



## EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

# THE GREAT COMMISSION AND ITS FULFILLING

NOTES

### Introduction

In our last session we looked at our lives from God's perspective. We realized He wanted us to exchange our lives for the eternal things of God, rather than for the temporal things of earth. We saw that the only three things that are eternal are God, His Word and the souls of men and women. These three eternal things are best stated for us in a command that Jesus gave to His disciples. Today we call that command the Great Commission. If we give ourselves to God, He will have us exchange our lives for the Great Commission. The commission demands that we disciple men and women of all nations. The way we disciple is by teaching all that Jesus commands which is found in the Word of God. Consequently, the three eternal things are best understood by us in light of the Great Commission.

### The Great Commission

*Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go 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, teaching 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.*

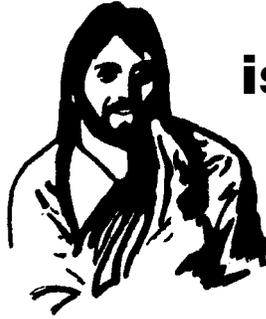
*Matthew 28:16-20*

The passage opens with Jesus meeting His disciples on top of a mountain after His resurrection. Matthew says that some of them doubted. Jesus tells them *He* possesses all the power in Heaven and on earth.

On the basis of that authority they were to go and disciple all the nations. They were to make disciples by teaching others all Jesus had commanded them. He closes by saying He would be with them always.

In order to better understand the commission and the implication for our lives, we need to examine this phrase by phrase.

# ALL AUTHORITY



**is given unto me**  
**Matthew 28:18,20**

**GO YE**



**MAKE DISCIPLES**  
**of ALL NATIONS**



**teach them TO OBEY ALL THINGS**  
**I have commanded you**

**I am with you**

**ALWAYS**

**Resources**

**Objective**

## The Resources

*All authority is given unto me in Heaven and on earth. Go therefore...*

Jesus first instructs His disciples that all authority or power had been given to Him. On the basis of this He said, "Go therefore." When one finds the word "therefore" or "wherefore", it means to stop and examine the preceding statement. What is about to be said will be based on the preceding statement. So what does "All authority is given unto me" mean?

From the context, it would appear Jesus is talking about a resource because Jesus is in the process of commanding them to reach the 250,000,000 who inhabited the earth at that time. This means each of them would have to reach about 22,725,000 people. If they had to rely on their own resources, they would never get the job done. Jesus was saying, "Whatever you need in Heaven or earth to get the job done, I have the authority and the power to give it to you." On the basis of that resource, Jesus is able to say, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

It is interesting to note Jesus begins with the resource, He does not just give them this monstrous job and leave it to them. He makes sure they have the resources necessary to accomplish the task. It is also important to note that Jesus ends with the resource.

*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

He promises to be with us unto the end of the age. This means He will provide whatever our needs are. If we don't understand verse eighteen, we will never be able to come to grips with verses nineteen and twenty. Notice on the diagram (page 2) that the two resources have been joined with a line.

## The Objective

Beautifully sandwiched between the two resource statements is the objective.

*Go therefore, and make disciples (teach) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.*

The objective of the Great Commission is to go and make disciples of all nations. In this objective, there are several components which we need to consider.

## Disciplemaking

Jesus said make disciples. There is the imperative of the passage and this is where the emphasis is focused. Jesus is saying this one thing you must do, **MAKE DISCIPLES**. As we study this passage, we will see why this imperative is so important.

## How to make Disciples

“Jesus said, teach them to observe (**obey**) all things I have commanded.” To make disciples we must teach people not to just observe but **obey**. Observe in our day means to see, understand or watch. To *obey* means application of the principle must take place. This allows principle to become reality. A disciple learns with the intention of application, not retention of knowledge. Jesus taught the eleven how they were to live if they were going to be His disciples. Now He commands the eleven to teach their followers everything that He had commanded them, thus making them disciples.

When Peter saw three thousand converted at Pentecost, he realized his job had only started. Jesus said *make disciples, not converts*.

*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

*Acts 2:41,42*

It is of little wonder that the next verse says the converts continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. What was the apostles' doctrine? It was all the things Jesus had taught them. The apostles were commanded to teach the doctrine to the 3,000 in an effort to disciple them.

