

Go Therefore

The Mission of the Church

Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (ESV)

INTRODUCTION

In the 40 days between Christ's resurrection and His ascension, there are at least ten recorded appearances and five different reiterations of the disciples' mission.

- *The disciples were slow and needed to have their mission reinforced and solidified.*
- *Their mission was counter-intuitive to their Jewish exclusivity.*



THE MISSION

Throughout the various versions of the commission, the message is the same. The disciples are called upon to be witnesses of the risen and exalted Christ and proclaim His Gospel which:

- *demands repentance and faith in Him as the only Savior.*
- *must be proclaimed to all people in all the earth.*

This mission rests upon the same absolute authority the disciples are to proclaim to the world.

THE IMPERATIVE

The main verb in the Great Commission is not "go" but to "make disciples of all nations." However, since the whole world is to hear this proclamation:

- *God's heralds must necessarily "go," even to the most remote regions of the earth.*
- *Jesus outlines the plan for expansion in Acts 1:8.*

AN IMPROBABLE SUCCESS

The naïve and inexperienced disciples took the Gospel of Christ to hostile cultures, steeped in idolatry and pagan philosophies. They succeeded because of Christ's authority, not their own. It was a success qualified by God's purpose.

- *For the most part, all nations would hate them.*
- *It was a success despite promised persecution.*
- *As Jesus said, few would respond.*

Most of the disciples gave their lives in the service of their mission. Matthew went as far as Ethiopia; Peter, to Rome; Nathaniel, to Armenia; Andrew to Greece; Thomas, to India; Philip, to Phrygia; Simon, to Britain. All of these men died in these foreign lands proclaiming the Gospel.

Versions of the Great Commission

Matthew:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

Mark:

"Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature."

Luke:

"...preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name to all the nations."

Acts:

"...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

John:

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

"Many of every age, of every social class, even of both sexes, are being called to trial and will be called. Nor cities alone, but villages and even rural areas have been invaded by the infection of this superstition."

~ Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan