

**An Examination of "Make Disciples of All Nations"
in Matthew 28:18-20**

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The Great Commission has been used as a theological catalyst for a church's outreach ministry. Although all four Gospels contain a Great Commission text, only Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15 record the commission in an imperatival statement. Since Matthew 28:19 attracts the greatest amount of attention among Christian writers¹ and since Matthew 28:19 is central in the development of a church's philosophy of ministry, it is crucial to understand the meaning of the independent clause, "Make disciples of all nations."

A "perusal of the proliferation of current books, pamphlets and articles inundating the shelves and racks of any Christian bookstore or library"² discloses the current interest in and emphasis upon "discipleship" and "discipling." With this resurgent focus on "discipling all nations" (Matt. 28:19) has come a myriad of unreliable conclusions. These either make authoritative assertions not exegetically supported by the text or fail to expose valuable implications found within the text. For instance, some have viewed Matthew 28:19 as applicable to foreign missions but have neglected its application to the individual's responsibility at home. In addition, a lack of grammatical sensitivity has led others to see the four verbals in Matthew 28:19,20 (going, discipling, baptizing, teaching) as four consecutive, distinct, and parallel actions. Culver notes,

The usual exposition, expressed in a thousand missionary sermons, goes something like this: The first step in carrying out the great

commission is to *go*--to those who have not heard, to the very ends of the earth. If you cannot go yourself, the next best is to help someone else to go and to pray for him. The second step for these missionaries is *evangelism*--getting people to make a public decision for Christ, thus becoming disciples. Many methods of making the decision public are allowed. This is deemed to be making disciples. The third step is to *baptize* these confessed disciples. As a fourth and final step, they are to *teach* the details of Christian doctrine.³

Concerning cross-cultural mission strategy, the Church Growth movement has committed sociological eisegesis on the term "nations" as it tries to defend its "people movement" theory.⁴ Failure to examine the literary structure of Matthew or to explore the motifs of discipling and its Gentile outreach has produced inaccurate and incomplete teaching of this passage.⁵ Without a sound hermeneutical foundation, any methodology, program, or strategy loses its authority.

The purpose of this study is to understand the clause "make disciples of all nations" in Matthew 28:19. Though evangelism and subsequent conversion initiate the discipling process,⁶ the focus of this study is on the process of discipling following conversion. This article analyzes the clause "make disciples of all nations" within the immediate setting of Matthew 28:18-20. A subsequent article will articulate the practical ramifications of this clause for twentieth century believers.

The clause in Matthew 28:19, "make disciples of all nations," is syntactically connected to verses eighteen through twenty. These verses in turn are within the pericope of Matthew 28:16-20, which forms both the conclusion to the resurrection narrative and to Matthew's whole book. Therefore, to understand "make disciples of all nations," one must examine both the context and the content of Matthew 28:18-20.

Context of Matthew 28:18-20

Both the theological and the literary context of Matthew 28:18-20 are pertinent to an understanding of the clause "make disciples of all nations."

Theological Context of Matthew 28:18-20

The theological context involves the comparison of Matthew 28:18-20 to the other commission texts given by Christ and the

identification of Matthew 28:18-20 within the first Gospel's overall purpose and structure.

Comparison to other commission texts. Scholars generally regard the following passages as commissions given by Christ: Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-8.⁷ Matthew 28:16-20 is often identified with the appearance of Christ before five hundred (recorded in I Corinthians 15:6) soon after the ending of the Passover feast.⁸ In addition, the pericopes of Matthew and Mark apparently refer to the same event.⁹

Similarities and differences exist between Matthew and the other commission texts. According to Basset,

The versions of Jesus' last words in Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-18; Lk 24:46-49; Acts 1:8; and Jn 20:21-23 contain four common elements: the risen Lord's presentation of himself, the commissioning, the content of the mandate, and the confirmation. The distinctive perspectives opened up by these texts still influence Christian missionary strategies: *plantatio ecclesiae* (Mt), universal evangelization (Mk), witness (Lk-Acts), and sending forth (Jn).¹⁰

In addition to Basset's list of affinities, these parallels are evident: universalism (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8), doubt prior to the commission (Matt. 28:17; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:38), and baptism (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; possibly Luke 24:47¹¹).

The differences between the gospel accounts both highlight the emphasis of each evangelist and complement the full picture of Christ's post-resurrection commission to his disciples. Matthew presents the eleven as disciples; Luke and John present them as witnesses (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8) and apostles ("sent ones," John 20:21) respectively. Mark and Luke define the purpose of the disciples as preaching the Gospel (Mark 16:15) and preaching repentance (Luke 24:47), but Matthew defines their purpose as making disciples.¹² The authority for the Lucian commission is the Old Testament; the authority for the Matthean commission is the position of Christ. The promise given in Mark 16:17-20 is Christ's miraculous working through the disciples. The promise given in Luke 24:29 is the power of the Spirit. The promise given in Matthew (28:20) is Christ's enduring presence.

Identification in Matthew's overall purpose and structure. An understanding of the purpose and structure of Matthew provides insight into the meaning of Matthew 28:18-20. According to Toussaint, the purpose of Matthew is to prove that Jesus is the Messiah and to present the kingdom program of God.¹³ Therefore, Matthew discusses Israel's rejection of the Messiah, the inclusion of the Gentiles in the kingdom program, and the present responsibility of believers to the Messiah in the present form of the kingdom.¹⁴

Scholars do not concur on any one structural outline of Matthew, but most propose one of the following five approaches.¹⁵ Some have structured Matthew geographically (e.g. McNeile) after Mark's outline. Kingsbury, developing an observation made by Ned Stonehouse on the phrase "From that time Jesus began" in 4:17 and 16:21, has structured the book Christologically into three major sections: the Person of Jesus Messiah (1:1-4:16), the Proclamation of Jesus Messiah (4:17-16:20), The Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Messiah (16:21-28:20).¹⁶ Several scholars have effectively discredited Kingsbury's structure.¹⁷

Several men develop the book thematically around the kingdom motif. This often includes the offer, rejection, and postponement of the kingdom. This approach, which is more appropriate to a harmonistic study of the life of Christ,¹⁸ is insensitive to the structural cues in Matthew's Gospel.

Others, following B. W. Bacon, have structured the book around five major discourses (chs. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25).¹⁹ However, scholars have criticized this view because it does not clarify the relationship of these discourses to the intervening narratives.²⁰ One must determine whether the narrative sections introduce the discourses, the discourses introduce the narratives, or if the discourses connect two narratives.²¹ Also, several structuralists have argued for a symmetrical and/or a concentric outline of the book.²² The last approach is given by R. T. France, who combines three of the preceding theories to construct an interesting, but unconvincing outline.²³

Since no convincing attack has discredited the third view, this writer agrees with the following outline:

- I. Prologue: The Origin and Birth of Jesus the Christ(1:1-2:23)
- II. The Gospel of the Kingdom (3:1-7:29)
 - A. Narrative (3:1-4:25)
 - B. First Discourse: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)

- III. The Kingdom Extended under Jesus' Authority (8:1-11:1)
 - A. Narrative (8:1-10:4)
 - B. Second Discourse: Mission and Martyrdom (10:5-11:1)
- IV. Teaching and Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom:
Rising Opposition (11:2-13:53)
 - A. Narrative (11:2-12:50)
 - B. Third Discourse: The Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-53)
- V. The Glory and the Shadow: Progressive Polarization (13:54-19:2)
 - A. Narrative (13:54-17:27)
 - B. Fourth Discourse: Life under Kingdom Authority (18:1-19:2)
- VI. Opposition and Eschatology: The Triumph of Grace (19:3-26:5)
 - A. Narrative (19:3-23:39)
 - B. Fifth Discourse: The Olivet Discourse (24:1-25:46)
- VII. The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus (26:1-28:20)
 - A. The Passion (26:1-27:61)
 - B. The Resurrection (27:62-28:20)²⁴

Matthew 28:16-20 is the concluding episode in the resurrection scene and the epilogue to the entire Gospel.²⁵ Concerning Matthew 28:16-20 as the final epilogue for the book, Carson observes,

It has been recognized that the closing pericope (20:16-20) is fully intended to be the climax toward which the entire Gospel moves. By tying together some of Matthew's most dominant themes, these verses give them a new depth that reaches back and sheds light on the entire Gospel. . . . Matthew's Gospel ends with the expectation of continued mission and teaching. The five preceding sections always conclude with a block of *Jesus'* teaching (3:1-26:5); but the passion and resurrection of Jesus end with a commission to *his disciples* to carry on that same ministry (see Introduction, section 14), in the light of the Cross, the empty tomb, and the triumphant vindication and exaltation of the risen Lord.²⁶

Several Matthean themes are conjoined in this final pericope.²⁷ Though eschatology is accentuated in verse twenty, the two dominant themes are Christology and ecclesiology. Christ in his exalted position (vs. 18) pronounces upon all men both the binding nature of his teaching and the necessary submission to his person (vss. 19, 20a). His omnipresence is a source of encouragement in verse 20. The ecclesiology of this passage includes discipling, which stresses both baptism and thorough teaching, and outreach, which describes the church's mission to all people.

