

# OpenTheo

## Sea of Galilee, The Great Commission (Part 2)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In "Sea of Galilee, The Great Commission (Part 2)", Steve Gregg explores the commissioning of the disciples and the importance of spreading the gospel. He emphasizes the need for Christians to prioritize loving and serving God, rather than judging others for their religious practices. Gregg also discusses the role of baptism in the conversion process and the importance of making disciples throughout one's life. Overall, he stresses the message of submitting to King Jesus and following his teachings until the end of time.

### **Transcript**

And that being so, he knew how Peter had died, and he recognized that what Jesus had said to Peter on this occasion actually came true in Peter's martyrdom. And so he was able, by hindsight, to say that Jesus said this, indicating by what death Peter would die. Now, how did Peter die? The Bible doesn't record it.

However, tradition is fairly strong on this from early sources in the church, that during the persecution of the church under Nero, Peter and others sought to flee from Jerusalem. And according to the tradition, Peter encountered Jesus from Rome. Peter was in Rome and he was fleeing from Rome because of the persecution from Nero.

And he encountered Jesus walking toward Rome. Peter was running from it and Jesus was walking toward it. And according to the tradition, which is written in Latin, Peter said to Jesus, Quo vadis? You've never heard that expression? Quo vadis? It means, where are you going, in Latin.

And he said to Jesus, where are you going? And Jesus said, I'm going back to Rome to be crucified again. And on the basis of that vision or whatever it was that Peter had, he turned and went back into Rome, was arrested and he was sentenced by Nero to be crucified. Peter, because he did not count himself worthy to die in precisely the manner that Jesus had, requested to be crucified upside down, just so that he wouldn't have the honor, which he felt he did not deserve, of dying in precisely the way Jesus did.

So he asked to be crucified upside down. Sounds pretty much like Peter. Lord, not my

feet, also my hands and my head.

The guy's always overdoing it. And he said, no, if you're going to be crucified, please crucify me upside down. According to tradition, he hung upside down for a few days.

And he preached to people who went by. And if I remember from Foxe's Book of Martyrs accurately, I think someone, I'm going to be thinking of someone else. I think someone talked the emperor into cutting him down and letting him down, but he died anyway.

I'm not sure about that last part. But according to the tradition, Peter was crucified and hung upside down by orders of Nero. If that is true, that would explain why Jesus said you will stretch out your hands and another will gird you, which means bind you in a sense.

He says when you were young, you're kind of on your own. You kind of did what you wanted. You were a free man.

You could put on your own clothes and you could walk wherever you wanted to go. If that's the life you want, you can have it, but you can't be a disciple. Because at the end of verse 19, it said, follow me.

You're not going to go where you want. You're going to go where I want you to go. You're going to follow me.

Now, in your old age, you'll find people taking you where you don't want to go. And basically, the life of discipleship is that. You surrender your self-rule.

You don't just get up in the morning and say, what would I like to do today? Where do I want to go today? You wake up and say, this is another day to serve the Lord. He's my master. I'm his slave.

What does he want me to do? What opportunities will he put in my way to serve him? And what does he want for me to do with myself and my life and this day and the hours of this day? That is essentially normal discipleship. And Jesus is saying to Peter, you used to be on your own. Now you're not anymore.

And actually, the time will come when you're carried somewhere you won't want to go at all. And you'll stretch out your hands and be bound or girded by others. And John, in retrospect, recognized that this was the way that Peter, in fact, had died.

And so Jesus had been predicting that. Now, verse 20. Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following.

That is, he looked behind. The impression is, Jesus had been sitting by the fire with Peter, having this conversation. Do you love me? Feed my sheep.

Do you love me? Feed my sheep. Somewhere, unmentioned in the narrative, they got up and they started walking together. Possibly as Jesus was giving these instructions to Peter about, you know, you're going to die this way, more or less.

I mean, we start telling some private stuff about his future. Perhaps Jesus wanted to take him off from the crowd and talk to him privately about this. So they were up and they were walking.

And John was walking behind them, following them. And Peter looked over his shoulder and said, hey, what about him? What about this man, this John? Now, Peter and John, as I said, were close friends. Partners in business and partners in apostleship also.

