quiet, but unshakeable, NO. The greatest battle we face is not overcoming unjust laws, but becoming this kind of people" (Piper 2005a).

<sup>32</sup> Matthew's emphasis on righteousness as both personal piety and social engagement finds further support throughout the NT (Eph 4:24; 5:9; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:29; 3:10). But it is Paul who makes the explicit connection between righteousness and the kingdom: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). Moo notes, "Since Paul typically uses 'righteousness' language in Romans in a forensic sense to refer to our status before God, many interpreters think that *dikaioyne* has that sense here. But Paul also uses this word to refer to 'ethical righteousness,' that is, behavior pleasing to God (e.g., 6:16, 18, 19). This meaning fits the present context better. 'Peace' refers to the horizontal harmony that believers should manifest. When these blessings are present, 'joy' results." (Moo, Douglas J. "The Values of the Kingdom (14:17 - 18)" In *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. By Moo, 461. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.)

<sup>33</sup> Regarding the short-term training mission described in Matt 10, Harvey notes that the disciples would have "learned about making preparations, targeting receptive hearers, facing persecution and opposition, relying on divine resources, and enduring to the end" (1998:132).

<sup>34</sup> Keener notes, "The model of training other miracle-workers fits the ancient Israelite model of prophetic guilds" (2009:310).

<sup>35</sup> France notes regarding the discourse on the Mission of the Kingdom (Matt 10), "its relevance to Christian disciples in subsequent generations would have been as obvious to Matthew's first readers as it presumably was to

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the author himself ... while the situation is specific to the Twelve themselves, it is likely that Matthew regarded these instructions as applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to later disciples as well” (2007:371, 380).

<sup>36</sup> Matthews’ teaching on “power ministry” also finds support throughout the NT. Luke highlights the signs and wonders of “non-apostles” in the early church – Stephen and Philip (Acts 6:8; 8:5-8). According to Paul, “the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power” (1 Cor 4:20). The gifts of the Holy Spirit include “miracles” and “healing” (1 Cor 12:10, 28, 29) and power ministry appears to be a part of normal church life in Galatia (Gal 3:5). Finally, James encourages the ministry of healing in the church (James 5:14-15).

<sup>37</sup> Three atonement theories have dominated the theology of the church: 1. *The Christus Victor theory*. Gustaf Aulen describes this as the classical or dominant view of the atonement for the first thousand years of Christian history: “Its central theme is the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christus Victor fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the ‘tyrants’ under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself” (1986:4). This theory reflects a Satanward orientation and highlights the ‘rescue’ dimension of the gospel. 2. *The Substitutionary theory* was first articulated by Anselm. “Here there is always the thought of a satisfaction to be paid to God’s wounded honour, or His broken law ... It sees man as being in danger, not from the hostile forces of evil, but from a holy God who he had offended by his sin. And it sees Christ as taking upon Himself the responsibility, as bearing divine judgment, as winning a new standing for those who are in Him” (Morris 1972:398). This theory reflects a Godward orientation and focuses on the “relational” dimension of the gospel. 3. *The Moral Influence Theory* is associated with Abelard. This view focuses on how the love of God displayed through Christ on the cross moves people to repentance. This theory reflects a humanward orientation, highlighting the subjective impact of Christ’s love on our lives (Morris 1972:398-399). For more about these three theories, see “Atonement” by R.W. Yarbrough in *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* 2001.

<sup>38</sup> Both Philip and Paul explicitly combined the message of Jesus (which would include his death on the cross) with the kingdom in their evangelism: “But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28:31; cf Acts 20:20-28; Col 1:13-14). See “What is the Gospel?” by Robert A. Guelich (*Theology, News and Note*, Spring 2004, Volume 51, Number 2) for an excellent summary of how the gospel of Christ crucified and the gospel of the kingdom are one gospel.

<sup>39</sup> France points out the significance of the four “Eucharistic verbs” of the Last Supper: “The significance of the verbs used becomes clear when the five Synoptic feeding narratives are compared with the three Synoptic accounts of Jesus’ Eucharistic action at the Last Supper. In all eight pericopae we find the same sequence: “took...blessed/gave thanks ... broke ... gave” (2007:558, 991).

<sup>40</sup> “It is not an accident of history but the working of divine sovereignty that Jesus was crucified at the Passover season. For Jesus was the new, eschatological Passover lamb (cf. 1 Cor 5:7), whose sacrificial death was the atonement for the sins of the world. The bread and wine, the commonest of elements, come in the institution of the Eucharist to bear sublime meaning as the expression of the very center of the Christian faith, the mystery of the death of God’s own Son. For this reason the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is at the center of Christian worship” (Hagner 2002:774).

<sup>41</sup> “By reinterpreting a familiar ritual Jesus gave them a new way of looking at God’s purposes that would make sense to them once he had risen” (Keener 2009:621).

<sup>42</sup> Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. <sup>22</sup> Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning. <sup>23</sup> When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down. <sup>24</sup> Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. <sup>25</sup> When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. <sup>26</sup> And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ <sup>27</sup> then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’” Then the people bowed down and worshiped (Ex 12:21-27).

<sup>43</sup> Thus, Don Williams concludes, As the living God assaults Egypt with the plagues, he proves that he is both the Warrior-King who saves his people and the just Judge who comes against the oppressor. Yahweh’s goal is not merely to gain political freedom for Israel (as some liberationist theologians believe). He acts in order to bring her under his sovereignty and to destroy the idolatrous system of Egypt (which masks the evil one). For this cause he goes into battle (Williams 1989:81-82).

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<sup>44</sup> As Jeremias points out, “Without Is 53 the Eucharistic words would remain incomprehensible” Hagner, Donald A.: *Word Biblical Commentary : Matthew 14-28*. Dallas : Word, Incorporated, 2002 (Word Biblical Commentary 33B), S. 773

<sup>45</sup> “They will remember that Jesus did indeed shed his blood for the forgiveness of their sins. And they will remember his promise to share the table with them in the future kingdom. As Paul put it, every time they eat the bread and drink the cup, they will be announcing the Lord’s death until he comes (1 Cor 11:26). The Lord’s supper is divinely ordained to remind Jesus’s followers of the past and the future, what Jesus has done and what Jesus will do” (Turner 2008:626).

<sup>46</sup> See BDAG.

<sup>47</sup> Matthew’s teaching on the relationship between the cross and the kingdom finds both strong support and significant development in the NT. The teaching on substitutionary atonement is abundant (Rom 3:24-26; 5:6-10; 1 Cor 15:3-4; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:10-13). We find important development of thought when it comes to the Christus Victor theme. Both John and Luke describe Christ’s life and ministry in terms of Christus Victor. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8). “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, ... he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him” (Acts 10:38). Jesus spoke prophetically (in the Gospel of John) about his impending death and resurrection as a defeat of Satan: “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31; cf John 14:30; 16:11). Moreover, Peter, Paul and the author of Hebrews teach that Christ’s victory over Satan and the forces of darkness takes place preeminently in his death, resurrection and exaltation. At the cross Christ disarmed and triumphed over “the rulers and authorities” (Col 2:15; Heb 2:14, cf. Col 1:13-14). In his resurrection and exaltation, he was raised far above all the spiritual forces of darkness (Eph 1:21-22; 1 Pet 3:22). The lens of kingdom theology, and the passages noted above, have led the prominent New Testament scholar N.T. Wright to affirm, “I am inclined to see the theme of *Christus Victor*, the victory of Jesus Christ over all the powers of evil and darkness, as the central theme in atonement theology, around which all the other varied meanings of the cross find their particular niche” (2006:114). N.T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

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