

The Great Commission

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When Jesus told His apostles to preach the Gospel to all creation so that all men might have opportunity to be saved, He gave them what is commonly called, “The Great Commission.” This commission is so important that it is found in three different places (Mat. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:46–47). Consider the following reasons why it is called “great”:

It was given with the greatest authority. Jesus prefaced the commission by saying, “All authority has been given unto me in Heaven and on earth” (Mat. 28:18). Never had men been charged with a task on such awesome authority. In one great statement, Jesus summarized the power and authority which He had been demonstrating during the last three years of His life. This embraced all the forces of both the physical and spiritual worlds. The apostles never forgot this authority. They frequently referred to it in their preaching (Acts 2:33; Eph. 1:22–23; 1 Pet. 3:2, etc.). They didn’t preach by their own authority, but by that of Jesus, Who sent them forth (Acts 2:33–42; 4:12; 10:48; 1 Cor. 14:37; Col. 3:17, etc.). The Gospel is an authoritative message. The Lord still possesses this authority and commands His people to take His Word into all the world.

It embraces the greatest responsibility. Man has the responsibility to take care of his own, to do good to his fellowman and to live a sober, righteous, and godly life (1 Tim. 5:8; Gal. 6:10; Tit. 2:12). However, those who call themselves Christians have no greater responsibility than to spread the saving Gospel to as many as they possibly can.

It is the greatest in scope. In the beginning God dealt with mankind by families, such as those of Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc. When He gave the Law of Moses at Sinai, He began dealing with a nation – Israel. In “The Great Commission” the doors of salvation are opened for all nations. Whereas before, only the Hebrews were God’s chosen people, now God’s grace is extended to “whosoever will” obey the Gospel (Rev. 22:17). The Gospel is God’s saving power to Jew and Gentile alike (Rom. 1:16). The scope of this commission is universal.

It bears the greatest news. From time immemorial God had been working out His purpose that culminated in the issuing of this commission. By the preaching of the Gospel, people would be called out of the world. By obedience to the Gospel, they would be saved and added to the church. The first occasion of fulfilling the commission was on the first Pentecost following Jesus’ resurrection at which time the following things occurred:

1. The apostles preached and proved that Jesus is the Christ of prophecy (Acts 2:14-36).
2. Many believed in Him and asked the apostles what to do to be saved (Acts 2:37).
3. They were told to repent and be baptized to receive forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38).

These were the very things Jesus had told the apostles to preach in “The Great Commission.” The result was that about 3,000 were baptized – saved – that day (because God had forgiven their sins), and the Lord added them to His church (Acts 2:41, 47). Surely there is no greater news than that which tells one how to receive God’s forgiveness and how to inherit eternal life.

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