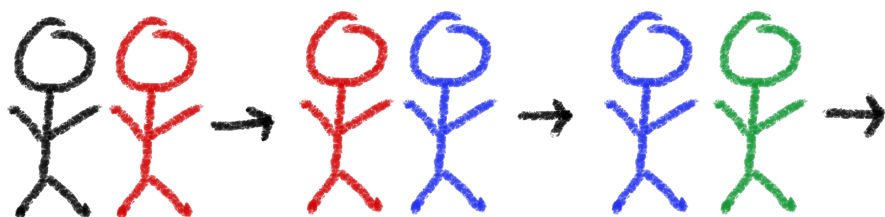


# INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLE-MAKING

*Obedying the Global Mandate of the Resurrected King Jesus*



SAM McVAY, JR.  
&  
SPENCER STEWART

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## PROLOGUE:

### THE CALL TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS

Arguably one of the most stunning statements ever made by Jesus was, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mt. 28:18). What a powerful and comprehensive statement by the resurrected God-Man! Think of its scope: "I now have *all* authority in *all* of heaven and *all* of earth!" This is a radical proclamation that Jesus did not make until after His resurrection from the dead. Of course, in His deity, it was eternally true that He had all authority everywhere; but in His humanity, He has now gained the victory through the resurrection. Yes, He had taught and ministered in authority. He had even given authority to His disciples to go on mission. But to say, "All authority in heaven and earth is mine," was reserved for a time when He had conquered in His humanity the last enemy to be defeated, which is death (1 Cor. 15:26). Jesus then stood before His disciples having defeated sin, sickness, Satan, and, finally, death. He has 100% victory in His humanity. He no longer dwells in a body that can die. He is now in a resurrected body, in which He will reign forever. The failure and consequences of Adam's sin have now been overcome.

What does He say after this amazing proclamation? What could follow such a statement? He clearly lays out His global plan to His followers, which will lead to filling the whole earth with His glory and government. What is this global plan? "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations..." (28:19). What does the One with all authority want His followers to do? Make disciples of all nations. There is no call here to propagate a religion called Christianity. Not even a call to make converts who gather in a building once each week. No, there is the clear and focused call to make disciples of all nations.

This call has gripped us to the core. We want Jesus and His mission to be the center and circumference of our every action. We are giving ourselves to Jesus and His mission in our living, preaching, praying, and writing. It is this for which the beloved Church should spend all of its energy, resources, and time. Under the weight of this glorious global mandate, which is anointed by the Holy Spirit and raged against by all of hell, we offer up this booklet. It is our prayer and hope that it will help align and accelerate the Church in her central call to make disciples. May the Spirit anoint and empower these words for all who say, "Yes," to the mission of the King.

Blessings,  
Sam

## INTRODUCTION

### THE GREATNESS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

A person's final words are important.<sup>1</sup> We cherish the final moments beside the bed of a dying loved one. He says what had remained unsaid, but needs to be said now. He seeks to impress upon his loved ones what really matters. At the end of the Gospels, we find a similar situation, though immeasurably more joyful.

A group of men and women, for three years, had followed a Jewish Man, Jesus of Nazareth, everywhere He went. They had met Him when He was about thirty, being baptized by John in the Jordan River.<sup>2</sup> At His command, they had left everything to travel with this homeless Man around the towns and villages of Galilee in the north, frequenting Jerusalem and the region of Judea in the south.<sup>3</sup> They had marveled at His miracles – signs and wonders that He worked by the power of God's Spirit, by simple words, healing every disease; giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, voice to the mute; casting out demons; walking on water; calming a storm; raising the dead!<sup>4</sup> They had been baffled by His mysterious teachings of the nature of the coming Kingdom, which had drawn near and for which the King would be killed.<sup>5</sup> They had worked with Him and rested against Him at dinners.<sup>6</sup> They loved this Man. And yet they all abandoned Him on the night He was betrayed by one of their own.<sup>7</sup> The greatest among them even denied knowing Him three times.<sup>8</sup> And then He was gone. Crucified and buried.

For three days, they grieved. They hid, scared of what the Jewish council and the Roman government would do to His followers.<sup>9</sup> Some even began to leave Jerusalem, lamenting that their hope for redemption would not be fulfilled.<sup>10</sup> But that morning, some faithful women took

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<sup>1</sup> I (Spencer) was set on this line of thinking through Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011) 43.

<sup>2</sup> Lk. 3:21-23, Jn. 1:35-51

<sup>3</sup> Mt. 4:18-25; e.g., Jn. 2:13, 5:1

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Mk. 1:27, 32-34; Mt. 8:27, 9:27-33, 11:4-5, 22:22; Lk. 4:22, 7:11-17; Jn. 9, 11:25, 11:43-44

<sup>5</sup> Mt. 13, 4:17, 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:18-19

<sup>6</sup> Mt. 14:19-21 and Jn. 13:23

<sup>7</sup> Mt. 26:31, 47-56

<sup>8</sup> Mt. 26:33-34, 69-75

<sup>9</sup> Jn. 20:19

<sup>10</sup> Lk. 24:13-21



spices to His tomb, and found it empty, except for two angels announcing His resurrection!<sup>11</sup> Peter and John sprinted to see this empty tomb for themselves.<sup>12</sup> Only once-worn grave clothes. Mary Magdalene stayed behind, weeping outside the tomb. Suddenly, shockingly, her Rabbi called her by name.<sup>13</sup> He was alive! Some of the disciples could not believe their eyes because of the intensity of their joy.<sup>14</sup> They touched His scars, and they enjoyed meals with Him – ghosts don't eat fish!<sup>15</sup> He really was alive again in a glorified, resurrected Body, the beginning of the New Creation!<sup>16</sup>

But another end came – not the end of His life, because He could never die again,<sup>17</sup> but the end of His life on *this* earth. The disciples had been graced with another forty days with their beloved Teacher, learning still more about the Kingdom of God.<sup>18</sup> And it all built up to this moment. He would leave them. He would ascend to the right hand of Majesty, sharing the throne of God the Father, reigning over all of His creation.<sup>19</sup> What would His “last words” be? What did they really need to hear? What really mattered? What would be the exclamation point on the end of these incredible three years?

We call these words the Great Commission. As our friend Joseph in India is fond of saying, “The Great Commission is the greatest commission.” That is unarguably true. The Gospels present it to us, at their climax, with that kind of emphasis. These words are the standing orders from the Commander of the universe until the stars fall, the sun stops shining, and the skies roll away.<sup>20</sup> And everyone who calls Him King should make obedience to these words his highest priority.

JOHN 20:21

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

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<sup>11</sup> Lk. 23:55-24:10

<sup>12</sup> Lk. 24:12, Jn. 20:3-10

<sup>13</sup> Jn. 20:11-16, cf. Jn. 10:3, Isa. 43:1

<sup>14</sup> Lk. 24:41

<sup>15</sup> Jn. 20:20, 27; Lk. 24:39-43

<sup>16</sup> Rev. 3:14, 1:5, Col. 1:18, cf. 2 Cor. 5:17

<sup>17</sup> Rom. 6:9, cf. Acts 2:24, 13:34, Rev. 1:18

<sup>18</sup> Acts 1:3

<sup>19</sup> Jn. 20:17, Acts 1:9, 2:33-36; 1 Cor. 15:25-27, Rev. 3:21

<sup>20</sup> “To the end of the age” (Mt. 28:20), cf. Mt. 24:3, 29-31; Rev. 6:12-17

MATTHEW 28:18-20

... "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

LUKE 24:46-50

[Jesus] said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." <sup>50</sup>Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them.

ACTS 1:8

"... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

For the sake of this introductory booklet, we will focus next only on Matthew 28:18-20, but we will remember these other pieces of the Commission: that it is like Jesus' commission from the Father, that it depends upon the power of the blessing of the Holy Spirit, and that it entails witnessing to Jesus and to the forgiveness of sins that come through repentance and faith in His Name.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

Before we dig into the details of the Great Commission in Matthew, we should support our conviction that this Commission is given to every believer until the end of the age. Some may think that it was only meant for the Eleven (the Twelve apostles minus Judas). Or some may think that it is only for professional ministers. This is an understandable misunderstanding for anyone in the American church culture with its typical separation between the clergy and the audience. In some places, the audience is divided between those who take the Bible more seriously (doing some discipleship kind of things) and those who just attend (but are glad to know they are going to heaven). We are convinced that such a current state of affairs is the result of the Adversary's scheming and deceiving to lead the Church "astray from the simplicity and purity [of devotion] to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3 NASB). We believe three simple truths can demolish such strongholds and demonstrate the Great Commission's applicability to every believer: (1) the demand of the Gospel of the Kingdom, (2) the nature of a disciple, and (3) the fact that the *first* Great

Commission was being reinstated by the *second* Man.<sup>21</sup>

THE DEMAND. First, the truth is that Jesus only called one kind of person: a disciple. The Greek word for *disciple* means *learner* – one who follows in order to learn how to become like his teacher.<sup>22</sup> Jesus said in Luke 6:40, “[A] disciple is not above the teacher; but having been fully equipped, every [one] will be like his teacher” (lit.). Therefore, we can offer at this point a very simple definition of a disciple of Jesus, based upon Jesus’ own words:

*A disciple of Jesus is one who is learning to become like Jesus.*

King Jesus never intended for anyone to presume to be saved who was not answering His call to be a disciple on His terms. Jesus’ call is not merely an invitation to get something; it is a demand to give something (your very life) in order to get something (His eternal life) that will enable us to give something (glory to His Name). Luke 9:23-25 reads:

“And he said *to all*, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup>For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. <sup>25</sup>For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?’”

*A disciple surrenders everything to make Jesus everything.* Jesus addressed these words not only to His disciples, but “to all.” To those who thought they could negotiate this all-or-nothing deal, Jesus did not lower the expectation, because His worth as the Son of God could not be lowered:

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” <sup>58</sup>And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” <sup>59</sup>To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” <sup>60</sup>And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” <sup>61</sup>Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” <sup>62</sup>Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk. 9:57-62).

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<sup>21</sup> Adam was a type of the One to come, Jesus, who was raised as the Second Man (Rom. 5:14, 1 Cor. 15:44-45). The Great Re-commission of Genesis 1:28 will be briefly stated in this Introduction and unpacked more thoroughly in Section Two (pages 30-37).

<sup>22</sup> BDAG, 609. *Mathētes* (“disciple”) is a cognate of the verb *manthanō*, “I am learning.”

No one can say, “*Lord, let me first....*” The fact that Jesus is Lord preempts any human plans. A follower should only say, “Lord, not my will, but Yours will be done. What would You have me do?” That second would-be disciple wanted to bury his father before following Jesus. Jesus commands that we must honor our parents and love them as ourselves,<sup>23</sup> but our love for our family must only “be out of obedience to Jesus, not *instead of* obedience to Jesus.”<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the third would-be disciple’s priority was his family, not the Lord. When Elisha was becoming Elijah’s disciple, he had asked this same question, and Elijah allowed him to go say goodbye to his family before following him.<sup>25</sup> But Jesus is greater than Elijah; Jesus is the Word of God become flesh.<sup>26</sup> It dishonors Him and disqualifies the sinner to put anything, even family, above Him.

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.<sup>28</sup> And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.<sup>29</sup> Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt. 10:37-39).

In fact, when large crowds began to “follow” Jesus, the Disciple-maker doubled down on this demand for preeminent and exclusive allegiance:

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them,<sup>26</sup> “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.<sup>27</sup> Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple....<sup>33</sup> So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:25-27, 33).

Again, Jesus commands that we love our fathers, mothers, spouses, children, and siblings – even enemies!<sup>27</sup> Yet, if the choice is between family or obedience to Jesus, a disciple chooses obedience to Jesus. If the choice is between living or being like Jesus in death, a disciple chooses to be like Jesus in death (Phil. 3:10). *A disciple surrenders everything to make Jesus everything.* Jesus did not want crowds; Jesus wanted (and deserved) disciples.

Guard your hearts against the thought that these demands are only

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<sup>23</sup> E.g., Mk. 7:9-13, Mt. 15:3-6, 19:19, 22:39

<sup>24</sup> *ESV Study Bible* note on Lk. 9:60.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Ki. 19:19-21

<sup>26</sup> Jn. 1:1-4, 14-18; cf. Mt. 12:42, Jn. 8:53-58

<sup>27</sup> E.g., Mt. 22:39, 5:43-48

meant for an elite sub-group within a larger group of people who are saved, even though they keep their lives, their families, their stuff, and, therefore, are not disciples. It cannot be. Later in Luke 18, the rich young ruler asked Jesus what He must do to inherit eternal life; Jesus replied essentially with what He had already said in 14:33, which was: “renounce all” and “be my disciple.” The question concerned eternal life, and the answer was: give up everything and be My disciple (18:22). *Discipleship is a salvation issue.* We are saved by grace through faith – the kind of faith that sees Jesus is Lord, Creator, Owner, Master, a Disciple-maker worthy to be obeyed.<sup>28</sup> Another time, Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, then you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” from slavery to sin.<sup>29</sup> If one does not live in the state of increasingly learning and obeying Jesus’ words, then he does not truly believe, he is not a disciple, and he will remain enslaved and die in his sins.<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere, Jesus taught that only disciples who are bearing fruit for the sake of God’s glory will be saved; others will be burned in the fire (Jn. 15:1-8).

Jesus said, “Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters” (Lk. 11:23). There is no middle ground. There is no fellowship between light and darkness; there is no agreement between Jesus and Satan (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). There is no such thing as “kind of a disciple,” kind of believing that Jesus is kind of Lord. There are only two options: either a person is a follower of Jesus, or He is a follower of Satan. This may seem harsh, but the apostle Paul himself wrote of the sins in which the Ephesians “once walked, according to the pattern of this world, according to the prince of the authority of the air, the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience” (2:2, lit.). Unbelievers are disciples of Satan. However, in the book of Acts, to be a “believer” is synonymous with being a “disciple” of Jesus.<sup>31</sup> It is simply unbiblical that the American church has created a default category of “believers” who are *not* disciples. Because we begin as sons and disciples of the evil one,<sup>32</sup> it is absolutely essential for every person to repent, believe in, and submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, His death, resurrection, and heavenly reign, to be born again by God and transferred from the dominion of darkness into the light of the Kingdom of His beloved Son.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Rom. 10:9-10 (contextually, “Lord” means Yahweh, the One true God, cf. v. 13, qt. Joel 2).

<sup>29</sup> Jn. 8:31-32 in context of v. 34, “everyone doing sin is a slave to sin” (lit.).

<sup>30</sup> Same context: Jn. 8:21, 24

<sup>31</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992) 37; his examples: Acts 4:32, 6:2, 6:7, 9:26, 11:26, 14:21-22.

<sup>32</sup> Like the dichotomy Paul taught above, Jesus Himself gave many parables in which there were only two categories of people: the sons of the Kingdom and the sons of the evil one (e.g., Mt. 13:38, 23:15, Jn. 8:44, cf. Acts 13:10; 1 Jn. 3:8-10).

The only kind of believer is a disciple. There will be mature and immature disciples, but all believers must be in the process of learning to become like Jesus through deepening repentance and increasing obedience. Otherwise, they are not His and will not be saved in the end. Thus our first simple truth is established that, when combined with the next, will help us see that the Great Commission applies to every believer. That first simple truth is that Jesus demands everyone to be a disciple.

THE NATURE OF A DISCIPLE. The second simple truth, which establishes universal participation in the Great Commission, is the nature of a disciple. Jesus demands that everyone be a disciple, and a disciple is one who is learning to be like Jesus (Lk. 6:40). What is Jesus like? He is a Disciple-maker. Therefore, a disciple who is equipped to be like Jesus will also be a disciple-maker.

Jesus said, “Amen, amen, I am saying [to] you, the [one] believing into Me – the works which I Myself am doing, that [one] will do, and greater works than these will he do, because I Myself am going to the Father” (Jn. 14:12, lit.). This statement of fact from Jesus does not apply only to the original apostles or professional ministers today – *whoever is believing* into Jesus. Every believer is a disciple, and every disciple becomes like Jesus; therefore, every believer will be doing works like Jesus was doing. What was Jesus doing? Jesus was proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom and demonstrating the power of the Kingdom by the Holy Spirit in the process of making disciples for the glory of God the Father. Therefore, every disciple of Jesus will be proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom and demonstrating the power of the Kingdom by the Holy Spirit in the process of making disciples for the glory of God the Father. This will look somewhat different, practically, in the lives of different disciples, since we each have differing gifts and preordained works.<sup>34</sup> But the big-picture, categorical fact remains: every disciple will make disciples.

This is precisely what we see in the book of Acts: ordinary believers (a.k.a. disciples) went and made disciples of all peoples by proclaiming and demonstrating the Gospel of the Kingdom. On the day of the first martyrdom (Stephen), great persecution broke out “against the church in Jerusalem, and they were *all* scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, *except* the apostles” (Acts 8:1). “Then the [ones who] had

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<sup>33</sup> Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; 2 Cor. 7:10; Mt. 4:17; Lk. 5:8-11, 14:25-33; Mt. 10:37-38; Mt. 16:24; Mk. 1:15, 8:34; Lk. 9:23; Jn. 3:1-8; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23-25; 1 Jn. 3:9-10, 5:1, 4, 18; Col. 1:12-13

<sup>34</sup> Rom. 12:3-8 (esp. v. 6); 1 Cor. 12:4-11 (esp. vv. 4, 11); Eph. 2:10

been scattered went about evangelizing the word" (8:4, lit.). Who went about making disciples? The scattered. Who were scattered? Everyone except the apostles. *All* of the earliest believers began to obey the Great Commission. A servant named Philip performed signs and wonders in Samaria, evangelized about the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, and baptized new believers.<sup>35</sup> A disciple in Damascus named Ananias was led by the Lord to proclaim the Name of Jesus to Saul and baptize him.<sup>36</sup> Some random, unnamed men from Cyprus and Cyrene proclaimed the Lord Jesus to the Greeks in Antioch.<sup>37</sup> "The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord... And in Antioch the *disciples* were first called *Christians*" (Acts 11:21, 26). We see again that there should be no difference between a Christian and a disciple. These reports from the book of Acts can encourage us that, because of the indwelling Spirit of Jesus, every believer can share the Gospel, make disciples, and teach them to be like Jesus.

THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE ORIGINAL COMMISSION. It has been established that every believer must be a submitted disciple, and by nature, every disciple will make disciples like Jesus made disciples. Our third point underscores the fact that Jesus' Global Mandate applies to every one of us: in giving the Great Commission, Jesus was reinstating the original commission for Man to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue, and rule (Gen. 1:28). God's purpose for all mankind was interrupted by Adam's sinfulness, which was passed on to all his descendants.<sup>38</sup> But God's blessing to fulfill Genesis 1:28 continued to be promised in the foreshadows of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel, David, Solomon, leading to the promised Messiah.<sup>39</sup>

Adam was a type of the Christ to come.<sup>40</sup> Jesus began to fulfill the original commission in Genesis 1:28 through His ministry, death, and resurrection (in a way that ensures its consummation). Now Jesus invites His disciples to join Him in this original commission until the completion of the age. We will save the details of this Scriptural link between the first and final Great Commissions for Section Three. If the universal application of the Great Commission is a sticking point for you, then you could jump to that section. Otherwise, for now, you may

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<sup>35</sup> Acts 8:5-13

<sup>36</sup> Acts 9:10-19 11:19-20

<sup>37</sup> Acts 11:19-20

<sup>38</sup> Rom. 5:12-21

<sup>39</sup> See pp. 32-33.

<sup>40</sup> Rom. 5:14 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45-49)

simply appreciate the truth that every human was created to be like God, reproduce this likeness in others, and thereby expand the rule of God on earth (in other words, make disciples). Jesus' redemption and commission put us back on that track.

#### TRY THIS AT HOME

The Great Commission does not apply only to professionals. No matter who you are, the Great Commission applies to you. Jesus is demanding that you be His disciple, learning to be like Him. Therefore, as you grow in likeness to Jesus, you will make disciples like He made disciples. This is the natural created order, restored by the grace of God in Christ to the blessing to be fruitful and multiply. We all reproduce after our own kind.<sup>41</sup> Lukewarm "believers" reproduce lukewarm "believers." Disciples reproduce disciples, who in turn, reproduce more disciples.

With that settled, we will take a closer look at the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, including the genesis of this commission and the prophetic promises that it will be successfully completed. We will discuss in greater detail the DNA of a disciple and Jesus' example of the process of multiplication. Our earnest prayer is that God will use this humble introduction to kickstart or refine many believers to be disciples who make disciples who make disciples for the glory of God in the preeminence of Christ!

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<sup>41</sup> Gen. 1:21-22, 24, 28; esp. 5:3



## PART ONE: THE KING'S COMMISSION

### SECTION ONE: MATTHEW 28:18-20

On the most important Sunday morning in history, the women left the angels at the empty tomb “with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples” (Mt. 28:8).

And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me” (28:9-10).

We must quickly acknowledge the glaring fact that Jesus – here and several times earlier in the Gospels<sup>1</sup> – received *worship* from Jews who believed in only One God.<sup>2</sup> They truly believed Jesus was both God and Man – the Son of God who became flesh and was still One with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> And they were right: Jesus was and is worthy of worship!

