

For the Sake of His Name—Ch.4 (The Target of the Great Commission)

Introductory Summary—"This chapter argues from the Scriptures that the true target of the Great Commission is establishing local churches, not merely winning people to Jesus Christ. The task of the Great Commission, as we saw in the last two chapters, is making and maturing disciples. But the task is a means toward the goal of building local assemblies of disciples who will carry out the Great Commission themselves. The Great Commission starts with winning people to Christ, it continues in discipleship, and culminates in thriving local churches. The true measure of success is churches planted, not converts won." P.61

The Content of the Great Commission: Church planting is the necessary context for the two central components of disciple-making baptizing and teaching.

"The local church is the God-ordained means for the baptizing and instructing of those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ. Without the formation of local assemblies, the commission cannot be fulfilled. When we accept Christ, we are brought into union with Him and placed into His body, the church. Though the church is the mystical, universal Body of Christ, the responsibilities of baptizing and teaching belong to the local church as visible expression of that Body. Thus church planting must be the target of missions." P.63

The Backdrop of the Great Commission: Church planting is the work Christ declares he is accomplishing through his people's obedience. (Matt 16:18) P.63

The Implementation of the Great Commission: Church planting is the main activity of the book of Acts. Acts 14:21-23—"The apostolic missionary practice was evangelism (*preached the gospel...made many disciples*), the edification of the saints (*strengthening the souls of the disciples*), and the establishment of local churches (*appointed elders for them in every church*)." Pp.65-66

The Description of the Great Commission: Church planting and strengthening is the focus of Paul's missionary efforts, letters, and prayers

I Cor 3:4-17—"The local church is the centerpiece of God's work in this dispensation" (I Tim 3:15). P.69

The Fulfillment of the Great Commission: Church planting was considered the mark of a reached area. Rom 15:14-29—"Paul had fulfilled the preaching of the gospel in that he had laid the foundation of Christian faith in the region: disciples of Jesus Christ and churches to equip and strengthen them-the vehicle through which the rest of the region could be reached for Jesus Christ. 'A claim to have fully preached the gospel of Christ is understandable in this sense, for Paul's point is that he has finished planting churches where Christ was not named in the area extending from Jerusalem to Ilyricum. This hardly means that every village or town heard the gospel.'" P.71

Concluding Summary—"In summary, Church planting must be the target of the Great Commission because 1) it is the necessary context for disciple making; 2) it is the work Christ is doing in the earth; 3) it is the main activity of the book of Acts; 4) it is the focus of Paul's missionary efforts, letters, and prayers; and 5) it was considered the mark of a reached area. The New Testament leaves no doubt that church planting was important to the apostles and the main target of fulfilling the Great Commission. It must be our target as well." P.72