The Great Commission

This arrangement of the Greek text, the KJV-1769 revision and my English [US] translation is in the Public Domain.

The Greek text is that of the Westcott and Hort, edition of 1893; New York: Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square (WITHOUT the marginal readings). Verse references are added before each Greek verse. Their punctuation will GENERALLY NOT be given.

The copy with five highlight colors: red first second third highest plus with any combination of the highlight colors: bold and/or bold underline and/or ALL CAPS underline are used for various degrees of emphasis. Italics are used for titles OR to set apart words from the rest of the text. Bracketed Bible references will be supplied. For example Genesis 1:1 = [GEN 1:1] and 1 Kings1:1 = [1KI 1:1]. Because of a conflict two references will differ from the ordinary first 3 digits for the name of the book (i.e.) Judges = [JDG 1:1] and Philemon = [PHM 1:1]. A one chapter book will be treated as other books for reference (i.e.) Jude = [JUD 1:1].

Users bringing errors to our attention would be greatly appreciated.

[Differences of philosophy such as to text type(s); English or other version preference(s); "bible" code(s) or numerics of whatever kind will NOT receive a "thank you" OR REPLY OF ANY KIND].

Unicode FONTS: Arial & Times New Roman ONLY have been used in this document.

JOH 3:36 ο πιστευων εις τον υιον εχει ζωην αιωνιον ο δε απειθων το υιον ουκ οψεται ζωην αλλ η οργη του θεου μενει επ αυτον. Times New Roman type has been chosen for the Greek text for its smooth clean beauty of the Greek letters.

Prepared by A. Allison Lewis ending in August 2007
Notes added, minor rearrangements, some English updated, references and abbreviations USUALLY printed in full. The initial letter for pronouns for God are capitalized.
Matthew 28:18, 19, 20

MAT 28:18 - WH και προσελθὼν ο ιησους ελαλησεν αυτοις λεγων εδοθη μοι πασα εξουσια εν ουρανω και επι της γης

KJV And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

AAL And Jesus coming spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and upon the Earth.

MAT 28:19 - WH πορευθεντες ουν μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη βαπτιζοντες αυτους εις το ονομα του πατρος και του υιου και του αγιου πνευματος

KJV Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

AAL Going therefore, DISCIPLE [i. e., make followers, disciples, or evangelize] all the nations: BAPTIZING them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:

MAT 28:20 - WH διδασκοντες αυτους τηρειν παντα οσα ενετειλαμην υμιν και ιδου εγω μεθ υμων ειμι πασας τας ημερας εως της συντελειας του αιωνος.

KJV Teaching them TO OBSERVE all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

AAL TEACHING them [the followers, baptized disciples] to keep all whatever I commanded you; AND, behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the age.
NOTE: The above KJV-1769 revision quotations are NOT altered. Those in the Appendix are NOT altered. Some of those in the following Commentary MAY BE altered.

The Commentary begins on page 592 and goes through 597. 592 Some take the phrase, and Jesus came, as suggesting that He suddenly appeared at a distance, and the doubting continued only until He came near. And spoke unto them. We may well suppose that He first said many other things. What is here given divides itself into three parts;

(a) The assertion of authority, MAT 28:18;
(b) The commission, MAT 28:19-20a;
(c) The promise, MAT 28:20b.

