

# **THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE GREAT COMMISSION**

James W. Garrett

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*The Church is under orders. The risen Lord has commanded it to "go," to "preach," to "make disciples"; and that is enough. The Church engages in evangelism today, not because it wants to or because it chooses to or because it likes to, but because it has been told to. Evangelistic inactivity is disobedience. It is right, therefore, to go back to the very beginning and re-examine the Church's marching orders."*<sup>1</sup>

These are the introductory words of a sermon that John W.R. Stott presented at the 1968 World Congress on Evangelism (at that time John W.R. Stott was chaplain to the Queen of England). Stott's words are an appropriate introduction for our study.

The concern of this paper is *how*, rather than *what*. We will not exegete fully the biblical passages under consideration, but only those portions of the passage that deal with "how." Our study will involve two concerns:

- A. The Great Commission itself;
- B. The historical account of how the New Testament Church demonstrated obedience to the Great Commission.

## PART I THE GREAT COMMISSION

The Great Commission occurs four times in Scripture, occurring at the end of each of the Four Gospels. Luke also records in Acts 1:6-8 a prophetic statement by Jesus, concerning the fulfillment of the Great Commission. These are not different versions of a single occasion. During the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension, Jesus probably repeated the commission many times in different words and with different emphasis. A quick look at the settings in which the Great Commission is recorded confirms this.

- A. John records what Jesus said in *Jerusalem on the day of the Resurrection* (John 20:19-23).
- B. Matthew records what Jesus said to His disciples *on a mountain in Galilee* (Matthew 28:16-20).
- C. Luke gives his summary of what Jesus said on the subject *during the whole forty-day period* (Luke 24:44-49). This is evident from the fact that in Luke's account it is Resurrection Day immediately before the commission and Ascension Day immediately after.
- D. Mark's version of the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-18) is in the portion of Mark that is textually questionable. There is significant evidence (not conclusive) that the original

conclusion of Mark was lost and that Mark 16:9-20 is an addition by someone other than the original author. If verses 9-20 are an addition by a later hand, they probably were written by someone who put into the text what he assumed Mark would have written, on the basis of what the Church experienced after the ascension. If this is true, then Mark 16:9-20 belongs in the second part of our study, the history of the fulfillment of the Great Commission in the early church. Since the integrity of these verses is questionable, it is unwise to build any doctrine or practice on the basis of statements made in these verses alone. It is appropriate to use these verses to substantiate conclusions drawn from other passages.

- E. Even though Acts 1:6-8 is not another version of the Great Commission (there is no command or exhortation) but rather a prophetic statement by Christ, we will consider it because it does contain valuable information for us.

### **MATTHEW 28:18-20**

*And Jesus came up 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 the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

To grasp what Our Lord commanded on this occasion, we first must undertake a brief word study of these verses.

The main verb of the phrase is μαθητεύω (*matheteuo*) "to disciple, to teach, to instruct." In the passage before us, the verb is, second person plural, first aorist tense imperative mood, active voice μαθητεύσατε (*matheteusate*).

The aorist tense in the imperative mood signifies summary action, transient or instantaneous...or something to be undertaken at once.<sup>2</sup> It has the sense of either a command or an appeal to "do it!" The imperative mood is used when the will of one person seeks to impact the will of another. Obedience or compliance is desired. **The primary command of the commission, therefore, is to *disciple all the nations*.**

The other three verbs in this passage, all participles, speak to the "how." We must understand the significance of the participles if we are to interpret properly Matthew's account of the Great Commission. The two participles, βαπτίζοντες (*baptizontes*), "baptizing," and διδάσκοντες (*didaskontes*), "teaching," are both nominative plural, present tense, active voice. The use of the present tense in participles indicates that the described action takes place simultaneously with the action described by the main verb. Thus, "discipling" (the primary command) would be defined in this passage as, "baptizing people and teaching them to keep the commands of Christ." In a departure from Classical Greek, the Koine Greek sometimes used a participle as an imperative, although the use is rare. Because these two participles are tied to the main verb, which is in the imperative mood, they would be examples of the imperative use of participles.

