

*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”*  
(Matthew 28:19–20).

January 2004

## ON THE VITAL MINISTRY OF TEACHING

by Henry M. Morris\*

The Great Commission, as it is known, is broader than many Christians realize. First of all, it involves Christians being sent into all the world. *“As my Father hath sent me,”* said Jesus to the disciples, *“even so send I you”* (John 20:21). Then, just before His return to heaven, He told them what they would do as they went, *“Ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth.”* But how could they (or we) possibly do such a thing? *“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you”* (Acts 1:8), was His statement.

And what does it mean to be “witnesses”? The actual Greek word also means “martyrs,” so this Commission could well involve real sacrifice in many cases. But *what* would be the content of their witness? On another occasion, He had already told them that *“repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations”* (Luke 24:47). A more succinct, and yet more comprehensive statement of His Great Commission had been given on still another occasion, when He said, *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15).

Yes, but just what is this “gospel” that we are to preach? The message clearly must include repentance and remission

of sins, of course, but that is only a part. What is it that must be repented of, for example, and on what basis are sins to be forgiven? And then what?

The gospel we are to preach is, of course, the “good news” about Christ. That, in fact, is precisely the meaning of the Greek word itself. It is not “good advice” or “good philosophy.” It is the wonderfully glad tidings in the record concerning Jesus Christ—specifically who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in the ages to come.

Its central focus is on the substitutionary death of Christ for our sins, His physical burial, and bodily resurrection (see I Corinthians 15:1–4). But it also includes His creation of all things in the beginning (Revelation 14:6–7 calls that the “*everlasting gospel*”). Furthermore, it includes the promised “*hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel*” (Colossians 1:5), as well as everything that God in Christ has said or done in anticipation of His promised heavenly kingdom.

The most extensive definition of that Commission, was given when Jesus met with His first eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee, and said: *“All power is given unto me in heaven and*

\*Dr. Henry Morris is Founder and President Emeritus of ICR.

*in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 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*" (Matthew 28:18–20).

Twice in this missionary mandate, we note that He stressed the ministry of teaching. The scope of the commandment is indeed extensive; *all* nations are to be taught, and the teaching is to incorporate *everything* that Jesus taught.

And even that is not all. There was another great commission given to men and women back at the very beginning of time, and it is still in effect. "*Have dominion over . . . every living thing that moveth upon the earth*" (Genesis 1:28), God had told our first parents. This primeval dominion mandate necessarily implies comprehensive scientific research into the nature of the earth and all its living creatures—plant life, animal life, human life. Then, for us to "*subdue*" the earth (Genesis 1:28) must involve the development of all kinds of technology and commerce and—especially—*education!* What is learned and implemented in one generation would be useless if not transmitted to the next generation. That requires the vital ministry of teaching!

When Christ told the disciples to "teach all nations," the actual language He used was "make disciples in all nations." A disciple is not just a listener (like a student whose mind is closed or filled with trivia) but one who is a real learner and user of the information provided by his teacher. The word "disciple" is obviously related to "discipline." True education requires both a disciplined teacher and a disciplined learner. It is appropriate also that the various individual areas of study (science, math, language, etc.) are themselves known as "disciplines."

The "*all things*" we are to "*teach*" must clearly include *everything* that Christ comprehended in both His dominion mandate and His missionary mandate. Remember that our Lord created them all and has paid the price for their full redemption. He has promised that "*the [creation] itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*" (Romans 8:21). This responsibility is further implied in Christ's command to "*preach the gospel,*" for, as noted above, the gospel itself also embraces all that Christ is, and does, and says, from creation to consummation. It is infinitely more comprehensive than just the atoning death and bodily resurrection of the Savior, as essential as these are. Belief in this central core of the gospel, along with personal faith in Christ and His Word, is vitally important and is sufficient for one's personal salvation—if truly understood and sincerely believed. But this "simple gospel" is definitely not all that is involved in the Great Commission, nor in the dominion mandate, which the Commission incorporates and extends.

The gospel of Christ which we have been commanded to preach, the person and work of Christ of whom we are to be witnesses, and the all-comprehensive teaching implied in the Great Commission and the dominion mandate involve nothing less than the wonderful plan of God for His entire creation in the eternal ages to come.

No individual Christian can preach or teach all these things. These orders must involve the entire company of His disciples, each using his or her own individual abilities and opportunities to help in the implementation of God's great plan, and doing it faithfully, as unto the Lord. To help us in doing our part, the Holy Spirit, indwelling each true disciple, has given special "gifts" to each person.

Some of these “gifts of the Spirit” are listed in Romans 12:6–8, some in I Corinthians 12:28, and some in Ephesians 4:11. All three listings are different, and each is obviously incomplete. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that there may be other gifts not covered in any of these three sample lists, that would be given as people and needs vary over the years. “*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit*” (I Corinthians 12:4).

It is significant that the only gifts mentioned in all three of the Biblical lists are those of prophecy and teaching. However, the apostle Paul said that the prophetic gift (that is of conveying new inspired revelation from God to those early believers) would soon vanish away, presumably when the New Testament Scriptures had been completed (see I Corinthians 13:8; also note John’s warning at the end of his book of Revelation not to add anything more—Revelation 22:18). That tells us that the gift of teaching has the distinction of being the one *permanent* gift of the Spirit stressed in all three of the Bible’s listings, and therefore needed permanently in the accomplishment of the Great Commission.

