

The Great Commission

📖 Matthew 28:16-20

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Last time we looked at the resurrection in Matthew 28:1-15. Matthew's account is quite brief, but he inserts two very important apologetic elements to his argument. One being that there were so many witnesses to the empty tomb that there was no other explanation than resurrection from the dead and two being that the religious leadership were given this explanation by the Roman soldiers but tried to cover it up by paying them a large sum of money. Matthew hoped that the Jewish people who were not yet convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus would investigate these things and become convinced. The narrative in 28:1 begins with the timing, it was "after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week." In other words, it was Sunday before dawn. I hold to a Friday crucifixion and a Sunday resurrection. Some people disagree with that because they say, that's not three full days and three full nights, and Jesus said He would be in the tomb "three days and three nights" and in another place He said He would rise from the dead "after three days." However, these expressions have been shown to be Jewish idioms, and things that are predicted elsewhere to occur after three days happen on the third day, not the fourth day. Furthermore, in Jewish thought, any part of a day was considered a full day and factually Jesus was not raised on the fourth day, but on the third day. So if you put all this together a Friday crucifixion followed by a Sunday resurrection is the best view. So 28:1 is telling us that sometime during Sunday night "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb." 28:2 is background for the things that already happened. "And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred." This was a sign of divine intervention. As the explanation shows, "for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it." The stone was rolled away so that others could go in and see that He was not here. The angel remained to explain to the visitors why He was not here, because He is risen, and also to remind them that He had told them this ahead of time, and that they should go to the Galilee where He would meet them. So the resurrection had already taken place sometime during the night and the stone was removed by the angel, not so Jesus could get out, but so that visitors could get in. In 28:3 the appearance of the angel "was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow." So he had a gleaming brilliance to his appearance that came from his presence with God. In 28:4 we see the Roman soldier's response. "The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men." In other words, they were terrified and fainted, not the typical response of a trained Roman soldier. So what they encountered was no normal threat. By 28:5 the soldiers had already come to and fled the scene to go

and report this to the religious leaders. About that time, it was almost dawn and the women arrived at the tomb. And “the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.” The women would have very likely fainted as well but the angel calmed their fears telling them “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.” In 28:6 the angel tells them plainly, “He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.” The angel said this to fulfill his commission.” But it’s quite obvious that the women did not understand or accept what he said because when they gave the report they said someone had removed the body and lain it somewhere else. In 28:8 the women “left the tomb quickly with” mixed emotions; fear and great joy, and they “Ran to report it to His disciples.” The report was not what the angel said but the disciples did not believe them anyway. And here we’re told in 28:9 that “Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.” This is not Jesus’ first appearance, which was to Mary Magdalene alone, who did not recognize Him, because these women did immediately recognize Him, and more than that they worshiped Him. It’s important to observe that these monotheistic Jewish women who probably said the Great Shema three times a day, “The Lord our God is one,” did not think it wrong to worship Jesus as God. Therefore, they must have understood that the sense in which God is one allows for a diversity of Person’s within the One. It’s also important to observe that Jesus did not prohibit them from worshiping Him. And yet if Jesus is not God then they would be committing idolatry and He should have stopped them. Every time someone other than God is worshiped in the Bible, excepting Satan and the anti-Christ, such as an angel, the angel tells the individual, “Do not do that!” But Jesus did not say that. Jesus accepted worship because Jesus is very God of very God. In 28:10 Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.” This is the third or fourth time it was said that He would meet them in the Galilee. The meeting place in the Galilee is important because it was the heart of Jesus’ ministry. The reason Jesus’ ministry ended up in the Galilee is because His message was met with more acceptance in the Galilee. So now His ministry is going to return to the Galilee and this will be a set up for the great commission to go to all the nations of the world. Then in 28:11, “while they were on their way, some of the Roman guard,” not all of them, only “some” came into the city of Jerusalem. And what they did was “report to the chief priests all that had happened.” In other words, they told them about the earthquake, the strange visitor in gleaming white, how the stone was rolled away and that the tomb was empty with the linen cloths were just laying inside. They told them the whole story just as it happened and we have no reason to question that the Roman guards told them the exact truth. But observe in 28:12 what they did to the truth. “And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’ And if this should come to governor Pilate’s ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.” So they created a deception and make a corrupt deal with some of the Roman guards. And 28:15 says the Roman guards accepted the money and circulated this deception widely among the Jews. And yet the irony of the situation is that this was not a very good lie because if all the Roman

