

## *Matthew 28.16-20 – The Great Commission*

Notes from some commentaries:

1. W F Albright & Mann – Anchor Bible
2. Francis Wright Beare
3. Craig Blomberg – New American Commentary
4. Don Carson – Expositors' Bible Commentary
5. W D Davies & Allison – ICC vol III
6. David Dickson (17<sup>th</sup> C)
7. R T France – Tyndale NT Commentary
8. R H Gundry
9. Donald Hagner – Word Bible Commentary
10. Matthew Henry (18<sup>th</sup> C)
11. Craig Keener
12. R H C Lenski
13. Leon Morris – IVP Pillar
14. Thomas Oden, ed., Ancient Christian Commentary
15. Matthew Poole (17<sup>th</sup> C – though not Poole himself)
16. Eduard Schweizer – *The Good News according to Matthew*
17. Michael Wilkins – NIV Application Commentary
18. N T Wright – *Matthew for Everyone*
19. Terence Donaldson – *Jesus on the Mountain* - separate notes at <http://davidpfield.com/other/Jesus-on-the-Mountain.pdf>

Matt 28:16 (ASV) But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped [him]; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: 20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Matt 28:16 (GNT) Οἱ δὲ ἑνδεκα μαθηταὶ ἐπορεύθησαν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν εἰς τὸ ὄρος οὗ ἐτάξατο αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, 17 καὶ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν προσεκύνησαν, οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν. 18 καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ [τῆς] γῆς. 19 πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, 20 διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν· καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.

Matt 28:16 (NIV) Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

## OVERVIEW / STRUCTURE

NTW – “they gather up the whole gospel”

Michel: q by Wilkins – “Matt 28.18-20 is the key to the understanding of the whole book.”

Hagner: ‘final majestic pericope ... here we find especially Christology and discipleship but also ecclesiology ... and righteousness’

Gundry: ‘a compendium of important Matthean themes: Jesus as the greater Moses, the deity of Jesus, the authority of his commands, the trinitarian associations of baptism, the dangers of doubt among disciples, the teaching ministry of disciples, discipleship as keeping Jesus’ law, the presence of Jesus with his disciples, and the directing of Christian hope to the consummation. Paramount among these themes, however, is the mission to all the nations.’

Schweizer: ‘proclaiming the reign and institutionalizing it’

Schweizer: ‘The present form of the account yields a rational sequence of narrative, statement of authority, command, and motivation for the command, similar to that found in the so-called messenger formula of 2 Chronicles 36.23’

Keener: fn339: ‘Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:24 find an echo of 2 Chron 36.23, which closes the Hebrew Bible, just as Matthew 1.1 echoes Genesis; ... the connection is at best hypothetical’.

Gundry: ‘2 Chr 36:22-23 offers comparisons with Matt 28:18-20’ G not convinced – order different (commission/assurance); content – who speaking; Cyrus commanded cp Jesus commands; go J build temple cp go nations disciple them.

Schweizer: ‘The promise stated at the outset has been fulfilled; Immanuel (“God with us”; 1.23) is present, and the promise made to Abraham for his offspring (1.1ff) has become true in Immanuel; he has become a blessing for all peoples (Gen 12.3).’

Hagner: ‘The commission proper ... is thus preceded by the assertion of Jesus’ authority ... and followed by the promise of his presence.’

A T Robertson: q by Wilkins – “It is the sublimest of all spectacles to see the Risen Christ without money or army or state charging this band of five hundred men and women with world conquest and bringing them to believe it possible and to undertake it with serious passion and power. Pentecost is still to come, but dynamic faith rules on this mountain in Galilee.”

Hagner:

- enthronement hymn (presentation, proclamation, acclamation)
- theophany
- farewell speech
- priestly blessing
- covenant renewal
- official decree
- commissioning narrative.

‘The text is sui generis in the same way that the event is sui generis’

Hagner: ‘As on the mount of the transfiguration (17:1-8), the veil is taken away – but now permanently.’

Henry: Christ now delivered to his apostles the great charter of his kingdom in the world, was sending them out as his ambassadors, and here gives them their credentials.