The promised appearance in Galilee picks up in verse sixteen: “Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>And when they saw him they *worshiped* him, but some doubted” (28:16-17). Even though Matthew’s narrative is characteristically concise, many believe that more than the Eleven apostles were present at this event. Back in Jerusalem, the women were running to tell Jesus’ disciples (28:8), a group obviously larger than the Eleven.<sup>4</sup> Jesus commanded them to tell His “brothers” to meet Him in Galilee (28:10). Again, more than the Eleven were His brothers.<sup>5</sup> The view that many other disciples were present also helps make more sense of the report that “some doubted” (28:17).<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to think that some of the Eleven doubted in Galilee, because they all had already seen the resurrected Jesus in Jerusalem (most of them more than once)<sup>7</sup> and worshiped Him there.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is best to interpret this as an appearance to the Eleven and many more. In fact, some believe this is the

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<sup>1</sup> Mt. 8:2, 9:18, 14:33, 15:25, 20:20; Jn. 9:38, 20:28

<sup>2</sup> As Jesus affirmed for them: Mk. 12:29, quoting Deut. 6:4 (cf. Mt. 19:17, 23:9).

<sup>3</sup> Jn. 1:1-4, 14, 10:30, 17:21, 14:17

<sup>4</sup> See the difference in Lk. 6:13; note also 6:17. Compare Mt. 13:10 with Mk. 4:10.

<sup>5</sup> Earlier in Mt. 12:48-50, “But he replied to the man who told him, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’”

<sup>6</sup> The Greek word can mean “hesitated.” Perhaps cf. Lk. 24:41, “disbelieved for joy.”

event Paul to which refers in 1 Corinthians 15:6 when more than 500 saw the resurrected Jesus at one time.<sup>9</sup> We cannot know for certain, but it seems possible in light of the Galilean setting (safer than Jerusalem and the base of Jesus' earthly ministry to Jews *and Gentiles*) and the universality of the Great Commission (everyone needed to hear this).

MATTHEW 28:18-20<sup>10</sup>

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

### ALL AUTHORITY WAS GIVEN TO ME

What a stunning statement from a Man! The first Adam was given authority over the earth, but not heaven. And he promptly handed over his authority to Satan at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.<sup>11</sup> But this Galilean resisted all of Satan's temptations, remained sinless, and became the last Adam in His death and the Second Man in His resurrection!<sup>12</sup> Through the Cross and the resurrection, God "disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in" Christ (Col. 2:15). The defeated devil and demons have no authority over this God-Man.<sup>13</sup> Jesus has *all* authority.

Authority is the right to exercise power. The authority of Jesus had been a major theme in Matthew. Jesus taught with authority.<sup>14</sup> Even the winds and waves obeyed Him.<sup>15</sup> He claimed the authority on earth to forgive sins.<sup>16</sup> He had authority with a simple word to cast out demons, heal every disease, and raise the dead – and even to delegate this rightful

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<sup>7</sup> Carson, *Matthew*: "The Eleven, who according to the other Gospels, had already seen the risen Jesus at least twice (Peter at least three times, Thomas at least once), respond instantly with worship on the occasion of this new epiphany, but some (others) hesitated..." (594).

<sup>8</sup> Even "doubting Thomas" at his first sight: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:24).

<sup>9</sup> E.g., *The Reese Chronological Bible*, 1413. The *ESV Study Bible* provides 1 Cor. 15:6 in the note on Mt. 28:10. See also Osborne, *Matthew*, 1069.

<sup>10</sup> For a one-page document with a more literal translation and exegetical notes, see [ProjectOne28.com/SALT/Mt28\\_18-20](http://ProjectOne28.com/SALT/Mt28_18-20).

<sup>11</sup> Gen. 3, cf. Eph. 2:2, Lk. 4:6, but Dan. 2:21, 4:17, 4:25, 4:32, 5:21; Rom 13:1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Mt. 4, Jn. 8:28-29, 46, 14:30-31, 15:10; Heb. 4:15, 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19, 2:22, 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Jn. 2:1, 3:5; 1 Cor. 15:45-47

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also Phil. 3:21, Eph. 1:20-22

<sup>14</sup> Mt. 7:29

<sup>15</sup> Mt. 8:27. The disciples marveled, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?" The answer is Yahweh, the God of all the earth (see Ps. 107:25-32).

power to His disciples.<sup>17</sup> In Matthew 11:27, the pre-resurrection, eternal Son of God was able to say, “All things were given over to Me by My Father...” (lit., cf. Jn. 5:27, 16:15, 17:2). This was difficult to see as He was being arrested, mocked, beaten, and crucified like a criminal. But as Jesus said these words in Galilee, His position of authority was about to change. He was soon to ascend into heaven and be seated “at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him” (1 Pet. 3:22, cf. Eph. 1:20-22). The resurrected and exalted Man, Jesus Christ, is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the sovereign God over all of the universe!<sup>18</sup>

DANIEL 7:13-14. Jesus was alluding to Daniel 7:13-14 when He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth was given to Me” (Mt. 28:18, lit.). The Greek for “authority” and “was given” match exactly the official Greek translation of Daniel 7:14.<sup>19</sup> Jesus was claiming that He fulfilled this prophecy. First, let us briefly consider some background. A major emphasis in the book of Daniel is that the Most High God is sovereign, and He gives the right to rule the nations of the earth to whomever He wills (4:17, 25, 32; 5:21). Daniel was given a prophetic vision of four beasts, which represented the succession of the kings and kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (hundreds of years in advance!).<sup>20</sup> Then God showed Daniel the solution to these evil kingdoms in 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.  
<sup>14</sup>And to him *was given authority*<sup>21</sup>  
and glory and a kingdom,

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<sup>16</sup> Mt. 9:6-8. The fact that Jesus referred to Himself here as the Son of Man is significant, as we will soon see the connection between Matthew 28:18 and Daniel 7:13-14.

<sup>17</sup> Mt. 4:23-24, 9:35, 10:1, 8; cf. Lk. 10:19

<sup>18</sup> Acts 2:33, 36; Rom. 9:5, 14:9; Rev. 1:5-6, 17:14, 19:16

<sup>19</sup> The Greek translation of the OT is called the Septuagint (or LXX) for its seventy translators, c. 250 B.C. The words in the LXX and Matthew match exactly in form: ἐξουσία, *exousia* (“authority”), and ἐδόθη, *edothē* (“was given”).

<sup>20</sup> For more detail than is presented here on Daniel 2 and 7, including their connection to the Great Commission and the vision of Christ in Revelation 1, see the audio and especially the notes for Spencer Stewart, “The Son of Man and the Saints of the Most High” (ProjectOne28.com/Son\_of\_Man).

<sup>21</sup> The Hebrew word is often translated “dominion,” though “authority” is one of its lexical definitions. As stated above, the Greek words in Dan. 7:14 and Mt. 28:18 match, so it would be helpful if they were translated consistently to inform readers of the allusion.

that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;  
his *authority* is an everlasting *authority*,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one  
that shall not be destroyed.

“Son of Man” was Jesus’ favorite title for Himself.<sup>22</sup> He repeatedly claimed to be this mysterious figure. There are many clues here that the one “*like a son of man*” is more than merely human. First, He rides on the clouds of heaven, which is said only of Yahweh.<sup>23</sup> A regular human does not ride on clouds; God rides on clouds. Secondly, He approaches the Ancient of Days. Therefore, He must be holy, because a regular sinful human cannot approach the holy, holy, holy God without perishing.<sup>24</sup> Most clearly, 7:14 says, “to Him was given [a “divine passive,” God was the One who gave] authority and glory and a Kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should *serve* Him.” The Aramaic for “serve” here is used for the religious service offered to a deity,<sup>25</sup> so the NIV is not far off to translate it as “worship.” For all these reasons, this prophecy shows that the Son of Man is divine. He is worthy to be obeyed and worshiped like God alone is worthy to be obeyed and worshiped!

So, all of the theological weight of Daniel 7:13-14 is packed into Jesus’ un-equaled statement: “All authority in heaven and on earth was given to Me.” Jesus has the right to rule *everything* and *everyone*. This is the foundation of the Great Commission. Jesus is staking claim on every human being who has been created *by Him* and *for Him* (Col. 1:16).

#### THEREFORE, GO, DISCIPLE ALL THE NATIONS

Jesus followed His credentials with, “Therefore....” In Daniel, authority, glory, and a Kingdom were given to the Son of Man for the explicit purpose that all the nations should serve Him. The Greek for “all the nations” in the official translation of Daniel 7:14 again matches the Greek in Matthew 28:19, “Therefore, go, disciple *all the nations*.” The purpose of the Great Commission is to fulfill Daniel 7:14 that all nations would recognize Jesus Christ as the God-Man who deserves to be served and obeyed and worshiped.

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<sup>22</sup> More than 65 times in the Gospels (George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Revised Edition, Ed. Donald A. Hagner [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, 1993] 144).

<sup>23</sup> Ps. 104:3, Isa. 19:1

<sup>24</sup> E.g., Ex. 19:21-24, 33:20. Cf. Jer. 30:21-22 about the Messiah, setting up the context for the New Covenant promise in chapter 31.

<sup>25</sup> *TWOT*, 1059.

“Nations” translates *ethnos*, which does not refer to political states, as we typically think of nations. *Ethnos* refers to ethno-linguistic people groups (peoples with their own ethnicity and language).<sup>26</sup> All the people groups of the earth should serve Jesus as His disciples.

Just as Jesus was not satisfied with crowds in His earthly ministry, He does not commission us to make merely converts. Neither does He charge us to plant churches. There is a mistaken notion that if we start “churches” (meaning institutions), then “churches” will produce disciples. The opposite is true. We are commissioned to make disciples, and when people become disciples, assembled into Christ, then a church is formed.<sup>27</sup> *The Son of Man*<sup>28</sup> said, “I will build My Church.” It’s Jesus’ job to build His Church; it’s our job to make disciples.<sup>29</sup> So, let us now examine what a disciple is. What is this kind of person which we should be making among all the peoples of the earth?

THE DNA OF A DISCIPLE. Earlier we utilized a bare bones definition of a disciple: one who is learning to be like his teacher. Now we can become more specific:

*A disciple of Jesus  
is a wholehearted follower,  
who has been born again by God  
and is being transformed by the Spirit into the Image of Christ,  
who is bearing fruit,  
and who will multiply.*

Let us consider the Scriptural teachings for each phrase in this definition.

WHOLEHEARTED FOLLOWER. A disciple is 100% Jesus-focused. We already have seen in the Introduction that Jesus demanded undivided allegiance. A disciple cannot follow Jesus half-heartedly. He cannot nurse

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<sup>26</sup> See the exegetical study of all the usages of *ethnos* in the NT, in their contexts, with specific attention to *panta ta ethnē* (Mt. 28:19 and elsewhere) in John Piper, “Unreached Peoples: The Unique and Primary Goal of Missions” (DesiringGod.org).

<sup>27</sup> The Greek behind “church” (ἐκκλησία, *ekklesia*) means “assembly.” The fact that there is one Church, despite many physical locations on earth (e.g., Acts 9:31) shows that the true place of assembly is “in Christ” (cf. Eph. 2:6, Col. 3:3, Rom. 12:5, 1 Cor. 12:12-13). E.g., Phil. 1:1, “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi....”

<sup>28</sup> Before making this statement, Jesus identified Himself as the Son of Man (Mt. 16:13-19), which is significant because only the Messiah could build the New Temple (Zech. 3:8-10, 6:12-13), which is the Church (1 Cor. 3:9, 3:16-17, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:4-5; Eph. 2:19-22; Rev. 13:6).

<sup>29</sup> We appreciate Richard Greene using such clear language for something that has been a core conviction of ours.

competing affections for sin, family, or life itself. Therefore, a disciple must repent, meaning he must change his mindset. This was Jesus' first and continual demand: "From then, Jesus began to be proclaiming and saying, 'Be repenting, because the Kingdom of the heavens has come near'" (Mt. 4:17, almost lit.). Disciples are honest about their sinfulness.<sup>30</sup> But feeling sorry for sins or merely sorry for the consequences does not equal repentance. There is a worldly sorrow that leads to death, but godly sorrow leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-10). A disciple with godly sorrow sees the worth of God and changes from loving sin and Self to hating sin and Self.<sup>31</sup> He changes from living for Self to living for God.<sup>32</sup> He changes from denying God glory to giving God glory.<sup>33</sup>

There is also a repentance necessary even for religious people: a change from trying to earn salvation to trusting in Christ's finished work alone for salvation.<sup>34</sup> A disciple realizes there is nothing he could possibly do to make himself right with the holy God, and so he confesses his sinfulness and his utter dependence upon God to be His Savior. A disciple believes Jesus is who He says He is: the Son of God who came down from heaven to die as a perfect sacrifice for sins, be raised again, and exalted as King of kings until He comes again to judge the world in righteousness.

Paul gives incredible, God-breathed examples of a wholehearted follower who is obsessively focused on Jesus Christ:

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2).

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal. 6:14).

... it is my eager expectation and hope... that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.  
<sup>21</sup>For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil. 1:20-21).

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.  
<sup>8</sup>Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of

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<sup>30</sup> Lk. 5:8, 1 Jn. 1:8-9

<sup>31</sup> From Jn. 3:19-20 to Rom. 12:9 (cf. Lk. 11:13), Lk. 14:26, Jn. 12:25

<sup>32</sup> 2 Cor. 5:14-15, Gal. 2:20, Phil. 1:21

<sup>33</sup> From Rom. 1:21, 23 to 1 Cor. 10:31

<sup>34</sup> Heb. 6:1, Phil. 3:3-11

all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ<sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith -<sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,<sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:7-11).

In order to become a disciple, each person must respond properly to the authority and worth of the Son of God. Therefore, the initial step in making a disciple is proclaiming the Gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ with its demand for repentance, faith, and submission to Jesus as Lord and Savior.<sup>35</sup>

BORN AGAIN. Every descendant of Adam is born a sinner who grows up to commit sins.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, every descendant of Adam is separated from the life of God and dead in trespasses and sins until God makes him alive and causes him to be born again.<sup>37</sup> Jesus taught in John 3:3, 5-6:

“Amen, amen, I am saying [to] you, unless anyone is born again, he is not able to be seeing the Kingdom of God....<sup>5</sup> Amen, amen, I am saying [to] you, unless anyone is born of water<sup>38</sup> and Spirit, he is not able to be entering the Kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit” (almost lit.).

A person is born again (or, “born *from above*,” cf. 3:31, 19:11, 23) when God fulfills His ancient promise of the New Covenant, giving the dead sinner a new heart and a new spirit and putting the Holy Spirit into his new spirit.<sup>39</sup> It is crucial that we discern in the midst of our disciple-making efforts whether or not someone has experienced the new birth. If not, we must treat him as an unbeliever who needs to repent and turn to Jesus in faith. If he has been born again, then we are able to teach him the Lordship of the Spirit of Christ, who is in him.

BEING TRANSFORMED. The new birth regenerates a person from a dead sinner to a “new creation” in Christ.<sup>40</sup> This change occurs in his

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<sup>35</sup> See fn. 33 on p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Rom. 5:12-19

<sup>37</sup> Gen. 3, Isa. 59:2, Eph. 2:1, 5; Jn. 1:12-13; 1 Jn. 5:1; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3

<sup>38</sup> “Born of water” does not refer to water baptism, but to the fulfillment of Ezekiel 36:25-27, where it is used symbolically for the cleansing of the Holy Spirit (as in numerous other passages). See Spencer Stewart, “Salvation By Grace Through Faith, Not Water Baptism” (ProjectOne28.com/grace\_not\_water\_baptism.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> Ezek. 11:19-20, 36:25-27

<sup>40</sup> See fn. 37, plus 2 Cor. 5:17.

human spirit, and it remains for his soul to be in the process of increasing transformation. “For by one offering, [Christ] has perfected forever the [ones who] are being made holy” (Heb. 10:14, lit.). Christ’s finished work on the Cross has established our perfection in eternity, and it must be working into the actual thoughts and desires of our hearts, the words of lips, and the actions of our bodies. We must be “being made holy.” Even though we are still able to sin,<sup>41</sup> we are not able to live in it; we are not able to continue sinning habitually, unchanged,<sup>42</sup> because the Spirit has begun His jealous, transforming work, which He will not fail to complete.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, a disciple does not repent only once; he keeps with repentance.<sup>44</sup> He continually confesses his sins<sup>45</sup> and learns how to reckon himself dead to sin but alive to God (Rom. 6:11). If he were to continue in unrepentant, habitual sin for the rest of his life, then he would prove to be an unsaved dog, who never knew the Lord, and he will not enter the Kingdom of God.<sup>46</sup> “No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him” (1 Jn. 3:6).

Some may question if this teaches salvation by works instead of by grace through faith. No, because it is God’s grace that enables us to cooperate with His sanctifying work: “...with fear and trembling *be working out your salvation, because God is the [One] working in you both to be willing and to be working for [His] good pleasure*” (Phil. 2:12-13, lit.). We work *because* God is working in us – to the praise of the glory of His grace.<sup>47</sup> The Spirit is given to us for a greater purpose than to get us to heaven; the Spirit is given to transform us into the Image of Christ:

“But we all, with face having been unveiled, beholding the glory of the Lord, *we are being transformed into the same Image from glory unto glory, as from the Lord, the Spirit*” (2 Cor. 3:18, lit.)

We praise God for the assurance He gives us that He will complete the sanctifying work He began in us until the Day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:6). This confidence does not make us complacent; it makes us joyfully obedient.

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<sup>41</sup> Jas. 1:14-15, 3:2; 1 Jn. 1:8-9; Phil. 3:12-14; Rom. 7:15-25

<sup>42</sup> Rom. 6:1-2; 1 Jn. 2:4, 3:6-10; 3 Jn. 1:11, plus fn. 46

<sup>43</sup> E.g., Phil. 1:6, 2:12-13; 1 Thess. 5:23-24

<sup>44</sup> Mt. 3:8, Lk. 3:8, Acts 26:20

<sup>45</sup> The present tense verb in 1 Jn. 1:9 should be translated as a continuous, repeating action: “If *we are confessing* our sins....” The same goes for the present imperative in Jas. 5:16, “Be confessing your sins to each other....”

<sup>46</sup> Cf. footnotes 41 and 42, plus Heb. 12:14; 1 Jn. 2:19; 2 Pet. 2:22; Ga. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Rom. 8:13; Heb. 10:26-31



It is crucial that disciple-makers remain faithful to Jesus' demand for perseverance in faith and sanctification,<sup>48</sup> because He warned us that some will immediately receive the word of the Kingdom with joy, but have no root and fall away.<sup>49</sup> We cannot settle for initial excitement in the Gospel. The reputation of the Lord Jesus and His Gospel is at stake, as well as the salvation and eternal rewards of those we love. If our disciples sin, we must gently correct and warn them.<sup>50</sup> A true disciple receives a loving rebuke for what it is: the love of God the Father who disciplines every son, so that he may share in His holiness.<sup>51</sup> We must press our disciples to deepen their relationship with the indwelling Spirit, who is *Lord* and by whom they can overcome the desires of the flesh, grow increasingly holy from the inside out, and shine the light of Christ in them to the glory of God the Father.<sup>52</sup> In Part Two, we will share some stories as examples of this central aim in disciple-making, which is activating our disciples' agreement with the indwelling Spirit.

FRUITFUL. Jesus said, "In this My Father is glorified: that you may be bearing much fruit and become My disciples" (Jn. 15:8, lit.).<sup>53</sup> A branch connected to the trunk of a vine with its sap flowing cannot help but bear fruit. If someone is not bearing fruit, then he must not be connected in a living relationship to Jesus. Such a branch will be cut off from its superficial connection to the Vine, and it will be burned in the fire (15:6). A branch bearing fruit will be pruned (15:2), disciplined and purified through the Spirit's inner work during outward trials, as well as through moments of abiding and ministering. This pruning intensifies the flow of Life through the disciple's abiding in Christ and Christ's abiding in the disciple, so that he can bear "more fruit" and "much fruit" to the glory of God (15:5, 8). Therefore, in all circumstances, a disciple focuses on abiding in the Person of Jesus, in His words, and in His love,<sup>54</sup> so that he bears the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). This life of the Spirit will manifest in spiritual worship, good works, and bold witness to Jesus.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Eph. 1:6; 1 Cor. 15:10, Col. 1:29, Rom. 15:18

<sup>48</sup> For sanctification, see footnotes 41-46; for perseverance in faith, see Mk. 13:13, Jn. 8:31, Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 25-26, 3:5, 12, 21; cf. Col. 1:21-23; 1 Cor. 15:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Heb. 3:13.

<sup>49</sup> Mt. 13:5-6, 20-21; Mk. 4:5-6, 16-17; Lk. 8:6, 13

<sup>50</sup> Mt. 18:15-20, Jas. 5:19-20, Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:24-26, Heb. 12:12-16; 2 Thess. 3:15; Ti. 3:10; 1 Cor. 5:1-13

<sup>51</sup> Prov. 3:11-12, Heb. 12:5-11, cf. Ps. 141:5

<sup>52</sup> Respectively, 2 Cor. 3:17-18, Gal. 5:16 and Rom. 8:13, Rom. 6:19, Mt. 5:16 and Phil. 1:9-11

<sup>53</sup> "Show" (NIV) and "prove" (ESV, NASB) are loose glosses for *ginomai*, lit., "become."

