

# Circular Letter: The Great Commission

by Elder R. H. Hale

Pastor of the Mountain Fork Primitive Baptist Church

Madison County, AL

---

The one hundred and eighty-eighth session of the Original Flint River Association has come and gone, and thanks be to God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, this year's meeting was held with great success. The preaching was good and the fellowship and the singing was heavenly.

Once again, I have been asked to write the circular letter for this year's minute. Since the Association did not specify or assign a particular subject that I should write about; I shall, if God permits, choose to comment concerning the commission and commandment Christ gave to His apostles just prior to His ascension.

For the sake of clarity and the lack of space, I have combined the commission given in Mark 16:16 with that of Matthew 28:19. When combined, it should read somewhat as follows:

“Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved but he that believeth not shall be damned. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

This commission and commandment raises two questions. Did the Apostles fulfill the commission and keep the commandment given to them? And if so, does this mean they are no longer relevant today? The answer to the first question is yes. They (the Apostles) fulfilled in every respect the commission and kept the commandment given to them. Jesus, Himself, foretold their fulfillment, “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth,” (Acts 1:18). “And after the Holy Ghost came upon them they went forth and preached the gospel everywhere and they did so with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven: the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following,”

(Mark 16:20; I Peter 1:12). Truly, “their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world,” (Romans 10:18). And we believe the sound of their words will continue to echo and reverberate throughout the world and will continue to do so until the consummation of all things.

Before the close of the New Testament days the truth of the Gospel had come unto the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colossi. Paul wrote to them saying, “Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world” (Colossians 1:6). Paul further wrote that the Gospel had been preached to every creature (all the creation) which is under heaven, (Colossians 1:23). According to Colossians 2:12, we are told that the Colossians had heard, believed, and were buried with Christ in baptism and been raised with Him through the faith of the operation of God who had raised him from the dead.

By considering those men who were contemporary with the Apostles; men such as Philip, of whom it is said of the Samaritans, “They believing Philip’s preaching the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, and were baptized both men and women” (Acts 8:12). He was sent by the Spirit of God to preach Jesus to the eunuch in the desert who believed and was baptized. Ananias was sent by God to baptize Saul of Tarsus and then Paul and Silas were sent by the Holy Ghost to preach in Macedonia, were Lydia, “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” was baptized. We can see from these events that the commission and commandment to go preach, disciple, and baptize believers exceeded to the contemporary generation of men with the Apostles. When we read the histories of the first and second generations of men such as Hermes, Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and who could fail to mention the Novatianist and Waldenses, with others, we must conclude that the commission and commandment to teach the ordinances exceeded to men and the church beyond New Testament days.

We believe a God-called and Holy Spirit sent elder in the Lord’s churches, is just as much a minister of the Gospel in China as he is in Alaska, in India as he is in Canada; his feet upon the mountains are just as beautiful in Arabia as they are in Spain, or America. Their field of labor (dominion) is from sea to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth. When sent by the Spirit, with the express purpose for the elect to receive the salvation in Christ Jesus with eternal glory, there are no boundaries..

In conclusion, in this day and time when ten acres of vineyard yields but one bath and the seed of a homer yields an ephah, it is my firm conviction that if a God-called minister does not feel the spiritual anointing to do the work of an evangelist in a distant field, he is not wrong in not going. On the other hand, if he feels the spiritual compunction to go, he is not wrong in going wherever the Spirit may

lead him. We feel it is of God by His several ability who determines who is sent or who is not.

The questions then: Is the commission and ordinance relevant today? Yes, for the churches of Jesus Christ and her ministers wherever they are sent by the Spirit of God.

Elder R. H. Hale, moderator