Literary Context of Matthew 28:18-20

A literary analysis is valuable in understanding Matthew 28:18-20 and must include both a discussion of the literary forms attributed to Matthew 28:16-20 and the literary development of Matthew 27:62-28:20.

Literary forms of Matthew 28:16-20. "Around the turn of the century, New Testament commentators who studied the Great Commission were immersed in the study of the source of the text,"²⁸ but today the emphasis has largely swung to the genre of the text. The proposals for the form of Matthew 28:16-20 are myriad.²⁹ Malina considers this genre to be a royal decree like Cyrus' in II Chronicles 36:23. Rengstorf identifies the form as a Judean Oriental enthronement liturgy. Jeremias and Michel characterize it as an Oriental enthronement hymn. Similarly, De Ridder and Recker describe it as an enthronement speech of the Lord. Dibelius considers it mythology, Bultmann calls it a cult legend, and Dodd labels it as a concise narrative. Strecker, Munck, Trilling, and Friedrich consider it a word of revelation, a farewell speech, a speech of God, and a revelation discourse respectively. Reedy labels it a pronouncement story or an expanded chreia. The most plausible designation in this plethora of opinions is Benjamin Hubbard's. Hubbard, followed by Mullins and Hendrickx, believes Matthew 28:16-20 is modelled after the Old Testament commission form. Yet, even his view is marked with inconsistencies and questions.

Carson rightly concludes "that this pericope does not easily fit any known literary form and must not be squeezed into a poorly fitting mold."³⁰ Discarding those views which contradict inspiration, Osborne states, "Perhaps the best way to evaluate all these hypotheses is to say no single theory adequately explains all the theological implications of the passage. We, like the early believers, are simply overwhelmed by the richness of this passage."³¹

Literary Development of Matthew 27:62-28:20. How does Matthew 28:16-20 correlate with the resurrection passage (Matt. 27:62-28:20)? Leon-Dufour suggests that the resurrection passage is organized like a diptych in which the first panel (27:62-28:15) alternates between the guards and the women and the second panel(28:16-20) culminates the whole Gospel rather than merely concluding the final narrative.³² His suggestion of severing the

pericope from its narrative is unacceptable. Matthew 28:16-20 is both the final episode of the resurrection narrative and the epilogue of the entire Gospel. Osborne, building upon the work of Leon-Dufour, persuasively argues for the following triptych arrangement in which there is "a progressive pattern of three contrasts with each panel portraying the Risen Lord in victory over his enemies, each building on the one before it."

First Panel:

Preparation--the posting of the guard (27:62-66) vs. the approach of the women to the tomb (28:1)

Second Panel:

Reaction--the fear of the guards (vv.2-4) vs. the joy of the women (vv.5-10)

Third Panel:

Results--the spread of lies (vv.11-15) vs. the announcement of truth (vv.16-20).³³

In the resurrection passage, the Lord moves toward the ones who accept him and away from the ones who reject him. The Lord seeks to calm the fear of the women but ignores the fear of the soldiers. Matthew contrasts Christ's rendezvous with the disciples in Galilee to the soldiers' rendezvous with the apostate religious aristocracy in Jerusalem.³⁴ As his men disseminate the truth, the leaders of Israel disseminate a lie.³⁵ This rejection-acceptance motif is interwoven throughout the Gospel.

Content of Matthew 28:18-20

A correct interpretation of the content of Matthew 28:18-20 requires an exploration of the structure of Matthew 28:16-20, a discussion of the setting of Christ's final speech (vss. 16, 17), and an exegesis of the speech of Christ (vss. 18-20).

Structure of Matthew 28:16-20

In Matthew 28:16-20, verses sixteen and seventeen form the setting for Christ's commission; verses eighteen through twenty form the speech of Christ's commission. In the setting of the commission, one notes that the disciples obediently come to Christ (vs.16) and that

the disciples hesitantly worship Christ (vs.17). Certainly the focus of this pericope is upon the commission rather than the appearance of Christ.³⁶

Matthew 28:18-20 is bound together topically, syntactically, and literarily. Verses sixteen and seventeen describe the activity of the disciples; but verses eighteen through twenty delineate the speech of Christ. The speech of Christ is composed of three sentences: an indicative (vs. 18), an imperative accompanied by three participles (vss. 19-20a), and another indicative (vs. 20b). Syntactically, verse eighteen is linked to verse nineteen by *ouv* while verse nineteen and the beginning of verse twenty are linked to the end of verse twenty by *kai*. Malina observes, "This syntactic articulation points to a coherent relationship of three statements bound together to form a single utterance."³⁷ Literarily, the word *pas* or its derivative is found four times in three verses (vss. 18-once; 19-once; 20-twice).

Matthew 28:18-20 can be outlined as follows:

- A. Proclamation of his authoritative position [indicative]: Christological (vs. 18)
- B. Plan for his people [imperative]: missiological (vss. 19-20a)
- C. Promise of his enduring presence [indicative]: Christological (vs. 20b)

The passage focuses on the commission; yet, from the certainty of the indicative statements emanates the power of the imperative.³⁸ The truth of verse eighteen demands obedience to the commission, and the fact of verse twenty encourages obedience to the commission.

The Setting of Christ's Commission

Verses sixteen and seventeen form the setting for Christ's commission to his disciples. In verse sixteen, the disciples (specifically designated as the eleven disciples)³⁹ obey Christ's command to meet on an appointed mountain in Galilee.

Scholars have suggested several reasons for the designation of a mountain for this meeting. Firstly, some see this as a theological clue revealing the "New Moses" on the "New Sinai,"⁴⁰ a view that is speculative and poorly supported. A second view holds that Matthew's use of mountains highlights the important acts of Christ.⁴¹ However, Christ did many significant acts in other localities. Many suggest that Matthew uses mountains as places of divine revelation

throughout his book (4:8; 5:1, 14; 8:1; 15:29; 17:1, 9, 20; 21:21; 24:16; 26:30).⁴² Though some of these passages support this view, Matthew's use of mountains for other purposes (14:23; 21:1; 24:16) impairs it. The practice of placing theological significance on geographical indicators is questionable. The usage of mountains in Matthew is simply the evangelist's accurate recording of locations chosen for practical purposes.⁴³ Matthew 28:16 probably designates a place of privacy for the rendezvous.

Christ's choice of Galilee for their gathering is significant. Certainly, Christ emphasized this location previously (26:32; 28:10). From a practical perspective, Galilee was the home of the disciples.⁴⁴ Aside from that, Matthew seems to bypass the post-resurrection accounts in Jerusalem for the one in Galilee. Matthew's reference to Galilee as "Galilee of the Gentiles" in Matthew 4:15 may indicate that he is using Galilee as a reflection of the "universal character of the Gospel."⁴⁵ On the other hand, since Christ's earthly ministry is focused in Galilee in Matthew's Gospel, this strategic choice may demonstrate both the continuation of Christ's ministry and the continuity between Christ's earthly and post-resurrection ministry.⁴⁶

In verse seventeen the disciples hesitantly worship Christ. This combination of worship (*proskuneo*) and hesitation (*distazo*) is only found one other time in the New Testament (Matt. 14:31, 33) and there it also refers to the disciples. The first independent clause expresses the disciples' worship of Christ. Schonweiss and Brown describe *proskuneo*,

The OT sense is taken up and further developed, except that now it denotes exclusively worship addressed (or which should be addressed) to God or Jesus Christ (even in Mt. 18:26 the king is a symbolic figure for God) . . . Hence, whenever obeisance is made before Jesus, the thought is either explicit or implicit that he is king (Mt. 2:2), Lord (Matt. 8:12), the Son of God (Mt. 14:33), One who can act with divine omnipotence (eg. Mt. 14:33; Mk. 5:6; 15:19) . . . Thus obeisance is especially appropriate before the risen and exalted Lord (Mt. 28:9,17; Lk. 24:52).⁴⁷

The second independent clause (*hoi de edistan*) has been the subject of much debate. Structurally, *de* may be a conjunction introducing a new sentence⁴⁸ or connecting the second clause of a compound sentence. The cluster *hoi de* introduces an alternate subject from the previous context. Normally, *hoi de* introduces a new sentence when the article is accompanied by a nominative noun;⁴⁹

but Matthew 28:17 includes no such noun. On the other hand, *hoi de* normally connects two clauses into one sentence when the first clause contains the particle *men*, which is also absent in Matthew 28:17a. However, the syntactical parallelism of Matthew 26:67, in which *men* is also absent, and Matthew 28:17 supports the second view. Logically, Matthew 26:67 refers to the different responses of two groups within the Sanhedrin. Either view is plausible as long as it maintains a distinction in actors.⁵⁰ Typically, the Greek texts (UBS#3, MT) have supported the compound sentence view in Matthew 26:67 and Matthew 28:17.

