Called to Make Disciples
Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:6-8
SS Lesson for 04/28/2019

Devotional Scripture: Col 1:3-12

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Key Verse: Matt 28:19-20
Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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- Appointed to present everyone perfect in Christ (Col 1:28)
- Appointed because of being qualified (2 Tim 2:2)
- Appointed to use sound doctrine (Titus 1:9)
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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The slogan “This changes everything” has been used at length in advertising. The claim has been attached to a flavoring for water, an allergy relief medication, a truck, and a brand of mayonnaise. Even a book bears that slogan as a title! Obviously, the overuse of any slogan can rob it of its original appeal. But when we consider the impact of Jesus’ resurrection, we can say beyond a shadow of a doubt that “this changes everything.” Today’s lesson tells us why.

Today’s lesson text presents two accounts of Jesus’ giving his disciples instructions for continuing his ministry in his absence. The first, from Matthew 28, comes immediately after the passage from last week’s study. That passage recounted events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection itself. All that took place in and near Jerusalem. A change in geographical context is introduced, however, by the transition noted in Matthew 28:16, which opens today’s lesson.

The second account comes from the book of Acts. This book is Luke’s record of the history of the first-century church. A vital part of what preceded the founding of the church (Acts 2) was a commission or charge given to the apostles before Jesus’ ascension near Bethany (Luke 24:50, 51). At first glance, the author Luke seems to record two locations for that event: Bethany, as above, and the Mount of Olives, per Acts 1:12. But no contradiction exists when we realize that Bethany was so close to the Mount of Olives that the village is said to be “at” the mount (Mark 11:1; Luke 19:29). This location was at least 60 miles south of Galilee, but less than two miles from Jerusalem. The tiny village of Bethany is mentioned 11 times in the New Testament, all in the four Gospels. (Not counted is a different Bethany in John 1:28.) The geographical contexts of our two lesson-segments are different, but the time frame is the same. Both occur during the 40 days of Acts 1:3. This period begins at Jesus resurrection and ends before Pentecost, when the church is established.

Key Verse: Matt 28:19-20

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

28:11-15. While the women were running to find the disciples and tell them of the Resurrection, another group was moving rapidly to counteract the truth. Some of those who had been guarding the tomb overcame their fear, went into the city, and reported to the chief priests all that had transpired. It was imperative that the priests have an explanation to counter the truth. After deliberation the chief priests and elders... devised a plan. They gave the soldiers who had guarded the tomb a large sum of money and told them what to report to their superiors. The fabricated lie was that the disciples of Jesus had come during the night and had stolen away the body of Jesus while the soldiers were asleep. Such a report would not have been well received by the officials for a soldier who fell asleep on guard duty would be put to death (Acts 12:19). The Jewish leaders realized this as well, but promised to satisfy him and keep the soldiers out of trouble. Such satisfaction obviously would involve the payment of another large sum of money. The soldiers took the money offered by the Jewish leaders and did as they were instructed. As a result, this story was widely circulated among the Jews, and many believed the disciples had really stolen Jesus’ body. But the logic of the explanation does not hold up. If the soldiers were asleep, how would they have known what had happened to the body of Jesus? And why would they admit “sleeping on the job”? The disciples’ courage during this period was not sufficient to carry out such a plot. They were afraid and had scattered when Jesus was arrested. To execute this kind of plot was beyond their ability. But the truth is often harder for a person to believe than a lie, and many still swallow this lie.
28:16-20. Matthew did not record the meeting of Jesus with the 10 disciples later that same day (John 20:19-23) or the appearance 8 days later to the 11 disciples (John 20:24-29). But he did record an appearance occurring some time later in Galilee, where He promised He would meet them (Matt. 26:32; cf. 28:7, 10) at a mountain. Which mountain He specified is unknown. When Jesus appeared they worshiped Him, but some doubted. Since Jesus had appeared to them earlier and verified Himself to them, they were not doubting the Resurrection. There was probably simply a brief question among some of them as to whether this was truly Jesus appearing to them. There was no indication that any miraculous element was involved in His being there and since unusual circumstances had occurred with previous visits, perhaps they wondered. Their doubts were quickly dispelled, for Jesus spoke to them claiming all authority in heaven and on earth. This authority (exousia, “official right or power”) had been given to Jesus by the Father and now He was instructing the disciples to go on the basis of that authority. Their field was to include all nations, not just Israel (see 10:5-6). They were to make disciples by proclaiming the truth concerning Jesus. Their hearers were to be evangelized and enlisted as Jesus’ followers. Those who believed were to be baptized in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Such an act would associate a believer with the person of Jesus Christ and with the Triune God. The God whom they served is one God and yet is three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Those who respond are also to be taught the truths Jesus had specifically communicated to the Eleven. Not all that Jesus taught the disciples was communicated by them but they did teach specific truths for the new Church Age as they went abroad. Jesus’ commission, applicable to all His followers, involved one command, “Make disciples,” which is accompanied by three participles in the Greek: “going,” baptizing, and teaching. The final words of the Lord recorded by Matthew were a promise that He would be with them always until the very end of the Age. Though the Lord did not remain physically with the Eleven, His spiritual presence was with them until their tasks on earth were finished. These final words of the Lord were carried out by the apostles as they went everywhere, proclaiming the story of their Messiah, Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

