

## Evangelism: Extending the Kingdom Through Church Planting

In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28, Jesus tells us these familiar words, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age". These words can never be understated. Jesus in this Great Commission lays out the mission of the church, which is to make disciples.

What does it mean to make disciples? And, where are disciples made? Are they not made in the church? Is not the church the means through which God calls a dying world into Christ? Notice that Jesus tells us two very important things about the Great Commission. First of all He tells us that we are to baptize these disciples. That's quite important. Where do baptisms happen? And, into what are people baptized? Is it not the church? When a child comes to faith they are baptized and enter into membership in the church.

The second thing that Jesus teaches us is that disciples are to be thoroughly immersed in the word of God. They need to come under it in its entirety. Disciples need to see it worked out in the lives of other Christians. And, they need to be given a good swift kick in all love so that they will continue in obedience to it. This is why Jesus gave us the church in all its variety, mission, and governance. Without the church disciples cannot be properly made. These two things indicate to us that the great commission is about church planting. Because it is only in and through the church that these are able to be accomplished.

Have you ever thought of the great commission in that light? Sure, it is a call to personal evangelism, but it is primarily a call to plant churches. I've seen people sort go off on their own and try to make disciples without the church. This produces nothing but unhealthy, malnourished, and lop-sided disciples. People need to be under the all-exposing word of God. It is only His word that will make a thoroughly converted Christian. And, friends, this can't happen exclusively in bible studies. *When you became a Christian you entered into a declarative ministry.* The word of God needs to be declared over you as the final say over all of life.

Do not miss the significance of this. The last words of the Gospel of Matthew contain Jesus' command to plant churches. It is arguably the most 'Jewish' of the Gospels. Matthew is replete with references to the Old Testament. It is a gospel that shows with great clarity how Jesus fulfills the Law of Moses. I think we need to ask the question: why this Gospel? Why is the great commission found at the end of the most 'Jewish' of the Gospels? The reason, I believe, is this. Jesus is reigning in a new era in the history of redemption. No longer would God expand his Kingdom through a literal nation called Israel. Now, in the New Testament era, God would extend His Kingdom throughout the entire world *through the church*.

Will you join the mission of Christ for His church? *You can do this by praying for our church plants.* Outreach North America puts out a list of prayer requests for each of our denominations church planting endeavors. If you would like to access those, let me know and I can forward you their information. And, as a church, it is important that *we continue in the corporate discipline of annually supporting our local church plants.* We must be diligent to make disciples in our own church, but this should not be to the exclusion of God's broader kingdom work.

Grace to You,  
Tom