

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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THE DIVINE COMMISSIONS

Three great commissions are set forth in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These are not the same, even though they are often treated as though they were. There are those who insist that the wording of all these commissions demonstrate that it was the declared intention of Jesus Christ that His apostles, and anyone else who felt inclined to do so, should go at once and proclaim the salvation bringing message of God to all mankind. They further insist that the ministry of the apostles in the Acts period was greatly hindered and restricted by their nationalistic feelings and their Jewish prejudices against the Gentiles. Such charges are grossly unfair to these faithful servants of God. In view of this, these commissions need to be carefully examined in order to find the exact instructions of Jesus Christ in each one of them. This we will do in this study. The first of these is recorded in Matthew.

And Jesus came and spake to them saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, 10, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. Matt. 28:18-20.

There is hardly any passage in the New Testament that has been subject to as much twisting and wresting, and to as many misapplications and misinterpretations as this one. And all this has been helped along by the very careless translation we find in the King James Version. A more accurate rendering of the Greek is a crying necessity here, so I submit the following resultant paraphrase. The reader will note that it is my conviction that the

Greek verb *baptizo* has in it the idea of establishing a fixed relationship; that is, the idea of identification. A literal, grammatic rendering of this commission would read as follows:

And Jesus approaching them, spoke unto them saying, All authority in heaven and on the earth has been given to Me. Going, therefore, make disciples of all the nations, relating them to the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and then teach these disciplined nations to observe all whatsoever I direct you. And 10, I am with you all the days even to the consummation of the eon. Matt. 28:18-20.

These words were spoken to "the eleven disciples" (Matt. 28: 16), and when honestly interpreted have nothing to do with the proclamation of God's salvation-bringing message, nothing to do with proclaiming the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. This commission did not have to do with the apostles course of action in the present evil eon. This directive belongs to that condition and state of things called the kingdom of God, the time when He governs the earth and the nations upon it (Psa. 67:4). It will be fulfilled and performed to the letter in the time after the Lord Jesus has assumed sovereignty, after He has taken to Himself His great power and is exercising it upon the earth.

The central command in these directives is to "make disciples of all the nations." This does not mean to preach to them in the hope that a few will accept. This commission does not have to do with individuals, but with nations. These are to be disciplined and are to be identified with or related to the name (the character) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These are to be merged into all the purposes and programs of the Deity at that time (See Psalms 22:27,28; 66:3,4; 82:8; 86:9; 102:15; 138:4). The words "in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" were never intended to be some magic formula that a clergyman was supposed to repeat as he dipped a person into water or sprinkled water upon them.

This commission cannot be carried out until Jesus Christ makes request of the Father and the nations are given to Him as His portion (Psa. 2:8; 82:8); not until God is governing the nations upon the earth (Psa. 67:4). At this time the men to whom these words were spoken will be sitting "upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28), and because of their positions, powers, and past histories will be the most honored and

revered statesman upon the earth. And since the nations at that time will want to be identified with the Deity (Psa. 67:4; 72:11, 17; 138:4; Isa. 55:5; Matt. 12:21; Rom. 15:12), these powerful men will go forth and relate nations to God in Christ in a formal and declared union. Furthermore, they will instruct the nations in regard to their responsibilities and conduct under God's government.

To those who insist that the commission in Matthew sends all believers to herald God's salvation-bringing message to men of every nation, there is one perfect answer. The men to whom these words were spoken did not understand them this way. We are on safe ground when we interpret these words in the same manner as they were understood by these divinely-possessed, Spirit-filled apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose words were confirmed by the God they were serving. Who are we to say 1900 years later that they misunderstood and failed to obey His commission?

The Commission in Mark

The commission recorded in Mark is entirely different from the one given in Matthew, even though it was spoken to the same eleven men.

And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 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. Mark 16:15-20.

This commission was performed and fulfilled to the letter in the thirty-three years of which the book of Acts is the history, and it was the fulfillment of this commission that did so much to give the Acts period its peculiar character. The heralds went forth and proclaimed everywhere, covering every Israelite in Palestine and those who were dispersed throughout the world. They did what they were told to do, and God did what He promised He would do. The final verse of this chapter is proof of this:

And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Mark 16:20.

The words *pase te ktisei* which are here translated "to every creature" obviously do not mean this. If it did it would include the animals, which pushes it into the ridiculous. This phrase means "in every creation." Few

indeed have dared to translate this phrase literally, since there is very little understanding as to how *ktisis* (creation) is used in the New Testament.

In 1 Peter 2:13 where *pase anthropine ktisei* is translated "every ordinance of man," it should read "every human creation," and these creations are then described as being kings and governors. In Col. 1: 15 where *prototokos pases ktiseos* is translated "firstborn of every creature," it should read "firstborn of every creation." These creations are then described as being thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. Thus empires, nations, states, cities, and all their officials would be "creations" in the Biblical use of this term.

As the heralds went forth some of these creations would take a very hostile attitude toward the proclamation of the gospel in their countries; others might be more or less friendly, such as those on the Isle of Paphos, where Sergius Paulus was the procounsul (Acts 13:6-7). But the heralds were not to choose the easy places; they were to preach the gospel "in every creation" whether the political climate was favorable or not. If there were Israelites within the borders of these creations, they were to go there.

Some may continue to insist that the words "in every creation" mean that these men were to go everywhere and preach to everyone without exception or distinction. However, again let it be noted that the men to whom these words were spoken never understood them to mean this. Their conduct in the early chapters of Acts make this plain, and we can arrive at no better understanding of these words. The apostles limited their ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In Acts 10, after a vision was repeated three times, Peter went to the devout, God-fearing, Gentile family. This was the way God wanted it, and this was the way they did it. We should honor their faithfulness.

The Commission in Luke

The commission recorded in Luke is different from those set forth in Matthew and Mark. In Luke we are told that after the Lord had opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, He said unto them:

Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. Luke 24:46-48.

There were Israelites in every nation, and it was the pledge of God that, **"To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand"** (Rom. 15:21; Isa. 52:15). This is why repentance and remission of sins was to be proclaimed "among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

This was no command or commission to proclaim God's salvation-bringing message to all men without exception or distinction. Those to whom these words were spoken did not understand them this way, and these were the very men whose understanding had been opened so that they could comprehend the truth (Luke 24:45). Peter did not understand them this way. It took a spectacular vision thrice repeated and some direct conversation with the Lord before he would go to even one Gentile household.

We lose nothing by acknowledging the unique place of Israel in the Acts period. We gain much in the way of truth when we do. From the day of Pentecost to the house of Cornelius, an eight year period, the gospel was to the Jew only. At Acts 10 one Gentile household is evangelized, but nothing more is done or can be done until the great apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, begins his ministry. We read of this in Acts 13. From that point on a company of Gentiles was called out and participated in the blessings of Israel. After Acts 28:28 the salvation bringing message of God was made freely available to all men. This produced a new and different company of believers of which we are a part.

END Issue SB013