The Great Commission of the Great King

Matthew 28:16-20

Introduction: 1) SEBTS is known as a Great Commission Seminary. When asked in 2021 who we are, I said I can give it to you in a 1) word, 2) short phrase, or 3) a longer sentence.

1) GO!

2) We are a Great Commission Seminary.

3) Our mission statement: "SEBTS seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by equipping students to serve the Church and fulfill the Great Commission."

2) However, all of this begs a question: "What is the Great Commission?" Afterall, the phrase is not found in the Bible. Recently I have become aware of the fact many do not know what it is or where it is.

- Our accreditation visitin Spring 2022. Asked both what is it and where is it.
- Interesting facts concerning the "Great Commission"
  - Only 17% of regular attenders can identify and define the Great Commission.

- 50% (half) of “churched Christians” say they have never heard of the Great Commission and cannot correctly identify the scripture associated with the command.
- 50% of “church Christians” do not view missions as a mandate for the entire church, only a calling for some.
- Only 37% pray for global missions on a weekly basis when they gather for worship.
- Only 47% of all Christians and 60% of evangelical Christians say “sharing Jesus with others” best fits “what missions is.” Other answers tended to focus on and give attention to curing societal ills (poverty, racism, sexism, global warming, war).

3) So, lets ask and answer 2 crucial questions: 1) Where do we find the Great Commission? 2) What is the Great Commission?

- Where: Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21-23; Acta 1:8. God gives it 5 times. It is important to Him!
- What: Matthew 28:16-20, the longest and most popular version, will answer that question.
  - These are the last words and final marching orders of King Jesus before He ascended back to heaven. Last words are meant to be lasting words.

- These words of Jesus were not uttered by a dying man, but by the risen and resurrected Lord! (Matt 28:1-10) The Great Commission stands on the solid rock of the Bodily Resurrection! Without the former the latter has no power, no authority, no worth. Three powerful truths!

I. Recognize and believe He has all authority 28:16-18

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) great missionary to China who surrendered to be a missionary at 16 said: "The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed."

He believed this because He knew who had all authority in the universe!

1) Worship Him as the resurrected King 28:16-17

Jesus has died on the cross (ch 27) and risen from the dead (28:1-10). Now the eleven disciples minus Judas go north to Galilee "to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them" (v. 16). The scene reminds us of the setting of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1). It is interesting to note that the climatic temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4:8-11), the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1), the Olivet discourse of the end times (Matt. 24-25), and now the Great Commission of the great king all took place on a mountain. "When they sawHim they worshiped Him," though amazingly, "some doubted" (v. 17). Perhaps they were overwhelmed by it

all. Evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus is not sparse! He appeared at least 11 times according to the New Testament in fulfillment of numerous Old Testament prophecies. The Christ of the manger is also the King of the empty tomb! Worship Him as the resurrected King.

2) Hear Him as the sovereign Lord 28:18

Jesus comes close and now speaks (Read v. 18).

- "All" appears 4 times in verses 18-20 (all/always)
- Echos of Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." (cf. Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9-10)
- John Piper, "The risen Christ is great, greater than you ever imagined. Here is our witness to the world: the risen Christ is your King, and He has absolute unlimited authority over your life. If you do not bow and worship Him and trust Him and obey Him, you commit high treason against your King, who is God over all."

Every square inch of creation belongs to King Jesus. His authority is unrivaled! His Lordship extends to everything including you and me!

Abraham Kuyper (1864-1945) Prime Minister of Netherlands and public theologian: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, MINE!"

Recognize and believe! Trust and obey!

II. Obey and act on His global plan 28:19-20

The wonderful theologian John Stott wrote, "We need to be global Christians with a global vision, for we have a global God" (*40 Questions*, 116). Verses 19-20 are the heart of the Great Commission. The main verb is the charge to "make disciples." It is an imperative! However, the 3 participles orbiting around the imperative: "Go, Baptizing and Teaching" rightly receive the force of an imperative as well. This is how we make disciples. We go! We baptize! We teach! And, we have no need to stop and pray about doing this! We have the Great King's command and commission. It is crystal clear!