The subject of *hoi* is also debated. The three views are as follows: 1) a group of Jesus' followers other than the eleven, who, though not mentioned in Matthew, are believed to be among the five hundred mentioned in I Corinthians 15:6 (e.g. Carson, McNeile);⁵¹ 2) the eleven disciples (e.g. Giblin); 3) a portion of the eleven disciples (e.g. Ellis, Hubbard).⁵² The first view is unacceptable because *hoi de* always indicates a group mentioned in the context. The second view is unsupported by any syntactical evidence from the Gospel known to this writer. The third view finds support from the parallel syntactical arrangement of Matthew 26:67. Therefore, it appears that some of the disciples immediately worshipped but others initially hesitated.

The word *edistasan* occurs only twice in the New Testament, here and in Matthew 14:31. Both accounts discuss doubt and worship by the disciples. This doubt is not unbelief; rather, it is hesitation or uncertainty.⁵³ The motif of little faith is interwoven throughout the first Gospel. The other evangelists also discuss the disciples' lack of faith toward Christ in his post-resurrection appearances (Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23).⁵⁴

Basically three views are espoused concerning the object of their doubt.⁵⁵ Some believe the disciples were uncertain how Christ would respond to their previous abandonment.⁵⁶ Others postulate that the disciples doubt either the fact of the resurrection or the identity of Christ in a glorified body. Both of these positions are untenable since the other evangelists suggest Christ has already met the disciples. The last view suggests that the disciples doubted the propriety of worship,⁵⁷ but this view contradicts their actions in Matthew 14:31-33. If they worshipped there, why not here also? It may be that the emotional trauma recently experienced by the disciples produced a hesitation in their relationship with the Lord. This writer "hesitantly"

acquiesces to the third view. Osborne summarizes the significance of verse seventeen,

The disciples worship, but waver. There is a twofold connection here: a contrast with the worship theme, which adds even greater stress to the victorious promise of verse 18; and a transition to the reassurance of verses 18ff. This is Matthew's message to the believer: In the midst of uncertainty he may trust the authority of the Lord. In the other gospels, doubt is assuaged by the physical presence of the Risen One; here it is dispelled by the authority of his Word.⁵⁸

The Speech Comprising Christ's Commission

Verses eighteen through twenty record Christ's speech given to his disciples. The speech is comprised of three sections: the proclamation of his authoritative position (vs.18), the plan for his people (vss.19,20a), and the promise of his enduring presence (vs.20b).

The Proclamation of Christ's Authoritative Position. In verse eighteen Christ addresses his disciples,⁵⁹ some of whom are hesitant to worship him, and expresses clearly his exalted position of authority. Malina observes that "the statement in v. 18b expresses Jesus' consciousness of full authority *with a view to wielding* that authority in the command that follows."⁶⁰

Some see the words of Jesus as a fulfillment of Daniel 7:14, or at least as showing some type of parallel.⁶¹ *Edotha*, *exousia*, and *panta to ethna* are common to both passages, and the subject of both passages is the activity of the Messiah. While Daniel 7:14 refers to Christ's parousia, Matthew 28:18 refers to his post-resurrection exaltation. Those seeing affinity between the two passages normally believe Daniel 7:14 is fulfilled at Easter.⁶² Others believe that the evidence for a parallel is scarce and that the identification of Easter with the parousia is problematic.⁶³ Clearly, both passages describe the exalted activity of Christ. The position of Christ presented by Matthew will be physically realized in the Millennium, according to Daniel.

Although the essence of Christ's authority had not changed between his earthly ministry and his post-resurrection ministry, the scope of his authority had.⁶⁴ Carson concurs, "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."⁶⁵ Matthew has both emphasized Christ's authority in his Gospel⁶⁶ and shown the continuity of Jesus' authority before and after the resurrection by Christ's post-resurrection command to teach his pre-resurrection instruction (vs.20).

How does Christ describe his authority? It is comprehensive. All authority is his. The term *exousia* "is a more comprehensive term than 'power' (*dynamis*), referring to position as well as function."⁶⁷ Nothing in creation is exempted from his authority. This authority is given by the Father. Christ spoke elsewhere of his God-given authority (Matt. 11:27; John 3:35).⁶⁸ Thus, Christ is the mediatorial king.⁶⁹ His authority denotes his deity.⁷⁰ He is the sovereign of the universe who deserves the homage of all beings (cf. Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:16-18; Rev.1). The universal and glorious position of the Lord is a key motivation for the commission which follows.

The Plan for Christ's People. Christ's plan for his followers, which is to disciple all people, is found in Matthew 28:19,20a. This sentence contains one imperatival clause; attached to the clause are one aorist participle and two present participial phrases. This section identifies the usage of the three participles, and analyzes the main clause and the two participial clauses.

(1) **Identification of the three participles.** A key to understanding "make disciples" is to determine the relationship of the accompanying participles to the main verb. The aorist participle *poieuthentes* has been understood four basic ways: 1) as a parallel command to the main verb; 2) as a pleonastic participle with little or no significance; 3) as a circumstantial participle with no imperatival force; 4) as a preparatory participle.⁷¹ The first view sees the participle as parallel to the Old Testament commission texts⁷² or as a technical term for mission.⁷³ The evidence for this view is questionable and unconvincing. The grammar mitigates against it; typically, a participle is grammatically subordinate to the main verb.⁷⁴ In addition, Matthew uses paratactic imperatives in succession in his book (Matt. 8:4; 18:15; 19:21),⁷⁵ yet chooses not to in this situation.

The pleonastic or auxiliary usage describes a verbal redundancy from Semitic influence (e.g. main verb + *lamed* and an infinitive construct) in which "the word 'go' is better left untranslated."⁷⁶

Bauer suggests that "the aor. ptc. of por. is oft. used pleonastically to enliven the narrative . . . the idea of going or traveling is not emphasized."⁷⁷ Certainly, pleonasms are used in Matthew. Yet, an inductive analysis of the aorist participle with an imperative in Matthew does not support this contention.⁷⁸ In addition, McKnight observes,

[It] should be noted that the same form (participle with imperative) is found several times in the LXX, and that the participle is usually a translation of a Hebrew Qal imperative (see Gen. 27:9,13; 37:14; 43:2; Exod. 5:11,18; 3 Kings 14:7; 4 Kings 5:10). Thus, the participle, though it does not have the same value in the sentence as the imperative, may well be more than a Semitic pleonasm.⁷⁹

Proponents of the third view translate the participle without any imperatival force as "having gone" or "while you go."⁸⁰ Although the form of the participle supports this view, the context of this participle and the usage mitigates against it.⁸¹ Chute, after his thorough study on the usages of this participle with an imperative, suggests,

If Matthew had desired to render any of the passages, including the Great Commission (28:19), as simultaneous without imperatival force it seems as if he would have used the present middle participle with the aorist imperative as he did in three occurrences of this construction in the book (Matt. 10:7, "As you go,[sic] preach . . ."; Matt. 10:12, "As you *enter* the house, *give* . . ."; and Matt. 10:14, "As you go out of that house . . . *shake* off the dust of your feet"). Or possibly he could have used the present active participle with the aorist imperative as he did on two occasions (Matt. 6:3, "When you *give* alms, do not let your left hand *know* . . ."; and Matt. 6:17, "When you *fast*, *anoint* your head . . .").⁸²

Advocates of the final view believe the preparatory participle has imperatival force and should be translated, "go *make disciples*."⁸³ Concerning this construction, Bosch notes,

First, we have here a construction which Matthew frequently uses and about which Schlatter says, "When two actions are connected with a single event, Matthew puts the aorist participle of the preparatory action before the aorist of the main verb. This sentence construction is so common that it may be designated a characteristic of Matthew's style" (Schlatter 1948:23. My translation). This means that in Matthew 28:19 both *poreuthentes* and *matheteusate* (make

disciples) refer to *one* event. . . . *Poreuthentes* serves to underline the urgency and primacy of *mathateusate*.⁸⁴

Both context and usage sustain this view. Concerning the context, Rogers notes,

First, the participle is vitally related to the command contained in the imperative. Without the action of the participle having taken place, it would not be possible to carry out the command. The participle proposes the way for the fulfilling of the main verb and in this way also has the form of an imperative.⁸⁵

In addition, Mark 16:15 ("go into all the world and preach the Gospel") only makes sense if the aorist participle has imperatival force. The command to go was also present in Christ's limited mission given to the disciples in Matthew 10:5-7.

