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TH502: Theology in Global Context: OA

Final Paper!

The theme of this paper is to examine and bring some sort of enlightenment to what is known as the “Great Commission” that is found in Matthew 28:18-20 and also to establish the purpose of it in today’s society. This paper will include various sources that was covered in this class. Right now the world is going through a pandemic that has not been seen in the life of many who are alive today, in this country or abroad. This pandemic has gripped the world and have taken by storm. Nevertheless, Matthew 28:18-20 is still needed and God still expects it to be carried out now, whether the times are good, bad or even uncertain.

The ministry of Jesus took place over a span of three years. During that time, wars were being fought, Rome was dominating, disease was happening, death was gripping families, poverty was prevalent and yet He lived and carried out His Divine purpose in spite of the times and the seasons. In fact, Jesus had personal struggles going on in His own life. In John 6, He was rejected by His own people, His brothers didn’t believe in Him, the religious leaders of the day (the Pharisees and Sadducees) were always trying to trap Him and plotted to kill Him, the authorities (chief priests) rejected Him, He was betrayed by one of His closes disciples for money, He was denied by one of His inner circle disciples, put on trial for a crime He never committed, He was mocked and beaten by the soldiers whose care He was in and finally crucified on a rugged, dirty cross.

Yet, in all of these situations, Jesus made time to cast out unclean spirits, heal Peter’s mother-in-law, cleansed a leper, healed a paralyzed man, healed a man with a withered hand, calmed the sea, raised Jairus’ daughter, healed a woman with a hemorrhage, fed the five

thousand, walked on water, cast out the demon from the Greek woman's daughter, healed a deaf-mute, fed four thousand, healed a blind man, cast out a deaf and dumb spirit, healed blind Bartimaeus and withered a fig tree. He did all of this while doing on the job training with His disciples because He knew that time was of the essence. He only had a short time on the earth physically. He also knew that His disciples would grieve His death and then have to pick up where He left off and do what He did. That is why at the end of His ministry He spent time preparing them for their impending ministry.

In Matthew 28:18-20 New King James Version (NKJV) it states, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." The exegesis of this text is absolutely necessary in order to tie in the rest of the paper.

The commission that Jesus, Himself, received was from the Father. So when He said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth," He was saying that He was saying that the Father gave Him all power and further, authorized Him to use it. His universal dominion as Mediator is the greatest foundation of the Christian religion. Jesus has all power. He didn't assume it, He didn't usurp it, but it was given to Him by His Father, so He was legally entitled to it. This power that was given to Him by His Father was over all flesh. He has the authority to give eternal life to as many as were given Him (John 17:2). This power enabled Him to forgive sins (Matt. 9:6) and give salvation (Luke 19:12).

Where does He have this power? In heaven and the earth. Why? Because He is the Lord of all (Acts 10:36). He has all power in heaven, over the angels and power of intercession with

the Father. He has all power on the earth too. He prevailed with God by His sacrifice of atonement on the cross and He prevail with men and deals with them as one having this authority and ministry of reconciliation. He is in all causes and over all people and to him every heart and knee must bow, and every tongue confess him to be the Lord.

Next, He tells those He sends out to “Go ye therefore.” Although He initially gave it to His disciples that walked with Him on earth, now that they are no longer on earth, Jesus continues to give it out to all of those who call Him their Savior and Lord. All born again believers are now the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and He has now commissioned them to carry out His ministry of reconciliation through all the earth. The scripture tells is “As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, to excite them to fly (Deut. 32:11), so Christ stirs up his disciples and disperse them throughout and over all the world. This mandate has been given to every the minister of the gospel, whose business it is to bring the gospel to the end of the in this present day time, as it was for the disciples to transmit it from nation to nation, to the end of the world.

When first sent out, they were forbidden to go to the Gentiles, but now all of Christ’s disciples are sent to all nations. Secondly, salvation through Christ is to be offered to all and no one is to be excluded, except if that person refuses to accept the invitation. The salvation that is to be preached is a common salvation of “whosoever will, let him or her come,” for there is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female, but all are welcome. Finally, it is an invitation that the kingdoms of this world is to become Christ’s kingdoms.

