

# The Great Commission and the New Testament: An Exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20

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## Introduction

The seal of the Baptist university where I teach has the Greek text of a portion of Matthew 28:19, which translates into English as, “Make disciples of all nations.” The founders of the school, like many of our spiritual ancestors, wanted to emphasize that this commission is essential to the Christian faith. The importance many believers attach to this passage is consistent with the prominent place it occupies in Matthew’s gospel. That the commission provides the climactic conclusion of Matthew’s account of the ministry and message of Jesus indicates that this is a charge he wanted the reader to remember. Not only does the position of the commission indicate its significance, but scholars have frequently noted that this passage summarizes the major themes of Matthew. As Donald Hagner says, “For these words, perhaps more than any others, distill the outlook and various emphases of the Gospel.”<sup>1</sup> This exegetical study focuses on what is perhaps the most important teaching of our Lord concerning the mission of his people.

## Exegesis

A survey of the literature on the Great Commission indicates that many scholars are unconvinced that Jesus ever actually gave this commission. The recent Jesus Seminar, for example, contends that Jesus gave no “missionary” mandate at all. The

contributors reject the authenticity of the whole passage for two reasons. First, the commission in Matthew differs significantly from the other “commissions” found in Luke 24:47-48 (cf. Ac 1:8) and John 20:22-23. Robert Funk argues, “These commissions have little in common, which indicates that they have been created by the individual evangelists to express their conception of the future of the Jesus movement. As a consequence they cannot be traced back to Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

B. Hubbard has shown, however, that the different commissionings share important characteristics. In fact, he concludes that a “proto-commission” predates the canonical gospels.<sup>3</sup>

The “Fellows” of the seminar also believe that since words important to Matthew are found in the Great Commission, then he (Matthew) is probably the author of the commission.<sup>4</sup> The logic seems to be that since words important to Matthew appear here then they cannot be Jesus’ words. Few evangelical scholars, however, are contending that these words are the *ipsissima verba Jesu*. Rather, they contend that Matthew shaped the sayings of Jesus and used his own words to summarize those sayings.<sup>5</sup> Still, they believe the Great Commission was an actual event that transpired at the end of Jesus’ own time on earth.

Yet another challenge to the authenticity of this commission comes from those

who believe that post-Jesus theological statements are present in the commission. We will examine those problematic statements in the exegetical section. For now it is enough to say that there is nothing unusual or illogical about approaching the study of the commission with the presupposition that Jesus wanted his followers to continue and spread that which he had begun. Was his mission and purpose on earth important enough to die for but not important enough to continue?

In addition to authenticity, there has also been a good deal of study into the possible existence of a literary form (or *Gattung*) after which this commission was modeled. The results of these studies have not been conclusive, however, and most doubt that Matthew is following a particular *Gattung*.<sup>6</sup> It seems Meier is correct when he says that the commission *sui generis*.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, since there is no *Gattung*, it is perhaps best to simply observe the basic components of the commission as follows:

- A. The disciples go to Galilee as commanded and see Jesus (vv. 16, 17).
- B. Jesus appears to the disciples and declares his power (v. 18).
- C. Jesus commissions the disciples (vv. 19, 20a).
  - 1) The goal of the commission is to make disciples.
  - 2) The characteristics of making disciples are baptizing and teaching.
- D. Jesus promises his disciples that he will be with them (v. 20b).

#### Verse 16

The phrase “the eleven disciples” is a reminder of the tragedy of Judas’ failure and subsequent suicide (27:5). That the disciples go “into Galilee” demonstrates

their obedience to Jesus’ instruction (28:10). Geographically speaking, Jesus’ ministry ends in Matthew where it began: in Galilee of the Gentiles (4:15,16).<sup>8</sup> The mention of a specific mountain, however, is new information.<sup>9</sup> The term “mountain” is an important one for Matthew’s account, for the reader associates the mountain as a place of teaching,<sup>10</sup> highlighting the Matthean portrait of Jesus as the “one greater than Moses.”<sup>11</sup> The reader is thus prepared for the fact that Jesus is about to impart important revelatory material to his followers.

