

Our Calling in Prison Ministry: “Go Make Disciples of All the Nations”

(by Pastor Bob Hoekstra)

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age. Amen.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Our Calling in Prison Ministry

This distinctive word in Matthew 28 is our calling in Prison Ministry: “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.*” Actually, this is the calling for every follower of Jesus Christ. The body of Christ has come to refer to these words as “the Great Commission.” These words are the over-riding guideline for all of God’s people until the end of this church age - - including those who are in Prison Ministry.

Making Disciples in Every Nation

This calling is to making disciples. A disciple is a follower of the Lord. This word describes a person who has trusted in the Lord Jesus for salvation and is now walking with Christ day by day, looking to Him for transformation of life and fruitfulness in service. It is the will of our Lord that this happens in every nation of the world - - in America, in the Ukraine, in India - - everywhere!

Our Authority

Upon what authority do we call people everywhere to follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior? It is the authority of the Lord Jesus Himself. “*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations’*” (28:18-19a). When we go forth in Jesus’ name, we are serving under the ultimate authority in all the universe.

Evangelism and Edification

The two aspects of discipleship are specified by Jesus as baptizing and teaching: “*baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you*” (28:19b-20a). This could be restated as evangelism and edification. First, proclaiming the good news of the saving grace of Christ, which leads to new believers being publicly identified with the Lord Jesus in water baptism. Second, teaching the new believers to follow the instructions of the Lord in every area of their lives.

Promised Presence

This call to making disciples in all the world is a daunting assignment. However, we should be much encouraged by Jesus’ promised presence. “*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (28:20b). Wherever we go to make disciples - - anyplace in the world - - in the free world or behind prison bars - - our Lord is with us to guide, to protect, to strengthen, and to bring forth much fruit!