The main Greek word for “disciple” is “mathetes” meaning “pupil or learner.” So the commission is not to go into all the world and bring condemnation or judgment, but to go into all the world and preach and teach the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and cause people to become

pupils and students of Christ [CITATION Jam961 \l 1033]. In other words, disciples are to make other disciples. They are to raise up an army for the carrying on of the war against the powers of darkness, by enlisting the nations to become a part of the army of God. Believers are marked by their Christ-like living, the way they treat each other and by the way they treat outsiders [CITATION Nei00 \l 1033].

The instructions for executing this commission is in the command of “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is done through the vehicle of prayer and water baptism. The act of baptism is an outward expression of the believer’s faith that there is but One God in three persons, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and our consent to a covenant with God. Baptism is an oath wherein one renounces the world and the flesh and allows God to enthrone our hearts as one makes their allegiance with God. It’s acknowledging the Father as the believer’s Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, the One to Whom they resign themselves to as their absolute Owner and Proprietor and the One Who rules by His law. In the name of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as one takes Christ as their Prophet, Priest and King and gives themselves up to be taught, saved and ruled by Him. Finally, in the name of the Holy Spirit because He carries the redemption and the believer gives up his or herself to His conduct and operation as their Sanctifier, Teacher, Guide and Comforter.

Finally, those that are baptized and become disciples of Jesus Christ must be taught. Jesus said, “Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.” The duty of Christ’ disciples are to observe all things that Christ had commanded them and in order to do that they must submit to the teaching of those whom He sends. When Christ disciple people, that is not the end of it, He then enlists them as His soldiers to be trained for His service. To observe what Christ commanded is to obey Him.

Next, the assurance that Christ gives them is in the statement “And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” This statement was to strengthen their faith. Notice that He didn’t say, I will be with you, but that I am with you. Although, He was about to leave them in the physical, and He knew they would be grieved, but He was assuring them of His spiritual presence which is more expedient for them than His physical presence could be. In other words He was saying, “My Spirit is with you. The Comforter will abide with you” (John 16:7).

Christ was about to send them to set up His kingdom in the world, which was an enormous undertaking. He was promising His presence with them to carry them through the difficulties that they would likely encounter. His Spirit would be there to bear them up, plead their cause, be there with them in service, in their sufferings, to bring them comfort and even honor. He was promising to be with them so that their ministry would be effective in the discipling of the nations, for pulling down the strongholds of Satan and setting up the kingdom of the Lord Jesus wherever they went.

Finally, after telling them that He would be with them, He tells them for how long. Always, even unto the end of the world. They will have His constant presence with them, all day, every day. There would no time period where the Lord would not be with them. In fact, there would never be a time that His presence would not be with them and He will be with them even to the “end of the world.” In other words, He was going to be with them and then with their successors. He will be with every minister of the Gospel in all of the ages and that extends even to this present day and even to generations of generations after today until the Lord Jesus Christ returns and raptures the church. When the “end of the world” is come, and the kingdom of God is delivered up to God, then there will be no further need of ministers and their ministries.

The final word Jesus spoke to his disciples was, “Amen.” This is not just a conclusion of the book of Matthew, but it is Jesus’ confirmation of His promise of “Lo I am with you. It is His “Amen” of His promises being “Yes and Amen” (2 Cor.1:20). It is Him saying “Verily I am with you and will be with you and “These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God (Rev. 3:14).

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, some doubted Jesus’ identity and some even doubted Who He said He was, but even in spite of their doubts, Jesus gave the proclamation of His identity and presence” (Matt. 28:17). This teaches those carrying the gospel message that people will always doubt you, but like Jesus, are not to become offended or take their eyes off the commission given them. That this is spiritual and not to be taken personal.

