

Fewer passages within the entire Bible are more familiar to us than Mathew 28:18-20—it's commonly identified as "The Great Commission"—and fundamentally consists in two parts—the church's mission and motive...

Now—before I move any further let me clarify—this passage is NOT exhaustive in describing the church's mission nor in providing motivation—there are those who reduce the whole of our purpose to missions or evangelism—as if this was the beginning, middle, and end of the church's mission—but—this passage does summarize the major aspect of the church's mission—and it does provide two very important motives—for the church to fulfill her mission...

- I. The Church's Mission
- II. The Church's Motive

- I. The Church's Mission

- A. Make disciples

1. Now—the first thing that needs underscoring—is the historical and apostolic aspect—of this commission....
2. V18—"And Jesus came and spoke to them"—who are the "them"—but the eleven disciples of verses 16-17...
3. That is—this commission was in the first place—given to the apostles—who went to ALL THE NATIONS...
4. And yet—this commission was given to the church—and thus has a relevance for every church in every age...
5. Now—by "making disciples" is simply meant—making Christians—to make a disciple is to make a Christian...
6. The single Greek word translated "make disciples" literally means—to teach for the purpose of making disciples...
7. A "disciple" is a follower of Christ—it necessarily entails two things—learning from Christ and following Christ...
8. In short—a disciple follows Christ's teaching and example—they learn from Christ—thus they follow Christ...
9. Thus—when we are told to "make disciples" we told to—make Christians—or to make follows of Jesus Christ...
10. Now—obviously—there is a sense in which we are not able to MAKE disciples—this is a work for God alone...
11. But—we are to MAKE disciples in that—we are to teach them with the goal—that God would convert them...
12. Thus—necessary to this mission of "making disciples"—is the preaching or proclamation of the gospel of God...
13. Acts 14:21-22—"And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God..."
14. Here we learn HOW disciples are made—they are made by hearing and believing the gospel of Jesus Christ...
15. That is—disciples are always made through the gospel—and that gospel often, not always, comes by preaching...
16. Thus—I suggest—that fulfilling this particular mission includes—foreign, local, and personal evangelism...
17. [1] Foreign evangelism—by this I mean—we are to assist in the endeavor—to take the gospel to all the nations...

18. Now—there are several ways in which we can do this—we can either go ourselves or else support those who go...
19. That is—we ourselves can go to foreign lands—or else—we can support prayerfully and financially others..
20. [2] Local evangelism—by this I mean—we as a local assembly—are to collectively share or preach the gospel...
21. [3] Personal evangelism—by this I mean—we as families and individuals—are to share the gospel with others...
22. Now—let me clarify—all of these forms of evangelism, foreign, local, personal—are all local church based...
23. That is—all of these should be filtered through and in some way connected to—individual local churches...

B. Mark disciples

1. V19b—"baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"—notice the HOW, WHO, and WHY of baptism...
2. [1] The HOW of baptism—the Gk word translated "baptizing" is *baptidzo* which literally means—to immerse or submerge...
3. Thus—what our Savior is commanding is that—we dip, immerse or submerge—believers into or under water...
4. [2] The WHO of baptism—we here learn that ONLY those who are presently disciples—should be baptized...
5. That is—baptism is for disciples only—those who are presently Christian—those who are followers of Christ...
6. Jn.4:1-3—"Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), 3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee..."
7. [3] The WHY of baptism—we here learn that baptism is—"into the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit..."
8. That is—disciples are baptized into the NAME of God—which simply refers to—the NATURE of God Himself...
9. The Scriptures often equate God's name with His being—"our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name..."
10. That is—hallowed be your being—may God Himself be hallowed—may God Himself be considered as holy...
11. The prepositional phrase—is best rendered—"into the name"—and it fundamentally underscores two things...
12. IDENTIFICATION and PARTICIPATION—but before I examine these—let me remind you something...
13. While both of these, identification and participation, are true of us at conversion, they are publicized in baptism...
14. That is—what is here assigned to baptism—being put into the name—actually happens at the time of conversion...
15. Every person without exception—when they believe on Christ—are put into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit...
16. [a] identification—that is—to be baptized into God's name means—we IDENTIFY ourselves with that name...
17. In baptism—a person is taking upon himself the name of God—he is publically identifying himself as God's...
18. He is bearing in a public way God's name—he's aligning himself with God—he's taking a stand with God...

