

STUDIES IN MARK--LESSON FORTY-SEVEN
Jesus Appears To The Eleven & Gives His Great Commission
Mark 16:12-20

INTRODUCTION -

I. LESSON LINKS AND CONTEXT.

- A. Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene (16:9), who reported his resurrection to the unbelieving apostles (16:10,11).
- B. His next appearance was to the group of women as they returned from the tomb (Matt. 28:9,10), having heard the message of the angels.
- C. The false report of the watch, who were paid "much money" by the chief priests and elders, was duly circulated but hardly taken seriously (Matthew 28: 11-15).

II. NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE LESSON.

- A. The appearance of Jesus to his disciples gave them "living hope," and transformed their fear into undying faith (1 Peter 1:3-5).
- B. The resurrection is the keystone of the arch supporting our faith in Jesus as the Messiah and authenticating his claim as the divine Son of God (Romans 1:4).
- C. The last commission of Jesus is called great, in contrast to the limited commission he gave the twelve, which sent them only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:5,6).
- D. The final commission was given by Jesus with all authority in heaven and on earth, after his resurrection, during the forty days before his ascension to heaven (Acts 1:3-5).
- E. The great commission is the source of our authority to preach the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46-49).

DISCUSSION -

I. JESUS APPEARS TO TWO IN THE COUNTRY (Mark 16:12,13; Luke 24:13-35).

- A. Walk to Emmaus: "And after these things he was manifested in another form (i.e., another manner) unto two of them, as they walked, on their way into the country" (12).
 - 1. Jesus, unknown to the two disciples, appeared to them as they walked toward Emmaus and talked

- with them (Luke 24:13-24).
2. Matthew and John do not mention this meeting; Mark reports it only briefly.
 3. Their eyes were "holden" at first, yet Jesus conversed with them (Luke 24:16,17).
 4. Then he explained the scriptures (Luke 24:25-29).
 5. While eating with them Jesus made himself known: "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight" (24:30,31).
- B. They went and told: "And they went away and told it unto the rest: neither believed they them" (Mark 16:13).
1. After Jesus identified himself, they returned to Jerusalem and announced his resurrection to the eleven apostles (Luke 24:32-35).
 2. That was the third (or 4th) appearance of Jesus.
 3. Their report included the Lord's appearance to Peter (Luke 24:34).
 4. The incredulity of the disciples, disappointing as it was to Jesus, became the basis of greater faith in him: It shows the unbelieving eleven later became honestly and absolutely convinced they saw Jesus alive after his death and resurrection.
- II. A MEETING IN JERUSALEM (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25).
- A. He upbraided them: "And afterward he was manifested to the eleven themselves as they sat at meat; and he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen" (14).
1. It is generally believed this appearance is the same as that recorded in Luke 24:36-43, and John 20:19-25).
 2. That was evidently his fifth appearance after his resurrection.
- B. That upbraiding speech to "the eleven" (a term used as an official designation rather than an exact number) was probably at the meeting which Thomas missed (John 20:19-25).
1. If the words in Mark 16:15-18 were uttered at this meeting (which does not appear likely, according to Mark 16:19 compared with John 20:19-25), then the commission was given the evening of the day

1. This summarizes the book of Acts of Apostles
2. When we have finished our labors, can the Author of the Bible say, "the Lord went with them" all the way"?
3. There was a general purpose for the gifts (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:4), and there was evidently an individual purpose in each gift to believers.
4. The purpose of the signs given may be summarized as follows:
 - a. To authenticate the revealed word of God as it was proclaimed, and for all time to come (Mark 16:20; Gal. 1:11,12; etc).
 - b. To edify the church (1 Cor. 14:26; 12:7).
 - c. Tongues were a convincing sign to the unbelieving (1 Cor. 14:22).
 - d. The gift of prophecy was a sign to the believing (1 Cor. 14:22).
 - e. To establish the divine order in the first century, creating respect for it in human hearts, and to produce the written inspired record, "the perfect law of liberty," which superceded the law of Moses.

CONCLUSION -

- I. Those miraculous gifts had to cease when the last person on whom the apostles had laid their hands died (Acts 8:14-17; 19:6; 2 Tim. 1:6).
- II. When the word of God was duly proclaimed, confirmed, and written, there was no more need for the miraculous powers to "accompany" believers than a completed building needs the scaffolding used in its construction.
- III. "It was never necessary for every individual believer to have miraculous power, in order for this prediction to be true"--Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary, 9-25-66, but it is necessary for every sinner to hear the gospel, believe it, repent of his sins, and be baptized for the remission of his sins.

1. The apostles were not the only ones who could work some of the signs mentioned; yet there never was a time when all believers universally possessed such powers (Acts 6:5; 8:4-8; cf. 1 Cor. 12-14).

Study of the entire New Testament reveals it required more than being a baptized believer to receive power to work these signs (Acts 8:14-17).

2. The promise of Jesus did not embrace all believers individually, but believers generally, in sufficient number to confirm the divine origin of the new message and enable the world to believe.

Such was necessary in the beginning of Christianity as the word of the Lord went forth from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, etc (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:19,20).

3. If any of our brethren who claim to speak with "new tongues" have claimed the ability to work the other four of the five signs Jesus mentioned in Mark 16:17,18, I haven't heard of it at this time. But consistency and time will likely produce such claims.

