THE GREAT COMMISSION

BIBLE TEXT

Luke 24:49 - 53; Matthew 28:16 - 20; Mark 16:15 - 20

MEMORY VERSE:

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark 16:17, 18).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version


49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

Matthew 28:16 - 20

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Mark 16:15 - 20

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

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The Great Commission

15 gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. 19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

### III The Empowering Holy Ghost

1. The Great Commission depended upon power from God for successful results, Luke 24:49;

   **Acts 1:8**
   
   8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

2. The Holy Ghost brings to remembrance all of Jesus’ teachings; these things are to be taught to the people of the world, Matthew 28:19, 20

   **John 14:26**
   
   26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

3. Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, and the disciples went forth to carry out their commission, Mark 16:19, 20; Luke 24:50-53;

   **Acts 1:9-14**
   
   9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. 12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

### NOTES:

Jesus Christ our Lord was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:3, 4). The joy of Jesus' disciples knew no bounds as the truth of
the resurrection of their Savior and Master unfolded to their hearts and minds. Once again their sovereign Lord lived and walked among them. It filled the disciples’ hearts with awe and love to behold Jesus suddenly standing in their midst when they were in secret meeting with the doors bolted against intrusion. But Jesus was no intruder in their midst. He comes to those who desire His presence and seek His blessing.

Receiving Instructions

Before His crucifixion Jesus repeatedly told His disciples that His Kingdom was not of this earth, and that He would soon return to the Father in Heaven. He attempted to describe to the disciples the plan of His Kingdom and of the Gospel dispensation, but the hearts of these men, even though they followed their Master very faithfully, were not capable of realizing at once all God’s plan. However, the time of His ascension drew near, so the last of His words and testament on earth were given to the disciples. Jesus had instructed them to go before Him into Galilee; and there, in the country that had produced most of His disciples, He gave the Great Commission and outlined the life-work of those disciples who were destined to become stalwart defenders of the Faith and intrepid warriors of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The task that Jesus commanded the disciples to perform was tremendous; in fact, it was so great that it could never be carried out except through the agency and direct help of the Comforter, the Third Person of the Trinity, whom Jesus had promised to send from Heaven. First things should be obtained first, and Jesus instructed the disciples to tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until they "be endued with power from on high." Once the power of the Holy Ghost had been obtained, the disciples would be properly equipped to go forth to carry out the rest of their commission.

It was vitally important that the disciples keep in constant communion with God the Father. The Holy Spirit was the communicating Agent, and He fills this same office, and others, still today. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13, 14). These verses show the necessity of having the Holy Comforter in the heart to lead and guide. He must be followed if any measure of Christian success is expected.

A Savior with Power

A very important and forceful statement opened Jesus' discourse with His disciples in Galilee, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). This is a very sweeping statement — all the power that can be attributed to God, Jesus Himself possessed. A heart of faith has no trouble believing this, for the true Christian knows that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and equal to the Father in power and authority. Jesus not only had that power, but He imparted a portion of that same power to His disciples to perform the work of the Kingdom, and He imparts power for Kingdom work in the present generation to all who are "called, and chosen, and faithful." Jesus is no respecter of persons. He calls every man, woman, and child to walk with Him; He receives them when they answer the call with all their heart; and He gives grace, glory, and strength to help them to be faithful.

How was this God-given power imparted to the disciples to
be used? Were they to rule with rigor the Church and the nations that came under their influence? Not at all. They were to go forth into all the world to preach and to teach the Gospel. The doctrine to be taught was the doctrine that the disciples had learned from Christ, and that doctrine would set men free from the bondage of sin. The disciples were not instructed to proclaim the truth to the educated and overlook the uneducated; they were not to visit the civilized nations and forget the heathen; they were not given permission to travel to the easily accessible cities at the expense of the remote and hard-to-reach populations. They were commanded to preach to every creature — wherever he could be found, at any and every expense of strength, money, or other means at their disposal.

The Christian Commission

Was this commission given to the eleven disciples only, or is it a commission that is binding on everyone who takes upon himself the name of Christ? Without doubt the latter is true. Our Father and our Savior know the extent of man's ability, and never expect the impossible. These eleven men would not be expected to preach to every man in every part of the world; but the Gospel faithfully proclaimed would make new disciples who in turn would take up the commission, and the Kingdom would grow until the end would be accomplished that had been determined.

