

CHAPTER 4**THE CHURCH—EQUIPPED AND PREPARED**

The Lord Jesus perfectly accomplished His mission. At the end of His time on this earth He said, “I have _____ the _____ which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4). He was God’s perfect witness on the earth.

In John 17:11 the Lord Jesus spoke of the time when He would no longer be in the world: “And now I am no _____ in the _____.” God’s perfect witness would leave the earth and return to heaven. Does this mean that God would no longer have a WITNESS on the earth? Jesus went on to say in John 17:11, “. . . but THESE (His disciples, those who would become members of His Church) are _____ the _____.” Christ would return to heaven but the CHURCH would remain on the earth to continue to bear WITNESS to the living God.

In this chapter we want to think about the MISSION and WITNESS of the Church and how Christ has equipped and prepared His believers to carry out a wonderful ministry on this planet.

GOD’S COMMISSION

Before Jesus Christ went back to heaven He told His disciples exactly what their assignment was. Before He sent His soldiers into the world He gave them very clear “marching orders.” These important commands that the risen Lord gave to His believers are mentioned in Acts 1:2—“until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Spirit had given _____ unto the _____ whom He had chosen.”

These commandments were given to His disciples (apostles) after the resurrection and before the Lord returned to heaven. These commands are sometimes referred to as “THE GREAT COMMISSION.” All members of Christ’s Church need to understand the Great Commission because only then will we understand what our Lord has told us to do and what our MISSION really is. The Great Commission has been written down by all four of the Gospel writers:

1) The Great Commission as recorded by Matthew:

This is found in Matthew 28:19—“ _____ ye therefore and TEACH (make disciples of) all _____ baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” You will notice that Christ wanted His Church to be a WITNESS throughout the world (“ALL NATIONS”). God told His disciples to go and make other disciples!

In Matthew 28:18 we learn the reason why this is called “the GREAT Commission.” It is GREAT because the One who gave it has “all _____” and all authority! If your friend told you to do something, you may or may not want to carry out his order. If the President of the United States told you to do something, this would carry much more weight because he is a man of great authority. Christians have received their orders from the KING OF KINGS—the risen Lord! He is our Commander-in-Chief! All authority belongs to Him.

2) The Great Commission as recorded by Mark:

This is found in Mark 16:15. Where were they to go? _____
What were they to do? _____ Who were they to preach to?
_____ God has GOOD NEWS for every person on the face of this earth., and the CHURCH has been given the responsibility of making this good news known.

3) The Great Commission as recorded by Luke:

This is found in Luke 24:47. What are the two “R’s” that Christ told his disciples to preach?

R _____

R _____

The first of these two “R’s” is something that man must do. Man must repent (change his mind about sin, self and the Saviour). True repentance is when a person discovers and acknowledges his utter ruin and guilt and sinfulness before a holy God. “I’m guilty before God and deserving of hell and I’m unable to save myself!” The second of these two “R’s” is something that God must do. This word means “FORGIVENESS” (see Acts 10:43 where we are told that those who believe in Christ will receive complete **remission** or forgiveness of sins). God has GOOD NEWS for everyone that repents (see Acts 3:19). This wonderful message was to be preached among _____ (Luke 24:47).

Notice also the words of Jesus found in Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8 (Acts was also written by Dr. Luke). Jesus wanted His disciples to be HIS W_____. The Church was to be God's witness on the earth, pointing clearly to the living God.

4) The Great Commission as recorded by John:

This is found in John 20:21 (and compare John 17:18): "As my Father hath _____ Me, even so _____ I YOU." Jesus Christ was sent into the world by the Father on a special mission (John 17:18). So also the Church has been sent into the world by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church has been sent on a special mission also! We have been sent by the SON OF GOD and it is our responsibility to represent Him properly in this world.