<sup>54</sup> Respectively, Jn. 15:4-7, 15:7, and 15:9-10.

MULTIPLY. Fruit carry seeds. Seeds grow new organisms. In a metaphor similar to the Vine's fruitfulness, Jesus said:

"Amen, amen... unless the grain [of] wheat, having fallen to the ground, dies, it abides alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>The [one] loving his soul loses it, and the [one] hating his soul in this world will keep it unto eternal life. <sup>26</sup>If anyone serves Me, he must be following Me, and where I Myself am, there My servant will be also..." (Jn. 12:24-26, lit.).

Jesus was that preeminent Seed of wheat, who died, was buried in the ground, and produced the Church. Jesus immediately moved from this metaphor into discipleship language because the crop<sup>56</sup> will carry the DNA of the original Seed. With compassion for the lost and commitment to glorify the Father,<sup>57</sup> Jesus died to give life to others; therefore, His followers also will die that others may receive His life.

That, we believe, is the meaning of Jesus' discipleship call: "And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and *take up his cross daily* and follow me'" (Lk. 9:23). We do not take up Jesus' Cross - He alone could die as a holy, substitutionary, wrath-appeasing sacrifice for the sins of the world. We take up our own crosses. We once read that passage in such a way that we collapsed into one point "deny himself" and "take up his cross." Taking up the cross then meant dying to Self, in other words, denying Self. But if we follow Jesus to be like Jesus, then we must consider the purpose of Jesus' Cross to discover the purpose for our crosses. Jesus did not bear His Cross merely to die to Self. Jesus denied Himself, so that He could bear His Cross, and He bore His Cross to accomplish God's redemptive purposes *for others*.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, we are called to follow His example and sacrifice our lives for others. It may be a sacrifice of time, money, or reputation. It may be a sacrifice of safety, risking abuse and even death. Disciples are honored to embody<sup>59</sup> the sacrificial love of Christ. Disciples are willing to die for the glory and government of Christ to increase in others' hearts. Disciples desire to multiply the life of Christ into others at any cost. This is to say, disciples make disciples who make disciples.

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<sup>55</sup> Jn. 4:23-24, Phil. 3:3; Phil. 2:12-13 and Eph. 2:10; Lk. 24:48-49; Acts 1:8, 2:4, 4:8, 13, 31, 6:10

<sup>56</sup> The Greek behind "fruit" in Jn. 12:24 (*καρπὸν, karpon*) is translated as "crop" seven times in NASB.

<sup>57</sup> The very next verses, Jn. 12:27-28, show Jesus' ultimate purpose to glorify the Father by His death. For compassion for the lost, consider Mt. 9:13, 36, Lk. 19:10 (and Rom. 9:15).

<sup>58</sup> We thank Richard Greene for bringing clarity here.

<sup>59</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray wrote that the Lord "sends his disciples to herald the gospel of a reconciliation that was achieved through suffering and to embody it in a suffering of a like order" (*The Book of Revelation* [London: Oliphants, 1978] 45), Phil. 1:29; 1 Jn. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:21.

Now we have examined our fuller definition of a disciple:

*A disciple of Jesus  
is a wholehearted follower,  
who has been born again by God  
and is being transformed by the Spirit into the Image of Christ,  
who is bearing fruit,  
and who will multiply.*

This is the kind of person that we are trying to make among all the peoples of the earth because Jesus is worthy, and our first priority is the advance of His Kingdom in our hearts and in all hearts.<sup>60</sup>

BAPTIZING. Following the commission's main verb, "disciple," Jesus used two present participles to explain *how* we disciple all the peoples. The first is "baptizing." Baptizing simply means immersing. The substance into which the person is immersed must be specified. Through our church traditions, we probably always associate the word *baptize* with the substance of water, but this is not always the case in the Scriptures. John the Baptist came immersing people into the water of the Jordan River, but he told the people to believe in the One coming after him, who was greater than him because He was before him.<sup>61</sup> John contrasted his baptism with Jesus' superior baptism:

I, on the one hand, I am baptizing you in water with a view to repentance, but the [One] coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not able to carry; He Himself will baptize you in [the] Holy Spirit and fire..." (Mt. 3:11, lit.).

There we learn of two baptisms that are superior to water: immersion in the Holy Spirit and fire. In addition, Paul taught of baptism into *Christ* and into *death*.<sup>62</sup>

In the Great Commission, Jesus specified the substance with yet another phrase: immersing disciples "into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19). It is our conviction that these words do not speak *primarily* of baptism in water. Primarily, they specify baptism *into the Name* of the Triune God. A name "is a verbal marker to represent the whole person and his character [especially in the ancient

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<sup>60</sup> Mt. 6:33

<sup>61</sup> Jn. 1:15, 19-36

<sup>62</sup> Rom. 6:3, which conforms to Jesus' use of baptism to refer to His death (being immersed in the wrath of God on the Cross, which led to be immersed in the ground as a dead Man, Lk. 12:50, Mk. 10:38-39, cf. Ps. 88:7, 42:7).

culture of the Scriptures]. When we hear a name, we think of that person....”<sup>63</sup> In Scriptures like Isaiah 30:27, “the Name of Yahweh” is Personified and signifies God Himself. We believe this is the primary sense of Jesus’ command to be baptizing into the Name: it means we are commissioned to immerse disciples *into the Person* of the Three-in-One God. How does the disciple get into the Person of God?

We must first plant the seed of the Gospel in his heart because that seed is God’s means to cause the hearer to be born again.<sup>64</sup> God gives the disciple a new spirit with the Holy Spirit in him.<sup>65</sup> The results of this new creation<sup>66</sup> are simply amazing:

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body [Christ] – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – <sup>6</sup>and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-7).

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

For you died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3, cf. Jn. 17:21).

Because the new disciple’s spirit becomes one with the Spirit of Christ,<sup>67</sup> he truly comes to be seated in Christ in God in the heavenly realms. The new disciple is literally, spiritually, in the Name of the Triune God; he is literally, spiritually, immersed in the Father, in the Son, in the Spirit. The King has commanded us to partner with Him in this spiritual creation of disciples, as sowers of the Gospel seed. This is astounding! And we must teach our disciples the incredible things that took place when they first believed. They must be taught to find their identity *in* Christ.

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<sup>63</sup> *The Preeminence of Christ: Part One, To the Glory of God the Father*, 5 (ProjectOne28.com).

<sup>64</sup> 1 Pet. 1:23, 25

<sup>65</sup> Ezek. 36:25-27

<sup>66</sup> 2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15

God designed a tangible teaching tool for the disciple's new identity: baptism in water. Grievously, many ministries think that a person must be baptized in water in order to be born again and saved; they think water baptism is the moment that a person's sins are forgiven and the moment he is baptized in the Holy Spirit. This is such a serious distortion of the Gospel of justification<sup>68</sup> by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone that we offer a seven-page article online, which contains these words:

There is not one single instance in the Scriptures where it says explicitly that someone received the Holy Spirit by being baptized in water.... On the contrary, at least five occasions in the book of Acts demonstrate that people receive the Holy Spirit separate from water baptism (Acts 2:1-4; 8:15-16; 9:17-18; 10:44-48; 19:5-6).<sup>69</sup>

Acts 10:44-48 especially shows that baptism in the Holy Spirit is the prerequisite for water baptism. In other words, a person should be born again by immersion in the Spirit, through believing the Gospel of grace, before he is immersed in water. The apostle Peter went out of his way to clarify (in 1 Pet. 3:21) that the physical water does not lead to salvation; the water symbolizes the believer's appeal to God for forgiveness through Christ's finished work. The new birth, forgiveness, justification, salvation - these occur the moment a person believes, before water baptism.<sup>70</sup>

Properly understood, water baptism is a wonderful outward expression of that prior inward faith. The believer reenacts, symbolically, what already happened in the spiritual realm when he believed. The disciple proclaims his faith to the community of faith and identifies himself with Christ and with them - in Christ. The disciple is lowered into the water to symbolize how God united him with Christ in Christ's own death and burial. Then the disciple is raised out of the water to symbolize the resurrection of his spirit through union with the resurrected Christ. The disciple is thus pledging to walk in newness of life in the Spirit for the glory of the Father in the preeminence of the Son. And just as Jesus received revelation of the Father's pleasure at His

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<sup>67</sup> 1 Cor. 6:17

<sup>68</sup> To be justified (*dikaiaō*) means to be declared righteous (*dikaios*) by God the Judge. To be righteous means to be in right relationship. See DiscipleNations.net/justice.

<sup>69</sup> "Salvation by Grace through Faith, Not Water Baptism" (ProjectOne28.com/baptism).

<sup>70</sup> Eph. 1:13-14, Jn. 1:12-13, 3:5-8, 15-16, 18, 36; 5:24, 7:37-39, Gal. 3:5, 14; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 10:43, 13:39 (lit.), 26:18; Mt. 26:28, Eph. 1:7-8; Rom. 3:20, 25, 28; Gal. 2:16; Heb. 10:10, 12, 18; Rom. 1:17, 3:24, 4:5-6, 11, 16, 23-24, 5:1-2, 9:30; Ti. 3:7; Gal. 3:8, 11, 22, 24, 5:4-6; Heb. 11:7; cf. Rom. 5:9; Acts 26:18, Rom. 15:16, 1 Cor. 6:11, Heb. 10:10, 14; 2 Thess. 2:13

baptism in the Jordan River, the disciple can also hear, through the Spirit of adoption, “This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.”<sup>71</sup>

TEACHING. This second participle expounds the ongoing process of disciple-making. Our brother Jonathan Brickley was once presented with a semi-rhetorical question: “Yeah, but what really is discipleship?” The question was intended to assert that discipleship is a vague process, about which people cannot agree. Jonathan replied, “Well, it’s simple, really. It’s teaching disciples to obey everything Jesus commanded.” That was a sage response. It cut to the practicality of the Great Commission. Jesus is Lord. He deserves to be obeyed. And He has defined obedience through His commands. Learn them. Do them. Teach them to be done.<sup>72</sup>

A more literal translation pulls out the richness of Jesus’ emphatic words: “teaching them to be keeping as much as all I commanded you.” “To be keeping” implies “to be obeying” and more: to be possessing the commands for safe-keeping, to be guarding. For example, Jesus said in John 14:21, “The [one] *having* My commands and keeping them – that [one] is the [one] loving Me...” (lit.). Jesus probably chose the word to hearken back to Mount Sinai when Yahweh spoke of “those who love Me and *keep* My commandments.”<sup>73</sup> Here, Jesus stood on the *mount* in Galilee and claimed the *authority* of Yahweh in flesh!<sup>74</sup> Disciples have been entrusted with the words of Jesus,<sup>75</sup> which they must treasure<sup>76</sup> as the words of God, obeying them and guarding them from being distorted as they disciple others. Furthermore, disciples do not get to pick and choose which commands to be keeping. Jesus piled on words for emphasis: *as much as every single thing* I commanded.<sup>77</sup>

Some distort grace as though we no longer have to obey commands. “That’s old covenant legalism,” they think. They miss the point of the new covenant: “And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ezek. 36:27, cf. Rom. 8:3-4). Grace is not license to sin; it is power to obey.<sup>78</sup> Obedience is not legalism; it is a joyful expression of love (Jn. 14:15-24). A disciple does not obey in order to be justified, because he trusts God already declared

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<sup>71</sup> Mt. 3:17, cf. Rom. 8:14-15, Gal. 4:4-7

<sup>72</sup> Ezra provides a great Old Testament example: “For Ezra had set his heart *to study* the Instruction of Yahweh and *to do it* and *to teach* His statutes and rules in Israel” (7:10, lit.).

<sup>73</sup> Ex. 20:6, cf. 15:26, 16:28; Lev. 22:31, 26:3; Dt. 4:2, 4:40, 5:10, 5:29, 6:2, 6:17, 7:9, 7:11, 8:11, 10:123, 11:1, 11:8, 11:22, 13:4, 13:18, 26:17-18, 27:1, 28:9, 28:45, 30:10, 30:16

<sup>74</sup> See below on “I AM with you all the days” (Mt. 28:20, lit.). See also Carson, 599.

<sup>75</sup> 1 Cor. 9:17, 1 Thess. 2:4, 1 Tim. 1:11, Jude 3, cf. Mt. 25:14, Lk. 12:48

<sup>76</sup> Mt. 13:52; 2 Cor. 4:4-7; cf. Ps. 19:10, 119:72, 127

him righteous by grace through faith in Christ's righteousness. A disciple obeys because the Spirit is working through Him, producing the fruit of love for God, which causes desire to glorify Him.<sup>79</sup> This is what we must teach others to do.

Some have tried to detach disciple-making from teaching, but it is inherent in the Greek word and Jesus' definitions, in which He paired "disciple" with "teacher."<sup>80</sup> Such people are probably reacting (as they should) against a sterile kind of "discipleship" program that merely fills in the blanks in workbooks. Disciple-making entails teaching, and there is historical, factual information to be learned, but disciple-making is teaching in its fullest sense. It is not merely tossing out information, hoping something is done with it after the workbook is closed and the class dismissed. Disciple-making is not merely teaching commands; it is teaching *to obey* commands. Discipling means leading the disciple to personal, practical submission to the Lordship of Jesus and fruit-bearing obedience to His commands. That requires an intimate relationship with the disciple, so that the disciple can see the disciple-maker himself both knows and obeys the commands – so he can see *how* the disciple-maker applies the realities of the faith in real life. Perhaps the most accurate translation of *mathētēs* in our day would be "apprentice." The training is live, personally tailored, and aimed at practical imitation.

The Scriptures provide a metaphor for discipling that is still more intimate: fathering and mothering. Children are born with virtually no understanding of how this world works. Parents are responsible for all of the child's learning: brushing his teeth, tying his shoes, preferring others, working diligently, courting a bride. This holistic discipleship must be as spiritual as it is earthly. Therefore, on the one hand, biological parents are commanded to be spiritual parents – to store God's commands in their hearts and teach them diligently to their children when sitting at home and when traveling, to raise their children in the child-training and instruction of the Lord.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, non-biological parents are encouraged to adopt (spiritually) those who need disciplined from outside

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<sup>77</sup> Jesus said πάντα ὅσα (*panta hosa*). *Hosa* (as much as, as great as) is added to *panta* (all, everything) for emphasis.

<sup>78</sup> Consider grace working and reigning through righteousness (1 Cor. 15:10, Rom. 5:21), and Ti. 2:11-12, in which "the grace of God" is "training us, that, having denied impiety and worldly passions, we should live wisely and righteously and piously."

<sup>79</sup> For a fuller definition of love as passion for God's glory, see *The Preeminence of Christ: Part One, To the Glory of God the Father*, 41-48 (ProjectOne28.com).

<sup>80</sup> E.g., Lk. 6:40; *pace* Wilkins, 38-39, whose main argument is that John the Baptist had disciples, even though he was a prophet and not a teacher. Though the content and form of teaching from a prophet may be different than a teacher, John's disciples were still learners (which is why Wilkins has to hedge on p. 87, and fn. 22, discussing Lk. 3:10ff., 11:1, Jn. 3:26).

the family.

Timothy's father was not a Jew, but Timothy was raised spiritually by his mother and grandmother.<sup>82</sup> Then Paul took Timothy to be his spiritual "son."<sup>83</sup> They lived and worked together, so that nearing the end of his life, Paul was able to say to Timothy:

You have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, <sup>11</sup>my persecutions and sufferings... which persecutions I endured... <sup>14</sup>as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it...<sup>84</sup>

Timothy received more than a workbook from Paul, and Timothy did more than fill in blanks. Paul could testify about Timothy to the Philippians: "But you know his proven worth, that *like [a] child [with a] father, he served with me for the Gospel*" (2:22, lit.).

Paul lamented the scarcity of such spiritual fathering in the Church, and in his absence, sent Timothy to let the Corinthians window into their father-son relationship:

I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved *children*. <sup>15</sup>For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many *fathers*. For I became your *father* in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>16</sup>I urge you, then, *be imitators* of me. <sup>17</sup>That is why I sent you *Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church* (1 Cor. 4:14-17).

Disciple-making is living and speaking in such a way that one can say, "Imitate my way of life," and two things follow: (1) the disciple knows what is meant because he has witnessed the lifestyle, and (2) the imitation leads to Christ-likeness because what was modeled was sincere obedience to the true commands of Christ. Paul could say this: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."<sup>85</sup>

Paul wrote Timothy: "You then, *my child*, be strengthened by the

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<sup>81</sup> Dt. 6:4-8, 20-25; Eph. 6:4, cf. Ex. 12, 14; Ps. 78, 145; Prov. 2-3; see the teaching series "Discipling Children" and *Theology 101 for Kids!* (DiscipleNations.net/Discipling-Children).

<sup>82</sup> 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14-15 (see fn. 84); Acts 16:1

<sup>83</sup> 1 Cor. 4:14-17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2, 2:1; Phil. 2:22; cf. Peter and Mark (1 Pet. 5:13)

<sup>84</sup> 2 Tim. 3:10-11, 14. "From whom you learned it" is plural, and the sentence continues to refer to Timothy's childhood (v. 15), so his mother and grandmother should be included as Timothy's disciple-makers with Paul (cf. 1:5).



grace that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup>and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:1-2). There we see discipleship to the fourth generation: (1) Paul, (2) Timothy, (3) faithful men, (4) others. Disciples make disciples. If a son is fathered well, then he will be equipped to father his own disciples. The son knows that he is discipling them to obey for themselves, so that they will be able to teach others to obey. Sadly, what precious little discipleship does happen these days often stops at the relationship between the first and second generation. We easily forget that discipleship is not complete until the disciple is imitating Jesus in making disciples. Paul involved himself like a good grandpa to ensure that his “son” made disciples of his “grandsons” – and that his grandsons would faithfully disciple great-grandsons!

Disciple-making as fathering and mothering, such as we have been advocating here, is what Jesus did. He spent intimate time with His disciples, *teaching* them how to interpret and apply the Scriptures and how to pray, *showing* them how to care for the poor and outcast, how to heal the sick and oppressed, how to proclaim the Gospel by the power of the Spirit, and how to endure persecution for the glory of the Father. And He called His disciples to be *like Him*, which necessarily includes making disciples like He did.

We are grateful that discipleship can happen, in measure, in many different situations. It can certainly happen even when a believer is alone with the Spirit. It can happen when peers sharpen one another. It can happen through a preacher’s sermons.<sup>86</sup> Yet we believe the missing key to the practical outworking<sup>87</sup> of disciple-making in our culture has been this intentional, intimately relational fathering and mothering to the third and fourth generation. This is what we must rediscover and learn to walk out by the grace of the Spirit.

I AM WITH YOU ALL THE DAYS. The only way that this mission will succeed is by grace, by the Spirit of Christ in disciple-making disciples. The Great Commission is sandwiched between revelation of the

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<sup>85</sup> 1 Cor. 11:1, cf. Phil. 3:17, 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:9

<sup>86</sup> It can even happen, in measure, during a fill-in-the-blank workbook program like what was disparaged above. We should remain concerned, though, that some forms of disciple-making may set discipleship in an inadequate context (such as wholly scholastic) and thereby hurt more than they help.

<sup>87</sup> We must qualify that this is the missing key in terms of practicality, because the greater problem in our culture has been revelational. As we addressed in the Introduction, the demand of the Gospel has been missing, so that many have become (false?) converts rather than disciples. Our prayer for this booklet is to improve upon the rediscovery of both the revelation and its outworking.

authoritative Person of Jesus and the perpetual Presence of Jesus. He would soon ascend to the right hand of the Father, but He had promised not to leave His disciples as orphans; He had promised to come to them in the Person of the Holy Spirit.<sup>88</sup> God had long desired to dwell in the heart of Man, and Christ's sacrifice and ascension were the means unto that end.<sup>89</sup>

In closing the Commission, Jesus did not say, "I will be with you," with proper grammar in the future tense. Neither did Jesus merely say, "I am with you." He said ἐγὼ εἰμι (*egō eimi*), "I, I AM" – the emphatic Greek translation of Yahweh's definition of His Name in Exodus 3:14-15.<sup>90</sup> Earlier we noticed "keeping" His commands alluded to God on Mount Sinai. Now we receive Jesus' blatant claim to be Yahweh on this mountain. He is God the Son, One with the Father and the Spirit. He is eternally all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present, especially in the hearts of His disciples, in whom His Spirit dwells.

The Spirit of Christ is our empowerment to be disciples who make disciples who make disciples. The Spirit of Christ is the Chief Disciple-maker. He guides us into all truth, speaks the Father's will to us, and glorifies Christ in us as He is transforming us into His Likeness.<sup>91</sup> If it is the Spirit who disciples us, and if all of life is to be walked by the Spirit,<sup>92</sup> then the Spirit is the One who disciples others through us. Our responsibility is to believe and receive from the Spirit the wisdom and words<sup>93</sup> to help our disciples discern what the Spirit is teaching them from their insides. We only put language to what the Spirit is already doing in them in order to increase their fellowship with the Spirit, who is Lord. By growing in such submission ourselves, we help them no longer live, that Christ may live through them (Gal. 2:20).

