

Matthew 28:18-20

The Great Commission or the Great Omission?

We have been in the book of Exodus since the first week of 2010

- I have preached 61 messages thus far

Last week marked the end of a major transition in the book of Exodus

- From Exodus 25-40, the major focus will be on the Tabernacle

I thought this was a good place to stop and take a break

- I think it will be good to switch gears

I want to begin a mini-series on a topic that I believe is vastly misunderstood

- That is the topic of discipleship

I wish we had the time this morning to give everyone the opportunity to tell us, in a few words, what their view of discipleship is

- I think it would help us all to see that we are not all united on this great topic

I am launching this mini-series with the most important of Texts on the subject

- Matthew 28

Let me give you a little background on the book of Matthew

- We will eventually find ourselves at the end of the book
- Literally, the final words of this great Gospel

God is gracious to give us four (4) Gospel accounts

- They give us four different perspectives of the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus Christ¹

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Audience	Jewish	Roman	Greek	Universal
Picture of Jesus	Messiah, King	Servant, Redeemer	Perfect Man	Son of God

In our Bibles, Matthew is the bridge between the OT and NT

- It is the hinge that turns the Testaments
- It shows Jesus to be the fulfillment of the OT prophecies

Matthew is a Jew writing to Jews about a Jew²

- He focuses on genealogies
- He focuses on the message and miracles of Jesus
- He quotes from the OT frequently

But as Jewish as this Gospel is, there is also a Gentile focus as well

- Gentile women are included in Jesus' genealogy
- Gentiles worship Him after His birth
- In the parable about the seed, Jesus says, "**the field is the world**" (13:38) – not just a Jewish audience

¹ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 306.

² *Ibid.*, 310.

Toward the end of the Gospel, we see Jesus tried, mocked, crucified, buried, and resurrected

- The story doesn't end with Jesus' death!
- He is alive forevermore!

On Resurrection Sunday of this year, I preached from Matthew 28:1-10

- Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb
- They found the tomb open!
- Furthermore, they saw an angel sitting on the stone that was rolled away!

Jesus told these women in Matthew 28:10, “take My word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me”

- This is remarkable language, considering what has happened

Think of the Twelve apostles

- Judas Iscariot has hanged himself
- The only apostle at the crucifixion was John (John 19:26)
- Peter has influenced others to go back to fishing

Yet Peter was restored back to ministry (John 21)

- The Eleven are about to see Jesus

We read in Matthew 28:16, “But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated”

- Notice that expression, “the eleven”

Not “the twelve”

- But 11
- Judas is dead³

Not all disciples are life-long followers

- There are born-again disciples
- And there are also disciples who are not born-again

We don't know what mountain was the rendezvous point

- But Jesus knew it
- And His disciples knew it as well

From the Biblical record, it seems that the disciples had remained in Jerusalem around 8 days before proceeding to Galilee

- We also know that Jesus appeared to many people after His resurrection and before His resurrection

“And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful” (Mt 28:17)

- What an economy of words here!

³ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Matthew*, 996.

We remember Thomas' words in John 20, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (20:25)

- Eight days later, Jesus appeared to them
- Jesus said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing" (20:27)
- Thomas, obviously overwhelmed, said, "My Lord and my God!" (20:28)

Many times in the Gospels, we see the disciples being admonished for their lack of faith, doubt, and uncertainty

- They were just like us
- We are just like them

In 1 Corinthians 15, we are told that Jesus appeared to over 500 people at one time

- We aren't told when that was

But it could be on this mountain, here in Matthew 28, that Jesus appeared to a large group of people

- What more fitting occasion than to give His great commission

This Commission wasn't given only to the Eleven apostles

- But to the masses of those who had followed Him

Matthew 28:17 tells us two conflicting responses

- "when they saw Him, they worshiped"
- "but some were doubtful"

How are we supposed to take this?

- At this critical juncture, were the Eleven still doubtful?