## Practical Application

What should the apostles teach the 3,000 about stealing?

You would say, “Teach them ‘Thou shall not steal.’ ”

What would the apostles teach about adultery?

You would say, “ ‘Thou shall not commit adultery.’ ” In fact Jesus warns that if we entertain the thought in our mind we have committed adultery in our hearts.

If I ask you, “Why should the apostle’s teach the 3,000 these things?”

Your reply would be, “Because Jesus commands them to teach all he had commanded them. So they must teach these things to the 3,000 in an effort to make them disciples.”

## Who Is To Go?

This is a crucial point to grasp and understand. Everywhere I go people tell me, "If God were to call me I would go." I have news for you. God has called you. The last word from Heaven was "go therefore." If you are not going in light of this clear-cut teaching, I have a question for you. Has God told you, "*I don't want you to go, stay right here, disregard what I have said to the others, I want you to remain?*" If God has not clearly rescinded this order, the original order still stands, **Go Ye**.

For some this will mean going next door, across the street, down the block or the other side of town. For some, it will mean going to another town or state. For others, it will entail going to another country. The geography is irrelevant as long as you are willing to go wherever God leads. Problems only occur when you are not willing to leave your present location and go wherever God wants you to go. I don't know where you are to go, when you are to go or with whom you are to go. I do know that YOU are to go.

## What Am I To Do?

Wherever you go, Jesus said to **make disciples**. If you can't make disciples where you are, there is no need to send you anywhere. When you have mastered the art and skills of being a disciple and making disciples, God will reveal when, where and with whom you are to go. God may send you locally or to another state or country. Where you go is not important as long as you are committed to obey and go where He commands you.

## A World-Wide Ministry

Jesus said to make disciples of all nations. God wants every Christian to have a world-wide vision as well as a world-wide ministry. In the following verse, write in the correct coordinating conjunction (and/or) and think about the implications of this.



*"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, ( ) in all Judea, ( ) Samaria, ( ) to the end of the earth."*

*Acts 1:8*

The Bible says "and" in each of these places. There are a number of ways in which a person can have a world-wide ministry.





## How to Have A World-Wide Ministry

### • Go Personally

God has called many to labor in foreign fields. Bringing the good news of salvation to a foreign culture is an exciting assignment. This may be God's will for you. However, for many it will not be God's will to labor overseas.

### • Through your Children

God may call one of your physical or spiritual children to serve in the uttermost parts of the earth. Your children are an extension of your life. Nothing could be more exciting than to see God extend your ministry through them. It is a sad commentary on our vision when we don't want our children to exchange their lives in a foreign field.

### • Through your Prayers

Every time we bow our heads and hearts to God, we have the capability of reaching around the world. There is nowhere we can be shut out. If we can't talk to people in other places *about* God, at least we can talk *to* God about them. Through our prayers we can enter into the labors of missionaries. Again it is a tragic commentary on our lives when we refuse to invest our precious time in intercession for others.

### • Through Finances

One can enter into the labors of any missionary through giving. Your financial participation makes you a co-laborer with the missionary or missionaries you choose to support. It is unfortunate we give so sparingly.

### • Through Vocation

Choose a missionary and arrange to spend your vacation helping him. If you can win and disciple people, you will be an asset to any program. It may be you have a special skill that would be of benefit to a specific field. Not only would your service be a blessing to the missionary, it would do a great deal to strengthen your own vision and Christian walk. There are no skills possessed by a Christian which are not needed by some mission organization.

## Whose Responsibility is the Great Commission?

You do not need to look very far to realize the Great Commission is not being fulfilled. The nations are not being disciplined. Have you ever wondered whose responsibility it is? It is obvious that whoever is responsible needs to be fired and replaced with someone more capable. But who should we fire?

You may say that it is the Church's responsibility. However, when we talk about the Church, people normally think about the building on the corner, the brick and mortar, the stained glass, the soft organ music. It does not take long to realize that God did not give the responsibility to these. Then who is responsible?

The illustration at the beginning of this chapter shows us how the objective is passed to us and also shows us how the responsibility is passed down from one generation to the next.