The remaining participle in this passage is the opening word of verse 19. This participle, *πορευθέντες* (*poreuthentes*), is the nominative plural, masculine, aorist participle of *πορεύομαι* (*poreuomai*), meaning, "to go." The aorist tense in a participle indicates that the action described occurs prior to the action of the main verb. So, the "going" precedes the "discipling."

Of special importance to the topic of this study is the question of what Matthew intended to convey by the use of this participle (*poreuthentes*). Participles have varied uses in Koine Greek. There are several ways that this participle can be understood. The three most obvious are:

1. As a simple participle, *poreuthentes* would be translated, "going," or, "as you go," meaning that as one moves about in the natural intercourse of life, he should be discipling those about him, by baptizing them and teaching them to observe the commandments of Christ. This understanding of the participle would imply that if every Christian did this in his own place of residence, then the nations would be disciplined.
2. On the other hand, if this participle is translated as a conditional participle, it would be translated, "if you go," or "when you go." The idea being, "Should you go out among the nations, disciple them." This rendering of the participle says nothing about discipling in the routine intercourse of life, nor about a deliberate going forth for the purpose of discipling.
3. The third possibility would be that this participle, like the two other participles in this passage (*baptizing* and *teaching*), is imperative. If the participle is so used here, it would be translated, "Go." As an imperative, it would be either a command or an appeal to go to the nations of the world and make disciples of them. This is the manner in which most English versions have rendered this passage.

Thus, verse 19 can be interpreted in two ways:

- as a command to go out for the explicit purpose of discipling nations;
- as a command to be involved in discipling in a "bloom where you are planted" sense (If one stays at home, he should be discipling. If he travels on business or holiday, he should be discipling).

There are two means of determining whether the introductory participle of the commission is simple, conditional, or imperative. These are (1) immediate context and (2) how the eleven disciples responded to the commission.

In all honesty, the context provides little help. Some feel that since the main verb is an imperative, and the two present participles are used in an imperative sense (*baptizing them and teaching them*), then the opening participle (expressing some sort of *going*) also must be an imperative. This assumption, of course, begs the question. The command could begin with discipling (the main verb), rather than going, i.e. ***Disciple all nations, as you go or when you go, baptizing etc....***

An examination of the response of the eleven, and the Church under their leadership, is more enlightening. We will examine their response a little later.

### MARK 16:15-16

*And He said them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned."*

In this textually questionable record of the Great Commission, there is great similarity to Matthew's account. The recipients of the commission in this account are *the Eleven*, the same as in Matthew's record of the Great Commission<sup>3</sup>. The verbal pattern also is the same, even though the vocabulary is somewhat different.

Thus, both the main verb of Matthew 28:19 (*matheteuo*), "disciple," and the main verb of Mark 16:15, κηρύσσω (*kerusso*), "proclaim," are second person plural, first aorist tense, imperative mood, active voice (*matheteusate* and *keruxate*).

In both Mark and Matthew, the opening verb of the commission is the participle (*poreuthentes*). So we face the same question concerning the use of participles in Mark that we face in Matthew: "Is Jesus commanding the eleven to *go into all the world*, or is He telling them that *as they go they* are to preach?"

### LUKE 24:46-47

*...and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."*

Luke's account contains the same central term as Mark's account of the commission, (*kerusso*), "proclaim." The form of the verb in Luke is κηρυχθῆναι (*kerukthenai*), which is first aorist, infinitive, passive. The syntax of the sentence does not allow us to interpret this infinitive as an imperative (a command). This seems to be an infinitive of *result or purpose*. Thus, the sense of the entire passage is that Christ's death and resurrection occurred so that beginning with Jerusalem, repentance and forgiveness could be proclaimed in His name among all nations.

This passage assumes, therefore, that such proclamation will occur. The language concerning the empowerment of the Eleven carries the assumption that, as witnesses, they will be proclaimers.

## JOHN 20:21-23

*Jesus therefore said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."*

In John's account of the Great Commission, as in the other three accounts, the Eleven are the recipients of the commission, even though one of their number, Thomas, was absent at the time. Christ stated to them that as the Father sent Him, so He would send the Eleven. They are to be agents of redemption. However, there is no indication as to whether they are to travel throughout the world or to remain in Palestine. Jesus, sent of God, confined His travel to a very small area. So, if the Eleven were sent in the same manner as Jesus was sent ("as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you"), their commission could have been confined to a specific area, rather than being sent on a world-wide evangelistic crusade.

