

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

Matthew 28, Luke 24 & Acts 1

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 9 of 14



# Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

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Our Identity – Who do we think we are?

# Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

## Our Identity – Who do we think we are?

- Our personal identity develops as we tell our personal story – either to others or to ourselves.
- That narrative develops over time.
- New experiences, new friends, new accomplishments all get worked into our story – and into our personal identity.

# Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

## Narrative and Metanarrative

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## Narrative and Metanarrative

- Each story we tell, about ourselves or anyone else , can be called a **narrative**.
- Any historical framework into which we can fit all the stories that can ever be told is a **metanarrative**.

# Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

The American Church:

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## The American Church:

- Churches tend to be deeply segregated along generational, racial, socioeconomic, educational and other lines.
- For example, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century **only 5.5%** of Christian congregations were racially mixed.<sup>2</sup>
- This is not the model the Bible presents to us.

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3. To accept that **our identity in Christ** is something shared, and is a basis for unity with diverse others in the church.
4. To appreciate **biblical diversity as a spiritual strength** that expresses itself in the people and ministries of our church.

Previously in this series

Previously in this series

# A Shared Origin: The Story of Creation

Genesis 1 – 2

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 1 of 14



Previously in this series

# A Shared Tragedy: Sin and Its Effects

Genesis 3 – 11

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 2 of 14



Previously in this series

# A Shared Promise: The Covenant with Abraham

**Genesis 12:1-3**

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 3 of 14



Previously in this series

# A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ



Part 4 of 14

Previously in this series

# A Shared King: The Covenant with David

2 Samuel 7

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 5 of 14



Previously in this series

# A Shared Songbook: Christ in the Psalms

**Psalms 2, 16, 22, 110 & 118**

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 6 of 14



Previously in this series

# A Shared Expectation: The Nations in Prophecy

Isaiah – Malachi

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ



Part 7 of 14

Previously in this series

# A Shared Savior: The Lord Jesus Christ

Matthew 1 – 2

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 8 of 14



# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- Immediately after Christ's death, the disciples were at a loss – confused and disheartened.
- With Jesus around, they always knew what to do – namely whatever he told them.
- After he rose from the dead, that simple fact occupied all of their attention.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- But he was not planning to stay with them forever.
- Once he left, they would have a job to do and that job is what we are going to talk about today.
- For example, at the end of the Gospel of **Matthew** we read the following.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **Matthew 28:16-20** (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- That should be familiar to most of us because we read from that passage at the end of our services.
- Let's look more closely at what Jesus is saying.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **28:18** “All authority” has been given to Jesus.
- As an earthly king might pass his throne on to his son, God the Father has given all authority to Jesus.
- He is **fully God** so this is his rightful inheritance.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **28:19** Jesus Christ, this one who has all authority, gives his disciples a large-scale assignment.
- These **disciples** are to go and **make more disciples**.
- “**Make disciples**” is actually the only part of the assignment that comes in an **imperative** or command form.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **28:19** The one non-negotiable thing they must do is “make disciples of all nations.”
- Jesus came only to one place and mainly one people.
- The disciples were commanded spread this message around.
- They were to be **missions minded** from the beginning.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **28:19** As part of disciple-making, they will need to baptize.
- Jesus gives this baptism a clearly Trinitarian form.
- They will not baptize in the name of “God” generically.
- Rather it will be in the (one singular) “name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **28:19** God has within himself an element of diversity, which speaks against uniformity in the church.
- He reveals himself to us as unity in diversity – together.
- He created a world, the human race made in his image, and finally the church – they all reveal this variety.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **28:20** Disciples will be made by means of teaching.
- The content will be **all that Christ commands** – the whole word of God as revealed in the Scriptures.
- He leaves them with a promise to be with them.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- Now on to the Gospel of **Luke**.

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- Now on to the Gospel of **Luke**.
- **Luke 24:44-49** (ESV)

<sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ...

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **Luke 24:44-49** (ESV)

<sup>46</sup> and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **24:44-46** Luke reminds us that Christ's life and ministry were foretold in the Scriptures.
- **24:47** The message of "repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name."
- The recipients of the message shall be "all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **24:48** As Christ's "witnesses" they will proclaim a message on the basis of their personal experience with him.
- **24:49** Finally, they need to wait.
- They are not to leave Jerusalem until they receive the supernatural "power from on high" that they will need.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- And the book of **Acts**.

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- And the book of **Acts**.
- **Acts 1:4-8** (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” ...

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- 1:4-5 Dr. Luke is also the author of Acts.
- He again emphasizes what Jesus told the disciples – namely that they first need to wait.
- Something important is coming.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- Acts 1:4-8 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup> He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **1:6-7** When the disciples ask about the timing of the kingdom, Jesus points them to something more pressing.
- He doesn't tell them that their ideas are altogether wrong, but that they need to adjust their priorities.
- First things first.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- **1:8** The **Holy Spirit** would come upon them to empower them for the task.
- They would be Christ's **witnesses** from here on.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- Their destinations would be:
  1. Jerusalem
  2. All Judea and Samaria
  3. The end of the earth.
- These places can apply to us in two ways.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- First, purely as **geography** – focused on place.
  1. **Jerusalem** – in this city locally.
  2. **All Judea and Samaria** – to nearby regions.
  3. **The end of the earth** – everywhere else.

# A Shared Assignment: The Great Commission

- Second, as **ethnography** – focused on people and culture.
  1. **Jerusalem** – people near us who are a lot like us.
  2. **All Judea and Samaria** – people near us who are different from us, as Jews were different from Samaritans.
  3. **The end of the earth** – everyone else.

A Shared Assignment

Conclusions

# A Shared Assignment      Conclusions

- Jesus's **Great Commission** tells the church to make disciples of all nations.
- We are to baptize believers and teach them so that they will grow in their faith.
- We are to proclaim both repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus's name.

# A Shared Assignment      Conclusions

- We are to take this message to our **Jerusalem** of Indianapolis – or to the people who are most like us.
- To our **Judea and Samaria** of Indiana and the rest of the USA – or to people near us who different from us.
- And finally, to everyone and everywhere else.

# A Shared Assignment      Conclusions

- The **Great Commission** is an assignment shared by the church in all places and all times.
- Christ's goal for the church is that it would be made up all kinds of people from everywhere on earth.
- He promised to be with us to the end of the age – until we accomplish the task.

# A Shared Assignment      Conclusions

- This diverse mass of people – the church – is primarily identified as **the people who belong to Jesus**.
- **Who we are** is very important, but **whose we are – who we belong to** – is more important still.<sup>2</sup>

# A Shared Assignment      Conclusions

- In **Philippians 1:21** (ESV) Paul was able to say,  
“For to me to live is Christ ...”
- I pray we can all say the same thing.

# A Shared Assignment      Conclusions

- Let's pray for the supernatural power we need to:
  1. Be Christ's witnesses to everyone we encounter.
  2. Proclaim a message of repentance and forgiveness of sins.
  3. Make disciples of all the nations.
  4. Live a life that consistently backs up the gospel message.
  5. Keep doing all of the above until Jesus comes.

# A Shared Assignment      Conclusions

- Finally, may the Lord make a church that is
  1. Even more unified
  2. Even more diverse
  3. So fully identified with Christ that God's nature, love and wisdom will be evident to us and to the outside world.

Next Week

# A Shared Spirit: Uniting of Jew and Gentile

Acts 2, 10 – 13

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 10 of 14



# Reference List

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