We must remember that Jesus has already appeared to the Eleven

- John 20 tells us that Jesus appeared to the Eleven in the locked room
- On two separate occasions
- Eight days apart

In other words, Jesus had already appeared to the apostles

- Even Thomas' doubts were settled

Most likely, it was the Eleven who worshiped

- They had already seen the resurrected Jesus

Listen to the words of Acts 1:3, "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God" (emphasis mine)

Who were the people who doubted on the mountain?

- Most likely some of the 500
- They had not seen the resurrected Lord

What did Jesus say to this group of disciples?

- That is our focus this morning

Let's read Matthew 28:18-20

The Great Commission is really a call of obedience to every born-again believer

- It is not an option, but an obligation

We are either being faithful to this Commission

- Or we are being unfaithful to it

We are either employing the Great Commission

- Or we are employing the Great Omission

In these three verses, Jesus unveils the three necessary elements that comprise His Great Commission to the Church

- God's power (28:18)
- God's priority (28:19-20a)
- God's presence (28:20b)

I. God's power (28:18)

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

After the mixed-bag of responses, Jesus draws near and speaks

- Read these words carefully, "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth**"

"all authority"

- Those words are staggering

Not some authority

- Not most authority
- But "**all authority**"

Unlimited, unrestricted, boundless authority

- Infinite power and resources at His fingertips

Jesus had authority during His earthly ministry

- Authority to teach (Mt 7:29)
- Authority to forgive sin (Mt 9:6)
- Authority to send out the apostles with delegated authority (Mt 10:1)

But this is radically different from having "**all authority**"

- Let me explain

During Jesus' earthly ministry, His authority was somewhat veiled

- He placed Himself under the authority of His Father

This is the truth of Philippians 2

- “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (2:5-8)

Jesus was still fully God while robed in full humanity (aside from the sin nature)

- Yet He voluntarily limited Himself under the authority of His Father
- He submitted Himself instead of choosing to exert Himself on various occasions

But things are different after His resurrection

- Now He has full power and authority
- Now He can demonstrate His unbridled sovereignty

This sphere of this authority or power reaches to the extremes of “heaven and...earth”

- Wow!

No longer is Jesus just an earthly Teacher

- He is the One with absolute power and authority

As we think about the Great Commission, we dare not think that we must accomplish this in our own power

- Now, we have God’s Almighty, unlimited power available to us

- **God’s power (28:18)**

II. God’s priority (28:19-20a)

We might expect Jesus to discuss more of what His unlimited authority means

- But that’s not what He does

Instead, Jesus transitions to give His disciples a final charge

- A final commission

We know that Peter had left to go fishing

- Perhaps he was a bit bewildered about what he should be doing

After all, Jesus was dead

- Peter had failed Jesus miserably by denying Him three times

But here is Jesus commissioning the disciples

- Peter included!

What is the overall thrust of this Commission?

- Different people have stressed various elements

But the central truth is so crystal clear

- There is only one main verb
- There are three participles that help to give richness to that verb

Participles are subordinate to verbs

- In other words, verbs outrank participles

The main verb is “make disciples”

- The three participles are:
 - o Going
 - o Baptizing
 - o Teaching

19 Go therefore

The first verbal component that we encounter is the participle “go”

- Some have read this as the main verb
- That is wrong

I grew up in a type of church that stressed this aspect of the Great Commission

- Go!
- You need to go out and tell people about Jesus!
- We need missionaries to go!

There is certainly an element where that is true

- But the Great Commission is not fundamentally about going

The disciples were to make disciples

- But that was impossible if they didn't go out

So there is a balance to be had here

- You can't fulfill the Commission only by going
- But you can't fulfill the Commission if you don't go

As the disciples went out, however, they were not going in their own power

- Listen to Jesus' words, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore...”

