

## **Baptist Distinctives Part 5 – Evangelism and Missions**

The first mandate after the resurrection was “Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you!” (Mt. 28:7). This command suggests that evangelism, telling the good news, is near to the heart of God. Those who receive the good news of the gospel are under obligation to share it.

**The Command** – Jesus gave various missionary commissions to His disciples (see e.g. Lk 24:46-49; Jn 20:21-23; Acts 1:8). None of these is more compelling than the one often called the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20 given when His redemptive work was complete. It is significant that the command was not “go” as with the angel in Mt 28:7. The imperative in verse 19 was not to “go” but it was to “make disciples.” Our mandate from Christ is, “as we are going” we are to “make disciples” by “baptizing” and “teaching” (participles = continuous action) all those who receive Christ.

**The Purpose** –The church always is one generation away from extinction. If we neglect missions and evangelism our churches and denomination will become extinct. Our motive is not simply church growth or even church existence. It is the love of Christ that should constrain and compel us to share the good news (2 Cor 5:14-21). History is filled with examples of churches, movements and denominations that abandoned this obligation and now are gone. In 1814 Baptists divided over commitment to missions. The anti-evangelism/missions group went their own way and dwindled into extinction. The evangelism/missions group known as Southern Baptists has flourished to become the world’s largest evangelical denomination.

**The Plan** – Forty days after His resurrection Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives and revealed a simple plan to reach the world (Acts 1:1-8). First, wait on the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8a), who alone can convict the hearts of the lost and convince them of their need of the Savior (Jn 16:8-15; Eph 1:13-14). Second, carry the gospel to your own “Jerusalem,” your neighborhood and town (1:8b). Third, carry the good news to your “Judea and Samaria,” your state and country (1:8c). Finally, carry the gospel to the “end of the earth” through foreign missions (1:8d).

Lamar E. Cooper, Sr.