

Study Notes: Matthew 28:16-20
February 1, 2026: “Jesus Gives the Great Commission”
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Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

- In Matthew 28:9-10, Jesus gave instructions to the women at the tomb, to pass on to the disciples about where they should meet Him after His resurrection. Prior to His death, Jesus also spoke similar instructions to the disciples in Matthew 26:32.
- Scholars believe the mountain mentioned may be Mount Tabor, the place where Jesus had earlier been transfigured before Peter, James, and John (see Matthew 17:1-8). However, this is based on tradition alone. Wherever the mountain was, it is clear that the disciples knew where to go, as the eleven who remained (Judas had committed suicide (Matthew 27:1-10)) went to meet Jesus at the designated location.

When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

- When the disciples saw Jesus, they had two different reactions. Some of the disciples worshiped Jesus, however, some doubted or hesitated.
 - The Greek word translated as “worshiped” is *proskyneō*. It indicates bowing down or paying homage to someone. The Pillar New Testament Commentary notes, “Worship was the natural response to the realization that Jesus, who had meant so much to them throughout his earthly ministry, was stronger than death and was alive again.”
 - The Greek word translated as “doubted” is *distazō*. It is the same word used of Peter when he began to sink, while walking on water (Matthew 14:31). The Faithlife Study Bible notes about this word, “Here it implies hesitation or indecision, rather than unbelief. The disciples are struggling to comprehend what they are witnessing.” The Expositor’s Bible Commentary further explains, “Jesus’ resurrection did not instantly transform men of little faith and faltering understanding into spiritual giants.”

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- In response to the disciples’ reactions, Jesus spoke words of comfort to them, assuring them He had been given all authority and would be with them always. He also issued a command to them, which we know as the *Great Commission*.
- Pastor James Boice notes the importance of the word “all” in these verses, “When we study the Great Commission, we notice that the word *all* occurs four times, though this is obscured in some versions: (1) Jesus possesses all authority, (2) he sends us to all nations, (3) we are to teach people all he has commanded, and (4) as we do, we are to know that Jesus will be with us all the days, or always.”
- Jesus first reminded the disciples that He has all authority over heaven and earth. There is no need to doubt or fear, because He is greater than anything else in all of creation. For that reason, Jesus was able to issue a command to the disciples.

- The command to the disciples was to go and make disciples of all nations. The verb which is translated as “go” is probably better translated as “as you are going.” The New American Commentary explains, “To ‘make disciples of all nations’ does require many people to leave their homelands, but Jesus’ main focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be.”
- The command to make disciples is described by the New American commentary, “The verb ‘make disciples’ also commands a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith. The truly subordinate participles in v. 19 explain what making disciples involves: ‘baptizing’ them and ‘teaching’ them obedience to all of Jesus’ commandments. The first of these will be a once-for-all, decisive initiation into Christian community. The second proves a perennially incomplete, life-long task.”
- Jesus provided help and comfort to the disciples after issuing this command, telling them that He would be with them always, even to the end of the age. This promise was made irrespective of what the disciples did or what was done to them. It is interesting that this is an echo of one of the opening promises of the book of Matthew about Jesus, that He would be, “Immanuel, God with us (see Matthew 1:23).”