

Church 101

Lesson 2 The Great Commission

PART I EXPLANATION

Introduction: The church as an organization has been given a commission directly by Christ. Each individual church is to be a colony of heaven, made up of citizens of the kingdom of heaven and in subjection to the laws and leadership of that kingdom. They are to be His representatives upon this earth by actively expanding the kingdom of heaven by fulfilling their commission. This is the function of the church. This is how it operates. The purpose of the church is to bring glory to God through Christ, but its function is to **spread the gospel, baptize, and make disciples.**

For example, a business has the purpose of making money. That is why it exists. However, the way in which they operate to make money, depends upon the particular market they are involved in. Just as a business must clearly define its primary function and how they are to operate; so is it necessary for the church to understand clearly how it is to operate on a daily basis. The market that the church is to be engaged in is the salvation of the souls of men. Clearly identifying this prevents the church from becoming confused as to what their primary focus should be upon.

If a church is not fulfilling its commission, it is dysfunctional, i.e. it is not operating properly. If a business that is in the market of making widgets doesn't produce or sell any, there is a major problem with the business. If something doesn't change, the business will soon be bankrupt and cease operations. The same is true of a church. If a church loses sight of its function of preaching and making disciples, eventually it will fall away and diminish.

A church that ceases to be evangelistic soon turns cannibalistic. When a church doesn't focus its attention beyond its four walls, it commonly starts criticizing other churches or even its own members to feel more spiritual. By putting others down it serves to exalt its perspective of self. When our attention is properly focused upon making disciples, it keeps the members from becoming too focused upon what others are doing and prevents discord in the church.

The church has received a commission from Christ to spread the gospel throughout the world. Contained in that commission is the necessary authority to carry on the work it has been given. The primary purpose of a commission is to give the specific task to be accomplished along with the authority to carry it out. In the military, only commissioned officers have authority to command and carry out the mission. No other individual is allowed to take command of the mission regardless of ability or experience.

There is much difference of opinion as to who this authority was truly given to. Did Christ give His authority to the apostles? To individual Christians? To ministers? Or to His church? Who exactly is it that has the authority to carry out this commission?

This authority could not merely have been given to the apostles, because they are all dead and the apostolic office was restricted to twelve men who met certain qualifications. If the authority were given solely to them, the authority would have ceased to continue beyond the first century. The authority could not be given solely to individual Christians or ministers because the individual who baptized you could later prove to be a false prophet. Certainly Christ did not give His authority to false prophets. No individual possesses the authority to carry out the Great Commission apart from a church.

The authority to preach and baptize is given to the local church. The assembled church is granted authority from Christ to baptize its converts in the name (or authority) of the Father, Son,

and Holy Ghost. Though this is usually performed by ministers of the gospel, it is not necessary as the church can authorize any of its members to baptize converts.

Likewise, when fulfilling its Commission in regions beyond, the church can authorize evangelists or missionaries to preach, baptize, and organize new churches. These churches are to be self governing, with authority from Christ to baptize their converts, and are expected to carry on the Great Commission themselves. This is God's plan for spreading the gospel throughout the world.

Definitions: *For English use the Webster's 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong's Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong's number is in parenthesis.*

English: **Commission** -

Greek: (1849) **exousia** *ex-oo-see'-ah* -

Quotation: "We ought to regard the Christian church, not as a luxurious hostelry where Christian gentlemen may each one dwell at his ease in his own inn, but as barracks in which soldiers are drilled and trained for war. We should regard the Christian church, not as an association for mutual admiration and comfort, but as an army with banners, marching to the fray to achieve victories for Christ, to storm the strongholds of the foe, and to add province after province to the Redeemer's kingdom." Spurgeon

"And so here, not encouragement, but obligation is the inference that is drawn from that tremendous claim. (i.e. all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth) Because I have all power, therefore you are charged with the duty of winning the world for its King... a non-missionary church never has much of Christ's presence." Alexander Maclaren

"Our admission into the visible church is in order to something further; when Christ hath *disciplined* us, he hath not *done with us*; he *enlist* soldiers that he may *train them* up for his service." Matthew Henry

Confessions (Look up and read these articles)

New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith of 1833

Article XIV Baptism And The Lord's Supper

London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

Chapter 28 Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper - paragraph 1

PART II EXPLORATION

Key Questions (*Answer in writing*)

1. Who is the Great Commission given to? Explain.

2. What is the significance of the word 'power' in Mt. 28:18?
3. Why did Christ not give His commission only to the apostles?
4. Why do we know the commission was not given to individuals or ministers?
5. What three things are we to 'Go' do to fulfill our commission?
6. In Matthew 28:20 what promise are given if we attempt our commission?
7. What happens to a church that ceases to be 'evangelistic'?
8. Where does the London Confession say the ordinances are to be continued?
9. Why is it necessary to establish who the Great Commission was given to?
10. Who does the local church authorize to carry out the commission in the regions beyond?

Key Scriptures: *(summarize what each verse teaches in your own words)*

Mt. 28:18-20 We are commissioned to go and _____ all nations the gospel and to baptize them in the _____ of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, _____ them to _____ and not just know the commandments of Christ.

Mk. 16:15 We are to preach the gospel to _____ not just who we want to preach it to.

Luke 24:46-47 We are commissioned to preach _____ and remission of sins in His _____ among all _____, _____ at Jerusalem.

John 20:21-23 We are commissioned the same as the Father _____ Christ.

Acts 1:8 We are empowered to be witnesses by the _____.

Key Chapter(s) *(Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter):*

Acts 8

PART III EXPECTATION

Memory verse: Mt. 28:19-20

Personal Definition: (*Write a definition in your own words*)

Commission -

Personal Confession: (*Study the confessions and write your confession in your own words*)

Authority to perform the ordinances -

Meditation question: (*be prepared for discussion*)

If the authority of the commission was given to the first church, does there need to be a chain link succession from your church back to the apostles?

How do you determine who has the proper authority to fulfill the commission?

Extra Credit: Make a list of five people in your sphere of influence, pray each day this week for them, and ask them about the possibility of explaining the gospel to them in a Bible study.