Jesus literally said, "...and behold, I AM with you all the days until the completion of the age."<sup>94</sup> Others have noticed the repetition of "all" in this all-important passage: Jesus has *all* authority; therefore, disciple *all* peoples, teaching them to be keeping as much as *all* He commanded,

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<sup>88</sup> Jn. 14:3, 17-20, 23, 28. Christ is in us because His Spirit is in us; though co-existent, distinct Members of the Trinity, They are One (2 Cor. 3:17-18).

<sup>89</sup> See Jn. 16:7 and Section Three of *Spirit, Soul, Body* (free at ProjectOne28.com).

<sup>90</sup> Jesus frequently claimed to be Yahweh in flesh with this emphatic Greek, e.g., Jn. 8:58. See Spencer's Exodus survey (DiscipleNations.net/OTsurvey) and his forthcoming booklet, *The Preeminence of Christ: Part Two, The Great I AM* (ProjectOne28.com/preeminence).

<sup>91</sup> Jn. 14:16-27, 16:12-15; 1 Jn. 2:27; 2 Cor. 3:18

<sup>92</sup> Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:4

<sup>93</sup> 1 Cor. 2:6-7, 12-13

because He is present *all* the days.<sup>95</sup> This last phrase indicates the Great Commission applies beyond the first-century group of disciples. Jesus promised His Presence to the end because the Commission endures for every believer to the end of the age. But, this evil age is not simply going to stop; it is going to be *completed* according to God's plan, which is to sum up all things into the headship of Christ (Eph. 1:9-10).<sup>96</sup> What an honor and a joy to be under His headship now and to be moved by His Spirit to position others under His headship until the Day He returns!

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<sup>94</sup> The traditional "always" is less literal or specifically comprehensive as Jesus' πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας (*pasas tas hēmeras*, all the days). The Greek συντελείας (*sunteleias*) emphasizes more than an end: the completion or consummation of a duration (see *BADG*, 974).

<sup>95</sup> E.g., Osborne, 1078.

<sup>96</sup> A combination of NIV (1984) and NASB may best translate the tricky Greek verb in Eph. 1:10. *Anakephalaionai* can mean to sum up (Rom. 13:9) and to bring together, and it is built upon the word *kephalē*, head.

## SECTION TWO: THE GENESIS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

### GENESIS 1:26-28

What we have studied as the Great Commission could actually be called the Great *Re*commission. The *first* Great Commission came from the mouth of God to the first man in Genesis 1:26-28, and it reveals the identity and purpose of our species:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."<sup>27</sup> God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.<sup>28</sup> God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (NASB).

We have seen that disciples are meant to be like their teacher. Here, Adam and Eve are created in the likeness of God, in other words, to be disciples of God.<sup>1</sup> They were commanded and empowered ("blessed")<sup>2</sup> to imitate God,<sup>3</sup> who subdued His angelic enemy by casting them from heaven to earth and then began correcting the effects of that judgment by overcoming the darkness and watery abyss.<sup>4</sup> Satan then boasted a competing kingdom on earth, so God dispatched His Image-bearers into enemy territory to complete His earthly subduing and ruling.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, God planted Man in the Garden of Eden and commissioned: "serve it and guard it" (Gen. 2:15, lit.).<sup>6</sup> Those Hebrew words were later used of the priests *servicing* in the temple and *guarding* it from anything unclean, such as a Satan-infested snake.<sup>7</sup> God was "walking" in the Garden with Man (Gen. 3:8), a word also used later of

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<sup>1</sup> See DiscipleNations.net/the-ot-context-for-nt-discipleship (crediting Wilkins, 57-60).

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew behind "blessed" means to endue with power to accomplish a task (John N. Oswalt, "*kābash*," *TWOT*, 430).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Eph. 5:1

<sup>4</sup> See *Light Shines in the Darkness: Scripture Interpreting the Spiritual Drama of Genesis 1:2-3* (ProjectOne28.com).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ps. 8:2. See "Section Eight: Subdue" in *Light Shines in the Darkness*. See also G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011) 34, 45.

<sup>6</sup> This paragraph is indebted to G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004). The literal translation of Gen. 2:15 is treated on pp. 66-67, 83.

God's presence in the Holy of Holies.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it becomes clear that Adam was the first priest, and the Garden of Eden was the first temple.<sup>9</sup> Not only was Adam a priest, he was also king of the earth ("let them rule... over all the earth," Gen. 1:26) in the likeness of the King of kings.<sup>10</sup>

But did God want Adam and Eve to stay in a small garden-temple? No! God desired His garden-temple to fill the entire earth; He wanted to dwell on the whole earth – to fill the whole earth with His glory<sup>11</sup> and share His Kingdom with the family of Adam and Eve. Unto that end, God blessed them to be fruitful and multiply, so their family would outgrow and expand the borders of the original Garden and fill the earth with Images of His glory. In order for Adam and Eve to be able to guard and serve an enlarging temple space, they would have to disciple their children to know the Lord, to obey His commands, and to partner in this original Great Commission.<sup>12</sup> Their children also would have to resist the enemy, serve in the temple, be fruitful and multiply, and disciple their children. Those children would have to disciple their children, and so on, until the enemy was completely subjected to the global rule of the Image of God's glory. Temple-building, Kingdom-advancing, familial disciple-making is built into the DNA of Mankind.

And the first parents failed miserably. Through sin, death entered the world, and the earth was cursed because its king rejected its Sustainer.<sup>13</sup> Through sin, Adam, the priestly king, abdicated his authority to Satan, who became known as the ruler of this world.<sup>14</sup> But the word of God cannot fail.<sup>15</sup> The word of God in Genesis 1:26 must succeed. Therefore, God immediately promised that a Man from Eve's family would beat

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<sup>7</sup> E.g., 1 Chron. 9:23, 2 Chron. 23:19, Neh. 11:19. See also Beale, *Temple*, 69, 81.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Gen. 3:8 with Lev. 26:12, Deut. 23:15, 2 Sam. 7:6-7.

<sup>9</sup> See further explanations in Session Three and Session Six of "HIStory," gratefully indebted to Beale (ProjectOne28.com/HIStory). Especially important in recognizing the Garden as the first temple space is the degree to which the later tabernacle and temple were modeled after the Garden of Eden. This shows they were symbolically taking steps back to the original plan. For their garden-like details, see Beale, *Temple*, 66-75. Most clearly, consider that the New Earth/Jerusalem of Rev. 21-22 is revealed to be a worldwide Holy of Holies (1 Ki. 6:20) with the Tree of Life, precious stones, River of Life, and tabernacling presence of God – all regained and perfected from the Garden of Eden.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Tim. 6:15, Rev. 17:14, 19:16

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Num. 14:21, Ps. 72:19, Hab. 2:14

<sup>12</sup> Recognition of Adam and Eve's need to teach children for the sake of stewarding an expanding garden was sparked in us by Beale, *The Temple and Church's Mission*, 85, though we believe it could have been given a stronger disciple-making context, our aim here.

<sup>13</sup> Rom. 5:12-21, Gen. 3:17-18, Rom. 8:19-22

<sup>14</sup> Jn. 12:31, 14:30, 16:11 (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4, Eph. 2:2; 1 Jn. 5:19)

<sup>15</sup> Rom. 9:6, Jos. 21:45, 23:14, 1 Ki. 8:56, Isa. 55:11, Jer. 1:12

Satan (Gen. 3:15).<sup>16</sup> This is the reason for the genealogies in the Bible; they are tracing the family line of this promised Seed. As it turns out, Adam was only a type of the One to come, who would fulfill everything Adam failed.<sup>17</sup>

The world still disciples in order to build temples and advance kingdoms, just the wrong ones for the wrong reasons, like Babel.<sup>18</sup> The original disciple-making DNA had not been erased, just redirected. Therefore, after the Flood, God restored His Genesis 1:28 blessing upon Noah and his three sons, particularly Shem, although the “subdue and rule” aspect was noticeably altered.<sup>19</sup> In their sinfulness, Noah and his sons could not subdue or rule in the manner intended by the first Great Commission. It would require that unique Seed to truly, totally subdue the enemy and rule the earth in righteousness forever.

God continued the family line of the Genesis 1:28 blessing with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.<sup>20</sup> Abraham’s blessing (to be a blessing to “all the nations”) was specifically connected to the discipleship of his children “to keep the way of Yahweh by doing righteousness and justice” (see Gen. 18:18-19). In this patriarchal stage, the promise of a future, global King began to appear.<sup>21</sup> Abraham’s Seed will “possess the gates of His enemies” (i.e., subdue) and the obedience of the peoples will belong to Him (rule).<sup>22</sup> Through this Seed, the Genesis 1:28 blessing will be restored to “all the nations” of the earth (the Greek version of Gen. 22:18 being the same as Mt. 28:19).

Jacob was renamed Israel, and when his twelve sons became the people of Israel, the Genesis 1:28 blessing became a national blessing.<sup>23</sup> God caused Israel to be fruitful and multiply, and through the Exodus, established her as His renewed temple-building Kingdom on earth.<sup>24</sup> The Garden-like tabernacle signified God’s intention to fulfill what He

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<sup>16</sup> For the significance of Gen. 3:15 in the rest of Scripture, as well as the interpretation of “seed” as a collective singular referring both to the Man Christ Jesus and the people of God, see James Hamilton, Jr., “The Skull-Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *SBJT* 10:2 (Summer 2006) 30-54 ([JimHamilton.info](http://JimHamilton.info)).

<sup>17</sup> Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:45-47

<sup>18</sup> Gen. 11:1-9 (esp. v. 4)

<sup>19</sup> Gen. 9:1-2, 7

<sup>20</sup> Gen. 12:2-3, 17:2-8, 22:17-18, 26:3-4, 26:24, 28:3-4, 28:13-14, 35:11-12, 48:3-4, 48:15-16

<sup>21</sup> Gen. 17:6, 17:16, 35:11, esp. 49:10

<sup>22</sup> Gen. 22:16-17, 49:10 (see Spencer’s Genesis survey for a literal interpretation of Gen. 49:10, which commends a Messianic interpretation, [ProjectOne28.com/OTsurvey](http://ProjectOne28.com/OTsurvey)).

<sup>23</sup> Gen. 47:27, Ex. 1:7, 12, 20; Ps. 107:38, Num. 23:10-11, Deut. 7:13, 15:4-6, 28:11-12, 30:16; 1 Chron. 17:9-11, 27; Isa. 51:2-3, Jer. 3:16-18, 23:3, Ezek. 36:9-12; Hos. 1:10

began in Genesis 1-2.<sup>25</sup> Like the first priest, Adam, this blessed nation of priests would disciple their children, as well as bear witness and teach the other nations to glorify God.<sup>26</sup> However, Israel's incessant, idolatrous law-breaking turned the blessing into a curse.<sup>27</sup>

The only hope continued to be the Seed of Genesis 3:15, a representative of the people, who could subdue and rule on their behalf. God blessed King David with His Spirit to be the fullest example of Genesis 1:28 yet. David was a prophetic, priestly king who subdued many nations and began to rule in righteousness and justice with a heart burning for the glory of God.<sup>28</sup> But David was not perfect. Ultimately, like every man, he was subdued by the devil<sup>29</sup> and could not eternally accomplish Genesis 1:28. But God promised the Son of David would build His temple and rule forever!<sup>30</sup> Solomon followed his father's prophetic, priestly example. He was blessed with Garden-esque wisdom like Adam,<sup>31</sup> and he built the Garden-like temple, which was an expansion of the previous tabernacle, signifying God's desire to fill the earth with His glory.<sup>32</sup> But Solomon was subdued by sin much worse than his father David, and he died after a forty-year rule,<sup>33</sup> falling a little short of the hope of the eternal rule of the Son of David. Israel waited.

In the midst of the flurry of failing kings and God's severe judgments for the people's idolatry, the prophets promised a Savior, an ideal Son of Adam who would subdue and rule and be served by all the

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<sup>24</sup> Ex. 1:7, 12, 20; 19:5-6; see the temple-building purpose in 25:8, 29:45-46

<sup>25</sup> See fn. 9 in this section.

<sup>26</sup> Nation of priests (Ex. 19:5-6). Disciple children (Deut. 6). Witnesses (Isa. 42:10-12, 21). For the priests' teaching role, see Lev. 10:11; Deut. 31:9-13, 33:10; Hos. 4:1-4; Ezek. 44:23; Mal. 2:6-7; e.g., Ps. 96:3, 10. Cf. also Christopher J. H. Wright, "Who Are We and What Are We Here For? The Identity and Calling of God's People" AGTS Spring Lectureship, 21 Jan 2010 ([http://www.agts.edu/news/news\\_archives/2010\\_1\\_19spring\\_lectureship.html](http://www.agts.edu/news/news_archives/2010_1_19spring_lectureship.html)).

<sup>27</sup> Deut. 27:26 (qtd. in Gal. 3:10), 28:15-68; Lev. 26:14-39

<sup>28</sup> Prophet (2 Sam. 23:2, Acts 2:30), priest (e.g., 2 Sam. 6:14; 1 Chron. 15:27), justice (2 Sam. 8:15; 1 Chron. 18:14). For glory (1 Chron. 16:10, 24-29, 29:10-20).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 11 (Jn. 8:44) and 1 Chron. 21:1, 7-8

<sup>30</sup> 2 Sam. 7:12-16 (cf. Ps. 72, 110)

<sup>31</sup> 1 Ki. 4:29-33 (Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 72)

<sup>32</sup> For hundreds of carvings of palm trees and open flowers on the curtains, walls, and doors, see 1 Ki. 6:29, 32-35; 7:18-26, 42, 49 (Beale, 71-72). The tabernacle's tent for the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was 45 feet by 15 feet (the Holy of Holies being a fifteen feet cubed; see the beautiful illustration in *ESV Study Bible*, 186). That space in the temple was 90 feet by 30 feet (1 Ki. 6:2, 20, see *ESV Study Bible*, 604), according to God's blueprint (1 Chron. 28:11, 19).

<sup>33</sup> 1 Ki. 11:3-4

nations, even as all the nations become blessed in Him.<sup>34</sup> He would be given as a substitutionary, wrath-appeasing, covenant sacrifice to reconcile the people to God.<sup>35</sup> This Son of Man would be the Son of God, Immanuel, Warrior God, Father of Eternity!<sup>36</sup> This humble, pierced King (Yahweh the Son) would be enthroned with Yahweh (the Father).<sup>37</sup> The Instruction of Yahweh would go out, and all the nations would stream to Zion to “inquire” of this Root and Branch of Jesse (to be discipled by Him).<sup>38</sup> *The Teacher* would no longer hide Himself, but all the children would be “discipled by Yahweh.”<sup>39</sup> They would become the spiritual children of the messianic Disciple-maker, obeying His voice.<sup>40</sup> Of the increase of His government (think Gen. 1:28) and peace, there would be no end, as He would usher in a new, heavenly Eden, filled with the glory of God.<sup>41</sup>

Into this prophetic context, the Word became flesh (Jn. 1:1, 14).

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<sup>34</sup> E.g., Isa. 11:1-5, 10; 42:1-4; Dan. 7:13-14; Gen. 22:18, 26:4; Jer. 4:1-2, Ps. 72:17

<sup>35</sup> Isa. 42:6-7, 49:5-8, 52:13-53:12; Dan. 9:24-26

<sup>36</sup> Isa. 7:14, 8:8-10, 9:6-7 (cf. Mt. 4:12-16). Immanuel means “God with us” (cf. Mt. 1:18-23). “Warrior God” (cf. Ex. 15:3) is usually translated “Mighty God,” but the Hebrew is *gibbor* (warrior). “Father of Eternity” is usually “Everlasting Father,” but both words are nouns for emphasis, parallel to the next phrase, “Prince of Peace.” See J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993) 102.

<sup>37</sup> For Yahweh the Son as a humble, pierced King, see Zech. 9:9-11, 12:10, 13:7; Mic. 2:13, 5:2-5. For enthroned with Yahweh the Father, see Ps. 110:1, 45:6-7.

<sup>38</sup> Isa. 2:1-5, 11:1-10, 49:1-6, 55:4-5 (cf. Zech. 2:11, 8:22). The “Instruction” is usually translated “law,” but there is much more to the five books of Moses than laws. Motyer teaches: “The word ‘law’ is not our best friend. Hebrew *tora* derives from *yara*, which means ‘to teach’. What we call the ‘law’ of the Lord is more akin to the teaching that careful parents would give to beloved children for their wellbeing (cf. Prov. 3:1-4, 6:20-23)” (*The Message of Exodus* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005] 213). For balance on *tora*, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010) 19-23. That the Messiah would be a Branch from Jesse (Isa. 11:1) means that He would be a human like David (Jesse’ son). That He would also be the Root of Jesse (11:10) means that He would be the God who created Jesse. Jesus is the only Man to be the Creator of His own ancestors! Worship at His feet!

<sup>39</sup> For “*the Teacher*,” see Isa. 30:20-21. Regarding “discipled by Yahweh,” ESV translates Isaiah 54:13, “taught by the LORD,” but the Hebrew is the adjectival form of the same noun translated “disciples” in 8:16. NASB also translates it as “disciples” twice in 50:4. (The LXX translated it with διδασκούς [*didaktous*, “taught”], as quoted in John 6:45.) Our attention was drawn to the Hebrew for disciple in Isaiah by Wilkins, 56.

<sup>40</sup> Isa. 50:10 defines the remnant as those who obey the Servant’s voice (cf. Deut. 18:15-18), on the heels prophesying the Christ setting His face like flint (to Jerusalem, cf. Lk. 9:53) and giving His back and cheek to those who strike and abuse, only to be vindicated by God (50:6-9). What is more, 50:4 (NASB, see fn. 39) explains that the Christ was discipled by the Father in order to disciple others! Because disciple-making is like spiritual fathering, the Christ’s disciples can be called His offspring, who have His words in their mouths (Isa. 53:10, 59:21).

<sup>41</sup> Isa. 9:6-7. For new Eden, see “Session 7” at [ProjectOne28.com/HIStory](http://ProjectOne28.com/HIStory).



## JESUS IS THE TRUE ADAM

Conceived in a virgin by the Holy Spirit, God the Word, the Son, became a Man – *blessed* from the womb to fulfill Project 1:28.<sup>42</sup> Jesus Christ is the true Israel, the true Son of David, the true Seed of Abraham, the true Adam.<sup>43</sup> Each of these was blessed to be fruitful, multiply, fill, subdue, and rule. Each of these failed. But in everything, the true 1:28 Man, the true Image of the invisible God,<sup>44</sup> would succeed. He Himself is the true temple, full of the Holy Spirit.<sup>45</sup> And He guarded His temple, resisting the serpent's temptations for forty days fasting in the desert and for all the days of His life.<sup>46</sup> He appeared to undo the works of the devil and bring the rule of God by casting out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, and making disciples.<sup>47</sup> Every step of the way, He subdued the enemy.

On the Cross, the serpent bruised His heel, but He bruised the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15), securing his final defeat.<sup>48</sup> By taking our penalty of death, satisfying the wrath of God against our sins, and nailing our record of debt to the Cross – paid in full – Jesus triumphed over the enemy.<sup>49</sup> Jesus was indeed the promised covenant, ratified by His own blood, by which He purchased some from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.<sup>50</sup> The Accuser's case against sinners was dismissed, for they had been declared righteous by the Judge on the basis of Christ's righteousness imputed to the believing.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the Accuser was cast out of the courtroom.<sup>52</sup> Jesus had bound the strong man (Satan) to plunder his possessions (people).<sup>53</sup> Fellowship with God was broken at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but restored at the Tree of

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<sup>42</sup> God become Man in a virgin (Mt. 1:18-25, Jn. 1:1-5, 14; Lk. 1:26-38). Jesus epitomized Genesis 1:28: blessed (Lk. 1:42), fruitful and multiplying (Jn. 12:24), filling the earth (Eph. 1:23), subduing (1 Pet. 3:22), and ruling (Acts 10:36).

<sup>43</sup> True Israel (e.g., Mt. 2:15, Jn. 15:1, Isa. 49:1-13, see "Introduction to the Old Testament," ProjectOne28.com/OISurvey). Son of David (Mt. 1:1, 9:27, 15:22, 20:30, 21:15; Lk. 3:31; Rom. 1:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:8). Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16).

<sup>44</sup> Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:3

<sup>45</sup> E.g., John 1:14 (lit.), 2:19-22, Lk. 4:1

<sup>46</sup> Lk. 4:1-13 (esp. v. 13), Jn. 14:30-31, Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21

<sup>47</sup> E.g., 1 Jn. 3:8, Mt. 12:28, 11:2-6

<sup>48</sup> The final victory over Satan is everywhere presented as something already won at the Cross (e.g., Rev. 1, 5, 12; Jn. 12:23-32, esp. v. 31, 16:11; Col. 1:20, 2:14-15; Heb. 2:14).