In other words, go in My power

- Go with the realization that Jesus has unlimited, unmatched power and authority

and make disciples of all the nations,

Here we come to the major thrust of the Great Commission

- This is the only imperative in verses 18-20

An imperative is a command

- Not a suggestion
- Not a recommendation

I was a bit shocked when I looked at verse 19 in other English versions

- All but the King James uses the phrase “make disciples”

The King James, however, reads like this, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations”

- It substitutes “teach” for “make disciples”⁴

The problem I have with that is this

- Discipleship is much more than just teaching

It includes other truths, such as

- Modeling
- Encouraging
- Correcting

Jesus didn’t just teach His followers

- He modeled the truth
- He answered their questions
- He allowed others to be with Him

If you look down at Matthew 28:20, we have the participle “teaching”

- But that is a different Greek word from the one here in verse 19, which means “make disciples”

If we boil the Great Commission just to teaching, then we are stressing facts, data, and information

- Jesus has a different goal in mind
- Verse 20 reads, “to observe” or to obey

Jesus’ command to “make disciples” isn’t given only for pastors, teachers, and church leaders

- Who does He address this Commission to?
- His disciples!

You don’t have to be a gifted teacher to disciple others

- You just have to be a born-again disciple

Think about the simplicity of this statement

- Jesus’ disciples are to disciple others

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then you should be involved with discipling others

- Does that scare you?

Perhaps some of you are intimidated by that statement

- How can I teach others when I have so far to go myself?
- How can I lead others when I stumble?

Let’s ask a basic question, “What is a disciple?”

- A learner
- A follower

Contrary to what you may be thinking, being a disciple doesn’t necessarily imply being a born-again believer

- There can be false disciples

⁴ John A. Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew*, 593.

After feeding the 5000 men (aside from women and children), some of those following Jesus stopped doing so

- They were offended at the demands of discipleship
- “As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore” (John 6:66)

Jesus’ words to the Pharisees are scathing as well about their efforts to make disciples of themselves

- “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves” (Mt 23:15)

We are not to make people become disciples of us

- We are to help people become better disciples of Christ

Here is something for you to think about

- There should always be someone who is discipling you; someone who is more mature in the faith
- But there should always be someone who you are discipling; someone who is less mature in the faith

I call this the Paul and Timothy principle

- You should have a Paul in your life – someone discipling you
- You should have a Timothy in your life – someone who you are discipling

I would ask you this morning, “Who is your Paul? Who is your Timothy?”

- Who is personally interacting with you, instructing you and guiding you?
- Who are you personally interacting with to teach and guide?

Every Christian is a lifetime learner and follower of Christ

- We never stop learning
- We never stop following

Many people think that evangelism is the end goal of outreach

- See that a person is saved
- Then point them in the direction of a local church

But Jesus doesn’t say that

- He says the goal is to make disciples

If you lead someone to faith in Christ, teach that person as much as you know

- Perhaps that is a little bit
- Perhaps that is a lot

I have to wonder sometimes, “How many converts remain spiritual babies for years when they could have been disciplined by someone?”

Jesus tells His followers, “make disciples of all the nations”

- Not just the Jews
- But everyone

Here in Matthew, perhaps the most Jewish of the Gospels, God is very clear

- The entire world is to hear the Gospel

This is why we need missionaries to go to the ends of the Earth

- This is why we need pastors to preach God's Word
- This is why we need teachers to teach the Scriptures

But you don't have to be a missionary, pastor, or teacher to fulfill the Great Commission

- Parents, teach your children
- Husbands, teach your wife

Discipleship should be the normal ebb and flow of our lives!

- We should constantly be learning from one another

There is much made of discipleship programs and classes

- And those have its place

But we can't relegate discipleship to a program

- It is about relationships
- It is about spending time with one another

If you aren't regularly interacting with other believers, guess what?