#### Verse 17

Verse 17 presents the reader with two related problems. First, how is it that the responses of worship and doubt are related? Are these responses mutually exclusive or can both be experienced simultaneously? Second, how many groups of people are involved here? If worship and doubt are mutually exclusive concepts then the responses of at least two different groups are being described. The answers to the two questions can be summarized as follows:

One possibility is that Matthew describes the responses of two different groups within the circle of the eleven. That is, this partitive interpretation takes the phrase *hoi de* (“but some”) to indicate a necessary change of subject from the “they” who worship. This would mean that some of them worshipped Jesus, but some others in the group doubted.<sup>12</sup> Yet Hagner has pointed out that all of the other uses of *hoi de* in Matthew could be interpreted as inclusive, not partitive, and some of them demand the inclusive interpretation.<sup>13</sup> Further, Matthew could have used *tines tines auton* to indicate clearly that he meant a subgroup from within the eleven.<sup>14</sup>

A second option is that Matthew refers to a group other than the eleven disciples. Thus, the disciples worshipped Jesus while others, who were also present but not mentioned, doubted. The problem with this interpretation is that Matthew has referred only to the eleven, and the context gives no indication that others are present. This interpretation is simply dictated by the conviction that the same group cannot worship and doubt at the same time.<sup>15</sup>

The third interpretation takes the nominative in *hoi de* to have the same subject as the main verb. That is, those who worship and those who doubt are, in fact, the same individuals. The verb *edistasan* (“doubt”) can indicate hesitation rather than skepticism.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the only other occurrence of this word in the New Testament is in Matthew 14:31 where Jesus asks Peter, who had at first walked on water toward Jesus but was then distracted, “Why do you doubt?” The question in that context does not seem to indicate that Peter was going through a period of intellectual skepticism concerning the person or power of Jesus. Given this interpretation of the word, Matthew may be saying that although the disciples worshipped Jesus, they were also hesitant or confused.

However one decides the issue of whether the whole group or only a portion of the eleven doubt, it is still not clear what Matthew means by saying that they worship and they doubt. Is their worship not real worship? Do they hesitate because they fear how Jesus will treat them, given their rather cowardly actions during his passion? On the other hand, Matthew could mean that they worship from a distance but are reluctant to approach Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Or does their doubt concern the propriety of worshipping Jesus? The meaning

is all the more difficult because Matthew makes no point—good or bad—concerning their doubt. Jesus neither condemns nor admonishes them,<sup>18</sup> whereas Jesus annuls the doubt in Luke 24:43 and in John 20:27. In Luke 24:25 he chastises them for their hardness of heart, as he does in the longer Markan ending (Mk 16:14).

My conclusion, then, must be tentative. It is likely that Matthew means that at least some of the disciples both worshipped and doubted, although it is possible that the entire group responded with both worship and doubt. It does not appear that Matthew means they doubted that this really was Jesus. More likely, since Matthew includes no reprimand from Jesus, he simply means that the disciples were confused and therefore indecisive as to the proper course of action. They respond in awe of Jesus but still have little idea what all the things which have transpired mean.<sup>19</sup>

Why did Matthew include the reference to their doubt since he makes no explicit point from it? I agree with Ellis that he included the reference to doubt because it happened.<sup>20</sup> But he also lets the reader know that a disciple still lives with a certain amount of tension. Disciples are those who know Jesus is the risen Lord and yet may still be confused.

#### *Verse 18*

Despite (or perhaps because of) the hesitation of the eleven, Jesus approaches them. Before the commission proper in v. 19, he assures them of his sovereignty over heaven and earth. Elsewhere in Matthew Jesus claimed the authority to forgive sins (9:6) and that all things have been given to him by the Father (11:27). Therefore, the claim here only heightens the reader’s understanding of Jesus’ authority. Jesus gives here a new dimension to the impli-

cations of his authority.