GOD'S WORD

God has not sent us into the world EMPTY HANDED! God has equipped us and put something into our hands which is very precious and very valuable: "I have _____ them Thy _____" (John 17:14). What precious gift has God put into our hands according to this verse? _____

As we have already seen, God has sent us into the world with a GOSPEL (a message of GOOD NEWS). In Mark 16:15 Christ commanded His believers by saying, "Preach the _____ to every creature." This word "PREACH" means to "announce as a HERALD."

In the days when the Bible was written people did not have radios or televisions or newspapers. Suppose a King had an important message for his subjects to hear. What would he do? Often he would send out a messenger called a HERALD. A HERALD was a person who would carry the message of the King. He was the man who would give the NEWS and make important ANNOUNCEMENTS. When this man would enter a town all the people would gather together to hear his message. He might begin, "HEAR YE, HEAR YE ..." and then he would give his message. God has given His Word and His message to His believers. We are HERALDS for the KING OF KINGS! It is our responsibility and privilege to deliver to men a message of good news from God Himself.

What is the GOOD NEWS that we preach (1 Cor. 15:3-4; John 3:16)? _____

_____ God has put His Word into our hands and it is a message of GOOD NEWS for all. It is the responsibility of all men to believe the gospel (believe God's message of good news).

1) God's Word is POWERFUL.

In Hebrews 4:12 we learn that "the Word of God is "quick (living) and _____." God's Word is so powerful that it can transform a sinner into a saint! God's Word works effectually and mightily in those who B _____ (1 Thess. 2:13). The GOSPEL is "the _____ of God unto _____ to everyone that _____" (Romans 1:16). Have you experienced the life-changing power of the Word of God?

2) God's Word is SHARP.

The Word of God is "sharper than any two-edged _____" (Hebrews 4:12). God's Word is able to PIERCE and CUT DEEP into the hearts of men. God's Word is called the _____ of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17). When Peter preached the Word, did it PIERCE hearts (Acts 2:37)? _____ When Stephen preached the Word, did it PIERCE hearts (Acts 7:54)? _____

3) God's Word is TRUE.

Jesus Himself said, "Thy Word is _____" (John 17:17). There is no greater weapon than THE TRUTH! The early Christians did not go forth preaching LIES about Christ and about salvation. They went forth preaching THE TRUTH about the true and living God. Was the Apostle John convinced that his message was TRUE (John 19:35; 21:24)? _____ Are you convinced that the message of the Bible is true? _____

4) God's Word is PRODUCTIVE.

When God sends the snow or rain He does so for a PURPOSE. The ground is watered and eventually brings forth fruit (see Isaiah 55:10). The same is true when God's Word goes

forth: "So shall my _____ be that goeth forth out of my _____: it shall not return unto me void., but it shall _____ that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (see Isaiah 55:11). When God's Word goes forth it will accomplish God's purpose. Jesus taught this truth in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:18-23). As the seed is sown, some of the seed will fall on _____ ground (v.23) and will bring forth fruit! Many will reject the Word of God but there will be some who will receive it!

Are you sowing the seed? Are you spreading the Word of God? Are you getting the message out to those who need to hear? How are you doing this? How can you do this better?

GOD'S SPIRIT

God's Word is extremely important, but God's Word by itself is not enough. The Word of God is powerless and will accomplish nothing unless the Spirit of God takes it and uses it. Think of a battle and a sword. The best sword in the world would be of no use if no one picked it up and used it. If it were just lying on the ground it would not kill any of the enemy soldiers. It would not pierce anyone. A sword is completely useless and powerless unless there is someone to wield it and use it.

The Spirit of God is the One who takes the Word of God and uses it! He is the One who convinces men and convicts men by the Word (compare John 16:8-11 where the word "reprove" means "convict"). If the Spirit of God were suddenly to leave the world, there could be millions of Bibles and tracts all over the earth, but not one person would ever be saved. The best preachers in the world could preach again and again, but no one would ever get saved. The Spirit of God must do that work in the heart that only He can do. It is the Spirit of God that takes the Word of God and makes it living and real. It is the Spirit of God who is able to convince men that they have a problem (SIN) and to convince men that God has the only solution to their problem (THE SAVIOUR, the Lord Jesus Christ).

