

THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN MATTHEW 28:18-19

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Abstract

The implementation of Christian Education must be based on correct theological principles, so as not to deviate from Bible truth, and glorify the Lord Jesus, the giver of the task of Christian Education itself. One of the main and important texts on this subject is Matthew 28:16-20 which is known as the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus for all believers, and the task of teaching part of it. Therefore, it is very important to understand the principles of Christian Education theology according to this text. Based on the exegesis study of Matthew 28:16-20, several Christian Education theological principles are put forward in it, namely: (1) Actors of Christian Education must have a loyal character, and be taught about the Bible first so they have teaching skills later; (2) The content or material taught in Christian Education is the teachings of the Lord Jesus; (3) Christian Education must be carried out by all believers, namely they have all the conditions in the first point; (4) Christian Education must function as a means of discipling every new believer (new disciple) to mature their faith; (5) Christian Education must be given to all believers of all ages; (6) Christian Education is the task from the Lord Jesus, the Owner of all power in heaven and on earth, therefore, it is a task that must be carried out; (7) Christian Education must aim to form every believer to become obedient to the teachings of the Lord Jesus; (8) Christian Education actors will be accompanied by the Lord Jesus; (9) Christian Education must be carried out on the basis of the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Keywords: Christian Education, Matthew 28:16-20, Teaching, Theology, Education.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is a history of salvation, not a history of Christian education, emphasized Eavey.¹ Even so, as the word of God from which all divine truths come, it also contains divine principles regarding

Christian education, one of which is contained in Matthew 28:16-20. Therefore, there is no Christian education without the Bible. So the implementation of Christian Education should be based on correct

¹ CB Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, 8th

Printing, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 19.

theology, namely based on Bible truth.

Matthew 28:16-20 is often known as the 'Great Commission' (cf. Mrk 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8). It is called the Great Commission because of the last emphasis He gave before His ascension.² Huffsturler argues that Matthew 28:16-20 is one text that is more popular than some other text, and is often understood as a mandate to make disciples.³ The majority of research on Matthew 28:16-20 focuses on mission or evangelism mandates.⁴ Meanwhile, Ojo suggested that Matthew 20:16-20 emphasize not on the mission mandate, but on discipleship. So it can be concluded that the Great Commission is more soul nurturing than soul winning. Because winning souls is only the starting point but the climax of the Great Commission is nurturing (maintaining) the souls that have been won until Christ is fully formed in them.⁵

The emphasis of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 as

discipleship, will have a deeper theological and practical meaning. The Great Commission talks about discipleship, and one of the ways to achieve this is to teach as the Lord Jesus said, "teach them to do everything that I have commanded you," (vv. 19a). Teaching is the heart of education. There will be no education without teaching. Therefore, the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 is the theological basis for carrying out Christian education. As emphasized by Rivosa Santosa and friends that the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) is the main basis for implementing Christian Religious Education.⁶ In fact, according to Morrison, Paul and the other apostles understood that the key to establishing a decent church was through the educational orders of the Great Commission.⁷

Therefore, because the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) also talks about education, it is very important to understand the theological principles of

² Don Fanning, "The Great Commission," *The Journal of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary*, Vol. 1, Issue 2 (Spring 2014), 1 (1-20).

³ David Huffstutler, "The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18:20," *Religious Affections Ministries*, (September 10, 2018). <https://religiousaffections.org/articles/biblical-studies/the-great-commission-in-matthew-2818-20/>.

⁴ See, Kolawole Olumafemi Paul, "The Great Commission Mandate of the Church in Matthew 28:18-20," *Word & World*, Vol. 40, Number 3 (2020), 426 (419-426).

⁵ Ola J. Ojo, "Exegetical Study of Matthew 28:18-20

And Its Implications For Theological Education," https://www.academia.edu/32023585/EXEGETICAL_STUDY_OF_MATTHEW_28_18_20_AND_ITS_IMPLICATIONS_FOR_THEOLOGICAL_EDUCATION.

⁶ Rivosa Santosa, Nira Olyvia, Victor Deak, "The Relationship Between Christian Religious Education and the Great Commission Mathew 28:19-20," *International Journal of Sociology, Policy and Law (IJOSPL)*, Vol. 2, Issue 4, (August 2021), 72 (66-72)

⁷ John Morrison, *The Great Commission and Christian Education: A Pointed Challenge to Christian Parents and Church Leaders*, (Revised March 2012), 26.