It is not clear whether the phrase *pasa exousia en ourano* (“all authority is given to me in heaven”) is drawn from Daniel 7:14. The majority of commentators believe that v. 18 is at least an echo of Daniel 7:20.<sup>21</sup> Yet while Jesus fulfills the role of the “Son of Man” (Dan 7:13), there are also points of discontinuity with the Daniel passage. First, Jesus’ power is presently realized; it is not something attained at his future coming.<sup>22</sup> Second, the interpretation of the vision in Daniel is nationalistic. It is to the “saints of the Most High” to whom the kingdom is given, and to whom the other nations, their former oppressors, must submit (cf. 7:18, 22). In Matthew, however, it is Jesus who rightfully deserves submission, and his authority forms the basis for making disciples of—not executing vengeance upon—the other nations.<sup>23</sup>

#### Verse 19

The *oun* (“so then”) bases the commission which follows on Jesus’ sovereignty. The only imperative in the commission is *matheteusate* (“make disciples”). Some conclude, then, that the participle (*poreuthentes*) with which the verse begins should be translated “as you go.”<sup>24</sup> Malina even argues that perhaps it should not be translated at all.<sup>25</sup> Based on the fact that “go” is a participle and not a finite verb he concludes, “Then to call the command a ‘Missionauftrag’ or a ‘Sedungsbefehl’ would be inaccurate.”<sup>26</sup> Yet Rogers has demonstrated that in some instances where a similar construction occurs if the participle were not given an imperatival force, then the action indicated would make no sense.<sup>27</sup> When a participle is linked with an imperative, the participle should also be given imperatival force.<sup>28</sup> Clearly Jesus is directing them to

go to all the nations and to make disciples, and it is entirely appropriate to describe this passage as a mission passage. They are commanded to go.<sup>29</sup>

The verb *matheteusate* is “characteristically Matthean.”<sup>30</sup> It does not appear to emphasize an initial commitment to Jesus.<sup>31</sup> The rest of the verse describes more of what it means “to disciple.” Discipling means teaching persons to observe that which Jesus has commanded. As Carson says, “Disciples are those who hear, understand, and obey what Jesus says.”<sup>32</sup>

But what does the phrase *panta ta ethne* (“all the nations”) mean? There are essentially two interpretations. First, some believe the phrase should be translated “all the Gentiles,” exclusive of the Jews to whom Jesus sent his followers in 10:5.<sup>33</sup> This interpretation is based in part on the belief that Matthew was written after Judaism and Christianity had parted ways and were no longer in conversation with each other.<sup>34</sup> Some support for this view occurs in the reference to “the Jews” in v. 15. The significance of this commission for Matthew’s audience would be that the mission to the Jews has ceased, and Jesus now instructs his followers to turn to the Gentiles.

J. Meier has offered a thorough response to Hare and Harrington. He has shown that in at least three instances in Matthew the term denotes Jews or Israel.<sup>35</sup> That Matthew saw an end to the mission to the Jews is hard to reconcile with 10:23. Against the insistence of Hare and Harrington that Matthew’s church has already moved away from Jews and Judaism, Levine states, “If Matthew’s church still follows the Jewish Law, uses the Jewish Bible as its anchor, has a nucleus of ethnic Jews, and accepts Jewish converts, then it is difficult to see in

what way the first gospel depicts the rejection of the Jews."<sup>36</sup> There is no evidence from Matthew that "mission" efforts to Jews should ever cease. As Davies and Allison state succinctly, "It is historically implausible that, in Matthew's time and place, there were no longer Christian missionaries to Jews."<sup>37</sup> These efforts apparently ran simultaneously with efforts to convert Gentiles. The central problem posed was over whether Gentiles had to submit to the "boundary markers" of Judaism when they converted to Christianity.