guards were asleep, how did they know it was His disciples that stole Him away? Maybe it was someone else. And so if one of them is awake so as to identify them as His disciples, why did they not sound the alarm and arrest them? And if it really was His disciples, and they really did escape with the body, then why did they not press charges later? It was illegal to rob a tomb. So all these things show how bad the lie really was but the amount of money must have been too great for the Roman guards to resist and so they took the risk and circulated the lie.

Tonight we come to the great commission. This is recorded in some way by all four Gospels as well as in the Book of Acts. In Matt 28:16. The NASB translates **But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee.** The word **but** should be translated as “so,” in the sense of “in accordance with.” In other words, in accordance with Jesus’ prediction in 26:32 that He would go to the Galilee and in accordance with the angel’s message in 28:7 that they should go to the Galilee and Jesus’ command to meet Him there in 28:10, **so the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee.** And note is made that now there are only **eleven disciples**, since Judas had already turned aside and hung himself, falling headlong and bursting, later to be buried in the Potter’s Field, which was re-named after his act of taking blood money, “Akaldema, the Field of Blood.” So only the **Eleven.**

As mentioned earlier, the **Galilee** was where most of Jesus’ ministry took place. The reason is described early in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus came to John to be baptized at the Jordan River. This was in Judea and John’s ministry was in Judea. But according to Matthew 4:12, the religious leadership did not like John’s message so they arrested him, and when this happened Jesus knew that they would also arrest Him so He withdrew into the safer region of the Galilee. In the Galilee He set up His ministry base at Capernaum, Peter’s town, on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee. The reason was because all the trade routes passed through this town. This made it an ideal location for the news of Jesus’ ministry to reach into the surrounding territories, including Gentile territories. And many were coming from all four points of the compass to have their sick healed, their blind given sight, their lame given legs. It was only toward the end of His ministry that He spends some time in Jerusalem and Judea. And now that He has been crucified and resurrected in Judea He returns to the **Galilee** to meet His disciples there. More specifically they went **to the mountain which Jesus had designated.** We don’t know exactly what **mountain He had designated.** Some have proposed it was Mt Arbel. This is one of the most remarkable mountains. It is located on the West side of the Sea of Galilee. Perhaps they met there. In any case, the strange thing is this had been arranged ahead of time and yet they did not believe ahead of time. So it must have been that after He was raised and were told to go to the Galilee they remembered that he **had designated the mountain** where they were to meet Him. So they proceeded that way.

And in 28:17 they arrived and He was already there and **When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.** This is another case where monotheistic Jews worshiped Jesus as God, and they had no trouble doing that, even though they believe God is one. So they must have had a concept of the oneness of God as involving a plurality of persons within. And this is not a foreign concept to any of us, as we know that one cluster