(a) The assertion of authority, MAT 28:18. All power. Jesus claims universal authority. We have seen on MAT 9:6 that the Greek word denotes permission, privilege, right, authority, and it sometimes suggests the power naturally attendant upon authority, or ability to enforce it. In this passage ‘authority’ is the correct translation, and the idea of corresponding power is suggested. All power (authority) in Heaven and in Earth, evidently denotes complete and universal authority. Calvin: “He must have supreme and truly divine dominion, who commands eternal life to be promised in His name, the whole world to be reduced under His sway, and a doctrine to be promulgated which is to subdue every high thing and bring low the human race. And certainly the apostles would never have been persuaded to attempt so arduous a task, had they not known that their Protector and Avenger was sitting in the Heavens, to whom supreme dominion had been given.” But by the very fact of saying ‘in Heaven and in [or on] Earth,’ the Savior showed that He did not mean the authority of a temporal king, such as even the disciples so persistently believed that the Messiah would be. Is given, more literally, was given, without saying when, and leaving it to be understood that the authority thus given is still possessed. We might suppose a reference to the councils of eternity, but more likely the gift was at His incarnation, as in MAT 11:27 Revised Version, “all things have been delivered unto Me of My Father,” and perhaps was consummated at His resurrection. Compare in general DAN 7:13f. The giver was God the Father; compare especially JOH 13:3 and 17:2, also MAT 9:8; 20:23; 21:23; JOH 5:27; 12:49. We learn elsewhere that this authority given to the God-man, the Mediator, is a temporary gift. When He shall have subjected to Himself all opposing authority among men, then He will deliver up this delegated authority of the King Messiah to God, even the Father, and His special mediatorial dominion will be reabsorbed into the universal and eternal dominion of God [1CO 15:24-28]. It is on the basis of this mediatorial authority, in
Heaven and on Earth, that the Savior issues His commission to His followers. **Go ye therefore.** This ‘therefore’

'[The reading is not certain: the word is omitted by many documents, and may have been inserted to bring out the relation between this and the foregoing clause. But that relation evidently exists, whether expressed by a particle or not.] should never be overlooked when we think of the commission [compare ‘therefore,’ in HEB 4:16]. He was a despised Galilean, a wandering and homeless Teacher, Who gave this audacious command; but it was a Teacher just raised from the dead and endowed by God with universal authority. Hanna: “When Jesus said, ‘Go, make disciples of all nations,’ He announced in the simplest and least ostentatious way the most original, the broadest, the sublimest enterprise that ever human beings have been called upon to accomplish.”

**(b) The commission, MAT 28:19-20a.** Jesus gives direction that all the nations shall be discipled unto Him, and taught to keep His commandments. If the “above five hundred” were present [see above on MAT 28:16], then this commission was not addressed to the Eleven only; and it is plain from Acts 8:2, 4, that the first Christians all set themselves to carry it out. Judaism in general was not a missionary religion. It was willing for Gentiles to come, as the prophets 593 had predicted they would, but it had no thought of going. The later Judaism had developed a zeal in proselyting, which in itself would have been commendable; but it proselyted to mere formalism and hypocrisy; [compare on MAT 28:15]. Christianity is essentially a missionary religion, analogous to the great conquering nations, the Romans, English, Russians. It must spread, by a law of its nature; it must be active at the extremities, or it becomes chilled at the heart; must be enlarging its circumference, or its very center tends to be defaced. We learn from Luke [24:47-49] that they were not to go immediately, but to tarry at Jerusalem for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit's power. This came in a very short time, and yet they tarried long, apparently several years; for the great Pentecost was probably in, AD 80, and the death of Stephen in AD 86 or 87. It required persecution at last to scatter them, and then they “went about preaching the word.” [ACT 8:4, Revised Version].