After conducting an inductive study of the usages of the aoristic participle of the verb *poreuomai* with an imperatival verb in the Old Testament (Gen. 27:9, 13; 37:14; 43:2; Ex. 5:18; I Kings 14:7; II Kings 2:16; 5:10), in the Apocrypha (Tobit 5:3b; Judith 12:11; I Macc. 7:7), and in the New Testament (Matt. 2:8; 9:13; 11:4; 17:27; 28:7, 19; Mark 16:15; Luke 7:22; 13:32; 14:19; 17:14; 22:8); Chute argues for the simultaneous, imperatival, preparatory usage of the aoristic participle in Matthew 28:19.⁸⁶ The observations of Matthew Black support the imperatival force, "paratactic imperatives are not uncommon in Greek when they are connected by simple *kai*. The more literary construction, however, puts the first verb in the participle, subordinated to the second imperative."⁸⁷

In conclusion, Chute states,

poreuthentes ("go") is a participle of attendant circumstance with imperatival force, i.e. a preparatory imperative. Although *poreuthentes* has imperatival force, Matthew has recorded it as a participle, preparatory to the main verb *mathateusate*, "make disciples." Thus the command is not fulfilled in the "go," nor is the participle one step in the process. The imperative is a "go and do" command. *poreuthentes* . . . *mathateusate* is probably best understood as a constative aorist commanding the action as a single whole.⁸⁸

Therefore, the best translation is "go *make disciples*."

If the relationship of the aorist participle to the main verb is preparatory, what is the relationship of the two present participles to the main verb? Though the discussion by scholars on the relationship of the two present participles to the main verb is less controversial, the conclusion is vital to a proper understanding of Matthew 28:19. The structure and significance of these two present participles are both important. Kingsbury understands these two imperatives as coordinating circumstantial participles which are both subordinate to the main verb.⁸⁹ He believes this pattern is syntactically similar to Christ's ministry with Israel found in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35.⁹⁰ This writer concurs.

Generally, grammarians and commentators have interpreted the participles with an instrumental usage.⁹¹ Carson argues that "baptizing and teaching are not the *means* of making disciples, but they characterize it."⁹² His reasoning is that "*matheteuo* ("I disciple") entails both preaching and response" and that "the response of discipleship is baptism and instruction."⁹³ His reasoning is faulty because the discipling process includes post-conversion baptism and instruction as well as evangelism and conversion. These two post-conversion activities are highlighted by Christ so that the disciples will recognize the importance of doing them.⁹⁴ Although they are not the sole activities of discipling, yet they are crucial to Christ. The practice of the early church is a testimony to their importance. The preaching of the Gospel is closely tied to the act of baptism (see the ministry of John in Matthew 3:1-6). Baptism is mentioned because it culminates and solidifies the commitment one has made to Christ in response to the Gospel. Thus, baptism is a declaration of discipleship. Applied teaching is mentioned because ongoing growth is the result of true discipleship. Apparently, an imperatival force connects these participles.⁹⁵ Though no linguistic proof supports the chronological order of the two participles, logic would uphold this contention. It makes sense that one would publicly confess his submissive relationship to Christ before growing in that relationship. In addition, this pattern of growth is seen in the early church (Acts 2:41-47).⁹⁶ In conclusion, the first participle highlights the urgency of discipling others, whereas the two present participles suggest the post-conversion plan in discipling others.

(2) **Analysis of the main clause.** What is the significance of the clause "make disciples of all nations" in Matthew 28:19? The verb *matheteuo* occurs four times in the New Testament: three times in

Matthew (13:52; 27:57; 28:19) and once in Acts (14:21).⁹⁷ Whereas the intransitive deponent usage describes the function of the verbs in Matthew 13:52 and 27:57 ("to become a disciple"), the transitive usage describes the function in Matthew 28:19 and Acts 14:21 ("make disciples").⁹⁸ The implication of Matthew 13:52 is that an individual who wants to teach the truths of discipleship must first become a disciple. By contrast, the implication of Matthew 27:57 is that a disciple is one who acts courageously based upon his commitment to Christ.⁹⁹ Acts 14:21 suggests that "to evangelize (*euangelizesthai*) a town and to make disciples (*matheteuein*) are two related but different activities."¹⁰⁰

This command, in keeping with the teaching about a disciple in Matthew's Gospel, signifies the bringing of someone into a submissive, growing, living relationship with Jesus Christ.¹⁰¹ This begins with conversion. This relationship is enhanced by a decision (baptism--declaration of discipleship) and a process of growth (teaching to observe--application of discipleship).¹⁰² The one who disciples is not making disciples of himself but is making disciples of the Lord. This activity becomes a paradigm for all disciples of all ages (not just the eleven) because the initial eleven were unable to fulfill this command and present believers still live in the age prior to the consummation, in which age Christ is to be proclaimed as Lord.¹⁰³ Three views have been espoused on the meaning of *panta ta ethna*.¹⁰⁴ Some believe this phrase refers only to the Jews of the Dispersion (e.g. D. W. B. Robinson). Others contend that the reference is to all nations with the exception of Jews (e.g. Hare and Harrington). Basically, for "Matthew the time of the mission to Israel as Israel is over."¹⁰⁵ However, a large number of scholars¹⁰⁶ believe the reference is to all ethnic nations including Israel.¹⁰⁷

The first view is untenable both on linguistic and logical grounds. Though the last two views are linguistically possible, the last view is much more probable based on the combined strength of linguistic usage and theological continuity. Clearly, *ethna* is the term typically attributed to Gentiles as opposed to Jews in the LXX, intertestamental literature, New Testament, and patristic writings.¹⁰⁸ In Matthew, the noun refers solely to Gentiles in 4:15; 6:32; 10:5,18; 12:18,21; and 20:19,25.¹⁰⁹ Yet, the noun seems to have a religious connotation for the church in Matthew 21:43 and an all inclusive ethnic meaning in Matthew 24:7.¹¹⁰ Significantly, the addition of the adjective *pas* to the plural noun of *ethnos*, as in Matthew 28:19, occurs three other times in Matthew (24:9, 14; 25:32) and seems to include

both Jews and Gentiles contextually. For instance, since Matthew's end time judgment accounts include both Jews and Gentiles (8:11, 12; 11:20-24; 12:41, 42; 13:36-43) and since the context of Matthew 25 indicates a distinction on spiritual and not ethnic grounds, it seems that the judgment of Matthew 25:32 includes both unsaved Jews and Gentiles.¹¹¹

Theologically, the last view is to be preferred based on the terminology of the other evangelists and the practice of the early church. The Marcan parallel (13:13) to Matthew 24:9 uses the term *pantas* without any particularistic focus.¹¹² Luke 24:47 describes the universal preaching of the Gospel as originating in and including Palestine. The practice of the church was both to the Jew and the Greek (e.g. the ministry of Peter and Paul).

