

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.

¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

Introduction

I have been guided very clearly to teach and preach on these verses for my last two messages at O.I.C.

There has been enough teaching on God's purposes for Israel, and I leave it up to you to make up your own mind from the scriptures already presented.

One famous Bible commentator said this about these verses.

"If a Christian understands all the rest of Matthew's gospel but fails to understand this closing passage, he or she has missed the point of the entire book."

I would agree with that Bible scholar because there is a sense that these verses are the focal point of the entire New Testament as far as a challenge to all believers is concerned.

If I was to do a survey amongst all the members of O.I.C. and ask them to list as far as they are concerned, the most important thing about O.I.C., there are to be likely to be three main answers.

1. **Fellowship.** – I love O.I.C. because there is great fellowship here. People are friendly and supportive, there is ministry in English, great mix of ages and nationalities etc.
There is the opportunity to fellowship with believers who share similar views and beliefs and values. Perhaps their favourite verse might be John 13: v. 35.

John 13:35 in N.K.J.

³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

It is great that you value fellowship.

It is important for accountability, encouragement and sometimes practical support.

2. **Clear preaching of God's word** - For lots of people who value God's word, the most important reason for attending O.I.C. is because God's word is preached, faithfully, clearly and without compromise.
This is really important because the **word of God feeds the soul when it is correctly taught.** If God's word is not correctly taught then it doesn't feed the soul. This is why for many people, getting clear exposition of God's word every Sunday is the most important reason for attending a Church.

(2 Timothy 3: v. 16 in the N.K.J.)

¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

This can either be an **encouragement or a challenge to our soul.**

When God speaks through His word it is **not always comfortable.**

We are challenged to grow and apply His word to our lives.

3. **Music and Worship Style** - I realise that Christians prefer different types of music, styles of worship, and even different musical instruments for worship.

In the North of Scotland where I visited many years ago, the don't have any musical instruments in one denomination.

They just sit to sing the Psalms with a presenter up at the front to help, and they stand to pray.

I was recently in Korea where Choirs are still popular and very much part of their worship style.

It might surprise you but for some Christians, the music and worship style is the all-important issue when considering a Church to attend.

At O.I.C. we could be described as **contemporary conservative**.

We have a **lovely group of talented musicians** who play songs that **99% of the time fit exactly into my preaching**.

In fact for me personally I have **never had a bad Sunday in 5 years as far as the music and worship is concerned**.

Even with our slightly limited library of songs, the music team always get it right. This is mainly because of prayer and preparation and the knowledge of what is going to be preached.

For some people the music is the all-important thing for them, and they don't worry about anything else!

All of these three things are thoroughly Biblical and should always be part of the life of every believer.

However, neither separately nor together do they represent the central purpose and mission of the Church in the world.

Therefore for all members of O.I.C. there is something more that is needed, to discover the central purpose of O.I.C.

It is the mission that **flows out from our fellowship, worship, and listening to God's word** that should be **our central focus**.

The central and highest purpose for all believers is to **glorify God**.

The supreme way in which God chose to glorify Himself was through the **redemption of sinful men and women**.

It is as we participate in God's plan that we as believers **give most glory to God**.

2 Corinthians Chapter 5: v. 19 in N.K.J.

¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

This is such a wonderful work that even Angels are amazed that it is even possible!

1 Peter 1: v.2. in N.K.J.

² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:

As you study the Old Testament you can see that the original purpose of God choosing Abraham and his descendants was to be a witness for God among the nations.

1 Chronicles 16: v. 23-24 in N.K.J.

²³ Sing to the LORD, all the earth;

Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.

²⁴ Declare His glory among the nations,

His wonders among all peoples.

Isaiah 49: v. 6 in N.K.J.

⁶ Indeed He says,

'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant

To raise up the tribes of Jacob,

And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;

I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,

That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' "

It has never been God's will for anybody to perish but for all to come to repentance.

(2 Peter 3: v.9 in N.K.J.)

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

(1 Tim. 2: v. 4 in N.K.J.)

⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Therefore, every believer who desires to glorify God and who wants to honour God's supreme will and purpose, **must share God's love for the lost world.**

They must also share in the mission of Jesus Christ to win sinners for Him.

This is what Jesus prayed for in His last prayer to His disciples.

John 17: v. 3-4 in N.K.J.

³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

⁴ I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

The work of O.I.C. is an extension of the work of Jesus.

Acts 1: v.1

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Luke says Jesus began his ministry, recorded in the Gospels, but continues His ministry, recorded in Acts.

John 17: v. 8 in N.K.J.

⁸ For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

If God's primary purpose for believers were **loving fellowship**, He would take us **immediately to Heaven**.

If God's primary purpose for the Church was the **learning of His word**, He would take believers **to Heaven** immediately after they were saved. In Heaven, God's word is where it can be perfectly understood and known.

If God's primary purpose for believers was to **give Him praise** He would take us **to Heaven where is praise is perfect and never ending!**

The only reason why God allows His Church to remain on this earth, **is to seek and to save the lost.**

John 20: v. 21 in the N.K.J.

²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

Because of all that I have said, we need to take the Great Commission from Jesus seriously at O.I.C.

It was the final message from Jesus recorded by Matthew and with it he closes His gospel.