of bananas has a plurality of bananas. But for some reason when people get religious they all of a sudden lose their common sense, denying something obvious. So they worshiped Jesus as God. And note again that Jesus did not prohibit them. He did not say, "Do not do that!" But also note that **some were doubtful**. The Greek verb **doubtful** is from *δισταζω*. It can mean to doubt, to waver, or to hesitate. Three basic views have been suggested. The first view is that the Eleven were not doubting His resurrection, but their future. This was the view of Dr Pentecost. It presupposes only the Eleven were at this meeting. He said, "This doubt did not concern the person of Christ. It did not relate to the fact of the Resurrection that these men had so long disbelieved but now had come to believe. The doubt did relate to what was ahead for the disciples. Christ had said that He had chosen them to go and bear fruit (John 15:16). In His prayer in their hearing, He had said that He was sending them into the world for the same purpose that the Father had sent Him into the world (17:18); namely, to make the Father known. He had forewarned them of the dangers they faced (16:1-2) and of the reception they would receive (15:18-25). More recently He had told them not to begin their ministry until the Holy Spirit had been given to them (Luke 24:49) In order to dispel this doubt, Christ gave a commission to the Eleven. His stated reason for being able to commission them to go as His witnesses to represent Him was...because of the authority that the Father had conferred on Him."¹ So in this view the Eleven were apprehensive about what the future held for them, and Jesus is assuring them that He has the authority to send the Spirit who will fit them for their future ministry. This an interesting idea but it does not seem to fit the context. Verse 17 is simply saying that some worshiped Him readily while others hesitated. The second view is that the Eleven who worshiped also doubted that He was Jesus resurrected from the dead. This view also presupposes that only the Eleven were at this meeting. It is possible for the article to function as a preposition and so the verse could be translated "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but they were doubtful." It would be saying they had a mix of emotions. However, Matthew has no other uses of the article in that way so it is unlikely that the same group that worshiped Him were the same as those who were doubtful. The third view is that there was a larger gathering than the Eleven and some of them doubted. This is the only view that sees more than just the Eleven at the meeting. Dr Constable expressed it this way, "Evidently those who doubted were not the Eleven but other followers of Jesus. The word "doubted" (Gr. *edistasan*) means "hesitated" (cf. 14:31)."² In this view, the occasion referred to is the one Paul reported in 1 Cor 15:6 where Jesus appeared to more than 500 at the same time. If this is the case, and it seems likely, the Eleven worshiped Him but others hesitated to worship Him. Their hesitation was a preliminary reaction by those who had not yet seen Him in His resurrection body. Since the Eleven had already seen Him they did not hesitate. Others that had not and were seeing Him for the first time, did. It shouldn't be a surprise, for even Thomas doubted preliminarily, but then went ahead and worshiped Him saying, "My Lord and My God!"

Now that's the conclusion of the final narrative that began in 26:1. And if there is a discourse following the narrative as Matthew normally includes, then the discourse is the last three verses. So the narrative would be 26:1-28:17 and the discourse would be 28:18-20. It wouldn't be a very long discourse, but it is a meaningful discourse and there is hardly any Christian in the world that doesn't know these verses. But what they mean is

not often known. Think of how wrongheaded this view is. Toussaint said, "Some believe that the great commission of Matthew applies to the Jews only. It is associated with the prophecy of Matthew 24:14, and the disciples are made to represent the Jewish remnant of the tribulation period. While it is true that Matthew 24:14 does refer to the tribulation period, there is no need to limit the commission of Matthew 28:19-20 to that future time."³ So one view is that this is referring to the commission to the Jewish remnant in the tribulation, such as the 144,000, and that the Eleven represent witnesses, but it does not refer to them. That seems like a long stretch to me. It makes much more sense that it is a commissioning of disciples for their ministry in the upcoming Church age.

In 28:18 we find some important words about this commissioning. **Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."** The essential thing to note is that Jesus has now been given all **authority**. This is something that was not true before the resurrection. Before He had authority to cast out, to heal, etc...that was an authority exercised **on earth**, and it was a great authority. But now in His resurrection body He has an even greater authority; authority **in heaven and on earth**. A. T. Robertson said, "He spoke as one already in heaven with a world-wide outlook and with the resources of heaven at his command. His authority or power in his earthly life had been great (7:29; 11:27; 21:23f.). Now it is boundless and includes earth and heaven."⁴ From this position He is the King in waiting. He has not yet taken the throne of David on earth, but He is in the position to come from heaven to earth, to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth and to reign and to rule. In the meantime, He will be busy in heaven continuing His ministry through His disciples on earth so there will be a body of people who will inherit the kingdom and rule with Him. Now having such authority He is going to exercise that authority from heaven on the Day of Pentecost by sending the Spirit. Of course, it is both the Father and the Son who send the Spirit. John 14:26 states this by saying, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." So here the Father sends, but in His name. In John 15:26 He said, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." So the Son sends the Spirit from the Father from whom He proceeds. The pre-requisite for the Son to be involved in the sending is that He be resurrected. That is so that He will have all authority to do so. And Jesus is careful to state in 28:18 that this authority was **given to Him**. Naturally the one who conferred this authority on Him is the Father. And so on the Day of Pentecost He will equip His disciples with the Holy Spirit so they can remember the things that He taught them and carry out this commission in laying the foundation of the Church and then building the Church upon the foundation.

