

Great Commission Bible Study

Matthew 28:16-20

I. Setting:

- A. We do not know for sure how much time passed between Jesus' appearance to the women on Easter Sunday and His appearance to the eleven in Galilee. We do know that Jesus appeared to various people in various places over a period of 40 days before He ascended into heaven. It may well be that this incident took place near the end of those 40 days. (PBC)
- B. Galilee was given to the tribes of Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali (Joshua 19:10-16, 24-39). The land was fertile and a number of important routes crossed the area (Is. 9:1). (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2) [See map on next page]
- C. At the time of Christ, Galilee extended from Mt. Hermon on the North to Mt. Carmel on the south, and from the Jordan River on the east side to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. Herod Antipas was its ruler. Jesus performed the major part of His ministry there. The twelve disciples, except Judas Iscariot, were all from Galilee. The leaders of Judea hated Galileans, who were known by the way they talked. (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)
- D. That a mountain setting was selected doubtless marked outwardly the fact that a noteworthy event was to transpire; for it was on a mountain that Jesus had preached His great sermon (chapters 5-7), on a mountain after spending a night in prayer He had chosen the twelve apostles from among His many disciples, on a mountain He had discoursed with the multitudes and then fed the five thousand and four thousand respectively. Now on a mountain He would issue the Great Commission. (A Short Explanation of Matthew 28:16-20 – Walter A. Maier)

II. The Eleven – 28:16:

A. What do we know about their backgrounds?

1. Matthew
2. Simon the Zealot
3. Andrew and Peter
4. James and John

B. What do we know about their recent behavior?

C. What were Jesus reactions to their various short-comings?

III. Worshipped Him – 28:17:

- A. There is little doubt that here Matthew intends the full sense of worship, implying that Jesus is now recognized as more than human – cf. the same verb used of the disciples with the exclamation “You are the Son of God” in 14:33. (CC)
- B. As with the worship of the two Marys (28:9), so now with the Eleven, we can imagine that this is worship in deepest sense.
 - 1. In what ways does our worship service provide opportunities to have this same worship each and every weekend?
 - 2. How can we take the gifts we receive in worship with us into our daily life?

IV. Some doubted – 28:17:

- A. This is not the same word (*apistos*) used to signify the “doubt” (tantamount to unbelief). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)
- B. The meaning of *distzo* can range from “doubt” (Mt. 14:31) to “hesitate” (BAGD), he still expresses faith when he calls to Jesus, as Lord, to save him (Mt. 14:30). The other gospels too depict some of Jesus’ followers in varying degrees of uncertainty, even after His resurrection. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 3)
 - 1. What kind of doubts do you think they had?
 - 2. How might these doubts differ from doubts they had had in the past?
 - 3. What are doubts that come into our lives?

V. He came to them – 28:18:

- A. He could have stood atop the mountain; challenged them to climb the rest of the way. He could have condemned those who doubted. Not so! He treated those doubters as He treated Thomas in John 20:24-28. (Koehneke)
- B. When, as verse 18 tells us, “Jesus approached and spoke to them” then surely all uncertainty disappeared. The entire apostolic band was eager to hear what their Lord had to say. (A Short Explanation of Matthew 28:16-20 – Walter A. Maier)
 - 1. How was Jesus’ coming to them, comforting to the disciples?
 - 2. How does He still come to us?

VI. All Authority – 28:18:

- A. Authority is illusory unless backed by real power. It means no hindrances, to be able, unlimited opportunity. It also means that an action is not prevented by a higher norm or court, that it may be done or is not forbidden. (Kittel)
- B. Jesus asserted that his was the absolute, the total control over all created things in heaven – the entire angelic host and the spirits of the saints already in glory and over all forces of nature, devils, and all the rest of his animate and inanimate creation. Whole creature world had to submit to His will and respond to His command; no hostile power could withstand Him. (A Short Explanation of Matthew 28:16-20 – Walter A. Maier)

1. How would this help the disciples overcome any doubts they had?
2. How is it comforting to us in our daily lives?

VII. Therefore – 28:19:

- A. Now - Inferential, denoting that what it introduces is the result of or an inference from what precedes. (Bauer p. 593)
- B. He could not only give commands to His disciples but also clear the way and do everything necessary for them to carry out His commands. (A Short Explanation of Matthew 28:16-20 – Walter A. Maier)

1. What had they already heard and seen that could fill them with confidence?
2. What are things that have happened in our lives that should give us comfort and confidence?