Furthermore, there is surely more than one type of teaching gift. Teaching the Bible is different from teaching music, for example. Also, teaching middle-school children is very different from teaching graduate students in science or teaching pastoral students in a seminary. But all teaching, too requires good preparation, sincere interest in students as well as subject matter, and—for Christian teachers in particular—doing it as unto the Lord. “*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men*” (Colossians 3:23).

The Lord does not call everyone to be a teacher. In fact, He warns those who are *not* truly called to a teaching ministry against trying to be one. “*My brethren, be not many masters* [same Greek word as ‘teachers’], *knowing that we shall receive*

*the greater condemnation*” (James 3:1). Recognizing the basic importance of training the younger generation, Satan has managed to deceive many pseudo-disciples into becoming *false* teachers, thereby incurring severe judgment on themselves. “*There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction*” (II Peter 2:1).

We need to realize that the dominion mandate still applies to all people, both Christians and non-Christians, whereas the Great Commission is the responsibility of Christians only. The latter, therefore, have a double responsibility in “subduing” the earth. With respect to science, for example, we not only want to win individual scientists to salvation in Christ, but also to bring the sciences themselves under submission to God and His Word. This includes warning students about the deadly fallacies of evolutionary philosophy, and secular humanism in general (whether the teacher is a parent in a home school, a dedicated teacher in a Christian school, or one of the occasional Christian teachers in the modern mission field called public schools). It applies in an extreme sense to college and university teachers, especially to those teaching science at the graduate level as they prepare our future scientific researchers and educators.

Considering the importance Christ placed on teaching in His Great Commission, as well as its preeminent position among the gifts of the Holy Spirit (the gift of evangelism is mentioned in only one of the three lists, for example; the gift of teaching is in all three), as well as its essential importance in implementing God’s dominion mandate, the entire Christian community is surely responsible to provide whatever support is needed to enable these teaching ministries to function effectively. ☪

## HOW LONG WILL THE SUN LAST?

by John D. Morris, Ph.D.

Recent solar activity caused great concern among many people, including “New Age” prophecies that the sun was burning out, and the end was near. While we don’t know the timetable for end-time events, we do know that giant solar flares shot far into space, producing beautiful displays of Northern Lights while disrupting the functions of communications satellites worldwide. We also know that such flares happen from time to time on the sun, related to its 11-year cycle of sunspots, and its rotating magnetic field. This series of flares in late October, however, was perhaps the largest ever recorded, causing many to wonder, “just how long will the sun last?”


Despite the pronouncements of overly enthusiastic astronomers, processes within the sun are not fully known, and controversy swirls around even their nature. The most common view of the sun’s nature is related to uniformitarian ideas of stellar evolution, in which the entire solar system coalesced out of an inter-stellar cloud of mostly hydrogen, some five billion years ago. The vast majority collapsed into the center where it concentrated and eventually became so dense and hot that it spawned nuclear fusion, with some hydrogen combining to form helium, giving off unthinkable amounts of energy. Energy levels, and thus the sun’s brightness, have increased over time to its present level. The earth and the other planets collected from the leftover dust, which included a wide array of other atoms and molecules. Parenthetically, in this theory, the sun was

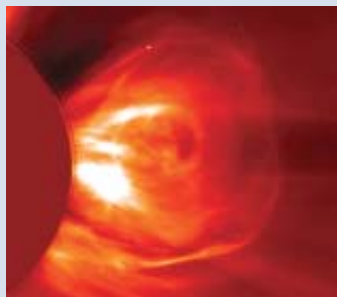
only about 40% as bright as now when life is thought to have evolved, thus the earth would have been completely frozen and inhospitable to life throughout most of its history.

Stellar evolution proposes that a star goes through many stages during its life, and astronomers can point to stars which appear to be at each stage. Most stars are quite unstable (our sun being a notable exception), periodically convulsing and erupting, throwing off vast amounts of material into space, all the while using

up their internal fuel. A star “dies” when it runs out of energy or catastrophically explodes in a nova or super nova. We see the remnants today as expanding gas clouds, which are not contracting into new stars. In stellar evolution theory, our sun still has about five billion years

of life left. Other theories of stellar life predict a shorter tenure, but still quite long.

Thankfully the Creator of stars has told us about the birth of the stars on Day Four of Creation Week (Genesis 1:17) and their ultimate destiny. They were created for man’s use and enjoyment, and to bring the Creator great glory (Psalm 19:1). He has also told us that sin’s penalty affects all of creation (Romans 8:20–22), and thus even stars “die.” One day the heavens and earth will pass away, but will be made new once again (II Peter 3:10,13), with no scars of sin and death. The sun won’t have the same function in eternity (Revelation 21:23), but it will continue forever (Psalm 148:3,6) and praise its Creator. 



*Courtesy of SOHO Project, NASA.*



© 2004 by ICR • All Rights Reserved

Single copies 10¢ • Order from: **INSTITUTE FOR CREATION RESEARCH**

P.O. Box 2667, El Cajon, CA 92021 • Available for download on our website ([www.icr.org](http://www.icr.org)).