
Bringing in the Harvest
A Study of Matthew 28:18–20

Shavuot • Beit Hallel • 5775

Bringing In the Harvest

Matthew 28:18–20 at Shavuot

And Yeshua came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matt 28:18)

- I. In His incarnation, Yeshua voluntarily set aside the use of His ultimate authority and lived as the Servant of Adonai. (Phil 2:5–11)

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Messiah Yeshua, who, being in the very in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:5–8)

- A. “being” = present participle, thus “always existed”
B. “emptied Himself” = “poured out,” as a libation offering by
1. taking the form of a bond servant
2. taking upon Himself humanity
3. being recognized by others as human
C. “humbled Himself” by
1. becoming obedient to death
2. to the most hideous kind of death, i.e., crucifixion

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that EVERY TONGUE WILL CONFESS that Yeshua Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:9–11)

- D. “highly exalted Him” by
1. bestowing on Him the name above all names
2. His infinite authority is thus acknowledge by all
3. “every knee will bow” / “every tongue confess” is a quote from Isaiah 45:23

Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. (Is 45:22–23)

4. “...that Yeshua Messiah is Lord” = κύριος, *kurios*, the Greek word by which יהוה is most often translated in the Lxx.

And Yeshua came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matt 28:18)

- II. Now, as the risen and victorious Messiah, He reminds the disciples that He has taken up His rightful authority, meaning He now exercises His infinite power to bring about His holy will.
- III. This parallels the prophetic vision of Daniel.

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. (Dan 7:13–14)

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (Matt 28:19)

- IV. “Therefore,” meaning “with the assurance of the risen Messiah’s ultimate authority by which the success of the kingdom is assured.
- V. “Go” should be taken as a command (even though in the Greek it is a participle). Participles and infinitive absolutes in Hebrew can function as imperatives or commands.
- VI. “Go” may simply mean “become active” in doing what Yeshua commands, much like the use of הָלַךְ, halach in the Hebrew: לָכוּ וְנִלְכְּהוּ, “come on, let’s go!” (e.g., 1Sam 9:9)
- VII. Notice what our text does not say: It does not say “Go, therefore, and evangelize the nations.”
 - A. Surely proclaiming (in word and deed) the Gospel, the Good News of Yeshua, is the first step, but if it ends in proclamation, the job has not been completed. Yeshua instructs us to make disciples.
 - B. What is a disciple? It is someone who “walks in the footsteps” of his or her teacher or master. Mental agreement is not enough. Doing, living, obeying is the proof of genuine faith in Yeshua.
 - C. Being a disciple means taking on the life of one’s Master.
- VIII. “all the nations” means the Abrahamic promise is being fulfilled.
 - A. This is the reversal of the Tower of Babel
 - B. This was demonstrated at Shavuot (Acts 2) when everyone heard the Gospel of the Kingdom in their own language.
 - C. While the nations foreign to Israel are primarily in view, “all the nations” must surely also include Israel.
 - D. It is the ingathering of the elect from the nations that will bring Israel to repentance (Rom 11:25ff)
- IX. “baptizing them”
 - A. There was no need to explain what “baptism” was since the *mikveh* was common among 1st Cent. Judaisms.

- B. The *mikveh* was symbolic of:
1. A change of status, e.g., restoring ritual purity
 2. A new beginning (though the proselyte mikveh may have been a later innovation)
 3. A symbol of resurrection (cf. 1Cor 15:29, “baptized with regard to the dead” = the final step in removing corpse defilement)
- C. “in the Name” (singular) – Ordained by the Father, purchased by the Son, regenerated by the Spirit

teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:20)

- X. “teaching them to observe all that I command you”
- A. What did Yeshua command His disciples?
1. Matt 5:17–20 – to obey all of the commandments

Matthew 5:17–20

Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Torah until all is accomplished. (Matt 5:17–18)

- B. Why does Yeshua refer at first to “the Torah and the Prophets” but in the next verse only mentions the Torah?
1. He uses the phrase “the Torah and the Prophets” to emphasize that He is talking about the written Scriptures,
 2. He is not talking about the oral traditions added by men, some of which He did come to destroy (Eph 2:14–15)
- C. “to fulfill” = “to establish the Torah in the lives of His people.”
- D. “until heaven and earth pass away – The permanency of the heavens and earth is regularly used in the Tanach as a metaphor for the concept of “eternal” or “forever.”

“His [David’s] descendants shall endure forever and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever like the moon, And the witness in the sky is faithful.” Selah. (Ps 89:36–37)

“Thus says the LORD, ‘If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. (Jer 33:20–21)

Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light Praise Him, highest heavens, and the waters that are above the heavens! Let them praise the name of Adonai, for He commanded and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which will not pass away. (Ps 148:3–6)

Thus says Adonai, Who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; Adonai of hosts is His name: If this fixed order departs from before Me,” declares Adonai, “Then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.” (Jer 31:35–36)

- E. “smallest letter or stroke”
1. This is a *kal v'chomer* argument. If the smallest is vitally important, then surely the greater is important!
 2. This means the Torah is unified. Nothing in God’s Torah is insignificant. Thus, God’s commandments cannot be put into categories ranging from “less important” to “very important.” The Torah cannot be divided into “civil,” “ceremonial,” and “moral” categories.
- F. “accomplished” (γίνομαι, *ginomai*, “to be, exist”) restates the meaning of the previous “fulfill.”

Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:17–20)

- G. “annuls & teaches” parallels “keeps & teaches”
- H. The word translated “keeps” is literally “does,” ποιέω, *poieō*.
1. “annuls & teaches” = does not do and teaches others not to do.
 2. “keeps [does] and teaches” = lives by the commandments (all of them) and teaches others to do the same.
- I. “called least” / “called great” – God is the Assessor!
- J. “your righteousness surpasses” – obedience from the heart by the power of the Ruach; not for the applause of men.

“But It’s Impossible to Keep All the Commandments!”

So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where Adonai your God has banished you, and you return to Adonai your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then Adonai your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where Adonai your God has scattered you. (Deut 30:1–3)

1. In the diaspora there is not Temple, no priesthood, no sacrifices, no tithes, no ability for being ceremonially clean, etc.
2. Obeying all the commands that we are able to obey, and doing so from the heart by the power of the Ruach, indicates our willingness and desire to obey them all if it were possible.

- X. “teaching them to observe all that I command you”
 - A. What did Yeshua command His disciples?
 - 1. Matt 5:17–20 – to obey all of the commandments
 - 2. Making disciples means teaching those who have come to faith to keep the Torah as Yeshua kept it.
 - B. This teaching dismisses the notion that the Torah is for Jewish believers only. Those whom Yeshua saves from the nations are to live the same life of obedience as He taught His Jewish disciples to live.
 - C. This means that Messianic/Torah Communities are in the best position to accomplish Messiah’s mandate.

teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:20)

- XI. “Look! I am with you always, even to the end of the age”
 - A. This proves that the commission Yeshua gave to the Eleven extends even to us:
 - 1. Surely the Eleven could not have made disciples among all of the nations within their life times.
 - 2. “unto the end of the age” means “until Yeshua returns.”
 - B. “and lo” = “Look! Keep this in mind!”
 - 1. Yeshua promises His presence with us through the abiding Ruach HaKodesh
 - 2. “with you” for strength, for wisdom, for comfort, and for success in the mission to which He has sent us.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek,

Romans 1:16