VIII. Go – 28:19:

- A. Set in motion, to bring on the way, to lead. In the NT it means to go, to take a journey that only ends in eternity. (Kittel – Volume 6, Page 573)
- B. As you are going through life...each moment of your life. – The disciple-makers must go out where these people are. Not as in the OT period by attracting them to Jerusalem, the Temple, and its worship, but by traveling out to all the unbelieving and presenting them with Word and Sacrament where they live. (A Short Explanation of Matthew 28:16-20 – Walter A. Maier)

1. What are places where you are in contact with people who need to know Christ and the salvation He has won for us?

2. What are some approaches that you might use to witness?

IX. Make disciples – 28:19:

- A. In the NT *mathetes* occurs only in the Gospels and Acts. It is a common word attested for certain some 250 times. (Kittel)
- B. Disciple (*Mathetes*) always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the disciple and which in its particularity leaves no doubt as to who is deploying the formative power. (Kittel).
- C. One who accepts, learns from and follows a teacher and instruction. A disciple of Jesus is one who devotes himself to Jesus in this way. This is possible only when through the miracle of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, a person is enabled to accept Jesus as his Savior and Lord, and this for this reason seeks to learn of Christ and doing His bidding. (A Short Explanation of Matthew 28:16-20 – Walter A. Maier)

1. How is disciple-making being done at our church?

2. What can you do to help?

X. All nations – 28:19:

- A. It appears as an adjective here and then three more times in the verses ending Matthew's Gospel: "all nations," "all things – everything," "all the days – always." (A Short Explanation of Matthew 28:16-20 – Walter A. Maier)
- B. Although the Eleven were all Jews, they were to preach the gospel to Jew and Gentile alike. This was in keeping with God's ancient promise to Abram: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3). It is significant that Jesus chose to utter these words in Galilee, where Jews and Gentiles had been in frequent contact with one another for centuries. (PBC, Page 443)

1. How does our church do this?

2. How can you help?

XI. Baptizing them – 28:19:

- A. *1 Peter 3:15, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”*
- B. *1 Peter 2:2, “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”*
- C. *Hebrews 5:11-14, ¹¹ We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. ¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³ Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”*
- D. There is a whole host of things that, in the push and shove of daily Christian living and mission, go into the process of getting people to the point where they are baptized, as well as enabling them to be taught comprehensively to guard everything that Jesus commanded all of his people to guard. All one has to do is read the rest of the NT (or just the Gospel of Matthew) to learn the importance of loving one’s neighbor (even the enemy [5:43-48]), doing good deeds that direct glory to the Father who is in heaven (5:16), working together to restore and preserve one’s fellow disciples (18:15-20). This means that the commission to “make disciples” is given here in only the barest of skeletal forms. (CC)

1. Looking at paragraphs A-C, where does the ability for us to be a witness begin?
2. Read paragraph D and see how you can be a part of the discipling process?

XII. In the name – 28:19:

- A. In Judaism this phrase indicated that a person was being effectually committed to something or someone. One circumcised “in the name of the covenant” was committed to the covenant, brought under its blessing and placed under its obligations. A person baptized “in the name of the Father” has God as his gracious Father. Baptized in the name “of the Son,” one receives all the benefits of the Son’s redeeming act. Baptized in the name “of the Holy Spirit,” one receives the life-giving, life-sustaining power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is the enacted gospel of the Trinity. (CSB)
- B. “Name” is singular, followed by the threefold naming of the divine persons. This illustrates the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Those baptized in the name of the Father has God as their Father; baptized in the name of the Son, they receive all the benefits of the Son’s redeeming act; baptized in the name of the Spirit, they receive the life-giving, life-sustaining power and presence of the Spirit. Christian Baptism is founded on this institution. (TLSB)

1. The next time there is a baptism in church think about all the benefits that are being shared.
2. How can you take hold of these benefits in your daily life?

XIII. Teaching them – 28:20

- A. The form in which Jesus teaches is that of a Jewish teacher of the period. After reading of the Scripture portion which took place standing, Jesus seated Himself like other expositors of the time and based His address on the passage just read. (Kittel)
- B. Disciples are made not only through Baptism, but through the ongoing catechetical work of the Church. (TLSB)
 1. How does this take place at our church?
 2. How can/do you take advantage of the classes offered at our church?

XIV. To obey everything– 28:20:

- A. This teaching is not to be a mere intellectual process. Jesus says “teaching to guard,” which means to obey and preserve, and also to preserve and to keep inviolate. A living reception in the heart is had in mind, an assimilation by means of faith, one that will henceforth control and mold the entire character and life. (Lenski, Page 1179)
- B. He asks that his disciples teach those who are converted and baptized not only to know (academically), or keep in mind, but also to observe, or do His will – and to do so not only 90% but all 100% of the things he has commanded his disciples. (A Short Explanation of Matthew 28:16-20 – Walter A. Maier)
 1. What are some ways to go to another level of learning the Scriptures?
 2. What are some things that need to be done to have us go to another level of Scriptural ingestion?

XV. I am with you to the end of the age – 28:20:

- A. This is not a general sort of promise of Christ’s presence with his disciples; rather, it is a promise that sustains and enables the making of disciples. The church will not go out alone as she baptizes and teaches. Jesus will be going with her. In that sense, although the Great Commission is, on one level, Jesus’ command to which Jesus commits himself; he will undergird and accompany the performance of it. “The one who receives you receives

me” (10:40). With this authority (28:18) and this promise (28:20), Jesus speaks to their doubt. (CC)

B. Not only in Spirit but also according to His human nature. He is present especially in His Church and congregation on earth as Mediator, Head, King, and High Priest. This presence is not a part, or only one half of Him. Christ’s entire person is present, to which both natures belong, the divine and the human – not only according to His divinity, but also according to, and with, His received human nature. (TLSB)

1. How was this empowering to the disciples, especially those who doubted?
2. How is it comforting and encouraging to us in our daily lives?

XVI.