

The Great Commission - What Does It Really Mean?

694454 [119 Ministries](#)

All over the world, believers promote the "Great Commission" as the mission and purpose of "The Church." But why do we not do the Great Commission as Jesus (Yeshua) requested? Jesus told us to teach all nations to obey everything He commanded, but there is one command most refuse to teach. Do we really want to obey the Great Commission after we learn what it really means? We should, but why don't we?

Matthew 28:19-20

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This was the last commandment Jesus (Yeshua) issued to His disciples before His ascension. It is considered one of the most important commandments ever uttered by Jesus and is the foundational setting of most vision and mission statements of Christian churches all over the world.

My question is do we really want to do what Jesus commanded in the Great Commission, and if we do, then why are we not doing it?

There are really two parts that consist of what is commonly referred to as the "Great Commission of Jesus Christ."

- 1) Go to all nations and baptize new disciples.
- 2) Teach the new disciples to obey everything I (Jesus) commanded you (disciples).

So Jesus is very clear that all of His disciples, in all nations, are to obey everything He commanded.

What did Jesus command to His disciples?

Matthew 23:1-3

*Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So, **you must obey them and do everything they tell you.** But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.*

Let's break the above down.

- 1) Jesus is commanding His disciples to obey and do everything taught out of Moses' seat.
- 2) Jesus issues a second contrasting commandment to not do what the Pharisees actually practice which is contrary to what is preached in Moses' seat.

That which is taught out of Moses' seat we are directly commanded by Jesus to observe and do. Not only are we to observe and do what is taught out of Moses' seat, but according to the Great Commission we are also to teach ALL NATIONS to OBSERVE and DO it.

Let's start with what Jesus commanded His disciples to not do.
But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

Jesus stated that His disciples should not model the behaviors and teachings of the scribes and Pharisees that are contrary to what is preached out of the Moses' seat. There are two laws dominant in the first century that merit scripturally defining. (We are not discussing Government -Roman- laws)

1) In Moses' seat the Pharisees taught word for word God's law that was written down by Moses. This is God's law or often referred to as the Law of Moses. This is known as the first 5 books of our Bible.

2) When they left the Moses' seat the Pharisees and Scribes taught and practiced something called the "oral law" or the "Talmud." This is the "tradition of the elders," also called "commandments and doctrines of men." The Pharisees of today still practice these "oral laws."

Simply put, these "oral laws" are laws of men (Pharisees) that were invented to build "fences" around God's laws. They placed more importance on the "oral law" than God's own laws. For example, God's law has just a few commandments specific to His Sabbath. The Pharisees had 1400+ commandments that they commanded men to keep to help "protect" and "guard" God's laws. The Pharisees made their own laws for people to obey so that people would not even come close to breaking God's laws. Thus, people were actually obeying men instead of God. This is a form of idolatry.

The Pharisees elevated their own laws above God's laws with their "traditions of the elders." This is precisely why Jesus had so many harsh words for the Pharisees. Also there existed a false doctrine that some Pharisees subscribed to which taught that salvation was enabled through the keeping of commandments (Acts 15; Galatians). This is defined today as legalism.

Jesus Himself intentionally violated the "oral law" of the Pharisees directly in front of them several times, just to make a point that they were making a dangerous error and that commandments and doctrines of men are in reality nothing. Commandments of God are all that matter. Here is an example of Jesus speaking harshly to the Pharisees because of their "oral law."

Mark 7:6-13

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: " 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

The only time the Pharisees really had everything completely right was when they were sitting in the Moses' seat reading the Law of Moses verbatim. This is the only time when their own bias and doctrine did not violate and compromise the will and doctrine of God. They were in fact simply speaking only the Word of God. Therefore, in Matthew 23:3, Jesus is simply stating to not nullify the Word of God by our traditions and doctrines, even if they are what was passed down to us.

What did Jesus command His disciples to do?

"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you."

Here is a picture of a Moses' seat. It is a real stone seat in which the one sitting in it would read directly and verbatim from the Law of

Moses. How and when did the actual Moses' seat originate? Not surprisingly, it began with Moses.