And Peter had just been told that his future looked a little bleak in some ways. He may not have fully understood the prediction that he was going to be crucified. But however much of it he may have understood, he certainly knew that Jesus was saying, you're not going to be at liberty anymore.

People carry you where you don't want to go. And that didn't sound all that inviting. And he turned around and said, what about this guy? Is he going to have to do that too? Is that going to happen to John also? What's going to happen to him? And Jesus said to him, if I will, that he remain until I come.

What is that to you? You follow me. Now, this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die.

But if I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? This is the disciple who testifies of these things and wrote these things. And we know that his testimony is true. That last line sounds like the testimony of some persons endorsing the gospel, possibly the elders of the Church of Ephesus or somewhere else, whoever was helping in the manufacture of the document.

And there also are many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that could be written. Amen. Now, the reference to John, what will he do? And Jesus said, well, none of your business is what he basically said.

You mind your own business. If I want him to stay around till I come, that's no business of yours. You just follow me like I told you to.

That is a very, very important passage for us to pause and consider for a moment, just the ramifications of it. It is not for us to meddle necessarily about what God has for somebody else to do. It's possible that if we look at our lot in life and the lot of somebody else, we may say, well, God, how come I can't do what he does? How come he doesn't have to suffer like I do? How come that guy doesn't have to work as hard as I do? How come that guy gets to have a prettier wife than I do? How come that guy gets to have

more money than I do? How come that guy gets a bigger congregation than I do? You know, God, doesn't he have to kind of pull his weight too? How come I have to do all this stuff? I have to suffer all these things.

And that guy over there, he'd know better than I am, but he has a better lot in life than I do. And, you know, this is essentially kind of what's behind this. What shall John do? You're talking about me, spread my hands out and people carrying me where I don't want to go.

Well, is John going to have to do that? Is he going to have to face those kinds of... Is he going to have to make the same kind of sacrifices I'm making? And she said, none of your dang business. It's none of your business what John's going to do. He's going to follow me and whatever I want is what's going to happen to him.

You mind your own business. You do what I told you to do. You follow me.

And this is a lesson that Christians often do not learn, unfortunately. I've been told by persons who have come home from the mission fields, from many, that many times missionaries are very territorial, very competitive among themselves. Different missionary boards, you know, want to control the outreach to a certain village, but there's more than one organization trying to get in there.

Different denominations and stuff. And a lot of times missionaries come home not because of the hardships of the mission itself, but because of the problems they have with other missionaries. My father-in-law, having spent time with several missions down in Haiti, noticed that wherever he went, it seemed like the members of one missionary group would sit around and talk about how other missionary groups were not doing the right thing.

They were not doing it right. And the ways that they had done things wrong and so forth. And he was invited to speak at the morning devotions of one of these missionary groups.

And he said, I don't really have much of a message for you. He said, I just have one word for you. Mind your own business.

You do what God told you to do. You follow Jesus, and if somebody else, you don't think they're following him good enough. You don't think that they're doing as much work as you are, doing it the way that you would think they should do it.

What is that to you? Or to put it the way Paul put it, over in Romans 14, in verse 4, Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. Now, what Paul is talking about there is where Christians had different opinions about non-essential issues.

What day of the week do you worship? Is there one day esteemed above another? Or is

every day alike? Do you eat meat sacrificed? Or do you even eat meat at all? Or do you just eat herbs? These are issues that are non-essentials. The day you worship, the things you eat, even out of religious conviction, there's a lot of latitude given to the Christian about extra-biblical religious practices. In my opinion, Christians just don't have any business judging others about whether they go to the same church, same kind of church, go as frequently to church, that's just none of their business.

That's what Paul says. Some people esteem one day above another. Some don't esteem any day better than any other.

Now, if you go to synagogue on Saturday, or you go to church on Sunday, that's esteeming one day better than another. That's fine. No problem.

Paul says, don't judge anyone about that. But he said, don't judge those who don't either. He said, who are you to judge another man's servant? He answers to his own master, not to you.

And that's something Christians often are the first humans on the planet to forget. Religious people tend to be that way, whether they're Christians or not. I mean, other religious people too are that way.

It is a characteristic of religiosity that when people are doing something they'd rather not do for God, they get upset that someone else doesn't have to do that. Same thing for God. Essentially, that's what legalism boils down to.