**Teach,** Revised Version, *make disciples of*, or more exactly, *disciple.* We greatly need an English verb ‘disciple,’ for this passage, and for MAT 13:52 and ACT 14:21. In John 4:1, the literal translation is ‘makes disciples.’ The Syriac [Pesh.] here exactly reproduces the Greek, by means of a causative form, probably devised for the purpose, and quite distinct from *‘teach’ in MAT. 28:20. THE LATIN AND THE COPTIC*
WERE UNABLE TO MAKE THE Distinction, AND THE Latin Failure EXTENDED ITSELF TO THE Early English AND German Translations. Some Later Germans Have RENDERED ‘Make Disciples Of,’ AS In SEVERAL RECENT English Versions. The verb ‘disciple’ is found once in Shakespeare. [“All's Well,” 1, 2, 28], once in Spenser’s [“Faery Queene,” b. iv., c. 1], also in Hammond [d. AD 1660]; it is called obsolete by Webster, but recognized by Richardson, Worcester, Stormonth, etc. There may be doubt as yet about introducing it into a popular version, though employed here by the American Bible Union and by Davidson, but it may be used in religious discourse with great advantage. ‘Teach,’ in all early English versions, WAS A VERY IMPERFECT TRANSLATION, CONFounding THIS TERM WITH THAT IN MAT 28:20, which REALLY means ‘teach.’ To disciple a person to Christ is to bring him into the relation of pupil to teacher, “taking His yoke” of authoritative instruction [MAT 11:29], accepting what He says as true because He says it and submitting to His requirements as right because He makes them. Towards a mere human and uninspired teacher we can properly feel and act thus only within narrow limits; but the Great Teacher has perfect wisdom and unlimited authority. We see then that Christ's intimated authority [MAT 28:18] is not only the basis of our duty to disciple others, but the basis of all true discipleship. His teachings and requirements are perfectly wise and righteous and good and we may see this to some extent at the outset, and more and more as we go on in the disciple's life; BUT We ACCEPT THEM AT ONCE, AND SET ABOUT CONFORMING TO THEM, BECAUSE He HAS A PERFECT RIGHT TO BE BELIEVED AND OBEYED. As to the noun ‘disciple,’ see on MAT 5:1. We know from other Scriptures that in order to men's becoming true disciples to Christ, THERE IS NEEDED, NOT MERELY Human Instruction AND Influence, BUT A SPECIAL WORK OF THE Holy SPIRIT OF God.

All [the] nations, the Greek having the article. Not merely the contiguous, or the kindred nations, not merely the most cultivated, but all the nations. Discipleship to Christ is possible to all, necessary to all. Our Lord has already predicted that the good news shall be preached in the whole world [MAT 26:13], and that when He finally comes for judgment “before Him shall be gathered all the nations.” [MAT 25:32]. So in the latest commission, given just before the ascension, “and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” [LUK 24:47 Revised Version]. And if MAR 16:9-20, Revised Version, be accepted as genuine, the commission there given reads, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole
creation.” In MAT. 10:5 Revised Version, the Twelve were forbidden to go “into any way of the Gentiles”; but that was a temporary and limited mission; the final and permanent mission made them begin with the Jews [LUK 24:47], but go into every way of the Gentiles, disciple all the nations. The idea of one religion for all the world then seemed very strange.

Liddon (II, 247): “No existing religion could aim at it, since the existing religions were believed to be merely the products of national instincts and aspirations; each religion was part of the furniture of a nation, or at most of a race. Celsus, looking out on Christianity in the second century of our era, with the feelings of Gibbon or of Voltaire, said that a man must be out of his mind to think that Greeks and Barbarians, Romans and Scythians, bondmen and freemen, could ever have one religion. Nevertheless this was the purpose of our Lord.”

Baptizing them. See the term explained on MAT 3:6. It is here the present participle,

[The aorist participle read by B D, without other support, and in obvious assimilation to the aorist participle and verb which precede.]

as is ‘teaching’ in the next clause. This construction might grammatically mean, if called for by the natural relation between the actions, or by the connection here, or by the known relations as elsewhere set forth, ‘disciple by baptizing... by teaching’; and so many, understand it. But the general teachings of Scripture DO NOT ALLOW us to think that discipling can be effected by a ceremony and subsequent course of instruction in Christ’s precepts. WE MUST THEREFORE understand that the present participles give baptizing and teaching as in a general way concomitants of discipling, THE CEREMONY ATTENDING IT PROMPTLY AND ONCE FOR ALL, THE INSTRUCTION IN PRECEPTS BEGINNING IMMEDIATELY, AND CONTINUED WITHOUT LIMIT, FROM THE NATURE OF THE CASE.

