

WHY?

Matthew 28:16-20

There are those great mysteries of God of which we will never know the answer. Where did God come from? How could God have never had a beginning? If God is self sufficient and totally fulfilled in Himself alone, then why did He create the universe, especially if He is all-knowing and if He is perfect? For certainly He knew how evil that men would become and how they would corrupt planet earth, and certainly He knew that would grieve His perfect character beyond our comprehension. But even worse, certainly He knew that the amassing of the sins of the fallen angels with fallen men would cause Him to burn up the entire universe in a future day of judgment. So why? WHY? **WHY?** Philosophers have spent lifetimes wrestling with these questions, and they are no closer now than they've ever been to the answers.

But God does give us a word that will satisfy us in our thirst for this knowledge. He said in Isaiah 55:8-9, "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts". And He said in Psalm 145:17, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works". Beloved, that's all we need to know about all the unfathomable mysteries about God. God is smarter than we are, and He never makes a mistake. And knowing that we can always, always trust Him.

But there are some things that God would have us to know. First of all, God wants us to know Him as much as He chooses for us to know. As part of the New Covenant, Jeremiah wrote to the Jews and also to you and me in Jeremiah 31:34, "No more shall every man teach his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD". And because of this promise, Paul wrote to the Philippians that he counted all things but loss that he might know Jesus, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10). And beloved, there is no greater knowledge on this earth than the knowledge of God!! To have an intimate, personal **relationship** with the living God. To walk with Him and talk with Him and with spiritual eyes see things others can't see, seeing Him work out details in your life in such a perfect way, and to say, "Thank you, Lord", because you know that He was right there with you, helping you.

But God not only wants you to know Him, but He wants you to know His will. Jesus said, "For whosoever does the will of my Father in Heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50). Now, God would not expect us to do His will and then not be willing to reveal to us His will, would He? Never! Paul writes in Romans 12: 2 that we are not to be conformed to this world but to be renewed in the spirit of

our minds, that we might prove that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. God has a perfect will for our lives and He wants us to know it and prove it. Now, there are two aspects of God's will. God has a general will for all of us as His children, and God has a specific will for each one of us as His children, just as surely as God's will for Paul was to be a missionary. His will for you might not be as high profile as Paul's, but it is still just as specific and just as important in His eyes.

And yet, I could not tell you how many Christians I've had to tell me after they've survived a serious illness or accident, "God has left me here for something, but I don't know what it is". But if you had asked them before their terrible trauma, "What is God's will for your life?" many if not most would have told you the same thing - "I'm not really sure." Paul plainly declares that He was called to be an apostle by the will of God (1 Corinthians 1:1, 2 Corinthians 1:1). Have you figured out yet why God put you on the planet? Beloved, we get only one shot in this life to get it right. And there can be no greater joy for a Christian than to stand before the Father at the Judgment Seat of Christ and hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You fulfilled your purpose for your life. You got it right!" And to the contrary, there can be no greater tragedy than to live your whole life and then stand before God at the judgment seat of Christ and hear that you missed your purpose, that you missed your calling in life. So I want us to consider that awesome question today. Why? Why am I here as a Christian? For what purpose did God leave me on planet earth after He saved me?

Now, when it comes to God's specific will, God and God alone must reveal that to you. The occupation you choose, whether you marry or not and if you do marry, who you will marry and where you will live. Only God can guide you in these major decisions. But God leaves us no doubt about His general will for all of us. It is found right here, in His Word. And it is so important that we not miss it that He stated it five different times, in each one of the gospels and in the book of Acts. I want us to read each one of God's declarations of His will to us.

Matthew 28:18-20: "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."

Mark 16:15: "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature".

Luke 24:46-47: "Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and

that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”.

John 20:21: “So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’”

Acts 1:8: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

If you’ve been around a Baptist church more than about 2 days, the moment you heard me say the words Matthew 28 you knew where this message was going. The Great Commission. The Baptist marching orders since day one of our history. And may I say that we have declared these verses as our marching orders because the Bible declares them as our marching orders, and we should be proud that we stand with the Bible in the matter. But I want us to understand today why. Why does God command those who name the name of Jesus to proclaim His name to the ends of the earth? Well, let’s look for a few moments at the **cause** of the Great Commission.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Psalm 67:1-4. In verse 1 the psalmist invokes God’s mercies and blessings. And don’t we all want God’s mercies and blessings upon us! But I want you to notice that he understands that God’s blessings are not an end to themselves. There is a high and holy cause for God to bless us. Actually there are two. Look at verse 3 “Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the people praise You”. The first cause for the Great Commission is **the glory of God**. That God’s name would be praised throughout the entire earth. Oh, friends, do you realize how few of the peoples in this world, the nations in this world, praise the God that made them and the Christ that died for them?

