

The Great Commission

- Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' Matthew 28: 16-20

A proof text?

- Slogan?
- Pretext for what we have already decided (that mission should mean)

Devotional

- Assurance
- Commission
- Promise

Guilt trip?

From a context

- Matthew's Gospel – aimed to provide purpose to a community in crisis on how it should understand its calling and mission
- Jewish Christians living in gentile setting in 70s and 80s AD
- Crisis occurs on fall of the temple

Crisis

- Who are we?
- Are we really Jewish?
- What are we doing outside our homeland?
- Do we have a mission to our fellow Jews?
- Do we have a mission to the gentiles among whom we live now?

Aim

- To help a community of Jesus-followers discover their new identity as 'Jews-with-a-mission' or 'Jews-for-Gentiles'
- Pro-Jewish e.g. geneology starts with Abraham
- Pro-Gentile e.g. wise men from the East

All Nations

- Not all 'all Gentile nations'
- But 'of Jews and Gentiles' alike

Kingdom Perspective

- Cosmic reference point – redefines all personal and group identities
- Authority – kingly statement
- Teaching to obey – live as loyal subjects of the kingdom

Implications

'teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you'

- Teaching – not indoctrination or instruction, rather 'shaping or formation'
- Not 'follow these rules' but 'come to terms with the implications of what God has done by establishing his kingdom'
- Authority – not 'God says so' but 'God is doing and has done so'
- Obey is not so much to do as to re-orientate into liberation, centred on person of Jesus
- Leads to transformation which evidences Jesus's Kingship

Discipleship

- Internally transformed life made plain in everyday conduct, not external conformity to a fixed pattern of religious practice
- Command to "make disciples" – challenge to act as bridge between existing and future circles of disciples

Are you an orange or a peach?



...the only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.

The church is to be the primary agent of mission and if it does not exhibit evident community and transformed lives, then any amount of evangelistic events and church projects will have limited credibility ...

That community is described in Scripture as nothing less than the body of Christ. ...

this means that how the church conducts its life is foundational to the whole work of proclaiming the good news of Christ.

L. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989) p. 227