

World Evangelism

Imagine a fishing club whose goal is to catch fish all over the world.

The club meets week after week, talking about the need to fish and discussing the best techniques and methods for how to fish. Sometimes they bring in guest speakers about fishing. They have all the best equipment and they even sing songs about how much they love fishing and the one who made fish.

But there is a problem. They never catch any fish! They want to. They know they should. They realise that every day there are thousands of fish that go uncaught. But they are having such a good time talking, meeting, singing, and studying about fishing that they don't have any time to actually fish!

After all fishing requires going out, being patient, getting your hands dirty with grubs and bait. It is very time consuming. Sometimes you come back without anything. Sometimes the fish have all sorts of problems. Sometimes the fish are very far away. Fishing can also be very expensive....

Unfortunately, this imaginary fishing club is a parable for the church and Christians today who often spend more time talking about reaching the world than actually doing it.

We must remember that the church is more than just a social club; the church has a mission - to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

In every account of the life of Christ (the gospel records) and in the book of Acts, we find that Jesus has one major concern - that His followers go and preach the gospel to the entire world.

In this study, we will study the various passages that make up the Great Commission and see what they teach us about world evangelism.

KEY VERSE: Mark 16:15 *'And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'*

BOOKS TO MEMORISE: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, **1, 2 & 3 John, Jude, Revelation**

CHAPTERS TO READ THIS WEEK: John 1-7

1. MARK 16:14-20

Mark 16:14-20

14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. 15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. 19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

On the day of His resurrection, Christ appeared to several people individually and then to His disciples as a group. Mark 16.14-20 records that first appearance of Christ to all the disciples excluding Thomas who was not present.

As the disciples (referred to collectively as ‘the eleven’) were getting ready to eat their evening meal, Jesus appeared to them and rebuked (“upbraided”) them for their unbelief and hard-heartedness in not believing the reports of those who saw Him earlier in the day (v.14).

Then Jesus got straight to the point:

v.15 He told them that He wanted them to go into all the world and proclaim the good news of what He had done on the cross to every person on the planet.

v.16 He said that those who believe the gospel and as a symbol of their faith get baptised will be saved. Those who do not believe will be damned. (Notice that baptism is not mentioned here, because faith is what is required to save.)

v.17-18 Jesus told them there will be powerful signs that follow those who believe which is exactly what happened when you read the history of the church in the book of Acts. Though we don’t see these type of things happening today in the same way, we do see God changing lives and confirming His Word with miraculous power.

After Jesus spoke to them (a few days later), He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God (v.19). They went forth and preached everywhere and the Lord did do exactly what He said He would do, working with them and confirming His Word with signs following (v.20).

What we learn from this passage:

- **The extent of our mission - UNIVERSAL** - ‘all the world’ and ‘every creature’.
- **The message of our mission** - ‘the **GOSPEL**’ of Jesus Christ.
- **The power of missions** - Christ promises to confirm **HIS WORD**.

2. JOHN 20:19-23

John 20:19-23

19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. 21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: 23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

This passage records the same appearance of Christ to the disciples as Mark does. Here, John emphasises the building up of Jesus' disciples' faith in the resurrection, showing them His hands and side (v.20).

Even though moments before, they were gathered in fear with the doors shut, Jesus now says to them, 'as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you' (v.21). Then Jesus breathed on them and gave them the Holy Spirit (v.22). He also told them that due to their sharing the gospel message some will have their sins forgiven while others who reject the gospel will not have their sins forgiven (v.23).

What we learn from this passage:

- **The people Jesus uses** to carry His message are just **ORDINARY** people who have ordinary fears and struggles. But He will fill those ordinary people with power and strength through the Holy Spirit to do His work.
- **The importance of our mission** - The task of going for Jesus and preaching His gospel is the difference between forgiveness and lack of **FORGIVENESS OF SIN**.
- **The way we go** - **AS JESUS WENT** becoming one of the people as much as possible to show them God and His Son.

3. MATTHEW 28:16-20

Matthew 28:16-20

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Before this account in Matthew, over forty days, Jesus had appeared to the disciples and various groups of followers to teach them and to verify His resurrection.

In this passage, Jesus met the eleven disciples (without Judas) in a mountain in Galilee (v.16). As many as five hundred people may have been there (see 1 Cor 15:3-6).

1 Corinthians 15:3-6

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

The disciples came and worshipped Him, but within their hearts, there was still some doubting (v.17). Their doubts were probably not over His resurrection but whether this was really Jesus.

All doubts were dispelled when Jesus said, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth' (v.18). He let them know that He was in charge and His authority is the basis for the following commands:

v.19 He told them to go in His authority and teach (make disciples) of all nations (all groups of people). He also commanded them to baptise those who believe in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

v.20 Then He told them to teach those who believe to obey all the things He has commanded. Finally, he promised to be with them (and us) in this endeavour.

What we learn from this passage:

- **The authority for our mission** comes from the highest level - **JESUS HIMSELF**, King of kings, Lord of lords.
- **The scope of our mission** - **ALL NATIONS**.
- **The method of our mission** is **TEACHING** and **DISCIPLING** and helping people grow to maturity so they can teach others.
- **The goal of our mission must be local CHURCHes that will reproduce** the teaching and church of Jesus Christ that brought them the gospel in the first place.
- **The blessing on our mission** - **Jesus will be WITH US** always even unto the very end of the world (this present age).