## ACTS 1:8

*but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*

In this verse, the eleven are told that they will be Jesus' witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. This clearly is not an exhortation or a "commission." It is a promise ("Ye will receive power...ye will be witnesses"<sup>4</sup>). So, in the strictest sense, this is not a restatement of the Great Commission, but a prophecy about the expansion of the Church which would occur through the coming of the Holy Spirit.

## PART II THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE GREAT COMMISSION

From a vantage point twenty centuries removed from these sayings of Jesus, we tend to look at the early church through our hindsight perspective. The Jerusalem Church has been criticized by some for not moving out aggressively to take the world. Is that criticism justified? Let's examine the record.

After the prophesied falling of the Holy Spirit, recorded in Acts 2, the Church began its history. Through the first seven chapters of Acts, the Church is described as being witnesses of Jesus in Jerusalem and Judea. When the church was scattered through the persecution of Saul, that witness extended to Samaria (Acts 8:1). For the next several chapters, this is as far as the witness went (9:31). Even the first sermon to Gentiles (Acts 10), occurred at Caesarea, which is a part of Judea. It is not until 11:19 that the witness is seen beyond Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Here, again, the Gospel reached new territory because Christians fled Jerusalem in a time of persecution. They did not travel to these places to preach the Gospel.

What do we make of this? Up to this point in the narrative, no one deliberately and by design went anywhere to spread the Gospel<sup>5</sup>. However, everywhere believers found themselves, they preached the word. Thus far, the Church's response to the Great Commission was an *as you go* response. The participle in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 15:16 is complied with as a simple participle or a conditional participle - *going, therefore, or when you go*.

This, *as you go*, style of ministry continues through Acts 12. The first record of an intentional going forth to take the Gospel to the nations begins in Acts 13. The instructions to release Barnabas and Saul to the ministry of world evangelism came as a specific command from God.

With this evidence before us, there is but one conclusion. The early church under the oversight of the apostles and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, did not consider itself commissioned to launch a world-wide evangelistic crusade. It did consider itself commissioned to witness faithfully where it was. When circumstances took Christians to other places, they faithfully witnessed there. Only when the Holy Spirit gave specific directions to go somewhere and preach, did the disciples venture forth with the express purpose of evangelizing new territory.

We return to the question of how the aorist participle, *porēuthentes*, should be translated in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15. This is one of those instances in which Greek allows a liberty that English does not. The Holy Spirit led Matthew and Mark<sup>6</sup> to use a verbal Greek form that does not require the reader to choose between understanding it as either a simple participle or an imperative participle (one to the exclusion of the other). Unfortunately, in English it must be translated one way or the other. In Acts, *as you go*, (simple participle) is demonstrated as being applicable to all Christians. *Go, therefore*, (imperative participle) is demonstrated as being applicable to those whom God calls to the specific ministry of going to the nations.

As noted above, the Jerusalem Church has been criticized for not launching out and evangelizing the world. The statement often is made that since the Church did not do what God told it to do that God had to bring persecution to have His way and get the Gospel to Samaria, Antioch, etc. Upon reflection, this view does not seem valid to me. The early Church was Spirit-led in a way that has been an example to subsequent generations. The Apostles were led by the Spirit and they led the Church. This being true, they were doing what was proper. Indeed, God did use persecution to begin the expansion. However, had He wanted to move the Gospel out of Jerusalem earlier, why didn't he give instructions, as he did with the Philip and the Eunuch (Acts 8:26ff), Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1ff), and the Paul/Barnabas/Antioch initiatives (Acts 13:1ff)? No one can answer. However, the wise timing of God is seen in the Acts record. The method is God's. To criticize the Jerusalem Church's, "blooming where it was planted," is unfair criticism and based upon an assumption or conjecture, not objective evidence. Their conduct (*as you go*) certainly reflected conformity to the most common understanding of the terminology in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15.