The term "ethna" can be understood as a "plural collective" for "the whole world outside the community of believers."¹¹³ "The aim of Jesus' disciples, therefore, is to make disciples of all men everywhere, without distinction."¹¹⁴

(3) **Analysis of the participial phrases.**¹¹⁵ Baptism into the triune name of God is administered to all believers as the declaration of discipleship;¹¹⁶ and the ongoing obedience to all of God's truth is taught to all believers as the application of discipleship. In analyzing the first phrase, one must consider the definition, description, and criticism of Christian baptism. Christian baptism¹¹⁷ is both a picture of a believer's union with Christ and a public proclamation of a believer's devotion to Christ. "It was not only a demonstration of faith but a promise of faithfulness."¹¹⁸ Thus, devotion is an important aspect of baptism.¹¹⁹

In Matthew 28:19 baptism is described as into the name of the Triune God. This prepositional phrase refers to action involving the one being immersed rather than the one immersing.¹²⁰ Some propose the preposition *eis*, which Matthew differentiates from *en*, suggests the result of an activity.¹²¹ Harris lists three possible views for the prepositional phrase, "*eis* to *onoma*."¹²² First, "it may denote a transference of ownership." Second, "it means to endow a person . . . with the benefits of salvation . . ." Third, by tracing "the origin of the phrase" to Hebrew, it denotes "the fundamental reference or purpose of something." Thus, it distinguishes "Christian baptism from other rites, especially John's baptism."¹²³ The second view is theologically questionable and the third view is contextually unsupported,¹²⁴ but the first view is viable. Thus, baptism, which

pictures a believer's positional submissive relationship to Christ (Rom.6:3-4), is a public declaration of one's submissive relationship with the Trinity.¹²⁵

This participial phrase has been criticized both textually and theologically. Based upon the exclusion of the Trinitarian formula in several quotations by Eusebius and a Jewish-Christian source dating from around the sixth century, some scholars have denied the authenticity of the Trinitarian formula in favor of a shorter reading.¹²⁶ However, no manuscript evidence or additional patristic quotations exist that "corroborate the originality of the shorter reading."¹²⁷

Theologically, some have argued that the trinitarian formula is inconsistent with the monadic formula practiced in the early church (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; Gal. 3:27; and Rom. 6:3).¹²⁸ Several solutions have been suggested. Whereas some hold that Matthew gives the meaning of the rite rather than the formula to be recited,¹²⁹ others believe that the "Lucian formulas" provide the "theological significance" and the Matthean formula is to be recited at baptism.¹³⁰ Other scholars, based upon the presentation of dual formulas in the *Didache*, conclude both formulas provide the theological significance and can legitimately be recited at baptism,¹³¹ and this writer concurs.

The second participial phrase emphasizes the process of discipleship,¹³² which is the instilling of the teachings of Christ in the life of a disciple. A discipler concentrates on teaching which transforms a life. The teaching ministry of Christ is emphasized in Matthew.¹³³ In the early church, post-baptismal teaching was predominant (Acts 2:37-42; 8:12f; 9:18f; 10:34-48; 16:13-15; 18:8-11).¹³⁴ While Matthew 28:20a explicitly presents the content and purpose of teaching, it implicitly establishes the perpetuation and methodology of teaching. The content of teaching is "all that I have commanded you." This word cluster is an Old Testament "idiom" for the "authoritative will of God" (Ex. 7:2; 23:22; 29:35; 31:11; 34:11; Dt. 1:3, 41; 4:2; 7:11; 12:11, 14; 13:1).¹³⁵ Christ's teaching was both the restoration of the essence of the Old Testament law and the fulfillment of the Old Testament law (Matt. 5:17ff). Though all of Christ's teaching is to be taught, the structure of the book suggests an emphasis on the five major discourses.¹³⁶ In addition, one could stress the kingdom or discipleship motif.

The purpose of the teaching is continuous obedience (*tarein* is a present infinitive and denotes obedience, cf. 19:17; 23:3).¹³⁷ Doing God's will is central to the book of Matthew and to the concept of

discipleship.¹³⁸ Since this obedience is a response to the commands of the Lord God, it is not optional.

The perpetuation of the teaching ministry by all disciplers is implied in the text. "What took place during the public ministry is normative for the faith, especially for what regards discipleship, which for Matthew defines Christianity."¹³⁹ Carson elaborates,

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." . . . It then follows that by carefully passing on everything Jesus taught, the first disciples--themselves eyewitnesses--call into being new generations of "earwitnesses" (O'Brien, pp.264f.). These in turn pass on the truth they received. So a means is provided for successive generations to remain in contact with Jesus' teachings (cf. 2 Tim 2:2).¹⁴⁰

The methodology of teaching is also implied in the text. Although Jesus' teaching ministry is often directed to crowds (Matt. 23)¹⁴¹ or to opponents (Matt. 21:23-46), it is primarily directed to the disciples. Christ's teaching of the disciples created a viable model for their teaching of others. His model for teaching could be outlined as follows:¹⁴²

- I. The Selection of Disciples
- II. The Association with Disciples: This takes *time!*
- III. The Demonstration before Disciples: one's example
- IV. The Impartation of Truth to Disciples
 - A. Introduction to his teaching: At times the disciples ask questions (Matt. 17:19). Christ speaks to needs by using the occasion (Matt. 14:27), raising curiosity (Matt. 13), and asking questions (Matt. 16:13).
 - B. Plan of his teaching: attention, communication, motivation, application, delegation, evaluation, perpetuation
 - C. Style of his teaching: personalized (content and tone), repetitious, picturesque, progressive, simple, from known to unknown.
 - D. Form of his teaching:
 1. Generally: discourse, dialogue, parable and story, disputation.

2. Specifically: simile, hyperbole, pun, contrast, poetry, allegory, metaphor, visual aid, illustration, paradox, irony, proverb.

V. The Delegation of the Disciples (Matt. 10): An opportunity to apply the truth.

VI. The Evaluation of the Disciples

The Promise of Christ's Presence. The promise of Christ's presence, which is found in Matthew 28:20, is the Lord's consolation for those he commissions during the interim preceding the consummation of his kingdom. Christ's promise is emphatic, extensive, and enduring. The promise is accentuated by the words "surely" (*idou*) and "I" (*ego*).¹⁴³ These words stress the certainty of Christ's vow.

Christ's promise is extensive, since he will be with his followers "all the days." These words are reminiscent of God's promise in the Old Testament. O'Brien observes,

The reassurance of the divine presence (e.g., 'I am with you', or 'certainly I will be with you') was a regular feature of the Old Testament commissioning narratives (e.g., Genesis 17:4; 28:15; Exodus 4:11-12; Joshua 1:5-6, 9, etc.) when God assured his servants that his help and assistance would go with them as they carried out his appointed tasks.¹⁴⁴

The abiding presence of God was previously introduced in Matthew's Gospel: 1:23--"God with us," and 18:20--"I am in their midst."¹⁴⁵

Christ's presence will endure until the consummation of this age. The apocalyptic phrase *suntelias tou aionos* occurs six times in the Scripture, five of which are in Matthew (13:39,40,49; 24:3; 28:20).¹⁴⁶ It always refers to the second coming of Christ to earth. Until Christ returns to rule physically on the earth, believers are personally accompanied by Christ as they carry out his commission in the "interim period between the resurrection and the parousia."¹⁴⁷

Summary

A passage can only be understood in its context. Therefore, "make disciples of all nations" was analyzed within its theological, literary, and immediate context. The theological context reveals the uniqueness of Matthew's commission to disciple in contrast to the

other evangelists' accounts and establishes the climactic position of this text in the Gospel's overall structure. The literary context contrasts the commission of Christ to his disciples with the silent judgment of Christ toward his rebellious enemies.

The immediate context describes the setting of Christ's commission and the speech of Christ's commission. The commission to disciple all nations is an urgent imperative, which is directed toward all men without discrimination. The commission is based upon Christology: the position of Christ and the presence of Christ. To disciple an individual is to bring that individual into a vital, submissive, growing relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Discipleship is initiated at conversion. Discipleship is characterized by a public confession of the convert's devotion to Christ (baptism) and continual obedience to the teachings of Christ. The discipler both encourages the baptism and actively teaches the content and necessary application of Christ's instruction.

Editor's Note: The second and final part of "An Examination of 'Make Disciples of All Nations' in Matthew 18:18-20 will appear in the Fall 1991 issue of *CBTJ*."

Notes:

¹ A perusal of both technical and popular literature will substantiate this conclusion. The neglect of Mark 16:15 is due to the controversy over the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20. It is beyond the scope of this article to substantiate the textual veracity of this text.

² Richard D Calenberg, "The New Testament Doctrine of Discipleship" (ThD dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), 1

³ Robert D Culver, "What is the Church's Commission?" *BibSac* (1968) 125:243-244

⁴ Along with the Church Growth movement, Douglas H Shank, "The Great Commission to 'Make Disciples:' Its Interpretation and Application to Mission Strategy" (ThM thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1985), 1, submits that several schools of thought on mission strategy are not built on "critical research."

⁵ For example, Matthew's emphasis on the teaching discourses of Jesus is seldom mentioned in interpreting the participial phrase on teaching found in Matthew 28:20.

⁶ There are several helpful studies available on the evangelistic methodologies of Christ and the early church. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine this important area. Rather, those aspects of discipling related to post-conversion are discussed.

