

“The Great Command”
Matthew 28:16-20

Introduction: The last scene that Matthew was to paint of the Lord Jesus Christ was a meeting of the disciples with Jesus at Galilee. The Lord broke in to confront the disciples with the glory of His passion and to convince the disciples of the greatness of His purpose.

1. The Appointment of the Disciples v. 16- *“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.”*
2. The Attitude of the Disciples v. 17
 - a. Some Shouted v. 17- *“And when they saw him, they worshipped him...”*
 - b. Some Doubted v. 17- *“...but some doubted.”*
 - (1) It seems incredible that anyone faced with the overwhelming evidence of a risen Christ could still have hesitated, but some did.
 - (2) This word doubted occurred also in Matthew 14:31. Simon Peter looked away from Jesus to the angry elements and began to sink. The Lord told him, *“O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”*

Body: Let us break down the great command into parts and study it in greater detail.

- I. Notice the Lord’s Power v. 18- *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”*
 - A. God Gives Power to the Willing II Corinthians 8:3
 - B. God Gives Power to the Waiting Luke 24:49, Acts 1:12-14, 2:1-4
 - C. God Gives Power to the Wanting Psalms 63:1-2

- II. Notice the Lord’s Place v. 19- *“Go ye therefore...”*
 - A. The Advancement of God’s Church- *“Go ye...”*
 1. Mark 16:15- *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”*
 2. Luke 14:23- *“And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”*
 3. Go Where?
 4. Acts 1:8
 5. “Witness is a key word in the Book of Acts and is used twenty-nine times as either a verb or a noun. A witness is somebody who tells what he has seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20). When you are on the witness stand in court, the judge is not interested in your ideas or opinions; he only wants to hear what you know.” (Wiersbe)
 6. “The light that shines the farthest will shine the brightest at home.” (Oswald J. Smith)
 7. We see the outline of the book of Acts in this verse.
 - a. Their Community—Jerusalem Acts 1-7
 - b. Their Country—Judea Acts 8-9
 - c. Their Continent—Samaria Acts 8-9

- d. Their Cosmos—The uttermost part of the earth Acts 10-28
- 8. Why are we to go to these places?
- 9. We are to multiply churches! Acts 9:31
- 10. If the fruit of a Christian is another Christian, then it follows that the fruit of a church is another church. (Beller)
- 11. Ephesians 3:21 reveals to us that the church will survive. The only way that could be is if the church is reproduced. We need not only a multiplication of converts, but a multiplication of churches. (Beller)
- 12. This Place is Directed Acts 16:6-7- *“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.”*
- 13. Luke 5:1-6 It was a good idea to fish, it was even a good place to fish, but they were not fishing where Jesus wanted them. Sometimes a church plant will fail simply because everybody but Jesus thought it was a good idea.
- 14. This Place is Distinguished Romans 15:20- *“Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation”*
- B. The Authority of God's Church- *“...therefore...”*
 - 1. Notice the word “therefore”.
 - 2. It links our authority to His authority as Lord of Heaven and earth.
 - 3. Our authority is to invade the world with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ!
 - 4. We must multiply churches because Scripture and history compels us to! History is what happened. Heritage is what we do with history.
 - a. Paul
 - (1) He could not sit still. He did not want a mega church.
 - (2) II Corinthians 10:16
 - b. Shubal Stearns
 - (1) He commenced his labors [at Sandy Creek] with building a house of worship, and constituting a church [November 22, 1755] of sixteen persons.
 - (2) Robert Baylor Semple wrote: [from 1755-1757] "These, uniting their labors with the others, a powerful and extensive work commenced, and Sandy Creek Church soon swelled from 16 to 606."
 - (3) Morgan Edwards wrote: Soon after the neighborhood was alarmed and the Spirit of God listed to blow as a mighty rushing wind in so much that in three years' time they had increased to three churches and upwards of 900 communicants.
 - (4) Sandy Creek Baptist Church, in seventeen years, is become mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, to forty-two churches, from which sprang 125 ministers. (George W. Paschal)
 - c. John Waller
 - (1) Waller spent more than 113 days in four different jails in Virginia.
 - (2) John Waller died at 62 years old having preached 35 years.