I had such a hard time quitting smoking, man, I'm not going to tolerate anyone else still smoking. After what I had to go through to quit, you know. My conscience wouldn't let me smoke.

I'm not speaking for myself, I've never smoked a cigarette. But I mean, people who struggle to follow God, because it's maybe not in their heart to do it, they are the most likely to judge others who aren't struggling as hard, who aren't sacrificing as much, who aren't living with as much self-sacrifice or whatever, aren't putting in as much time. That's that spirit of meddlesomeness.

Now, if somebody's walking in sin, there is a place to meddle. The Bible makes it that we're accountable to each other in that respect. If somebody's sinning, there's something to be said for approaching them.

The Bible says you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness. But that's only if you're sinning. If it's a matter of non-essentials, like whether you eat meat or not, whether you esteem one day above another or not, whether you go to a certain kind of meeting or you don't go to certain kinds of meetings, those are not dictated in Scripture.

Therefore, they are nobody's business but your own. Now, it's also not your business to judge anybody else, whether they do the same thing you do or not. That is simply what Paul is saying.

Those kinds of non-essentials are going to be Christians who have different opinions, and who are you to judge? They answer not to you, but to God. But religious people always seem, the more religious they get, the more legalistic they get, the more they are likely to be judging people about non-essential things and making decisions about whether that person's okay or not with God. In 1 Corinthians chapter 4, Paul was being judged by some criteria by the Corinthian church.

And apparently not in a favorable light. Because in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, he said in verse 3, But with me it's a very small thing that I should be judged by you, or by a human court. He doesn't care what man thinks.

He said over in Galatians 1.10, If I were trying to please men, I wouldn't be the servant of Christ. You can't please men and Christ too. You've got to decide whether you're going to do what Jesus says or whether you're going to do what men want you to do so you don't get them unhappy with you, including religious men.

He says, these were Christians who were judging Paul. He said, I don't care what you think. Your judgment of me is of little concern to me.

It's a very light thing, a very small thing, if I'm judged by you, he said, or by any human court. In fact, I don't even judge myself, for I don't know anything against myself, as my conscience is clear. Yet I'm not justified by this, but he who judges me is the Lord.

I'm not accountable to you, I'm accountable to the Lord. He's the one who judges me, not man. Isn't that what Paul is saying? Sounds like it to me.

Therefore, judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts, and then each one's praise will come from God. We're not out for the praise of man. We're not out to please men.

We're out to get the praise of God and to please God. Now, religiosity, I think there's a touch of that in Peter, when he said, what about this man, Lord? What about John? What shall that man do? I think that religious spirit that is concerned about whether other people are doing it quite the same we are, paying quite as much as we are, putting in as much time as we are, jumping through the same hoops we are, and suffering as much as we are, that suggests that what we're doing, we're not doing out of love for God. Because you know what? If you do something out of love for God, you enjoy it.

I have a fair number of things in my life that I do differently than some other people. For instance, I live more... This is no boast whatsoever. This is not a virtue necessarily, but I

live less affluently than some people do.

Now, that is in no sense anything that I would care to judge anybody else about. It's not like I'm making some big sacrifice and groaning under it, and then I'm complaining that someone else isn't making the sacrifice. I do what I do because I enjoy it.

I live the way I do because I'm out of love for God. When you love God, you enjoy things. Making sacrifices for someone you love is something you do because you love to.

And when you do what you love, you're happy. And you don't criticize others who aren't doing it. It's sort of like if you like eating vanilla ice cream, you're not going to complain that somebody else isn't eating vanilla ice cream.

If you hate vanilla ice cream and someone is forcing it down your throat, then you're going to complain, how come these other guys don't have to eat this stuff? But if you like it, if you love it, you're not going to be paying any attention to whether anyone else is eating their quota or not. And the fact that anybody would judge another person about religious particulars, the way they're serving God, the way they're jumping through the religious hoops, whether they're doing it the same way I am, suggests that the person who's doing the judging doesn't love it themselves. They're not doing it out of love for God.

They're doing what they consider to be a religious duty. And because it's a religious duty to them, they figure everybody else should have a religious duty to them. Because if you love doing service to God, you don't look for ways out, and you don't look for ways to criticize people who aren't doing it.

