

Understanding "The Great Commission": Matthew 28:18-20

Something to think about before we begin:

Jesus is the *only man in history* to set up an appointment for a few days after His death...*and keep it!* (cp Matt 26:30-32; Mark 14:26-28; Matt 28:7; Mark 16:7; John 20:1-3; Matt 28:18) No doubt, the resurrection is *the event* that changed the course of human (and heavenly!) history. In what way is it significant, then, that there are several accounts of the "Great Commission" at different places and in different times? (consider, perhaps, Acts 1:3)

Matthew 28:16-17

We must not forget that these final conversations recorded in the gospels were private encounters between Jesus and His apostles, with perhaps a few other disciples present. (note: "the eleven" are specifically mentioned in Matthew 28:16 and Mark 16:14; "the eleven and those who were with them" are mentioned in Luke 24:33; and John chapters 13-16 register the "Last Supper" of Jesus with His apostles - there are, perhaps, a few others who join them in the Garden of Gethsemane afterward) That being said, some of the particulars of the work they would be doing (the promise of the Holy Spirit coming on them with power, for example) are limited to the apostles themselves. How can we be certain, then, that the more "general" work of preaching the gospel was not limited only to the apostles? [Matt 28:16; consider passages like Acts 8:4-5; 11:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 2:1-2; 4:1-2; Hebrews 5:12; etc]

This is clearly *not the first encounter* of Jesus with His disciples (apostles) after His resurrection (see John 20:19-23, 24-29, and Mark 16:14-18). It is also clear that Thomas and the other apostles had come to believe in the resurrection before this moment (cp John 20:24, 28-29). What might Matthew mean when he says that "some doubted"? [Matthew 28:17 (note the only other use of this same word is in Matthew 14:31); cp John 21:1-3]

Matthew 28:18-20

Analyze Jesus' words to the apostles *in the light of Personal Evangelism* done by all disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me" [Matthew 28:18]

- Jesus had already sent these men out to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" about a year earlier. (Matthew 10:5-7; cp Jesus' own "limited" mission, Matthew 15:21-28) On what basis does He now send them out to all the world? [v18; cp Philippians 2:8-11]

"Go, therefore..." [Matthew 28:19]

- Based on His absolute authority, what did Jesus intend for His apostles (and us!) to do?

- Though this is not the **primary** purpose of Jesus' use of the word "go", do you believe He intended for His disciples to "stay" in one place and hope people would come to them in order to hear the gospel message?

"...and make *disciples*..." [Matthew 28:19]

- How would you define the word "disciple"? (Feel free to use a dictionary, Greek dictionary, or Bible dictionary, if you have access to those)

"...of *all nations*..." [Matthew 28:19]

- This is the fulfillment of the promise that was made to Abraham that in his seed, "all the families of the earth" would be "blessed". (see Genesis 12:3; Acts 3:25-26) Who did Jesus intend to be excluded from this promise? [cp 1 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; Titus 2:11; etc]

"...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." [Mt 28:19]

- Jesus sets forth (at least) two things that are **necessary** for making disciples: baptizing them (v19) and teaching them (v20). Obviously, there must be *some* teaching in order for someone to know they need to be baptized, but why might "baptizing them" precede "teaching them" in Jesus' instructions here? [v19]

- The expression Jesus uses is literally "baptizing them **into** the name...". What does this phrase emphasize more than simply "baptizing in the name of"? (cp Gal 6:10; Eph 2:19; 1 Tm 3:15)

"...teaching them to *observe* all that I have commanded you" [Matthew 28:20]

- What is the difference in "teaching all that I have commanded" and "teaching to observe all that I have commanded"? Which is emphasized here? [v20]

- Though "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" is emphasized, does this mean we do not also need to teach "all that (Jesus) commanded"? (cp Acts 20:20-21, 26-27)

"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." [Matthew 28:20]

- Especially for those facing persecution and death, these words would have been of great encouragement. Do you believe that Jesus will "be with you" if you are teaching His will and making disciples for Him? Why or why not? (cp Acts 11:21; see Ex 7:5; Ezra 7:9; Neh 2:8; etc)

May the Lord help us to GO and MAKE DISCIPLES of Jesus in ALL NATIONS!!