Blomberg: ‘This short account contains the culmination and combination of all of M’s central themes: (1) the move from particularism to universalism in the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom; (2) discipleship and the establishment of the church; (3) Jesus’ commands as ultimately incumbent on Christians; and (4) the abiding presence of Jesus as teacher, as divine Son of God, and the risen and sovereign Lord of the universe.’

Davies/Allison:

- Michel – enthronement – receives a) authority b) lordship c) universal recognition

- summarize Malina in rel 2 Chr and Gen 45.9-11 – royal decree
  - o message formula
  - o narration
  - o command or summons
  - o motivation
- covenant – preamble; prehistory/conferral of power; statement of relation or obligation; specific commands; blessing
- Hubbard – commissioning
  - o intro
  - o confrontation
  - o reaction
  - o commission
  - o protest (absent here)
  - o reassurance
  - o conclusion

Davies / Allison: ‘looks back to summarize Jesus’ ministry as a whole .... and looks forward to the time of the church ...’

Davies / Allison: ‘If Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.290, could affirm that Deuteronomy’s conclusion ‘stands to the whole law-book as the head to the living creature’, this is equally true of 28.16-20.’

Davies / Allison: rel to end Moses and hand over to Joshua – go, command, all, with

- observance of all God commanded
- end on mountain
- Josh 1.2/9 go
- Josh 1.7 – observe/do
- Josh 1.9 – God’s presence

So ‘Mt 28.16-20, like 1 Chr 22.1-16 and Jer.1.1-10, deliberately borrows from the traditions about Moses. Readers are to exercise their scripturally informed imaginations and set the end of Jesus beside the end of Moses. Just as Moses, at the close of his life, commissioned Joshua both to go into the land peopled by foreign nations and to observe all the commandments in the law, and then further promised his successor God’s abiding presence, so similarly Jesus: at the end of his earthly ministry he told his disciples to go into all the world and to teach the observance of all the commandments of the new Moses, and then further promised his abiding presence.’

Davies/Allison: ‘Beside the commissioning narratives associated with Moses and Joshua, the closest parallel to 28.16-20 we know of appears in Livy 1.16, the account of Romulus’ ascension: ‘Romulus Quirinus, the father of this city, at the first light of day, descended from the sky and clearly showed himself to me. While I was awed with holy fright, I stood reverently before him, asking in prayer that I might look at him without sin. “Go”, he said, “announce to the Romans that heaven wishes that my Rome shall be the capital of the earth; therefore, they shall cultivate the military; they shall know and teach their descendants that no human might can resist Roman arms.”’

Davies/Allison: ‘almost a compendium of Matthean theology’

Davies/Allison: ‘28.16-20 expresses the meaning of Jesus’ resurrection for Matthew. The resurrection is the exaltation of Jesus as Lord of all so that his cause is now universal .... The resurrection is the end of an old time and the beginning of a new time .... The resurrection is the vindication of the earthly Jesus ... The resurrection is the act by which Jesus becomes the ever-present help of his followers.’

Davies/ Allison: ‘28.16-20 offers a christological concentration. V.19 calls Jesus ‘the Son’. The allusion to Dan 7.13-14 confirms Jesus’ status as ‘Son of man’. The statement of exaltation and authority suggests the title ‘Lord’. ‘All that I have commanded you’ present Jesus as teacher. The mission to ‘all the nations’ reminds that Jesus is the Son of Abraham (1.1). And in v.20 Jesus is ‘Emmanuel’, God with us (1.23).’

Davies/Allison: ‘The climax and crown of Matthew’s Gospel is profoundly apt in that it invites the reader to enter the story: 28.16-20 is an open-ended ending.’

## WORDS / PHRASES

### *but*

Morris: 'the adversative *But* sets the disciples over against the Jews and the intrigues about the guard over the tomb'. (also Gundry)

### *the eleven disciples*

Wilkins: "the designation "eleven" has poignant significance" – doesn't include Judas (warning); does include Peter (encouragement)

*More than the 11 there?*

Lenski – yes – relates back to v.7; 'a most notable occasion ... announced in advance no less than three times ... and devoted to the giving of the Great Commission'.

