

“BACK TO OUR FUTURE”

SESSION 1- THE GREAT COMMISSION

After Jesus rose from the dead he was present with the apostles and a number of others. Paul talks about a time when Jesus appeared to 500 people at one time (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). During the forty days following his resurrection, Jesus gave many proofs to the apostles that he was alive. He also told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait. The Holy Spirit would be poured out in all its power. This pouring out is called the “baptism of the Spirit”. When the Holy Spirit came, the apostles would be receiving special powers so that they could teach and prove Jesus’ power in ways they had never been able to before.

Today’s story takes place at the Mount of Olives, at the end of the forty days, when the apostles were meeting together with Jesus. Jesus gives his last instructions to the apostles before being taken up into heaven. They were to teach in Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Jesus was repeating what he had already told the apostles.

Jesus told them that they would have a very important job to do. When someone tells someone to do a job and then gives them instructions, that is called a “commission”. The job that Jesus told the apostles to do was very important. So we call it “The Great Commission”. Here is what the Great Commission is: “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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

The great commission (as in Matthew 28:19-20) is where we begin to look “Back to Our Future”. In the book of Acts we see how the apostles did just as Jesus asked. They went, preached the gospel to make disciples, baptized, and taught people how to obey God. Example after example in Acts removes doubts about the power of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Over and over people hear about Jesus and then respond by believing and wanting to be right with God and be baptized. They want to learn how to live a life of continued obedience.

Today’s study is a turning point in the bible. The Old Testament emphasized the power of God, the Father. The Gospels emphasize the power of God, the Son. Now, Acts emphasizes the power of the God, the Spirit.

Let's talk about what he meant when Jesus told them to make disciples.

What is a disciple? See John 8:31.

In the Bible days, a disciple was a student who followed and modeled the life and teachings of a master. The master held complete authority in directing and educating his students. It was expected that every disciple would then pass the teachings of the master on to others so that the master's knowledge and approach to life would continue to spread.

To today's Christian, a disciple is someone who chooses to become a follower of Jesus Christ, embracing his teachings and outlook on life. As disciples of Jesus we will want to become disciple-makers, passing on the teachings of Jesus to others.

How does someone become a disciple?

We become disciples as we learn about who Jesus is and what he did for us. When we are baptized, it is a sign of the beginning of our growth into becoming disciples. That's why Jesus tells us to go into the world baptizing. The work of teaching everything Jesus taught then begins. This isn't just about teaching facts but about how we deal with life and a relationship with God.

We're told in the Great Commission to teach people to obey everything Jesus commanded us. What do you think this means?

Some examples:

Luke 6:35-36	Love our enemies
John 17:20-21	All who believe "be one"
I Peter 2:12	Do good, set example
Matthew 22:36-40	Sums up all Jesus' commandments

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes to you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

According to this verse, what was Jesus' discipleship strategy for the early church?

Start where you are, then expand into other places.

BREAK IT DOWN / WRAP IT UP

Talk about what we've learned or been reminded of.