

## Fact Check: Reconsidering Popularly Misinterpreted Scriptures

Sermon #5 Matthew 18:18-20 | Is the Great Commission Ours?

### Using the Wrong Tool for the Right Task

- Today's sermon is not about *what* we do as much as the Biblical basis for *why* we do it.
- If we are really "people of the Book," then we need to take each-and-ever word as if it were "God breathed" and take it seriously in all forms.
- The so-called "Great Commission" has been misused as our missionary motivation.
- The continued misuse of this passage will only result in *fewer missionaries, fewer disciples, and fewer churches*.

### The History of the Great Commission

- For almost 17 centuries, no believer had ever heard of a "Great Commission."
- The term "Great Commission" did not come about until approx. 1650, and prior to that time this passage was not typically used with a missionary focus, but a Trinitarian focus, and was viewed as only a commandment for the eleven (v. 16).
- It is believed that Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) popularized the passage for missionary purposes.

### What Does the Great Commission Actually Say?

- The imperative is **teach**, which is the verb form of the noun, *disciple*.
  - While it is poor English, the equivalent would be "go learn them...").
  - With no formal equivalent in English, **teach** is used by KJV (as the activity done by one with *disciples*) and *make disciples* is used by most modern versions.
  - The English language does not contain a verb that is based on the *learner* noun.
  - Matthew 13:52 has the verb in the past tense, and KJV uses **instructed** while NASB uses the incorrect interpretation "has become a disciple" (ESV is closer with "has been trained").
  - In older English, the correct verb would be "go...and doctor all nations" since a *Doctor* was one who instilled *doctrine*.
  - The insufficiency in all of these is that the Greek verb uses gives the implication that the *student* was to be a *disciple* of the *disciples*, not just an adherent to their set of teachings.

- There are three participles that describe the one *discipling*:
  - **Go** - because it is in the passive tense, perhaps something like, "having arrived..."
  - **Baptizing** - this is in the active tense, and literally "dipping them," and in its most usual sense would involve water, and *water Baptism* is universally understood as the sense used here. Here (for the first time) the Trinitarian formula of Baptism is given.
  - **Teaching** - coming from the Greek διδάσκω [didasko], the English word *didactic* comes directly from this word. It is clearly *instructional* in nature. Note that it is different from the previous use of the word **teach** in v. 19, this word focusing more on the *information* than the total development of the disciple. The teaching was **to observe all things whatsoever** had been commanded by Jesus Christ.
- The instructions concluded with the promise that Jesus would be with them "all the days until the completion of the age."

### A Few Implications of the Passage

- One of the clearest requirements to being a disciple is found in Luke 14:33. In light of this, consider:
  - Luke 5:11 (concerning Andrew, Peter, James, and John).
  - Luke 5:27-28 (concerning Levi).
  - Luke 18:22-25, 28 (concerning the rich, young ruler and the 12).
  - Acts 4:34-35, 5:1-2 (concerning the early assembly).
- If we are to **teach all things whatsoever**, do we teach Matthew 10:8 (or Luke 10:9)?
- If the individual is instructed to *make disciples*, isn't the individual supposed to be *going, baptizing, and teaching*? Yet the vast majority of the Christian world reserves *baptizing* for the ordained sector.

### Do We Have a Commission?

- *What if* the 12 were commissioned to carry out a *Kingdom program* and that this so-called Great Commission was related to *their task*, and that *our task* is not Kingdom-related but is related to an age of individual faith in a non-Kingdom age?
- If so, then *our commission* (if one is needed) would be found elsewhere.
- Consider 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 as a possibility.