Wilkins: small gp see him in Jer-m; broader in Galilee. Note use of "brothers" in v.10

France: idea that more than 11 is driven by desire not to have "doubting" amongst the 11

Hagner: 'the decision about the sense of the construction in 28:17 [but they/some] is usually influenced by the problem posed by the idea of all eleven 'doubting''

Blomberg – *hoi de* does suggest some change of subject. But no reason to believe more than 11 there.

### *went into Galilee*

France: 'the wider mission is launched where the original mission began'. (Hagner same)

Henry: 'a long journey to go for one sight of Christ, but it was worth while.'

### *to the mountain*

Hagner: 'traditionally the mountain has been identified with Tabor, the mount of transfiguration.'

Lenski: 'On mountain heights heaven and earth, as it were, meet, and here the glorified Savior spoke of his power in heaven and on earth. With the vast expanse of the sky above him and the great panorama of the earth spread beneath him, Jesus stands in his exaltation and his glory – a striking vision indeed.'

Blomberg: ' "the mountain" as a place of revelation and communion with God' 4.8 14.23 15.29 17.1 24.3 26.30

Gundry: 'εἰς τὸ ὄρος repeats what Matthew inserted at the start of the Sermon on the Mount (5.1). "Where Jesus appointed them" implies Jesus' authority,' (go where he tells you)

### *where he had commanded them / to which he had directed them*

Henry: 'Those who would maintain communion with Christ, must attend him there where he has appointed.'

Davies / Allison: *τασσω* may here mean 'give commands' ... and *οὗ* may bear the sense it does in 2.9 and 18.20, namely, 'where', so that we might translate: 'where Jesus gave them commands' – a plain reference, and one necessarily redactional, to the mountain of 5.1.'

***and when they saw him***

France: perhaps they saw him at a distance first – as in Jn 21

***they worshipped [him]***

Worship – 8.2 9.18 14.33 15.25 20.20 28.9

NTW – yes, it means ‘prostrate’ but given the connection b/w 1.23 and 28.20, here it has its full force of ‘worship’

Hagner / Davies-Allison go with mss which include “him” though UBS/NA exclude it.

***but some doubted / hesitated.***

France: ‘a state of uncertainty and hesitation’

Calvin – q by Davies/Allison – “the sense is that some hesitated at first until Christ approached them nearer and more intimately.”

*Who is doubting and what is the doubt?*

- a) the 11 worship and others doubt
- b) the 11 worship and they also hesitate
- c) some of the 11 worship and some of them doubt/hesitate
- d) if doubt, then what?
  - i. that it was Jesus
  - ii. whether Jesus will forgive them
  - iii. whether they should worship

DF – it was just the eleven; when they saw him some of them worshipped but some of them hesitated, not sure that it really was him.

***And Jesus came towards them and addressed them*** (NTW), *saying*

Henry: Though there were those that doubted, yet, he did not therefore reject them; for he will not *break the bruised reed*. He did not stand at a distance, but *came near*, and gave them such convincing proofs of his resurrection, as turned the wavering scale, and made their faith to triumph over their doubts.

Schweizer: ‘The Matthaean idiom ‘draw near’ has connotations of Jesus’ coming to the aid of those who doubt.’

France: ‘In response to their ‘hesitation’ Jesus came and spoke to them in reassurance (just as he did in 17.7, the only other place where M uses the verb ‘come’ of Jesus).’ Beare – 52x in total

Hagner: ‘Jesus’ words will accomplish what the sight of the risen Jesus alone could not.’

Garland (q by Hagner): “Matthew understands that the fluctuation between worship and indecision is every disciple’s struggle. What is needed is confidence that Jesus is Lord of all and present with them at all times.”

Gundry: ‘... neither the appearance of Jesus removes doubt - on the contrary, it occasions doubt ... Rather, it is Jesus’ word that quiets all doubt even though that word does not take up the question of doubt. We could hardly ask for better evidence of the authority of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew’s theology.’

*Who addressed here – apostles / leaders / all disciples*

- see France on v.20
- Carson: ‘given ... to the Eleven in their own role as disciples (v.16). Therefore they are paradigms for all disciples .... it is binding on *all* Jesus’ disciples to make others what they themselves are – disciples of Jesus Christ.’

## All authority

Lenski: 'denotes active power, the full ability to do as one wills'.

NTW – contrast satan's offer in 4.8-10

NTW: 'it is basic to the most elementary NT faith that Jesus is *already* ruling the whole world'.

Matthew Poole: 'This was inherent in him as God blessed for ever, given to him as our Mediator and Redeemer, given him when he came into the world, but more especially confirmed to him and manifested to be given him at his resurrection and ascension, Phil 2.9-10. Having declared his power, he delegates it ...'

David Dickson: 'Christ not only as the Son of God, hath joynt, equal and the same Sovereignty in Heaven and Earth with the Father, communicate unto him by eternal Generation, but also as God Incarnate, God-man, he hath supreme and absolute Authority given unto him over all things in Heaven and Earth, to and for the church, all things, for the good thereof, being put under his Feet, without exception of any thing, save of him who hath put all things under his Feet: and he hath supreme, sole, and absolute Authority, as onely Head and King of the Church, to appoint and maintain the way and means of gathering, preserving and ruling his church, and all the affairs thereof unto the end of the World ...'

France: 'the words were based on Daniel 7.14, the passage which Jesus has quoted in 26.64 as 'about to be fulfilled 'from now on'; then it was still future – now it has happened. ... The 'ingressive aorist' (*has been given*) thus indicates 'that prophecy that the Son of Man would be enthroned as ruler of the world was fulfilled in the resurrection' (Jeremias *NTT*, p.310). Of course, Jesus already had *authority* during his earthly ministry (see, e.g., 7:29; 9:6, 8; 11:27; 21:23ff.). But now he has *all* authority ... In 4:8-9 Satan offered him '*all* the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them'; now, by the way of suffering obedience, he has received far more than Satan could offer, all authority *in heaven and on earth*.

Henry: 'Hereby he asserts his universal dominion as Mediator, which is the great foundation of the Christian religion. He has *all power*. Observe, (1.) *Whence* he hath this power. He did not assume it, or usurp it, but it was *given* him, he was legally entitled to it, and invested in it, by a grant from him who is the Fountain of all being, and consequently of all power. God *set him King* (Ps. ii. 6), inaugurated and enthroned him, Luke i. 32. As God, equal with the Father, all power was originally and essentially *his*; but as Mediator, as God-man, *all power* was *given him*; partly in *recompence* of his work (because he humbled himself, therefore God thus *exalted him*), and partly in *pursuance* of his design; he had this *power* given him *over all flesh*, that he might *give eternal life to as many as were given him* (John xvii. 2), for the more effectual carrying on and completing our salvation. This power he was now more signally invested in, upon his resurrection, Acts xiii. 3. He had power before, *power to forgive sins* (ch. ix. 6); but now *all power* is given him. He is now going to *receive for himself a kingdom* (Luke xix. 12), to sit down at *the right hand*, Ps. cx. 1. Having purchased it, nothing remains but to take possession; it is *his own* for ever. (2.) *Where* he has this power; in *heaven and earth*, comprehending the universe. Christ is the sole universal Monarch, he is *Lord of all*, Acts x. 36. He has *all power in heaven*. He has power of dominion over the angels, they are all his humble servants, Eph. i. 20, 21. He has power of intercession with his Father, in the virtue of his satisfaction and atonement; he intercedes, not as a suppliant, but as a demandant; *Father, I will*. He has *all power on earth* too; having prevailed with God, by the sacrifice of atonement, he prevails with men, and deals with them as one having authority, by the ministry of reconciliation. He is indeed, in all causes and over all persons, supreme Moderator and Governor. *By him kings reign*. All souls are his, and to him *every heart and knee must bow*, and *every tongue confess* him to be the *Lord*.'

Gundry: authority before resurrection – 7.29, 9.8, 11.27, 21.23

Davies / Allison: 'the sense corresponds not to the Latin *omnipotens* (the ability to do all things) but the Greek παντοκρατωρ: Jesus is the ruler of all.'

Davies/Allison: 'allusion to LXX Dan 7.13-14. The two texts (i) contain common vocabulary [given, authority, all the nations] ... (ii) share the same word order [given + dative pronoun + authority] ... (iv) repeat the word πας (Daniel 2; Matthew 4), (v) concern 'the transfer of power' (Schaberg) ... (vi) recount an event of consequence for all the nations and (vii) depict the worship or service of the central figure.'

### *in heaven and on earth*

Schweizer: ‘“Heaven and earth” is the all-inclusive formula of the Old Testament; it also appears in Matthew 6.10’

Hagner: 9.6 – has authority on earth; 11.27 – all things revealed. ‘The authority of the risen one is not categorically new but now depends upon a new basis – the arrival at a new stage of salvation history.’

Beare: ‘No king of Israel ever claimed, no future ‘Messiah’ was ever promised, any kind of authority in heaven. Jesus now proclaims that sovereignty over the entire universe has been committed to him ...’

Carson: ‘It is not Jesus’ authority per se that becomes more absolute. Rather, the spheres in which he now exercises absolute authority are enlarged to include all heaven and earth, i.e., the universe.’

Carson: ‘Messiah’s “kingdom” (i.e., his “king-dominion.” the exercise of his divine and saving authority...)’

### *has been given to me.*

Hagner: ‘the passive verb assumes God as the acting subject’

‘It was not a strange world into which Christ sent his servants, but into the world the Father had laid at his feet.’  
Besser (q. Lenski)

NTW: ‘People get very puzzled by the claim that Jesus is already ruling the world, until they see what is in fact being said. The claim is not that the world is already completely as Jesus intends it to be. The claim is that he is working to take it from where it was – under the rule not only of death but of corruption, greed and every kind of wickedness – and to bring it, by slow means and quick, under the rule of his life-giving love. And how is he doing this? Here is the shock: *through us, his followers*. The project only goes forward insofar as Jesus’ agents, the people he has commissioned, are taking it forward. (M for Everyone)

### *Therefore, go*

Carson: Two aspects to the “therefore”: ‘Because he *now* has this authority, *therefore* his disciples are to go and make disciples – i.e. – the dawning of the new age of messianic authority changes the circumstances and impels his disciples forward to a universal ministry .... his promotion to universal authority serves as an eschatological marker inaugurating the beginning of his universal mission.’ and ‘Because of that authority, his followers may go in confidence that their Lord is in sovereign control ...’

Hagner: ‘This is to provide them in turn with authority and supply them with confidence as they go.’

Hagner: ‘... the commission proper consists syntactically of the main verb μαθητεύσατε, ‘make disciples,’ with three parallel subordinate participles: πορευθέντες ... βαπτίζοντες ... διδάσκοντες. The participles when linked with the imperative verb themselves take on imperatival force and function as imperatives.’

Lenski: ‘[go] is something new. Hitherto men were welcomed when *they* came to Israel, God’s people; now the people of God are to go to men everywhere ... what going there has been since Jesus spoke this word! Who will count the miles travelled by the messengers of Jesus?’

But – Pharisees went out on mission, remember.

Morris: contrast with 10.5 – ‘do not go’ i.e. the ‘go’ is about the *who* of mission more than the *how*

Wilkins: “participles attendant to an imperative accrue imperatival force” – see Wallace, 640-45, Carson, Hagner

Keener: 3 participles – go is aorist (is part of make disciples); baptize and teach are present – explain how make disciples. ‘going’ as participle but co-ordinate with main verb – 2.8 11.4 17.27 28.7

## *make disciples*

Lenski: 'it connotes results not methods and ways'.

Wilkins: "disciples" not a special group of Christians. All Christians are disciples – just whether they're obedient and growing or not.

Verb – 13.53, 27.57, Acts 14.21. Is learner or pupil

Gundry: 'the use of μαθητεύσατε, "make disciples [i.e., learners]," puts evangelism in terms of learning the law of Jesus.'

Hagner: 'to be made a disciple in M means above all to follow after righteousness as articulated in the teaching of Jesus.'

Henry: [1.] How far his commission is extended; to *all nations*. Go, and disciples *all nations*. Not that they must go all together into every place, but by consent disperse themselves in such manner as might best *diffuse* the light of the gospel. Now this plainly signifies it to be the will of Christ, *First*, That the covenant of peculiarity, made with the Jews, should now be cancelled and disannulled. This word broke down the middle wall of partition, which had so long excluded the Gentiles from a visible church-state; and whereas the apostles, when first sent out, were forbidden to go into the way of the Gentiles, now they were sent to *all nations*. *Secondly*, That salvation by Christ should be offered to all, and none excluded that did not by their unbelief and impenitence exclude themselves. The salvation they were to preach is a *common salvation*; whoever will, let him come, and take the benefit of the *act of indemnity*; for there is no difference of Jew or Greek in Christ Jesus. *Thirdly*, That Christianity should be twisted in with national constitutions, that the kingdoms of the world should become Christ's kingdoms, and their kings the church's nursing-fathers. [2.] What is the principal intention of this commission; to *disciple* all nations. Μαθητεύσατε — "*Admit them disciples*; do your utmost to make the nations Christian nations;" not, "Go to the nations, and denounce the judgments of God against them, as Jonah against Nineveh, and as the other Old-Testament prophets" (though they had reason enough to expect it for their wickedness), "but go, and *disciple them*." Christ the Mediator is setting up a kingdom in the world, bring the nations to be his subjects; setting up a school, bring the nations to be his scholars; raising an army for the carrying on of the war against the powers of darkness, enlist the nations of the earth under his banner. The work which the apostles had to do, was, to set up the Christian religion in all places, and it was honourable work; the achievements of the mighty heroes of the world were nothing to it. They conquered the nations for themselves, and made them miserable; the apostles conquered them for Christ, and made them happy.

Keener: // commission to that given to Adam and Noah – subdue the earth. esp Gen 9.2 – all into your hands

## *of all nations*

France: 'Jesus' universal Lordship now demands a universal mission.'

Lenski: 'here we have the fulfillment of all the Messianic promises concerning the coming kingdom'.

Lenski: 'Minor children are such a large part of every nation that the Lord who loved children, would certainly act in a surprising manner if he intended to leave them out of his discipleship.'

NTW: 'so you must go and make all the nation into disciples'

Universality theme – 1.1; 1.3-5; 2.1-12; 3.9; 4.15ff; 8:5ff; 8.28; 10.18; 11.21-22; 12.21; 12.41-42; 13.38; 15.21-28; 16.13; 21.28-32, 41-43 22.8-10; 24.14; 24.31 25.31-32; 26.13; 27.54

Luke // - "repentance and forgiveness of sins ... be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (24.47)

Hagner: 'the reference to 'all nations' here, of course, cannot be understood as the collective conversion of national groups (in which case αὐτά, the neuter plural pronoun, would be expected rather than αὐτούς, "them" [masculine] as in our text.'

Blomberg: ‘“Them” (*autous*) shifts to the masculine pronoun from the neuter *peoples* (*ethnē*) and therefore implies a shift from groups to individuals (as in 25:32).’

Carson: ‘Matthew’s Gospel is now, in its final verses, returning to the theme introduced in the very first verse ... that the blessings promised to Abraham and through him to all peoples on earth (Gen 12:3) are not to be fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah. And when that promise is reiterated in Genesis 18:18; 22:18, the LXX uses the same words found here: *panta ta ethnē*.’

Carson (and others): there wasn’t a problem in the early church about the gentile mission as such. The problems were about what was to be required of Gentile converts.

Keener: ‘But ancient hearers would, and modern hearers should, recognize a drastic innovation in a command to disciple ‘nations’. To be sure, the discipling of nations is carried out through baptizing and teaching individuals in those nations; although exceptions to grammatical consistency in antiquity abound, it is probably significant that the object “them” attaching to baptizing and teaching (28:19-20) is masculine (*autous*) rather than neuter (*auta*), although “nations” (*ta ethnē*) is neuter. Nevertheless, the stark command to disciple “nations” implies more than producing disciples for any ancient teacher would, and in contrast to other disciplers Jesus’ followers would not disciple others to themselves (23:8).’

‘All nations’ means “all gentiles” and excludes Jews or means “all nations including Jews”?

Doh! See 24.9, 14; 25.32

### ***baptizing them***

NTW: ‘the public, physical, and visible way in which someone is marked out, branded almost, with the holy ‘name’.’

Matthew Poole: ‘But it doth not therefore follow, that children of such professors are not to be baptized, for the apostles were commanded to baptize *all nations*: children are a great part of any nation.’

Henry: ‘Our *consent* to a covenant-relation to God, *the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*. Baptism is a *sacrament*, that is, it is an *oath*; *super sacramentum dicere*, is to *say upon oath*. It is an oath of *abjuration*, by which we renounce the world and the flesh, as rivals with God for the throne in our hearts; and an oath of *allegiance*, by which we resign and give up *ourselves* to God, to be *his*, our own selves, our whole selves, *body, soul, and spirit*, to be governed by his will, and made happy in his favour; *we become his men*, so the form of homage in our law runs. Therefore *baptism* is applied to *the person*, as *livery* and *seisin* is given of the premises, because it is the person that is *dedicated* to God.’

Carson: ‘baptizing and teaching are not the *means* of making disciples, but they characterize it.’

### ***in / into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit***

Davies / Allison: ‘‘Into the name’ probably means either ‘in order that they may belong to’ ... or ‘in order that they may enter into a relationship with’ ...’

Lenski: ‘‘It does not mean, ‘on the authority of.’ If that were its meaning in this instance, we might well ask, ‘Why does Jesus not say on my authority?’’’

Albright/Mann: not a ‘liturgical formula’ but ‘a description of what baptism accomplished’

NTW: ‘name’ cf chap 1

Carson: ‘suggests a coming-into-relationship-with or a coming-under-the Lordship-of’

France: ‘entrance into an allegiance’

Hagner: ‘brings a person into an existence that is fundamentally determined by, i.e., ruled by, F, S, and HS.’

Hagner: ‘As Carson rightly notes of our passage: “There is no evidence we have Jesus’ *ipsissima verba* here.”’

NTW: 'Matthew innocently places this formula on Jesus' lips, unaware that in centuries to come it would become well-known as a brilliant piece of dogmatic theology. He is, at this point, rather like someone innocently whistling a snatch of tune that a great composer will later make the centrepiece of a wonderful oratorio.'

Henry: 'It is into the name of *the Father*, ... as our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, to whom therefore we resign ourselves, as our absolute *owner* and *proprietor*, to actuate us, and dispose of us; as our supreme *rector* and *governor*, to rule us, as free agents, by his law; and as our *chief good*, and *highest* end. It is into the name of *the Son*, ... We take Christ to be our Prophet, Priest, and King, and give up ourselves to be taught, and saved, and ruled, by him. It is into the name of *the Holy Ghost*. Believing the Godhead of the Holy Spirit, and his agency in carrying on our redemption, we give up ourselves to his conduct and operation, as our sanctifier, teacher, guide, and comforter.'

Blomberg: 'Jesus has already spoken of God as his Father (Matt 11:27; 24:36), of himself as the Son (11:27; 16:27; 24:36), and of blasphemy against God's work in himself as against the Spirit (12:28). Mounce states, "That Jesus should gather together into summary form his own references ... in his final charge to his disciples seems quite natural." On the other hand, it is not inconceivable that Matthew distilled the essence of Jesus' more detailed parting instructions for the Eleven into concise language using the terminology developed later in the early church's baptismal services.'

### ***teaching them to observe / keep all things that I have commanded you.***

Lenski: 'The baptizing will naturally be a single act for each person, for the effect of baptism is durative; it stamps and seals us with the holy name once for all. But the teaching goes on throughout life.'

Hagner: Jesus teaches at 4.23 5.2 7.29 9.35 11.1 13.34 21.23 26.55. 'This command recalls the explicit teaching of 5.19.'

Gundry: teaching contrasts with v.15 false instruction

Gundry: cf OT – Ex 7.2, Deut 1.3, 30.8, Josh 1.7, Jer 1.7

Davies/ Allison: LXX of Ex 7.2, Deut 1.3, Josh 22.2, Judg 13.14, Jer 1.7 (and also Dt 6.1, 30.8, Josh 1.7)

David Dickson: 'The commission of Christ's Ministers doth extend unto the drawing Nations into subjection unto Christ, and into covenant with him, to be his disciples, and to obey all his commandments, only by way of doctrine .... *by Doctrine make all nations Disciples*, this is the force of the word *teach*.'

Davies/Allison: not just one command or SM but everything Jesus says – in fact more – 'The earthly ministry as a whole is an imperative'

How do the all-in-one-go-literalist-baptistic interpreters of Jer 31 deal with this requirement to teach those who have been baptized?

Carson: 'reminiscent of the authority of Yahweh (Exod 29:35; Deut 1:3, 41; 7:11; 12:11, 14)'

Carson: 'Remarkably, Jesus does not foresee a time when any part of his teaching will be rightly judged needless, outmoded, superseded, or untrue: *everything* he has commanded must be passed on "to the very end of the age".'

Carson: 'Matthew's Gospel ends with the expectation of continued mission and teaching. The five preceding sections always conclude with a block of *Jesus'* teaching ... but the passion and resurrection of Jesus end with a commission *to his disciples* to carry on that same ministry ... in the light of the Cross, the empty tomb, and the triumphant vindication and exaltation of the risen Lord.'

### ***And, behold, I will be with you always***

Henry: Not, *I will be* with you, but *I am—ego eimi*. As God sent Moses, so Christ sent his apostles, by this name, *I am*; for he is God, to whom past, present, and to come, are the same.

Morris: n43 'Moule says that the accusative πᾶσας τὰς ἡμέρας "perhaps strictly = *the whole of every day*"

NTW: 'God-with-us' has become 'Jesus-with-us'

Gundry: 'The presence of Jesus "with" his disciples when they go to make disciples, as distinct from his presence "in the midst of" his disciples when they gather together (18:20), recalls similarly expressed promises of protection in the OT (Gen 26:24; 28:15; exod 3:12; Josh 1:5, 9; Judg 6:12, 16; 2 sam 7:3; Isa 41:10; 43:5; Hag 1:13; cf Matt 28:10). In other words, Jesus assures his disciples the way Yahweh assured his people in the OT.'

Wilkins: 'A true Israelite would proclaim only God to be eternal and omnipresent, so here Matthew records a concluding claim by Jesus to his deity.'

France: 'the promise applies to more than just the eleven'

France: 'not so much a cosy reassurance as a necessary equipment for mission.'

Henry: To *succeed* this great undertaking; "Lo, *I am with you*, to make your ministry effectual for the discipling of the nations, for the *pulling down* of the strong holds of Satan, and the setting up of stronger for the Lord Jesus." It was an unlikely thing that they should unhinge national constitutions in religion, and turn the stream of so long a usage; that they should *establish* a doctrine so directly contrary to the genius of the age, and persuade people to become the disciples of a *crucified* Jesus; but *lo, I am with you*, and therefore you shall *gain your point*.

Henry: Wherever we are the word of Christ is nigh us, even *in our mouth*, and the Spirit of Christ nigh us, even *in our hearts*. The *God of Israel*, the *Saviour*, is sometimes a *God that hideth himself* (Isa. xlv. 15), but never a God that absenteth himself; sometimes *in the dark*, but never *at a distance*.

### ***until the end of the age***

Hagner: 'The last phrase, "the consummation of the age" is also found in 13.39-40, 49; 24.3 and for Matthew (contrast Heb 9.26) refers to the end of the present age through the parousia of the Son of Man and the experience of the final judgment of the wicked and reward of the righteous.'

Henry: The Old-Testament promise of a gospel ministry is made to a succession (Isa. lix. 21); and this must be so understood, otherwise how could Christ be with them always to the *consummation of the world*?

Blomberg: 'might be an idiom roughly equivalent to *forever*.'

Carson: 'The period between the commission and the consummation is of indefinite length; but whatever its duration, it is the time of the church's mission ...'

### ***To look at:***

- Karl Barth – Exegetical Study of Matt 28.16-20 in *Theology of the Christian Mission* ed. G H Anderson, 1961, 55-71
- Bauer – *Structure of M's Gospel*
- Calvin
- Paul Clarke dissertation
- D Hill – The Conclusion of M's Gospel – lit crit observations – *IBS* 8 (1986) 54-63
- Luther
- Peter O'Brien – Gt Commission – Missionary mandate? – *Ev Review Theology* 1978, 254-67
- P Perkins – Mt 28.16-20 – resurrection, Ecclesiology, Mission in *SBL 1993 Seminar Papers* 574-88
- D P Scaer – Rel of 28.16-20 to rest gospel – *CTQ* 55 (1991) 245-66
- Dave Walker dissertation
- NTW – *Resurrection of the Son of God*