

THE GREAT COMMISSION

As We Are Going
Matthew 28:16-20

This passage is the climax and major focal point not only of Matthew's Gospel...but of the entire New Testament. It would not even be an exaggeration to even say that it's the focal point of all Scripture.

This *central message* of Scripture pertains to the *central mission* of the people of God...a mission, tragically, many Christians either do not understand...or are unwilling to fulfill. Many are involved in the church today only to the extent that it serves their *own desires* and *felt needs*.

There is a two-fold purpose why we have been created...

- We were created by God *to experience and enjoy His grace*.
- So that we might *extend His extravagant glory to all the peoples on the earth*.

The supreme purpose and motive of *every individual believer* and *every body of believers* is to **glorify God!** God blesses His people with *extravagant grace* so they might extend His *extravagant glory* to all the peoples on the earth. **Experience His grace ...Extend His glory!**

I. **THE APPEARANCE: (vs. 16-17)**

But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated (vs. 16)...

Even though Jesus appeared *eleven* different times in the *forty days* following His resurrection, **Matthew** only recorded two of those appearances...the meeting that He had with **Mary Magdalene** and **the other Mary** as they left the tomb on their way to tell the disciples that He had risen...and now when He appeared on the **mountain** that He had specified in **Galilee**...the mountain where He had promised He would meet them (**Matthew 26:32; Matthew 28:7, 10**).

We aren't told when or how the Lord specified the exact time and place in **Galilee** where the disciples were to gather, but they were now at that particular **mountain which Jesus had designated**.

Because they were where Jesus had told them to be...*they met Christ...they met God*.

When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful (vs. 17)...

They worshiped Him...On but one previous occasion does Scripture say that the **eleven disciples** actually worshiped Jesus. After He walked to them on the water, they "*worshiped Him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son!'*" (**Matthew 14:33**).

But some were doubtful...Since Jesus had appeared to the disciples earlier and verified Himself to them, they couldn't be doubting the resurrection. Exactly what was doubted isn't specified.

Other than the **eleven**, we aren't told who was present on that mountain there in **Galilee** when Jesus gave the **Great Commission** ...but it seems possible that it was a large group of followers... including the many women who had followed and ministered to Him during His ministry. This may very well have been the time when "*He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time*" (**I Corinthians 15:6**).

It seems reasonable that the Lord would have assembled a large group of believers and that He chose **Galilee** for the meeting place because most of His followers were from that region. It's also probably the reason He designated a mountain...so He could speak to a large group.

Because some of those followers hadn't seen Him since His resurrection, they could be those who **were doubtful**.

Their doubts were quickly dispelled...Jesus **spoke to them**.

II. **THE AUTHORITY: (vs. 18)**

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth (vs. 18)..."

Authority...Gk. *exousia*, literally means *to be in a position with power to do something, to have dominion over, an official right, or liberty*. It combines two key ideas...*right* and *might*. Implicitly it refers to the *freedom* and *right* to speak under the *sovereign authority* of Jesus Christ. This is the same authority that had been given to Jesus by the Father. Now He was instructing the disciples to **go** on the basis of that authority.

Submission to the *absolute sovereignty* of Jesus Christ isn't a believer's *option*...it's his supreme *obligation*.

Their field was to now include **all nations**...not just **Israel**. Remember earlier...

“These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: ‘Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’”

~Matthew 10:5-6

III. THE ASSUMPTION: (vs. 19a)

Go therefore (vs. 19a)...

Go...*Aorist passive participle*...this form refers to *an act of outward obedience*. Literally means *“as you are going”*...an *assumption* that believers...that the church...will go.

This assumption makes clear that the church is not to wait for the world to come to its doors...but that it's to go to the world. This goes directly against the *seeker-sensitive* church movement.

IV. THE ASSIGNMENT: (vs. 19b-20a)

And make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you (vs. 19b-20a)...

It's a *three-fold assignment*...make disciples of all the nations, baptize new believers, and teach them.

- Make disciples...*of all the nations*...not just **Israel**. This is where the command lies in this passage...an *aorist imperative active*! It's the *main verb* and the *central command* of **verses 19-20**...which closes **Matthew's** gospel.

Disciples...Gk. *matheteuo*, a unique and pointed word...literally means to *instruct or teach one to be a follower of one's worldview or doctrine*. The uniqueness of the word used here is the *direct attachment* to a teacher. It not only means to *learn*...but to become *attached* to one's teacher and to become their *follower* in *doctrine, worldview, and conduct of life*...how to conduct themselves in life...how they should live.

Jesus' command, therefore, is for those who *are* His disciples to become His instruments for *making disciples of all the nations*.

The specific requirements Jesus gave for *making disciples* involve **three participles**...going, baptizing, and teaching.

- Baptize...*Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*. This would identify and associate a

believer with the person of Jesus Christ and with the Triune God ...through faith.

Two reasons we are to be baptized:

1. To be *obedient*...fulfill the **Great Commission**. Baptism is a divinely commanded act of *faith* and *obedience* and *identification*.
 2. To *fulfill all righteousness*...the *righteousness of God*.
- Teach...*Teaching them to observe* (to obey...do it) *all that I commanded you*. Means to *instruct by word of mouth*. Teach the truths Jesus specifically communicated. The church's mission isn't simply to *evangelize* but to **teach**.

The believer who desires to *glorify* God...who wants to honor God's supreme will and purpose...must share God's *love* for the lost world and share in His *mission to redeem the lost* to Himself.

“For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

~II Corinthians 5:14-21

V. THE ASSURANCE: (vs. 20b)

And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (vs. 20b)...

I am with you always...I am...Gk. *ego eimi*, is an **emphatic form** that can be rendered, “**I, Myself am**”...it’s calling special attention to the fact of the *omnipresence* of God through the Holy Spirit.

It’s as if Jesus was saying...*Now pay special attention to what I’m about to say, because it’s of the utmost of importance. I Myself, your divine, resurrected, living, eternal, Lord, am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

Though the Lord didn’t remain *physically* with the eleven...His *spiritual presence* was with them until their tasks on earth were completed. These final words of the Lord were carried out by the apostles as they went everywhere...proclaiming the story of their **Messiah...Jesus Christ, King of the Jews**. It’s the same *assurance* that we have as we **go**.

Even to the end of the age...means until the Lord *returns bodily* to *judge* the world and to *rule* His earthly kingdom. The phrase **end of the age** is used *three (3) times* by Christ...and it’s always used to designate His second coming.

This is the *assurance* of the *personal* and *empowering presence* of the One vividly portrayed in this gospel. It’s the *authority* and *power* that is His...that is promised to His followers. In His power His commission can be performed. That’s why we should **never underestimate the power of the Gospel!**

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **Don’t underestimate the power of the Gospel!**
- **We will only accomplish the *Great Commission* through living the *Great Commandment*...**

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

~John 13:34

- God has been drawing...is now drawing...and, until the final judgment, will continue to draw sinful men back to Himself and to restore the world that sin has corrupted...all for the purpose of **bringing glory to Himself**.