4. LUKE 24.44-49

Luke 24:44-49

44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things. 49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

This passage records another appearance of Jesus to the disciples in Jerusalem, possibly the second Sunday or at some other point.

Jesus emphasised that His coming, His life, His death, His burial, and His resurrection were the ultimate fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures (law of Moses, prophets, and the psalms) (v.44-45).

Jesus showed them that the Christ they thought would come as King to rule and reign had to first come to suffer and to rise from the dead (v.46). Now repentance and remission (forgiveness) of sins should be preached in his name "among all nations" beginning at Jerusalem (v.47).

Jesus also told them that they were witnesses of these things (v.48). They had seen what Jesus did, who He was, and so they needed to go tell what they had seen and heard.

He went on to tell them that the promise of God's Holy Spirit is coming so they should wait at Jerusalem until that promise and power came on them (v.49).

What we learn from this passage:

- **The foundation of our message is** rooted in all of God's revelation to man through the Scripture (**THE BIBLE**) - Jesus is the pinnacle of God's revelation.
- **The acceptance of the message** is through **REPENTANCE** and **FAITH**.
- **The witnesses of the message** must be those who have personally **EXPERIENCED** the life-changing gospel of Jesus.
- **The power to share the message** is **NOT** something we have **IN OURSELVES**.

5. ACTS 1:4-8

Acts 1:4-8

⁴ And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. ⁵ For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ⁶ When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? ⁷ And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. ⁸ But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Picking up where his first book (The Gospel of Luke) left off, Luke repeated Christ's instruction to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise (v.4). This promise is the coming baptism of the Holy Ghost which will immerse them into the body of Christ (v.5) (see 1 Corinthians 12:13).

1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Jesus told them that it was not time for Christ to restore the kingdom of Israel (v.6-7). Their responsibility was to wait for the Holy Spirit. After He came upon them, they would receive power to go out and be witnesses to Jesus both in Jerusalem, in all Judaea, in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part (v.8).

And what a power they gained a few days later when the Spirit came! This band of fearful, doubtful, uneducated, and poor followers of Jesus would go out and 'turn the world upside down'.

Acts 17:6

And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

What we learn from this passage:

- **The power to witness** comes from the **HOLY SPIRIT**.
- **The audience to whom we witness is EVERYONE** at the same time through going and sending.
- **The purpose of our witness** is to tell people about **JESUS**.

SUMMARY OF GREAT COMMISSION PASSAGES

Hopefully, from these passages, you can see that Jesus' main focus during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension was to prove His resurrection and to get His followers (His church) to realise their mission.

A big part of Jesus' ministry was to prepare the Apostles to be ready to carry out His mission on earth. But the Apostles and that first generation of Christians has passed away. There are no longer any apostles, but the church of Christ goes on. Jesus promised that He would build His church.

Matthew 16:18

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The mission of the church is still the same in this generation:

a. Go into all the world - our city, country, our world, even those we don't like or those very different from us.

b. Preach the gospel to everyone. Tell them the good news that Christ died for their sins, was buried and rose again to give them new life. Tell them that the way they receive this good news is to repent and believe. Tell them that if they don't believe they will perish in their sins, but if they do believe they will be forgiven and given eternal life

c. Make disciples. Those who believe the message should be baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost and should be taught to know and do all the commands of Jesus, becoming His followers/disciples as well.

d. Plant churches. Part of following all of Christ's commands involves meeting together with other baptised believers, ministering to one another, and seeking to carry out the mission from that new church.

e. Repeat the process. The new believers and new church should then seek to plant other churches and send out missionaries around the world until the whole world knows.

GOD WANTS TO USE YOU

This great mission of God is not something that only a select group of specially trained missionaries are responsible to do. Certainly, we want to train, equip, and send out well trained and qualified missionaries to preach the gospel in places we may not be able to go to. But there is a role and responsibility for every believer to get involved.

You are one of God's priests.

1 Peter 2:9

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

You need to understand that in God's church there is no hierarchy, no such thing as 'clergy' and 'laity'.

Every believer in Christ has been given the Holy Spirit.

Every believer has been chosen, made a royal priest, a holy nation, and a special ('peculiar') people.

Every believer has the privilege to show forth the praises of the One who called him or her out of darkness into marvellous light

The mission and the task is too big for any one person or for just a few; it requires everyone working together - going, praying, giving, sending.

You have been entrusted with great responsibility.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

¹⁸ And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. ²¹ For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Explanation

v.18 God has all things. It all belongs to Him. He through Jesus Christ has reconciled us to himself. And now He has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

v.19 *to wit* means 'that is' - God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them (like they deserve). Now He has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation - that men can be reconciled to God.

v.20 Paul and other believers are ambassadors for Christ. As we speak, God speaks through us and implores men to be reconciled to God.

v.21 Men should be reconciled to God because God has made Christ sin for us who knew no sin (God himself in Jesus took our sin). The goal is to make us righteous like God in Christ.

Application

We who are believers are included in the 'us' of this passage. We have been given the ministry and the word of reconciliation. We have the message that tells men...

their reconciliation is possible and provided for in Christ

they can be right with God

their sins have been paid for

righteousness is available.

God is counting on us. God has entrusted this to us. God has given this ministry to us. We have been chosen. He wants us to be His ambassadors.

Will you pick up the baton? Will you carry out His mission? Will you realign your priorities, your time, your giving, your family, your reading, your leisure, your prayers, your entire life to carry out this greatest of assignments - witnesses of Jesus Christ to all nations!