In the early to middle 1970's, ministries arose that called all believers to quit their jobs, sell their houses, cars, etc., and travel about the nation and the world evangelizing. In their preaching, some of these groups made sarcastic remarks about Christians "who would rather deliver milk for a dairy than deliver the Gospel to the lost world." In the early 1980's, musician Keith Green

caught the vision of missions and began to teach that every Christian is called "to go" unless God calls him "to stay." Such views do not fit either the language of the Great Commission nor the example of the Apostolic Church. Only those Christians called of God to leave their homes and go into world evangelism are to do so. Everyone else is to "study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (I Thessalonians 4:11 KJV). While living this quiet life, each believer is to be witnessing and making disciples of Jesus Christ through relationships.

This does not mean that the local church is to be unconcerned about discipling the nations. In Matthew, we find the following account,

*Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.*  
(Matthew 9:35-10:1)

Then, in Luke, the following is recorded,

*Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.*  
(Luke 10:1-3)

Here are two exhortations to pray that God would send out laborers into the harvest. Certainly, any congregation that cares about God's Kingdom will be praying that God will send out laborers into the harvest.

A second expression of concern for the fulfillment of the Great Commission is the financial provision for those whom God has called into the harvest. Paul spoke strongly about this in his epistles. For example, in I Corinthians 9:1-14, Paul makes a strong statement concerning the obligation of the church to support those who are in trans-local ministry. He concludes by stating, *So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.* The Greek word translated "directed" in this passage ("ordained" in the KJV) is the word, *διατάσσω* (*diatasso*), which means, *order, direct, or command*. This verb is used with the dative of the one being ordered or commanded, which, in this case, are the preachers themselves. No doubt Paul is referring to the instructions that Jesus gave to those whom He sent out as preachers. Note the instructions first to the Twelve and later to the Seventy:

*And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God*

*and to perform healing. And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city... Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come... Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; (Luke 9:1-4; 10:1, 4-5, 7-8)*

In both of these commissions, Jesus told the preachers that they were to rely on the material gifts of those to whom they ministered. In Paul's case, however, the principle of living off the Gospel was enlarged. Not only were believers expected to support those ministering to them, but they also were to support preachers who traveled about in what we now call, "missionary work." (In the last half of *Acts*, the terms, *apostle* and *missionary*, could be used interchangeably).

The Corinthian passage cited above was written from Ephesus and Paul was claiming the right to receive financial support from the Corinthians even though he now was ministering elsewhere. Paul then stated that even though he had the right to expect such support, he chose to forego that right in Corinth, so that he would not be open to the charge of merchandizing the Gospel in that city. Paul sarcastically states in II Corinthians 11:7-8 that he "robbed" other churches in order to preach the Gospel at Corinth. What he is referring to is that other churches supported him during his missionary work in Corinth, while the Corinthians contributed nothing financially.

In contrast to the Corinthians, the Philippian church was generous in its support of missionary work. One of the reasons for Paul's writing the Philippian letter was to commend them for their generosity (Philippians 4:15-16).

From these examples, it is clear that the financial support of missionary endeavor is a part of the New Testament pattern. This is one means of responding to the Great Commission.

### **PART III**

## **THE NEW TESTAMENT MODEL OF MISSIONARY/LOCAL CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS**

Historically, missions societies and mission agencies have been formed to send and supervise missionaries. In the mid-1800's some churches began to struggle with the appropriateness of such agencies. The view was put forth that mission agencies are not found in the Bible and therefore are not consistent with God's plan for sending laborers into the harvest. The contention was made that the local church was to be the sending agency and that each missionary was to be under the authority of the elders of a local church. Since no organization other than the local church is seen in the Bible, it was argued, nothing beyond the local church is authorized by God.

The "anti-agency" view reflected the hermeneutic that caused various groups to struggle with the appropriateness of using musical instruments in New Testament worship. This was an issue among Presbyterians in America during frontier days and the existence of non-instrumental Presbyterian congregations have been reported to the author even in this decade. This is the same hermeneutic that caused the birth and proliferation of the non-instrumental Churches of Christ.

This hermeneutic expresses the view that anything relating to the Church which is *unscriptural* is, by its very nature, *antiscritptural*. Thus, since musical instruments are not mentioned in the Bible as a part of the worship life of the New Testament Church, nor do they seem to have been a part of the life of the Church in the Second Century, they are a human, fleshly, addition to God's Church. As such, according to this hermeneutic, the use of musical instruments in the church is in opposition to Scripture.

This same hermeneutic provides the philosophical basis for those who view the existence of mission agencies as being in conflict with God's plan for the Church. Let's examine that hermeneutic. Is something that is unscriptural automatically, antiscritptural?