**Making Disciples in Response to the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20)**

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

A Commission that was appointed (16)

**Appointed to teach (2 Tim 2:24)**

24 And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

**Appointed to present everyone perfect in Christ (Col 1:28)**

28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

**Appointed because of being qualified (2 Tim 2:2)**

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

**Appointed to use sound doctrine (Titus 1:9)**

9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.
Appointed to proclaim God’s word clearly (Col 4:3-4)

3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

A Commission that some may doubt (17)

Doubt because human limitations (Gen 17:15-19)

15 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. 16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." 17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" 19 Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

Doubt, but with God all things are possible (Matt 19:26)

26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Doubt that should be turned into perseverance (James 1:4-6)

4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

Doubt that should be helped (Jude 1:22)

22 Be merciful to those who doubt;

Doubt that should turn into reliance on God (Mark 11:22-24)

22 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. 23 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Doubt that does not stop God from being faithful (2 Tim 2:13)

13 if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

A Commission from and with authority (18)

Authority to disciple others (Matt 4:19)

19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Authority with power over demons and diseases (Luke 9:1)

9 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.

Authority and stewardship of God’s Word (Col 1:25)

25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—
Authority that is commissioned by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-4)

2 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. 4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

A Commission that involves baptism (19)

A baptism that signified repentance (Acts 19:1-7)

1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" 3 They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 4 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" 5 They replied, "John's baptism," they replied. 6 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 7 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 8 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 9 There were about twelve men in all.

A baptism that symbolized being buried with Jesus (Col 2:11-12)

11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

A baptism that symbolized a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:18-22)

18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago while God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

A baptism with water (Acts 1:5)

5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

A Commission that involves teaching (20)

Teaching with wisdom (Col 3:16)

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Teaching with ability from God (1 Tim 3:2)

2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

Teaching sound doctrine (Titus 2:1)

2 You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.

Teaching that is anointed (1 John 2:27)

27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.
**Making Disciples While There is Time with Godly Power (Acts 1:6-8)**

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"
7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.
8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

**Time of restoration (6)**

*A restoration from sin (1 John 5:16)*

16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.

*A restoration from doubting (Jude 22-23)*

22 Be merciful to those who doubt; 23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear-hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

*A restoration from grief caused by sin (2 Cor 2:5-8)*

5 If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent — not to put it too severely. 6 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. 7 Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.

*A restoration from idleness and weakness (1 Thess 5:14)*

14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

**Time that is not known (7)**

*Man does not know the future but God does (Eccl 8:7-8)*

7 Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come? 8 No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.

*Man does not know the day or hour (Matt 24:36)*

36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

*Man must understand the present time because the day is nearer than believed (Rom 13:11)*

11 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

*Man must be watchful because he does not know the time (Matt 25:13)*

13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

*Man does not know the time so he must make the most of every opportunity (Eph 5:15-17)*

15 Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.
Power provided by the Holy Spirit (8)

*Power through the Holy Spirit for eternal life (John 4:14)*

14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

*Power that leads us into the likeness of Jesus (1 Cor 15:46-49)*

46 The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

*Power that leads to perfection (Heb 12:22-24)*

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

*Power in the inner being (Eph 3:16-19)*

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge— that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

*Power to keep the peace with one another (Eph 4:2-4)*

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—

**Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

**Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable**

**Verse 16**

"But" (NASB) is too strong a contrast for the Greek word *de* that occurs here and means "then" (NIV). However the action of the Eleven contrasts with the action of the guards (Matthew 28:15). We do not know the mountain to which Jesus had directed them and to which they went (cf. Matthew 26:32; Matthew 28:7; Matthew 28:10). Galilee, of course, was where Jesus began His ministry, and it had Gentile connotations because of the presence and proximity of many Gentiles. What Jesus would tell His disciples in Galilee would continue His ministry and teaching that they had already experienced.