From Exodus 18 before Mount Sinai Moses was teaching and judging from the law that was passed down orally from Jethro (Moses father-in-law) in the Moses' seat:



Exodus 18:13

The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening.

Moses defines the purpose and process of the Moses' seat to be the vehicle to state God's law to thus make His law known:

Exodus 18:15

"And Moses said unto his father in law, 'Because the people come unto me to Inquire of God: When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and His laws'"

Jethro recommended to Moses to share the responsibility of teaching God's law because Moses was only one man:

Exodus 18:17-18

Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.

Moses then gathered elders based on specific criteria and taught them all of God's law so they could also perform the duty of Moses' seat:

Exodus 18:20-21

Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.

From the time of the Exodus onward, Moses' seat has been a vehicle to teach God's exact laws (Law of Moses) to His people.

Do Christian scholars also define "Moses' seat" to be the Law of Moses just as it is taught to be in Scripture from Exodus to the first century? Yes, here is a sample:

The Geneva Study Bible:

Mat 23:2 "(1) We ought to listen to whatever we are truly taught from the word of God, even by wicked teachers, but in a way so that we abstain from their evil behaviour."

The People's New Testament:

Mat 23:2 Sit in the Moses' seat. Are the expounders of the law of Moses."

John Wesley's Notes: "Mat 23:2 The scribes sit in the chair of Moses - That is, read and expound the law of Moses, and are their appointed teachers."

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary:

Mat 23:2 in Moses' seat-that is, as interpreters of the law given by Moses.

Christian commentary and scholarship agree that Moses' seat was indeed the Law of Moses and that the disciples were commanded by Jesus to keep the Law of Moses.

So what does all of this mean?

It means simply what Jesus commanded. Jesus clearly commanded His disciples to OBSERVE and DO the Law of Moses (Matthew 23:1-3). No one disputes this.

Jesus ALSO commanded His disciples to teach ALL NATIONS to obey EVERYTHING they were COMMANDED by Jesus. No one disputes this. THEREFORE, LET'S FULLY APPLY WHAT JESUS TEACHES AND COMMANDS US:

We as disciples are to go out into ALL NATIONS and teach ALL NATIONS to OBEY EVERYTHING Jesus COMMANDED which, of course, INCLUDES the LAW OF MOSES. (Matthew 28:19:20)

Really? Jesus wants us to OBSERVE and DO the Law of Moses AND teach ALL NATIONS TO OBEY? It shouldn't be that surprising, for Jesus did state:

Matthew 5:17-19

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I do not come to destroy, but to fulfill (with meaning). For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all (law and prophets) be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus stated Himself that not one of God's commandments was to be "abolished" or "put an end to" until all of the Law and Prophets are fulfilled and Heaven and Earth passes away. Heaven and Earth passing away and being made new is the last prophetic event foretold in Scripture.

Isaiah 65:17

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

Revelation 21:1

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,

Please note that this event has clearly not yet happened.

Jesus states that all of God's law will exist at LEAST UNTIL the day that the Lord states:

Revelation 21:5-6

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

Christ's work on the cross for our salvation is finished (John 19:30), but the Lord is not yet finished with what has been said in all of His Law and Prophets until He says "it is done," which is signaled by the new Heaven and new Earth. If this Scripture is true, then what Scriptural gymnastics do some teachers employ to avoid such a conclusion?

Well, if they touch the verse at all, it creates quite an embarrassing mess. Some teach that in Matthew 5:17, “fulfill” means “to put and end to” or to “finish.” This is done, by their own admission, to avoid the clear teaching of Jesus that not one of God’s commandments are to pass away from the law and to preserve their misinterpretations of Paul’s letters.

If this interpretation is indeed true, we should be able to apply such teaching to Scripture and it should make logical sense, as God is not the author of confusion. We are commanded to test all things and only hold on to what is good (1 Thes. 5:20) Let’s test the teaching that “fulfill” means “to put and end to” or “finish” instead of “fulfill” simply meaning to “fill up the whole and complete meaning” of God’s law, evidenced by Jesus walking out the true interpretation (not Pharisaical) of God’s law.

