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Fazio's "Two commissions: Two missionary mandates in Matthew's gospel" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Fazio, J. (2015). *Two commissions: Two missionary mandates in Matthew's gospel*. El Cajon, CA: Southern California Seminary Press. 112 pp. \$14.00. ISBN 9781785924989

Does Jesus give one commission to his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew, or does he give two? If he gives two distinct commissions, what is the relationship between them? These are key questions that James Fazio, Dean of Bible and Theology at Southern California Seminary, addresses in this book. While people are familiar with the Great Commission, found in Matthew 28:16-20, they might not be aware of a second commission, found in Matthew 10:1, 5-8. Some scholars see these two commissions as in continuity with each other, so that the earlier one is expanded and broadened in the later one. So there is just one commission, with the sending out of the disciples in Matthew 10 being a precursor to the Great Commission in Matthew 28.

However, Fazio, as well as other scholars, believe there are two unique commissions, given at different times and addressed to different people groups. In the Germinal Commission, Jesus calls the disciples to reach the scattered Jewish people, as indicated in Matthew 10:5-6 (ESV): "These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" Fazio views Jesus' earthly ministry as focused almost entirely on the Jewish people. The Great Commission, which is universal in scope, only occurs after Jesus' ascension. It is Jesus' call to the apostles and other believers for the church age, with the mission shifting from the scattered Jews to all people.

While Fazio discusses this topic with scriptural continuity and discontinuity in mind, he also does so by examining these elements as found in covenantal and the dispensational perspectives on interpreting the Bible. He notes that some scholars emphasize the overall continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and those holding to the covenantal perspective generally fit in this category. The earlier set of scriptures is viewed as a precursor to the later set of scriptures. The Old Testament promises are fulfilled in the New Testament, and the Bible as a whole is covenantal in nature. Other scholars give significant attention to the discontinuities between the two testaments, and dispensationalists tend to support this position. They view the emphases of the Old Testament and the New Testament as being different in many ways, and understanding the discontinuities is important for interpreting the Bible correctly.

Given the author's argument in favor of two distinct commissions in the Gospel of Matthew, one might expect him to appreciate the dispensational perspective and not appreciate the covenantal one. However, he is critical of both perspectives. While an appreciation for continuity is important, those from the covenantal group give insufficient attention to the discontinuity. Those from the dispensational group are correct in addressing discontinuities, but they err in giving too much attention to them, seeing discontinuities where they do not actually exist.

This book offers a contribution to the field of biblical interpretation and would be beneficial for libraries in Christian colleges and universities, as well as in seminaries.

Reviewer

John Jaeger, Johnson University