

# THE GREAT COMMISSION - AN ETHNOCENTRIC APPROACH

## GOLDEN TEXT

*“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (Mark 16:15)*

## USEFUL PRACTICE

Jesus' imperative command to his Disciples points to the universality of the preaching of the Gospel in the world.

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15-18**

### **Matthew 28**

19 - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 - And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

### **Mark 16.**

15 - He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

16 - Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

17 - And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues;

18 - they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

- I) **To conceptualize** “The Great Commission”;
- II) **To explain** Cross-Cultural Missions;
- III) **To affirm** the global view of the Gospel in the world.

## INTRODUCTION

This quarter we will study missionary work. It is an invitation to reflect on the imperative command of our Lord Jesus to preach the Gospel to every creature. Therefore, in this first lesson, our purpose is to clarify the Great Commission, conceptualize and develop the theme of Cross-Cultural Missions and present a global view of the Gospel message in the world. We will see that missions are a divine command and that God counts on every believer to say “yes” to the work He started through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### I – THE GREAT COMMISSION

**1- What is the Great Commission?** It is the Lord's command to his Church to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. This commandment is traced back to the Old Testament (Isa. 45:22; cf. Gen. 12:3) and is based on the New One (Matt. 9:37, 38; 28:19; Acts 1:8). In this way, the Great Commission can be better understood as a post-resurrection order of Jesus Christ given to his disciples (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:4,5,8 ). James Hudson Taylor, an English missionary to China for 51 years, said about it: “The Great Commission is not an option to be considered. It is a commandment to be obeyed.”

**2- The cultural issue.** The “Go” of Jesus also means crossing borders. In this respect, announcing the Gospel in a different culture is the great challenge of missionary work. Therefore, we must not despise the culture of a people whom we intend to evangelize, nor impose ours on them (1 Cor. 1.1, 2). However, the culture of a people must be evaluated and tested by the Scriptures. If, on the one hand, culture is rich in beauty and goodness, since man was created in the image and likeness of a good and loving God; on the other, as a result of the Fall, it was tainted by sin and, in part, dominated by demonic actions. Therefore, let us be ready to preach the Gospel beyond our borders! Let us get ready for this challenge!

**3- The command to make disciples of all nations.** The word “nation” is

the translation of the term *ethnos*, which refers to ethnic groups and not primarily to countries. A country is a politically defined nation, whereas an ethnic group is a culturally defined people with their own language and culture. According to some museologists, there are 24,000 ethnic groups in the world. Almost half of all of them has not been evangelized yet. Does that not move us? There are millions of people who have not heard the Gospel of Christ yet. The Apostle Paul's cry is urgent and crucial: "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named" (Rom. 15:20 – NIV).

**4- The effectiveness and objectives of the Great Commission.** To be effective and fulfill its objectives, the Great Commission must be carried out by people filled with the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), since it is He who convicts the person of sin (John 16:8), regenerates the sinner (Titus 3:5) and enables men to confess Jesus as Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). In this regard, the Church will be ready to accomplish the following Great Commission goals:

- 1) To proclaim the Gospel through words and deeds to all creation;
- 2) To disciple new converts, making them faithful followers of Christ;
- 3) To integrate them spiritually and socially into the local church, so that they grow in grace and knowledge through the action of the Holy Spirit in their lives, always enjoying the communion of saints.

## **II – CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONS**

**1- Concept.** The prefix *trans* comes from Latin and has the meaning of “movement beyond” and “through”. In a general sense, Cross-Cultural Missions is about crossing a culture to take the Gospel message. This message cannot be restricted to a single culture, but reach all corners of the Earth, wherever there is an ethnic group that has not yet heard about the Good News.

**2- Cross-cultural view of the Bible.** When talking about cross-cultural missions, the Holy Bible is the standard to be followed. The Old Testament records the revelation of a missionary God. On at least three specific occasions in the book of Genesis, He dealt with all mankind and not just one nation (Gen. 3:15; 6:11-14; Gen 12:3). In this sense, Cross-Cultural Missions have the same appeal and are a fundamental part of the mission of the Church, as this is an executive agency of missions. God has not chosen for this task another institution, however financially powerful. Nevertheless, He chose his Church, establishing it on Earth with the mission to expand his kingdom to all nations (Acts 9:15; 16:5; 22:14, 15, 21; 26:16-18).

**3- Barriers in Cross-cultural Missions.** There are complex barriers to world evangelism and the Church needs to know them and prepare to carry out its missional task. The barriers are numerous. Let us see:

**a) Geographic barriers:** new nations and new cultures;

**b) Cultural barriers:** life values, customs and habits;

**c) Economic barriers:** currency and trade differences;

**d) Language barriers:** native languages;

**e) Religious barriers:** Islam, atheism, materialism, secularism, etc. The apostles faced these same barriers. But, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel left Jerusalem and reached the “ends of the Earth”. That same Spirit is with the Church of the present age to confirm the noble mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

### **III - GLOBAL VIEW OF THE GOSPEL IN THE WORLD**

**1- Evangelism and Discipleship.** In Matthew 28:18-20, we see an emphasis on "making disciples". Now, making disciples is an order based on the relationship between a master and his disciple. In this order, it is understood that the mission does not take place in just one act, one moment. Making a disciple, according to the Scriptures, takes time. Our Lord spent at least three years forging the character of his disciples. On the other hand, in Mark 16:15-20, we see an emphasis on "proclamation" and "announcement". The missional task takes into account the public proclamation of the Gospel at the same time that it acts in the permanent formation of the new convert. Evangelism and discipleship do not exclude each other, but they are two faces of the same mission.

**2- Repentance and empowerment by the Spirit.** In the Cross-cultural Mission, the missionary message has to take into account the call to repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:46-49). This appeal must be under the authority of Jesus, whose object is “to be [his] witnesses,” in the power of the Holy Spirit, “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In this sense, we must be ready to announce the message of Jesus under the capacity of the Holy Spirit, as we read in Acts, praying that sinners repent and believe in the Gospel (Mark 1:15).

## **CONCLUSION**

We have a great challenge in Cross-Cultural Missions: to reach the whole

world with the genuine message of the Gospel. Therefore, as the Church of God, we are called to leave “Jerusalem” with a view to reaching the “ends of the Earth”. There are many peoples in this world to be reached, so God counts on every believer committed to the cause of the Kingdom of God. It is a Kingdom imperative that we ask ourselves what we are doing so that “the living water” may quench the thirst of those thirsting for eternal life around the world. The sinner depends on the sending of the Body of Christ to hear the Good News of salvation from us.