Jesus promised, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." These disciples were not destined to live upon earth forever. Jesus had lifted the penalty of sin from their lives; but the sentence of death, common to all men, still remained. What, then, did Jesus mean by this saying, except that the Great Commission includes all generations of Christians? The commission is just as binding upon the children of God today as it was upon the eleven disciples immediately after Jesus' departure.

"God to the angels commissioned not
Here the glad message to tell,
But to the saved, snatched from the grave,
Gave He the charge that story to tell.
Down through the ages 'twas e'er the same,
Always a faithful band
Told the sweet story of Jesus' love,
Told of Redemption's plan."

Powerful Gospel

The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven is a powerful Gospel. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith; and implicit faith in the Son of God will bring about great and marvellous things. Jesus assured the disciples that mighty miracles would follow their preaching of the Truth. In Jesus' name devils would be cast out of men; and if the disciples unintentionally took up a serpent, or if they accidentally drank any deadly thing, no harm would befall them. In addition, new tongues would be manifest among them, and they would lay their hands upon the sick and "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (James 5:15). The same miracle-working power that had been manifested in the Son of God would be manifested also among His true followers.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and His Word is the same and will continue forever. Some men would have us believe that the miracles of the Gospel ceased when the first Church was fully established — that the miracles and the baptism of the Holy Ghost were given to secure a successful start for the Church but are now a thing of the past. Nothing can be
farther from the truth, because a true, living faith in God will bring about the same results in our lives as it brought about in the early Church. The Latter Rain Gospel today has witnessed the same miracles that accompanied the preaching of the Gospel after Pentecost, and many, many of them. God works for men to the extent that they allow Him to work; so do not limit the power of God or of His Son.

Water Baptism

The Great Commission included the ordinance of water baptism to be performed upon all who were truly converted into the Church from their former sinful ways. This ordinance typifies the death and burial of Jesus and His triumphant resurrection. (Romans 6:3-6) ³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin) It is an outward act that is indicative of the inward work wrought by the grace of God. It is performed in behalf of those only who have had a change of heart. Burial denotes death, and the man who is not dead to sin cannot be buried with Christ in water baptism.

The Bible way of water baptism is by immersion. The word baptism is derived from a word that means literally to dip or plunge. John the Baptist must have baptized by immersion, for he went to the portion of Jericho where he found much water (John 3:23) ²³ And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized). Jesus was baptized of John, and we read, “Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water” (Matthew 3:16). He necessarily went into the water before He could come out of it.

Immersion must have been the Apostolic way of baptism, too. When Philip baptized the eunuch who had been converted through his ministry, “they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38). Are these passages of Scripture not sufficient evidence to establish the grounds of immersion as the proper mode of baptism?

Holy Trinity

The truth of the Trinity in the Godhead shines through the ordinance of water baptism. The disciples were commanded to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” — the three Persons of the Godhead, but only one baptism!

When Jesus was baptized, the three Persons of the Godhead were present. Jesus Christ, the Son, obeyed the ordinance; the Father in Heaven witnessed to the fact by saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17); and the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, descended like a dove, and lighted upon Jesus (Matthew 3:16) ¹⁶ And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him). The baptism of Jesus is the pattern for every Christian baptism; and though the convert who obeys this wonderful ordinance may not see any demonstration with his natural eye or hear any words with his
natural ear, yet the Godhead witnesses to the fact of the ordinance obeyed. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (I John 5:7). Every Christian should obey this ordinance of water baptism at his earliest opportunity, because continued willful neglect of any command of God will result in eternal separation from God.

The Great Commission was given that the Gospel of Jesus Christ might be spread throughout the world. Not all are called to spread the Gospel in the same way; but when a person willingly serves God with all his heart, the way that he should spread the Gospel will become apparent. When the will and way of God are known, then it is the joy of the Christian heart to follow.

**QUESTIONS**

1. In what appointed place were the disciples to meet Jesus after His resurrection?
2. To whom were the disciples commanded to preach the Gospel?
3. Were they to do this in their own strength? Why were the disciples commanded to tarry for a time in Jerusalem?
4. What signs follow the preaching of the Word?
5. What is the meaning of the ordinance of water baptism? To whom should it be given?
6. Were the eleven disciples the only Christians who received the Great Commission?
7. How long did Jesus promise to be with His disciples?
8. What took place when Jesus had finished blessing the disciples?