

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



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The Great Commission's Suppositions

By Brian R. Kenyon

Matthew's account of the Great Commission is a well known passage to most readers, especially during the summer when many go on evangelistic missionary campaigns. In Matthew's account of the Gospel, this passage formulates the last words of Jesus before ascending back to the Father.



Sybil Carr

Aug. 15, 1919 - June 27, 2015

On June 27, our beloved sister Carr, wife of the late B. C. Carr, founding director of the Florida School of Preaching, departed this life. She supported the school every way she could and constantly encouraged its students, especially their wives. Her charming personality will be greatly missed!

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Mt. 28:18-20, NKJ)

This passage is key to understanding conversion and God's plan of salvation. The translation, "make disciples" (from *matheteuo*, μαθητεύω), is more accurate than the King James Version's "teach [all nations]." Although teaching is involved in making disci-

ples, *matheteuo* is a verb form of the noun "disciple" (from *mathetes*, μαθητής). It is a different word than "teaching" (from *didasko*, διδάσκω) in verse 20. Properly understanding the relationship between "making disciples" and "teaching" helps to properly understand the passage. The verse is not saying, as is often heard from pulpits, "teach, baptize, and teach some more." Rather, the Great Commission teaches that the way to "make disciples" is by "baptizing" (which involves teaching, Acts 2:41) and by "teaching" (which involves baptizing, Acts 8:35-36; 16:32-33). Grammatically, "baptizing" and "teaching [them to observe]" are equal parts in "making disciples." They are present active participles, showing relative aspect of time in relation to the main verb, which is the imperative, "make disciples."

Note also that disciples are to be taught "to observe all things that I [Jesus] have commanded you" (Mt. 28:20). It is impossible to know everything before (or after) being baptized into Christ, but people can and must learn "to observe" what they learn from the Scriptures (cf. Mt. 5:6; Lk. 6:46; 2 Tim. 2:15).

In addition to the basic teaching of this passage concerning making disciples, there are at least three suppositions behind the basic teachings about which people must be aware. These suppositions will help to better appreciate God's love for all mankind, culminating in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

New Covenant

By the statement, "All authority has been given to Me" (Mt. 28:18), Jesus declared that He was the

new authority. Prior to the Calvary events, God, the Father was the Divine authority and the Law of Moses was the standard of judgment for the people of God. Moses, the lawgiver, declared,

Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. ²The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. ³The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. ⁴The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. (Deut. 5:1-4)

The Law of Moses was not for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, nor any Gentile nation, unless such a nation proselyted.

However, even in the midst of the Law of Moses, a new covenant was promised (Jer. 31:31-34). The Hebrews writer declared that the fault of the old covenant was not in the covenant itself, but in the people who were subject to it (Heb. 8:7-8). Then, after quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34, the Hebrews writer affirmed, "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete" (Heb. 8:13). Despite the discussion about the time between the cross and Pentecost, for all practical purposes, Jesus' death brought that old covenant to an end (Col. 2:14).

Now, Jesus is the new covenant's authority! Even while Jesus was alive, God, the Father, pointed to Him as the coming source of authority. At Jesus' baptism, the voice of the Father rang clear, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17). John said he baptized Him so that "He should

be revealed to Israel" (Jn. 1:31). On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Peter, James, and John saw Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, the Father's voice again said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Mt. 17:1-5). The Great Commission teaches that a new covenant is in effect!

New Coverage

With the object of "make disciples" being "all the nations," Jesus declared that the new covenant is for everyone (Mt. 28:19), not just the Jewish people as was the case for the old covenant (cf. Deut. 5:1-4). Jesus did indeed come to the Jewish people. It was declared to Joseph concerning Jesus' birth that "you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21). The apostle John stated that Jesus "came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (Jn. 1:11). Jesus Himself said to a Canaanite woman, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 15:24).

However, the Gentiles were always part of the promise made to Abraham, that in him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3). Paul elaborated on this in Galatians 3, where he declared that "the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'" (Gal. 3:8). Isaiah prophesied,

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the

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1807 South Florida Avenue
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(863) 683-4043

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mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. ³Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2-3)

This "mountain of the LORD's house" to which "all nations flow" is the church that Christ promised and did in fact build on the first Pentecost following His resurrection (Mt. 16:18-19, 28 cf. Mk. 9:1-2; Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:38, 41, 47). The Gospel of the new covenant is different from the old law in that the Gospel is for all people! In Mark's account of the Gospel, Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:15-16). Indeed, the Great Commission presupposes new coverage in that all are amenable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

New Commandments

Jesus' desire that disciples "observe all things that I have commanded you" declared that people are to follow a new set of commandments than what was required under the old covenant. Israel was to keep the old law. Before the children of Israel would enter the Promised Land, Moses encouraged them,

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; ²⁰that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them. (Deut. 30:15-20)

The commandments that Israel were to obey under the old covenant were those contained in the Law of Moses. However, the Law of Moses has been done away (Col. 2:14). It has served its purpose, for "the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor" (Gal. 3:24-25). The word

"tutor [schoolmaster, KJV; guardian, ESV]" (from *paidagogos*, παιδαγωγός) referred to an instructor, teacher, guide (it is found again only in 1 Cor. 4:15). The idea here is that the law brought God's people to Christ, which was as far as it was intended to go. Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Mt. 5:17). The Law of Moses gave way to Christ. Paul put it like this, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:3). The "end" here refers to completion, or fulfillment.

This, of course, does not mean that God's people are no longer under "law" whatsoever. They are no longer under the Law of Moses, but instead are under the "law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). The new commandments that cover the scope of the new covenant are found in the New Testament as shown by the Great Commission and other passages (1 Cor. 14:37).

To further illustrate the force of the authority of Jesus' words as revealed in the New Testament, note that on the Last Day, all humanity will be judged by the Christ (Jn. 5:28-29). Jesus also said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Mt. 7:21). Though many will be deceived into thinking they have done what the Lord expected, He will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Mt. 7:21-23). The reason why He never knew (i.e., approved) them was because they did not do the "will of My Father in heaven"! John recorded Jesus saying, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48). The Great Commission contains new commandments that are necessary to obey!

Conclusion

The Great Commission is a great passage, not only because of what it means to conversion and God's plan of salvation, but also because of its underlying suppositions. From the first promise of a Savior (Gen. 3:15) to the final coming of Christ, the power, providence, and love of God is amazing! 🌟

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Monday	__ 8:30-12:00	Revelation (259)	Bauer	3
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Tuesday	__ 8:30-12:00	Preacher and His Work (107)	Wheeler	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Computers and Churches (287)	Wheeler	3
Wednesday	__ 8:30-12:00	Romans (261)	Kenyon	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Christian Evidences (224)	D. Stearsman	3
Thursday	__ 8:30-12:00	Logic (270)	Kenyon	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	English I: Grammar (124)	Patterson	3
Friday	__ 8:30-12:00	Church History: General (241)	Franson	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Pentateuch (164)	Elledge	3
Extension Classes				
Tuesday	__ 7:00-9:30	Topical Bible Studies (134) (Livingston church of Christ, Livingston, TN)	J. Stearsman	2.5
Thursday	__ 6:00-8:30	Difficult Texts of the New Testament (274) (Orange Street church of Christ, Auburndale)	Bauer	2.5
	__ 7:00-9:30	Revelation (259) (Wesconnett church of Christ, Jacksonville)	Atnip	2.5