- It will be impossible for you to have the Paul and Timothy that every one of us needs

[baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.](#)

Thus far, we have discussed "going" and the command to "make disciples"

- Now we want to discuss the second participle, "baptizing"

Baptism is the first step of obedience for a believer

- This is because baptism is the means by which we identify with Him

In water baptism, we pledge our commitment to follow Christ

- We show that we have made a lifelong decision to be a disciple of Him
- We openly identify with the Lord Jesus Christ

Water baptism portrays the Gospel

- We go down into the water and rise again
- This portrays the fact that we died to sin and rise to walk in newness of life

Baptism doesn't save anyone

- Baptism is the step of obedience after a person accepts Christ

Disciples should be baptized "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"

- All three Persons of the Trinity

This is because all three Persons are involved in our salvation and sanctification

- We identify with all Three

Notice that we are to be baptized in the "name"

- Singular

Not plural

- “names”

There is unity and diversity among the Trinity

- Unity of essence
- Diversity of purpose

The thought of a believer not being baptized runs counter to the tenor of Scripture

- When sinners came to faith in Christ, they were baptized soon thereafter

20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;

Now we come to the third and final participle which helps us to understand the command to “make disciples”

- Going
- Baptizing
- Teaching

Teaching is a fundamental aspect of making disciples

- You can't have disciple-making without teaching

Churches aren't to be social clubs

- The church is “the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15)

The participle for “teaching” is present tense

- This conveys ongoing, continual action

In other words, there is never a time when you can coast spiritually

- You never reach an age where you can say, “I have learned enough; I don't need to be instructed any more.”

So how do we balance teaching with making disciples?

- Why aren't these the same?

You can be taught, but not be a disciple of Christ

- Judas knew a lot of facts; however, he wasn't a true disciple of Christ
- Satan and the demons know a lot about God and the Bible; however, they aren't true disciples of Christ

If our goal is just to teach, then I think we have aimed at the wrong goal

- The goal isn't information
- The goal is Christlikeness

I was never personally disciplined by anyone after I came to faith in Christ

- Instead of attending youth group, I was in the adult SS classes wanting to learn
- I attended church as often as I could, since my parents were unbelievers and didn't take me to church

I remember my first night of Bible college

- I felt like I knew the Bible pretty well

I was invited to this guy's doom room to play Bible Trivia

- I was absolutely humiliated
- This guy knew all the answers, even the verses that went with the answers

Afterwards, I asked him if he had learned all of this during the 2 years of Bible college

- He laughed and said that he had learned most of this from his own Bible studies

Jesus' words are staggering in scope, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you"

Think of all that Jesus has addressed in the Gospel of Matthew

- All His parables
- All His various discourages
- All His rebukes of the Pharisees

Think of Jesus' own example

- Certainly this is to emulated

Look at the ministry of Paul and hear the language that he uses in various context of ministry

- "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2)
- "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Col 1:28)
- "follow our example" (2 Thess 3:7, 9)
- "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1)

In other words, there is a warmth and intimacy that exists in discipleship

- It isn't just a person standing behind a lectern or pulpit

Discipleship can take place in church

- Or at home
- Or at a restaurant
- Or at work

Discipleship is oftentimes personal in nature

- Helping someone set up a budget
- Helping someone learn how to be a godly man or woman
- Holding someone accountable for change

Is teaching involved with this?

- Of course!

But is teaching all that is involved?

- No
- **God's power (28:18)**
- **God's priority (28:19-20a)**

III. God's presence (28:20b)

and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Jesus could have ended with verse 19

- Make disciples
 - o Going
 - o Baptizing
 - o Teaching

But verse 20 is so important

- This verse is a word of encouragement to these disciples

Jesus ends by saying, “**I am with you always, even to the end of the age**”

- Wow!

As the disciples go, baptize and teach – making disciples – Jesus promises that He will be there with them!

