

“Making Disciples of All Nations”

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“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

Read Matthew 28:16-20

This paragraph has been often called, “The Great Commission,” but I have made the command to make disciples into a participle . . . please excuse me. I did so only because it reads better as a title for the article.

I find the two verses (vv. 16, 17) preceding verses 18 through 20 intriguing. The 11 disciples obeyed our Lord’s command and went to the place He had previously designated (v. 16). Upon arriving, they saw Him. They responded in one of two ways. Some of the 11 worshipped and others doubted. Why did some worship and others doubt? They had initially obeyed what He said and yet at this juncture in their journey, they doubted.

I believe it is always necessary to put the statement in its historical context. If we had experienced all that had transpired what would our response have been? We might want to believe we would have been leading the charge for obedience and waving the flag of undying loyalty, but I think we might have been more like Peter’s denial and Thomas’s doubt.

The Greek word for doubt is a verb and is only used twice in the New Testament. Here and in Matthew 14:31 where Peter, when walking on the water, “doubted.” It is not a brutal word, but a word meaning, “To waver in one’s opinion.” It is in the context of belief and doubt, abandonment and hesitancy, loyalty and betrayal that our Lord than utters the next three statements. The Three salient features in the three verses that follow and have been the subject of many studies.

- **First**, the power of our Lord is highlighted (v. 18).
 - This power is regal (“All authority”)
 - This power is universal (“In heaven and on earth”)
- **Second**, the program of our Lord is described (v. 19).
 - This program is intentional (“Make disciples”)
 - This program is inclusive (“Of all the nations”)
- **Third**, the presence of our Lord is guaranteed (v. 20).
 - This presence is personal (“With you always”)
 - This presence is perpetual (“Even to the end of the age”)

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His power guarantees that every resource has been made available to insure the success of the mission. His program guarantees that instruction has been given and direction is clear. We will never have to wonder if we are doing the right thing. His presence guarantees that we will never be left to feel that we have been abandoned by God. What an exciting thought!

When considering the disciple-making ministry, we have a clear direction from our Lord as to what we are to be about. Every area of ministry is to be contributing and working from this divine design. Whether it is a pre-evangelism that leads to evangelism that leads to disciple-making that leads to the planting of local churches, we are to see every piece of ministry contributing to and working from this divine design. How wonderfully simplistic this makes local church ministry! Ministry is never defined by location; it is defined only by attitude. Regardless as to where you might find yourself on the disciple-making continuum, with the proper mind-set, you can be a part of something that is far greater than your "piece of the pie." Right now through the WBC fellowship, various people are engaged in this divine design. From the children's ministry, through Project Manna, in Pre-school Moms, and in every manifestation of the WBC Mission Statement, God is fulfilling His design for ministry.

Ultimately, all of this will culminate in the heaven when an innumerable host from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation will gather around His throne to worship Him. I long for that day. Yet until that day we are privileged to be a part of His eternal purpose in time. In fact, "We are determined to shout the supremacy of God in all things by finding, celebrating, and declaring that He is enough in this life and in the life to come through the systematic study of the Scripture and to share this message with every tribe, tongue, people, and nation." Friends . . . rejoice.