Christian Education in this text through exegesis studies. This is the aim of this research.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is the exegesis method. The exegesis method is often referred to as the literal-grammatical-historical approach.⁸

The word 'exegesis' is a transliteration of the Greek noun ἐξηγησις, which comes from the verb ἐξηγέομαι. This word comes from two words ἐκ (out, out of) and *hegeomai* (bring, lead). So, ἐξηγησις can be translated as 'to bring out' or 'to lead out,' which means to tell, announce, or practice declaring. There are two ideas in this word, namely: (a) introducing, suggesting; (b) explain, tell. When exegesis is applied to the Bible, it means a careful investigation of the original meaning of the text based on the historical context and literary form of the book.⁹

It is acknowledged that the principles or methods of exegesis have varied patterns

among scholars. However, the pattern used in this study includes contextual, historical, lexical, grammatical, structural, exegetical, and theological analysis,¹⁰ to find the theological principles of Christian Education in Matthew 28:16-20.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The theological principles of Christian Education found in Matthew 28:16-20, are made in the following points, which are as follows:

Characteristics of Christian Education Practitioners: Loyal, Taught, and Proficient in Teaching

The Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) was given by the Lord Jesus after His resurrection and when he was about to ascend to heaven.

Verse 16 records that only eleven disciples left for Galilee, to the hill that Jesus had shown them earlier (cf. Matt. 26:32; Mark. 14:28). Judas Iscariot did not go because he was dead.¹¹ Apart from

and interpretation.'

¹⁰ For contextual, grammatical, structural, and historical definitions, see Sayangi Laia, Harman Ziduhu Laia, and Daniel Ari Wibowo, "The Wrong Practice Of Anointing Oil In The Church According To James 5:14 A Theological Study," *Theological Journal Kerugma*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (October, 2020): 8-9.

¹¹ John Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, (1746-1763). Matthew 28:16. <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/cmt/gill/mat028.htm>.

⁸ Harman Ziduhu Laia, Jimmy Sutrisno, and Daniel Ari Wibowo, "The Old Testament Dietary Laws Was Abolished According to Mark 7:19b?" *Theological Journal Kerugma*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (October, 2022): 111.

⁹ Sri Binar, Harman Ziduhu Laia, Widi Prasetyo, "Exegesis of Revelation 20:1-10 About 'The Millennial Kingdom,'" *Theological Journal Kerugma*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (October, 2019): 35-36. The verb ἐξηγέομαι is used six times in the New Testament (Luke 24:35; John 1:18; Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:19). The noun is defined as 'story, description

various debates about Judas, one thing is amazing, namely Judas was an unfaithful disciple, even became a traitor to Jesus,¹² therefore, not together with the eleven disciples to receive Christ's Great Commission. In contrast to these eleven disciples, although they were shaken by the death of Christ (Matt. 26:31), like Peter denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:34; 69-75), in the end, after Christ's resurrection, their faith returned follow Jesus and they become firm. So, this shows one of the characters worthy of being a teacher, namely faithfulness in following the Lord Jesus.

Christian Education Content: All the Teachings of the Lord Jesus

Verse 20 says, “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (NET)”. The phrase ‘everything I have commanded you,’ refers not to a single commandment, but to the entire teaching of Jesus, not only the commandments but also wisdom, parables, blessings, and prophecy,¹³ taught by the Lord Jesus to the disciples for three and a half years He disciplined them. The disciples have been

taught, now they must teach, for what they have received. So, another character that teachers, like the eleven students, must have is to be taught first so that they have knowledge, so that they are proficient in teaching the teachings of the Lord Jesus (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2).

Christian Education Actors: All Believers

The word 'teach' (v. 20a) is translated from the Greek word *didaskontes*. The subject is the masculine plural, which refers to the 'eleven disciples'. Because the Great Commission was conveyed to the eleven students, this became a debate, whether Christian Education was only carried out by students or all believers.¹⁴ But it must be admitted that even though this is not an order for every believer to evangelize actively, nevertheless, evangelism is the first step to make disciples. Therefore, it is better not to separate between evangelism and discipleship. That is on package.

Paul handled this problem well. He said: “Given the previous exegetical analysis, the researcher confirms that Matthew 28:18-20 does not only apply to

¹² Deven K. MacDonald, “The Characterization of A False Disciple: Judas Iscariot in Mark's Gosepl,” *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry (MJTM)*, Vol. 15 (2013-2014), 133. (119-135)

¹³ John Muddiman and John Barton (ed.), “The Gospels,” *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 83.

¹⁴ Ryan Phelps, “The Great Commissioning: An Exegesis Of Matthew 28:16-20,” *A Paper Requirements for the Course THEO 690-005, (Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, March 4, 2011)*, 32, 81. Phelps concludes that Matthew 28:16-20 is not every believer's active evangelistic task, but it does focus on the discipleship commandment.

the apostles but also, in a broad way, to every believer of all ages, namely the 'church,' namely the body of Christ.”¹⁵ This can be justified by the arguments in the text, namely: (1) the object of discipleship is 'all nations'. This could not have happened and been reached by only the eleven disciples or the priests alone; (2) the promise of the Lord Jesus' inclusion to 'you' until the end of time. It is impossible for the eleven disciples to live to the end of time, therefore, this promise also applies to every believer until the end of time.

