

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Commission: A Study of Matthew 21–28

STUDY TWENTY-ONE

What Now?

Matthew 28:16–20

The plan Jesus set in motion before He ascended back into heaven is the only plan that will work.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

As the end of the conference drew near, the decision makers discussed, “What now?” When William Carey realized they favored the wide road with a smooth path, he grabbed Andrew Fuller’s arm crying out, “Is nothing again going to be done?”

William Carey wanted a missionary society that supported international workers who would make disciples among people who had never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Eventually, his vision materialized and he became one of those workers—going to India. For more than forty years, without returning home, he translated the Bible, preached the gospel, and made disciples. We now know William Carey (1761–1834) as the father of modern missions.

The global vision that compelled Carey comes from the words Jesus spoke in Matthew 28:16–20. As Christians, we’re indebted to those who’ve proclaimed Jesus’ message before us, and we’re summoned by our Lord to continue in that worthy endeavor so others, too, may enjoy Christ.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

What Now?

Matthew 28:16–20



PREPARE YOUR HEART

It's always important to pray before reading God's Word. Since we'll focus on Jesus' global mission, read Psalm 67:2–3 below, and write it as a prayer in your own words while also requesting God's aid in this study.

*“May your ways be known throughout the earth,
your saving power among people everywhere.
May the nations praise you, O God.
Yes, may all the nations praise you.”*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The passage for our *Searching the Scriptures* study is known as the Great Commission—Jesus' marching orders for His followers. Jesus had risen from the dead, but would soon leave them to ascend into heaven. What were they to do next?

In the momentous words of the Great Commission, Jesus answered the “What now?” question all of His disciples must have been asking. His words still ring true today, giving us *the central plan* for carrying on Jesus' ministry until He returns.



Observation: The Great Commission

We begin with observing what the Bible says by reading it slowly and paying attention to the words.¹ Read *Matthew 28:16–20* and note questions you may have about the text or anything that stands out to you.



What Now?

Matthew 28:16–20

According to Matthew 28:17, the eleven disciples responded in what two ways to Jesus?

1. _____
2. _____

According to 28:18, how much authority has been given to Jesus?

According to 28:19, to what nations did Jesus send His disciples?

According to 28:20, which of Jesus' commands are His disciples to obey?

According to 28:20, how long will Jesus be with His people?

Did you catch the “therefore” in 28:19? In observation, we note the logical connection of statements—especially when we see connectives like “therefore.” So how does the “therefore” connect verse 28:19 with verse 28:18?

There's nothing following Jesus' words in Matthew's gospel. This is it. This is the plan. This is the Great Commission. Here are the instructions for all disciples who will follow Jesus after He has left the earth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



What Now?

Matthew 28:16–20



Interpretation: Jesus' Plan to Reach All Nations

Observing the text helps us break it down into sections so that we can understand what it means. In the interpretation step, we want to see through the author's eyes to avoid imposing our own opinions into the author's meaning.

The Setting—Matthew 28:16–17

Begin by looking up *Galilee* (Matthew 28:16) in the maps section of your Bible or your Bible atlas. In his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll suggests a possible site of “the mountain where Jesus told them to go” as Mount Arbel. This vantage point would have given the disciples a broad view of the Galilee region and the highways that linked Israel to the rest of the world.²

Why do you think Jesus wanted to meet His disciples there instead of Jerusalem?

Review the prophecy about Galilee at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in [Matthew 4:12–17](#). Do you see any interpretive connections between the launch of Jesus' ministry and His commissioning His disciples?

Imagine seeing the resurrected Jesus on that mountain in Galilee. His new, immortal body must have appeared awesome, and yet He still bore “the wounds in his hands and his side” (John 20:20). The disciples worshiped Him, but some doubted—perhaps fretting over how they could carry on without the Master. Jesus answered their doubts and settled their hearts with His specific and encouraging instructions.



What Now?

Matthew 28:16–20

The Great Commission—Matthew 28:18–20a

Jesus began with a declaration of His authority (*Matthew 28:18*), the same theme that Matthew had developed throughout his gospel (Matthew 7:29; 9:6; 16:1–4; 21:23–27). What earlier event in Matthew 28 proved Jesus' authority once and for all?

Rephrase in your own words Jesus' statement, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth." Doing this increases our understanding because we must know what the text means before we can restate it.

According to *Matthew 28:18–20*, how do we make disciples and what does a disciple do? Note the central verb, *make disciples*, and the other action words that complement it. For help identifying the verbs, read pages 322–323 of Pastor Chuck's commentary.



What Now?

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The Divine Assurance—Matthew 28:20b

How does Jesus' assurance in [Matthew 28:20](#) encourage His disciples and empower them to carry out His command to make disciples?

Just think—the God of the universe cares about us, gives us purpose in life, reveals to us His plan for the world, and equips us with His presence to do what He commands!

Jesus said in so many words, “I will give all the strength you need, provide all of the energy necessary, open all the doors that need to be opened, and when I do, walk through them. Open your heart, open your doors, open your life.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

In the upper room before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would come. According to [John 16:8, 13–15](#), what did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do to aid His disciples in their mission?



What Now?

Matthew 28:16–20

Right before Jesus ascended into heaven, He met His disciples one last time. The setting for this encounter was the Mount of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem, and Jesus had a final word of instruction for them. According to [Acts 1:8](#), what did Jesus say about the source of their power, the job they were to do, and where they were to go?

*Insight for Living Ministries has [Vision 195](#) as part of our marching orders. It's our vision to go to all 195 countries of the world with the message of Christ!
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



Application: The Great Commission, Our Mission

What principles can we apply from Christ's Great Commission? At least four streams of application flow from His powerful words.

First, *Jesus spoke to very ordinary people who knew Him personally*. No super-spiritual saints were in the group of people who received the Great Commission! They were people just like us.

Second, *Jesus presented a plan that was brief, simple, and clear*. Anyone can grasp the action points—*make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching*. His plan is doable because we operate under His authority and in His power, not our own.

Third, *Jesus was intense about the mission but relaxed regarding the method*. Jesus used the word *all* to communicate His passion: “all authority,” “all the nations,” “all the commands I have given you” (Matthew 28:18–20). We must be all-in regarding His mission, but remember, Jesus never gave us a specific method. We can be flexible to adapt our ministries to be as effective as possible.

Fourth, *Jesus expected obedient action from all His followers*. Each follower of Christ *can* participate in the Great Commission, and we *should*. Making disciples is not an option.



What Now?

Matthew 28:16–20

As you conclude this study, pray for clarity and wisdom about how God would have you move forward in a new way in His Great Commission. If He's made it clear, then pray for courage to do what He's revealed. Write down the one thing you know to do this week to further His plan.

God will always guide you as you find new ways to share the glorious news of His Son, Jesus. May God give you opportunities to speak about His mysterious, glorious plan of Christ to those who desperately need good news.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I give You my heart, hands, and feet in Your Son's service. Give wings to the words of the gospel as I proclaim them to others. Motivate me to find new ways to participate in fulfilling the Great Commission. Thank You for the reassurance of Your Son's abiding presence and the Spirit's energizing power to make Your kingdom a reality on earth. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Learn more about Pastor Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* method on the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](https://www.insight.org/how-to-study-the-bible-for-yourself)" at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org).
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 16–28*, vol. 1B (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 320–21.

