

# The Great Commission

*Matthew 28:16-20*

## INTRODUCTION

Last week on Easter, I attempted to describe and explain the connection between the Resurrection of Jesus, some 2000 years ago, and how it was the first wave of transformation into God's New World, also called New Creation at the end of Fallen World history.

I also described, in a parallel picture of a baby being developed and born, in how at conception a single cell is formed and out of that single cell comes all the other cells that together form a new life called a baby. In the same way, Christ resurrection is the single first cell of God's New World, and out of that Good News a new world is developing in all those who come to Him, which develop into little Christs like the first original cell, beginning to form a whole new life of existence called New Creation.

### **C.S. Lewis**

“The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose.

It says in the Bible that the whole universe was made for Christ and that everything is to be gathered together in Him. I do not suppose any of us can understand how this will happen as regards the whole universe. We do not know what (if anything) lives in the parts of it that are millions of miles away from this Earth. Even on this Earth we do not know how it applies to things other than men. After all, that is what you would expect. We have been shown the plan only in so far as it concerns ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

This seems perfectly congruent with the Apostle John in *1 John 2:6*

This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Now it must be noted that we are not in fact becoming like the Divine Nature of Jesus, but we should become like the One True Human nature in who Jesus is.

So in this gestation period, as we might call it, what are we to do? We are to prepare for the birth of God's New Creation in and through discipleship. In becoming like Christ we are to spread His message and mission to others in inviting them into God's New World which will be revealed at His coming.

Let us look at the Commission He gave His early followers before He ascended into Heaven to be the One True Human at the Right Hand of the Heavenly Father.

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* (New York: Harper One, 2015) 199-200.

## **The Great Commission: *Matthew 28:16-20***

The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted. Then Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

### **I. The Authority of Jesus**

*“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”*

- A. Christ is our authority! Not Jesus and...but Jesus alone!
- B. Notice it is not Jesus and some denomination or tradition. It’s not Jesus and the AFCC or the Baptist or the Catholic, but in Christ alone!
- C. Christ is not merely in a position to give us a good example or mere suggestions, but to follow Him and to love Him is to obey Him.

#### ***John 14:15-21***

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

- D. The follower of Christ shows love primarily in and through obedience to Christ.
- E. Christ has defeated death in life both as the Divine, Son of God, and as the One True Human or Adam, Christ has accomplished everything to be accomplished to have ALL AUTHORITY.
- F. Christ is said to be both King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All authority finds their submission in Him and to Him.

G. Under-Shepherds of Christ's church find their authority to lead only in Him, and nothing in and of themselves.

### **John Stott**

The authority by which the Christian leader leads is not power but love, not force but example, not coercion but reasoned persuasion. Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve.

### **R.C. Sproul**

The very word authority has within it the word author. An author is someone who creates and possesses a particular work. Insofar as God is the foundation of all authority, He exercises that foundation because He is the author and the owner of His creation. He is the foundation upon which all other authority stands or falls.

### **Elisabeth Elliot**

Until the will and the affections are brought under the authority of Christ, we have not begun to understand, let alone to accept, His lordship.

### **C.S. Lewis**

Authority exercised with humility, and obedience accepted with delight are the very lines along which our spirits live.

H. There is no better picture of authority lived out like this that in the person of Jesus.

### **N.T. Wright**

In particular, Jesus has now been given 'all authority in **heaven** and earth'. We recall that in the temptations the devil offered Jesus this prestige, but without exacting the price that he has now paid (4:8–10). That would have been a hollow triumph, leading to the worst tyranny imaginable. Jesus' authority as the risen one, by contrast, is the authority of the one who has defeated tyranny itself, the ultimate tyranny of death; his is the authority under which life, God's new life, can begin to flourish. Despite what many people today suppose, it is basic to the most elementary New Testament **faith** that Jesus is *already* ruling the whole world. That is one of the most important results of his **resurrection**; it is part of the meaning of **messiahship**, which his new life after the crucifixion has made plain.

People get very puzzled by the claim that Jesus is already ruling the world, until they see what is in fact being said. The claim is not that the world is already completely as Jesus intends it to be. The claim is that he is working to take it from where it was—under the rule not only of death but of corruption, greed and every kind of wickedness—and to bring it, by slow means and quick, under the rule of his life-giving love. And how is he doing this? Here is the shock: *through us, his followers*. The project only goes forward insofar as Jesus' agents, the people he has commissioned, are taking it forward.