The synagogue is a case in point. Synagogues clearly were an unscriptural invention of man. No where in the Old Testament is the synagogue mentioned. Since Scripture did not authorize synagogues, where did they come from? When the Jews were dispersed among the nations, devout leaders were concerned that the people would forget the Law of Moses and the unique covenant that God had made with Israel. Two things resulted from this concern. First, a class of teachers, called, *rabbi*<sup>7</sup>, was developed. These rabbis devoted themselves to the study and teaching of the Law. They developed synagogues (literally, "gathering place") where the rabbis taught the Law of Moses. Later, since there was no temple, the synagogues added preaching, prayer, and worship to their activities. When the Jews returned to Palestine, they established synagogues in each village. It became the practice to have a synagogue in each village where there were at least ten families, the theory being that the tithes of ten families could support a rabbi. In Jesus' day, synagogues even existed in Jerusalem, where the Temple stood. The synagogues and rabbis were associated with the Pharisees.

Since the synagogue is an unscriptural invention of man, what was Jesus' view toward the synagogue? He did not utter one recorded word against it. He frequented the synagogue, when it was appropriate. Since Our Lord was so intense in His desire to purify the religion of the Jews (cleansing the temple, condemning religious practice when it replaced a Godly heart, etc.), He surely would have spoken out against the synagogue, especially in Jerusalem, the place of the Temple, if unscriptural religious institutions are by their very nature, antiscritptural.

The synagogue was an institution created by sincere people in an effort to preserve the knowledge of God and His Law. Para-church mission agencies are the same thing. They are institutions developed by sincere people to accomplish a task to which God has called them.

Even so, it is worthwhile to study the Biblical record of the relationship between the local church and those whom God has called to the ministry of world evangelism. The only case study with enough information to guide us is the relationship between Antioch and Paul's teams. The

terminology used in Acts 13 helps us to understand the nature of the relationship between the Antioch Church and the missionary team.

*Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. (Acts 13:1-4)*

First, note that the church was instructed by the Holy Spirit, *You separate to me Barnabas and Saul into the work to which I have called them* (literal translation).

This is an example of the specific call of God on the lives of certain believers. God made a sovereign choice to call these two men into missionary activity.

A second interesting fact is that these two were to be separated *unto the Holy Spirit*. There is a similarity between the terminology here and that used for separating men unto God for the purpose of priesthood under the Old Covenant. Out of local church leadership, God was taking these two men unto Himself in a special way.

Note that the Holy Spirit was going to launch them into a work to which they already had been called. In Paul's case, we have a record of that call given some years earlier<sup>8</sup>; we assume that something similar must have taken place with Barnabas. However, neither Barnabas nor Saul moved forward in that call until the Holy Spirit instructed the Antioch church leadership to set these two apart.

Here then is an important point concerning the relationship between missionaries and the local church. The local church should confirm the call to missions upon a person's life, and, through the laying on of hands the leadership of the local church should set the missionary apart to his ministry.

The local church is not described as "sending" Paul and Barnabas. The Greek word in the text describing the action of the church (v3) is ἀπέλυσαν (*apelusan*), "they released." So, the Antioch church was not sending Barnabas and Saul, but releasing them to go do what the Holy Spirit was calling them to do. In verse 4, they are described as being sent out (ἐκπεμφθέντες [*ekpempthentes*]) by the Holy Spirit, not by the Antioch church.

Once again, we see an illustration of the fact that the church did not feel that the Great Commission obligated them to launch a world-wide evangelistic crusade. The church only felt responsible to release into world evangelism those whom God has called into it - and then only after a clear word from God that they are to do so. Their responsibility did not go beyond that. Antioch was not a missions sending agency.

Barnabas and Saul (Paul) did feel an ongoing tie to the church that had been used by God to launch them into this ministry. This is seen by their return to Antioch at the end of the trip and their report to the church.

*From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they spent a long time with the disciples. (Acts 14:26-28)*

On this first missionary journey, there was no agency between the missionaries and the church from whence they had come. Paul and Barnabas demonstrated that their relationship was with the local church in Antioch.