<sup>49</sup> Col. 2:14-15

<sup>50</sup> Isa. 42:6, 49:8; Rev. 5:9-10

<sup>51</sup> Rom. 3:21-26, 8:28-39 (esp. vv. 33-34); 2 Cor. 5:21

<sup>52</sup> Jn. 12:31, Rev. 12:10

<sup>53</sup> Mt. 12:28-29 (people as possessions: 2 Tim. 2:26, Ti. 2:13-14)

Calvary.<sup>54</sup> Jesus became a curse to redeem us from the curse.<sup>55</sup> And He put death to death.<sup>56</sup>

In His death, Jesus became the Last Adam, and in His resurrection, the Second Man.<sup>57</sup> Exalted to the throne of God with all authority in heaven and on earth, He has subjected the rulers and authorities of darkness to Himself.<sup>58</sup> Right now, there is a Genesis 1:28 Man ruling over all creation!

#### THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE BLESSING

The Last Adam and Second Man became a life-giving Spirit.<sup>59</sup> Having been exalted, He received the promised Holy Spirit from God the Father and poured Him into the hearts of His disciples.<sup>60</sup> The Spirit planted His word in them, His imperishable seed, which caused them to be born again through faith.<sup>61</sup> The disciple's dead, Adam nature was crucified in Christ and raised with Christ to walk in the newness of life.<sup>62</sup> Adam and Eve walked with God in the breeze of the Garden, and we are now able to fellowship with the Triune God and walk by the Spirit - *like* Jesus walked.<sup>63</sup> Our greatest need and our greatest desire has been provided for, thanks to Christ's death, resurrection, and outpouring. By the Spirit, we can *know* God and His Christ, which is the definition of eternal life.<sup>64</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance of full glorification in the Trinity.<sup>65</sup> The Holy Spirit is the Lord, transforming us

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<sup>54</sup> Consider the irony: after the Tree of *Knowledge*, man in man's wisdom could not know God. But the *foolishness* of what was preached - Christ crucified on a *tree* - becomes the wisdom of God to those called by God, in order to shame the wise and bring the wisdom of the world to nothing (1 Cor. 1-2, tree: Gal. 3:13-14, Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29).

<sup>55</sup> Gal. 3:13-14

<sup>56</sup> 1 Cor. 15:20-23, Heb. 2:14, Rev. 1:17-18

<sup>57</sup> 1 Cor. 15:45-47

<sup>58</sup> Acts 2:33, Rev. 3:21, Mt. 28:18, Phil. 3:21, Eph. 1:20-23

<sup>59</sup> 1 Cor. 15:45

<sup>60</sup> Acts 2:33, 2:17, 5:32; Rom. 5:5, Ti. 3:6, Gal. 4:6

<sup>61</sup> 1 Pet. 1:3, 23, 25

<sup>62</sup> Rom. 6:4, 7:6 (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-17, Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10, Gal. 2:20, 6:15)

<sup>63</sup> Jn. 14:23, Gal. 5:16, 25; 1 Jn. 2:6

<sup>64</sup> Jn. 17:3 (cf. 1 Jn. 5:20)

<sup>65</sup> Eph. 1:13-14 (cf. Rom. 8:30)

into the Genesis 1:26 Image of Christ.<sup>66</sup> *The Holy Spirit is the blessing of Genesis 1:28:*

GALATIANS 3:13-14

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” –<sup>14</sup>so that in Christ Jesus *the blessing of Abraham* might come to the [nations], so that we might receive *the promised Spirit* through faith.

Abraham’s blessing was a blessing to be fruitful and multiply as the father of nations, to inherit the Promised Land, and to bless all the nations of the earth with the knowledge of the righteous and just God.<sup>67</sup> By faith, we are reckoned to be sons of Abraham, sons of God, friends of God like Abraham, and co-heirs with Christ of the whole world!<sup>68</sup> The blessing of Abraham, which was a reinstatement of the blessing to Adam, has come to the nations by the Spirit of Christ (Gal. 3:13-14).

Just as Adam and Abraham were blessed to fill the earth, the resurrected Christ now is filling us (Eph. 3:19, 5:18) and “filling for Himself all [things] in all [ways]” (1:23, lit., cf. 4:10). We are integral to this blessing and this filling, as we receive it more and more fully in our hearts and share it by discipling all the nations. And as we will see in the next section, this filling is promised to succeed. All creation will be filled with Christ, the Image and Glory of God, in a renewed Eden – the Garden-temple revealed in Revelation 21-22.<sup>69</sup> The End comes full circle. From the beginning, God commissioned a Man to expand His Garden-temple to establish His Kingdom over all the earth for His glory. Jesus, the true Adam, has ensured its completion.

The Great *Recommission* to us grants the privilege and joy of experiencing the true Adam fulfill the original commission through partnership with us. To be *fruitful* and *multiply* is to make disciples by spiritual father and mothering. To *fill* is to do it among all the people groups of the earth. To *subdue* and *rule* is to obey all Jesus commanded, undoing the works of the enemy through faith and expressing Christ’s Kingship through good works for His glory.<sup>70</sup> We can do it because we are *blessed* with His Spirit. Behold, He is with us all the days (Mt. 28:20). So, let’s go – with confidence in the promises in the next section: His plan absolutely will succeed.

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<sup>66</sup> 2 Cor. 3:17-18

<sup>67</sup> Gen. 12:1-3, 18:18-20, cf. Isa. 11:9, Hab. 2:14

<sup>68</sup> Gal. 3:7-16, 25-29, 4:6-7

<sup>69</sup> Fn. 9 and 32 with Rev. 21:11, 16-21, 27; 22:1-2

<sup>70</sup> E.g., 1 Jn. 3:8, 2:13-14, 4:4, 5:4-5; Mt. 5:16

### SECTION THREE: THE PROPHETIC ROOTS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

In this section, we consider some of the prophecies and parables that give purpose to the Great Commission and promise its successful completion. In the End, disciples from all peoples will be submitting to the unrivaled and ever-increasing government of King Jesus.

#### THE GROWING MOUNTAIN: DANIEL 2:34-35, 44-45

Around 605 B.C., Daniel was among the first exiles from Judah to Babylon. God had given him a position of favor among King Nebuchadnezzar's wise men.<sup>1</sup> Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that frightened him, and he demanded that one of his wise men tell him the dream and its interpretation. He refused to tell anyone the dream; someone had to receive revelation of the elements of the dream without his help, so that he could trust that interpretation. None of them could. In anger, Nebuchadnezzar threatened to put to death all of the wise men.<sup>2</sup> When Daniel found out about this sentence of death, he prayed to God for revelation, which He gave. Daniel told the king:

No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked,<sup>28</sup> but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what is necessary to take place in the latter days.<sup>3</sup>

Daniel then proceeded to prove he had received revelation from God by telling Nebuchadnezzar what was in his dream. He had dreamed of a great image, a statue with a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, middle and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet mixed with iron and clay (2:31-33). Let us pause here to consider the interpretation of the first part of his dream. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar: "you are the head of gold;" you are "the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might... making you rule over... all" of creation (2:37-38). The sovereignty of God is a major emphasis in Daniel. The repeated lesson in chapter four is: "the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He wills" (4:17, 25, 32), which is part of the lesson here, too. Earlier, God had raised up Assyria to conquer Israel. Then, to complete His judgments, He gave the kingdom, power, and might to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to conquer Assyria and Judah.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dn. 1 (esp. vv. 9, 19-20)

<sup>2</sup> Dn. 2 :1-13

<sup>3</sup> Dn. 2:27-28, lit. See "The Son of Man and the Saints of the Most High" for the verbal connection to the Book of Revelation ([ProjectOne28.com/Son\\_of\\_Man](http://ProjectOne28.com/Son_of_Man)).

<sup>4</sup> See "Prophets and Politics Leading to Exile" ([DiscipleNations.net/OTsurvey/exile](http://DiscipleNations.net/OTsurvey/exile)).

So, the head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar and the kingdom of Babylon. Daniel then interpreted the silver as the kingdom that will replace Babylon (notice the degrading quality of the kingdoms of men). God would raise up Cyrus and the Medo-Persian kingdom to conquer Babylon.<sup>5</sup> Next, the bronze represented Alexander the Great of Greece.<sup>6</sup> The legs of iron, which became feet mixed with iron and clay, signify the kings and kingdom of Rome. Amazingly, Daniel accurately prophesied hundreds of years of politics because God not only knows the future, but is sovereignly running it. And that is why we can trust that this next portion of Nebuchadnezzar's dream will certainly be fulfilled; God is going to make it happen:

DANIEL 2:34-35

As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.<sup>35</sup> Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

The Stone is the Christ. "Cut out by no human hand" means that God will do it. How did we come to know the Christ as an individual piece of rock on the earth? He was not conceived by ordinary human means; the Holy Spirit of God conceived Jesus in the womb of a virgin! (The virgin birth had already been prophesied before Daniel in Isaiah 7:14.) This Stone, Jesus Christ, by His death and resurrection, has crushed Satan and the rulers and authorities of darkness in the heavenly realms.<sup>7</sup> Right now, He is reigning on His Father's throne as the King of kings,<sup>8</sup> and He "is filling for Himself all [things] in all [ways]."<sup>9</sup> Right now, the Stone is growing into a great mountain.

How? When a dead sinner becomes a born-again disciple, he is transferred from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of light and

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Isa. 44:28-45:13, Dn. 8:20, Jer. 51:1, 11

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Dan. 8:5-8, 21; see also the very helpful footnotes in the *ESV Study Bible*.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. 3:15, Jn. 12:31, Col. 2:15, Heb. 2:14-15, Phil. 3:21

<sup>8</sup> Mt. 26:64, Acts 2:33-36, Eph. 1:20, Heb. 1:3, 13, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2; Col. 3:1, 1 Cor. 15:25; Rev. 1:5, 3:21, 17:15, 19:16

<sup>9</sup> Eph. 1:23, lit., cf. 4:10. The participle is middle voice (personal interest). Most translations render the verb as a gnomic (generic) present in the active voice ("fills"), but if we take seriously both the continuous aspect of the present tense (see Wallace, 514ff.) and the personal interest of the middle voice (Wallace, 414ff.), then the translation can express the proper theological richness: "is filling for Himself." Christ is filling *now* and *for His glory*. So also, John Piper, "His Body: The Fullness of Him Who Fills All in All" (DesiringGod.org).

transformed into a living stone.<sup>10</sup> Each time a new living stone is added to God's Temple (Christ and His Church),<sup>11</sup> the mountain grows larger; His Kingdom expands. As that new disciple is taught to obey as much as all Jesus commanded, the Kingship of Christ increases in his heart – the mountain grows in him. As that disciple grows in likeness to Christ, he makes other disciples who make disciples – the mountain grows exponentially. *Disciple-making fulfills the prophecy of the Stone becoming a great mountain.*

This Stone will not only grow, but overcome. Jesus Himself alluded to this prophecy in Matthew 21:44 when He said, “And the one who falls on this stone will be *broken to pieces*; and when it falls on anyone, it will *crush him*” (cf. Dan. 2:35, Lk. 20:18). When King Jesus returns to rule the nations with a rod of iron, He will dash every unbeliever to pieces like a potter's vessel (Ps. 2:9).<sup>12</sup> Every enemy will be *blown away like chaff*, thrown into the Lake of Fire.<sup>13</sup> Then the New Earth will be all mountain – all Christ, all Church, all Kingdom forever.<sup>14</sup>

#### THE MUSTARD SEED AND LEAVEN: MATTHEW 13:31-33

He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. <sup>32</sup>It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches” (Mt. 13:31-32).

Jesus' audience thought the Christ would immediately lead a military rebellion against Rome and re-establish the national, political kingdom of Israel.<sup>15</sup> This parable of the Kingdom's small beginnings must have been a jolt. Few, if any, understood the prophets had foretold of two comings of Christ: first to suffer and then to conquer. Probably none expected the gradual growth of a garden plant. The patience of God is perplexing!

Nevertheless, King Jesus is the original Seed, having died and been buried in the field in order to come back to life, grow, and bear much

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<sup>10</sup> Col. 1:12-13; 1 Pet. 2:4-5, Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Cor. 3:9, 16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16

<sup>11</sup> Jn. 2:19-22 (and fn. above)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. also Rev. 12:5, 19:15, 2:26-27

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Dan. 2:35, Mt. 3:12, Lk. 3:17, Rev. 20:11-15

<sup>14</sup> Dan. 2:35, Eph. 1:9-10, 23, 4:10; Rev. 11:15-18, 21:2 (for New Jerusalem as the whole New Earth, see [ProjectOne28.com/NewJerusalem](http://ProjectOne28.com/NewJerusalem))

<sup>15</sup> See Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 137-138. For the Maccabean Revolution, see “The Time Between the Testaments,” pp. 8-10 ([ProjectOne28.com/two-testaments](http://ProjectOne28.com/two-testaments)).

fruit.<sup>16</sup> The King's rule will become "larger than all," "so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches" (13:32). These birds and branches may seem like incidental details to fit the parable, but they actually allude to Old Testament prophecies in Daniel and Ezekiel. Above, we examined Nebuchadnezzar's first dream. Daniel 4 records a second dream:

... I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. <sup>11</sup>The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. <sup>12</sup>Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and *the birds of the heavens lived in its branches*, and all flesh was fed from it (4:10-12).

Just as Daniel interpreted the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, this time Daniel said:

The tree you saw... <sup>21</sup>... *in whose branches the birds of the heavens lived* - <sup>22</sup>it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth (4:20-22).

The size of the tree signified Nebuchadnezzar's dominion over all the earth. All the creatures of the earth were under his kingdom. (This language was also used in Ezekiel 31:6 about Assyria, who was the world power before Babylon: "All *the birds of the heavens* made their nests in its boughs... and under its shadow lived *all great nations*.") Nebuchadnezzar's dream warned him of impending judgment because of his pride; God had made his kingdom grow, and God would cut the tree down.<sup>17</sup> Nebuchadnezzar would learn the lesson: "the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men" (4:17). The lowliest Man is Christ,<sup>18</sup> and His humility is highlighted in this parable of the small mustard seed. God has delighted to set Christ over the kingdom of men, and so the parable borrowed language from Daniel (and Ezekiel) to teach that, in the End, all creation will be under Jesus' benevolent dominion.

Even more exciting than those allusions is the direct prophecy of the coming Christ in Ezekiel 17. It comes after a parable in which Judah was a cedar tree and its evil King Jehoiachin was a young twig plucked off the top and carried into exile in Babylon.<sup>19</sup> Then a seed was planted and

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<sup>16</sup> Jn. 12:23-24 (context vv. 27-28, 32-33)

<sup>17</sup> Dn. 4:14-16, 23-33

<sup>18</sup> Phil. 2:3-11, Mt. 11:29

grew like a willow twig, representing Jehoiachin's replacement, King Zedekiah, who also was judged for his evil.<sup>20</sup> Out of this bad context comes the good news, the Gospel promise:

Thus says the Lord Yahweh: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. <sup>23</sup>On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; *in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest.* <sup>24</sup>And all the trees of the field shall know that I am Yahweh; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am Yahweh; I have spoken, and I will do it" (Ezek. 17:22-24).

The previous twigs were kings, and this twig is *the King*, the Christ. He Himself will grow, bear branches, produce fruit, and every sort of bird will nest in His branches, as the parable of Matthew 13:31-32 declared.

Just as with the prophecy of the Stone growing into a great mountain, we believe disciple-making fulfills the growth of the mustard plant into a creation-filling tree. The Kingdom expands as wild branches are made disciples, receiving Christ's rule in their hearts and being grafted into Him.<sup>21</sup> In the End, when disciples are made among all the peoples, Christ will cut down every competing tree and reign over all.

Jesus followed that parable with another like it: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened" (Mt. 13:33).<sup>22</sup> Again, the Kingdom began small and seemingly insignificant with one humble Servant voluntarily laying down His life. But, *His rule will permeate the earth as His disciples make disciples who make disciples.* In the End, there will be sons of the Kingdom in all of the dough (world). For that to be true, we must first do this next verse.

#### THEN THE END WILL COME: MATTHEW 24:14

Jesus' disciples asked, "...what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Mt. 24:3). In the middle of a long answer, Jesus gave a promise: "And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the

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<sup>19</sup> Ezek. 17:4, 12, cf. 2 Ki. 24:8-17. The *ESV Study Bible* has helpful notes on Ezek. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Ezek. 17:5-21, cf. 2 Ki. 24:17-25:7

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Jn. 15:1-8, Rom. 11:17



end will come” (24:14, cf. Rev. 14:6-7). This is not a guess. Not a hope. Not a maybe. The Gospel of the Kingdom *will* be proclaimed to all people groups, and *then* the End will come.

Do we want the End to come? Do we want to see Jesus face to face, shining like the sun?<sup>23</sup> Then let us give our prayers, money, and service to proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom to all peoples! The End will *not* come before that. Missionary statesman Oswald J. Smith wrote: “Christ wants to return. He longs to return. It is His right. Then why does He wait? He is waiting for you and me to complete the task.”<sup>24</sup> Making disciples of all peoples is a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Christ and the fullness of His Kingdom on earth!

In 1956 George Eldon Ladd wrote, because of the unparalleled missionary movement of the previous century: “The world is nearly evangelized; *any generation which is really dedicated to the task can complete the mission.*”<sup>25</sup> At this writing, Joshua Project reports that there are just over 7,000 unreached people groups in the world (down from an estimated 17,000 in 1976).<sup>26</sup> Many of these are difficult areas – areas where Jesus will tell His disciples to take up their crosses and go. The Church can do this. Ralph Winter and Bruce Koch chart 1,000 churches in the world for every unreached people group.<sup>27</sup> Ron Sanford says there are 103,500 evangelicals for every unreached people group.<sup>28</sup> We have enough resources; we have enough people with the witness-bearing Spirit;<sup>29</sup> and, we have the unbreakable promise of King Jesus that He is with us, and we will succeed.

The first thing we must do is obey Jesus’ command in Matthew 9:38, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore *pray earnestly* to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” The global Church is full of heroes already out in the harvest field. We stress *global* because “more missionaries are now sent from non-Western

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<sup>22</sup> Leaven is often negative, but not always: it is commanded in the grain offering of Pentecost (Lev. 23:16-17). The Kingdom’s advance, which it symbolizes, is clearly positive.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12; Rev. 1:7, 16

<sup>24</sup> Qtd. in George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope: A Biblical Study of the Second Advent and the Rapture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956) 151.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>26</sup> JoshuaProject.net

<sup>27</sup> Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, “Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge” (JoshuaProject.net) 545.

<sup>28</sup> Tweeted by @ToEveryTribe on Oct. 28, 2012 (visit ToEveryTribe.com)

<sup>29</sup> Jn. 15:26-27

churches than from the traditional mission-sending bases in the West.”<sup>30</sup> The Kingdom is forcefully advancing<sup>31</sup> as the Lord of the harvest sends out laborers to new peoples. Yet we must pray that more of His Church wakes up to this aspect of the Great Commission. Many do not think of it at all. Like the Israelites of Haggai’s day, they have busied themselves building their own houses while the global temple of God remains incomplete.<sup>32</sup> We must pray for another stirring of the people’s spirits to finish the building effort with the kind of teamwork seen during Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s days.<sup>33</sup>

We must pray even for those who do think of the Great Commission, but in a limited sense of “make disciples” rather than the fullness: “make disciples of all the nations.” We need the Spirit to affect our priorities. Most of the money given to the Western Church is spent on the Western Church. Less than one percent of Christian giving goes to pioneer missions among unreached peoples.<sup>34</sup> More than ninety percent of evangelical missionaries minister among reached peoples, leaving less than ten percent for the nearly three billion unreached souls.<sup>35</sup> We need the Spirit to affect our hearts in order to change those realities. We have many Timothy-type missionaries (and surely need more), who are sent to minister in a different culture that has already been reached with the Gospel (like Timothy to Ephesus). We especially need the Spirit to help us pray in, equip, send out, and support more Paul-type missionaries, who are commissioned to proclaim the Gospel where Jesus has never been named.<sup>36</sup>

Romans 15 shows that Paul’s vision of Christ and his personal commission to carry the Gospel to the nations<sup>37</sup> was undergirded with the prophetic Scriptures, as Paul quoted 2 Samuel 22:5 and Psalm 18:49, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, Isaiah 11:1, 10 and 52:15. Indeed, Paul saw this as a specific purpose of Christ’s incarnation and servanthood:

For I am saying Christ became [a] Servant of the circumcised for the sake of the truthfulness of God, in order to confirm the promises to the forefathers, and [for] the nations to glorify God for mercy. As it is written,

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<sup>30</sup> Winter and Koch, “Finishing the Task,” *op. cit.*, 531.

<sup>31</sup> See DiscipleNations.net/forcefully-advancing for explanation of why this is the most likely translation of Matthew 11:12 (hint: Lk. 16:16 is the key).

<sup>32</sup> Hag. 1 (esp. v. 2-4, 7-10)

<sup>33</sup> Ezra. 1:5, Hag. 1:14; cf. the coordination of Neh. 3. The Church in Christ is the true temple of God (Jn. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5, Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Cor. 3:9, 16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16), which Christ is building (Mt. 16:18) through our partnership (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:9-17, Eph. 2:19-22, 4:16).