1) The Spirit CLOTHES believers.

In Luke 24:49 the early disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem unto they were endued (CLOTHED) with _____ from on high (compare Acts 1:8). Jesus was speaking

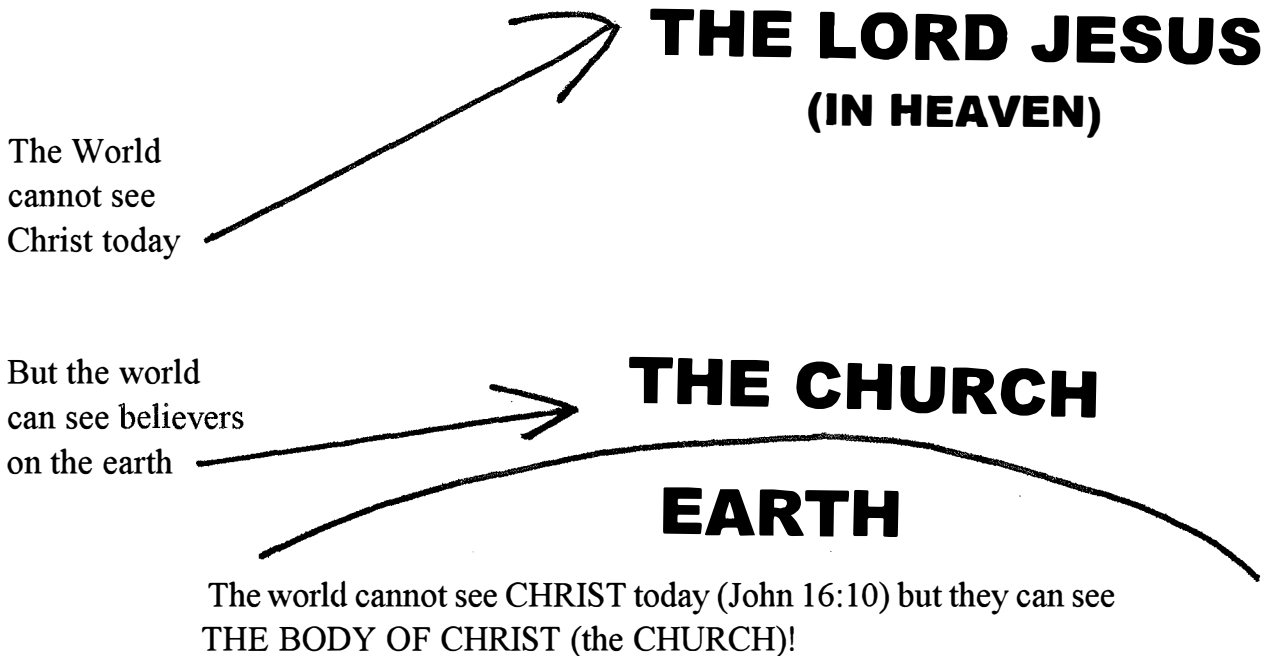
of the power of the Holy Spirit who would come on the day of Pentecost to live in the disciples in a very special way (John 14:16,17,20). Trying to do the work of God without the Holy Spirit is like trying to drive a car without gas. It's impossible!

2) The Spirit EMPOWERS believers.

God has not only given the Church a GREAT COMMISSION but He has also given the Church GREAT POWER to obey this commission. Where does the believer's POWER come from (Acts 1:8)? _____ The Spirit of God enables the believer and empowers the believer so that he (or she) can properly and rightly represent Christ in this world. Does the Holy Spirit live in your heart (Romans 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19)? How do you know this? Does GOD'S GREAT POWER work in and through you (Eph. 3:20)?

3) The Spirit TRANSFORMS believers.

