

Contrasting Mark's & Matthew's Commissions

What If Jesus Had Returned

There are several different records of Jesus' commissions in the Four Gospels. Focus will be on contrasting two of them: Matthew 28:16-20 & Mark 16:14-20

Though often linked to being the same, exactly the opposite is true. Mark 16's commission is in line with the continuation of John the Baptist's ministry in preparing Israel for her prophesied Messiah & kingdom. The only difference between John's message, from that of Peter's along with baptizing for the remission of sins, is Israel's promise of the Holy Ghost.

John the Baptist

Mark 1:1-5 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; ² As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. ³ The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁴ John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵ And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

Peter & the Apostles

Acts 2:36-40 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. ³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? ³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ³⁹ For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. ⁴⁰ And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Whereas John the Baptist's ministry & baptism was authorized in the *name of the Lord*, the Apostles were baptizing in the *name of Jesus Christ*. The promise of remission of sins & gift of the Holy Ghost extended to those Jews that were scattered about among the nations; this was an assurance of Moses if/and or when Israel would repent as a nation.

Ezek 11:16-17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. ¹⁷ Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

The scribes & pharisees were warned of the wrath to come as we see Peter's exhortation to...
"Save yourselves from this untoward generation".

Was Peter's Offer Legit

Acts 3:19-20 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰ And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:"

Strikes 1 & 2

What is often not considered is a... What if? What if Israel did repent and was converted as a nation? Was Peter's offer of Christ's return legit? Up to this point Israel had two strikes against herself. The Jew rejected the ministry of John the Baptist and Peter accused Israel of crucifying Jesus... "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." **Acts 2:36**

Strike 3

Israel's 3rd strike came at the stoning of Stephen when accusing his Jewish audience, in front of the high priest, of blaspheming the Holy Ghost... "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." **Acts 7:51**

Of course, hindsight tells the rest of the story as to how the longsuffering of God entered into the picture with outreach to the Gentile via the ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles... "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." **1Tim 1:16**

1Tim 2:5-7 For *there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;* ⁶ Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. ⁷ Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and* lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

What if?

This brings us to a '*What if*', if Israel would have repented? Examination of this question sheds light upon the commission found in Matthew 28.

In comparing the commissions found in Mark 16 & Matthew 28, perhaps we can find clues in answering this, '*What if*'?

Preach the Gospel to Every Creature
Mark 16:14-20 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. ¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into

Go Ye Therefore, and Teach All Nations
Matt 28:16-20 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given

all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. ¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. ¹⁹ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Notable Contrasts

Different Locations

The first notable contrast is that of the different locations. In Mark's, Jesus appeared while the disciples were sitting at '*meat*'. In Matthew's, it was '*into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them*'. With understanding that each of the Four Gospels portrays Jesus differently, Matthew's Gospel portrays Jesus as a King:

Matt 5:1-2 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: ² And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Kingdom of Heaven Versus Kingdom of God:

Both expressions, '*kingdom of heaven*' & '*kingdom of God*' are found in the Gospels. Whereas the term '*kingdom of God*' is all inclusive, '*kingdom of heaven*', found 32 times only in Matthew's Gospel, relates directly to the future kingdom here on earth.

In Matthew 5, the disciples assemble upon a mountain to then be given instructions that are found through chapter 8:1... "When he was come down from **the mountain**, great multitudes followed him." **Matt 8:1**

Jews Verses Gentiles

As already pointed out, the primary audience of John the Baptist & the Apostles was Israel.

Immediately following the '*Sermon on the Mount*', another group of people is injected into the discussion centering on the kingdom of heaven!

Matt 8:5-11 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, ⁶ And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. ⁷ And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. ⁸ The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. ⁹ For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*. ¹⁰ When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. ¹¹ And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

A centurion (Roman soldier) showed more faith than that which Jesus was looking for in Israel! Jesus then projected into the future that there would be Gentiles sitting down with Abraham, Isaac & Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Though focus of the kingdom of heaven is on Israel's reign, along with the 12 Apostles judging the 12 Tribes of Israel, Gentiles are also introduced into this kingdom on earth...

Matt 25:31-34 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ³² And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: ³³ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Preaching Versus Teaching

A very significant difference, most often neglected between these two commissions, is that the emphasis in Mark's commission is *preaching*, while Matthew's is *'teaching'*

Preaching Commission

Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Mark 16:15-16 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. **Mark 16:20** And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Teaching Commission

Matt 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you *always*, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

What's obvious is that which was being preached, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. What should be just as obvious is what Jesus instructed to be taught... *"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..."*!

Reflection back from this appearance with the resurrected Christ, would be that first mountaintop encounter with Jesus in which commandments were given that directly pertained to the prophesied kingdom of heaven here on earth.

Matt 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Baptismal Authorities

Perhaps the most noticeable distinction between the two commissions, that sticks out like a sore thumb, are the baptismal formulas. Along with that distinction are the absence of the requirement for repentance & promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In the name of Jesus Christ

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost

Matt 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Baptizing in the Name of Jesus Christ:

The formula, or authority given in baptizing in the *name of Jesus Christ*, is found only once here in the book of Acts. Reason simply being that it's restricted to the house of Israel.

Acts 2:36-38 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. ³⁷ Now when **they** heard *this*, **they** were pricked in **their** heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall **we** do? ³⁸ Then Peter said unto **them**, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and **ye** shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Baptizing in the Name of the Lord:

Philip Baptizes Samaritans

Philip, after having hands laid upon him by the Apostles, journeyed to Samaria where he preached Jesus Christ and baptized both believing men & women.