In the name, but into [Revised Version] is the most obvious and commonest translation of the Greek phrase [eis to onoma]. The same preposition and case are found after baptize in ACT 8:16; 19:5; 1CO 1:13, and (with other nouns) in GAL 3:27; ROM 6:3 (twice); 1CO 10:2; compare also MAT 10:41 f.; 18:20. Now if we take this obvious sense ‘into,’ the question will arise whether the ceremony actually brings the person into the name, into Christ, into Paul, Moses, etc., or whether it only represents, symbolizes the relation thus indicated. Those who believe in baptismal regeneration, or in baptism as constituting regeneration, will of course take the phrase in the former sense; others will understand that the ceremony only represents the person’s introduction into the name,
into Christ. In either case the idea denoted by ‘into’ seems to be a highly important and with those who believe in baptismal regeneration, etc., an essential element in the significance of the ceremony. Now it is to be observed that Luke in Acts, while twice using ‘into the name’ [eis to onoma] [as above cited], in ACT 2:38 has epi toi onomati [so also in MAT 18:5; 24:5], ‘upon the name,’ upon this as basis or ground of the ceremony, and in ACT 10:48 en toi onomati, ‘in the name,’ within the limits of it with relation to it and it alone. If then the idea attached to ‘into’ be highly important, or even essential, how do we account for the fact that Luke uses these other expressions, which may with some effort be construed as equivalent, but will quite fail to indicate the important conception in question? It would seem clear that Luke, when recording the action of the apostles in carrying out the commission, did not regard the distinctive notion of ‘into’ as essential or highly important, or he would not have used that phrase twice, and twice the other phrases. And those who insist on the most obvious translation of eis by ‘into,’ must beware of treating any particular interpretation of the expression as very important, in the presence of Luke's usage. The question may also arise whether it is not better, with the great grammatical commentators Fritzsche and Meyer [compare also Weiss] to understand eis to onoma as meaning in all these cases ‘unto the name,’ with reference to the name, as that to which the ceremony is restricted. Then it becomes plain at once that Luke's other phrases give substantially the same sense, and we see why he has varied the expression at will. This rendering is felt by all to be necessary in 1CO 10:2, ‘baptized unto Moses,’ which only Davidson ventures to translate ‘into Moses.’ Noyes says ‘into the name,’ but ‘to Moses'; Darby ‘to the name’ and ‘unto Moses.’ And in GAL 3:27; ROM 6:8, ‘unto’ gives a thoroughly appropriate conception, ‘baptized unto Christ,’ with distinct and exclusive reference to him; i. e., the ceremony does not refer to Moses, or to Paul, but to Christ. And notes especially the appropriateness in ROM 6:8, “all we who were baptized unto Christ Jesus were baptized unto his death.” Our baptism in referring to Christ Jesus referred especially to his death. “We were buried therefore with him through the 595 baptism unto death,” etc. We believe then that it would be a decided improvement to render baptize eis everywhere by ‘unto.’ If this be not done, it would be less misleading to retain the customary baptismal formula ‘in the name,’ and thus avoid suggesting a conception which Luke’s usage clearly forbids

[Tertullian gives in nomen, but the Latin versions in all forms, and numerous Latin Fathers quoted by Sabatier, give in nomine; the Memphitic seems to be equivalent to in nomen; the Syriac cannot well make the distinction.]
Or if ‘into’ be employed as the most obvious translation, then we should beware of treating the distinctive notion it suggests as essential or important, when Luke has evidently not so considered.

In Hebrew thought and feeling, the name of God was peculiarly sacred, as representing Him. It must not be spoken irreverently, and later Jewish feeling exaggerated this into a rule that the proper name Yahweh must not be pronounced at all, but another word substituted. [Compare on MAT 22:44]. The name of God must not in an oath be taken in vain, but the oath by that name must be solemnly taken and sacredly kept. In numerous passages of the Old Testament, the name of God solemnly represented Himself; to perform any action with express reference to His name gave the action a sacred character. And so in the New Testament use, ‘hallowed be thy name,’ ‘did we not prophesy by thy name,’ ‘in His name shall the Gentiles hope,’ ‘where two or three are gathered together in My name,’ ‘many shall come in My name,’ etc. In such phrases a great variety of specific ideas will arise according to the natural relations of the particular objects and actions, and the connection of the statement; but in all cases the name is a sacred representative of the person. Thus ‘baptized unto the name of Paul’ is an impressive way of saying ‘baptized unto Paul,’ like ‘baptized unto Moses’; ‘baptized unto the name of the Lord Jesus’ [ACT 8:16; 19:5] and ‘baptized on (in) the name of Jesus Christ’ [ACT 2:38; 19:38; 10:48], are an impressive equivalent ‘baptized unto Christ’ [GAL 3:27; ROM 6:3]; and ‘baptize unto the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ is a solemn way of saying the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.’