**Verses 16-20**

The King’s final instructions to His disciples (28:16-20)

Whereas the chief priests used bribe money to commission the soldiers to spread lies, the resurrected Jesus used the promise of His power and presence to commission His disciples to spread the gospel. [Note: Carson, “Matthew,” p590.] This is the final address that Matthew recorded Jesus giving. As usual, he used a narrative to lead up to the address. In this case the narrative consisted of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore this address is the climax of these events in Matthew’s structure of his Gospel. It is also climactic because of its position at the very end of the Gospel and because of its content. It recapitulates many of Matthew’s themes, and it ends the story of Jesus where it began: in Galilee. [Note: See France, The Gospel . . ., pp2-5, for further explanation of the geographical plan of Matthew’s Gospel.]
"... to demonstrate that Jesus, in enduring the humiliation of the cross, did not die as a false messiah but as the Son who did his Father’s will (Matthew 21:37-39), God vindicates Jesus by raising him from the dead (Matthew 28:5-6). Consequently, when Jesus appears to the disciples on the mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-17), it is as the crucified Son of God whom God has vindicated through resurrection (Matthew 28:5-6). Although some disciples show, in doubting, that they are yet weak of faith (Matthew 28:17; Matthew 14:32), they all see on the person of Jesus that crucifixion, or suffering sonship, was the essence of his ministry (Matthew 21:42).

Correlatively, they also grasp at last that servanthood is the essence of discipleship (Matthew 16:24; Matthew 20:25-28). As ones, therefore, who comprehend, in line with God’s evaluative point of view (Matthew 17:5), not only who Jesus is but also what he was about and what it means to be his followers, the disciples receive from Jesus the Great Commission and embark on a mission to all the nations (Matthew 28:18-20; chaps 24-25)." [Note: Kingsbury, Matthew as . . ., pp162-63.]

**Verse 17**

When the Eleven finally saw Jesus, they worshipped Him. Yet some of them still had unresolved questions about how they should respond to Him. The word "doubted" (Gr. edistasan) means "hesitated" (cf. Matthew 14:31). [Note: I. P. Ellis, "'But some doubted,'" New Testament Studies 14 (1967-68):574-80.] Apparently Jesus’ resurrection did not immediately dispel all the questions that remained in the minds of His disciples. Perhaps, also, some of them still felt embarrassed about deserting Him and wondered how He would deal with them.

**Verse 18**

Jesus proceeded to address the Eleven. Matthew did not record them saying anything, which focuses our attention fully on Jesus’ words. Notice the repetition of "all" in Matthew 28:18-20: all authority, all nations, all things, and all the days. Matthew stressed the authority of Jesus throughout his Gospel (Matthew 7:29; Matthew 10:1; Matthew 10:7-8; Matthew 11:27; Matthew 22:43-44; Matthew 24:35).

"Not merely power or might (dunamis), such as a great conqueror might claim, but "authority" (exousia), as something which is His by right, conferred upon Him by One who has the right to bestow it (Rev. ii27)." [Note: Plummer, p428.]

God restricted Jesus’ authority before His resurrection because of His role as the Suffering Servant. Following His resurrection God broadened the sphere in which Jesus exercised authority (cf. Matthew 4:8-10). He became the One through whom God now mediates all authority (cf. Daniel 7:14; Philippians 2:5-11). This was Jesus’ great claim.

"By raising Jesus from the dead and investing him with all authority, God vindicates Jesus and thus decides the conflict in his favor (Matthew 28:5-6; Matthew 28:18)." [Note: Kingsbury, Matthew as . . ., p8.]

**Verse 19**

Jesus’ disciples should go and make disciples because Jesus now has universal authority. He gave them a new universal mission in keeping with His new universal authority. Previously He had limited their work to Israel (Matthew 10:1-8; cf. Matthew 15:24). Now He sent them into all the world. They could go confidently knowing that Jesus has sovereign control over everything in heaven and on earth (cf. Romans 8:28). Note the similarity between the original cultural mandate to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28; Genesis 9:1) and this new mandate for believers.

In the Greek text there is one imperative verb, "make disciples" (Gr. matheteusate), modified by three participles, "going," "baptizing," and "teaching." [Note: See Robert D. Culver, "What Is the Church’s Commission? Some Exegetical Issues In Matthew 28:16-20," Bibliotheca Sacra 125:499 (July-September 1968):239-53.] This does not mean that we should make disciples wherever we may happen to go. The participle "going" is not just circumstantial, but it has some imperativial force. [Note: Cleon Rogers, "The Great Commission," Bibliotheca Sacra 130:519 (July-September 1973):258-67.] In other words, Jesus commanded His disciple to reach out to unreached people to make disciples, not just to make disciples among those with whom they happened to come in contact.