You pity them if they're not enjoying it as much as you. But anyway, Paul says, I don't care what you think. I don't stand before a human court.

But I'm not accountable to man. Christians are accountable to God. Now, I've been sometimes criticized for saying that.

But how can I not say it? The Bible says it. Paul says, it's no big deal. If man judges me, who cares? Because you know what? He says, man shouldn't be judging these things before the time.

And when is the time? When Jesus comes, he'll make known the secrets of the heart, because you don't know anyone's heart. And if you start making judgments on that basis, you're going to make some big mistakes, and it's none of your business. You can judge whether someone's actually practicing sin.

That's not a matter of the heart. I mean, you don't have to see someone's heart. You can look at their actions.

But if there's no sin, then you've got no business considering whether someone's serving God the way you are or not. And I would like to say to you who've just gone through the whole Bible in nine months, and you're going to know the Bible a whole lot better than a lot of people you're going to be around in the future, that you be very, very careful. If you have come to maybe an understanding of Christian duty more than some of the people that you'll fellowship with in the future.

I mean, I don't know where you'll be in the future. You might be on the mission field with people who are your superiors spiritually. But it's also possible some of you will be in churches or social groups where people are pretty spiritually dull.

I mean, there's both kinds out there, and who knows where you'll be. But when you are around people that you judge to be less informed than you or less committed than you or whatever, it's not your business to criticize that. And if you're critical of people who are not paying the price that you're paying to be a disciple, that may be because you're not so happy about being a disciple yourself.

It tells you a lot about your own heart. And I should think that would be obvious to anyone who thinks about it. So, Peter has to get a little bit of a slap on the wrist here.

You know, well, Lord, you'd say I'm going to die. Someone's going to take me someplace I don't want to go. Now, John always seems to weasel out of this kind of stuff.

You're going to make him do this too? And Jesus said, if I don't even let him die at all. What is that to you? You may have to die. You may have to be tortured.

You may have to be crucified. You may have a miserable, protracted, horrendous death to glorify me. Don't you want to glorify me? Don't you love me? If you love me, you won't complain about the way you're going to glorify me.

That's what John said about Peter's death. He said this about the way that Peter would glorify God, meaning the way he died. By what death he would glorify God, verse 19 says.

Well, death is not such a bad thing when you think of it in that light. Most people don't like to get even nailed to a cross, or even dying in any particular way. Most people are not looking forward to dying.

But if you think of it in the terms that John puts it here, it's the death by which Peter would glorify God. Well, that puts it in a totally different light. I want to glorify God, whether in life or in death.

That's no big sacrifice. I've got to die anyway. Might as well glorify God if I can.

And Jesus said, well, maybe, for all you know, John might not even die. Now, Jesus said



this in such a way as it caused a rumor to go around after this in the church that John wasn't going to die. And John clarifies that apparently by the time he wrote this gospel.

In fact, maybe he even added this chapter after he'd closed the gospel because he became aware of a false rumor going around that had been predicted that Jesus would come in John's lifetime. And he felt like maybe he better clarify that because that does seem to be his parting shot. It seems like this whole chapter might even be there just to clarify that point.

And he said, no, Jesus didn't say that I wouldn't die. He just said, what business is it of yours if John happens to not die? That's not the same thing as a prediction. And sure enough, John did die.

Well, the final statement is that Jesus did a lot of other things that aren't recorded. That's also the way that John chapter 20 closes. He did many other signs that are not recorded in this book.

However, the closing verse of 21, verse 25, says, I suppose that the world itself couldn't contain the books if they were to be written containing everything Jesus said and did. That strikes me as a hyperbole. I was actually talking to someone who took everything in the Bible literally, and they insisted that this was the only way to do honor in Scripture.

I said, really? Don't you think there's any exaggeration involved? They said, no. I said, well, what about this verse here? That if everything Jesus did was written, the world itself could not contain the books. Think of how many books the world can contain.

I mean, even a single library sometimes has a million books. Are you saying that a million books wouldn't be enough to record everything Jesus did in his lifetime? I think you could almost make reference to every time he blinked in so many pages as that. And they said, nope.

Nope. Because there's other things he did, too. I mean, how many times he took a breath, and how many times he twitched his finger, and how many times he swatted at a fly, and how many times he did this.