<sup>34</sup> “The Unfinished Task” (JoshuaProject.net)

<sup>35</sup> Winter and Koch, “Finishing the Task,” *op. cit.*, 543, 545.

“Therefore I will praise You among the nations,  
and sing to Your Name.”

<sup>10</sup>And again it is said,  
“Rejoice, O nations, with His people.”

<sup>11</sup>And again,  
“Praise the Lord, all you nations,  
and let all the peoples extol Him.”

<sup>12</sup>And again Isaiah says,  
“The root of Jesse will come,  
even He who arises to rule the nations;  
in Him will the nations hope” (Rom. 15:8-12, lit.).

At this point in Paul’s ministry, after many travels and persecutions, he wrote: “from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ,” and “I no longer have any room for work in these regions” (15:19, 22). This is really incredible! We know there were many sinners in these regions who still needed to be evangelized, because Paul sent Timothy to minister to the Church in Ephesus *and* to “do the work of an evangelist” there.<sup>38</sup> Yet Paul’s commission was not simply to make disciples of individual people, but people groups. Once the Gospel took root among a people group, with a Church standing solidly on the foundation of Christ,<sup>39</sup> his work was fulfilled, and he had to look for more room to keep going:

... thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation,<sup>21</sup> but as it is written,

“Those who have never been told of him will see,  
and those who have never heard will understand.”<sup>40</sup>

Yes, let us continue to pray in, equip, send out, and support Timothy-type missionaries. But oh, by the Spirit of Christ, let us learn to pray in, equip, send out, and support more Paul-type missionaries. Our King’s global mandate is not simply to disciple as many people as we can, but to disciple all the peoples of the world. May we not be self-centered, and may we not focus only on peoples who are more easily

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<sup>36</sup> John Piper, “A Passion for the Supremacy of Christ - Where He Is Not Named” (desiringGod.org)

<sup>37</sup> Acts 9:1-19, 22:3-11, 26:2-18

<sup>38</sup> 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 4:5

<sup>39</sup> 1 Cor. 3:10-11

<sup>40</sup> Rom. 15:20-21 (quoting Isa. 52:15, from an astounding context of Christ’s atonement)

reached, nor only missions that are apparently more fruitful. May God grant us a passion for His Name that will sacrifice to finish our unique and primary task: “to press on to reach more and more unreached people (even if they are less responsive than other more-reached groups).”<sup>41</sup>

Lest we be misunderstood, let us anticipate and answer the question, “Are they saying that we should stop discipling groups that are already reached in order to go to unreached groups?” No, for a couple of reasons. First, the fullness of the Great Commission is “teaching them to be keeping as much as all [Jesus] commanded” (Mt. 28:19), so we must *reach and teach*. The goal is not merely conversion; the goal is transformation into the Image of Christ; the goal is glorification.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, many of the Paul-type missionaries will be raised up from these already-reached areas, and they need to be given a Biblical vision of missions and equipped to walk by the Spirit in the works that God planned for them from their mothers’ wombs.<sup>43</sup> We do not mean to pit one type of missions against another. Paul and Timothy were on the same team! We are laboring, though, in prayer and teaching for a more holistic understanding and engagement of our Global Mandate.

With or without us, the Gospel *will* be proclaimed and disciples made among all peoples. If not us, the Lord will send out other laborers. The question is whether or not we will enjoy the partnership with Christ and the eternal rewards of reaping the harvest with Him. Will we delay the End, or will we hasten the day of God?<sup>44</sup>

EVERY TRIBE, TONGUE, PEOPLE, NATION: REVELATION 5:9, 7:9

The Gospel of the Kingdom *will* be proclaimed to all peoples, and it *will* produce faith in some among every tribe who will submit to the Lordship of Jesus and become His disciples.<sup>45</sup> The nature of Christ’s atonement has secured this promise. The apostle John was granted this revelation of the resurrected Christ Jesus in the heavenly throne room:

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<sup>41</sup> John Piper, “Unreached Peoples: The Unique and Primary Goal of Missions” (DesiringGod.org).

<sup>42</sup> 2 Cor. 3:18, Rom. 8:28-30, Heb. 2:10, 1 Cor. 2:7

<sup>43</sup> Eph. 2:10, Gal. 1:15, Jer. 1:5, Lk. 1:15

<sup>44</sup> We fearfully write of delaying the End because of the inverse implication in Peter’s command to live holy lives, thus hastening the Day of God (2 Pet. 3:11-12). However, we submit to Jesus’ words that God the Father “has *fixed* by His own authority” the “times or seasons” of the End (Acts 1:7). In the mysterious sovereignty of God, our disobedience (delay?) and/or obedience (hastening?) to the Great Commission will fit within His pre-ordained plan. We cannot mess up God, but we can miss out on the rewards of obedience. May it not be! Be working in us, O God, to be willing and working Your good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

And when He took the scroll, [the angels] fell before the Lamb... <sup>9</sup>and they are singing [a] new song, saying:

“Worthy are You to be taking the scroll  
and to open its seals,

because You were slaughtered, and by Your blood You bought [for] God  
out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,<sup>46</sup>

<sup>10</sup>and You made them [for] our God [a] Kingdom and priests,  
and they will reign upon the earth” (Rev. 5:8-10, lit.).

This passage guarantees that the Great Commission will be successful. Missionaries eventually will meet a believing response to the Gospel from some among every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. Why? Because the Lamb of God has already purchased them! They are His! They do not know it yet, but His owns them. They were bought with a price, the precious blood of Christ.<sup>47</sup> His is the blood of the New Covenant, in which God promised to send His Spirit into them, to cleanse them and cause them to obey His commands.<sup>48</sup> They do not know it yet, but they will reign on the New Earth in submitted partnership with their Bridegroom King. Will we go tell them this good news? They are bought, but they still must repent and believe; they cannot be saved apart from the Name of Jesus.<sup>49</sup> They can only get to the Father through Jesus, His Son, the Way, the Gate for the sheep.<sup>50</sup>

Revelation 5:9 explains how Jesus could say, in advance, “*I have* other sheep that are not of this fold. I *must* bring them also, and they *will* listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (Jn. 10:16). Again, these other sheep from non-Jewish people groups did not know it yet, but Christ already *had* them. God the Father had already given them to His Son (Jn. 10:29, 17:6, 9, 24; 6:37) before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-7), when their names were written in the Book of Life of the Lamb Having Been Slaughtered (Rev. 13:8, 17:8).<sup>51</sup> What a glorious mystery! Jesus laid down His life to purchase these sheep. He died “for the nation [of Israel], and not for the nation [of Israel] only, but also to

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<sup>45</sup> Rom. 10:17, cf. 1 Pet. 1:23-25

<sup>46</sup> The head noun of the direct object (the ones whom He bought) is supplied in most translations (“men” or “people” from every tribe), but it is not there in the Greek. This is a *partitive* genitive construction, which signifies that the (implied) head noun is *part* of a larger whole designated by the genitive that follows (tribe, tongue, people, nation; see Wallace, 84-85, cf. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999] 359-360). If any head noun is supplied in the translation, it should be “some,” as ESV supplies in 2:10 and 11:9 (a phrase nearly identical to 5:9).

<sup>47</sup> Rev. 5:9; 1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19

<sup>48</sup> Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25, Heb. 12:24; Jer. 31:31-34, 32:40; Ezek. 11:19-20, 36:25-27

<sup>49</sup> E.g., Rom. 10:9-17; 1 Cor. 1:21, Eph. 3:6, Acts 4:12, Jn. 14:1, 6, 1:12-13, 3:15, 16, 18, 36; Lk. 24:47; 1 Jn. 2:23, 5:12; Heb. 9:27, 10:26-31

gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (Jn. 11:51-52). Christ *has* other sheep scattered to the ends of the earth, and He *must* bring them through the missions of the sheep who have already heard His voice (e.g., Jn. 17:18, 20). These other sheep *will* hear His voice, too. He has prayed for it (17:20), and He has promised it (10:16).

History has proven the confidence this can inspire to risk our lives to go gather these other sheep. In 1890, at the age of twenty-three, Peter Cameron Scott was called from his Scottish Presbyterian church to the west coast of Africa.<sup>52</sup> Because this was before missionaries even knew what malaria was, much less had pills to prevent it, they went on missions with their goods packed in coffins. Scott caught the fever, and he was sent home deeply discouraged. Once he recovered, he went back with his brother. His brother died, and Scott buried him by himself. Then he caught malaria again. Again he was home, devastated. He visited Westminster Abbey and the tomb of the great missionary and African explorer, David Livingstone. On his tomb were the words: “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; Them also I must bring.” Those words stirred Scott to risk it all again, and he became the founder of African Inland Mission. Scott died a few years later from blackwater fever, but his missions agency continues to this day to reach many other sheep with the voice of the Good Shepherd.<sup>53</sup>

The book of Revelation not only gives the atonement’s theological undergirding for missions in 5:9-10, but 7:9-10 also reveals the outcome of missions after the Great Tribulation.<sup>54</sup>

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,<sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

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<sup>50</sup> Jn. 14:6, 10:7-10

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Rev. 20:15, 21:27; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 1:9 Isa. 4:3, Dan. 12:1, Lk. 10:20, Phil. 4:3, Heb. 12:23

<sup>52</sup> John Piper tells this story often and sources Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004) 347.

<sup>53</sup> Visit AIMint.org.

<sup>54</sup> For the understanding of “after” the Great Tribulation, see Rev. 7:13-14. Every interlude reveals information before or at the opening of the Great Tribulation, followed by information of the closing or aftermath of the Great Tribulation (see the chart at [ProjectOne28.com/Revelation/Interludes.pdf](http://ProjectOne28.com/Revelation/Interludes.pdf)). For the connection between first and second vision in Revelation 7, see [ProjectOne28.com/Revelation/140000.pdf](http://ProjectOne28.com/Revelation/140000.pdf).

“Missions exist because worship does not.”<sup>55</sup> God is seeking true worshipers from every people group (e.g., Jn. 4:23-24). And He will get them. The eternal Church will consist of people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. And they will worship Him for His salvation.<sup>56</sup> Consider also Revelation 15:4:

Who will not fear, O Lord,  
and glorify Your Name?  
For You alone are holy.  
All nations will come  
and worship You,  
for Your righteous acts have been revealed.

So that we go and seek these true worshipers with the Shepherd Lamb, may God give us the psalmist’s heart:

PSALM 67:1-5<sup>57</sup>

<sup>1</sup>May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make His face to shine upon us,      *Selah*  
<sup>2</sup>that Your way may be known on earth,  
Your saving power among all nations.  
<sup>3</sup>Let the peoples praise You, O God;  
let all the peoples praise You!  
<sup>4</sup>Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for You judge the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations upon earth.      *Selah*  
<sup>5</sup>Let the peoples praise You, O God;  
let all the peoples praise You!

May our hearts be joyfully jealous for the glory of God, glory for which He will answer these prayers. And may our hearts be given confidence in the sovereignty of God, sovereignty by which He will accomplish these prayers. This sovereign Lord says:

“For from the rising of the sun to its setting My Name *will* be great among the nations, and in every place incense *will* be offered to My Name, and a pure offering. For My Name *will* be great among the

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<sup>55</sup> John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, Third Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010) 15.

<sup>56</sup> These palm branches signify the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, which annually commemorated Israel’s salvation through the Exodus and God’s dwelling among them in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. This multitude will experience their own Exodus, their own salvation from the Pharaoh-like Antichrist – even from sin, Satan, and death. Therefore, 7:15 promises, literally, “... the One sitting on the throne will *tabernacle* over them with His presence.” For a Biblical theology of the New Exodus, see Spencer Stewart, “Tying the Two Testaments Together” (ProjectOne28.com/two-testaments).

<sup>57</sup> For an excellent expository, missions message from Psalm 67, see John Piper, “Let the Peoples Pray You, O God, Let All the Peoples Praise You!” (desiringGod.org).

nations, says Yahweh of hosts.... For I am a great King, says Yahweh of hosts, and My Name *will* be feared among the nations” (Mal. 1:11, 14b).

#### THE INCREASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT: ISAIAH 9:6-7

<sup>6</sup>For to us a Child is born,  
to us a Son is given;  
and the government will be upon His shoulder,  
and His Name will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Warrior God,  
Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup>Of the increase of His government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over His Kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this (Isa. 9:6-7, lit.).<sup>58</sup>

Matthew and Luke, in unique ways, teach us that Jesus is the fulfillment of this passage. There is much we would love to say about it, but we leave that to another place.<sup>59</sup> Our one point here is that, through discipleship, Christ’s government is increasing, and His government will never stop increasing.

When Christ comes again, He will destroy all who do not want Him to reign over them, and He will cast them into the Lake of Fire.<sup>60</sup> Then the unhindered, un-ending peace promised in Isaiah 9:7 will be established on the New Earth. We will have rest from all of our enemies. There will be no more war, no more need for the battle gear of Isaiah 9:5. No more pain, no more death, no more tears.<sup>61</sup> Only peace and joy. And the increase of His government will never end. When we are resurrected and/or glorified, it is not as though our knowledge of God will be complete and eternity will be an unchanging condition. We can never reach the end of knowledge of the infinite God! We will always be learning more of His infinite glory! We have been saved by grace, “so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). It will take infinite ages to show these riches! And as our revelation of His glory and grace increases, His Kingdom will increase – forever without end. He is that good.

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<sup>58</sup> For “Warrior God” and “Father of Eternity,” see Motyer, *Isaiah*, 102.

<sup>59</sup> See Mt. 4:14-16, Lk. 1:32-35, and [ProjectOne28.com/Isa9](http://ProjectOne28.com/Isa9).

<sup>60</sup> E.g., Lk. 19:27, Rev. 19:11-21, 20:11-15



May our confident expectation of such glory and such joy motivate us to go, disciple all the peoples – to tell slaves of sin that the Son can set them free indeed. The yoke of the oppressor can be broken (Isa. 9:4), and Jesus' yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Mt. 11:30). But they must submit to His yoke. They must surrender everything to make Jesus everything. He is worth it. And some from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation will believe it. The Great *Re*commission will succeed – to the praise of the glory of His grace. Forever and ever, amen!

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<sup>61</sup> Rev. 21:1-5

## PART TWO: THE KING'S METHOD

### SECTION ONE: THE EXAMPLE OF THE CHIEF DISCIPLE-MAKER

We have seen that disciples learn to be like their teacher. Jesus is our Lord, Savior, Teacher, and He is our example (Jn. 13:15, 1 Pet. 2:21). We are called to walk like He walked (1 Jn. 2:6). We are commanded to make disciples like He made disciples. Granted, there will be some differences. We face a high hurdle in our technological and ridiculously independent culture, especially contrasted to Jesus' agrarian, rabbinic, family-oriented culture. Also, Jesus' ministry was obviously unique in some respects. He had a limited time with some unmatched ministry requirements to shift from one covenant to the next – ultimately through His own death, resurrection, and ascension. We do enjoy a distinct advantage, though, in that Jesus called disciples before Pentecost, whereas we are privileged to see people become born again, and then we help them be discipled by the Spirit from their insides.<sup>1</sup> Still, we should examine how we may make disciples as much like Jesus as possible.

#### HIS DEPENDENCE UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT

There seems no better introductory principle from Jesus' ministry than His dependence upon the Holy Spirit. If anyone could succeed as his own boss, doing his own thing, it would be the God-Man. This is the One who created the universe and holds it together! But Jesus repeatedly declared that He did "nothing from Himself" – nothing sourced from His Godhood and nothing from His Humanity; He only cooperated with the Father's work in Him by the Spirit.

"Amen, amen, I am saying [to] you, the Son is able to be doing absolutely<sup>2</sup> nothing from Himself, except what He sees the Father doing; because whatever that [One] is doing, these [things] the Son is also doing likewise. <sup>21</sup>Because the Father loves the Son and shows [to] Him all [the things] which He Himself is doing, and greater works than these will He show, in order that you yourselves may marvel. ...<sup>30</sup>I Myself am able to be doing nothing from Myself..." (Jn. 5:19-20, 30, lit.).

Jesus demonstrated a radical, complete dependence upon revelation from the Father through the Spirit. He never coasted on auto-pilot. He never did anything or said anything just because He thought it was a

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<sup>1</sup> We can see in Jn. 16:12-15 the challenge Jesus faced and the help we have: "I have more to say to you, more than you can now bear, but when the Spirit of Truth comes...."

<sup>2</sup> The Greek contains a double negative to be emphatic, but that breaks the rules in English, so "absolutely" signifies the strength of Jesus' words here.

good idea. He never did anything merely because He read it was commanded in the Scriptures. He did not have a “What Would a Messiah Do?” checklist. What He had was the Spirit of the Father, to whom He gave glory:

Jesus said: “...[the things]<sub>J</sub> which I heard from Him [the Father]<sub>J</sub>, these [things]<sub>J</sub> I am speaking to the world...”<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Jesus said [to]<sub>J</sub> them, “Whenever you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM, and I am doing nothing from Myself, but just as the Father taught Me, I am speaking these [things]<sub>J</sub>.<sup>29</sup> And the [One who]<sub>J</sub> sent Me is with Me; He did not leave Me alone, because I Myself am always doing the [things]<sub>J</sub> pleasing [to]<sub>J</sub> Him” (Jn. 8:26c, 28-29, lit.).

“Because I Myself did not speak from Myself, but the [One who]<sub>J</sub> sent Me, [the]<sub>J</sub> Father, He Himself gave [a]<sub>J</sub> command [to]<sub>J</sub> Me, what I should say and what I should speak.<sup>50</sup> And I know that His command is eternal life. Therefore, what I am saying, just as the Father has spoken [to]<sub>J</sub> Me, in this manner I am speaking” (Jn. 12:49-50, lit.).

“You are believing that I [am]<sub>J</sub> in the Father and the Father is in Me, [aren’t you]<sub>J</sub>?<sup>3</sup> The words which I Myself am saying [to]<sub>J</sub> you I am not speaking from Myself, but the Father abiding in Me is doing His works” (Jn. 14:10, lit.).

“... and the word which you are hearing is not Mine, but the Father’s [who]<sub>J</sub> sent Me” (Jn. 14:24).

“... but in order that the world may know that I am loving the Father, even as the Father commanded Me, so I am doing” (Jn. 14:31, lit.).

“But if *by the Spirit of God* I Myself am casting out demons, then the Kingdom [of]<sub>J</sub> God has come upon you” (Mt. 12:28, lit.).

John also bore witness to the Son’s dependence upon the Father through the Spirit: “Because the [One]<sub>J</sub> whom God sent is speaking the words of God, because He gives the Spirit without measure” (Jn. 3:34, lit.). Luke, carried along by the Holy Spirit, also credited Jesus’ miracles to the Father: “And the power of the Lord was with him to heal” (5:17). Peter also preached the Son’s dependence upon the Father through the

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<sup>3</sup> Greek has three ways to ask a question: one is straightforward and does not anticipate an affirmative or negative answer. Another uses the negative particle μή (*mē*, “not”) to explicate expectation of a negative answer to the question. To portray that in English, if it was present in this verse, it would read, “You are *not* believing... *are you*?” But the third way to ask a question is employed here: the negative particle οὐκ (*ouk*, “not”) explicates expectation of a *positive* answer. “You *are* believing... *aren’t you*?” shows that Jesus knows His disciples do, in fact, believe this. The question is rhetorical to drive home the application of the Father’s indwelling in the following statement.

Spirit: "...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

God the Son could have performed the entire ministry of the Messiah "from Himself," with His own wisdom and power. But the Son made Himself nothing, became an obedient servant,<sup>4</sup> and allowed the human will of Jesus to vessel the Spirit's anointing. He did so because the Father had determined for Man to be fruitful, multiply, subdue, and rule (Gen. 1:28). Jesus came to fulfill that plan - as a Man, full of the Spirit.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, He also provided an example to all men and women.

Jesus did nothing of Himself; therefore, He did not make disciples of Himself. Isaiah had prophesied that the Christ would be "discipled" by the Father "morning by morning" in order to disciple others (50:4, lit.). Jesus said that was indeed how He discipled: "...all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (Jn. 15:15).

If even the Son of God did not try to make disciples on His own, how much less should we! No formulas, no programs, no slick ideas of our own can substitute for learning from God the Spirit. In that case, we should pray consistently for the Spirit's leading, just like the Chief Disciple-maker.

#### HIS PRIORITY OF PRAYER

Jesus' life of dependence produced a life of prayer. Only dependent people pray. "Father, I need You to do something I can't" (or, in Jesus' case, something He could have done, but humbly submitted not to do, in order to fulfill God's purpose for *Man* by the Spirit.)

We believe the perfect Son of God enjoyed unbroken fellowship with God the Father and God the Spirit (until experiencing His wrath on the Cross, Mt. 27:46). Since Jesus was always hearing and seeing and fellowshiping with the Father in the flow of life,<sup>6</sup> we could surely excuse Him if He did not stop for extended times of prayer. Yet that is exactly what the Gospels show Jesus regularly doing.