However, even though the implications of this Great Commission are given to every believer, those who are worthy to carry it out are only those who are faithful, have been taught (disciple), and are capable in teaching.

Functions of Christian Religious Education: Means of Discipleship

In Matthew 28:19-20b there are four interrelated verbs, namely: 'go' (poreuthentes), 'disciple' (matheteusate),

'baptize' (baptizontes), and 'teach' (didaskontes). 'Matheteusate' is the main verb, the other three are participles.¹⁶ Wallace asserts that the word 'go' is a condition that simultaneous (precedes) the act of 'discipling'. The other two participles, namely 'baptize', and 'teach' are means, namely means by which the disciples make disciples.¹⁷ So, 'teaching' is a means of discipleship. Kgatle says that 'teaching' refers to constant training in all the New Testament commandments.¹⁸

Objects of Christian Religious Education: All Nations

In the phrase 'didaskontes autous' (teach them), they (autous) are the objects or people taught by the pupils. They are the same person as the object verb baptize, both of which refer to 'all nations' (panta ta ethne). So, the objects of 'teaching' and 'baptizing' are all nations. 'All nations' in this text has been understood in two ways, namely: (1) all Gentiles, and (2) all nations.¹⁹ But Acts 1:8 that it refers to all

¹⁵ Kolawole Olumafemi Paul....., 424-423.

¹⁶ Duncan Heaster, *New Testament Commentary - Volume 1: Matthew-John*, (tp: Carelinks Publising, tt), 187. Others see the four verbs as commands, see Craig A. Evans, "Matthew," *New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 484. On the question of the word 'go,' see Benjamin L. Merke, "Why the Great Commission Should Be Translated 'Go!' and Not 'As You Go'," *STR*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2018): 21-32.

¹⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the*

Basics, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 645. DA Carson, "Matthew," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Abridged Edition: New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 260 (pdf). Carson suggests that 'baptizing' and 'teaching' are not means of making disciples, but characteristics of making disciples.

¹⁸ Mookgo S. Kgatle, "Globalization of missions: An exegesis on the Great Commission (Mt 28:18–20)," *In die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi*, 52 (1), (11 July 2018), 4.

¹⁹ DA Carson, "Matthew 13-28," *Expositor's Bible*

nations (Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth).²⁰

Discipleship is done after someone believes. Therefore, discipleship is preceded by evangelism. After one believes, one must be baptized (Mrk 16:16; Acts 2:38), and taught. Evans stated that teaching was done after being baptized.²¹ So, the object of Christian Education is all nations, namely everyone who has believed throughout the world. Today, Christian Education is often only devoted to school children. But Matthew 28:16-20 confirms that Christian Education must be given to all believers, of all ages.

The Purpose of Christian Religious Education: Obedience to the Teachings of the Lord Jesus

The phrase “obey everything I have commanded you” (v. 20a, NET) is the goal of teaching. The word 'do, comply, obey' (terein), means 'care carefully, guard custody'.²² Thus, it refers to a lifestyle of

learning, remembering and practicing all of the teaching commandments of Jesus and the Holy Spirit throughout the New Testament.²³

Christian Education Delegator: Jesus Has All Power

Before the Lord Jesus gave the command 'to make disciples of all nations' by baptizing and teaching them (vv. 19-20a), the Lord Jesus said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (vv. 18, NET).

The original Greek text reads: “λέγων ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ [τῆς] γῆς” implies 'His authority is worldwide and absolute so that the Message is also worldwide (cf. Dan. 7:13).²⁴ The implication is that the person who commands to make disciples by 'teaching' is Jesus, the Owner of all power in heaven and on earth.²⁵ Keener explained that because Jesus has all power, because He is King in God's kingdom, His disciples must carry out

Commentary: With the New International Version, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 596.

²⁰ James I. Fazio, “Two Commissions: Theological Implications of Matthew's Gospel,” A Thesis of Master of Theology, (California: Southern California Seminary, Apr. 2013), 39.

²¹ Craig A. Evans, Matthew..., 486.

²² Thayer, Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, ref. 5282.

²³ Mookgo S. Kgatle, “Globalization of missions: An exegesis on the Great Commission (Mt 28:18–20),” In die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi, 52 (1), (11 July

2018), 4.

²⁴HL Ellison, New International Bible Commentary, ed. FF Bruce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 1154.