Therefore, it is better to take the commission here as expanding the "mission" of 10:5 to include all ethnic groups.<sup>38</sup> There are, however, two further distinctions among those who hold this interpretation. Some maintain that a legitimate implication of the term *ethne* is that there is a concern for the ethnic identity of each group. What Matthew intends, on this reading, is that the disciples understand that their mission is to ethnic groups, and they must preserve the ethnic identity of each group. Group conversions can, and perhaps should, be the norm.<sup>39</sup> Yet the use of the masculine pronoun in the next clause (*autous*) means that the antecedent of "them" cannot be the nations, since *ethne* is neuter. We would have expected *auto* otherwise. Thus, Matthew focuses the commission upon individuals, not nations.<sup>40</sup> The phrase "all the nations" refers to both Jews and non-Jews, but the pronoun (*autous*) lessens the nationalistic or ethnic connotations of *ethne* ("nations"). Thus, Jesus commands the making of disciples of individuals from all ethnic groups, including Judaism. The best or most effective way of reaching persons within their particular ethnic heritage is simply not addressed in this passage.

The two characteristics of making disciples are baptizing and teaching.<sup>41</sup> Baptizing is referred to without any explanation, so Matthew must have presupposed his reader needed no explanation.<sup>42</sup> It probably means "with regard to" or "because of one's relationship to."<sup>43</sup> Those baptized must give public indication of a particular understanding of and relationship with God as he has been revealed by Jesus.

Baptism must be in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup> Most believe the "trinitarian" or "triadic" phrase comes from Matthew, not Jesus, for two reasons. First, nowhere in Acts is anyone baptized with these words.<sup>45</sup> The logic runs that if Jesus had specified these words then Acts would have certainly indicated that they were the words used. Second, the theology being advocated is, at the least, incipient trinitarianism.<sup>46</sup> Many believe that this doctrine arose after the time of Jesus, and therefore its inclusion here is anachronistic. Others hold that the phrase may or may not contain the *ipsissima verba*, but it still represents the essence of what Jesus taught and is therefore an accurate summary by Matthew. The statement that the doctrine of the Trinity was not formulated until later is true in the sense that it was not articulated as such in the first century. Nevertheless, G. Fee has shown that "incipient Trinitarianism" not only existed early but was presumed by Paul without argument.<sup>47</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity is based upon the implications of several New Testament texts. Rather than ascribing to later thinkers a doctrine that is inconsistent with what Jesus must have taught, it is more likely that we have here one of the teachings that led to the later attempts to summarize doctrinally what Jesus said.<sup>48</sup>

But why, if the phrase is authentic, is baptism in Acts in the name of Jesus only? Furthermore, why is it that when Eusebius quotes from this commission he usually omits the triadic phrase and quotes Jesus as saying “in my name”?<sup>49</sup> In response to the first question, there is no reason to believe that the phrase was ever intended as a formula in the sense that every word had to be repeated exactly as it is stated here.<sup>50</sup> Jesus commands that baptisms be performed on those who understand the unique relationship enjoyed by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Some have concluded that there was an older Greek text that used the phrase “in my name” instead of the triadic phrase based primarily on the evidence from Eusebius. That text is now lost to us.<sup>51</sup> Eusebius quotes Matthew 28:19 twenty-one times. Sixteen times he quotes Jesus as saying “in my name,” and five times he uses the words found in the received text.<sup>52</sup>

There are weaknesses with the view that the text originally said “in my name,” however. First, Eusebius is not consistent or exact in the way in which he quotes the New Testament. Second, there is no other patristic source which corroborates Eusebius’ reading.<sup>53</sup> Most significantly, there are no Greek manuscripts that attest to “in my name.” The most likely conclusion, then, is that the received text is original.

