**Baptism And The Great Commission**

**Introduction:**

1. **READ Mt. 28:18-20** – The Great Commission is often referred to as the “last words of Jesus to His disciples.”
	1. In one sense, this is true – **Acts 1:4-8** has a version of the Great Commission, and Jesus did speak those words just before ascending into heaven.
	2. However, the other versions of the Great Commission were spoken in the days and weeks before Jesus’ ascension.
		1. **Mt. 28:18-20** was likely spoken 3-4 weeks after Jesus’ resurrection while He and the disciples were in Galilee on a mountain.
		2. **Lk. 24:44-49** took place in the upper room the night of Jesus’ resurrection; **Mk. 16:15-16** might have been on the same occasion, or at the ascension.
	3. So, rather than just being Jesus’ final words to His disciples, the Great Commission becomes something more…it is what Jesus drilled into their heads for 40 days before His ascension…it is what He most wanted them to understand.
	4. It is a summation of the Christian’s mission; it is a summation of our lives in Christ – we would do well to meditate on it, and understand it.
2. Our focus, of course, is baptism, so we will look at the Great Commission from the perspective of how it relates to baptism.

**Body:**

1. “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*.”
	1. Think about this statement for a moment – I don’t imagine Jesus physically looked like someone who had “all authority!”
		1. Just a few weeks before, He had shown His disciples His body – with the crucifixion scars still on it. They could reach their hands “into” His side.
		2. And while He had walked through a couple of walls into locked rooms, here He apparently appears completely human.
		3. Not only that, but Rome was still in power – it was the Romans who had recently crucified Him! The Roman army could still conquer anyone.
		4. Had ANYONE else in his position made this claim, they would have been laughed off the mountain… but Jesus had been resurrected from the dead!
			1. The disciples had seen Him die. They had personally buried Him. They had watched the stone roll over the tomb door…
			2. And now they were seeing Him alive – He had power over death itself, and no other authority could touch Him! (not Pilate’s; not Caesar’s)
			3. Once you eliminate the threat of death, no one on earth can have ANY power over you. Military might is power, but it can’t control the immortal.
	2. Look at the authority Jesus received upon ascending to heaven days later:
		1. **Dan. 7:13-14** – This is a prophecy of the Messiah receiving His kingdom...it is not a picture of Him coming at the final day, but rather of his ascension. He received an eternal dominion over all people.
		2. **Rev. 4:8-11** – This is the throne scene in heaven, and the Father is on the throne. And in chapter 4, the Father is the focal point.
			1. All heaven is praising Him. The four creatures and 24 elders continually praise Him using these words.
		3. But then, in **Rev. 5:9-14** the focus shifts. The Lamb of God, Jesus, appears on the scene, and it is as if He has just been slain.
			1. Notice the similarities to Daniel 7 – Jesus has purchased people “*from every tribe and tongue and people and nation*.” He has made them into a kingdom. He has dominion forever and ever.
		4. This is the authority Jesus has! It is total. It is complete. And baptism is an act of submission to that power and authority.
	3. This submission to the authority of Jesus in baptism is seen in the phrase: “*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*.”
		1. The phrase “in the name of” had a very specific connotation in the languages Jesus spoke.
		2. Some say this phrase would have been uttered in Greek. In Greek it meant “an entry of a sum of money or an item of property into the account bearing the name of the owner.”
			1. So, if someone deposited money with a banker “in the name of” someone else, what was deposited became the property of the person whose name was on the account.
			2. In this sense, we become the property of the Trinity when we are baptized into their names…it is at that point we begin to belong to them.
		3. Jesus likely also spoke Aramaic, and some believe that is how it is best to understand this phrase.
			1. Generally, the term simply meant “with respect or regard to.”
			2. However, the rabbis used it in a very specific way: to mean that something was done with a specific intent or purpose in mind.
				1. Heathens who were made slaves, for instance, according to the rabbis, had to be baptized “in the name of slavery.” The baptism was done with the intent of making them slaves.
				2. Samaritans were not permitted to circumcise Israelites because they would do so “in the name of Mt. Gerazim.”
				3. The person became something different after being baptized, or circumcised, in the name of something…
				4. And baptism “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” here has a purpose – to submit to God. Without this, we haven’t submitted.
2. “Go; Make Disciples; Baptizing Them; Teaching Them.” These are the essential elements of the Great Commission.
	1. We need to see how these things relate to one another.