Take, for example, just one stretch of time early in His public ministry. After healing all the sick who came to Him in Capernaum,

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<sup>4</sup> Phil. 2:7-8

<sup>5</sup> See "The God-Man: A Study in Walking as He Did" (ProjectOne28.com/God-Man).

<sup>6</sup> Note, for example, Jesus was praying during His baptism (Lk. 3:21).

Jesus “departed and went into a desolate place” to pray.<sup>7</sup> Then He traveled to other towns, evangelizing the Kingdom of God and healing great crowds (Lk. 4:43, 5:15). But again, Jesus “was withdrawing to desolate places and praying” (Lk. 5:16, lit.). The imperfect tense in that verse communicates that Jesus was *often* withdrawing to be praying. Such was His habit.

We often do not pray because we feel too busy (even though crowds are not pressing in on us to be healed). Jesus was a busy Man (and He prayed during all the busyness). But He often interrupted the hectic pace – He often stopped doing good things – for the sake of extended times of prayer.

One of those extended prayer times came the night before He chose the Twelve apostles – the *whole* night: “He went out to a mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples and chose from them twelve, whom He named apostles...” (Lk. 6:12-13). Was He getting clarity on their names? On their roles (Peter, Judas, etc.)? Was He praying for their response? For their growth in revelation? What an example for us to labor in prayer for God to show us whom we should disciple most intimately! We must pray for God to empower our call to discipleship. And because their flesh will profit nothing in response,<sup>8</sup> we need God to move upon their hearts graciously. “Father, give them repentance and a knowledge of the truth!<sup>9</sup> Remove their heart of stone and give them a new heart; fill them with Your Spirit!<sup>10</sup> Open their eyes, and shine into their hearts to see Your glory in the face of Christ, so that they joyfully submit to Your Lordship!”<sup>11</sup>

Notably, Jesus was praying before He asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” (Lk. 9:18, 20). Surely He was praying for the Father to give them revelation. Peter spoke for them, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!”<sup>12</sup> And Jesus immediately credited – not Peter’s flesh, which profited nothing – but the Father who gave revelation<sup>13</sup> in response to His Son’s prayer! Oh, how we need to be interceding for our

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<sup>7</sup> Lk. 4:42 compared with 5:16

<sup>8</sup> Jn. 6:63, Rom. 8:7-8; 1 Cor. 2:14

<sup>9</sup> Acts 5:11, 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; Jn. 10:37, 44, 65

<sup>10</sup> Ezek. 11:19-20, 36:25-27

<sup>11</sup> 2 Cor. 4:4-6, Acts 16:14 (18:27), Ps. 40:8

<sup>12</sup> Mt. 16:16 (par. Lk. 9:20, Mk. 8:29)

<sup>13</sup> Mt. 16:17

disciples to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord,”<sup>14</sup> for their “progress and joy in the faith.”<sup>15</sup>

The apostle Paul supplied us with God-breathed prayers for our disciples:

... I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,<sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,<sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,<sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe... (Eph. 1:16-19).

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father...<sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,<sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that you, being rooted and grounded in love,<sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,<sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:14-19, see also Col. 1:9-11, Phil. 1:9-11; 1 Thess. 3:11-13, 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:16, Philemon 6).

May we imitate Paul as He imitated Christ (1 Cor. 11:1) in asking the Father to give revelation to our disciples.

Jesus prayed so often and so strikingly that, after one particular prayer time, one of the disciples was so moved that he asked, “Lord, teach us to pray!”<sup>16</sup> So Jesus gave them the model prayer.<sup>17</sup> May we truly be intercessors; may our disciples sense power in our Spirit-led prayers; and, may they learn from us how to pray like Jesus.

Soberly, Jesus was also praying for Peter before the temptations that would arise during Jesus’ betrayal, trial, and crucifixion: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to sift you<sup>18</sup> like wheat, but I Myself prayed for you<sup>18</sup>, in order that your faith may not fail; and when you yourself have returned, strengthen your brothers” (Lk. 22:31-32, lit.). Jesus not only interceded and warned/assured Peter; He invited Peter to pray in the

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<sup>14</sup> 2 Pet. 3:18

<sup>15</sup> Phil. 1:25 (cf. Jn. 16:24, Rom. 15:13; 2 Cor. 1:24)

<sup>16</sup> Lk. 11:1

<sup>17</sup> Lk. 11:2-4, Mt. 6:9-13. For exposition/example, see *The Model Prayer* (ProjectOne28.com).

<sup>18</sup> The first “you” is plural, and the second is singular; i.e., Satan asked for all of the disciples, and Jesus mentions here His intercession for Peter specifically.

Garden of Gethsemane on that scandalous night: “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”<sup>19</sup>

It is a war out there. We must pray like our disciples’ faith depends upon it. Jesus prayed for the Father to protect His disciples: “Father, keep them in Your Name... keep them from the evil one.”<sup>20</sup> Jesus prayed for His disciples’ holiness: “Sanctify them by Your truth; Your word is truth.”<sup>21</sup> He also prayed for His disciples’ disciples, for the multiplication of unified, loving disciples.<sup>22</sup>

Even this brief survey shows the Chief Disciple-maker’s priority of prayer. He has promised that His Spirit will help us to pray according to His will, and whatever we ask in His Name, according to His will, He will answer, so that the Son may glorify the Father, and so that our joy may be complete in Him.<sup>23</sup> May we grow in the grace of asking, in order to make disciples like Jesus made disciples.

#### HIS PROCESS

We can learn from the Chief Disciple-maker’s principles (prayerful dependence upon the Spirit of the Father) and from His process. His progression with His disciples could be categorized like this:

- Come and See
- Come, Follow Me
- Come, Learn from Me
- Go and Report Back
- Go and Disciple All the Nations

COME AND SEE. If we only read one of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), then we could mistake that Jesus’, “Follow Me,” was the first time that Peter, Andrew, James, and John had ever seen Jesus. But we learn from the Gospel according to John that they had earlier interactions. They were disciples of John the Baptist, and one day, two of them were with the prophet when he looked at Jesus and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mt. 26:41, Mk. 14:38

<sup>20</sup> Jn. 17:11, 15

<sup>21</sup> Jn. 17:17

<sup>22</sup> Jn. 17:20-26

<sup>23</sup> Rom. 8:26-27, Jn. 14:13-14, 15:16, 16:23, 26; 1 Jn. 5:14-15

<sup>24</sup> Jn. 1:35-36

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup>He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour (Jn. 1:37-39).

This seems like a simple narrative, but it is layered with double-meanings that will make more sense as the book unfolds. At this stage, Jesus', "Come and see," is an earthy invitation to join Him for the rest of the day. But later in John, "coming" to Jesus and "seeing" Jesus describe salvation by grace through faith.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, that evening with Jesus was enough: Andrew found his brother, Peter, and said, "We have found the Messiah!"<sup>26</sup> They had simply "followed" Jesus to that house, but it was the first stage of truly following Him as disciples.

What can we learn from this about making disciples? It is while we are out on mission that we will find disciples – or they will notice us. We are called to always be prepared to give an *answer* for the hope that we have in Christ as Lord.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, we must first live in such a way that people ask the *question!* "What is it about you? Why are you joyful? Why do you love like that? How do you have peace and hope?" Life in the Kingdom is contagious, but we must be out there, *in* the world, doing righteousness and justice, in order to catch the attention of would-be disciples. They need to see compassion, love, peace, and service that is unnatural. This is no call to be seeker-sensitive churches, holed up in our programs designed to draw visitors like the world draws them; it is a call to be seeker-sensitive *people*. We have to *go* in order to make disciples.

As we notice them, or as they notice the Life in us, we invite them to come and see more of our lives and the Source of our Life. We do not dare allow anyone to think our goodness comes from us, but we do all things in the Name of Jesus for the glory of God (Col. 3:17, 1 Cor. 10:31). And like Jesus, we ask them, "What are you seeking?" D. A. Carson comments that "the Logos-Messiah confronts those who make any show of beginning to follow him and demands that they articulate what they really want in life."<sup>28</sup> They may not know the right answer, so we have to

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<sup>25</sup> Come (Jn. 3:21, 5:40, 6:35, 37, 44, 45, 65; 7:37) and see (3:3, 6:40, 9:39, 11:40, 14:19, 16:16, 17:24, 20:25, 27). So, Grant R. Osborne, *The Gospel of John, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 13, Ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2007) 35. Cf. D. A. Carson's comments on the potentially layered meaning in "followed" and "staying/abiding" (*The Gospel according to John* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991] 154-155).

<sup>26</sup> Jn. 1:41

<sup>27</sup> 1 Pet. 3:15



go and show, invite them to come and see, and then call them to follow Christ with complete abandon.

COME, FOLLOW ME. After Jesus' interactions with Andrew, Peter, John (and probably James) after His baptism beyond the Jordan, He later found them at their day-jobs as fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. (The two sets of brothers were business partners.)<sup>29</sup> Jesus did a miracle which showed that He was in charge of fish, and Peter responded to His revealed holiness: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."<sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, "Do not be afraid. Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. From now on, you will be catching men alive."<sup>31</sup> More than, "Come and see," this was a command from the *Lord* to join Him in His Kingdom mission as His disciples. "Immediately," they left everything to follow Him.<sup>32</sup>

What do we learn here? We cannot be satisfied if someone has some nice thoughts about Jesus, but is not following Him as an obedient disciple. We must proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom with its demand, and we must make the King the center of the Gospel, not the sinner. The goal is not easy-believism in response to a mere offer of heaven. The goal is the glorification of God through a self-denying, cross-carrying, fruit-bearing disciple. Our friend Richard Greene counsels wisely, "What you win them through is what you win them to."<sup>33</sup> If we give an appeal to self-preservation through an offer of heaven, they often do not become disciples (at least for too long of a delay, if ever). Therefore, Richard encouraged us, "Front-load the commitment." That is what Jesus did. The crowds came, and He front-loaded the commitment, so they would be under no delusions about what He was worth and what He demanded. We must say, "Follow Jesus." We must make clear to all that they must lose their lives for Jesus' sake. They must surrender everything to make Jesus everything. There can be no negotiation with the Lord of glory. He died, "so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Cor. 5:15).

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<sup>28</sup> Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 155. *Logos* is Greek for "Word" (Jn. 1:1). *Messiah* means "Anointed One" in Hebrew; the Greek word for it comes to us as "Christ."

<sup>29</sup> Lk. 5:2-3, 7, 10

<sup>30</sup> Lk. 5:8

<sup>31</sup> Mt. 4:19, Lk. 5:10 (lit.). The Greek participle is a compound of two words: *living* and *catch* (see BibleStudyTools.com/commentaries/robertsons-word-pictures/luke/luke-5-10.html). Jesus contrasted that Peter, as a fisherman in the natural realm, caught *fish unto death*. But in the Kingdom of the heavens, he was commissioned to catch *men unto life* (cf. Jer. 16:16).

<sup>32</sup> Mk. 1:18, 20

<sup>33</sup> We later heard an earlier recording with the same saying from James Montgomery Boice.

We aim for would-be disciples to see the holiness of Christ and repent of their sinfulness, as Peter did. We communicate that an exchanged life, no longer living for themselves, means that Jesus will “make” them into something they are not (Lk. 5:10). He will make them like Him. They will become partners in the advance of the Kingdom. They will become disciples who make disciples. And their self-sacrificial service will bring the greatest joy, because the Master is the source of joy and all good things.

COME, LEARN FROM ME. Jesus said:

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt. 11:28-30).

Once they have committed to follow Jesus, there is teaching to be done. There is a yoke for them to learn to wear happily. They must agree to be owned by the Lord and to be commanded by Him as a humble bondservant.<sup>34</sup> Yet Jesus’ yoke is not burdensome.<sup>35</sup> His yoke is light, because as soon as He lays it on us, He lifts it for us.<sup>36</sup> It is His life living through us (Gal. 2:20). He is the One working in us both to be willing and to be working His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).<sup>37</sup> His yoke is more like a harness that lifts us and propels us.<sup>38</sup> We must help our disciples into a posture of learning from Jesus in order to obey Him fully.

Consider some categories of Jesus’ teachings. He taught His disciples how to interpret the Scriptures, how to understand the nature of the Kingdom, how to understand His identity (and theirs in relationship with Him), what to expect in the future, how and why to endure.<sup>39</sup> He taught them what it means to do righteousness and motivated them with its reward of happiness.<sup>40</sup> He taught them how to worship, how to pray, how to teach, how to heal.<sup>41</sup> He taught them how to avoid the errors of their contemporaries, such as their hypocrisy.<sup>42</sup> And, especially, He

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<sup>34</sup> 1 Cor. 6:19-20, 7:22; Rom. 14:7-9, 6:17-23, 7:4; 1 Pet. 2:16; Mt. 25:14, Lk. 17:10

<sup>35</sup> Mt. 11:30, cf. 1 Jn. 5:3

<sup>36</sup> John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006) 45.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Phil. 1:6, Heb. 13:20-21; 2 Thess. 1:11-12

<sup>38</sup> John Piper, “How To Do Good So That God Gets the Glory” ([desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org))

<sup>39</sup> Jn. 5:29, Lk. 24:27, 44-45; Mt. 5-7, 13, 24-25; Jn. 15:18-16:4

<sup>40</sup> Mt. 6:1 (lit.), 5:3-12 (lit.), 25:21, 23

<sup>41</sup> Jn. 4:21-24, Lk. 11:1ff., compare Lk. 8:51-55 and Acts 9:40-41

<sup>42</sup> Lk. 6:24-26, 11:43-52, esp. 12:1-3

taught them about the glory of the Spirit's ministry in them.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, our area of teaching is not narrow. It is as wide as life. We want it to be true of our disciples: "To me, to live is Christ!"<sup>44</sup>

Remember to think of discipleship as apprenticeship. An apprentice learns by watching and progressively joins in the work, learning even more on the job. Our disciples need to see us ministering to others, so they can learn to imitate us as we imitate Christ. After those ministry moments, we can take them aside and debrief ("Did you get why I took that approach?"), so they can learn even more. Our disciples also need to see us ministering to them. How can they see us ministering to them, while their minds are occupied as recipients of our ministry? We need to look for times that we can say, "Do you see what I've been doing?" or, "...what I'm doing right now?" The best preparation to make disciples is to be discipled well. Because we do not always catch the full import of the lessons we learn, a good disciple-maker will spell it out for his disciple, helping him learn *how* he learned *what* he learned. Our disciples also need to be doing ministry with us, so they can learn on the job, like Jesus' disciples were helping in instances like the feeding of the 5,000.<sup>45</sup>

GO AND REPORT BACK. Jesus not only involved His disciples as helpers with Him; He also sent them out on their own missions with instructions (and His authority). In Luke 9:1-6, Jesus instructed and sent out the Twelve to preach and heal in the cities to which He was about to go (cf. Mt. 11:1, also Lk. 10:1). In Luke 9:10, they reported back to Him.

In Luke 10:1-16, Jesus instructed seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead of Him, two by two. In 10:17, they reported back with joy: "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your Name!" Jesus' instructions had not specified that would happen, and they seem surprised and excited about it. Jesus offered a minor correction as to where their joy should be placed (10:18-20). Then He prayerfully gave them insight to the Father and Son's sovereign joy in revealing Each Other as the ground of their ministry (10:21-22). Finally, He encouraged their happiness in being so privileged to see the Son (and hence, the Father) and the coming of the Kingdom (10:23-24). We learn from all of that how important it is for our disciples to have their own ministry experiences that are followed by debriefing sessions with us, in which they can gain even greater perspective and maturity.

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<sup>43</sup> Jn. 14-16

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Phil. 1:20-21, Gal. 2:20

<sup>45</sup> Mt. 14:15-21 (esp. v. 19)

GO AND DISCIPLE ALL THE NATIONS. Finally, Jesus', "Go and report back," became, "Go, and disciple all the nations." The disciple-maker decides when the disciple is matured to the point that he is sent out to multiply himself. The disciple is not left alone, because he has the deposit of the Holy Spirit and the discipleship content that has already formed his character. This, again, is like fathering and mothering. Eventually, the child grows up. Parents cannot keep children tied down forever; parenting must mean preparing them to be out on their own.

We must empower our disciples to be themselves, infused with the DNA we received and passed down, but uniquely themselves. And we must commission them, envisioning and encouraging them that they will succeed in the Lord. Their labor in the Lord cannot be in vain.<sup>46</sup> He is gathering His sheep. He is building His Church. He is advancing His Kingdom forcefully.<sup>47</sup> Regardless of the difficulties ahead, as they depend upon Him, He will work through them for His glory and their joy.

The parent will stay in contact, but it will be a different kind of content in the relationship. Old fathers have different kinds of conversations with their grown sons. The father treats the son more like a man than a child. As we examined earlier, Paul concerned himself with Timothy's ministry to the fourth generation.<sup>48</sup> So also, we want to help our disciples make disciples who make disciples. The time required will change, though, and we will be freed up to go make other disciples in the same manner as the first. And the multiplication will continue exponentially.

Now we have seen how Jesus' process could be divided into stages: come and see; come, follow Me; come, learn from Me; go and report back; go and make disciples of all nations. In the next and last section, we will suggest some more practical applications based upon the Scriptural truths we have seen so far.

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<sup>46</sup> 1 Cor. 15:58, 3:8, 14; Gal. 6:9; Mt. 16:27

<sup>47</sup> See [DiscipleNations.net/forcefully-advancing](http://DiscipleNations.net/forcefully-advancing) for explanation of why this is the most likely translation of Matthew 11:12 (hint: Lk. 16:16 is the key).

<sup>48</sup> See p. 27 on 2 Tim. 2:2.

## SECTION TWO: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Every disciple is called to be salt and light to everyone around him. Disciples are also connected to peers whom they mutually sharpen and, in a very real sense, whom they help be disciples. And yet, one of the convictions undergirding this booklet is that every disciple is purposed to do more than salt the earth and sharpen friends. Every disciple is purposed to make disciples, which is more intentional and more involved than a general lifestyle witness and casual church relationships. Prayerfully, by this section, every reader agrees. Therefore, we close with some suggestions of how the rubber might meet the road in the kind of deliberate disciple-making advocated in the Scriptural studies above.

### SEEKING, CHOOSING, AND CALLING A DISCIPLE

First and foremost, be praying for the sovereign God to connect you with someone to disciple. We saw Jesus' example in this,<sup>1</sup> and we know that what we hope to accomplish is not natural – it requires supernatural help from God. Make your desire to multiply, for God's glory, part of your regular prayers, and be asking for the Spirit to lead you to find your first son or daughter.

Then, be watchful.<sup>2</sup> Be looking for the Spirit's leading in the midst of your daily walk. Our souls are accustomed to focusing only on our tasks, but God may be planning a divine encounter while we are running an errand or doing yard work or watching little league. Each new place you go, be asking the Lord, "What are You doing here? Do you have work for me here?"<sup>3</sup> The Spirit may send us to do deeds of mercy and service in order to meet new people and generate new conversations, in which credibility is already established by the demonstration of God's love. We are likely to find our disciple while we are out on mission.

With that alertness, the next step is to talk to people.<sup>4</sup> The Spirit will definitely help you care genuinely about the people He created as divine Image-bearers – the people Christ died to purchase. Ask questions to learn who people are, where they are from, what they do, what makes them tick, all the while praying for discernment to have your speech

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Jn. 4:35

<sup>3</sup> John Piper credits Darrin Patrick for this mindset in, "How Can I Live More Like an Evangelist?" ([desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)). Cf. Jn. 5:19-20.

<sup>4</sup> Consider Sam's sermon series on evangelism, which includes Scriptures, principles, and stories of stepping out awkwardly and gloriously ([NewLifeEquip.com/evangelism](http://NewLifeEquip.com/evangelism)).

seasoned with salt,<sup>5</sup> so that you demonstrate the love of God and can take any spiritual inroads to their hearts that present themselves.

Be open to the Spirit's leading for you to witness to your personal faith in Christ and experience of His grace. The enemy has secularized our culture and its norms so well that this transition to spiritual dialogue is the most difficult thing for many. Pray for grace to be yourself (the I-no-longer-live-but-*I-live-by-faith*<sup>6</sup>). Don't be weird, but don't worry about being weird! It may seem awkward to you at first, but awkwardness won't kill you. You have the words of eternal life! And you'll find that many people are more willing to talk about spiritual things than we assume. There are many tools and many ways to enter into the spiritual dialogue,<sup>7</sup> which may be appropriate and helpful, so long as we keep focused on Jesus. Our content is Jesus. The most important question for every person to answer is Jesus' question: "Who do you say I am?"<sup>8</sup> Based on Jesus' example, the best thing we could ask might be, "What do you think about Jesus?" We want to do more than monologue; we want to hear their thoughts, so that we can discern how to best communicate the Gospel to that unique individual in their unique situation.