- (3) Waller baptized more than 2,000 people in Virginia. He ordained 27 preachers. He constituted 18 churches. For many years he pastored five churches at one time.
- d. Lewis Lunsford
- (1) Lewis Lunsford began preaching in Virginia about the age of 17.
 - (2) Several churches were gathered as the fruit of his toils; the most prominent of which are, Nomini, Moratico, and Wicomico. When the Moratico Church was constituted, in the year 1778, he was unanimously chosen to be their pastor. This relation he sustained as long as he lived.
 - (3) His was a heart overflowing with sympathy for the wretched, and he was ready to disregard his own comfort and advantage to administer to their spiritual advantage. Over one of the large water-courses of the lower country, three miles wide, he once paddled a small canoe with a garden pale, rather than allow himself to fail in reaching his appointment.
 - (4) Mr. Toler wrote of Lewis Lunsford: "He journeyed much to preach the gospel in this State, and his rides were very lengthy. I have known him ride one hundred and twenty miles, in fifty successive hours, to reach his meetings...He used to say, his life was a continual chase through the world; and so it was."
 - (5) Day by day, and often late at night, he was found in his journeys — exposed to the [weather]...Once he is represented as traveling on a tour of preaching to the Valley of Virginia. When he left home the rain was falling, but he hesitated not, pressing on until, drenched and cold, he was compelled to stop for a season. Having warmed himself by the fire, he continued until night, when he commenced preaching services...the next day he urged his way, preaching day and night through the tour. Crowds attended his ministry. Much excitement in spiritual things was awakened, "the people," says Mr. Toler, "wondering at the gracious words that proceeded from his mouth." Tours of this kind, in the same region of country, were repeated, and with marked success. In a single neighborhood several were baptized, and a flourishing church was built up.
 - (6) Mr. Toler wrote: "He preached as if he ne'er should preach again, and as a dying man to dying men!"
- e. Isaac McCoy
- (1) In 1817, he received an appointment as missionary to the Indians of Indiana and Illinois.
 - (2) Deprivations, sicknesses, and sorrows such as but few mortals know were not strangers to them. Mr. McCoy rode hundreds of miles through the wilderness, and swam the swollen streams, lying on the wet ground at night, for the sake of carrying forward his missions.
 - (3) One of the severest trials that Mr. McCoy was called to bear was that during his absence from home sickness and sometimes death would visit his family. Five of his children were called by death at different times while he was absent from home.

- (4) In 1818, Isaac McCoy wrote this letter to the Baptist Board, which stated:
 “Although I have travelled more than 1,900 miles...and have preached more than one hundred sermons, yet I have not been able to preach one sermon in Edwards, Davis, or Dubois counties...In less than three weeks, I expect to have the sole charge of five churches, which are situated as follows: from White River church to High Bank is twenty miles, thence to Wabash twenty-four, thence to Maria twelve, thence to Prairie Creek forty, from Prairie Creek to White River church is seventy miles.”
- (5) Continued: “This extensive route lies through an immense population, all destitute of preaching by our ministers. There are also two or three places where I think churches might in a little time be formed, but there is none to blow the trumpet to assemble them. Now if I attend to preaching to these people, the Indians must be neglected, and if I attend to the Indians, with whom shall I leave these few sheep in the wilderness?”
- (6) Continued: “Should I be so happy as to embrace a brother in this work, it would be my wish to form a family establishment where, while one of us would be on a preaching tour, the other could be father to his children, and could attend closely to the ultimate object of the mission. I am very desirous to hear from the Board something on this subject.”
- (7) Luke 10:2- “*Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*”
- (8) In June, 1846, as he was returning from Jeffersonville, where he had preached, he was caught in a rain-storm, from the effects of which he died in a few days at his home in Louisville.
- (9) His last words were, “Tell the brethren, never to let the Indian mission decline.”
- f. Hezekiah Smith—Planted 13 churches in New England
 - g. Daniel Marshall—Planted 1 church in Virginia, 1 in North Carolina, 6 in South Carolina, and 7 in Georgia.
 - h. Lewis Craig—Planted 4 churches in Virginia and 4 churches in Kentucky.
 - i. John Corbly—Planted over 30 churches in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky.
 - j. Samuel Harris—Planted 26 churches in Virginia.
 - k. Christmas Evans pastored five churches at the same time in Wales.
 - l. John Taylor planted over 30 churches in Kentucky.
 - m. None of these men labored alone.
 - n. Acts 9:31
 - o. Churches must multiply or they will die!
 - (1) Example: Milford Biddle
 - (2) Example: Larry Raynes