## II. The Agenda of Jesus

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

- A. Many people wonder what the will of God is for their life because they still see themselves as so important that God wants to do something special with them. God wants to do something supernatural through all of us.
- B. Many people try to accommodate the lost in creating special atmospheres so they feel better about coming when the truth is we can save anyone, etc. What a Church needs is simply the Word of God proclaimed authentically from every member there. That is the grand attraction that would get the world's attention and create a desire to know more. What pushes people away are Christians who aren't authentic and who aren't deep in their faith?

### ***John 6:33***

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.

- C. Many people consider God's will as a direction and ask questions such 'Where will God send me to serve?' but the truth is God's will is not a direction, but rather a state of being.
- D. God's will is not necessarily to "go" anywhere, although at times it may. God's will for all of us are to be disciple makers. Notice in the Great Commission it says nothing of conversion. Sadly, the church has focused so much on conversion that we have ruled out almost entirely the actual mission of discipleship.

### **Jonathan Hayashi, Ordinary Radicals: A Return to Christ-Centered Discipleship**

"We were not called to make converts. Our job is the task of disciple-making. I mean, if we are not making disciples, why are we here?"

- E. Sadly, the church has focused primarily on conversion through a sinner's prayer, and you never find such focus or said prayer in the Bible.
- F. No doubt if we are making disciples, conversions will come, but if we focus merely on conversions without discipleship then we may find ourselves assisting in the great deception of Satan in that people have come to a false hope or belief in salvation, and not truly met Jesus.
- G. We must ask ourselves when did Matthew convert in his heart, or Peter, or Andrew or James or John? The answer is we don't know, but we do know because of their discipleship they had an authentic conversion.

- H. I've had people say to me, "I like it when you preach on salvation more than when you preach on discipleship". The question I have for them is when did the two get separated? When we preach in how to make disciples are we not in effect preaching salvation because one cannot grow into a follower of Christ without first placing faith in Christ? It begins with announcing the Good News!!!
- I. The Gospel is not mere evangelism and then discipleship something else. No, both evangelism and discipleship are hand in hand in the preaching of the Gospel.
- J. Sadly, my fear is that the church has focused on mere conversion for so long, often driven by a numbers game that many who "think" they are converted are not because they are like seed in bad soil. They have never grown into a proper disciple of Jesus. Their faith is in a prayer they prayed as child or in a church leader who told them this was the right way and gave them false assurance, but they have failed to ever put their faith into the authority of Jesus.
- K. Preaching the Gospel involves evangelism, discipleship, apologetics, missions, etc. This is what it means to live out the Gospel both in word and deed before the World.

### **III. The Assurance of Jesus**

*And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

- A. Jesus says we are to take this Good News of the Kingdom to all parts of the world which means to the parts that are comfortable and recognizable and also to the parts that are foreign, unsafe, and still influenced heavily by darkness.

#### **Elisabeth Elliot**

"God's command 'Go ye, and preach the gospel to every creature' was the categorical imperative. The question of personal safety was wholly irrelevant."

- B. We may have to take this news to receiving audiences, but many times we are called to take this message to unreceiving audiences. We are called to be a light in a dark place just as Christ was a light in a dark world.
- C. The encouragement is that we don't do this alone. We may abandon Christ, but Christ never leaves us to be abandonment.

#### **Hebrews 12:5**

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

D. Christ, the night before going to the Cross was abandoned, but God was with Him always.

***John 16:32***

Jesus answered. “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.

E. Unlike us, Christ will never abandon us even when we are unfaithful to Him.

***2 Timothy 2:13***

If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself. <sup>2</sup>

F. Christ will be with us in this work because we do not do this work apart from Christ. Actually, it is Christ doing the work in us and through us. We are just a vessel for the Lord.

G. Christ will be there until the end of this age, and will be visibly, presently with us in the age to come, New Creation.

## CONCLUSION

**Jennifer L. Lane, Faith Adventures: Stories of Learning with an Unseen God**

“As the church, we are in community together trying to fulfill this Great Commission that Jesus left us with. As we gently press into each other, we form one united thing, His church. As we work together, sharing the space God gives us to do His work, we all become shaped a little different. We all become a little more like Him.”

**Hudson Taylor**

The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (2 Ti 2:13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.