Making disciples involves bringing people into relationship with Jesus as pupils to teacher. It involves getting them to take His yoke of instruction upon themselves as authoritative (Matthew 11:29), accepting His words as true, and submitting to His will as what is right. A good disciple is one who listens, understands, and obeys Jesus’ instructions (Matthew 12:46-50). Disciples of Jesus must duplicate themselves in others. [Note: See James G. Samra, "A Biblical View of Discipleship," Bibliotheca Sacra 160:638 (April-June 2003):219-34.]
The "all nations" (Gr. panta ta ethne) in view are all tribes, nations, and peoples, including Israel (cf. Genesis 12:3; Genesis 18:18; Genesis 22:18). [Note: John P. Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19," Catholic Biblical Quarterly39 (1977):94-102.] The phrase does not mean Gentiles exclusive of Jews. Matthew hinted at the Gentiles’ inclusion in God’s plan to bless humanity throughout his Gospel (Matthew 1:1; Matthew 2:1-12; Matthew 4:15-16; Matthew 8:5-13; Matthew 10:18; Matthew 13:38; Matthew 24:14; et al.). Jesus’ disciples should make disciples among all people without distinction.

Baptizing and teaching are to characterize making disciples. Baptizing is to be into the name of the triune God (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 1:4-6). The "into" (Gr. eis) suggests coming into relationship with God as a disciple. Baptism indicates both coming into covenant relationship with God and pledging submission to His lordship. [Note: G. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament, pp90-92.] Obviously water baptism rather than Spirit baptism is in view (cf. Matthew 3:6; Matthew 3:11; Matthew 3:13-17).

This baptism differs from John the Baptist’s baptism. This one is universal whereas John’s baptism was for Israelites. This baptism rests on the finished work of Jesus Christ, but John’s baptism prepared people for Jesus’ person and work. [Note: Lenski, p1178.]

Jesus placed Himself on a level with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

"It is one thing for Jesus to speak about his relationship with God as Son with Father (notably Matthew 11:27; Matthew 24:36; Matthew 26:63-64) and to draw attention to the close links between himself and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:28; Matthew 12:31-32), but for "the Son" to take his place as the middle member, between the Father and the Holy Spirit, in a threefold depiction of the object of the disciple’s allegiance is extraordinary." [Note: France, The Gospel . . . , p1118.]

"The Trinity of God is confessedly a great mystery, something wholly beyond the possibility of complete explanation. But we can guard against error by holding fast to the facts of divine revelation: that (1) with respect to His Being or essence, God is one; (2) with respect to His Personality, God is three; and (3) we must neither divide the essence, nor confuse the Persons." [Note: The New Scofield ... , p1046.]

The early Christians evidently did not understand the words "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" as a baptismal formula that they needed to use whenever they baptized someone (cf. Acts 2:38; Acts 8:16; Acts 10:48; Acts 19:5; Romans 6:3). Jesus apparently meant that His disciples were to connect others with the triune God of the Bible in baptism. Jesus did not specify a mode of baptism, though immersion was common in Judaism and is consistent with the meaning of the Greek word baptizo, "to immerse or submerge." His command to baptize disciples seems to rule out baptism for infants and others who cannot consciously understand and agree with what baptism signifies.

Verse 20

Discipling also involves teaching followers everything Jesus commanded His disciples. Notice that the content is not the Old Testament law but Jesus’ commands. This does not mean that the Old Testament is unimportant. Jesus validated the whole Old Testament during His ministry (Matthew 5:17-20). However the focus now becomes Jesus as the source of revelation rather than secondary sources such as the Old Testament prophets (cf. Hebrews 1:1-4). Likewise the revelation of the rest of the New Testament came through Jesus and is therefore also authoritative (Acts 1:1-2). All of this teaching remains authoritative forever (Matthew 24:35).

Disciples must not just understand what Jesus has commanded, as foundational as that is. They must also obey it.