If the person is being open to the dialogue, but the setting or timing makes it challenging, you may discern that it would be best to ask for another, extended time to get together (perhaps over coffee or for breakfast or lunch). Ultimately, we want enough time and intimacy that we can truly hear their story and truly share *the Story*. Have the Gospel stored in your heart like an abounding treasure,<sup>9</sup> so that you can clearly and passionately articulate its basic truths: God created us (and all things) for His glory, but we exchanged His glory for lesser things; we deserve eternal wrath because of our sins, but God the Son became a Man (Jesus Christ) to absorb and satisfy that wrath on our behalf; He was raised back to life on the third day, and He ascended to God's heavenly throne, where He is reigning until His return to rid the planet of His enemies, save His disciples, and saturate all things with His glory! Each step of the way, ask questions to see if the person is tracking with you. After the Gospel has been delivered, it may be appropriate and wise to say, "Can you tell me what you've heard, so we can see if I did a decent job communicating these mind-blowing things? How would you

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<sup>5</sup> Col. 4:3-6

<sup>6</sup> Gal. 2:20

<sup>7</sup> Such as [NewLifeEquip.com/3-3-13MarkBrown](http://NewLifeEquip.com/3-3-13MarkBrown)

<sup>8</sup> Mt. 16:15

<sup>9</sup> Col. 3:16, Mt. 13:52

describe the Gospel in your own words?" Then you can realize if there are any major misunderstandings, and you can reiterate any points that need additional clarity or emphasis.

After the core of the Gospel, we must faithfully share the demand of the Gospel.<sup>10</sup> This is the part that has been so often short-changed or exchanged in modern America. The good news is good only for those who place *repentant* and *submitted* faith in Jesus as *Lord*. We cannot be afraid to state the hard truths plainly: "If you are not born again by the Spirit on the basis of grace through faith, then you remain dead in your sins and separated from God as His enemy. If you don't repent and believe and become Jesus' disciple, then on Judgment Day, you will be cast into the Lake of Fire to be punished for your sins forever. But you can be saved by grace! Repent and believe!" It is not politically correct, but it is absolutely loving to tell the truth with kindness and earnestness.<sup>11</sup> May the Spirit help us plead with them to be saved without watering down the call to discipleship.

Use Jesus' words to define a disciple and to contrast a crowd member with a disciple (with verses quoted in our Introduction). When it comes down to it, the questions are: "Do you believe that Jesus is God the Son, who died for sins and was raised again? Are you willing to give up your pseudo-control of your life? Do you want to keep sinning, or do you want Christ to save you and sanctify you? Are you willing for Jesus to be your Lord, your Owner and Master and King? Do you believe that He has the right to tell you what to do and that His plans for you will be more eternally delightful than anything this world has to offer?"

Because so many come from works-based religions or have been affected by real or perceived legalism, it may be helpful to contrast the Pharisees with a grace-gifted disciple.<sup>12</sup> They need to understand clearly that you are not telling them that they have to work up a righteousness of their own, but trust Christ's righteousness alone.<sup>13</sup> God does not demand self-wrought perfection; He demands a change of direction. Then His Spirit works in repentant disciples to bring us to perfection at the Second Coming of Christ. The Gospel is grace from start to finish!

Everyone wants significance. The greatest significance possible in

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<sup>10</sup> See pp. 5-8.

<sup>11</sup> Eph. 4:15, 25

<sup>12</sup> John Piper says this is one of the most helpful things he has heard from Tim Keller ("A Conversation," The Gospel Coalition, [youtu.be/QzBSlQovq-0](https://youtu.be/QzBSlQovq-0)).

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Phil. 3:9

any human life is to be glorifying our Creator and Redeemer in the forceful advance of His Kingdom. If we have shared “the Gospel of the *glory* of Jesus Christ”<sup>14</sup> well, then one who is being drawn to Christ by the Father will want more than fire insurance from hell; he will want to be a part of the coming Kingdom for the glory of the King. Be sure to connect the life which is offered to him as a disciple with the advance of the Kingdom. Before anyone says, “Yes,” to Jesus, he should understand that means being ruled by King Jesus and living to extend that rule to others in mission. Jesus is calling him to be a disciple who makes disciples. He needs to understand that you are offering your very life to help him become a mature disciple who learns to be like Jesus and goes out to make disciples like Jesus. “Do you want that?”

Even as emerging disciples are saying, “Yes,” as we rejoice with them, we also faithfully relay to them Jesus’ admonition to count the cost of being a disciple.<sup>15</sup> Jesus warned that the world will hate His disciples because the world hated Him (Jn. 15:18-20). “A boss may pass you over for a promotion. Family and friends may turn against you. People may beat you or kill you – or your spouse and kids. I don’t want any of this to happen to you, but if it does, do you believe Jesus is worth it? Do you desire to glorify Him at any cost?” We may even tell our new disciple to go home and pray earnestly that night in reflection on the Scriptures containing Jesus’ discipleship demands.

#### STAGES OF DISCIPLESHIP

Once we secure a wholehearted, “Yes,” from our new disciple, we take responsibility for his spiritual growth as his spiritual father. We must be constantly diagnosing his condition and progress. The next two subsections will suggest how how to do so, but it may help first to be thinking of his maturation in big-picture stages:

- Revelation and reception, by the Holy Spirit, of Jesus as his King
- Submission to the teaching of Jesus’ Scriptures
- Submission to the teaching and leading of a disciple-maker
- Submission to the teaching and leading of the Holy Spirit
- Obeying Spirit-led assignments
- Increased fruit-bearing in keeping with repentance
- Making another disciple of his own
- Helping his disciple multiply
- Life-long commitment to do it again and again

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<sup>14</sup> 2 Cor. 4:4, cf. 1 Tim. 1:11

<sup>15</sup> Lk. 14:25-33, esp. v. 28



## WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR DISCIPLE PRACTICALLY

*Regularly spend time in intentional, transparent relationship.* A disciple-making relationship is not sporadic, superficial, or casual. Discipleship is a matter of the heart, which issues in lifestyle,<sup>16</sup> so the relationship must be deep and wide and long. Regularly be confessing sins to one another and praying for one another (James 5:16). Be modeling and warning your disciple to beware of hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1-3). Model hospitality.<sup>17</sup> Much of your disciple's learning can take place as he or she watches you interact with your family and friends in your own home.

*Be assessing where he is in maturity and Scriptural understanding.* The need for spiritually discerned diagnoses never ends. There definitely are some basics everyone needs to know and do, but there is no cookie-cutter approach to transferring those to your disciple. "Lord, what does He need now? What do You want to do with him this week, this season?"

*Lead him to listen to and obey the Holy Spirit.* Christ communicates His Lordship through His Spirit within us; the Spirit is *Lord* (2 Cor. 3:17-18). And He is worthy to be obeyed. The Spirit is the indwelling Disciple-maker, and so, from the very beginning, we want to highlight His ministry: "that we might understand the things freely given us by God," that He may speak to us, guide us into all truth, and transform us into Christ's Image.<sup>18</sup> Encourage your disciple with these glorious truths. Carve out time in your meetings to settle down and wait for the Spirit's ministry. And be faithful with the next suggestion, regarding the Scriptures, which will renew his mind and help him to recognize the Spirit's language.

*Unpack the Scriptures with him - from milk to solid food.* "Every Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, correcting, rebuking, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be fully equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16). We participate in the divine nature through His precious and very great promises in the Scriptures, which produce life and godliness through the knowledge of God (2 Pet. 1:3-4). Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in Your truth; Your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). Therefore, take him to the Scriptures in his own Bible,<sup>19</sup> and show him that Jesus and the apostles taught that these Scriptures are the words of God, true and authoritative.<sup>20</sup> Show him the

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<sup>16</sup> Prov. 4:23, Lk. 6:43-45

<sup>17</sup> Rom. 12:13, Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9

<sup>18</sup> 1 Cor. 2:9-13, esp. v. 12; Jn. 14:26, 16:13-15; 1 Jn. 2:27; 2 Cor. 3:18

verses that teach us the foundations of the faith: who God is, who Christ is, who the enemy is, who Man is, what the Kingdom is, what the Gospel is, what the life of disciple looks like (such as the Sermon on the Mount, Eph. 4-6, Rom. 12). Explain (always with Scriptures) all the glories of being “in Christ.”<sup>21</sup> Teach him to read the Scriptures responsibly, letting context determine the author’s original meaning before applying it to his modern life. Model for him how to *pray the Scriptures*.<sup>22</sup>

We realize that not everyone has a grace-gift of teaching, and that last paragraph might have intimidated some. But every disciple-maker does have the Spirit, who calls and enables him to understand the Scriptures, pray them, and live them. Therefore, every disciple can do that with his disciple. And God did not design us to do it alone. If your disciple asks about a particular passage or topic, and you are not certain how to explain it, then model humility and earnestness by asking a teacher in your life and/or a surrogate teacher via a good commentary. We have written booklets and recorded sermons and teachings available for free in hopes that they may be helpful to this part of disciple-making.<sup>23</sup> But we also hope all believe that someone with a grace-gift of *service*, for example, can still *teach* all Jesus commanded *because Jesus is with him* all the days (Mt. 28:19-20). The servant’s teaching will be flavored differently than a teacher’s teaching, but the servant can still open the Scriptures and show his disciple who Jesus is, what Jesus said and did and demands, and how he himself is applying it. And the servant can connect his disciple to teachers, which our next suggestion.

*Plug your disciple into the Body of Christ.* You can’t be everything for your disciple, and he can’t live out the works preordained for him only in relationship with you. Seek to persuade him from the Scriptures<sup>24</sup> and your experience how necessary and beneficial it is to be a part of the Body of Christ. Connect him to an equipping ministry and a house church, where he can receive holistic ministry and learn to operate in his own grace-gifts for the edification of the Body.<sup>25</sup>

*Pray with your disciple.* Children learn to talk by hearing their parents

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<sup>19</sup> Please exhort him to use an essential literal translation, such as the ESV. Be willing to purchase and gift him with a good Bible or study Bible at the beginning of his commitment.

<sup>20</sup> E.g., Jn. 10:34-35, 17:17; Mt. 19:4-5, 22:43; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16; Ps. 119:160, Prov. 30:5

<sup>21</sup> E.g., Eph. 1:3-13, 2:5-6, 13; 1 Cor. 1:30, 12:13; Col. 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:11; Gal. 3:14, 26

<sup>22</sup> E.g., see the model prayers in *The Model Prayer* (ProjectOne28.com).

<sup>23</sup> Search ProjectOne28.com, NewLifeEquip.com, and DiscipleNations.net.

<sup>24</sup> E.g., 1 Cor. 12:4-30

<sup>25</sup> See *Spiritual Gifts* and “Cooperating Gifts” at ProjectOne28.com/gifts.

talk, and disciples learn to pray by hearing their disciple-makers pray. Again, the Spirit is the ultimate Teacher;<sup>26</sup> a disciple can be greatly encouraged, for example, by moments in which he sensed the Spirit's leading to pray something, and another prayed it before he could; that confirms the Spirit's leading and gives him confidence that he is indeed growing in sensitivity to the Spirit.

*Take him on mission with you.* Discipleship is apprenticeship. Take him with you as you go to pray over someone or witness to someone or to disciple another. Let him window into your marriage and parenthood. Take him to serve with you in mercy or justice ministries.<sup>27</sup> It may be as simple as raking leaves or shoveling snow. Sometimes disciple-makers and disciples need to be sitting around, talking, studying, praying, but it should not be confined to those kinds of times. Go, do some stuff together.

*Give him Spirit-led and affirmed assignments to obey.* A stage of discipleship listed above that probably made some uncomfortable is the disciple submitting to the disciple-maker. We humans (not to mention Americans) have a bit of an independent streak, and we don't like to submit to anyone. And so we don't like the idea of suggesting that another should submit to us. But the Scriptures command such submission.<sup>28</sup> Many people are also deathly afraid of the appearance of pride. They shrink back from taking the lead in a relationship from fear of offending the would-be disciple, as if they think they're better than the disciple. But if we glory in the grace of God,<sup>29</sup> then we can recognize that we may be further along in the progression of faith than another without becoming prideful. We can credit God's grace and gain courage to help a less mature believer. The fullness of disciple-making will not happen if we sheepishly maintain the relationship as peers, mutually encouraging, rather than a relatively more mature believer leading a relatively less mature one. Such authority comes, not from titles or assumption, but from spiritual experience. One who is ready to be discipled will recognize and respond to that authority, thinking, "This person has walked with the Lord and experienced more than I have, so he can help me."

Part of that help and leadership involves giving Spirit-led and affirmed assignments. "Spirit-led" qualifies that the assignments should

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<sup>26</sup> E.g., Rom. 8:26-27

<sup>27</sup> See [ProjectOne28.com/justice](http://ProjectOne28.com/justice) (esp. "Being Disciples Who Obey Everything, Especially the Weightier Matters").

<sup>28</sup> E.g., Heb. 13:17, Eph. 5:21; 1 Tim. 6:1

not be arbitrary, unscriptural, or manipulative, but discerned from prayerful assessment of where the disciple is at and what the Lord is doing. “Affirmed” qualifies that the disciple can sense the Spirit’s agreement. Disciples who lack that discernment, but don’t sense anything inherently wrong about the task, can simply trust their disciplinemaker. Such humility and cooperation will develop character, and the Lord will honor them for it. Assignments may include reading certain Scriptures or books, praying the Lord’s prayer (alone or with his family), waiting before the Lord, doing something caring for his wife or kids or taking some specific form of spiritual leadership with them, doing a deed of mercy, fasting from something, or pursuing peace with someone. The leader may ask the disciple to text or e-mail daily reports about some such matter; the consistent accountability can be a great aid to the development of self-control and faithfulness by the Spirit.

*Keep casting the vision of the Kingdom advancing through disciple-making.* Life is busy and distracting, and the disciple needs regularly reminded of the big picture and the end-goal of multiplication.

*Help your disciple multiply.* We’re not done until we’ve done this. See the subsection on the next page for more.

## DEALING WITH PROBLEMS

Discipleship is messy. Two imperfect people relating in an imperfect church in an impious world with an angelic enemy – that’s messy. We encourage you to make commitments to each other from the beginning, undergirded with Scriptures, to stick to this process. Early on, show disciples the Scriptural wisdom for relationships, to bear with one another, not easily offended, not harboring bitterness, not slanderous, pursuing peace.<sup>30</sup>

When problems pop up, whether they are relational or behavioral, pray regularly for wisdom and direction from the Spirit. Pray for courage and clarity to speak the truth to your disciple in love (Eph. 4:15), even if it will be difficult for you to say and for him to hear. *Focus on the root and not the fruit.* Behavior comes from the heart.<sup>31</sup> Sam’s sermon series, with expanded notes, may be helpful in leading the disciple to identify and address any strongholds.<sup>32</sup> A stronghold is a pattern of thought, and its resultant behavior, constructed when the enemy is given

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<sup>29</sup> E.g., 1 Cor. 4:7, Eph. 1:6

<sup>30</sup> Eph. 4:1-3, Col. 3:12-15, Jas. 3:13-4:12, Mt. 5:9

<sup>31</sup> Prov. 4:23, Lk. 6:43-45

a place to minister lies. But those thoughts can be taken captive, demolished, and replaced with obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Take responsibility for your disciple's sanctification, even as you encourage him to take that responsibility. Lead, envision, and hold accountable.

If one claiming to be a brother sins unrepentantly, warn him with merciful, yet stern, sobriety.<sup>33</sup> Warn that people doing sins habitually and unrepentantly will not inherit the Kingdom.<sup>34</sup> Share a Gospel that entails grace to break the power of cancelled sin. If he does not respond, follow the guidelines in Matthew 18:15-20. Keep the big picture of the Kingdom in mind, even as you focus on details; *make every problem an area of decision for or against Jesus' rule*. Pray, pray, pray. If it comes to it, we must be willing to let go and even excommunicate a "disciple" who is saying, "No," to Jesus. We cannot give false comfort; he must face the seriousness of his rebellion. Though the process can be heartbreaking, we must protect the Name of Jesus from disrepute and the Church from defilement.<sup>35</sup>

#### HELPING YOUR DISCIPLE MULTIPLY

Make certain that end-stage multiplication is part of the DNA early. From the beginning of your definitions of discipleship, cast the vision that, when your disciple matures, he will make disciples of his own. Give peace that he does not have to do it immediately, but it is the goal, and the Spirit will get him to that point. Perhaps the material in Part One of this booklet can be a catalyst to his conviction that this is how the King is advancing His Kingdom.

When your disciple is abiding in the Vine, bearing fruit, and demonstrating an understanding of the foundations of the faith, begin praying with him that the Lord would pair him up with his own disciple. Exercise Matthew 18:19 agreement. The Lord will answer. He's more jealous for this than we can be. No one could set a formulaic timeframe for when new disciples will be ready to make disciples, but let's be

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<sup>32</sup> Strongholds can come in a variety of shapes and sizes. They can be mental patterns from personal speculations, secular worldviews, or religious errors. They can stem from experiences of abuse (verbal, physical, sexual). They can manifest in emotional instability or addictive behaviors. For more on the nature of strongholds and overcoming them, see Sam's sermon series at [NewLifeEquip.com/strongholds](http://NewLifeEquip.com/strongholds).

<sup>33</sup> Ezek. 33:8-9; Lk. 17:3; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 2:24-26, 4:2; Ti. 1:9, 13, 2:15; Jude 22-23; 1 Thess. 5:12-14; 2 Thess. 3:15; 2 Cor. 13:2; Gal. 5:21; Col. 1:28

<sup>34</sup> Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10, Eph. 5:3-5, Rom. 8:13; Heb. 10:26-31

<sup>35</sup> E.g., 1 Tim. 6:1, Ti. 2:5-10; 1 Cor. 5; Heb. 12:15-16. See Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

working, praying, and hoping for sooner than later. They don't need to have a seminary degree before they are qualified; they need to be understanding and obeying Jesus' words (imperfectly, but increasingly) by the Spirit.

You have allowed your disciple to watch you disciple him and perhaps others, so he is ready to engage in the first steps: sharing the Gospel and its demand, casting the vision, explaining the essentials and the Spirit of it all. You're the grandpa, so pray for discernment of which moments to join your son with his son. Oversee the process and ensure he is passing on the right DNA of a disciple, connecting him to the Body of Christ, and helping him multiply, too (2 Tim. 2:2). Grandparents will tell you that this stage is the most fun for them.

## EPILOGUE:

### THE CENTRAL KEY TO TRAINING YOUR DISCIPLE

We have stated this principle many times, but it bears repeating. The central key to disciple-making is to *be Spirit-led in all things* with an unrelenting focus on the personal presence of Jesus and His rule in every area of the disciple's life. We ourselves must be walking by the Spirit, submitting to the active Lordship of the Spirit in accordance with God's words (Gal. 5:16, 25; 2 Cor. 3:17-18). We must be teaching our disciples to be walking by the Spirit, submitting to the active Lordship of the Spirit in accordance with God's words. Word and Spirit in us. Word and Spirit in them.

For the sake of illustration, Sam offers this disciple-making story; the name was changed to protect the humble:

Kristian is a strong believer who has a great family. He had never been discipled before, but he was growing in confidence to obey the Spirit's voice. We love 2 Corinthians 3:17: "The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." The Lordship of King Jesus is manifest in our lives through the Holy Spirit. Learning to hear and obey the Spirit is the heart of discipleship and the only path to true freedom.

In one meeting with Kristian, as he was giving me his spiritual inventory, he kept mentioning that he felt like he and his wife needed to do something with the TV in their house. He would say one time, "Maybe we should get rid of it," and another time, "I don't want to be legalistic, so maybe we should keep it." Back and forth it went a couple of times. So, I challenged Kristian that, though we don't have a Bible verse about keeping or getting rid of his TV, we are called as disciples to *obey the Spirit*, who is the *Lord*. I exhorted that the freedom he was lacking would be found in that obedience. I asked him, right there in the restaurant, to bow his head and pray with me, so we both could listen to what the Spirit may say about it. We bowed, and I prayed a short prayer for direction. We waited upon the Spirit for a few minutes, and then he looked up, smiling with a freedom he had not been enjoying. I asked, "What happened?" He reported that, while we were waiting, he saw (in his mind's eye) the TV down in their basement with a sheet over it. He had the direction and the will to go home and obey.

I told Kristian that it was not about the TV; it was about listening to the Holy Spirit about the TV. Obedience in response to the Spirit's leading is the true place of freedom. We want to help and heighten our disciples values of spiritual discernment and obedience to that discernment.

We disciple when we say what the Spirit is saying to our disciples and do what the Spirit is doing in our disciples. We put flesh and language to what they can sense, but not yet fully discern or explain. They have "ah-ha" moments, often saying, "You just said what I was thinking [or feeling], but I couldn't quite put my finger on it!" What we have done in those kinds of moments is align their souls with the ministry of the indwelling Spirit. As they mature, we help them grow in this obedient fellowship with the Lord, the Spirit - to experience it on their own and to disciple others to experience it also.

The testimony with Kristian illustrates well: we are like midwives; the baby is not ours, but the Lord's. We are like eunuchs; the Bride is not ours, but the Lord's. We are disciple-makers with a lower-case "d." The Spirit of Christ is the preeminent Disciple-maker in us and in them.<sup>36</sup> Let us utterly depend upon His help, which He has promised to give graciously and abundantly. Then the Lord, not we, shall receive the glory He deserves among all peoples through Spirit-filled, multiplying disciples.

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<sup>36</sup> E.g., Jn. 14:26, 16:13-15; 1 Jn. 2:27; 1 Cor. 2:9-13



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