



The New Testament Church – The Great Commission: “Teach All Nations”

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and **teach all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (v.20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

The word “teach” means to disciple.¹ This is the only command or imperative in the Great Commission. From this passage we can say that the mission of the church is to make disciples or to teach “all nations” (i.e., ethnic groups).

There are three other “verbs” (action words or state of being words) in vv.19-20 that appear to be action words, but they do not function as the main or controlling verb. They are “Go” and “baptizing” (v.19) and “Teaching” (v.20). Their function in the passages are “participles” (verbal adjectives or words that appear to be verbs but functions as a description of the main verb). Therefore *going*, *baptizing*, and *teaching* describe or add understanding to the main command of “**teach all nations.**”

- A. “Go” – This is in direct contrast to the earlier instruction “go not” (Matt. 10:5). The church is expected to disciple or teach all nations as they journey or traverse or travel or go about their daily lives. The church is to “go” corporately (through organized evangelism ministries), and personally (through informal, personal evangelism ministries). The idea is that as we are going, we must always seek to disciple people to Jesus. Evangelism is certainly the foundational aspect of discipleship (hence, the Great Commission in Mark 16:15, “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*” Certainly, discipleship does not end with preaching or heralding the good news or proclaiming the good news, though it is initiated by evangelism. We find out where people are at and seek to advance them through discipleship.
- B. “Baptizing” – The church is expected to baptize from among the people who respond to our “teach” or disciple mandate. Hence, we only baptize disciples or those who are willing to forsake all in order to follow Christ (Lk. 9:23). Baptism presupposes that the baptismal candidate is a true disciple. They have come to saving faith in Christ and are able and willing to follow Him. How does a person become a disciple of Christ? It starts with baptism and goes forward from there into full participation as a church member. Baptism is a once and done activity for the disciple by the church.
- C. “Teaching²” – The church is expected to continually instruct baptized disciples. We are to continually teach baptized disciples to observe or to hold fast, to watch, to keep “*all things whatsoever I [Christ] have commanded you.*” Baptizing and teaching are the “how to make disciples” of the mandate. Again, we find out where people are at and seek to make them disciples: If they need evangelism, we gladly proclaim to them the gospel of Christ. If they need to obey the Lord in baptism, we will arrange for this after a thorough examination. If they need on going “teaching,” we are happy to instruct them through the preaching/teaching ministries of the church including church membership and other commands such as Communion or Lord’s Supper.

The Lord Jesus commanded the church (and consequently, all His churches) to teach all nations. We are not to be satisfied with merely reaching our village by planting a New Testament, Biblical, Baptist church within the confines of our village. God expects the church to disciple “*all nations.*” This means every people group, their socio-political status notwithstanding. And this is so, because all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God. Therefore, the church is expected to plant other churches.

The New Testament church is an assembly of baptized disciples organized to carry out the great commission to all nations. By God’s grace, we seek to establish an independent, assembly or church that will in turn seek to establish other churches among “all nations” to the glory of God.

¹ μαθητεύσατε (*matheteusate*) – Literally, “disciple” (a command verb) – the church is commanded to disciple (“teach”) all nations.

² διδασκοντες (*didaskontes*) – Literally, “to hold discourse with others to instruct them”, either informally or formally.