Matthew 28:19 can be translated as saying, “You are going.” The imperative part of this statement was to “make disciples.” This ministry was and still is extended to “all the nations,” which was keeping with the spirit of becoming Abraham’s seed and receiving the Abrahamic blessing. The ministry that is to be birth through Jesus’ disciples included “baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” and “teaching them to observe all things,” that simply means laying the foundation for application. Jesus would fulfill His name “Immanuel” which means, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23) by being present with His people “even to the end of the age.” And “Amen” seals the promise. Which can be translated as meaning, “it is so.” [CITATION Rob90 \l 1033].

Theologically speaking Jesus’ disciple, past and present, are to see Christianity as essentially worldwide. Kim quotes Mark Juergensmeyer as saying, “all religions are found in diaspora and that religion has always been global. Generally speaking, Christianity is one of those religions to which outsiders can convert and are invited to convert. Since Christianity

claims theological universality and local inclusivity, it is spread by conversion and by missions or sharing the good news (evangelism or evangelization) as well as by migration and globalizing processes” [CITATION Seb16 \l 1033].

Geographically speaking, Kim says that Christianity is globally widespread and locally rooted. The fact that Christianity has always been geographically widespread, it must be lived out locally before many different communities. In Acts 1:8, the people gathered in Jerusalem when the festival was taking place. Luke emphasizes the different languages that the disciples spoke while in the upper room and when they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance. Those who were there listening, received the messages given to them in their own language, culture and context.

Socially speaking, Christian ministers must see world Christianity as globalization. Kim states that it is “primarily a people movement” because globalization is seen and assumed to be a result of Western colonial and no-colonial expansion. Socially speaking, the spread of Christianity is connected with what matters concerning economics and politics (p 11). The globalization of Christianity deals with culture and its system. When evangelizing, the minister must be able to reach people within the context of their culture and language and it must make sense to them (p 12).

Historically speaking, Christianity is translatable and contextual. Kim says this means that, “the expectation of translation is not only about language, but all dimensions of what is necessary if a religion is to be owned and received by the people of a different culture, including spirituality, theology, inter-relations and forms of social engagement. Christianity is to be able to allow them to encounter and receive Jesus Christ for themselves and respond according to their own cultural patterns and thought forms” (p 15).

Lidija Novakovic writes that “the main purpose of Jewish scriptural interpretation is for comprehensive and made applicable to particular communities. When one enters in other countries, the interaction between women, men and children are very specific and different from culture to culture and should be respected. Lynn H. Cohick states that “relating to women and children enables the New Testament reader today to better appreciate the New Testament teachings and descriptions of the family” [CITATION Joe17 \l 1033].

As with any culture, the religious belief system is necessary to understand as to how people behave and govern themselves, so that the ministers of the gospel message will expect opposition and some resistance. Everyone is not going to receive the message and do away with their own belief system immediately, so this requires the minister to be careful to understand the culture, respect the culture and operate with love and patience because it may take some time, but know that they will encounter opposition. Jesus had the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Essenes of His time opposing Him. So, it is important to expect there to be resistance when presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ (p 217).

Timothy C. Tinnent speaks of how when ministering Christ to people in other countries, it is vitally important to know that they must be able to see themselves as being important to Jesus Himself. Case in point, Tinnent use the African Christians as an example. Christianity was introduced to African Christians, in Africa through the vehicle of slavery from their white slave owners. They were taught that Jesus loves them, but not as much as their white counterparts. They were also taught that Jesus was for slavery and because they could not read and write, accepted what they were taught. They were shown a Caucasian, blond hair, blue eyed Jesus in pictures. So, it was very difficult for them to accept a Savior who partially loved them and who was for slavery. Although they believed in Him, it was difficult to see themselves as

being important to Him. Tennent says that “the result is that the image of Christ as Ancestor may not seem on the surface, to have an overwhelming relevance in addressing African issues such as malnutrition, AIDS, political instability, discrimination, and so forth. However, after deeper reflection, it is clear that the ancestor imagery may, in fact, resonate deeply with the living experience of African Christians in several areas (p 129). Eventually, as time passed, the Africans Christians began to ask questions and search out the scriptures for themselves and as a result, their perspective changed and they began to see that they were taught and fed lies about Who Jesus really is.