		1. The phrase “make disciples” is the central part of Jesus’ statement here. It is the action around which all the other phrases function.
		2. The phrases “go therefore,” “baptizing them,” and “teaching them” are all equivalent participial phrases in Greek.
			1. One could translate this “going therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them…teaching them.” The reason “go” is translated as a command is that Greek participles could function that way at the beginning of sentences such as this one.
			2. They all hold equal weight, meaning that they are all equally essential steps to disciple making.
				1. The teacher and student must meet (“going”), and the student must be taught the word…but baptism is an equally essential step.
				2. It is not the case that baptism is something that can wait to be done until weeks or months after a person is made a disciple…a person is not a disciple until baptism takes place.
	2. Look at how this was done practically by the apostles and early disciples:
		1. **Acts 1:12** – the disciples went to Jerusalem, where the first new disciples would be made (**v. 8**); **Acts 2:14** – Peter began teaching them; **Acts 2:38-41** – those who heard what Jesus commanded were baptized.
		2. **Acts 8:26** – Philip was told to go meet the eunuch; **Acts 8:32-35** – Philip preached Jesus to him; **Acts 8:36-39** – Philip baptized the eunuch.
		3. **Acts 10:23** – Peter went with Cornelius’ servants to teach him and his house; **Acts 10:34** – Peter preached to them; **Acts 10:47-48** – Peter baptized them.
		4. These are far from the only examples of this in the NT. This is how disciple making is done, and baptism is an essential part of that process.
			1. Baptism was always done immediately upon the person understanding the word that was taught – there were rarely delays. (Baptism after a delay is not wrong, but the person is not a disciple until baptism).
			2. It was clearly something the early disciples felt was vital and urgent – they did not leave the students they taught until they had been baptized.
	3. Some have suggested that due to the word order of **Mt. 28:19-20** that baptism even has a primary place in the process.
		1. Word order is important in Greek, and here, baptism is placed right beside the command to “make disciples.”
		2. It is suggested that this is because it is the point at which a person becomes a disciple, whereas the teaching must continue on after baptism – it is impossible for a person to be taught “all that Jesus commanded” before baptism. If this is true, it just emphasizes our point even further.
3. Finally, we need to make one more point about the phrase “*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*.” This identifies the baptism that unites all believers.
	1. First, we need to note what type of baptism this is – it is water baptism…not Holy Spirit baptism.
		1. **Lk. 3:16** tells us that Holy Spirit baptism is something only Jesus can administer. John didn’t have the authority to do it; neither do we.
			1. There are only two instances of it in the NT – Acts 2 and Acts 10, on Pentecost, and when Cornelius’ house heard the gospel.
			2. Both times, the recipients did not control whether they received it or not, and both times it fell on them from heaven…not from men.
		2. So as we return to Mt. 28, we must understand that this is a baptism that the apostles and disciples can administer, and it is one that the recipients can decide to receive. The only baptism that fits this is water baptism.
			1. And, we’ve already talked about the fact that John’s baptism and the baptism Jesus taught during His ministry were water baptisms, and that is the context in which Jesus’ statements here would have been understood.
		3. So “*baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*” is water baptism.
	2. **Eph. 4:4-6** – We read here that there is “*one baptism*” that unites all believers. Which baptism is it? (Note geographical locations of these baptisms)
		1. **Mt. 28:18-20** – This is the baptism Jesus said everyone should submit to.
		2. **Acts 2:38** – Peter commands these people to be baptized. It is their choice, and Peter and the apostles could administer it (unlike H.S. baptism). They are baptized “*in the name Jesus Christ*.”
		3. **Acts 8:35-39** – This is clearly water baptism. He “*preached Jesus to him*.”
		4. **Acts 10:44-48** – These received both water and Holy Spirit baptism. They were baptized “*in the name of the Lord*.”
		5. **Acts 22:16** – Saul was told to “*wash away his sins*” and to “*call on the name of the Lord*” (a direct quote from Joel 2, which Peter quoted on Pentecost).
		6. **1 Cor. 6:9-11** – They were washed “*in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God*” – this points us back to the Great Commission.
		7. **1 Pet. 3:20-21** – Peter, clearly referencing water baptism, says it saves us.
4. So, what have we said? Baptism is the initial step where we submit to Jesus’ unparalleled authority; it is what it takes to make us disciples; and baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is what unites all believers.