". . . Matthew uses this command to weave the final thread of his argument. The purpose of his Gospel was to prove to Israel that Jesus is the Messiah. The inquiring Jew would ask, "If Jesus is our King, where is our kingdom?" Matthew has indicated that the kingdom was offered to Israel, rejected by them, and postponed by God. At the present time and until the end of the tribulation the kingdom is being offered to the Gentiles (Romans 11). Therefore, the disciples are to disciple all nations. At the end of the age the kingdom of Israel will be inaugurated by the return of Israel’s King." [Note: Toussaint, Behold the . . . , p319.]
Called to Make Disciples

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Dr. Joe Ellis was a highly respected and innovative authority on church growth. His books include The Church on Purpose and The Church on Target, both of which are intended to provide encouragement and practical guidelines for growth to congregations and their leadership. One of Dr. Ellis’s most insightful statements comes from another book he wrote entitled The Personal Evangelist. It is this: “The most important tasks the church can do are those that only the church can do.” What is it that the church, and only the church, can do? What makes the church unique? The answer is that the church alone possesses and can pass along the message of salvation from sin. This message is founded on the facts of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the good news, the gospel, as defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. No other organization or institution in the world declares, or is charged with declaring, such a message. And that is only fitting since Jesus’ kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36). His final recorded words before ascending, as we have seen in this study, were that the gospel be taken to the entire world. Today, however, the church is pulled in different directions by a host of causes and issues. Many of these causes and issues involve societal ills, a number of which most certainly should be addressed. The Bible is highly concerned with issues of social justice. Even so, the church must not compromise or forsake its primary mission: to take to a lost and dying world the good news of eternal life available through Jesus. Acts 6:1–4 is a brilliant example of the tension. Two important social issues loomed: (1) providing food for widows in need and (2) ensuring fairness in the distribution of that food. The Jerusalem church took those issues seriously. But when the apostles said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables” (6:2), the primary mission remained unchanged. As the church makes disciples who in turn make disciples, then the church is accomplishing its primary mission. The locations mentioned in Acts 1:8 can provide a model for any church’s evangelistic strategy. A congregation must first seek to reach its own surroundings, but it must not be satisfied with that. The people must be challenged to expand the church’s outreach. That involves thinking globally. Support through prayer, financial resources, and personal involvement will be the result. A book title from several years ago stated an important truth: Disciples Are Made, Not Born. For a church to present itself as an attractive place to put one’s membership is relatively easy. For a church to commit to making disciples is an entirely different matter. A church must strive always and consciously to keep the main thing the main thing. The head of the church, Jesus Christ, has given the church its marching orders. Those orders have never been amended. The issue is whether the church needs to amend its priorities. Thus it bears repeating: the most important tasks the church can do are those that only the church can do.

This Gospel ends not with a command but with a promise, or rather a fact. Jesus will be with His disciples as they carry out His will. This is His great commitment. Immanuel is still God with us (Matthew 1:23; cf. Matthew 18:20). The expression "to the end of the age" (Gr. pasas tes hemeras) literally means "the whole of every day." [Note: Moule, p34.] Jesus promised to be with us every day forever. It does not mean He will cease being with us when the present age ends and the messianic kingdom begins. Throughout the present age (Gr. sunteleias tou aiovos) Jesus' disciples are to carry out His Great Commission. [Note: See D. Edmond Hiebert, "An Expository Study of Matthew 28:16-20," Bibliotheca Sacra149:595 (July-September1992):338-54; and L. Legrand, "The Missionary Command of the Risen Lord Matthew 28:16-20," Indian Theological Studies24:1 (March1987):5-28.]

Jesus began each of the preceding major sections of Matthew’s Gospel with ministry and concluded each with teaching. However in this one He concluded with a command that His disciples continue His ministry and teaching. Thus the book closes with the sense that the ministry and teaching of Jesus are ongoing.

(Adapted from URL: https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/matthew-28.html)
Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Ministry Preparation – Before ascending into heaven, Jesus spent His final days preparing His apostles and other followers for their leadership role in the future New Testament church. The living Lord commissioned His ambassadors to announce His victory over death to the entire world. Jesus’ reaching clarified His authority, claiming equality with the Father, possessing all sovereignty over heaven and earth.

Make Disciples – Jesus’ power continued through the working of the Holy Spirit, who came to His disciples at Pentecost. They were to declare the Gospel to everyone—baptizing, initiating, welcoming them into God’s family, both Jew and Gentile. As Jesus appointed the twelve disciples, they also needed to keep their eyes open for those willing to be trained and developed to become fishers of men. Jesus’ disciples asked Jesus about the restoration of the kingdom to the Jewish nation before He ascended into heaven. They longed to be from under the oppression of the Roman government. Jesus replied that times and places lay in the hands of the heavenly Father. He directed their attention to something greater about to happen than overthrowing a government. The Holy Spirit was coming to fill each one, empowering them to carry on Jesus’ ministry, declaring His Gospel message. They now had the enormous task and the exuberant joy of representing Christ at home and eventually abroad.

Discipleship Today – This mandate is in effect today. Christians are still under divine orders to spread the Good News about Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Also, Christians are to be taking what they are learning and teaching others. This is God’s plan to reach people all the way to the ends or "the earth."