Christology must be faithful to the biblical text and also be responsive to that particular culture, theological and contextual challenges that the people face on a regular day to day basis (p 132). When conveying the message of Jesus Christ, one must be affluent enough to translate it to the receivers culturally. When Jesus was choosing His disciples, Andrew, Peter and John, who were fisherman by trade, He spoke to them about fish. In fact, He told them in Mark 1:17, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” He caught their attention because He came to them and spoke to them in their language and culture. It was something they could comprehend and relate to. Something simple as “fish” caught their attention and drew them into Him. Jesus didn’t come with big theological words and tried to show all of is intelligence, but when to them where they were culturally and dealt with them on that level.

Terry Muck, author of “Missiology: An International Review,” said “Mission is the mother of all theology.” He quoted Curtis Chang of “Engaging Unbelief: A Captivating Strategy From Augustine and Aquinas” as saying, “that in order to do theology in a meaningful way today we must open ourselves to cross-cultural differences. We must be willing, to enter into the other person’s experience” [CITATION Muc04 \l 1033]. The one delivering the gospel message

must be able to understand empathetically and use language and things of the culture to communicate to them clearly, like Jesus did in order to gain His disciples. This demonstrates to them one's authenticity and causes them to be open to the one delivering the message.

Another point that need to be made comes from author, Afe Adgame, who wrote the "Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in a Global Perspective." He says that it "may be confusing from context to context" of various cultures" [CITATION Afe \l 1033]. The characteristics of Pentecostal is usually defined by the same characteristics such as "emphasis of spiritual rebirth (baptism of the Holy Spirit), spiritual gifting such as healing, deliverance, prophecy, lively expressions of worship. They should be viewed as "global movements and not a centralized, international organizations" (p 500). This means that it's not about being in a church building with organizations, so to speak, but more about the people that is being ministered to. There should not be church as usual as far as focusing on sitting in a particular seat, having different services as a ritual, but more about expressing through their words and actions that Jesus Christ is concerned about their souls.

Stanley John wrote in *Co-Workers of the Great Commission: the Flourishing of Diaspora Churches in North America* that "when people come to America, they come with their own faith." He poses a very thought provoking question of "What if immigration is the very tool that God uses for the revitalization of Christian faith in North America?" Due to the growing number of immigrants coming into the United States of America, there is a need for people to be able to see themselves. Just like the African Christians who needed to see themselves in the scriptures to know that Jesus really cared about them and that they were and still are incredibly important to Him, the same is true for people when they come to a strange land they are not originally from. They need to see people who are free and happy and who are excited about this

amazing and incredible Savior. They need to see people who look like them and who share the same culture to present Him to them.

Stanly John said, “As of 2007 there was a 29% increase and a 34% increase in 2014 of stateside, diaspora churches in North America and is expected to grow as the rate of immigration grows exponentially in the coming decades.” By viewing diasporic communities as groups we need to reach with the gospel is essential for the growth in kingdom building and for Christian ministers to be obedient to the “Great Commission” that was issued to them by Jesus in Matthew 28 when He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” All nations meaning all cultures of people, wherever and whenever you have the opportunity to do so. John states that, those areas that are considered, “unreached” or “unreachable” provides and opens doors for enormous opportunities for the message of Jesus Christ to be ministered and witnessed because migrants are more likely to accept the message. Familiarity makes things easier and the conversation go smoother and allows for the doors of opportunity to swing open and has a probable success rate. So, immigrant Christians are definitely a necessity.

Global Christianity is increasingly being made up of people from all walks of life. According to Tennett, North America’s cultural and ecclesiastical history comes from Western Europe which is the basis of how and what we understand church history to be. However, as those who are migrants, this Western European history does not include them so it is difficult for many of them to relate to it. Migrants need an ecclesiology that includes them, so it is imperative for North American churches to have a more inclusive doctrine for other races to be able to relate to and see themselves as being important to the Lord Jesus Christ (Tennett 254).