Acts 8:5-6 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. ⁶ And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

After the Apostles, that were at Jerusalem, got word of Samaritans receiving the word of God, Peter & John were sent down to pray & lay hands on them to receive the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:14-17 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: ¹⁵ Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: ¹⁶ (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) ¹⁷ Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

A serious question has to be raised & answered as to why these Samaritans didn't receive the Holy Ghost in response to Philip's preaching. The answer is actually given... "For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

With understanding that Israelites were baptized in the *name of Jesus Christ*, unless both of the following are true, there's only one of two possible answers as to why Philip didn't baptize in the *name of Jesus Christ*:

- A. Philip wasn't an apostle & therefore wasn't granted that authority.
- B. The Samaritans weren't Israelites.
- C. Both are true; Philip wasn't an apostle & the Samaritans weren't Israelites.

Peter Baptizes a God-fearing Household of Gentiles

Acts 10:44-48 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. ⁴⁵ And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, ⁴⁷ Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

God twisted Peter's arms to open the kingdom-gate's door to the God-fearing household of Cornelius. Contrary to an Israelite being baptized in *the name of Jesus Christ* to receive the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost fell upon these Gentiles **BEFORE** being baptized! Peter then proceeded to baptize this household in *the name of the Lord*.

It is obvious now that being baptized in the *name of Jesus Christ*, for the gift of the Holy Ghost, was reserved for Israelites; not Samaritans or Gentiles... being an apostle wasn't the issue.

The authority given to John the Baptist to baptize was also in the *name of the Lord*...

Mal 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Acts 19:3-5 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. ⁴ Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. ⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

The **they**, in context of Luke explaining why *these certain disciples of John the Baptist hadn't received the gift of the Holy Ghost*, are the **they** who were simply baptized in the *name of the Lord Jesus*. Paul, as did Peter & John with the Samaritans, being an apostle simply laid hands on these certain disciples of John the Baptist; no, Paul didn't rebaptize these certain disciples of John!

Paul's Claim of No Specific Authority

Paul, not having been sent to baptize, claimed no specific authority; Paul simply performed the rite on a few noted occasions... "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." **1Cor 1:17**

A Broken Link

Being reminded that Matthew 28 is a teaching commission to all nations, shouldn't we be able to trace a *line of authority* being fulfilled throughout the book of Acts?

- A. It can't be via the Apostles. They had a 'preaching' commission and were baptizing only Israelites in the name of Jesus Christ; to 'all nations' is a 'teaching' commission inclusive of the Gentiles.

Besides, there was agreement between Peter & Paul that Peter would focus on the circumcision and Paul on the uncircumcision... "(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles;) "

⁹ And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” Gal 2:8-9

- B. Samaritans & Gentiles, baptized by Philip & Peter, were authorized only in the *name of the Lord*. Baptizing in the *name of the Lord* certainly doesn’t match being baptized in the *name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. This would not only eliminate lineage through non-apostles, but again the Apostles themselves.
- C. The link is certainly broken with Paul who claimed no specific authority because of not having been sent to baptize!

There’s a missing link!

Who Has Been Authorized in Carrying Out the ‘Great Commission’ Today

In coming up with no evidence of anyone baptizing with authority in *the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* in the book of Acts, then from where do those who are proclaiming such authority & ambition in fulfilling a ‘Great Commission’ do so? Including myself, countless number of missionaries, denominations, churches, preachers, etc., down through the ages, are products of this commission one way or another.

What If Israel Would Have Responded

What if Israel would have responded to Peter’s message? Again, reflecting back to a previous point made, was Peter’s offer of Christ’s return legitimate? On the day of Pentecost, weren’t the Apostles given expectation of Jesus’ return... “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; ¹¹ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:9-11

Matt 10:23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

What if Jesus Would Have Returned

Could the key in discovering the missing link be in recognizing that this commission given to the Apostles, from a mountain top, would have begun to be fulfilled **AFTER** the ‘expected’ return of Christ?

The Missing Link

Return of the King

Mic 4:1-3 But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. ² And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ³ And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Zech 14:9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his (name one).

The Great Commission

Matt 28:16-20 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee,

into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

¹⁷ And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the **name** of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

... in the **(name)** of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost

Once one takes into consideration of that which was being offered to Israel, via the ministry of the Apostles, was put on the backburner because of the longsuffering of God and yet outreach to the Gentile/heathen via the ministry of Paul, postponement of Matthew's commission makes perfect sense!

2Pet 3:8-10 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

2Pet 3:15-16 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; ¹⁶ As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Our Great Commission

Failure in rightly dividing the word of truth has led to many disastrous divisions, practices & personal decisions within the professing church over past centuries. Such confusion still exists today as much emphasis is placed on the teachings of Christ over the Pauline epistles for in this dispensation of the grace of God. All the word of God is for us, but not to us. Each book in the Bible is purpose & audience driven. Lack of understanding in any one book of the Bible leads to confusion within all books in the Bible! All the Bible needs instructed!

The *Great Commission* for the *body of Christ* today can be summed up... “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then **we are ambassadors for Christ**, as though God did beseech *you* by us: **we pray *you* in Christ's stead**, be **ye reconciled to God.**”

2Cor 5:19-20