



THE GREAT COMMISSION...UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Matthew 28:19, 20

As with any Scripture, when you take the time to “dig down” beneath the surface, greater understanding will come to the meaning within God’s Word. Since the Great Commission is a command to all followers of Christ, it is important that we completely understand Christ’s directions for discipleship in our lives. Therefore, let’s take it apart and look more closely at Christ’s command “to go”.

GO

The first word spoken in this verse is GO. The Greek word is poreuomai. Vines gives the meaning as to go on one’s way, to proceed from one place to another. It is more distinctly used to indicate procedure or course than the verb eimi “to go” (not found in the New Testament). It is often rendered “go thy (your) way”. In Oriental usage the customary dismissal, marking the close of a case in court. Hence, marking the end of a conversation. The Greek Interlinear Bible states the verse in this way: “Therefore having gone make disciples.”

In Mark 16:15, Jesus also gave us a “GO” which relates to His Great Commission. “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” (HCSB) In other words, get active and be on your way to do it.

MAKING DISCIPLES

To make disciples might present a question in our minds. We cannot change or make other people into anything different. Those kinds of changes must come about as a result of our choice to change and it is only Christ who then can change anything within us. Therefore, what is meant by that word “to make?” When Jesus told His disciples that He would make them fishers of men (Matthew 4:19), He uses the word poleo. The meaning (according to Vines) is what we think of in relation to make. To make is used in the latter sense of constructing or producing anything, of the creative acts of God. To render or “make” one or oneself anything or cause a person or thing to become something. Again, that kind of make as Jesus spoke here, is only what can occur as far as changing is into something different as we surrender to Him.

So, what does the word “make” in Matthew 28:19 mean? That word “make” is not in the KJV. The correct rendering is to “Go and teach.” In the Biblical days, rabbis made disciples. However, the difference in Jesus’ command was to be teaching others about Jesus and His commands so others would follow Him (become disciples themselves as a result of our teaching). It is not about disciples to follow us as it was with the rabbis.

BAPTIZING

Baptism unites us with Christ in our death to sin and a resurrection to new life. It also (as an oath of allegiance) symbolizes submission to Christ, a willingness to obey His commands and an identification with God’s covenant people. By baptizing into the name of indicates that person has become the property of the one into whose name he or she is baptized. That word “baptize” means fully wet which indicates immersion.

An interesting note on how immersion was done in the Jewish community. Jewish baptism was and has never been taken lightly. In ancient times, immersion was to be done in the presence of witnesses. The individual would stand with their feet spread and their hands held out in front and then by squatting down they would totally immerse themselves. The witness would never touch them. In relation to this, it is interesting that when Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:16), this reference states He came up straightway out of the water.

According to Jewish law, the baptism had to have a required witness. "In the name of" was an indication of the required witness. Certain immersions required at least 3 witnesses. This is why we see in several New Testament references baptisms mentioned in conjunction with the names of individuals such as John and Paul. In Jesus' baptism, the 3 witnesses would have been John, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit (as a dove). In our baptisms, this is most likely why we have the public baptismal services of multiple witnesses and also of baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (also witnesses). It also indicates that through our baptism, we have declared ourselves to become the property of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

DUTY OF THOSE WHO ARE DISCIPLES

1. Observe all things Christ commanded.
2. Submit to the teaching of those He sends to teach (the disciple).
3. At some point, disciple others as well.

DUTIES OF THE DISCIPLERS

1. Teach the commands of Christ
2. To press upon those he/she discipled the necessity of obedience.
3. Assist the disciples in applying Christ's commands to particular life situations.
4. The one discipling must be living each of these out themselves.

GO! TEACH! BAPTIZE!