Can “fulfill” in Mt 5:17 mean “to put an end to”

Matthew 5:17

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I do not come to destroy (the law), but to "put and end (to the law)"

Huh?

Matthew 5:18

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all (law and prophets) be fulfilled.

Double huh?

Matthew 5:19

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments (that I just put an end to), and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them (even though I put an end to them), the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Triple huh?

There are only two possible interpretations of “fulfill” in Matthew 5:17.

1) One is that Jesus came to “fulfill the real meaning of God’s law,” which the Pharisees polluted through their oral law. This makes sense because this was the complete point and purpose of every teaching of Jesus when He was in proximity to the Pharisees. This is to correctly instruct us in the way God wants us to walk in His law and not the way men want us to walk in God’s law.

2) Or “fulfill” in Matthew 5:17 means to “complete, finish, or put an end to.” All one has to do is insert that definition into the context of the Scripture to witness how such an interpretation is illogical and absurd.

Technically based on a literal rendering of the Greek, either interpretation is acceptable:

G4137 pleroo play-ro'-o from G4134;

to make replete, i.e. (literally) to cram (a net), level up (a hollow), or (figuratively) to furnish (or imbue, diffuse, influence), satisfy, execute (an office), finish (a period or task), verify (or coincide with a prediction), etc.:--accomplish, X after, (be) complete, end, expire, fill

(up), fulfil, (be, make) full(come), fully preach, perfect, supply.(Strong's)

The only interpretation of “fulfill” that fits the context and avoids logical absurdities is to understand Jesus is teaching that He will make full or fully preach God’s law. Jesus came to fully preach God’s law. He taught us the full meaning of God’s law. Does that not fit the ministry of Jesus perfectly? Jesus taught, walked, practiced, obeyed, and lived the Law of Moses. Are we not commanded to walk as Jesus walked?

1 John 2:6

He that says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

So if Jesus commanded us to observe and do the Law of Moses, teach all nations to obey the Law of Moses, and He taught us that the Law of Moses would exist until the very end, then why are we not doing it?

Seriously.

I can only ask this question in response: Do we really want to do what Jesus commanded and if we do, then why are we not doing it?

If we really love Jesus, then our hearts and minds will want to obey every one of God’s commandments with eagerness:

John 14:15

If you love me, keep my commandments.

Loving God is actually defined as keeping God's commandments:

2 John 1:6

And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

So when Jesus stated:

Matthew 22:37-38

Jesus said unto him, You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.

Jesus is simply stating that we should keep God's commandments with all of our heart, soul, and mind. That is how we love God. God's grace, which is the forgiveness of our breaking of the law (sin) when we mess up, is God's demonstration of love for us.

Our keeping of God's law to the best of our ability is a demonstration of the extent of our love back to Him. How much do you love God?

As it relates to the Great Commission, how much do you want to see the rest of the world love God?

Are we only emphasizing grace and God's love for us, or are we instructing ALL NATIONS how to LOVE God back?

And if we are teaching ALL NATIONS God's commandments, are we teaching them all of them or just some of them?

We are to love God by keeping His commandments with all of our heart, soul, and mind. Is this not why God's law is written on our (Israel's) hearts and minds in the New Covenant:

Jeremiah 31:31-33

Behold, the days come, saith (YHWH) the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith (YHWH) the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith (YHWH) the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Hebrews 10:16

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

God writes His Law in our heart and mind through the teaching of the Holy Spirit:

1 John 2:27

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

John 14:23-24, 26

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loves me not keeps not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Some will say, “but Paul Said...” After realizing the above can not be refuted, some might still state “but I understand Paul to teach that some of God’s commandments have been abolished.” I would simply respond to that person that they are in error and are misunderstanding Paul.

Paul stated that we should continue in God’s law (Romans 3:31) and that Paul himself delighted in the law (Romans 7:22). Paul teaches nowhere in all of his letters that the Law of Moses has been abolished in any capacity. Paul was likely the best law teacher in all of the New Testament, right behind Jesus. Paul Stated that He Kept and Taught the Law of Moses.