By doing this, it will allow the Christians to be a positive influence whether at work, church in the supermarkets, and even in our very own communities. It will positively impact

how we train students to preach, teach and understand church administration so that they will be able to practice missions. All of this can be universally applicable and give us a larger, stronger and broader reach globally.

The final aspect that is to be discussed in this paper is how church has changed drastically due to the pandemic affecting the world. The bible tells us in John 4:35, "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" It's in this time where a virus has come and have ravaged the land, not just in the United States of America, but in all of the world. People were getting sick at rapid rate without a vaccine and thousands are dying, whether married, single, widowed, men, women, children, old, young, middle aged, babies, whether black, white, Asian, Hispanic, Indian, Russian, tall or short, healthy or disabled, thin or obese, rich or poor. Everyone has been affected. Families have been affected, small and large businesses have been affected, and government has been affected. People have been affected, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, politically and financially. People want answers. People want solutions. People need to find their place as bread-winners of the family has died and funerals can't be held, so family members and friends have not been able to say goodbye. Like Jesus said, in John 4:35, "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" The "Great Commission" is still viable, valuable and necessary. He has called all born again believers to "Go." He said in the base scripture of this paper, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." The commission is to "Go," "Baptize," and "Teach." This commission is given to all who call themselves Christians, no matter what

language one speaks, no matter the country they come from are in currently, no matter the race, no matter the educational or religious background, no matter their political affiliation, the commission is to go and make disciples. The building is not the church. The people are the church. Everywhere Christians go, the church has gone. Christians are, like the title of Stanley John's book, "Co-Workers of the Great Commission."

Due to this pandemic, it has definitely changed how the church has been represented and seen. I spoke with many pastors, ministers and lay member from different denominations of how they see church now and going forward. Many of them stated that they have reached many who don't go to church, who won't go to church and will probably never go to church since this pandemic has begun through online streaming. Many have received Christ. People don't feel judged and so God is allowed to speak to their hearts without interference. All of the pastors I spoke to are encouraged to continue to do the online services, have bible study online and the mid-week encouragement sessions. The culture that is being reached are technology driven so this is a way to speak their language. Smaller churches are joining larger churches and pastors are working together cohesively. Healing is going forth, souls are being saved, hearts are being mended, the family of God is growing exponentially and God is being glorified.

As fore stated at the beginning of this paper, the theme of this paper is to examine and bring some sort of enlightenment to what is known as the "Great Commission" that is found in Matthew 28:18-20 and also to establish the purpose of it in today's society. Right now the world is going through a pandemic that has not been seen in the life of many who are alive today, in this country or abroad and has gripped the world and have taken it by storm. Nevertheless, Matthew 28:18-20 is still needed and God still expects it to be carried out now, whether the times are good, bad or even uncertain all Christians are "All authority has been given to Me in heaven

and on earth. 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. Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.” Thank you and God bless.

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The Nelson Study Bible (NKJV)

ABSTRACT

The theme of this paper is to examine and bring some sort of enlightenment to what is known as the “Great Commission” that is found in Matthew 28:18-20 and also to establish the purpose of it in today’s society. This paper will include various sources that was covered in this class. Right now the world is going through a pandemic that has not been seen in the life of many who are alive today, in this country or abroad. This pandemic has gripped the world and have taken by storm. Nevertheless, Matthew 28:18-20 is still needed and God still expects it to be carried out now, whether the times are good, bad or even uncertain. The Christians must learn to be the church and not just go to one if they are going to win a dying and hurt world to Christ.

OUTLINE

Thesis: This paper is to examine and bring some sort of enlightenment to what is known as the “Great Commission” that is found in Matthew 28:18-20 and also to establish the purpose of it in today’s society.

I. Great Commission

A. Definition

B. Ministry of Jesus Christ

1. Opposition He experienced.
2. Purpose and Focus.

C. Given to the disciples

1. Who are today's disciples
2. What is the focus of their mission
3. Opposition to expect to experience.

II. Mission and Ministry

A. Whose is the intended audience

B. Learn Culture and Language

C. Effective method

III. Today’s Society

A. Pandemic

B. The Great Commission in today’s language.

C. Church of Today.