⁷ See Darrell Smith, "The Great Commission" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1967), iii; Daniel J Harrington, an abstract of "Dernieres paroles du ressuscite et mission de l'Eglise aujourd' hui (A propos de Mt 28, 18-20 et paralleles)," by JC Basset, in *New Testament Abstracts* 27:3 (1983), 259; and James D Devine, "A Harmony of Jesus' Final Discipleship Instructions" (ThM thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, 1978), 4. Unfortunately, Devine elevates John 21:15-23 above John 20:19-23.

⁸ John Wenham, *Easter Enigma* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 110-115. See Wenham, 90ff; and Robert Newman, *220 New Testament History II: The Apostolic Period* (Ithaca, New York: The Bloomsbury Research Corporation, 1983), 16, 24 for proposals concerning the chronology of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ.

⁹ See J Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 509ff; and Robert L Thomas, and Stanley N Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 261. Along with Smith, 32; this writer is accepting the longer reading of Mark as being authentic. For a contrary view, see Grant R Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 55-72.

¹⁰ Harrington, an abstract of "Dernieres," 259. Also, see D Wenham, "The Resurrection Narratives in Matthew's Gospel," *Tyndale Bulletin* (1973) 24:37-38

¹¹ See Wenham, "The Resurrection narratives in Matthew's Gospel," 38 for support for the Lucian passage.

¹² If Mark 16:15 is authentic and if one of Matthew's sources was Mark, Matthew's unique perspective as compared to Mark is clearly evident.

¹³ Stanley D Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980) 18-19

¹⁴ See also Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E Gabelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984) 8:25

¹⁵ These five categories are largely taken from Carson, "Matthew," 50 and RT France, *Matthew*, in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, ed Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985) 1:58-67. These categories are not comprehensive. For instance, Vern S Poythress, "NT 211 Gospels" (unpublished class material, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1986), 1-12, has an outline based on rhetorical structure, an analogical outline relating Matthew to the Old Testament, and an analogical outline based on the genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17.

¹⁶ Leopold Sabourin, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Bandra, Bombay: St Paul Publications, 1982), 52, 62, builds upon Kingsbury's basic outline.

¹⁷ See Carson, "Matthew," 50; and David L Barr, "The drama of Matthew's Gospel: a reconsideration of its structure and purpose," *Theology Digest* (1976) 24:350-351

¹⁸ For example, see Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*.

¹⁹ Terence J Keegan, "Introductory Formulae for Matthean Discourses," *CBQ* (1982) 44:415-428 attempts to show where each of the five discourses begin through the "precise and distinctive terminology" (p 428) of Matthew.

²⁰ The attacks of Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Form and Message of Matthew," in *Interpreting the Gospels*, ed James Luther Mays (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) 70-72, are answered by Carson, "Matthew," 50-51

²¹ See Barr, 351-352. Though the writer follows Carson's outline, in which the discourses follow the narratives, he sees some validity to the discourse as a type of connector between two narratives.

²² See HJ Bernard Combrink, "The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew as Narrative," *Tyndale Bulletin* (1983) 34:71; David J Clark and Jan de Waard, "Discourse Structure in Matthew's Gospel," *Scriptura* (1982) 1:5; and HC van Zyl, "Structural Analysis of Matthew 18," *Neotestamentica* (1982) 16:35. In this writer's view, these structural developments are forced and unconvincing.

²³ France, *Matthew*, 58-67

²⁴ This outline follows Carson, "Matthew," 51-57, with the exception of some key adjustments in the sixth and seventh section.

²⁵ Both Clark, "Discourse Structure in Matthew's Gospel," 70 and Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection and the Message of Easter* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1974), 140, unconvincingly argue that Matthew 28:16-20 is solely the epilogue to the whole book. Rather this writer concurs with Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 97, and France, *Matthew*, 410-411, who believe this pericope "has a twofold relationship both to the resurrection narrative and the Gospel as a whole" (Osborne, p 97).

²⁶ Carson, "Matthew," 36, 599. See also Herman Hendrickx, *Resurrection Narratives* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), 20, 41; and Otto Michel, "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel: a Contribution to the History of the Easter Message (1950)," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed Graham Stanton (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) 35.

²⁷ For a listing of helpful motifs found in this final pericope, see Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 97-98; Robert H Gundry, *Matthew A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 593; and Sabourin, 932. Yet one does not want to overstate the issue or fabricate motifs from one's own imagination. Shank, 101-104, lists several forced motifs (Christ being the second Moses).

²⁸ See Shanks, 93, who lists several of the older commentators.

²⁹ The following list is taken largely from Benjamin J Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20* (Missoula, Montana: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars' Press, 1974) 2-22; R Recker, "Matthew 28:18-20 interpreted from the point of view of the apostolate," in *Zending op weg naar de toekomst*, Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij HJ Kok, 1978, 53; Daniel J Harrington, an abstract of "Die formale Struktur von Mt 28, 18-20," by G Friedrich, in *New Testament Abstracts* (1984) 28:17; and Charles J Reedy, "Rhetorical Concerns and Argumentative Techniques in Matthean Pronouncement Stories," in *SBL 1983 Seminar Papers*, ed Kent Harold Richards (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983) 219, 221.

³⁰ Carson, "Matthew," 592. In addition, see the critiques of John P Meier, "Two disputed Questions in Matt 28:16-20," *JBL* (1977) 96:424; Shanks, 96; L Legrand, "The Missionary Command of the Risen Lord Mt 28:16-20," *Indian Theological Studies* (1987) 24:10-11; and Young J Son, "The Missiological Significance of Matthew 28:16-20 with Special Reference to Donald M. McGavran" (ThD dissertation, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1983) 13-41.

³¹ Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 87

³² Leon-Dufour, 139, 140

³³ Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 74

³⁴ See France, *Matthew*, 409

³⁵ On additional contrasts and their significance, see Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 83-84; and Hendrickx, 27.

³⁶ IP Ellis, " 'But Some Doubted'" *New Testament Studies* (1968) 14:574, states, "The most striking feature of St Matthew's account of the post-resurrection appearance of Christ is its brevity. Jesus appears in Galilee on the mountain of revelation and commissions the disciples to preach the gospel to the world. The appearance is not described, and the other details are brief and to the point." See also, Legrand, 6.

³⁷ Bruce J Malina, "The Literary Structure and Form of Matt. XXVIII. 16-20," *New Testament Studies* (1970) 17:88

³⁸ Robert P Meye, "The Christological Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel" *Foundations* (1968) 11:1, 20-21; and Legrand, 11-12, assert that the focus of the passage is on the mission of Christ and only secondarily on the mission of the church. No one would minimize the theology about Christ, since it is the foundation of the imperative. Yet, the imperative is the anticipated climax of the indicatives. See Grant R Osborne, "Redactional Criticism and the Great Commission: A Case Study toward a Biblical Understanding of Inerrancy," *JETS* (1976) 19:73, 76 for a similar conclusion.

³⁹ Even if the five hundred brethren mentioned in I Corinthians 15:6 were also there, Matthew is silent concerning them because his focus is on the eleven disciples as it has been throughout his Gospel.

⁴⁰ See Hubbard, 73, and Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 87, who discount this view.

⁴¹ Hendrickx, 48

⁴² For instance, see Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 87; and Wenham, "The Resurrection Narratives in Matthew's Gospel," 36.

⁴³ Certainly, Matthew 5:1; 15:29; and 24:3 reveal the wisdom of Christ's placing himself in a position where he could be viewed by many. On the other hand, the mountain locations in 14:23 and 17:1 provided privacy.

⁴⁴ See Paul S Minear, "Matt. 28:1-10," *Interpretation* (1984) 38:61

⁴⁵ Son, 63. Minear, "Matt. 28:1-10," 61, understands Galilee both as "a region of the periphery" to Gentile nations and as a region already occupied by many Gentiles.

⁴⁶ See Carson, "Matthew," 593; Minear, "Matt. 28:1-10," 61; and France, *Matthew*, 412.

⁴⁷ Hans Schonweiss and Colin Brown, "proskuneo," in *NIDNTT*, ed Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976) 2:877

⁴⁸ For this position, see Charles Homer Griblin, "Structural and Thematic Correlations in the Matthean Burial-Resurrection Narrative (Matt. xxvii. 57-xxviii. 20)," *New Testament Studies* (1975): 21:68, 75; and Daniel J Harrington, an abstract of "Duda y adoracion. Hoj de edistasan (Mt 28, 17)," by R Pietrantonio, in *New Testament Abstracts* (1983) 24:259. Typically, this view believes both clauses refer to all eleven of the disciples.

⁴⁹ Yet, according to NASV, Nestle-Aland Greek text (UBS#3), and The Majority Text (MT) at least one exception would be Matthew 26:66.