1) Go and make disciples of all nations 28:19

- This involves the work of evangelism and gospel proclamation.

  3 crucial questions must be asked here and answered:

1) What is the gospel?

2) Who are the nations?

3) What is a disciple?

- The gospel: a) What it is not → Mark Twain: "The church is good people standing in front of good people telling them how to be good." No, there are no good people, only sinners who need a Savior. (cf. Rom 3)B) Billy Graham → 50% of those attending church are lost? No! Much higher!!! They have not believed the gospel. C) <u>The gospel is</u>: 1) the good news that King Jesus died on the cross and paid the full penalty of human sin, rose from the dead, and will save anyone from their sin if they repent and trust in Him. 2) The gospel proclaims a <u>done</u> religion not a <u>do</u> religion. It is what Christ has done for us not what we can do for Him. 3) The gospel teaches the person who has Jesus + nothing actually has everything! And the person who has everything minus Jesus actually has nothing. (Ex. Pastor Sam in South Sudan).

  <u>Carl Henry</u>: "The gospel is only good news if it gets there in time." We GO!!!

- <u>The nations</u>: not a reference to political or national boundaries. The word is *ethne* (ethnic, ethnicity) meaning people groups who have a distinct culture, language and identity.

The Facts:

World population: 8 billion

People groups: 12, 016

Unreached people groups: 7, 223 4.7 billion

157,690 die every day without Jesus. Unengaged people groups: 3,184273 million (11/25/2022)

- These peoples will be born, live, die and go to hell without ever hearing the gospel. It is this reality that moved the great missionary James Fraser (1886-1938) to go to the mountains of western China and spend his life fulfilling the Great Commission there among the Lisu people. He was inspired to GO after reading a small booklet entitled *Do Not Say*. It inspired him to forego a promising career as an engineer and concert pianist, and to give his life to see an unreached and unengaged people group hear the name of Jesus. What were the words that changed the course of his and the Lisu people forever? They are simple and clear: "A command has been given: "Go ye into al the world and preach the gospel to every creature." It has not been obeyed. More than half the people in the world have never yet heard the gospel. What are we to say to this? Surely it concerns us Christians very seriously. For we are the people who are responsible….If our master returned today to find millions of

people unevangelized, and looked as of course he would look, to us for an explanation, I cannot imagine what explanation we should have to give….of one thing I am certain-that most of the excuses we are accustomed to make with such good conscience now, we should be wholly ashamed of then." (*MountainRain,* 4).

- Disciples: Devoted followers of King Jesus who as our Lord said, "deny themselves, take up His cross, and follow Him (Mark 8:34). It is more than a convert, though it starts there. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 11:1, it is someone, who out of love and devotion to their Lord, seeks to imitate Him in every area of their lives.

2) <u>Go and baptize disciples of all nations</u> 28:19

- First act of obedience
- Unbaptized Christian would have made no sense in the 1st century. It makes no sense today. It is an oxymoron. An unbaptized Christian is a disobedient Christian!
- Further, this part of the Great Commission implies church planting where baptized believers, who have identified themselves with Christ, come together for worship, fellowship and community as the family of God