In fact, Paul is accused several times of not keep or teaching the law of Moses. Paul responds, directly from His own mouth and actions, that he does keep and teach the Law of Moses (Acts 21:20-26; Acts 24:13-14).

In several instances, we witness Paul keeping God’s Feast days and Sabbaths.

Is it not odd that the very thing Paul had to defend himself against in the first century is the very thing we accuse him of today? Who messed up, us or Paul? Was Paul a hypocrite or schizophrenic?

No. Peter even warned us in advance that Paul's letters were hard to understand and that untaught and unstable people would twist Paul's letters to abolish God's commandments and make the error of the lawless.

2 Peter 3:15-17

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the lawless;

Notice Peter did not state that teachers would twist Paul's words and make the error of the "lawful." Teachers will be and are twisting Paul's words to break God's laws and make the error of the lawless.

The commandments that have been twisted away through Paul's letters are ironically the same commands that God's people ditched first when they would begin to fall away. These are stated by God Himself to be His most important commandments and the flesh has never wanted to be obedient to them. These commandments are His dietary instructions, Feast days, and Sabbath. When teachers create doctrine that removes these commandments, they are tickling the

ears of the flesh, thus such teaching became popular.

2 Timothy:2-4

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will heap up around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

If people would read Paul's letters from start to finish and pull in all appropriate context, stop injecting their own bias, then the error of the lawless would become a thing of the past and God's people would wake up to all of His ways. There are many things that we have been taught that are simply not in Scripture in any capacity. They are only doctrines and traditions of our fathers. Remember, the Pharisees had the same problem. How did Jesus respond to them?

Isn't this legalism?

Legalism is the attempt to keep God's commandments to earn favor or points leading to salvation. This is actually what the whole Book of Galatians teaches against. Galatians teaches against salvation through the law, not against obedience to God's law. There is a difference. Keeping the Sabbath and God's Feast days is no different than us also being obedient to honesty and being baptized.

Would it not be odd if someone accused you of legalism because you chose honesty as opposed to dishonesty because God commands that of you through His Word?

Just because Scripture states that God has a day that He considers important and was created for our benefit, does not make it legalism to keep it.

That word is all too often abused and used incorrectly. Scripture clearly teaches that through our faith by grace we are promised eternal life as all of our sins are forgiven. (Eph. 2:8).

Salvation by faith was also true during the ministry of Jesus (Luke 7:20) and even before His first coming (Romans 4:9). It has always been the means to salvation and always will be. Faith gets us into His kingdom. Once we are in His kingdom as citizens (Eph. 2), we are obedient to His rules in His constitution for His people, just like any other nation. In fact, it is how well we apply the Truth of God's Word to our lives that determines the different levels of rewards and crowns we receive in the end.

Scripture teaches us the more we strive to not sin (break God's law)(1 John 3:4), the greater our eternal rewards (Matthew 5:17-19)(Romans 14:10-12)(Romans 6:1-4). Are you going to be least or great in the end? The greater your love for God as evidenced in your obedience, the greater your rewards in heaven will be.

Remember though, God knows our motive for obedience, if it is not out of pure love and desire to be obedient to Him, but instead to boast or try to earn rewards, such works will be burned up (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

Christ IS our foundation, and IS the Word made flesh. Obedience to the Word is everything in our faith. It is our rock in which we are to stand firm.

But aren't there hundreds of laws? It is commonly taught that there are 613 commandments in God's Word. Many of those are for the High Priesthood role which has now been transferred to Jesus (see Hebrews). The majority (95%+) of the commandments most Christians already understand they should be keeping. The ones that are often ignored are the dietary instructions, Sabbath, God's Feast days, (Leviticus 11 & 23) and a few others.

In whichever city or state one might be living in, you are already being obedient to over a hundred thousand man made civil laws. Our eternal savior asks for obedience for a few hundred out of love for Him.