There's so many innumerable times. If you really wanted to write everything Jesus did, you'd have to basically write more books than the world could contain. I think they're missing the point here.

The point is not that if you wanted to mention every time Jesus' heart beat, and every time his lungs contracted, and every time he took a bite of food, and every time he swatted a mosquito. John's not talking about that. What he's saying is that Jesus did a whole lot more significant things than are recorded in the book.

In fact, so many that it'd be a hopeless enterprise to try to make a full record of them.

And he says that by way of hyperbole. So anyway, that's how John closes.

Now, in the few minutes we have left, I would like to talk about the Great Commission. And the Great Commission is found in three of the Gospels, but not in John. And it is found actually in two different settings, it would seem.

In fact, one would get the impression it was in three different settings. So it's hard to know how many times Jesus gave similar commissions to his disciples after his resurrection. If you'll note, for example, in Luke 24.

Luke 24 has told the story of the men on the road to Emmaus. That was on Sunday, Resurrection Sunday. They ran back, met with the apostles, and Jesus appeared to them in the room.

Okay? And that is recorded in verses 36 through 43. Now, verse 44 says, John 24, 44. Then he said to them, These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms concerning me.

Jesus acknowledged that the law and the prophets and the Psalms had a fair number of things written about him. And he opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures. This he either did by going through the Scriptures point by point and explaining them.

He could have opened their understanding that way. Or he gave them a gift of being able to properly understand them. That's how I have generally understood this.

So that when you find the apostles quoting the Scriptures and applying the Scriptures, they are doing so with the special gifting that Jesus gave them. Then he said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and 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. And you are witnesses of these things.

Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while he blessed them, that he was departed from them and carried up into heaven.

And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Now, you get the impression from reading Luke that this was Resurrection Sunday. It was, in fact, in the earlier verses.

Jesus appeared in the room that very night, said all these things, and then immediately raised his hands and ascended into heaven, after taking them outside to Bethany. So Luke has definitely compressed the events of 40 days into what looks like the account of

a single day. Now, we know that Luke didn't make any mistake about this, because Luke also wrote Acts.

And it is the book of Acts that tells us that Jesus spent 40 days instructing them and appearing to them in Acts chapter 1. In the opening verses, it says that Jesus spent 40 days appearing to them and teaching them things of the kingdom of God. So, the same author wrote both. We cannot assume that Luke was unaware of these 40 days, since he's the one who tells us about them in Acts.

But he has compressed the account from the Resurrection Sunday appearances all the way to the Ascension, as if it's one continuous narrative. That means that there's some breaks there, and we don't know exactly in what setting he said which things. But it would look like verses 44 through 49, and particularly 47 through 49, would be what he said, the Great Commission, in Luke's form here.

He said that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, beginning at Jerusalem. Well, Luke also wrote Acts, and he gave the same thing, apparently, in other words, in Acts 1.8. In Acts 1.8, he said, you shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you. That's the promise of the Father mentioned in Luke 24.49, the promise of the Father.

He says, you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and in the outermost parts of the earth. That's Acts 1.8. That sounds like this, beginning at Jerusalem, and going out from there in all the world. That the message should be preached.

What is the message? What is the Church's message? Repentance and remission, that means forgiveness of sins. It's the good news of forgiveness of sins, and it's the command that people repent. The Great Commission is a call to repentance.

But that's not all. Let's go over to Mark 16. In Mark 16, we have some verses near the end that are, well, as you say, the authenticity of them is disputed.

I do not dispute their authenticity. I believe they're accurate and authentic. In fact, the reason their authenticity is disputed, I believe it's beginning at verse 12, that the dispute begins.

Mark 16, 12, to the end of the chapter. I think it starts there. Or is it verse 9? Okay, thank you.

You got me. 9, okay. Now, if the original Gospel of Mark ended at verse 8, as some manuscripts have it, then we don't have any resurrection appearances of Christ, just angels after his resurrection.

So Mark would have left out all the resurrection appearances of Christ, and somebody

else would have written these verses at the end, these, whatever number there are, 12 or some more verses at the end. I don't think that's likely. Furthermore, though there are some early manuscripts that leave these verses out, there are quotations from these disputed verses found in some very early church fathers, including Irenaeus, who, as you know, was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John.

So Irenaeus was a very early witness. And actually, the writings of Irenaeus predate the earliest manuscripts of Mark that we have. That is, Irenaeus wrote the things he wrote before the earliest surviving documents of Mark came into existence.

And although those documents don't have these verses, Irenaeus' writings do, suggesting that he was aware of them, and they are no doubt, therefore, authentic. Now, beginning at verse 14, it says, Afterward he appeared to the eleven, as they sat at the table, and he rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart. This, again, was resurrection Sunday night.

Because they did not believe those who had seen him after he had risen. And he said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. But he didn't probably say it on that occasion.

Well, he might have, because he did say, according to John, on that occasion, As the Father has sent me, so send I you. So he may have actually given this version of the Great Commission on this occasion of resurrection Sunday night, though we have another version given later, as we'll see. He said, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe. In my name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues, they will take up serpents, and if they drink anything deadly it will not by any means hurt them, and they will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover.

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. This is deduced from the apostles' understanding of Psalm 110. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.

Amen. Now, let's talk about this version of the Great Commission. Once again, Mark does seem to be compressing things a bit, because he talks about the appearance of Christ to the Twelve on the night of his resurrection.

And it goes directly into verse 19 about him ascending into heaven, as if the 40 days between the resurrection and the ascension didn't exist. But we saw that Luke, in Luke chapter 24, told it just the same way, although Luke certainly knew about those 40 days,

therefore it must not have been thought to be contradictory to compress it this way. It was assumed, I guess, that most of the information about those 40 days wasn't worth recording, I guess.

And so the thing is compressed and it looks like it happened all at once. And for that reason, we can't be sure if the instructions given in verses 15 through 18 were given on resurrection Sunday night, or whether they were really the Great Commission that he gave just before he ascended 40 days later, or what. Now, the reason it could be either way is because according to John 20, in verse 20 and 21, on that resurrection Sunday night, Jesus did appear to the disciples, and he did say, Peace be unto you, as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.

Now, that's the only sense in which we could call anything like the Great Commission being given that night, according to John's gospel. But Mark may be giving us more information about what Jesus said on that night, because it's a similar message. You go, I'm sending you.

You go and preach the gospel, etc. So this might just be an expansion on what Jesus said that night. On the other hand, it could be an expansion on what he said on the Mount of Olives, recorded in Acts chapter 1, just prior to his ascension, he did give a Great Commission also.

That, you know, you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the other parts of the earth. That also is a commission. He gave at least two, and I think we could say at least three commissions on different occasions to the same guys, in different words.

We do not know what occasion exactly, because the way Mark compresses the material, it makes it impossible to tell. But on what occasion he gave this version of the commission. But let's take a look at its contents briefly.

He said, go and preach, in verse 15, Mark 16, 15. He said to them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

Does this mean you have to be baptized to be saved? Apparently not, because he says, but he who believes not will be condemned. He doesn't say anything about those who are not baptized. It was assumed, of course, that believers would be baptized.

It was assumed much more clearly in those days than it is in ours. There have been a bunch of muddled ideas about baptism that have come up in the last 2,000 years, and a lot of conflicting ideas, but as you can read from the book of Acts, it's very clear. To be baptized was the first act of a Christian after his conversion, on the same day usually.

It was not a question. Whether a believer would be baptized or not, he would. Therefore, Jesus said, whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.

It does not mean that you have to be baptized to be saved, but he just figured those things are going to go together. A person is going to become a believer. He'll be baptized.

Those people are saved. The people who don't believe are not saved. So believing seems to be the issue more than baptism.

But the assumption is there that they will be baptized also. And he says, and these signs will follow those who believe. And he lists them.

In my name they'll cast out demons, they'll speak with new tongues, they'll take up serpents. If they drink any deadly thing, it'll by no means hurt them, and they'll lay their hands on the sick and they'll recover. This is a favorite text among Pentecostals, and I can remember a time it was one of my favorite texts, because of the supernatural power it seems to invest in the believer.

In fact, it is probably the principal text for those of the assemblies of God and those kinds of Pentecostals who teach that tongues speaking is essential or is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit. After all, Jesus said these signs will follow those who believe. Are you a believer? Then you should be speaking in tongues.

It says they'll speak with new tongues. Now, to tell the truth, and to be quite honest, this is no proof that tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If anything, it would be the initial evidence of salvation.

It doesn't say these signs should follow those who are baptized in the Spirit. These signs will follow those who believe, who are saved. So you could almost, if you wanted to apply it that way, make tongues and the rest of these things proofs of salvation.

And there are actually some Pentecostals, we call them snake handlers, that do this kind of thing. They'll pass around deadly snakes and pass around a cup of poison just to make sure at least the elders and deacons of the church are saved. If they believe, they can do this and it won't hurt them.

Now, I really haven't heard much of the records. I mean, I don't know if they've kept a record of how many survived these snake handlings and poison drinking and things like that. I'd be interested to see some statistics.

It's interesting that no one has, to my knowledge, done any research to figure that out. But I would say that I think these people are misunderstanding what Jesus said. In fact, I believe it is impossible to understand Jesus to be saying that every believer is going to do all of these things.

I certainly don't see it in the book of Acts that every believer went around drinking poison or handling snakes. In fact, I don't see any evidence in the book of Acts that every

believer cast out demons or laid their hands on the sick. There may be a fair inference that they all spoke in tongues, though that's not declared to be the case, but a lot of them did.

But I'd like to suggest to you that these signs shall follow those who believe does not mean that every believer will do all these things, but rather, wherever the gospel is preached, there will be a believing community established, a church, and where there is a church, that is, those who believe, there will be signs, confirming signs, of the message that they represent, which is Christ and his gospel. There will be signs of confirmation that will follow the establishing of believers, that is, of believing communities. Those who believe I take to be a reference to the church.

These signs do follow the church, but not necessarily every individual believer does all those things. You could not prove it from this text, not from exegesis anyway. Yet, those kinds of things do happen.

As far as the serpent stuff, the only case we know of in Acts is when Paul was gathering some sticks and he did not voluntarily take up a snake, but one bit him, and he shook it off with a fire and it didn't hurt him. That would seem to be possibly a fulfillment of this. It may be the only case in history, it may not be.

There may be additional cases, but there would be no parallel to it in the person who goes out looking for a deadly snake to play with. We have no record in the Gospels of anyone drinking poison, although drinking a deadly thing could just mean drinking the local water. With the apostles going around preaching the gospel all over the country and all over the world, they might end up drinking stuff or eating stuff that is just not safe, but they were told that they could eat or drink, and if they drink any deadly thing, it won't harm them.

So they wouldn't have to worry about drinking the local water, and getting amoeba, dysentery, or anything else. So that's how I understand this, that he's saying essentially when the gospel is preached, there will become a community of believers. Where there is a community of believers, there will be signs.

Whether each believer will do these signs or not, we could not prove from the passage in, we certainly couldn't prove from Acts either. So I would say to push for those all being present in the life of a believer would seem to be going beyond the correct interpretation of the passage. One other passage is relevant, only a few verses.

Let's look at it real quick here. It's Matthew 28, verses 16 through 20. Now here we can say for sure that the great commission that is given to Matthew is not given in Jerusalem.

It was not given on Resurrection Sunday in the upper room, and it was not given on the Mount of Olives just prior to the Ascension. It is therefore not the same occasion that we

read of in Mark or in Luke, which apparently happened on one of those two occasions. It is not in the same words either, but we have to assume it's supplements.

Now the reason we know it's not in Jerusalem is because we're told it's not in Jerusalem. It's in Galilee. This happened sometime in Galilee.

Now we only have record of one appearance in Galilee, and that was in John 21, when Jesus appeared to the seven by the lakeside there, and helped them catch a big catch of fish and ate breakfast with them. That might be the occasion when this happened. Some people think it may have happened then.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that on one occasion, over 500 disciples saw Jesus after his resurrection. He says that in 1 Corinthians 15. This is not recorded in any of the Gospels, but I think it would be a fair inference that if Jesus appeared to 500 disciples at once, it was probably in Galilee, because he didn't have, it would appear, more than 120 in Judea, which is no doubt why there were only 120 in the upper room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

Judea, he had a smaller following than in Galilee. He had multitudes that once followed him in Galilee. There were probably at least 500 people who had first been healed and had demons cast out of them.

And therefore it would not be hard to muster a congregation of 500 for him to appear to in Galilee. And we don't know that the 500 were there. I'm just deducing it, and it may be incorrect.