3) <u>Go and teach disciples of all nations</u> 28:20

- This is the key component to growing as a disciple.
- Barna: “most Christians don’t act like Jesus because they don’t think like Jesus.
- Great value of expository preaching and teaching of the Bible. Book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, phrase by phrase, and word by word.
- It is immersing yourself in the gospel, not only for your conversion, but also your growth. Because I am loved and accepted in Christ, I love Him back. Because I am loved and accepted in Christ, I obey Him. Because I am loved and accepted in Christ, I study His precious love letter from heaven called the Bible.Because I am loved and accepted in Christ, I want to be like Him!And, I want others to know about Him too!
- Missionary Jim Elliott (1927-1956) – martyred in Ecuador with 4 others as they went to evangelize among the Auca Indians wrote in his diary: “Because Thou [the Father] sure art set to justify that Son of Thine and wilt in time make known just who He is and soon will send Him back to show Himself; because the Name of Jesus has been laughingly nailed upon a cross and is just now on earth held very lightly and Thou wilt bring that Name to light; because, O God of righteousness, Thou wilt do

right by my Lord, Jesus Christ, I worship Thee." This is the heartand passionof a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

III. Trust and rest in His amazing promise 28:20

John Keith Falconer, English aristocrat, Arabic scholar at Cambridge, athlete and world cycling champion in 1878, was a missionary to Yemen. He died there at the age of 31 (May 11, 1887) from malaria and was buried there. I love what he said: "I have but one candle of life to burn, and I would rather burn it out in a land filled with darkness than in a land flooded with light."

C.T. Studd (1880-1931) one of the Cambridge 7 served as a missionary in China, India and Africa. He died in the Congo and was buried there in a simple grave. What did he believe? "Some wish to live within the sound of a [church] bell; I wish to run a rescue mission within a yard of hell!" His last words: "Hallelujah!"

What would move and motivate such radical obedience of men like these to obey the final marching orders of our Great King? I'm sure there were a number of things, but I am certain the amazing promise of v. 20 was an important factor. As we GO and make disciples among the nations, what does our King promise?

1) He will be with you constantly

"Behold (*NIV*, "And surely"; *CSB*, "And remember"), I am with you always." *The Message*, "I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day." As Heb. 13:5 says, "I will never leave you, I will never forsake you." When we go to make disciples among the nations, wherever that is, He is already there waiting on you! David Livingston (1813-1873); medical missionary to Africa who died on his knees in prayer and whose heart was removed and buried under a Mvula tree near where he died: "Without Christ, not one step; with him, anywhere!" He will be with you constantly.

2) <u>He will be with you forever</u>

How long is "always?" It is "always, to the end of the age." And who is it that makes this unbelievable, out of this world promise?! It is Jesus our King. My friend David Platt puts it perfectly: "This, we remember, is the great reward of the gospel: God himself. When we risk our lives to run after Christ, we discover the safety that is found only in his sovereignty, the security that is found only in his love, and the satisfaction that is found only in his presence. This is the eternally great reward, and we would be foolish to settle for anything less."

<u>Conclusion</u>: By now you probably realize I love missionary biographies! They so encourage and inspire me. So let me close with a quote from one of my favorites. It provides a perfect conclusion to our study. Henry Martyn (1781-1812) was a

brilliant scholar, mathematical genius, linguist, translator and missionary. He read the diary of missionary David Brainerd, would forgo a career as a lawyer, and leave for the mission field of India and Persia. He would die at the age of 31 from fever, tuberculosis and malaria, and be buried in Tocat, Turkey. Upon his arrival in India he exclaimed, "let me burn out for God!" And, he said this: "The spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions. The nearer we get to Him [Jesus], the more intensely missionary we become!" We have a Great Commission from a Great King. Here then is our divine mandate until He comes again.

GO! Make Disciples! He will be with you every step of the way!!!

Practical Applications:

1) Do you have a passport?

2) Are you a member of a Great Commission church?

3) Do you pray daily for unreached and unengaged people groups? (Joshua Project)

4) How often do you go on North American and International Missions?

5) Do you have specific missionaries and people groups you pray for? Your church?

6) Do you pray that your children and grandchildren would become missionaries?

7) Do you give regularly to missions?

8) Do you have a missions savings account for your children and grandchildren?

9) Do you have a Great Commission ministry in your will?

10) Do you ever pray, “Lord, why should I stay?”

We all pray, give and serve and send!