The real issue is how one believes Jesus conceived of his relationship with the Father and the Spirit and whether or not one believes that Matthew accurately relates what Jesus said about that relationship. If one believes—for whatever reason—that Jesus did not believe he enjoyed a unique relationship with the Father from eternity and that such claims are owed to the early Christians and/or the evangelists, then rejection of this portion of the Great

Commission will logically follow. If, however, one concludes that Jesus did believe himself to be uniquely and eternally related to the Father and to the Spirit and that the evangelist accurately summarizes the essence of what Jesus taught on this point, then there is a solid basis for what became the doctrine of the Trinity. Matthew believed that Jesus’ unique status with the Father was essential to the mission. Thus, the passage is both Christological and missiological. Those who believe Matthew was either wrong, misinformed, or anxious to put words in Jesus’ mouth to justify later ecclesiastical beliefs and practices are suggesting that much of both Christian doctrine and history is based on a terrible misrepresentation of what Jesus actually said.

The disciples are commissioned to teach the new disciples to keep what Jesus commanded. It is Jesus’ own teaching, not the Torah, that is the substance of what is to be taught. Throughout Matthew the emphasis has been on Jesus as the teacher.<sup>54</sup> Now, the disciples are for the first time commissioned to teach also.<sup>55</sup> But it is not just that they are to teach. They are to teach the converts “to keep” (*terein*) that which Jesus taught. This verb adds a distinctively ethical dimension to the teaching.<sup>56</sup> Christianity is not Torah-based, but it is, nevertheless, inherently moral. Any proclamation of the gospel which does not have this Christocentric ethic is not the gospel as Matthew presents it.

The commission ends with the promise of Jesus’ presence, which is similar to those OT passages in which God promised his presence to those he commissioned.<sup>57</sup> The use of the word “all” is striking in this commission. All authority has been given to Jesus. Therefore, they must make disciples of all nations. They

must keep all that he commanded. Now they are promised that he will be with them all the days until the consummation of the ages. In 1:23 the name “Immanuel” was interpreted as meaning “God (is) with us.” Now the disciples are assured that as they go in his name he will continue to be Immanuel to them.

It is obvious that this commission is intended for more than just those disciples gathered at that particular time. Those eleven disciples would not be able to go into all the world, so the Great Commission is intended for all those who would follow Christ. It is universal in the sense that every disciple is to become a disciple maker. The commission also dictates that the proclamation must herald the fullness of God who has been revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Theology—proper and full—cannot be omitted from what we proclaim. Further, all the commands of Jesus are included. In no cultural context may the demands of the gospel be truncated. Finally, the gospel is intended for all the world. There is no place that is off limits to the power of the gospel. Jesus has been given universal power, and he has given his followers a universal commission. This commission encompasses the whole gospel for the whole world.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, WBC 33B (Dallas: Word Books, 1995) 881. Hagner summarizes these emphases as Christology, discipleship, ecclesiology, and righteousness. He also quotes O. Michel, “Matt. 28:18-20 is the key to the understanding of the whole book.” (“The Conclusion of Matthew’s Gospel: A Contribution to the History of the Easter Message,” *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Graham Stanton [Philadelphia:

Fortress Press, 1983] 35). Michel, however, holds that the commission should be understood in terms of Christology, not the missionary charge.

<sup>2</sup> R. Funk, et. al., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus: New Translation and Commentary* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997) 270.

<sup>3</sup> B. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974). For the “shape” or the components of this common tradition see 113-122. Hubbard does not believe the “proto-commission” upon which these other commissions were based can be attributed to Jesus. He dates the “proto-commission” within about fifteen years of the death of Jesus (116-128). Although I disagree with Hubbard on the issue of authenticity, my point is that even one who says that the commissioning is not authentic has shown that it shares common features with the other commissionings.

<sup>4</sup> See *Five Gospels*, 270.

<sup>5</sup> Evangelical approaches to this issue as it relates to this particular passage can be found in G. Osborne, “The Evangelical and Redaction Criticism,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22 (1979) 311. See also R.T. France, “The Authenticity of the Sayings of Jesus,” *History, Criticism, and Faith*, ed. Colin Brown (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976) 130-131. See also Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1987) 117-126. A very helpful summary of the methodological problems involved can be found in Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History*. “Go Nowhere Among the Gentiles: Matt. 10:5b”

(Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1988) 14-18.

