

THE GREAT COMMISSION

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18–20).

Origin. The Great Commission was given by the resurrected Christ to his eleven disciples shortly before His ascension to heaven (Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:47).

Commands. The Great Commission consists of three commands: "Go!" (Matt. 28:19), "Preach the gospel to all creation!" (Mark 16:15), and "Make disciples of all the nations!" (Matt. 28:19).

Starting Time. The Great Commission began on the day of Pentecost when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to empower His disciples (Luke 24:49, 52–53; Acts 1:4–5, 8). The Great Commission and the Church Age began at the same time—on the same day.



Starting Point and Goal. The Great Commission began in Jerusalem and has as its goal "all the nations" of the earth (Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

Message. The disciples were commanded to proclaim "repentance for forgiveness of sins...to all the nations" (Luke 24:47).

Plan. The Great Commission was carried out in stages according to a predetermined plan: "beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47) "you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Empowered. The power of the indwelling Holy Spirit must be present in their lives for the Great Commission to be successful (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–5, 8).

Authority for Missions. Going to all nations is missionary activity. Therefore, missions finds authority for its existence in the Great Commission.

Discipleship. Making disciples involves:

- a. *going*: "Go" (Matt. 28:19); "Go into all the world" (Mark 16:15),
- b. *witnessing*: "You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48); "you shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8),
- c. *preaching*: "preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15); "repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations" (Luke 24:47),
- d. *baptizing*: 'by baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' (Matt. 28:19 RCL), and
- e. *teaching*: 'by teaching them to keep all that I commanded you' (Matt. 28:20 RCL).

Sign of Its Beginning. Speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost was the first sign that the Great Commission had begun (Acts 2:1–13; cf. Mark 16:17). This miracle was evidence of the Holy Spirit's empowering: "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). Clothed with this new power, they began "speaking of the mighty deeds of God" (Acts 2:11) in the different languages of the Jews from the lands of the Diaspora.

Peter's Sermon. His first sermon on the day of Pentecost is an excellent example of how the Great Commission should be carried out.

- a. *He preached in Jerusalem* (compare Luke 24:47 with Acts 2:5, 14, 22).
- b. *He spoke in the power of the Spirit* (Acts 2:4, 33).
- c. *He witnessed about Jesus Christ* (compare Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8 with Acts 2:22–36, 40).
- d. *He preached repentance and baptism*: "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). "And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'" (Acts 2:40). Compare Luke 24:47.
- e. *He baptized them*: "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41; compare Matt. 28:19 and Mark 16:16).
- f. *He taught them*: "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42; compare Matt. 28:20).