Therefore for me personally I feel that it is right to close my ministry at O.I.C. with these words from Jesus.

There are 5 elements that we will discover over the next two sermons which if understood correctly and applied to every member at O.I.C. will bring dynamic results and a great blessing to O.I.C. and to you personally, wherever God leads you.!!!

These 5 elements are Availability, Worship, Submission, Obedience and Power.!!!

Today we only have time for the first one and next week we will cover the other four.

1. **Availability - Matthew 28: v. 16.**

We have to go back to Matthew 26: v. 32 to discover why the disciples had gathered together in Galilee.

We know from Matthew 28: v.16 that Jesus must have given them a specific mountain to meet with him.

It is highly likely that it was the mountain where Jesus taught the message that we read in Matthew Chapter 5-7.

It was not really a mountain as we know it, it was a large hill. If you have visited Galilee you have probably been there.

The last recorded appearance of Jesus was eight days after the resurrection. (John 20:v.26)

The journey from Jerusalem to Galilee would have taken about one week at this time.

We read in John 21: v. 1-17 that Jesus appeared again to the disciples after they arrived in Galilee.

During this time, Peter was restored to Jesus and gave a threefold commitment to serve Jesus, and to teach and feed His people.

So allowing for conservative estimates we can say that the Great Commission was delivered between 20-35 days after His resurrection.

It is likely that it wasn't just the 11 disciples at this meeting with Jesus, however we do know that the 11 disciples were there.

The place is not important, but what is important, is that the disciples all made the effort to travel to this place.

They could have said "We are too busy fishing.!!!" They could have said, "we are too busy with family commitments!"

However they made the effort to surrender their own plans to receive their instructions from Jesus.

The first thing that every Christian must do, is to surrender their life to God's plan, for inclusion in the challenge of the great commission.

In other words, where does God want me to be and serve in His Great Commission challenge?

There are no lone rangers, or go it alone disciples in God's plan for soul winning.

The reason for this is because true soul winning depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit, through us.

Soul winning doesn't depend upon our ability, it depends upon our availability.

We must surrender to Jesus to be able to win souls for Jesus.

This might make common sense **but many Christian people don't seem to realise this.**

We have a Biblical example from Isaiah, one of the greatest Prophets from God who wrote the most extensive work of prophecy in the old Testament.

Isaiah Chapter 6: v. 1-8. In N.K.J.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts;

The whole earth *is* full of His glory!"

⁴ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ So I said:

"Woe *is* me, for I am undone!

Because I *am* a man of unclean lips,

And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;

For my eyes have seen the King,

The LORD of hosts."

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said:

"Behold, this has touched your lips;

Your iniquity is taken away,

And your sin purged."

⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:
“Whom shall I send,
And who will go for Us?”
Then I said, “Here *am* !! Send me.”

Isaiah met with God, **discovered fully, his sinful heart, he was cleansed by God and then surrendered for God’s service.**

This is the normal procedure for all those believers who want to take the Great Commission seriously. Paul was always committing himself for fresh cleansing and filling of the Holy Spirit in order to be useful to Jesus.

2 Corinthians 7: v. 1 in N.K.J.

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Even people serving tables for Jesus had to be cleansed and filled with the Holy Spirit. –

Acts 6: v.3.in N.K.J.

³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

The following true story is a living example of how important it is that we surrender to Jesus in order to be used by Him to rescue lost souls.

The story is told in a book called “**God among the Zulus**” translated into English from German. The author was Kurt Koch.

A South African evangelist ran evangelistic campaigns all over South Africa.

Many people came forward at his meetings and were counselled for Salvation.

They seemed to have become Christians.

Some time later this evangelist went back to these places to see how the new believers were growing in their faith.

The evangelist was very sad because they had all gone back into worldly ways and were no longer attending Church.

The evangelist climbed a mountain and fasted and prayed for three days and spoke with God.

He discovered what the problem was.

The problem was the evangelist.

He was not surrendered to Jesus and He was not filled with the Holy Spirit.

People had believed his message and were humanly persuaded to trust Jesus.

However it didn’t work out well **because they were not born again by the Holy Spirit.**

The evangelist had a **powerful ministry of human persuasion.**

However having surrendered to God and been filled with the Holy Spirit, the evangelist returned to Zulu Land and Revival broke out.

People were truly born again, some were healed and even one lady was raised from the dead.

The stories of this Revival are so incredible that you might not even believe them had Kurt Koch not investigated these stories for himself and recorded them in a book.

The point of telling you this story is to stress how important the first step is to obeying the Great Commission, of being a disciple for Jesus.

About 37 years ago, Wendy and myself fully surrendered to Jesus and God clearly called us to train for His service at the Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburg Scotland.

However it wasn’t until I read the book, God among the Zulus and studied the Bible under the Rev. Dr. Colin Peckham that I fully realised the importance for full surrender to Jesus, cleansing and filling of the Holy Spirit.

Wendy and myself have served Jesus faithfully for about 35 years, but it all began with being fully available to Jesus.

To be willing to surrender to Him is the first step, for whatever Jesus has for us to do, wherever He sends us to do it.

Can I challenge all the believers in Jesus, to the first step, in obedience to the Great Commission.

It is a difficult step but it is essential if you want to be used by Jesus, regardless of any gifts, talents or natural ability.

Let us pray.