<sup>6</sup> The most extensive and helpful study has been the one by Hubbard, who argues that there was an OT *Gattung* for commissionings which Matthew has followed. He has failed to convince most scholars that there was a commissioning *Gattung* which was distinct from a general theophany. Most of the components of his commissioning *Gattung* would be true of almost any divine-human encounter. Further, Hubbard has to conclude that the confrontation in the Matthean passage is split into two parts by the reaction—a phenomenon not found in any of the OT commissionings. See especially the responses to his work by J. Meier, “Two Disputed Questions in Matt 28:16-20,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96/3 (1977) 422, 423 and D. Hill, “The Conclusion of Matthew’s Gospel: Some Literary-Critical Observation,” *Irish Biblical Studies* 8 (1986) 56. See also B. Malina, “The Literary Structure and Form of Matt. xxviii.16-20,” *New Testament Studies* 17 (1970-71) 88. Malina and Hill attempt their own literary analysis but with less success than Hubbard.

<sup>7</sup> Meier, 424.

<sup>8</sup> Hagner, 884.

<sup>9</sup> See Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992) 430. See also W. Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970) 47. Marxsen concluded that since the mountain was not mentioned in 28:1-10 it is mentioned in the commission only because Matthew

found it in the tradition. Hubbard concludes the reverse is true. Since it is not in the earlier part of chapter 28, we have evidence that Matthew added it. Both Marxsen and Hubbard see the mountain as mythological, since it had theological significance for Matthew. But once it is assumed that both Matthew and the early church willingly created events and instructions, it is hard to know whose creative hand we are seeing. Cf. Hubbard, 73, n.4.

<sup>10</sup> See 4:8; 5:1; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1; 24:3; 26:30.

<sup>11</sup> See Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 593, 594. See also T. L. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: a Study in Matthean Theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985). Donaldson points to six scenes in Matthew which portray Jesus on a mountain. According to Donaldson, Matthew is presenting Jesus as the focus of a “Zion typology.” See the response by R.T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989) 313.

<sup>12</sup> See K. L. McKay, “The Use of *hoi de* in Matthew 28:17: A Response to K. Grayston,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 24 (1985), 71, 72. See also W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *Matthew, III*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997) 681-682.

<sup>13</sup> For example, the phrase is used in 2:5: “He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born, and they (*hoi de*) said to him.” See K. Grayston, “The Translation of Matthew 28.17,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 21 (1984) 105.

<sup>14</sup> See Hagner, 884. The same point was made earlier by R. Kwik, “Some Doubted,” *Expository Times* 77 (1965-66) 181.

<sup>15</sup> As L. Morris says, “It can scarcely mean that the hesitators were among the worshipers; Matthew is saying that there were those who worshiped and there were those who hesitated.” See *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 745.

<sup>16</sup> Hagner, 885, points out that it would be more likely that Matthew would use *distazein* if unbelief were what he intended. On this point see especially I. P. Ellis, “But Some Doubted,” *New Testament Studies* 14 (1967-68) 576. Since the word occurs so infrequently in the NT Ellis adopts an etymological approach. He points out that Plato uses the word to describe a state of uncertainty or the inability to make a decision based on the evidence presented.

<sup>17</sup> Grayston, 108, says that they are fearful of being condemned when they see Jesus and so they worship him. Yet they doubt if even this worship will save them.

<sup>18</sup> Hubbard, 114, points to the juxtaposition of worship/joy with doubt/disbelief in all the commissionings. He states, “We conclude then that the proto-commissioning contained some description both of a positive response to the Christophany and of a negative or disbelieving one.”

<sup>19</sup> Walsh and Keesnet refer to the disciples response as “cognitive dissonance par excellence.” See “Reflections on the Ascension,” *Theology* 95 (1992) 195. Quoted also by



Hagner, 885.