And here He commissions them, and the most important part of the commission to understand is that Jesus' ministry is not about to come to an end, but it is going to continue from heaven, by means of the Spirit who will enable His disciples on earth, whom He will be with the whole time. So Jesus' ministry has never stopped since He was inducted into His ministry at His baptism by John. The only difference is that while He was on earth He

Himself was carrying out the ministry directly, but now that He is in heaven He is carrying out the ministry indirectly, by means of the Spirit whom He sent to indwell His disciples on earth. This will shed wonderful light on later NT statements about our spiritual life, so that when we are living by the Spirit, and not by the flesh, we are carrying out the ministry of Christ. That helps us understand what Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..." The meaning is that as we live by the Spirit Christ is ministering through us to the world.

Alright, let's look at the commission, and notice first of all the universal emphasis in the word **all**. **All** is used four times in verses 18-20; **all authority has been given Me...make disciples of all the nations...teaching them all that I commanded you...and lo, I am with you all the days**, not **always**, but **all the days**. The second thing we want to observe is that this commission is very different than the previous commission in Matthew 10:5-7. There He said to the disciples, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was a commission to the house of Israel only and the message was "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The nation Israel had to repent for the kingdom to come. Toussaint said, "This command is in sharp contrast to what the Lord had previously ordered and practiced (Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24). This can only be explained on the basis of a kingdom offer to Israel. Because of their spiritual condition, the people of Israel had rejected their King and the kingdom was taken from them." Now a new commission is given for a new age which has opened up. This means there is a dispensational distinction between Israel and the Church as well as the Kingdom and the Church. These are not the same and they are not to be confused in God's purposes. In Matt 3-12 Jesus came to the nation Israel and offered the kingdom to them. In Matthew 12 they rejected the kingdom. In Matthew 13 Jesus announced the postponement of the kingdom. From that point on Jesus has been preparing His disciples for the continuation of His ministry during the postponement, which includes the Church age. Now that they are prepared He gives them this commission.

In 28:19, **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**. The Greek structure of this is interesting. There is one imperative; **make disciples** and three participles; **going...baptizing...teaching**. The meaning is that the three participles are telling us how to **make disciples**. We must go, we must baptize, we must teach. The first one, **going**, has been the most difficult for grammarians. It's an aorist participle and some have translated, "having gone," making it circumstantial, meaning, wherever you happen to be, make disciples. This removes the imperatival force. Constable said, "The participle "going" is not just circumstantial, but it has some imperatival force. In other words, Jesus commanded His disciple to reach out to unreached people to make disciples, not just to make disciples among those with whom they happened to come in contact."⁵ So it is translated well by the NASB as **Go**. The aorist likely has a sense of urgency. There is an urgency to the mission of making disciples. Time really is of the essence since people have only one life to live and it could come to an end at any moment and then they will have to face the judgment. The word translated **go** is from *προσερχομαι* and means "to move towards" in the sense of physical movement. It means to approach people with an intent to **make them a disciple**. The command is not just for the apostles, it is for all believers throughout the entire

church age, because Jesus said, I will be with you until the end of the age. So we need to reach out with a concerted effort to people to make them disciples.