Another interesting thing is the line of demarcation that seems to exist between the close of the first missionary journey and the rest of Paul's life. Note that at the close of the first journey, their work is described as "accomplished," or "completed" (Acts 14:26). Never again did Paul have such a clear goal that would allow him to consider a mission to be completed. This first journey seems to have been an initiation into the work wherewith Paul had been called.

From the second missionary journey onward, Paul's apostolic band became a primitive type of a para-church missions organization. Paul's teams displayed six characteristics of a para-church organization:

- Local churches other than Antioch consigned members to the band. An obvious example is the Lystra church's laying hands on Timothy and commissioning him to join this band<sup>9</sup> that was traveling around the world planting churches. Other examples could be cited.
- Those who were a part of the band seemed to be accountable to Paul and not to any local church.
- The band was not directed by nor supervised by any local church. It went where it sensed God was leading and did what It sensed God was calling it to do.
- The band was responsible for its own finances. There is no record of Antioch's providing any income for the missionary trips, although surely there was some contribution from them. Sometimes Paul worked with his hands and sometimes contributions provided the income.
- The *esprit de corps* that seemed to develop among Paul and his team is characteristic of para-church ministries. Their relationships seemed to be cemented within the band more than with local churches which they planted and served.
- The pastoral care of the members of Paul's band did not reside with a local church, but was a function of the team and its leadership. Paul's letters reflect such a relationship with those who labored under his oversight.

All of this being true, we must recognize that Paul felt a personal relationship with the Antioch church. He returned to Antioch and spent time there after the lengthy and extensive second missionary journey, (Acts 18:22). At this point in his life, Antioch was the nearest thing that he had to a place that he could call, "home." This was Paul's last visit to Antioch. His later journeys seemed to have had even more of the character of a para-church mission.

So, the record of Paul's missionary journeys paint a picture of an evolution of the relationship between the missionary and the local church. From an undefined but obvious relationship between Paul and Antioch in the early years, to the final years when Paul and his band seemed to have become an embryonic independent para-church mission.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the above study, we draw the following conclusions:

1. All Christians are to be involved in making disciples, through proclaiming the Gospel, baptizing converts, and teaching them how to live the Christian life.
2. God calls some to leave their homes and go to where He sends them for the express purpose of discipling those who live in that location.
3. The Church should be in constant prayer to God, asking Him to send out more laborers into the unreached fields.
4. The Church has a responsibility to provide income for those who are sent into these distant harvest fields.
5. In some situations, the local church will be the sole institution relating to a missionary whom God called from its midst.
6. In some situations, para-church or mission agencies will be the primary institution overseeing and supervising the work of missionaries. The pastoral care of missionaries in these relationships may be the responsibility of the mission agency, rather than a local church.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>..Stott, John R.W., "The Great Commission," *Christianity Today*, April 26, 1968, pg. 3

<sup>2</sup>..Dana, H.E., and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, (Toronto, The Macmillan Company, 1955) p. 300

<sup>3</sup>..The question often is raised, "Since the eleven disciples always were the recipients of the Great Commission, was the commission given only to them, or was it for the whole Church?" The answer to this question is seen in the behaviour of the first Century Christians. As

demonstrated in this paper, each believer became a witness, giving testimony about Jesus Christ. Through this faithful testimony, the Gospel was taken to each country where Christians traveled. Thus, the Great Commission was understood as being for the whole Church, not just the eleven disciples.

<sup>4</sup>..both of these terms λήμψεσθε (*lempsesthe*) “ye shall receive” (power) and ἔσεσθε (*esesthe*) “ye shall be” (witnesses) are identical in form: second person plural, future tense, indicative voice.

<sup>5</sup>..Both Philip's leaving Samaria (Acts 8:26ff) and Peter's going to the home of Cornelius (Acts 10) were at the direction of the Lord. Neither knew why they were being sent to their destinations. Neither of them by design consciously embarked on their journeys to "fulfill the Great Commission." It also should be noted that both of these episodes occurred in Judea.

<sup>6</sup>..If Mark is the author of these verses.

<sup>7</sup> The term, *Rabbi*, is derived from the term that means, “great.” Thus the term is sometimes translated by the English term, “Master.”

<sup>8</sup> . Acts 9:15ff; 22:15; 26:17

<sup>9</sup> . Acts 16:1-4; I Timothy 4:14