⁵⁰ Those seeing Matthew 28:17 as different sentences typically hold to this view to prove that verse seventeen is making no distinction between participants. They would contend that Matthew 28:18-20 is Christ's answer to the doubts of the eleven disciples. Rather, Matthew 26:67 supports different participants for each act.

⁵¹ For instance, Carson, "Matthew," 593; and Allan Hugh McNeill, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: MacMillian and Co, Ltd, 1915) 434.

⁵² Hubbard, 76, following the grammarian Blass; John Tiffin, "The Meaning of Matthew 28:17 in light of the Author's Theological Purpose" (ThM thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1984) 97, following Robertson; and Ellis, 578.

⁵³ IP Ellis, "But Some Doubted," *New Testament Studies* (1968) 14:576; Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 88; and Tiffin, 102, 112. Tiffin (pp 112-113) concludes that the word "indicates an attitude of uncertainty which is not necessarily in direct opposition to what has been presented; rather, the one doubting has simply not yet come to a point of confirmation upon which a decision can be made[.]"

⁵⁴ Tiffin, 86

⁵⁵ This writer has largely used the development of Tiffin, 7-9.

⁵⁶ See K. Grayston, "The translation of Matthew 28:17," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (1984) 21:108

⁵⁷ See LG Parkhurst, Jr, "Matthew 28:16-20 Reconsidered," *The Expository Times* (1979) 90:179-180.

⁵⁸ Osborne, "Redactional Criticism and the Great Commission," 77

⁵⁹ Hubbard, 77-78, notes that the verb "proserxomai" describes the activity of Jesus twice in Matthew, here and in 17:7. In both cases it was to remove the disciples' fear.

⁶⁰ Malina, 89

⁶¹ While Matthew 28:18 reads, "edotha moi pasa exousia . . .," the LXX reads, "kai edotha auto exousia, kai panta ta ethna . . ."

⁶² See Hubbard, 82; Son, 73-74; Otto Michel, "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel: a Contribution to the History of the Easter Message (1950)," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed Graham Stanton (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) 36; Legrand, 16-19; and Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 89, who suggests that Matthew indicates a " 'proleptic parousia'."

⁶³ See Gundry, 595; Peter T O'Brien, "The Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20--A Missionary Mandate or not?" *Evangelical Review of Theology* (1978) 2:259; and Russell C Tuck, "The Lord Who Said Go: Some Reflections on Matthew 28:16-20," *Andover Newton Quarterly* (1966) 7:88, who notes a possible parallel between Psalm 110:1 and Matthew's exaltation account.

⁶⁴ O'Brien, 260

⁶⁵ Carson, "Matthew," 594

⁶⁸ One sees Christ's authority in teaching (7:29; 21:23), his authority in healing (8:9), his authority to forgive (9:6), his authority delegated (10:1), and his authority to correct improper worship (21:23).

⁶⁷ Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 90

⁶⁸ See Hubbard, 79

⁶⁹ See Homer Kent, "Matthew," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, ed Charles F Pfeiffer and Everett F Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962) 985; and Carson, "Matthew," 595.

⁷⁰ Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 90. Sabourin, 935, shows several Old Testament texts which speak of Jehovah's authority over heaven and earth (Gen 1:1; 14:19; Ps 134:3).

⁷¹ There is disagreement over the imperatival force of this participle. Yet, often the terminology used is confusing. Several writers combine some of the choices. This writer agrees with David J Bosch, "The Structure of Mission: An Exposition of Matthew 28:16-20," in *Exploring Church Growth*, ed Wilbert R Shenk (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 223, who considers the participle a pleonastic participle with imperatival force. This writer would not use the term "pleonastic," though. This writer agrees more with Cleon Rogers, "The Great Commission," *BibSac* (1973) 130:261-262 and Wayne Chute, "Go Make Disciples: A Clarification of the Command in the Great Commission according to Matthew" (ThM thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1977), 75, who view the participle as a circumstantial participle with imperatival force, a preparatory participle.

⁷² See Hendrickx, 55

⁷³ Jacques Matthey, "The Great Commission according to Matthew," *International Review of Mission* (1980) 69:167 following the work of Zumstein.

⁷⁴ See James L Boyer, "A Classification of Imperatives: A Statistical Study," *GTJ* (1987) 8:52

⁷⁵ James L Boyer, "Supplemental Manual of Information: Imperative Verbs" (unpublished material from Grace Theological Seminary) 77

⁷⁶ O'Brien, 261

⁷⁷ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, revised and augmented by F Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 692

⁷⁸ See the definitive work of Chute, which will be discussed in greater detail later. After an inductive analysis of the aorist participle of *poruomai* in Matthew, Son (p 85) concludes that "its pleonastic character is often weakened by the command character that demands action"

⁷⁹ McKnight, 111

⁸⁰ See the argumentation of Robert D Culver, "What is the Church's Commission?" *BibSac* (1968) 169:244-251. See also Boyer, "A Classification of Imperatives," 52-53, and Legrand, 52-53.

⁸¹ Chute, 5-6

⁸² Chute, 66

⁸³ See Hubbard, 83; Carson, "Matthew," 595; Rogers, 259-260; Chute, 75; and Bosch, 229.

⁸⁴ Bosch, 229. Also see the examples of P Boyd Mather, "Christian Prophecy and Matthew 28:16-20," in *SBL 1977 Seminar Papers*, ed Paul Achtemeier (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977) 106.

⁸⁵ Rogers, 261

⁸⁶ Chute, 25-65. For support for the simultaneous usage of an aoristic participle with an aoristic main verb, see F Blass and A Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, trans and rev Robert W Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 174-175; and A T Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, (Nashville: Tenn, Broadman Press, 1934) 860-861, 1112-1113. For evidence that the modal aspect of the aoristic participle is derived from the context, see Nigel Turner, *Syntax, Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark) 3:150. Rogers (p 259) observes that the preparatory, imperatival usage of the circumstantial participle is not specifically discussed by the grammars.

⁸⁷ Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1954) 46

⁸⁸ Chute, 75

⁸⁹ Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Composition and Christology of Matt 28:16-20," *JBL* (1974) 93:577-578. See also Gundry, 597, and William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973) 1000. Several men (Culver, Beasley-Murray, Meyer, Schaff) believe the absence of a *kai* between the two participles indicates that the second participle is subordinate to the first participle. See Culver, "What is the Church's Commission?," 245, 247-248 and G R Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962) 89. Grammar alone is inconclusive since Matthew 24:38 and 26:44 have coordinating participles without a *kai* between them. The practice in Acts would rather suggest a coordinate usage with the second participle being chronologically subsequent to the first.

⁹⁰ Kingsbury, "The Form and Message of Matthew," 578

⁹¹ See Robertson, 1128; Culver, "What is the Church's Commission?," 248; Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 92; France, *Matthew*, 414; De Ridder, 190; and Hendriksen, 1000. This writer is not distinguishing between the modal, means, or instrumental usage.

⁹² Carson, "Matthew," 597

⁹³ *Ibid*

⁹⁴ The syntactical relationship of the participles to the main clause stresses the post-conversion activity. The pronoun *autous* refers to *ethna* (cf Matt 25:32). In addition, the book of Matthew stresses the post-conversion teaching ministry of Christ to his disciples.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*

⁹⁶ Certainly, one could argue that the teaching of the Gospel precedes baptism (Acts 5:42). This is Culver's position (p.248). Yet, the application of the truth ("teaching to keep") is an activity for the believer.

⁹⁷ Some would also list John 4:1, which describes the ministry of Christ as "making disciples" (*poreuo mathetes*) and "baptising disciples." This verse both reveals the outreach of Christ and the continuity of baptism and discipleship. See Kvalbein, 49.

⁹⁸ For the dual usage of this verb, see Blass, 82. Conversely, Robertson, 475, 800; and Wilkens, 160-161, argue for the transitive usage in Matthew 13:52 and Matthew 27:57.

⁹⁹ See Matthey, 168

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. To "make disciples" in Acts 14:21 seems to involve both the conversion of certain people and their subsequent formation into a local body for growth and edification. This is consistent with Paul's practice elsewhere. Whereas Luke seems to distinguish between evangelism and discipling, Matthew sees evangelism as implied in discipling.

¹⁰¹ For a similar definition, see John A Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, (Valley Forge, Pa: Judson Press, 1886) 1:593. "Making disciples" certainly includes evangelization and conversion (Matt 11:28-30). In addition, the mention of baptism in Matthew 28:19 pictures conversion. Yet, the stress is on post-conversion activity.