But it says in verse 16, Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. So at some point they went to wait for him at a place that he had appointed. Now we don't read anywhere of this particular appointment of this mountain experience, but he must have told them, meet me at this mountain at this time, which would give them an opportunity to let other believers know, maybe as many as 500, hey, Jesus is going to appear on this mountain, and it may have been a meeting rather large for all we know.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Imagine that. I don't think any of the apostles were doubting at this point.

By this time they had all touched him, they had all seen him, they all knew him. So that suggests maybe there are some there besides the eleven. Of the 500 perhaps, I'm guessing.

Some doubted, conceivably. Well, 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 nations.



This is different than Luke and Mark. Luke says repentance and remission of sins should be preached in all the world, starting in Jerusalem. Mark says go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Both Mark and Luke have Jesus commission them to preach. Only Matthew has him commissioning them to make disciples. And further to explain that this means baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.

And lo, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age. Now, Jesus commanded them to make disciples, and there were two parts to that. One, he calls baptizing them, and no doubt that's just a reference to converting them.

Preach to them, get them to repent and be baptized, you've converted them then. You've baptized them, and then you haven't made a disciple yet, you've just made a believer. Now you have to make disciple out of them by teaching them to observe everything I've commanded.

Now, one of the things he commanded is to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But in the book of Acts, we never read of anyone baptizing in that formula. They always baptize in the name of Jesus.

A survey of all the passages in the book of Acts that talk about people being baptized will demonstrate. The apostles, and Philip, and everybody in the book of Acts who baptized them, baptized them in the name of Jesus, which has given rise to the Jesus-only idea that you have to be baptized only in the name of Jesus. My personal understanding of this apparent discrepancy is that when Jesus said in verse 19 here, baptizing in the name, singular, the singular name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that the disciples, later realizing that in Jesus dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, that the one name that embodied the whole Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was the name of Jesus, and so that's the name they baptized in.

But I certainly don't think it would be right to be legalistic and say you have to be baptized in this formula or in that formula. The fact is, if you are baptized only in the name of Jesus, or on the other hand, if you are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you've been baptized essentially in the same name. And it would be nitpicking and petty to try to divide the church over those kinds of issues.

Now, he did say they have to teach all nations to observe everything Jesus said. Why? Because he said in verse 18, All authority in heaven and earth is given to me. He's the boss.

He's the king. Obviously, people should obey their king. Therefore, teach people that all authority has been given to me.

Teach the kingdom of God. Teach that I'm the king. People are obliged to obey me, and then teach them how to do it.

Teach them to do the things I said. Therefore, the church has this commission. It has not in every time or in every place fulfilled the commission, or even tried to fulfill it in the terms Jesus gave it.

But this is the commission, that we need to bring people under the authority of Jesus Christ through the preaching of his authority as king. It is the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus said in Matthew 24, 14, This gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all the world as a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come.

The gospel of the kingdom has to be universally preached. The gospel of the kingdom is what? Jesus is king. He has all the authority.

He's got a name higher than every other name. He's the Lord of all. Every knee is going to have to bow.

Every tongue confess. Therefore, get smart, as Psalm 2 says, and kiss the Son, lest he be angry, lest he consume you. When he's angry, he's aroused only a little.

Obey him. Here's what he said to do. And the process of making disciples is a lifelong process.

Of course, it's less intensive after a person has reached a certain point of maturity where they can sort of study on their own, especially if you have Bibles. In those days, they didn't. But the apostles were there to teach the nations to do what Jesus said.

So when the 3,000 were converted on the day of Pentecost, what did they do? They sat daily under the apostles' teaching. And we have to assume that what they taught was what Jesus said to teach, what Jesus commanded. The Sermon on the Mount, the teachings of Christ, these are the curriculum for the disciple.

This is the commission of the church, namely to teach all nations to submit to the King, Jesus, and to communicate to them what it is that he taught and what he commanded. And that requires that we learn how to obey his commands. We have to think them through.

We have to understand how they apply to daily life. And we have to apply them to life, in our own lives and the lives of others, so that this gospel of the kingdom can be preached and disciples can be made, and then the end can come. And that is, in fact, the end of our series on the life of Christ.

Nothing left.