

17. GENERATIONS

—The Great Commission: Go and Disciple!

Matthew 28:18-20 is referred to as the Great Commission. For over 20 centuries, Jesus' last words have motivated believers to go and bring the good news of the kingdom of God to the remotest places on earth. The Great Commission originates in the Old Testament and is expressed in the other gospels and the book of Acts. In previous studies we saw God's heart for the nations and the need for workers to co-labor with Him. The challenge for us with this study is Jesus' command to **Go and Disciple!** As he said in John 15:16, "I chose you and appointed you so that you might **GO** and bear fruit." This fruit includes mature disciples who can disciple others.

THEREFORE GO!¹

Examine these 5 expressions of the Great Commission. What similarities and differences do you notice?

Matthew 28:18-20

Luke 24:46-48

Mark 16:15-16

John 20:21

Acts 1:8

Consider the examples of people who were sent by God to accomplish a mission. What observations and questions come to mind?

Genesis 12:1-3

Exodus 3:10-12

Jeremiah 1:4-8

Isaiah 6:1-13

Isaiah 49:5-7 (Acts 13:46-47)

To whom did Jesus send people and what does he instruct them to do?

Matthew 10:5-8

Mark 5:19-20

Luke 10:1-12

Acts 9:15-16

AND DISCIPLE!²

What do you observe about discipling others from the following passages?

Matthew 13:52

Acts 14:21-23

APPLICATION: 1. As you think about *going*, where are the places or to whom are the people you sense that God wants to send you? What fears, obstacles or excuses prevent you from doing so? 2. As you think about *discipling others* are there some individuals that you can begin to meet with to help them grow in Christ? List their names in your journal and initiate a plan to begin.

¹ The Greek tense of the word "go" in Matthew 28:19 is literally "having gone." It could also be "in your going" or "as you go." It is a participle dependent on the one imperative which is the verb "disciple" (*mathaytesatay*). The other dependent participles are *baptizing* and *teaching*. The command to go is implied nonetheless - perhaps as in the following paraphrase: *I authorize you to go and disciple the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I taught you. And do it until the end of time.*

² A second important idea to keep in mind is the verbal nature of the command, *disciple*. It is not a verb followed by a noun as in "make disciples." It says simply "DISCIPLE!" In other words, in this passage *disciple* is not necessarily an outcome (like a product that you end up with), but rather it is a *process* that you are *doing*. That being said, it is clear that many people became disciples, hence the common rendering "make disciples" as in most English translations. Nonetheless, we must remember there is only one imperative verb in Matthew 28:18-20. It is the verb "disciple!" We are to disciple the nations, we are to disciple all people.