<sup>20</sup>See Ellis, 575.

<sup>21</sup>By far the most extensive analysis of this question can be found in J. Schaberg, *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: The Triadic Phrase in Matthew 28:19b* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980) 111-141. She both sets forth positive reasons for concluding that there is an allusion to Daniel 7:14 LXX and carefully responds to those who say no such allusions are present. She says, 124, that Matthew is using Daniel in a new and creative way. See Gundry, 595, for the view that the phrase is not drawn from Daniel.

<sup>22</sup>R.T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989) 315. France also notes that the consummation, when Jesus' power is fully revealed, is still future (Mt 25:31).

<sup>23</sup>France, 316.

<sup>24</sup>See R. D. Culver, "What is the Church's Commission?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125 (1968) 243-253.

<sup>25</sup>He says, "The participle here has no object and does not, therefore, share in the total action the command orders as do the rest of the verbs in the statement." See "Literary Structure," 90.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>C. Rogers, "The Great Commission," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130 (1973) 258-267. See especially 260-261. For example, in Matthew 2:8 Herod tells the magi to "go (*pareuthentes*) and search diligently (*exetasate*) for the child." Obviously the participle "go" has imperatival force. Also, in 2:13 Joseph is told to "Arise (*egertheis*) and take (*paralabe*) the

child." Cf. also 11:4; 17:27. The reference in 17:27 clearly cannot mean "as you go" since there is no contextual indication that Peter was going to go to the sea otherwise.

<sup>28</sup>D. Carson, "Matthew," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Vol. 8* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984) 597. Carson points out that the imperatival force only holds when the participle precedes the imperative. Thus, the following participles *baptizontes* and *didaskontes* may describe actions that are characteristic of making disciples, but they are not the means of doing so.

<sup>29</sup>Yet Blomberg, 431, is right to note that it is not only those who go into foreign missions who are obedient to the commission.

<sup>30</sup>Hagner, 887. It occurs elsewhere in Matthew 13:52 and 27:57. For its only non-Matthean occurrence see Acts 14:21.

<sup>31</sup>Note in Acts 14:21 it occurs after *euangelisamenoi*. Thus, there appears to be a distinction between the two concepts of evangelizing and making disciples. Those who had been "evangelized" are to be discipled. Acts 11:26 indicates that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. This would indicate that the terms "Christian" and "disciple" were close synonyms for Luke.

<sup>32</sup>"Matthew," 596. Morris, 746, makes a helpful point that "In the first century a disciple did not enroll with such-and-such a school but with such-and-such a teacher." A helpful survey on discipleship can be found in H. Kvalbein, "'Go Therefore and Make Disciples' . . . The Concept of

Discipleship in the New Testament," *Themelios* 13 (1988) 48-53.

<sup>33</sup>See D. Hare and D. Harrington, "Make Disciples of All the Nations," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975) 359-369. They not only say *ethne* means "gentiles" here, they conclude that the terms *ethnos* and *ethne* always means "gentile(s)" in Matthew.

<sup>34</sup>As Hare and Harrington state, "Matthew does not envision the conversion of Israel as a nation; the time for that has passed. His Gospel reflects the conditions of a period in which the split between Israel and the church is definitive." *Ibid.*, 363.

<sup>35</sup>See J. Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977) 94-102. The three passages that clearly refer to Jews are 21:43; 24:47; 24:14. Meier also shows that Hare and Harrington's interpretation of 25:32 is not tenable.

<sup>36</sup>Levine, 195.

<sup>37</sup>Davies and Allison, 684. Hare and Harrington respond to the fact that the disciples did, in fact, take the gospel to the Jews as proof that Matthew's primary concern was not historical accuracy. This statement seems to assume that which is proven, however.

