AUTHORITY: THE GREAT COMMISSION 8

Posted on June 11, 2011 by Eddie

Category: Mission

> *Then Jesus came to them and said, â€œAll authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.Â Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.â€ (Matthew 28:18-20)*

We can be very diffident about spreading the Christian message in this day and age. What right have we to tell people that they need to come to Christ? Or what gives us the right to take the Christian message to other parts of the world?

The simple answer to questions like this is that we have the right to spread the Christian message, because Jesus has ultimate authority and he gives us not just the right, but the obligation to take the Gospel out into the wider world. This short passage from Matthew makes it clear that Christian mission is carried out by Christ's authority, at Christ's command and in Christ's presence (anyone looking for a three point sermon is welcome to use this)!

However, the outside world doesn't recognise Christ's authority and we can't reasonably expect doors to open to the Gospel around the world because of this passage. It just doesn't work like that. But whether or not the political authorities or social convention allows for the spread of the Christian message, we are still under an obligation from Jesus to make disciples in all nations. That includes post-modern Britain and it includes parts of the world that are quite happy with their own religious tradition, thank you very much.

However, Jesus' authority does not give us the excuse to be arrogant, unreasonable or manipulative. There is undoubtedly a time when Christians should directly confront the culture around them, but for the most part, Christian mission should be a model of service, gentleness and service. This is partly because gentleness is more effective than confrontation ("more flies are caught by honey than vinegar" is a quote I remember from the first book on evangelism that I ever read) but mainly because we are following in the steps of the one who became a servant and submitted to death on a cross.