

THE PROMISE AND ITS PURPOSE (part-two of a seven-part study)

In giving this multi-faceted command to His disciples, Jesus sets forth the foundational premise for its issuance; making it clear to them and us that He is in possession of comprehensive and universal authority, in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). Christ received this sovereign lordship by leaving heaven and coming to earth, in order to live here and die here as a sinless atonement for our sin; vindicating His life and validating His death by means of His resurrection from the dead. This redemptive accomplishment qualifies Him to be the one and only Savior of the world, as well as the Lord and Master of the universe (John 3:35; 5:22, 27). After Christ's ascension into heaven (Hebrews 1:1-4), Peter, at Pentecost, confirms this right to rule and reign, when he says the following in Acts 2:36 –

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.”

In Paul's final epistle to his disciple Timothy, during his second imprisonment in Rome, the apostle calls him to an accounting for the fulfillment of his ministry by saying this in 2 Timothy 4:1 –

“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom . . .

The above passages prove that Christ's sovereign rule doesn't merely reside in the realm of some Star Wars fantasy. For every follower of the Savior, it consists of our ultimate reality. At Pentecost, the response to Peter's declaration results in a profound conviction of sin, producing 3,000 conversions to Christ. Paul knew his interaction with Timothy, based on our Savior's authority to judge the living and the dead, would motivate his disciple to continue being faithful in his calling. So, he concludes with this admonishment, recorded in 2 Timothy 4:5 –

“But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

The application for us is obvious. Will we submit to Jesus' authority over us or not? When He issues marching orders, will we fall in line or not? How we answer those two questions will determine whether or not any of us will be used by our Lord and Master in the building of His Church (2 Timothy 2:20-21).