The phrase **make disciples** is the imperative. It's the command. It does not mean to make believers. If Jesus wanted to say that He could have said that. It includes that and presupposes that in the going out people believe the gospel. But it goes further than that. The word **disciple** is from *μαθητευω* and means "a pupil, a learner, a student." Jesus is saying we should make people into students of Him. Constable said, "Making disciples involves bringing people into relationship with Jesus as pupils to teacher. It involves getting them to take His yoke of instruction upon themselves as authoritative (11:29), accepting His words as true, and submitting to His will as what is right. A good disciple is one who listens, understands, and obeys Jesus' instructions (12:46–50). Disciples of Jesus must duplicate themselves in others."⁶ So making disciples would really involve working with a person to bring them to salvation and then into the process of being a student of the word of God, the goal of which is for that student to not only learn the teachings of Christ but to obey them, and ultimately make more disciples like themselves. This is the process of making disciples.

The scope of where we are to go is stated to be **all nations**. In other words, it's not an Israel only mission as the previous mission. It is an **all nations** mission. The **all nations** here is *εθνη* and probably refers to all nations including Israel, and not Gentile nations only, since the Church is composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. Of course, in the Book of Acts the great commission will begin to be fulfilled by going to Jews first, then to the Samaritans and finally to the Gentiles. The Church will incorporate **all nations**.

So the first thing is to go out toward all nations to make disciples. The second participle is **baptizing them**. This is a present participle. The word **baptism** refers to the process of dipping something so as to change its essential identity, as in dipping a piece of cloth in a dye so that it changes the essential color of the cloth. It really means nothing more than that. The reference here is to a kind of water baptism. The reason is because it is a baptism performed by men and only dry baptisms are performed by God. The difference between wet and dry baptism is that dry baptisms are performed by God and are real, they accomplish something spiritually; while wet baptisms are performed by men and are ritual only; they do not accomplish anything spiritual. We'd say there are three wet baptisms in Scripture. The first is the baptism of John. John's was a baptism of repentance. Those who were baptized by John were separating themselves from Pharisaism and identifying with John's message that the kingdom was near. They were also pledging to put their faith in the Messiah when He was pointed out. This baptism is clearly not the baptism of Jesus. The second is the baptism of Jesus. Jesus was baptized by John but His baptism was not a baptism of repentance. Jesus did not need to repent of Pharisaism. Instead, it was to fulfill all righteousness. The significance of which is it identified Him with John's message that the kingdom was near. This baptism is clearly not the baptism of Jesus either. The third baptism is believer's baptism. This is a baptism of identification with Christ. Those who undergo believer's baptism are proclaiming their separation from Adam and their identification with Christ. The reality happens at the moment of faith when the believer is Spirit

baptized, one of the real baptisms that is dry. The water baptism is a ritual picture of what Spirit baptism accomplished; He crucified our old man in Adam, that old man was buried, and raised us a new man to live a new life in Christ. So the core concept of baptism is a dipping that changes the essential identity of something and our water baptism is a ritual that proclaims two things. First, it proclaims that at the moment of faith in Christ our identity was changed from being in Adam to in Christ. This was done by the Spirit of God who baptized us into Christ's death, buried us and raised us to live a new life. Second, it proclaims our introduction into discipleship. Since a disciple is a student, one who is baptized is saying they are now a student of Christ. I like to think of it as being introduced in a school for a particular course of study. Before you can go to the classes and be considered a student you have to register. In the same way, before you can be a disciple you have to be baptized. So baptism here relates to discipleship, not salvation, it only pictures salvation.

Now if you study the Book of Acts you see that everyone in the early church was a baptized believer. I think that was because they had a better understanding of baptism. They knew that baptism had to do with one's identity and did not save you spiritually. That was a confusion that came later in Church history when Augustine wanted to have all the parents of infants baptize them. It was his way of solving the problem of infant salvation. He taught that infant baptism removes original sin, or what is called concupiscence, in Roman Catholicism today. This became the first step of salvation in Roman Catholicism. It freed man's will so when he matured he could cooperate with God through the sacraments in the process of salvation. This, of course, was all invented. The early church had no such ideas. Because it's so confused today I don't think it's a good idea to get baptized immediately after you are saved. I think baptism needs to be explained and I certainly don't think that infants need to get baptized. I think infant salvation is solved another way, through the unlimited provision of Christ's atonement.