¹⁰² See Michael J Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel* (Leiden: E J Brill, 1988) 162

¹⁰³ For the continuity between the eleven and all believers, see Carson, "Matthew," 596; Sabourin, 936; France, *Matthew*, 412; Culver, "What is the Church's Commission?," 241; Recker, "Matthew 28:18-20," 49, 58; and O'Brien, 254-255.

¹⁰⁴ Taken from O'Brien, 261-262

¹⁰⁵ Hendrickx, 56

¹⁰⁶ See especially John P Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19?," *CBQ* (1977) 39:94-102. See also, Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 92; O'Brien, 92; Carson, "Matthew," 596; France, *Matthew*, 414; Gundry, 595; Sabourin, 939; and Hubbard, 84.

¹⁰⁷ De Ridder, 188-189, unsuccessfully argues that the designation is religious rather than ethnic. It seems better to see the term ethnically with religious overtones. See Bosch, 236-237.

¹⁰⁸ See the presentation of Douglas R A Hare and Daniel J Harrington, " 'Make Disciples of all the Gentiles' (Mt 28:19)," *CBQ* (1975) 37:359-361, 367-368.

¹⁰⁹ See O'Brien, 262, and Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19?," 95-96.

¹¹⁰ Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19?," 97-98

¹¹¹ Ibid, 100. Matthey, 168, observes, "In Matthew's Gospel, the word 'Gentile nations' is, in its plural form, always used as 'the Gentile nations' (*ta ethna*) until the peak of the crisis between Jesus and the Jewish people (chapter 23, cf. also the parable 21:33-44). In this first part of the gospel, it means the Gentiles as opposed to the Jews, to God's elected people. From the moment when Jesus has closed the chapter of his special mission to the Jews (23:37-39), the term always appears in the form 'all the Gentile nations' (*panta ta ethna*) and means all the nations, of the earth, including the Jews, as opposed to God's new people, the Church."

¹¹² See O'Brien, 262

¹¹³ Carson, "Matthew," 596 and Walter L Liefeld, "Theology of Church Growth," in *Theology and Mission*, ed David Hesselgrave (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978) 177. Matthew 28:19 does not support the "peoples movement" (Carson, p 596) of the Church Growth adherents. Shank, 120, observes, "Church Growth advocates claim that the Great Commission means to convert an entire, intact 'people group' to nominal allegiance to Christ." This proposal is untenable

linguistically (Liefeld, p 175), theologically (Liefeld, pp 175-176), logically (Carson, p 596 on "city movements"), and contextually (Sabourin, 936: The ones who are disciples are individuals within the nation. Note the difference between the neuter usage, *ethna* and the masculine usage, *autous*).

¹¹⁴ Carson, "Matthew," 596. Wilkins (pp 168-169) likens the crowds of Jesus' earthly ministry to the nations of the church's ministry.

¹¹⁵ It seems best to understand the present participles as describing the ongoing activities of believers, who are actively evangelizing the lost.

¹¹⁶ In the New Testament, baptism is juxtaposed with conversion. Therefore, to speak of baptism is to indicate conversion. Although one technically becomes a disciple at conversion, it is publicly recognized and personally solidified at baptism.

¹¹⁷ For a discussion concerning the continuity and discontinuity between Christian baptism and initiatory lustrations at Qumran, proselyte baptism, John's baptism, Christ's personal baptism, and Jesus' baptism of disciples; see Richard E Averbeck, "The Focus of Baptism in the New Testament," *GTJ* (1981) 2:273-288; William Sanford La Sor, "Discovering what Jewish Miqva'ot can tell us about Christian Baptism," *BAR* (1987) 13:59; James D G Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977) 152; Murray J Harris, "Baptism and the Lord's Supper," in *In God's Community*, ed David J Ellis and W Ward Gasque (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1978), 16-17; R V G Tasker, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, ed R V G Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1961) 1:275-276; and Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 243-244.

¹¹⁸ Averbeck, 300. See also Harris, "Baptism," 20-21.

¹¹⁹ The context of discipleship, the continuity between John's baptism and Christian baptism, and the practice of the early church (Acts 2:38ff, 1 Pet 3:21) all support the concept of devotion of a believer to Christ. See Averbeck, 286, 288-289, 292; Kvalbein, 52; and John A. Broadus, 596.

¹²⁰ Hendrickx, 59, believes this phrase means one is to baptize others because of one's relationship to God. This is inconsistent with the usage of "into the name of Christ" in Acts.

¹²¹ Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, adapted by Joseph Smith (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963) 35; W F Albright and C S Mann, *Matthew*, in *AB*, ed William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freeman (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Doubleday, Inc, 1971) 362; and Carson, "Matthew," 597. For a contrary position, see John A Broadus, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, (Valley Forge, Pa: Judson Press, 1886) 1:594.

¹²² Murray J Harris, "Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament," in *NIDNTT*, ed Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978) 3:1209

¹²³ See Gundry, 596. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 90-92, believes the Hebrew origin also denotes a relationship one enters into. He sees Matthew 28:19 as describing the submissive relationship of a believer to God.

¹²⁴ Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 93

¹²⁵ This description is consistent with the following scholars: Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 93; Son, 168-169; Carson, "Matthew," 597; Albright, 362; Tasker, 275; and France, *Matthew*, 414.

¹²⁶ See Fred C Conybeare, "The Eusebian form of the Text Math. 28,19," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (1901) 2:275-288; Hans Kosmala, "The Conclusion of Matthew," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* (1965) 4:132-147; and David Flusser, "The Conclusion of Matthew in a New Jewish Christian Source," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* (1966-1967) 5:110-120.

¹²⁷ Hubbard, 162. See his extended critique on the shorter reading position (pp 151-172). The trinitarian concept can be seen at Christ's baptism (Mt. 2:15-17), elsewhere in the commission passages (eg Luke and John), and throughout the New Testament. See Wenham, "The Resurrection Narratives in Matthew's Gospel," 53, and Carson, "Matthew," 598.

¹²⁸ See the opposition to this view by P W Evans, "The Baptismal Commission in Matthew xxvii. 19," *The Baptist Quarterly* (1953) 15:25-27 and Carson, "Matthew," 598.

¹²⁹ Evans, "The Baptismal Commission," 25-27; Wenham, "The Resurrection Narratives of Matthew's Gospel," 52; and Gundry, 596.

¹³⁰ Harris, "Baptism," 18-19

¹³¹ Carson, "Matthew," 598. See also Broadus, 594-595.

¹³² Teaching all that Christ has commanded can only be an ongoing process. It took Christ three years.

¹³³ The book is structured around five discourses. Kingsbury, "The Composition and Christology of Matt 28:16-20," 578, observes, "In the three summaries of Jesus' ministry to Israel (4:23; 9:35; 11:1), the emphasis in each case is on the 'teaching' of Jesus (cf. also 5:2 and 7:28-29; 5:17-19; 23:2-10)."

¹³⁴ Hubbard, 89

¹³⁵ See O'Brien, 266; Kingsbury, "The Composition and Christology of Matt 28:16-20," 578; and Hendrickx, 61.

¹³⁶ Thus one present day curriculum could focus on the five discourses. This is only one of several viable options, since the other Great Commission texts do not emphasize the five discourses.

¹³⁷ Legrand, 26, notes, "The object of the 'teaching' of Jesus is not just a gnosis; it is also a praxis, a new type of life." In addition, Tasker, 277, observes, "The 'school-days' of a Christian are never over."

¹³⁸ Sabourin, 938

¹³⁹ Ibid, 115

¹⁴⁰ Carson, "Matthew," 599

¹⁴¹ Consider also the public ministry of Paul in Acts and his exhortation for public preaching and teaching in the Pastoral Epistles.

¹⁴² The following material is taken and reorganized from the following sources: Fredrick R Neely, "An Investigation and Application of the Teaching Principles and Practices of the Master Teacher" (PhD dissertation, Bob Jones University, 1978), 124-151; Robert E Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H Revell Company, 1963), 7; Ralph R Covell, "Biblical Models for Successful Teaching," in *Discipling through Theological Education by Extension*, ed Vergil Gerber (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 106-110; Herman Harrell Horne, *Teaching Techniques of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1971), iii; Son, 151-154; and Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teaching*, vii.

¹⁴³ See Tuck, 92; and Son, 177.

¹⁴⁴ O'Brien, 266. Even rabbinic literature speaks about the presence of the Shekinah (eg m'Abot 3:2, 6) for reassurance. See Gundry, 597, and the discussion of Michel, 34.

¹⁴⁵ It is going too far to see Matthew 1:23 and 28:20 as an inclusio for the entire book (eg Hendrickx, p 62).

¹⁴⁶ O'Brien, 267

¹⁴⁷ See Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 91.