

Spiritual Considerations...



Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.

Dave Phillips, editor

number 41

The Great Commission

Dave Phillips, Germantown

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:19,20)

Let's take another look at the Great Commission. Was that statement made for all disciples or was it only for the 12 apostles? Were the apostles told to immediately go preach and baptize? If so, what was the reason for this baptism? If this was the baptism of John (the immerser), why were they told to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and the Spirit? If not the baptism of John, why were they being told to baptize individuals into Christ prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2?

Before you answer too quickly, there is a similar type of statement given to the disciples in which he “breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). Jesus had promised them that upon His departure the Holy Spirit would be given to them, but this could not have been the time for that to happen because the Holy Spirit could not come until He had gone back to the Father (John 16:7). The apostles were instructed specifically to go to Jerusalem until they had received power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:6-12). That power would not have been conferred upon them until the Day of Pentecost “when they were all together in one place.”

Then, what could the answer be? The statement Jesus made in John 20 regarding the reception of the Holy Spirit must have been a figurative expression of a specific blessing that was to be conferred at a later time. He was speaking of a time when the apostles would have a unique and vital role in ushering in the means by which God would pass His will to mankind. Peter and the apostles would be the ones through whom God would work in ushering in what we know as the Christian Age. The fulfillment of this promise was recorded by Luke in Acts 2.

So we come back to the Great Commission and apply the same principle. Jesus was sharing an important truth to the apostles – the truth that all authority had been given to Him by the Father. The apostles were now being commissioned by the authority of the God of the universe to teach the will of God and make disciples of all mankind. The result of this teaching would be that people would be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. They were to teach these new disciples to observe all that Jesus had commanded them. The means by which they would fulfill this command (what specifically they would teach) would be given to them. That is, the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said (John 14:25-26) and they would be empowered from on high to carry out this command.

Did the command apply to the apostles only or to us? In the context of Matthew 28, the command would have been intended for the apostles. But the fact that the apostles were also to teach others implies that individual Christians have the same commission. Paul relates to the church at Ephesus that he received the knowledge of the mystery through a revelation from God (Eph. 3:1-5) and when we read what he wrote, we would then have the knowledge of that revelation. In other words, Christians have the word given to us that is sufficient to lead us to salvation and help us live the Christian life (2 Tim. 3:16,17). This word that we have received is to be passed on to other faithful men so that the process can continue (2 Tim. 2:2).

So, although the Great Commission still has application, it may not be the application that has always been made. But, of course, that depends on how you have always understood the passage.

A Child That Understands Prayer

One particular four-year old prayed, "And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."

January Mission to Village of Hope

Donna Griffin, Germantown

I was fortunate to be included in a medical mission trip to Ghana in January. Although Millington was the main congregation there were people from other congregations in Shelby County. We left at 7:00 pm on January 18 and arrived at the Village of Hope (VOH) at 11:00 pm on January 19.

We spent Sunday attending services at various congregations. Class was at 9:00 am at the VOH and worship was over around 1:00 pm. On Sunday evening, I attended a service at a nearby congregation. We had a lantern because there was no electricity and the meeting area had walls but no permanent roof. Ghana was playing in the African World Cup (soccer) so we had to wait for the game to be over for people to start arriving for services.

On Monday morning, we left at 4:45 am to go with our clinic to Asakraka in the Eastern region. Our clinic consisted of two physicians, two nurse practitioners, two registered nurses, and other volunteers. We saw over 200 people and did not get back to the VOH until 1:00 am the next morning. Asakraka was about four hours from the VOH.

On Tuesday, some of the group visited a slave castle that was built in the 15th century. I stayed at the VOH and helped organize the library.

On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, we went to Senya, which was only about 15 minutes from the VOH. We saw over 800 people in three days. We all had to work with interpreters as very few of the villages spoke English. The medical complaints were like we see here and some we don't have in the states. We prescribed many medicines for hypertension, diabetes, infections, malaria seizures, etc. Ghana has national health care but many of the people cannot afford to pay for it so they are so grateful to have any medical care. The sanitation conditions outside of the VOH are dreadful. Their diet is also dreadful. Most of the people live in one room houses and cook outside. Goats and chickens roam around outside where they cook.

The children at the VOH all bring their Bibles when they attend services and they all sing from their hearts. They all speak English at the VOH.

The education system is terrible. The teachers only come to school when they want to and we would see children playing outside their schools all day long. The buildings were in terrible shape. Some of them had no electricity, holes in the roofs and no doors. Fortunately the children at the VOH and others that attend school there have teachers all the time, books, computers, electricity (when it works), and a library. The children have to take a test to go to high school since there are not enough schools and the children at the VOH always score in the highest percentage on these tests and are able to go to high school.

There is such a need for medical care and education to improve their conditions.

A Story Only a Preacher Could Appreciate

A collector of rare books ran into an acquaintance who told him he had just thrown away an old Bible that he found in a dusty, old box. He happened to mention that Guten-somebody-or-other had printed it.

"Not Gutenberg?" gasped the collector.

"Yes, that was it!"

"You're crazy! You've thrown away one of the first books ever printed. A copy recently sold at auction for half a million dollars!"

"Oh, I don't think this book would have been worth anything close to that much," replied the man. "It was scribbled all over in the margins by some guy named Martin Luther."