Now one thing I do want to point out is that water baptism is associated with one kind of salvation for the Jewish people who lived before AD70. This was a physical salvation from that generation that was going to judgment in AD70 for committing the unpardonable sin. Remember, the unpardonable sin was the vile rejection of Jesus, claiming that the miracles that He had done were done by Satan indwelling Him rather than by the Spirit. Well, water baptism was the only way for a believing Jew to be spared from that judgment on Jerusalem in AD70. This is the baptism Peter is talking about in Acts 2:38 where he said to the Jews, "Repent (pl), and each of you be baptized (sing) in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your (plural) sins; and you (plural) will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And in verse 40 he kept saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized." What is going on here has been so confused in Church History, especially by the Church of Christ who cite this verse all day long. But if you look at the grammar, the call to repent is a national call, which is the condition for the kingdom to come, all Israel must repent, the call to be baptized is an individual call, individually they were to be baptized to separate from that generation that was

going to physical destruction, and the forgiveness of sins is a national forgiveness that would result if the whole nation repented, and the national reception of the Holy Spirit would take place. So maybe it's confusing to the Church of Christ or to other people who think you have to be baptized to be saved, but it's only true in one sense and for one time period. It's only true for Jewish people living before AD70 and what it would do was separate them from the rest of the Jewish nation so that they would not be physically judged in the AD70 destruction of Jerusalem. But that it is clear that baptism is not for spiritual salvation is stated by Paul who said in 1 Cor 1:17, "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel..." So if Paul was sent to preach the gospel but He did not baptize then is baptism a part of the gospel? No. Or else he would have been baptizing everyone. But he didn't. And the main reason Paul didn't was because he didn't want people saying, "I am of Paul." He did not want to be set up as an idol and that was a very real danger for the apostles.

So to re-cap, what **baptizing them** means in Matt 28:20 is for men to water baptize believers so that they do two things; first, make a public proclamation of the dry Spirit baptism that took place at the moment of faith in Christ, that at that moment they were crucified with Christ, buried with Christ and raised to live a new life; and second, they are inducted into a new school of training in the curriculum of Baptism is making a commitment, but it is not the commitment of salvation. Salvation is Him committing Himself to us. We don't commit ourselves to Him in salvation. We only commit ourselves to Him at discipleship. And what that means is that there are believers and then there are some believers who are also disciples in the sense we are talking here, so there is not a 1:1 correspondence between believers and disciples.

Now notice it says in verse 19, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**. The Greek Orthodox Church claims this is a baptismal formula and even I say this when I baptize someone. But if you study all the baptisms in the Book of Acts they never say this. In Acts 2:38 they say, "Baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." In Acts 8:16 they say, "...they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." In Acts 10:48 it says, "...he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." In Acts 19:5 it says, "...they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." And, of course, in Rom 6:3, which is Spirit baptism, it says "do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" We're not baptized into the Father and the Holy Spirit, just into Christ. So evidently Jesus did not mean this to be a baptismal formula. What did He mean? The preposition translated **in** is *εἰς* and signifies coming into relationship with God as a disciple. He meant to connect those who wanted to be disciples with the triune God of the Bible. It's therefore fully legitimate and preferable when baptizing to baptize them in the name of Jesus alone because He is the way they come into a relationship with the triune God.

Also note, **the name** is singular and then three persons are mentioned, **the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**. There is one name for these three persons. What this does is put the **Father...Son...and Spirit** all on the same plane. In other words, they are all one God signified by one **name**. The **name** signifies the reputation or

character of God and in that sense there is one God, not three gods, but in that God there are three persons, **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. This is called the Trinity.