19. Isa.43:6-7—"I will say to the north, Give them up! And to the south, do not keep them back! Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him..."
20. This passage is a prophecy of the salvation of the Gentiles—they will be called from—"the ends of the earth..."
21. This is similar language as our text—"Go and make disciples of all the nations"—that is—to the ends of the earth...
22. Verse 7—describes these disciples—"Everyone who is called by My name"—that is—has My name upon them...
23. This phrase doesn't mean—they were called by God—though that is a truth everywhere taught in Scripture...
24. But—that in coming to God—they were called sons of God—in coming to God—they took His name upon them...
25. Barnes—"To be called by the name of anyone, is synonymous with being regarded as his son, since a son bears the name of his father..."
26. Isa.44:5—"one will say, I am the LORD'S'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; another will write with his hand, The LORD's,' and name himself by the name of Israel [48:1; Jer.14:9]..."
27. This passage is very similar to the previous—it's a prophecy of what the coming Gentiles will say as the come to God...
28. Notice—fundamentally—they come aligning themselves with God—or, identifying themselves as God's sons...
29. This is done in two ways—[i] they testify they belong to the LORD—"one will say, I am the LORD's"—I belong to Him...
30. [ii] They call themselves by the name of Jacob (or Israel)—"another will call himself by the name of Jacob..."
31. Thus—in the first place—to be baptized into the name of God—is to publically align yourself with that name...
32. There's a sense in which—the sinner comes out of the water—belonging to God—with His name upon them...
33. [b] Participation—that is—to be baptized into God's name means—we are JOINED to that name—by faith...
34. To be baptized into—"the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit"—means—we are in union or fellowship with God...
35. Brethren—there is a profound mystery in this phrase—to share with the divine nature—to have union with God...
36. Now—as you know—Christians have union with God through and in Christ—the mediator between God and man...
37. Thus—as you know—usually the NT speaks of those baptized as—"baptized into the name of Jesus Christ..."
38. Acts 2:38—"repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" Acts 10:48—"and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" Acts 19:5—"they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus..."
39. To be baptized—"in the name of Christ"—is to identify with Him—but dear brethren—it means much more...
40. To be baptized "into Christ" means—we have union with Christ—union with who He is and what He's done...
41. It means we participate or share in Christ's death and resurrection—that He indwells us—by His Holy Spirit...
42. Thus—to be baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit—means—we have union with the Trinity...

C. Mature disciples

1. V20a—"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you"—this necessarily implies membership...
2. In other words—in baptism—there's not only the alignment with God—but also—with the family of God...
3. Thus—in becoming a disciple we become students—and we immediately enrol—in the institution of the church...
4. Or, put another way—the church is the primary means through/by which—disciples are brought to maturity...
5. Now—here I want to suggest three things about this instruction—its means, its content, and its purpose or goal...
6. [1] Its means—the Gk word rendered—"teaching"—literally means—"to teach or instruct" by way of words...
7. It implies that we communicate mental concepts—for the purpose of instructing—it's necessarily verbal in nature...
8. [2] Its content—"teaching them...all things that I have commanded you"—everything He personally taught...
9. He taught them precepts, promises, warnings, invitations—He taught about God, Himself, the Spirit and church...
10. John Gill—"All things I have commanded you—that is, every thing that Christ has commanded, be it what it will, and nothing else; for Christ's ministers are not to teach for doctrines the commandments of men; or enjoin that on the churches, which is of their own, or other men's devising, and was never ordered by Christ..."
11. Now—here I answer a question that might arise—are we merely to teach disciples the express words of Christ...
12. That is—are we merely to teach from the four gospels—or, to put it another way—merely the RED letters...
13. Well—the short answer is—NO—for in the first place, the apostles were Christ's apostle who taught His word...
14. Thus—when Christ tells us to teach all that He has commanded—this of necessity includes the entire NT revelation...
15. In the second place—Christ Himself taught the OT and claimed—Moses, the Prophets and Psalms—spoke of Him...
16. Thus—when Christ exhorts His apostles—to teach ALL THINGS He commanded—He means the entire Bible...
17. [3] Its purpose or goal—"teaching them to OBSERVE all things"—this is ultimate purpose or goal of teaching...
18. The Gk word rendered "observe" literally means—"to guard or watch over"—"to keep or pay attention to"...
19. Fundamentally, it means, to view something as having value, to guard it, and finally—to observe or obey it...
20. Thus—the purpose or goal of this teaching is twofold—[a] to pass the truth to another generation to guard it...
21. [b] To teach the truth that people would obey or practice it, NIV—"teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..."

II. The Church's Motive

A. His authority

1. There are within this passage—two powerful motives—to encourage the church—to fulfill this threefold mission...
2. V18—"and Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Therefore..."

3. That is—we are to go forward—making, baptizing, and teaching disciples—conscious of a very important fact...
4. All authority—both on heaven and earth—has been given to Christ—and therefore—the church is to fulfill her mission...
5. [1] What is given Him?—"all authority...on heaven and earth"—that is—He's the ruler and king over all things...
6. He is the Ruler over ALL THINGS in heaven and earth—this is the extent of His kingdom—there are no limits...
7. [2] When is it given Him?—"all authority HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME"—it was given to Him in His exaltation...
8. That is—at His resurrection and ascension—but especially His session—His sitting at the right hand of the Father...
9. [3] Why is it given Him?—simply put—His Father's rewarded Him—for His obedience to the eternal covenant...
10. Eph.1:15-23—"Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all..."

B. His presence

1. V20—"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..."
2. Now—here I want underscore something I've already mentioned—this passage describes the church as a whole...
3. The mission described in this passage—to make, mark, and mature disciples—is the job of LOCAL churches...
4. Individual Christians are not here commanded to make disciples, baptism them, and teach them all things...
5. Now—I've already clarified that this includes personal witnessing and evangelism—but this passage is describing church life...
6. It is through the local church that the gospel advances—and disciples are baptized and matured by teaching...
7. Here's my point—if all that's happening in this passage is local church based—then so is the promised presence...
8. That is—the promise—"and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"—is promised to the local church...
9. In other words—the place where Christ is promised to reside—is the same place disciples are baptized and taught...
10. What an incentive to fulfill our mission—Christ is with us—He's in our midst—if God be fore us—who can be against us...