Baptism then is here enjoined as to be performed with express reference to the Holy Trinity. Compare 2CO 13:14. From this, no doubt, arose the quite early practice of baptizing three times, a practice still maintained in the Greek Church, and in Germany and America by the Tunkers or Dunkards, and some others. It is not an unnatural conception, and not in itself particularly objectionable, but it has no warrant in Scripture; and indeed, the form of expression here employed, ‘unto the name’ being used only once, is distinctly unfavorable to that practice. It should also be discouraged as tending to exalt the ceremonial element, while New Testament Christianity has the minimum of ceremony.

It is very natural that Christians should everywhere employ in baptizing this phrase, ‘unto (into, in) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,’ and we see no reason for departing from it. But it is of doubtful propriety to call this a law, and to insist that baptism would not be “valid” without the use of this particular phrase. For it must be
remembered that baptize is nowhere else in the New Testament associated with this particular expression. In Acts and the Epistles we find only ‘the Lord Jesus,’ or ‘Jesus Christ,’ or simply ‘Christ.’ We may well enough understand that this is a compendious expression, which touches the main point or peculiarity of the great Christian purification. We could not wisely infer from that usage that it is improper or undesirable to employ the full expression given by Matthew, but we are bound to understand that it is not indispensable. There would be nothing gained in practice by using one of the shorter phrases given in Acts and Paul, but there is something gained in just conception if we abstain from regarding the expression in Matthew as having the character of a law, about which we should then have to suppose that Luke and Paul had been strangely negligent. Plumptre fancies [after Cyprian, “Ep. 78,” c. 17, 18] that it was enough for Jewish converts “to be baptized into the name of Jesus as the Messiah,” while heathen converts, who “were without God in the world,” and had not known the Father, needed the other and fuller formula. But Paul has not used it 596 and his converts were mainly heathen

[In the “Didache,” ch. 7, and in Justin Martyr, “Apol. I,” chap. 61, the formula of Matthew is given, as if a matter of course. There was no little dispute among the Fathers as to whether baptism in the name of Jesus would suffice. See Herzog “Taufe,” 4)].

It was probably this passage [MAT 28:19 - aal] and the great benediction of 2CO 13:14 that made the English Revisers unwilling to adopt the suggestion of their American associates, and change ‘Holy Ghost’ into ‘Holy Spirit’ [compare on MAT 1:18]. The former will, no doubt, long continue to be employed in certain phrases of devotion; but it would be a gain to uniformity and clearness of rendering, if the latter were everywhere used in the translations. The design of Christian baptism seems to be indicated as threefold. (1) The element employed represents purification; “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins. calling on His name.” [ACT 22:16, Revised Version]. This meaning it has in common with the Old Testament purifications of every kind, being a very impressive kind of purification, because “the putting away of the filth of the flesh” [1PE 3:21] is in this case so complete. (2) The action performed symbolizes burial and resurrection, the actual burial and resurrection of Christ, and the spiritual death and resurrection of the believer in union with Christ [ROM 6:3 ff.; GAL 3:27]. (3) To have this ceremony performed upon ourselves in the name of Jesus Christ or in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, is a sort of oath of allegiance or pledge of devotion to Him as our Savior, and our God; we are not baptized unto Moses or unto Paul, but unto Christ, unto the Trinity. Hence it was a pleasant fancy of the early Latin Christians to call baptism a sacramentum, the Roman soldier’s oath of absolute devotion and
obedience to his general; though the word sacrament afterwards came to be gradually employed in applications and senses quite foreign to the New Testament.

**Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Baptism is a mere ceremonial and initial act of obedience to Christ, which should be followed by a lifelong obedience to all His commandments. The person who is discipled and baptized is only started in a course of Christian living.** Notice that it is not simply teaching them the commandments of Christ, but teaching them to observe His commandments. They who disciple and baptize men must teach them the duty of obeying Christ in all things; and the Christian instructor has still fallen short of his task unless those whom he is called to instruct have both learned what Christ’s commandments are, and have learned to observe them. Notice also the emphatic and comprehensive terms, ‘all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’ The risen Redeemer looks back upon His now finished work of teaching and speaks of it all in the past tense, as He already often did in the prayer of John 17, on the night before the crucifixion. These completed commandments would be hereafter brought fully to the remembrance of the disciples by the new Paraclete who would soon take the Savior’s place as their instructor and counsellor [JOH 14:16, 26], and this whole mass of sacred instruction and duty, without omission or alteration, they must teach those whom they disciple to observe.

*Liddon: “This is not the least noteworthy feature of our Lord’s words, that He does not foresee a time or circumstances when any part of His teaching will become antiquated or untrue, inappropriate or needless.”*

How vast is the range of thought presented or suggested by this saying of our Lord. (1) Theology, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Mediatorial authority of Christ. (2) Discipleship, and the work of discipling others. (3) The great missionary idea, ‘all the nations.’ (4) The ceremonial element of Christianity. (5) Christian ethics. (6) Christ’s perpetual spiritual presence with those who serve Him. (7) Christ’s final coming.

**c) The promise, MAT 28:20b.** Jesus gives assurance of his spiritual presence with all engaged in discipling others and in observing his commandments. Obedience to the Great Commission 597 is based on His universal and complete authority [MAT 28:18], and encouraged by the promise of His unfailing and sustaining presence. And this clearly applies,
not merely to the apostles, but to disciples of every period, even to the end; compare MAT 18:20. True Christian workers may be despised by skeptical philosophers and some pretentious men of science or men of letters; but history has shown that they are a power in the world, and that power is explained by the perpetual presence of their Lord and Redeemer.

Many things in this Gospel have been introduced by lo or behold, calling attention to what follows as wonderful; but surely none more fitly than this its marvelous and blessed closing word. I is separately expressed in the Greek, and is therefore emphatic. Alway is literally [margin, Revised Version], all the days; DAYS OF STRENGTH AND OF WEAKNESS, DAYS OF SUCCESS AND OF FAILURE, OF JOY AND OF SORROW, OF YOUTH AND OF AGE, DAYS OF LIFE AND DAY OF DEATH—ALL THE DAYS. [Compare Westcott. “Revelation of the Risen Lord”]. The end of the world is literally [margin, Revised Version], the consummation of age, or of the world-period [compare on MAT 13:39; 24:8], viz., of that world-period which was introduced by the Messiah’s coming, and will be consummated by His second coming. THEN HIS SPIRITUAL PRESENCE WILL BECOME A VISIBLE PRESENCE, BUT NONE THE LESS SPIRITUAL, SUSTAINING, AND DELIGHTFUL; THEN WE SHALL SEE HIM WHOM NOT HAVING SEEN WE LOVE, AND SHALL KNOW EVEN AS ALSO WE WERE KNOWN.

Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see,
And in thy presence rest.

May every heart confess thy name,
And ever thee adore;
And seeking thee, itself inflame
To seek thee more and more!

Grant me, while here on earth I stay,
Thy love to feel and know;
And when from hence I pass away,
To me thy glory show.

Bernard of Clairvaux, Tr. By Caswall
Appendix: Notes on the Great Commission.

The following is taken from the Nelson, Wide margin, Center Reference Bible. Nelson #496. It was purchased in November 1981 by A. Allison Lewis.

Matthew 28:18-20 – KJV, 1769 REVISION

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, k All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
19 Go ye therefore, and l teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
20 Teaching l them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

K DAN 7:13; EPH 1:21; PHI 2:9; 1PE 3:22; REV 17:14.
I ACT 2:42.
2 Or, make disciples (or, Christians) of all nations – PSA 22:27; ISA 49:6, 22; 52:10; HOS 2:23; MIC 4:2; MAL 1:11; LUK 24:47; COL 1:23.