

On the passage commonly referred to as the Great Commission, 3 pgs

In the Bible, God is extolled for two great works, **creation** (*Jer.10:16; Ps.136: 1-9, 25-26; 33:6-9; 148:1-13; Rev.4:6b-11*) and **redemption** (*1 Pt.1:3-9; Col.1:15-20; 1 Cor.8:6; Rev.5:8-14*). They are the two universal causes to praise and worship Him. As with the **benedictions** upon Man at his creation and at his fresh beginning after the judgment of the flood, so God has something to say to the new Man upon his rebirth and coming to life in Christ. *All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. As you are going [participle] therefore, disciple [active transitive verb] all nations, baptizing them [participle] in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them [participle] to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I will be with you always, even to the consummation of the age. (Mt.28:18-20)* [The participles *going, baptizing, and teaching* modify the verb **disciple**.] Christ is charging His people to disciple the world by communicating the Gospel to the inhabitants of the places they traveled through and settled in. The commission conveys a redirection of purpose and gives man a part in it commensurate with God's ongoing work of redemption. Redemption is the regeneration of man, a returning of people from under the curse, a restoration of Man to be what he was meant to be, once again under God.

The Great Commission does not coerce Christians under some threat to witness. Christ is not just giving Christians another thing to do, one more command to obey by presenting us with a clear vision of His purposes. God provides us with a defining description of redeemed man, and focuses the whole of our lives on the most meaningful endeavor imaginable. Thus the Great Commission is also a benediction, paralleling the one at creation, in conjunction with both the nature of man as human flesh and blood, and the nature of the new man in spiritual union with Christ. It is just as natural for converted people to move in this new direction as it was for all people to move in the direction of the *be fruitful and multiply blessing* at creation.

God has given us a means of fulfillment in a world substantially damaged by sin and its consequences, where the certainty and dread of death have become controlling over man's every venture. In this respect, the Great Commission can be thought of as a means of grace. Acting out of our very natures as people created in God's true image [see *Man in God's Image*], we go on with our lives in societies and cultures throughout the world. But, after one comes to God through faith in Christ, there is an exciting difference, he has been brought to God and has a larger frame of reference – the whole world. Further, Christ promises to accompany us on the journey, *I will be with you*. So, as we come to Christ at various stages in our lives and in all kinds of situations, living in this world takes on new significance. Now in all we do, we not only act as men living in God's world, but as redeemed people reconciling the world to Him *sharing in the inheritance of the saints in light ... delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of his beloved son, Col.1:12-13*

For each of us as Christians, the important thing is that there are some people who can be thankful that we have lived and that God has worked through us [No Little People by Francis Schaeffer, p.152]. Going about our lives is infused with a larger **calling**, an overall **purpose of reproducing God's true likeness and conquering by means of the Gospel** under His authority and in the power of his Spirit. Thus we are once again blessed by the words *be fruitful and multiply*.

Thus it stands written that the Christ would suffer and would rise from the dead on the third day, and **repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations** ... You are witnesses of these things. I am sending you what my Father promised. But **stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high**, Lk.24:46-49.

... Just as the Father has sent me, I also send you. And after he said this, he breathed on them and said, **Receive the Holy Spirit** ... Jn.20:21-22

Signs of the End of the Age

*they will hand you over to be persecuted and will kill you. You will be hated by all the nations because of my name ... But the person who endures to the end will be saved. And **this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole inhabited earth** as a testimony to all the nations* Mt.24:9-14; Mk.13:9-11; Jn.17:14-18

A Call to Foreign Missions?

Having said the above, it is my opinion that **the Great Commission is not a command to pull up roots** (in obedience as Abraham did) and leave one's native homeland, family, customs, and language to be a missionary to people who have not heard the Gospel. As I have argued, **a married man's first obligation and primary mission** is to provide, protect, care for, and lead his family into the reality of spiritual (supernatural) life with the Living God [Gen.18:19; GT#1, p.8; #6, P.7].

Train a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it, Prov.22:6 .

Fathers raise your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, Eph.6:4 .

A married man who moves to a different culture risks not only his welfare but that of his family as well. He should not make such a decision unilaterally. Man and wife are partners and should carefully consider the risks to their current and future family as well as themselves. Of course God may lead you to a foreign field, but don't misunderstand the Great Commission as a command to go there.

Famine & Persecution

Jesus knew full-well that **persecution of the early church** would be intense and God used that scattering to spread his people throughout the Mediterranean area where they made known the Gospel. The first steps in the gospel's spread to the ends of the earth were not taken by apostles (who remained in Jerusalem), but by other Christians scattered by persecution, The Message of Acts by Dennis E. Johnson, p.45.

Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen. A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria ... But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison. But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went, Acts 8:1-4.

In the same way **God used famine** to move people around in the OT, Gen.12:10. In early life of

Jesus, [his supposed father] Joseph, was warned by God to escape Herod's edict to kill all males 2 and under, **Mt.2:13-16**, and fled with his family to Egypt. The risen Lord gave the great commission to the disciples in the early days of the Christian church knowing that persecution would force many Christians to flee their homes and even the country [see **GT#2, p.4-5**], so he used a participle to begin the commission meaning whether or not you are forced to leave, **Acts 7:1-8:8; 9:1-2**, as you spread out into the known world be ambassadors of Christ. Take the Gospel everywhere you go and disciple people.

In the past era (the 19th century) Christian men, took up the call to serve as missionaries to various indigenous peoples around the world. Notable among them were William Carey, British, who ministered 41 years in India; Adoniram Judson, American, who served in Burma for nearly 40 years; John Patton, Scottish, 30 years among a group of islands in the South Sea called Oceania today. All of these men came to the field by ship accompanied by their wives and children. They endured great hardship and personal loss, suffered terrible conditions, persevered much discouragement, and accomplished great things. One cannot help admiring their dedication and God's working through them. These and others deserve to be noted in **Hebrews 11** as men of faith. But their personal losses in the deaths of children and wives were staggering. How many of them would have lived had they stayed in their "civilized" countries of origin, we cannot know. Neither can we know how many would not have gone had they understood the primary duty of a father & husband and the meaning of the Great Commission as described above.