

APPENDIX V

THE GREAT COMMISSION ACCORDING TO JOHN (John 20:21)

In 1 Timothy 3:16 the incarnate life and ministry of the Lord Jesus serves as a pattern for the present ministry and witness of the church (cf. Acts 1:1-2). Likewise, it is the earthly life and witness of Christ that forms the very basis for the Great Commission of the church according to John (Jn. 20:21; 17:18). Therefore, a proper understanding of the Great Commission according to John should facilitate a correct understanding of the mystery of godliness.¹⁶⁵

The Apostle John recorded the words of the Lord Jesus as He made known to His disciples this Great Commission:

Just as the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you (Jn. 20:21).

Just as You sent Me into the world, even so I sent them into the world (Jn. 17:18).

The Father sent the Son, and in the same way, the Son sent His disciples (and by extension the church). If we are to understand what it means to be sent by Christ we must understand what it means for Christ to have been sent by the Father. How was Christ sent? What was His relationship to His Sender? The Gospel of John clearly delineates the meaning of this relationship:¹⁶⁶

1. Christ was sent not to do His own will, but the will of His Sender (4:34; 5:30; 6:38). Even so, we ought to be able to say, “My food is to do the will of Christ my Sender – to do only what Christ wants and desires. Not My will, but Christ's will be done!”

¹⁶⁵ Some of the truths involved in the Great Commission according to John were employed in the argumentation of this thesis to show how the objective facts of 1 Timothy 3:16 apply to the church. See pages 39-40; 52-53.

¹⁶⁶ This material was first prepared by the writer as part of a series of chaplaincy notes for the students of Grace Theological Seminary, January, 1975.

2. Christ was sent not to please Himself, but to please His Sender (8:29). Even so, may we be able to say, “For I do always those things that please Christ”. May our only fear be that of not pleasing Christ (2 Cor. 5:9-11; Eph. 5:10; 1 Cor. 7:32; Phil. 3:7-8).
3. Christ was not sent to seek His own glory, but to seek the glory of His Sender (7:18). Even so, we should not want recognition, praise or attention to be heaped upon ourselves. We want our lives to draw attention, not to the ugliness of self, but to the beauty of our Lord Jesus who has sent us. We are His witnesses and may our lives point only to Him (Acts 1:8; Isa. 43:10; Jn. 3:30).
4. Christ was sent into the world to represent His invisible Sender (5:37; cf. 1:18). Men could not see the Father, but they could see Christ. Even so, we have been sent into the world to represent the invisible Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). The world cannot see the Head but they can see the Body, which is His church. No man has seen Christ at any time (at least not since He has gone back to heaven), but the church is here to declare Him (1 Tim. 3:15-16).
5. Christ was sent into the world so that men, in seeing Him, would see His Sender (12:44-45). Even so, as men and women look at our lives they should see our Sender, even our Lord Jesus (Gal. 2:20; 4:19; 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 13:4-7).
6. Christ was sent into the world by His living Father and He lived by (through) His Sender (6:57). Even so, the living Christ has sent us and we live by Him. Christ is our life (Col. 3:3-4; Phil. 1:21)!
7. Christ was sent into the world, not with His own words and doctrine, but with the words and doctrine of His Sender (3:34; 7:16; 12:49-50). Even so, Christ has sent us into the world, not with our own message, but with the Gospel of Christ, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded (Mt. 28:20).
8. Christ could do nothing apart from His Sender (5:30). Even so, we are totally dependent upon our Sender and apart from Him we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5).
9. Christ was not alone, His Sender was with Him (8:16,29). Even so, we have the promise of our Sender (Mt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5)!

10. Christ was busy in doing the work of His Sender (4:34; 9:4) and when His work was done, He went home to be with His Sender (7:33; 16:5). Even so, we are to be always abounding in the work of our Lord Jesus, and when our work is finished we will go home to be with our Sender (Phil. 1:23; 2 Tim. 4:6-8)!

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And not only did Christ send us into the world, but He also sent another Person to make all of this possible: the Holy Spirit within us, our Comforter (Jn. 16:7)!