<sup>38</sup>Levine has pointed out clearly that the commission in 10:5 is not to all Jews; it is to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Space does not permit an adequate summary of her study of that verse. She concludes, "The ultimate distinction in the gospel remains along the lines of the social axis: judgment is based on faith manifest in action and not on eth-

nic origin or elite-group affiliation." See 222-223.

<sup>39</sup>See H. Goerner, *All Nations in God's Purpose* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979).

<sup>40</sup>See Blomberg, 432. "Hence, the missiological debate about the validity of group conversions cannot be settled by any appeal to this text."

<sup>41</sup>Carson, 597. They are not the means of making disciples, but for Malina, 91, to call them "paratactic" is perhaps misleading.

<sup>42</sup>As Morris says, "We have no knowledge of a time when the church was without baptism or unsure of baptism." See *Matthew*, 747.

<sup>43</sup>Schaberg, 19. See also G. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 90-92. See also S. Brown, "The Matthean Community and the Gentile Mission," *Novum Testamentum* 3 (1980) 205-208. Brown thinks Matthew is silent on circumcision because his community is divided on the whole issue of the gentile mission. Matthew, says Brown, supports the mission but does not want to offend those who oppose it.

<sup>44</sup>The use of the singular ("name") which is shared by the three is consistent with but not proof of a trinitarian interpretation. See Schaberg, 22, 23, who refers to such an interpretation as "Clearly anachronistic."

<sup>45</sup>Acts records the use of the name "Jesus Christ" (Ac 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; cf. Ro 6:3; Gal 3:27) and "the Lord Jesus" (Ac 8:16; 19:5).

<sup>46</sup>For the distinctions between "triadic" and "trinitarian" see Schaberg,

9,14, 24-26. She does not believe this passage meets the criteria of "Trinitarian," primarily because there is no substantiation of a personal Holy Spirit in Matthew. She thinks the Spirit is an impersonal force. She discounts references to verbs which would indicate the Spirit is personal, e.g. the Spirit "leads" Jesus (4:1) and speaks through the disciples (10:20).

<sup>47</sup>See Gordon D. Fee, "Christology and Pneumatology in Romans 8:9-11—and Elsewhere: Some Reflections on Paul as a Trinitarian," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 312-331. On the Christological issues involved see other articles in the same volume. See also Martin Hengel, *The Son of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) and I. Howard Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

<sup>48</sup>France says, "We cannot know how far Matthew had thought through the implications of such language, but he has unambiguously posed the problem which lies at the heart of all subsequent trinitarian debate, the recognition, in a monotheistic context, that Jesus, who is clearly understood to be distinct from the Father, is himself no less than God." See *Evangelist*, 317.

<sup>49</sup>*The Didache* uses the triadic phrase. See *Did.* 7:1-3.

<sup>50</sup>Schaberg, 21.

<sup>51</sup>See F. C. Conybeare, "The Eusebian form of the Text Mt 28:19," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 2 (1901) 275-288.

Conybeare based his argument on the fact that in the pre-Nicene quotes from Eusebius Jesus was quoted as saying "in my name," whereas in the quotes from the post-Nicene period he used the three-fold name. Hagner, 887-888, agrees saying, "The threefold name (at most only an incipient trinitarianism) in which the baptism is to be performed . . . seems clearly to be a liturgical expansion of the evangelist consonant with the practice of his day. . . . There is a good possibility that in its original form, as witnessed by the ante-Nicene Eusebian form, the text read 'make disciples in my name.'"

<sup>52</sup>On two other occasions Eusebius seems to quote from the commission but does not refer to baptism. For discussion of each of these quotes in their contexts in Eusebius see Hubbard, 153-161.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 162. Schaberg, 28, also mentions Eusebius' anti-trinitarian bias.

<sup>54</sup>See 4:23; 5:2; 7:29; 9:35; 11:1; 13:34; 21:23; 26:55. Cf. Hagner, 888.

<sup>55</sup>Schaberg, 2.

<sup>56</sup>R. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 278.

<sup>57</sup>Hubbard, 96.