- III. Notice the Lord’s Priority v. 19- “*...and teach all nations...*”
- A. God wants pastors to do the work of an evangelist. II Timothy 4:5
 - B. Titus 1:5
 - 1. There was an apostle, an evangelist, and an elder or pastor.

2. Paul (an apostle doing the work of an evangelist) left Titus (and evangelist who became a pastor) on the island of Crete to ordain elders (pastors) in every city (where the new churches were planted). (Beller)
 3. We must train our own church planters. II Timothy 2:2
- IV. Notice the Lord's Practice v. 19- "...*baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*"
- V. Notice the Lord's Persistence v. 20- "*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...*"
- A. Notice Our Call
1. Being a disciple meant more than being a convert or a church member. A disciple attached himself to a teacher, identified with him, learned from him, and lived with him. He learned, not simply by listening, but also by doing.
 2. In many respects, we have departed from this pattern. In most churches, the congregation pays the pastor to preach, win the lost, and build up the saved—while the church members function as cheerleaders (if they are enthusiastic) or spectators.
 3. How much faster our churches would grow, and how much stronger and happier our church members would be, if each one were discipling another believer.
 4. This is the responsibility of *every* believer, and not just a small group who have been "called to go."
- B. Notice Our Command
1. We are to Evangelize v. 19
 - a. What about the chief cities? Acts 16:12
 - b. Los Angeles—3.8 million people
 - (1) 63 Mormon Assemblies
 - (2) 40 Kingdom Halls
 - (3) 48 Muslim Mosques
 - (4) 4 Independent Baptist Churches
 - c. New York City—8.2 million people
 - (1) 23 Mormon Assemblies
 - (2) 14 Kingdom Halls
 - (3) 10 Muslim Mosques
 - (4) 5 Independent Baptist Churches
 - d. San Francisco—765,000 people
 - (1) 12 Mormon Assemblies
 - (2) 4 Kingdom Halls
 - (3) 2 Muslim Mosques
 - (4) 4 Independent Baptist Churches
 - The Mormons have a plan and have been carrying it out. The Jehovah Witnesses have a plan and have been carrying it out. The Muslims have a plan and have been carrying it out. Where is our plan?
 2. We are to Baptize v. 19
 - a. Baptism is an Outward Expression of an Inward Experience.
 - b. Baptism, for many, has brought death.

3. We are to Stabilize v. 20

- VI. Notice the Lord's Presence v. 20- "...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."
- A. His Presence is Seen v. 20- "...and, lo..."
1. There will be no "lo" until we "go"!
 2. The task would be impossible if the only word was "Go".
 3. II Timothy 4:16-17
- B. His Presence is Steadfast v. 20- "...I am with you always..."
1. It is more than just a promise, it is a fact!
 2. Acts 18:9-11
- C. His Presence is Sufficient v. 20- "...even unto the end of the world. Amen."
1. God has promised us that He will still move in these last days!
 2. The end of the world has not come yet, and therefore He is still working!

Conclusion: Will you get involved?

1. In our missions program?
2. In sitting as a church? Colossians 4:9, 12
 - a. What about greeters?
 - b. What about singers?
 - c. What about soul-winners?
 - d. What about following up with people?
3. Who will pray? The apostle Paul spent time in preparation before there was propagation. Galatians 1:15-18
4. How long will it take? Acts 11:26, 18:11, 20:31 (Multiplying Model, pgs. 43-45)
5. I know what to do if they do not want the gospel. Matthew 10:11-15
6. Can God do a work in Chase City? Luke 1:37- "*For with God nothing shall be impossible.*"