Jesus Christ is no more in the world. The Church (made up of believers) is in the world, and it is the responsibility of the Church to *present Jesus Christ to the world*. God wants His believers to be more and more CHRIST-LIKE (Gal. 4:19; 5:22-23). God wants His believers to manifest the L_____ of Jesus (2 Cor. 4:10-11). The world needs to see Christ IN US. One of the important ministries of the Holy Spirit is to transform and change believers into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).



GOD'S PRESENCE

The Lord never asked His believers to do His work by themselves and on their own. What great promise did Jesus give to His disciples in Matthew 28:20? _____

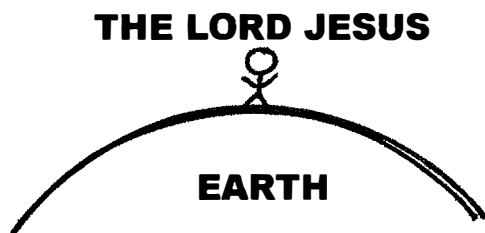
Consider Mark 16:19-20. In verse 19 we learn that Jesus returned to heaven. But in verse 20 we find Jesus present and W _____ with His disciples! He is in heaven but He is also present with His disciples on earth! We no longer have Christ's PHYSICAL presence (His body) but the Son of God is with us nonetheless! In fact, He has promised never to forsake us and never to _____ us (Hebrews 13:5).

Acts 1:1 speaks of the ministry of Jesus Christ when He was on earth up to the time of His ascension back to heaven: "of all that Jesus _____ both to do and teach." This ministry of Jesus Christ was CONTINUED by the church! He began it; the Church continues it. This chart might help you to understand this:

The beginning of the doing and teaching ministry of Jesus

The Lord working on earth

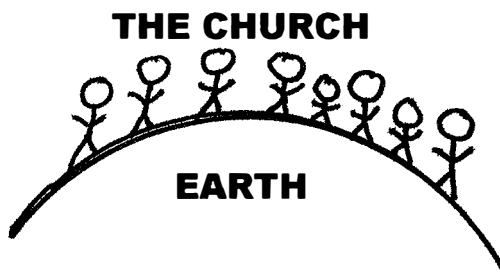
Described in the Gospels



The continuation of the doing and teaching ministry of Jesus

The Lord working through His church on the earth

Described in the Book of Acts



Jesus Christ wants to minister to this world through us! He wants to do certain things through you and He wants to teach people through you. He wants you to be HIS INSTRUMENT! Just as the surgeon fills and works through his surgeon's gloves, so the Lord Jesus wants to fill and use us as His gloves, as it were. Are you letting Him do this?

GOD'S ARMOUR

Consider the passage found in Ephesians 6:10-18. What kind of armour and equipment has God provided for His believers? What kind of enemy do we face as we seek to obey the Lord's Great Commission? Does the devil want men to hear and believe the good news (Luke 8:12)? _____

A good general would never send forth one of his soldiers into the battlefield without the right kind of armour and weapons and protection. God has sent us into the world, and He has given us everything that we need to fight the good fight of faith. In and of ourselves we do not have the strength that is needed, but we can be STRONG in the _____ and in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10). The battle is the Lord's!

GOD'S BODY

Every believer is a member of the body of Christ. This means that we are NOT ALONE! We are part of a great team! There are many members in the body of Christ. There are many other believers to support you as you do Christ's work and to work with you. A football player would soon get discouraged if he found out that he was the only member of the team and he had to take on the other team all by himself! This would be silly. A true team is made up of many members and these members all work together. As you serve the Lord in your school or neighborhood, just remember that there are many other believers in your church that are working with you and that are on the same team that you are on. Also, your local church is not alone! There are thousands of other Bible believing local churches scattered throughout the face of the earth. These people may not speak your same language and may have different manners and customs and ways, but you can rejoice that they are serving the same Lord in their corner of the world even as you are in your corner of the world.