- “**I am with you always**”

In Matthew 1, do you remember what an angel of the Lord told Joseph in a dream?⁵

- “**BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,**” which translated means, “**GOD WITH US**” (Mt 1:23)

Immanuel – God with us

- Jesus is Immanuel
- He promises to be with His people, always

Jesus refers to Himself as the I AM here in Matthew 28

- In other words, the “**I AM**” will be with us

Jesus claims this title in other places of the Bible

- “**I am the bread of life**” (John 6:35)
- “**I am the light of the world**” (John 8:12)
- “**I am the door of the sheep**” (John 10:7)
- “**I am the good shepherd**” (John 10:11)
- “**I am the resurrection and the life**” (John 11:25)
- “**I am the way, the truth, and the life**” (John 14:6)
- “**I am the true vine**” (John 15:1)

The author of Hebrews writes these words, “**I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU**” (Heb 13:5)

Can you imagine carrying out this task without the Lord's presence and help?

- It would be frightening

But Jesus promises to be with us “**always, even to the end of the age**”

- Until the Lord returns to judge the world and establish His earthly reign⁶

⁵ Robert H. Mounce, *New International Biblical Commentary, Matthew*, 268.

⁶ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur NT Commentary, Matthew 24-28*, 346.

It is easy to become overwhelmed with Jesus' statement here at the end of the Gospel of Matthew

- It is intimidating because our work will never be completed
 - o Unbelievers need the proclamation of the Gospel
 - o Believers need the instruction from the Word

It is one thing to go through this Text line by line

- It is quite another to live it out

I think that our generation has a very low view of discipleship

- Some have never seen it in their own lives
- Some have equated it with mere teaching
- Some frankly don't want anyone getting too close to them spiritually

What I want to do over the next few weeks is spell out some of the ramifications of what it means to be a born-again disciple of Christ

- To be one who follows the Lord

I hope that you will be challenged

- Some of you may discover that you aren't a real disciple of Christ
 - o You need to repent of your sin
- Others of you may discover that your commitment is lacking

Did you notice the uses of "all" or "every" in the Great Commission?⁷

- Verse 18 – "all authority"
- Verse 19 – "all the nations"
- Verse 20a – "all that I commanded you"
- Verse 20b – "always"

God has been given all authority to send us into all the nations to teach believers all that He has commanded so that His presence would always be with us

- Amazing!

This is the Great Commission

- God's power
- God's priority
- God's presence

On a scale from 1-10 (1 being low and 10 being high), where is your commitment to the Great Commission?

- That's a question that only you can answer

Imagine how different CBC would be if every one of us did this

- Our conversations would revolve around lost souls
- We would be praying for one another
- We would be strategizing outreach events
- We would be having discipleship meetings at each other's homes

The Great Commission is bigger than any one of us here this morning

- It is something that only God can bring about

⁷ D.A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Matthew*, 594.

The Great Commission has three different dimensions⁸

- Outward
 - o We are to go and make disciples
 - o We are not to be content with what we have done in the past

- Inward
 - o We must ask ourselves the hard questions
 - o Are we growing and maturing in the Word?
 - If so, then am I teaching others?
 - If not, then am I seeking to be disciplined by others?

- Upward
 - o We are all looking upward to the Lord Jesus Christ
 - o He has promised to be with us always
 - o We follow Him ultimately

We are all busy, right?

- We all have our schedules jam packed

But how much of your busy schedule reflects God's priorities?

- When was the last time that you went through everything you do and prioritized the activities?

Parents, your absolutely first mission field is your children

- They are your primary discipleship

Husbands/fathers, you need to be pouring your life into your wife

- Again, this needs to be a high priority of discipleship

But think if it stopped there

- What would happen with other discipleship opportunities?

In the book of Titus, Paul tells this young pastor about the four different age groups in the church

- Older men
- Older women
- Younger men
- Younger women

The model is really quite simple (cf. Titus 2)

- The older men should be teaching the younger men
- The older women should be teaching the older women

Older men, are you pouring your life into the younger men of this church?

- Older women, are you pouring your life into the younger women of this church?

The Great Commission isn't for a select few

- It is for every single person who is born-again

⁸ Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary, Matthew*, 963-64.