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**ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME – Biblical Commentary  
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**Mt 28,16-20**

***Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.***

***And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.***

***Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."***

It might seem strange that on the celebration of the Ascension, the reading presents us with a Gospel in which it does not appear. The Ascension is told in Luke and Mark's Gospels, but not in Matthew's. Then why is this reading taken from Matthew's Gospel?

Because the Ascension is not Jesus' separation from humanity, but an even more intense nearness, not an absence, but a more vivid and shared presence. But let's see the Gospel. Matthew chapter 28, verse 16-20, are the last verses of Matthew's Gospel, the end.

"...the eleven disciples..." Judah is missing, He has made his choice. Jesus had said "You cannot serve God and money", Judah chose money. It dominates all false idols, destroying all who worship it. Therefore Judah is not there. "...went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them."

This is strange enough. True that for three times Jesus was seen in Galilee; not in Jerusalem. Jesus once risen never appears in this sinister city, of the religious institution, the sign of death. Life is incompatible with death.

And three times there are invitations to go to Galilee, but in none of these invitations is it specified the actual place. Here the eleven go to an exact place, "...to the mountain...", not any mountain in Galilee, but "...to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them."

Which is this mountain? The expression "*the mountain*" appears at the beginning of the gospel, in chapter 5, indicating the mount of the Beatitudes, where Jesus announced His message. The beatitudes were eight, because eight is the number of the resurrection - Jesus rose on the first day after a week - the number eight means the fullness of life able to overcome death.

With Jesus death does not only not interrupt life, but permits the liberation all its energy and creates a new form, full and definite. For this the eleven go to the mountain which is the Mount of the Beatitudes. What does the evangelist want to say? That the experience of the risen Christ has not been a privilege given two thousand year ago to a group of people, but it is a possibility for all believers. It is enough to welcome Jesus' message, practice the beatitudes and amongst these was "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they will see God."

The evangelist writes, "*And when they saw him..*", which doesn't refer to seeing Him physically, but inwardly, that of faith, "*...they worshiped him,..*" So on seeing Jesus resurrected, they worshiped Him. Meaning they recognized in Him the divine condition. But there is something odd, "*...some doubted.*"

What is this something odd? Not that He is resurrected, because they could see Him. Not because Jesus had the divine condition, as they worshiped Him. What did they doubt? This verb "doubt" appears only twice in this gospel and the first time was in chapter 14, verse 31, when Peter wanted to walk on the water, meaning to have the divine condition. But, very quickly he began to drown because he was afraid of the wind.

He thought that the divine condition came from a privilege bestowed from above and not on the part of man to face adversity. So when he is about to drown Jesus chides him "*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*" What did these disciples doubt about? They doubted about being also able to achieve the divine condition, because they had seen how much it cost: the shame of betrayal, abandon and the cross.

They are those, when in the last supper together with Peter had ensured Jesus that they would not deny Him, in fact, the moment that Jesus was arrested, they all abandoned Him. For this they doubted, to be able to support that which Jesus had supported, being abandoned, betrayed and infamy the cross.

Jesus approaches them and says that He has been given every power in heaven and earth, meaning the fullness of the divine condition, and then sends them away. The relation with Jesus is dynamic. God's love is not centered on oneself, but wants to expand itself. He sends them to be disciples to all populations, the nation of gentiles. How? At the beginning of the gospel when Jesus called His disciples He had said: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men".

That is to remove mankind from the mortal element, water, to take them to what gave them life. Now Jesus says where and how. Where? To all humanity. The work load of Jesus' disciples is for all humanity. How? By baptizing them, the verb "to baptize" does not have the same liturgical significance, that "to immerse"

"... baptizing them in the name,," that is in reality "*...of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*" The number three indicates fullness and here wants to indicate the three realities of the divine condition, being an unconditioned and unlimited love. Which means. "Go and immerse every person, soak them with this love."

*".. teaching them.."* this is the only time that Jesus authorizes His disciples to teach, *".. to observe,,"* literally "to put into practice *".. all that I have commanded you."* It is the only thing that Jesus commands in this gospel, in which appears the word "command", are the beatitudes . The practice of the beatitudes means to orientate one's life to the good of others. This cannot be taught with a doctrine, but through communication and experience of life.

Well, if there is this, here is the Jesus' assurance *".. behold, I am with you always,,"* actually at the beginning of the gospel Jesus was presented as *" God is with us"*, a God that was not to search for, but to welcome and with him and like him to go towards humanity. *" I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Jesus is not living a time limit but a quality of a presence. Here then returns the theme of the Ascension that is not a separation of Jesus from mankind, but a more intense presence. It is not a distance, but a continual closeness that grows every day.