*"Teach them to obey all things that I have commanded you."*

At this point most of us get very uncomfortable. We do not want the responsibility. If it were left to us, the job would never get done.

### **My Response to His Ability**

Our reasons for not wanting such a tremendous responsibility are certainly understandable. We are not smart enough, rich enough or strong enough to get the job done. So how can God saddle us with a job which is beyond our ability?

Notice that the word "responsibility" is made up of two English words, response and ability. Now we are nervous because we don't have the ability. However, we are dealing with the wrong issue. The real issue is this: Is God able? Certainly we would all agree that God is rich enough, smart enough and strong enough. We are not able, but God is. Responsibility is responding not to our ability, but to God's ability to get the job done in and through us. That is why I said if we didn't understand verse 18, "all authority (power) is given to me," we would never be able to come to grips with verses 19-20. Now we can see why Jesus' first words to the eleven disciples atop the mountain pertained to His infinite resources.

God is searching for men and women who believe that He is able and who will respond to His ability. It is imperative that we take this responsibility. As it is, the nations are not being disciplined. Will you respond to His ability to get the job done through you? If you, as His disciple, say no, then to whom shall we turn?

### **Everybody's Responsibility is Nobody's Responsibility**

The story that follows is about four Christians named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.

There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody accused Anybody.

Conclusion: If Everybody will get in the act and pitch in, then Nobody will need to blame Anybody because Somebody will have done the job that needs to be done by Everybody.

NOTES

## **FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION**

Jesus not only gave the eleven the responsibility to reach all nations, He also gave to them the power and resources necessary to get the job done. In this session I want us to see how Jesus gave to them the plan for completing the task. Nowhere in Scripture did they call a meeting to discuss how they were going to reach the 250,000,000 who then inhabited the world. They just did what Jesus commanded them to do.

### **Did They Reach the World?**

When Paul wrote his letter to the church at Colosse, some thirty-three years after the death of Jesus, he said:

*...because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.*

*Colossians 1:5,6*

Now this is an amazing statement! Paul was saying that the Gospel had gone to all the world. But verse twenty-three is even more amazing:

*If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

*Colossians 1:23*

Not only had it gone to all the world, but every creature had heard. In a very real way Paul was saying, “We have done it!”

History and tradition tells us that ten of the eleven apostles died martyr’s deaths—most in foreign countries where they were preaching the Gospel. If God used them as He did Paul, whose story is recorded, we see they must have made a real impact. The Bible is silent about the ministries of the eleven apostles, the ministries of the seventy who were trained by Jesus and sent two-by-two, the 120 in the upper room, the 500 witnesses, and the 3,000 converted at Pentecost.

In the book of Acts the Bible does give us some insight as to the impact they made. In the second chapter of Acts we see how they went from adding 3,000 converts, who had come to Jerusalem from all over the world for the feast of Pentecost, to multiplying disciples in chapter six. In chapter nine we find them multiplying churches, to being accused of turning the world upside down in chapter seventeen. How they went from Jerusalem in Acts 1-8, to Judea and Samaria in 9-12, to Asia Minor, Europe and the world in 13-28 helps us understand Paul's statement: "the gospel has gone to all the world and every creature has heard."

## Can We Reach Our World?

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and the world has greatly multiplied since the early Christians reached their world. The demographers tell us that 250 million people inhabited the world at the time of Christ.

It took from the time of Christ until...

1850 to reach 1 billion people.  
 By 1930 the population was 2 billion people;  
 1960 the population was 3 billion people;  
 1975 the population was 4 billion people;  
 1987 the population was 5 billion people.



By 2000 there will be almost 7 billion people.

Is it still possible to get the job done with the world exploding the way it is? I think we can, mainly because other people are doing it.

## Coca-Cola

The story is told of a man by the name of George Pemberton. He lived almost 100 years ago. One day George stirred together a concoction called Coca-Cola. The first year he sold two gallons of syrup. Today, one hundred years later, 100,000,000 bottles will be consumed every day. Coca-Cola can be found in almost every country of the world. They have found a way to get their product to the ends of the world. They are not the only ones who are getting their products to the ends of the world.

