

Our "Great Commission"

In my upbringing within "The Church" I was always taught that our Great Commission is found in Matthew 28:29

"Going, then, disciples all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to be keeping all, whatever I direct you."

But look again. These were Jesus' words to His disciples (all Jews) to disciple the nations. It is not a commission to "The Church" to disciple the "Unbelievers."

In Matthew 16:18 we read the words of Jesus:

*"You are Peter, and on this rock will I be building My **ecclesia** (most translations use the word "church" here), and the gates of the unseen shall not be prevailing against it. I will be giving you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatsoever you should be binding on the earth shall be those things having been bound in the heavens ..."*

Again, most within "The Church" commandeer these words, claiming this is Jesus' promise to build His church. But if these are our own interpretations, we have taken great liberties! In all of these cases, the message is going strictly **to Israel**. **Where do we, as the Gentile "Church," have the right to replace Israel in these passages?**

It is simply a case of an improper handling of Scripture. We cannot simply open the Bible, pick out a passage, and claim that the Lord is speaking concerning us. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:15

*"Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, **correctly cutting** the word of truth."*

We must seriously study, and "correctly cut" the word of God. Who is God speaking to? If He is speaking to Israel, can we properly claim this is a word to us today? Are the circumstances the same today as they were when God's Word was written, or could God be working in different ways today? For example, God once worked strictly with Israel, requiring them to observe the Law. Paul would later write that we are free from the Law. Paul announced that God was working in a different way!

Much damage is done today by "simplistic Christianity." I hear people say, "I am **in** the Word of God." This is as if to say, "It doesn't matter where I read something in the Bible. Since God is always the same, I can trust His word." This has caused great division within the Body of Christ. We read in Mark 16:18

"... and if they should be drinking anything deadly, it should under no circumstances be harming

them; they will be placing hands on those who are ailing, and ideally will they be having it."

Does this mean the we in "The Church" today should be able to drink poison, because God has said it will not harm us? Beware of those that say, "I spent time in the Word." Clearly we are to study, and "correctly cut" the Word of God.

Back to the Great Commission. When Jesus spoke the words recorded in Matthew 28:29 God was proclaiming that "the kingdom is near" to the sheep of Israel; not the Gentiles. When the book of Acts opens, Peter and the other apostles again go only to the Jews. The message (the coming kingdom) has not changed, and this is a message to the Jews. It is their kingdom, as it was in King David's day. The Jewish prophets promised the coming Messiah to the Jews. It was to the Jews that the kingdom would be restored (see Acts 1:6).

So do we, as Gentiles, have a commission today?

When the Jewish leaders were gathered by Paul in Acts 28 they reject the kingdom message one last time. And in Paul's writing we read of God doing a new thing ... calling Jew and Gentile alike, with no barrier, to be joint heirs in Christ, and a part of the Body of Christ. And where better do we find the heart of Paul's message, and our "commission" for this present age, than in 2 Corinthians 5:18ff

"All is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the reconciliation. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, "Be conciliated to God."

- Bob Evely -

Kentucky Bible Conference in February

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