Some of the commandments are rather odd on the surface and it takes some prayer, meditation, and study to understand them, but consider this: If God himself came down and asked you to walk on you hands for the rest of your life because He states it will bring glory to Him and light to the nations, would you do it, or would you ask Him why and do nothing till you receive a response?

Now you might understand James:

James 2:18

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Perhaps it is time we show God how much we love Him. Perhaps we should stop finding excuses and comfort in men's doctrine that tickles our ears. If we don't love His ways now, we are not going to love them for all eternity either. Jesus called us to teach all nations to come to faith in Jesus by grace (God's love) and then teach them obey the Law of Moses (our love back).

Following our entering into His promise of our salvation, obedience is the most important thing in all of Scripture for His people. His (whole) Word is such a wonderful gift to offer.

Remember:

ALL (not some) Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

ALL (not some) Scripture is profitable for doctrine.

ALL (not some) Scripture is for rebuking and correction

ALL (not some) Scripture is for INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

When we understand and apply this, then and only then are we completely furnished unto all good works. We are then equipped to evidence our faith and LOVE GOD completely. So let's do the Great Commission and fully equip the saints with ALL OF GOD'S WORD.

If you would like to know what you are bringing them when you instruct all nations to be obedient to God's law, then consider studying the following Scripture:

1. The Law blesses (obey) and curses (disobey).

(Deut 11:26-27)(Ps 112:1)(Ps 119:1-2)(Ps 128:1)(Prov 8:32)(Is 56:2)(Mat 5:6)(Mat 5:10)(Luke 11:28)(Jam 1:25)(1 Pe 3:14)(Rev 22:14)

2. The Law defines sin.

(Jer 44:23)(Ez 18:21)(Dan 9:11)(Ro 3:20)(Ro 7:7)(1 Jo 3:4)

3. The Law is perfect.

(Ps 19:7)(Jam 1:25)

4. The Law is liberty.

(Ps 119:45)(Jam 1:25, 2:12)

5. The Law is the way.

(Ex 18:20)(Deut 10:12)(Josh 22:5)(1 King 2:3)(Ps 119:1)(Prov 6:23)(Is 2:3)(Mal 2:8)(Mark 12:14)(Ac 24:14)

6. The Law is the truth.

(Ps 119:142)(Mal 2:6)(Ro 2:20)(Gal 5:7)(Ps 43:2-4)(Jo 8:31-32)

7. The Law is life.

(Job 33:30)(Ps 36:9)(Prov 6:23)(Rev 22:14)

8. The Law is light.

(Job 24:13)(Job 29:3)(Ps 36:9)(Ps 43:2-4)(Ps 119:105)(Prov 6:23)(Is 2:5) (Is 8:20)(Is 51:4)(2 Cor 6:14)(1 John 1:7)

9. The Law is Jesus, the Word made flesh.

(PERFECT-LIBERTY-WAY-TRUTH-LIFE-LIGHT) (Ps 27:1)(Jo 1:1-14)(Jo 14:5-11)(1 Jo 1:7)

10. The Law is also for the Gentiles (foreigner/alien) who are grafted in.

(Ex 12:19) (Ex 12:38) (Ex 12:49) (Lev 19:34) (Lev 24:22) (Num 9:14) (Num 15:15-16) (Num 15:29) (ie: Ruth) (Is 42:6) (Is 60:3) (Mat 5:14) (Eph 2:10-13) (Ac 13:47) (Ro 11:16-27) (Jer31:31-34) (Ez 37) (1 Jo 2:10) (1 Jo 1:7)

11. The Law is God's instructions on how to love God, how to love others, and how to not love yourself.

(Ex 20:6)(Deut 5:10)(Deut 7:10)(Deut 11:13)(Deut 11:22)(Deut 30:16)(Deut 6:5)(Lev 19:18)(Neh 1:5)(Dan 9:4)(Mat 22:35-37)(Matthew 10:39)(Mat 16:25)(Jo 14:15)(Jo 14:21)(Ro 13:9)(1 Jo 5:2-3)(2 Jo 1:6)

Proverbs 28:9

"He who turns away his ear from hearing the Law, Even his prayer is an abomination."

We hope you have enjoyed this study. Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom