

Bi123 The Gospels 2

Lesson Bi123-29 The Great Commission

Training to become an officer in the military requires gaining both knowledge and experience. The process takes years to complete. Finally the day comes when the new officer is given his commission, or assignment. The time of preparation is over. Now the real work begins. The person's duty is to accept and fulfill the assignment, no matter what is required. Before Jesus left for heaven, he gave the disciples and all believers an assignment. Our assignment from Jesus, called "The Great Commission" is the subject of this lesson.

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. Many scholars believe this was also the appearance to more than 500 people, later mentioned by Paul. When the people saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Some present may have been seekers.

First of all Jesus told them that, having arisen, he now has all authority in heaven and on earth. No area, people, or culture lies outside the domain of his power and authority. Christ's mandate to us flows from his exalted position as part of the godhead. "Therefore," he said, or "on the basis of his authority," he has made a command. He said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:19-20). Believers go on his authority, not their own.

The word "go" means "to depart, to leave, to cross boundaries"—social, racial, and cultural, as well as geographic boundaries. Jesus himself had demonstrated such a ministry. The assignment affects witness done in your area and also in faraway places. Going is necessary to make disciples. Boundaries must be crossed. Notice that everyone hearing these words was included in this command. **All** believers are told to go!

When we go, what are we to do? The main command in the passage is, "Make disciples of all nations." The command has urgency—do it now! Making a disciple involves going out first, but it means more than just bringing a person to Christ. It includes nurture throughout a person's life. A disciple is a pupil, a learner, and even a martyr. We are to move men and women to surrender to Jesus and volunteer to follow and serve him. Such a commitment will cost some their lives.

Up to Christ's time of ascension, the disciples had concentrated on winning Jews, but now they were instructed to evangelize **all** nations, all people groups. They were to begin where they were in Jerusalem and then proceed to Judea, Samaria, and the farthest parts of the earth to reach all nations (Acts 1:8). God would direct their steps and he will direct ours too.

Our task of making a disciple has two parts: baptizing and teaching. The present tense used in these words means that we are to 'keep on' baptizing and teaching. We continue to make disciples by continuing to baptize and to teach.

This is the first time the Trinitarian formula for baptism was given. It is what we still follow today. Baptism is done in the one name of the three persons. The God of the Bible revealed himself as one God of three persons. These are God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They

are three and yet only one. Baptism served as an indication of repentance, according to the preaching of both John the Baptist and Jesus. It results in forgiveness of sins and the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Baptism is thus an outward sign of an inner work of grace that is already completed. The implication is that **all** who repented would be baptized.

The second part of the task is teaching—sharing what you have learned with those you win. What were the disciples to teach? They were to teach converts to obey everything Jesus had commanded them. Teaching results in a spiritual renewal, so that new believers can obey Christ's instructions. Converts needed more than just head knowledge—dos and don'ts. One evangelistic message is not enough. The actions of the teachers must agree with their words. The messenger is the message. It may take a lifetime of adding precept upon precept and living the message out to make mature disciples.

To sum up the lesson so far, we see that the commission was given because Jesus now has ALL power and authority. It meant they would go to ALL peoples; make disciples of ALL individuals; baptize ALL in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and teach them ALL to obey ALL that Jesus had commanded. The final good news is that Jesus promised to be with them ALL the time—to the very end of the age. They would not go on this assignment alone, but with the promise of Christ's presence. The “end of the age” means until Jesus returns to this world.

Jesus further told the disciples, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.” Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it (Mark 16:16-18, 20).

Jesus delivers those who believe the message from spiritual death. New believers should be baptized in water as a testimony to their families and neighbors of their changed life. Those who do not believe are under God's condemnation. Not only will the words of the messengers prove the truth of the gospel. God will work miracles to prove the message. Believers will speak in unknown languages. God will protect them from Satan and those he controls. They will bring God's healing to sick people. These promises are still for us today. As we proclaim his message, God gives supernatural signs to draw and convince unbelievers. This is because he is seated at the right hand of God and has all the authority of God himself.

The Good News of the Kingdom is that Christ has taken authority from Satan. All authority is now his. Satan is defeated and the power of sin is broken for those who follow Jesus. He asks us to go and spread this Good News, making disciples, baptizing and teaching them. He manifests his reign on earth through his Church. When we have accomplished our mission, Christ will come back and establish his glorious Kingdom.

This story is **important** because it shows God's concern that the message of Christ be told worldwide so all peoples can hear and respond to it.

The **main truth** of this story is that all believers are under the command of Christ. They are to share God's Word with all people. And God will be with them all of the time!

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What are the words of Jesus that make up the Great Commission?
A. [Pause] If you answered, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them," you are correct.
2. What is the Christian baptismal formula that Jesus gave?
A. [Pause] If you said, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," you are correct.
3. What promise did Jesus give to those who obeyed his Commission?
A. [Pause] If you answered, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age," you are right.
4. What were the disciples to teach those who responded to the Good News?
A. [Pause] If you answered, "Teaching them to obey everything Christ had commanded them," you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can tell it from memory. After you tell it to someone, ask them these questions, "What is the purpose of God in giving this Great Commission? Why are people involved in the process?"