Let me share a few numbers with you for a moment. According to researchers used by our International Mission Board there are 11,342 people groups in the world that are identifiable by race or language or culture or some combination of the three. And of these 11,342 people groups, about 6400 of them are less than 2% evangelical Christian. That’s 57% of the people groups of the world that have less than 2 out of every 100 people that are Christians. And that’s about 4,200,000,000 people living in a world of darkness all around. But not only that, for 3133 of these groups, no one is even trying to reach them. That amounts to 827,000,000 people, over 4/5ths of a billion people. Just out there, with no missionary there to even attempt to tell them about Jesus.

And researchers say that there are 580 out of those 6400 people groups with no known evangelical Christians at all. In all, out of 7,000,000,000 who now live on the earth, only about 320 million live in countries with more than 10% evangelical

Christians. Beloved, practically the entire world gives no glory to the one, true, God, but is giving glory to prince of this world, the devil. And for the glory of our great God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we are commanded to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

But there is another cause for the Great Commission. Not only for the **glory of God**, but also for the **gladness of man**. Look at Psalm 67:4. Beloved, the nations will be glad first of all when they receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. For you see, all of these people who are not giving glory to God are also dying and going to an eternal hell, where they will burn forever and forever. And knowing that Jesus died for them and will save them and then receiving Him as their Savior will bring the same gladness to their souls that it brought to your soul and my soul the day we trusted Christ as our Savior and Lord. And then the psalmist says their gladness will increase as God judges and rules the world in righteousness.

So the great **causes** for telling the world about Jesus are the **glory of God** and the **gladness of man**, the salvation of souls. God says in 2 Peter 3:9 that He is not willing that any should perish, but He also says in Romans 10:14, “How can they call upon Him in whom they have not believed, and how can they hear without a preacher?”

But I want us also to see today the **content** of the Great Commission. Jesus said first of all, “Go and make disciples of all the nations”. Now, I want us to travel back in time to that gathering of believers that heard Jesus make this statement. Scholars say that this could be the time that Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 15 where Jesus spoke to over 500 people after His resurrection. Perhaps and perhaps not, but let’s just say for a moment that it was this occasion. And if it was, then it is more than likely that in that group were the 120 that gathered together on the Day of Pentecost. That was the total number of believers at that time in that area. Now, can you imagine what they must have been thinking? “Surely”, they must have thought, “He can’t mean for us to go to all the nations. Come on, Jesus, do the math! There no way we could ever do that”. But that’s what He told them to do. Now, maybe they all couldn’t go, but some could go. And maybe they couldn’t personally go to all the nations, but some of those that they won could also go, until every nation was reached with the gospel.

But how well did they do with Jesus command? Well, tradition says that Philip went to Asia Minor preaching the gospel, Thomas to the East Indies, Simon the Zealot went to the British Isles. Andrew – Greece. Bartholomew, Armenia. Thaddaeus – Turkey. Some of the original 11 stayed around Jerusalem, such as James. But there were also laymen who went out with the gospel, as Philip, who went to Samaria. But here’s the point. That little congregation of about 120, not even as many as we have at Grant’s Creek – that little band of believers took Jesus seriously, and at least six of them became foreign missionaries and one a home

missionary. Beloved, the Great Commission is great because of the **magnitude** of it. It encompasses the entire world.

But notice the **message** of the Great Commission. **Make disciples.** Make followers of Jesus. Lead them to faith in Christ. Then **baptize** them. Water baptism, yes. But much more. To integrate them into the life of the church. Tony Evans: Those who just come to church on Sunday mornings and sit and soak and scoot are not obeying God in the matter of being a disciple of Jesus. There is no accountability, no one there to encourage them to grow in their faith. And I would add, they are also not involved in encouraging anyone else when they are not involved in the full life and ministry of the church. So we are to lead those we win to Christ to become active servants of Christ in His church.

And then we **teach them to observe all things.**

The **cause** – the glory of God and the gladness of man

The **content** – go into all the world and make disciples

The **confidence** – “All authority is given unto Me”. Jesus would never set us up to fail. We can have confidence as we go because of His authority in six distinct areas:

1. To anoint the gospel as we share it. 1 Corinthians 2:4
2. To open the ears of the listeners. Acts 16:14
3. To provide all necessary resources. 2 Corinthians 9:8
4. To thwart all Satanic opposition. Acts 13:6-12
5. To enable us to bare much fruit. John 15:5
6. To ensure that our fruit remains. John 15:16

The **comfort** of the Great Commission. – “...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age”.