

The Church and the Great Commission
Matthew 28:16-20; Gen. 1:26-28; Acts 1:1-11
March 11, 2007

I. Covenantal Context

A. Definition of covenant

1. A covenant is a bond in blood sovereignly administered.¹
2. A covenant is a life and death relationship that is God-established, God-defined, and God-centered.²
3. See *Westminster Confession of Faith* 7.1

B. The Cultural Mandate (Gen. 1:26-28)

1. Image of the Triune God (v. 26a)
2. Dominion over the Creation (v. 26b)
3. More specifically: fill and subdue the earth (v. 28)

C. Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12; 15; 17)

1. God will make a great nation (also 15:4-5; 17:2, 4-6)
Gen. 12: 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.
2. A blessing to all the families of the earth (also 18:18; 22:8; 26:4; 28:14)
Gen. 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
3. People of God now become more specifically the image of God
Shorter Catechism 10: God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.
Col. 3:10 and [you] have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.
Eph. 4:24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

II. The Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20)

A. Who's authority? The Triune God (hint: v. 19b)

1. God the Father
 - a. implied by v. 18 – authority given by whom
 - b. Psalm 2:6-8 “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me: “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.”
2. God the Son
 - a. his divine authority – they worshipped him (v. 17)
 - b. received all authority – heaven and earth (v. 18)
 - c. his abiding presence (v. 20b)
3. God the Spirit
 - a. *Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

¹ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1980), 4.

² L. Charles Jackson, *Bond in Blood: A Primer on the Covenant of Grace* (Belle Center: Keys for the Kingdom Publishing, 2000), 3.

- b. *John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.* (See also John 14:16, 26; 15:26)

B. What is the Great Commission?

1. As you are going

Aorist participle – not time relation, but “conceives of the action denoted by it, not as in progress (Present), nor as an existing result (Perfect), but as a simple fact . . . simply as an event.”³

2. Make disciples – of all nations (imperative)

The one imperative of this passage: do this wherever you go.

a. baptizing

i. into the Triune God

ii. into the Church

Acts 2:41, 47 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. . . And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

“American evangelicals have a tradition of individualism that sees the church as a voluntary club for the converted. Until we have a deep biblical sense of the corporate identity of the new people of God, we will not be able to present the gospel of peace on the front lines of our ‘culture wars.’ The true drawing power of the church transcends the cultural enclaves of contemporary society to dissolve the hatreds of a fallen world in the love of Christ.”⁴

b. teaching all of Christ’s commands

“Witness is by life as well as by word, but never without the Word of God. The cutting edge of the sword of the Spirit is the telling of the Good News of Jesus Christ.”⁵

C. What’s the Power of the Great Commission

1. Christ’s Mediatorial Kingship

Eph. 1:22-23 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

2. Union with Christ

Eph. 2:5-6 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

III. Application

A. This is your mandate: as you are going, make disciples of the nations

Do not neglect this responsibility, for this is part of your responsibility, part of the cultural mandate for believers

B. Your Church: baptizing, teaching, evangelizing

C. Your confidence: Jesus Christ

³ Ernest Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994), 60.

⁴ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 164.

⁵ Ibid., 165.