So far then, making disciples involves two things, moving toward people of all nations and introducing them by water baptism which brings them into a connection with the triune God. We move on to verse 20 where we find the third element, **teaching. Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**. But just what is **all that I commanded you**? The Greek word translated **commanded** is *εντελλω* and means "instruction." It's referring not to commands, per se, in the sense we think of a commandment to follow, but "instruction" as in a course of instruction or curriculum. Teaching them to observe certain instruction. Toussaint said, "The disciples had been commanded previously as to what they were to teach, and the Lord here refers to that. This seems best since the King did not instruct by means of commandments... In addition, the word "whatsoever" restricts the teaching ministry of the disciples to what Christ had commanded them to teach." What we are to teach disciples to observe are the things chiefly found in Matt 13-28. To include things prior to that or all that is included in the Gospel of Matthew would create contradictions, the most obvious being the command in Matt 10:5-6 to go only to the lost house of the sheep of Israel and the command here in Matt 28:19-20 to go to all nations. So there is merit in seeing that the proper way to read Scripture is the dispensational way of reading. This would mean things like the Sermon on the Mount are not directly applicable to the Church. Most of the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus explaining the proper interpretation of the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law is not directly to us, nor is it even primarily applicable to us, but only secondarily applicable to us in terms of the principles. What did John say? Law came through Moses; grace and truth through Jesus Christ! This is dispensationalism 101. It doesn't mean that there are no standards for the Church age believer to live by, it only means that the means of meeting those standards is by grace! We have something available to us that they did not have.

Now the final note in verse 20 is meant to comfort them, assuring them that they are not being left an orphan. **And lo, I am with you always**, or better, **all the days, even to the end of the age**. By **end of the age** is probably meant the end of the Church age. Jesus had spoken on Wednesday of the end of the age in the Olivet Discourse, referring to the age preceding the Messianic kingdom. But on Thursday He gave the Upper Room Discourse, giving Church age truth. And therefore, it is possible that **end of the age** is a reference to the end of the Church age. Walvoord said, "His presence with them, captured in the statement "ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20), was going to be enjoyed by believers to the end of the world, that is, the end of the present age, which would culminate in His coming for them." That coming would be at the rapture. However, it could just as easily refer to the Second Coming, since He will not be aloof from believers through the Tribulation time but will remain with them as well. In any case, these are the final words of Matthew's gospel. They are words of comfort and encouragement. He is with us in this endeavor to make disciples all the days, each day, every day.

In summary, in 28:16, in accordance with the previous words of meeting in the Galilee, the Eleven disciples proceeded to the Galilee, to a particular mountain which Jesus had designated, most likely along with many

other brethren who had not yet seen Him but wanted to. In 28:17 when they saw Him they worshiped Him; but some who had not yet seen Him hesitated. In 28:18 Jesus spoke to them saying “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” This is a high and exalted view of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the King in waiting. In 28:19 He gives His commission for the coming Church age. At the heart of it is the command to “make disciples of all the nations.” This means to bring students into a relationship with the triune God. This is done by going toward people, baptizing believers and teaching them to observe the body of instruction He delivered to them. And lo, they should not be discomfited, for He is with them all days, every day, each day, even to the end of the age.

In conclusion, what can we learn? First, that these are the marching orders for disciples. We are to become disciples so that we can duplicate ourselves in others, making more disciples. I would encourage you to do this in whatever capacity and venue you can. To not do this is to not invest your lives the way God intends you to. Second, the strategy is to go out. This began at Jerusalem and went to Samaria and then to the Gentiles, but it continues to go out today to other peoples and other languages. Third, being a disciple is more than just being a believer or even a learner, it is also being an observer. We are not being very good disciples if we only know the body of instruction but do not do it. Fourth, baptism is important, but not as a means of salvation, but rather as a means of proclaiming salvation and being initiated into discipleship.

¹ J Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 509.

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 28:17.

³ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 318.

⁴ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Mt 28:18.

⁵ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 28:19.

⁶ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 28:19.