## Record Companies

A few years ago a young lady by the name of Debbie Boone sang a song, "You Light Up My Life," and in just a matter of months this song was being sung around the world. The record companies have found a way to get their messages to the ends of the world. But, the children of God who have all the power of God, not just in Heaven but upon earth, cannot get the job done. Maybe we should hire the president of Coke or the record company to lead us.

## The Power of Multiplication

Can the world still be reached with the population exploding at such a rapid rate? The answer is "yes."

There is an old story that reminds us of the surprises we can get when even a small number like 2 is multiplied by itself many times.

King Shirham of India  
Was so pleased when his Grand Vizier,  
Sissa Ben Dahir, presented him with the game of chess  
That he asked Ben Dahir to name his own reward.  
The request was so modest that the  
Happy king immediately complied.

What the grand vizier had asked was this—  
That one grain of wheat be placed on the first square of  
The chessboard—  
2 grains on the second square  
4 grains on the third square  
8 grains on the fourth square  
16 grains on the fifth square  
Doubling the amount of wheat on each succeeding  
Square until all 64 squares were accounted for.

When the king's steward had gotten to the 17th square  
The table was well filled.  
By the 26th square the chamber held considerable wheat  
And a nervous king ordered the steward to speed up the count.  
When 42 squares were accounted for—  
The palace itself was swamped.

Now fit to be tied,  
King Shirham learned from the court mathematician  
That had the process continued  
The wheat required would have covered India to  
A depth of over fifty feet.

## Multiplying or Adding to The Kingdom

The difference between multiplication and addition is making of *disciples* and not *converts*. Let me illustrate it this way. If I were the only Christian in the world, whose responsibility would it be to

disciple the nations? You would answer, “It would be your responsibility.” So I start out and share the Gospel and the first person comes to Christ. I would have gone from 5,000,000,000 to 4,999,999,999. Encouraged by my success, I go to the next and that person comes to Christ; so now the ratio becomes  $\frac{4,999,999,998}{1}$ .

If I continue on winning it will be;

$\frac{4,999,999,997}{1}$	$\frac{4,999,999,996}{1}$	$\frac{4,999,999,995}{1}$	$\frac{4,999,999,994}{1}$
$\frac{4,999,999,993}{1}$	$\frac{4,999,999,992}{1}$	$\frac{4,999,999,991}{1}$	$\frac{4,999,999,990}{1}$

Now I have a question to ask. Am I doing what Jesus commanded me to do? Now think carefully before you answer.

You may say, “No, I am not doing what Jesus commanded.”

What is wrong with what I am doing?

“You are getting decisions, or making converts.”

What did Jesus say to make?

# DISCIPLES

## Disciples

That’s right, so by making converts I am only doing part of the job. I am adding to the Kingdom. If I do what Jesus commanded me to do, I would go back and train the first person. Train until he was able to share his faith and to see that it was his responsibility to reach the world. At that point I would have reduced the ratio from  $\frac{5,000,000,000}{1}$  to  $\frac{2,500,000,000}{1}$ .

Then, if the two of us were able to reproduce ourselves again in the lives of two more people who saw it was their responsibility, we could reduce the ratio to  $\frac{1,250,000,000}{1}$ .

In the chart on the following page you can see the comparison between addition and multiplication.

Adding		➤	Multiplying	
People Needed	Ratio		Ratio	People Needed
1	5,000,000,000	—	5,000,000,000	1
1	4,999,999,999	—	2,500,000,000	2
1	4,999,999,998	—	1,250,000,000	4
1	4,999,999,997	—	625,000,000	8
1	4,999,999,996	—	312,550,000	16
1	4,999,999,995	—	156,250,000	32
1	4,999,999,994	—	78,125,000	64
1	4,999,999,993	—	39,062,500	128
1	4,999,999,992	—	19,531,250	256
1	4,999,999,991	—	9,765,625	512
1	4,999,999,990	—	4,882,813	1,024
1	4,999,999,989	—	2,441,406	2,048
1	4,999,999,988	—	1,220,703	4,096

It is within our power to take every town, state, country, and the world for the cause of Christ. We only need people who see that:

- *It is their responsibility*
- *It is possible*
- *God wants to use them*
- *They need to exchange their lives for it.*

What are you **exchanging your lives for**? Is it the **eternal** things of God or the **temporal** things of the world?