V. JESUS "RECEIVED UP INTO HEAVEN" (Mark 16:19,20).

A. After he had spoken: "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (19).

1. At the end of forty busy, momentous, glorious days (Acts 1:2-5).

2. The greatest mission and commission ever given mortal human beings had been given the apostles (Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46-49; Matt. 28:18-20).

a. They were to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8).

b. Ministers of the New Testament (2 Cor. 3:7).

c. Ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:18,19).

3. He had charged the apostles to wait in Jerusalem until clothed with power by the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

4. The witnesses who beheld him going into heaven were as trustworthy as those of his resurrection--the same eleven disciples (Acts 1:9-11).

B. They went forth: "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen" (20).

of his resurrection.

2. It is more likely the commission was given at the appointed meeting in Galilee and then again just before his ascension to heaven.

III. THE WORLD-WIDE COMMISSION GIVEN (Mark 16:15-18).

A. The disciples' part: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (15).

1. They were to tell the world what God has done for its salvation. In a sense these words are the climax of the great ministry of Jesus.

2. Jesus left heaven and came to earth for this purpose (Phil. 2:5-11).

3. The great commission is his great and continuing charge: Go...." (Cf. Matt. 28:18-20).

4. These words fulfilled Old Testament prophecies that the good news is for all the world, including Gentiles (Gen. 12:3; Isaiah 49:6,7).

5. The Lord loves the lost masses of men (John 3:16; 15:13; Heb. 2:9).

6. "Preach the gospel to the whole creation" is a great duty: The commission is as specific and exclusive as to the thing preached, "the gospel," as when God told Noah to build the ark of "gopher wood" (Genesis 6:14; Galatians 1:6-9; Jude 3).

7. There is no acceptable substitute for faithful preaching of the gospel: Its facts, commands and promises. Nothing else can ever take its place (Luke 8:11). His gospel alone is able to save (Romans 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18-21).

8. The unique, distinctive message was then being committed to "earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7). The great need of the hour is men for this task: Hearts that believe and care, disciples to go, churches to send, wisdom to plan, money to support, etc. Cf. Wise, Glorifying God, p. 103.

9. Jesus is depending upon those men who have learned, received and enjoyed his saving grace, to share the benefits of his grace by teaching the message of the great commission to other people (Phil. 4:9; 1 Timothy 3:15).

10. This is how the apostles were to "make disciples" (Matt. 28:19; 6:33; John 9:4; 1 Cor. 15:58).

B. The sinner's part: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (16).

1. This tells what sinners must do to be saved.
2. Jesus delivered one faith and one law of pardon for all men of all nations. The law of pardon Jesus commands in the great commission is the one that saves.
3. There is no authority in the commission for ever teaching anything, in the name of Jesus, except "whatsoever I commanded you (the apostles)" (Matt. 28:20).
4. The sinner's duty is (a) to hear the gospel (Rom. 10:14); (b) to believe it (Romans 10:10,17); (c) to repent of his sins (Luke 24:47; 13:3; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26,28); 1 Peter 2:21); and (e) to observe all things Jesus commands (Matt. 28:20).
5. This commission is our authority to baptize believers, and a restraint against baptizing anyone except a believer (1 Peter 4:11; 2 John 9).
6. The great promise, "shall be saved," states the objective of the preaching authorized by the commission, and tells what God will do in saving the lost from sin and bringing them into the kingdom of His dear Son. There is no such promise to him that "disbelieveth," or to the believer (?) who does not repent or is not baptized.

IV. "THESE SIGNS SHALL ACCOMPANY THEM THAT BELIEVE."
(Mark 16:17,18).

A. Shall accompany them: "And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues" (17).

1. Jesus endowed the disciples with sufficient authority ("in my name") to attest his divine nature and to authenticate the new message.
2. This is the only time Jesus is recorded as having mentioned tongues.
3. "Them that believe:" Lack of faith had kept the apostles from doing some miracles (Matt. 14:28-31); hence, it was logical for Jesus to connect the doing of the signs mentioned with believers.
4. There are some who contend that the signs promised are intended for every believer throughout

the Christian age. This has become one of the proof texts which have led many religious practitioners of various sects to profit greatly by preying upon gullible unstable souls seeking relief from various maladies.

5. This has also led some untaught and unstable souls among us in recent years to be led by so-called "wonder workers" (?) into believing they can "speak with new tongues."
6. It would be well to observe that Jesus did not say in this passage just how or when believers would receive this power, nor did he say how long the power or signs would continue. This must be learned elsewhere in the New Testament.
7. My understanding is that the promise of Jesus was to baptized believers, not just apostles, but that the promise did not extend to believers in every age.
 - a. Some attempt to deny this position by taking the position that Jesus made the promise only to the apostles.
 - b. It is evidently true that the apostles were the only ones, except the Lord, who possessed power to work all the signs promised (Acts 2:1-4; 3:7; 16:18; 28:3-6). (There is no Bible record of any apostle drinking any deadly thing with or without harm.)
 - c. It is also true the apostles were included in the general term believers, but it seems wrong to say Jesus would address the apostles in direct address as they and them.
 - d. Grammatically, the antecedent of the "them" and "they" of verses 17 and 18 must be the last group under consideration, baptized believers (verses 15 and 16), and not "the eleven" in verse 14. In verses 15-18 Jesus is speaking directly to the apostles, but he is not speaking of them. Beginning with verse 19, Mark reverts to indirect discourse.
- B. Other signs promised: "They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (18).