²⁵Frederick William Danker (rev. & ed.), A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG), Third Edition, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 200). The word 'οὐν' (5432). BibleWorks V10. The word 'οὐν' is a superordinate, or inferential conjunction indicating that what it introduces is an ahris of or an inference of what precedes.

the mission of teaching the kingdom (Matt. 10:7)... Jesus' authority includes the authority to order his subordinates to 'go' (cf. Matt. 8:9).²⁶ Fowler agrees on this point, saying: "By the contingency of His authoritative Being, the early disciples, and all disciples since then, were required to make disciples who were Christians, people of Christ."²⁷ So, making disciples by teaching is the order of the Almighty, which must be obeyed by every believer, who has been taught, is faithful and capable of teaching.

Authority for the Implementation of Christian Religious Education: The Authority of the Lord Jesus Christ

Another implication is that the disciples who carry out the Great Commission are expected to rely on His authority to fulfill and obey all of His commands as He does in obedience to the Father's commands.²⁸ In making disciples by teaching, they must rely on the authority of Christ, wherever and whenever they teach. Believers who carry out the Great Commission need not fear, wherever He

leads, no matter what circumstances are encountered, He is in control.²⁹

A Promise for Christian Religious Education Practitioners: The Lord Jesus Accompanies You Until the End of Time

Verse 20b reads: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (NET)." Matthew's Gospel and the Great Commission end not with a command but with a promise, or rather a fact. Jesus will always be with His disciples when they do His will. This is His great commitment. Immanuel remains "God with us" (1:23; cf. 18:20). The word 'always' (Greek *pasas tes hemeras*) literally means "all day long".³⁰ Jesus promised to be with the perpetrators of Christian Education every day forever. That does not mean that He will stop being with Christian Education practitioners when this era ends and the world empire begins. Throughout this age (*Yun. sunteleias tou aiovos*) the disciples of Jesus must carry out His Great Commission.³¹

Starting Point for Implementation of Christian Religious Education: When

Commentary: New Testament, Second Edition, (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007), 86-87.

³⁰CFD Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*. 2nd edition, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 34.

³¹D. Edmond Hiebert, "An Expository Study of Matthew 28:16-20," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149:595 (July-September 1992): 338-354.

²⁶Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999),

²⁷James A. Fowler, "A Commentary on the Four Gospel – Jesus Confronts Religion," *Christocentric Commentary Series*, (California: CIY Publishing, 2006), 354.

²⁸Don Fanning....., 5.

²⁹Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible*

the Church was Established

One of the important questions about Christian Education is when it started. One of the first books introductory to Christian Education for Indonesian readers was published by Gunung Mulia which explains this issue, namely the book written by Homrighausen and Enklaar entitled *Pendidikan Agama Kristen*,³² and there it is explained: "However, when did Christian Education begin? Christian Education stems from the fellowship of God's people in the Old Testament. So basically, the basics are already there in the ancient Sacred History. Christian Education begins when Abraham is called to be the ancestor of God's chosen people, even Christian Education focuses on God himself, because God is the Great Educator for His people.³³ In this statement it is emphasized that Christian Education begins when Abraham is called to be the ancestor of God's chosen people, meaning that it has started in the Old Testament.

According to Eavey the teaching command that the Lord Jesus had commanded the disciples (Matt. 28:20) was first carried out on the day of Pentecost, which is usually called Peter's sermon representing the teaching given by the

apostles about Jesus, the prophecies that were fulfilled in Him, and the work Him as Lord and Christ. Of those who accepted his words, it was said that they 'remained firm' in the teachings of the apostles.³⁴

Based on the light of Acts 1:8 " But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth" (NET) shows that the Great Commission has just begun the disciples did in the event of Pentecost (Acts 2). This also relates to where the new church was founded at Pentecost.³⁵

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the exegesis study of Matthew 28:16-20, several theological principles regarding Christian Education are put forward, namely: (1) Actors of Christian Education must have a loyal character, and be taught about the Bible first so they have teaching skills later; (2) The content or material taught in Christian Education is the teachings of the Lord Jesus; (3) Christian Education must be carried out by all believers, namely they have all the conditions in the first point; (4)

³²Ebenhaizer I. Nuban Timo, "Book Review," *Theology in Loco*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (April 2022), 114. (113-121)

³³EG Homrighausen and IH Enklaar, *Christian Religious Education*, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia,

2008), 1.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 81-82.

³⁵Dispensationalism and non-dispensationalism theologians argue about when the church began.

Christian Education must function as a means of discipling every new believer (new disciple) to mature their faith; (5) Christian Education must be given to all believers of all ages; (6) Christian Education is the task from the Lord Jesus, the Owner of all power in heaven and on earth, therefore, it is a task that must be carried out; (7) Christian Education must aim to form every believer to become obedient to the teachings of the Lord Jesus; (8) Christian Education actors will be accompanied by the Lord Jesus; (9) Christian Education must be carried out on the basis of the authority of the Lord Jesus.

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