

1. In this passage Mk. briefly summarizes what is explained more fully by Mt., Lk., Jn. and Acts. Vs. 14 summarizes what Lk. and Jn. tell us about the evening of Easter Sunday. Vs. 15 tells us of the great commission in Galilee described by Mt. Vss. 16-18 are not found elsewhere but the same thoughts are found here and there in the Gospels and Acts. Vs. 19 is the Ascension found in the last chapter of Lk. and the first chapter of Acts. Vs. 20 is a summary of the entire book of Acts. Read the clear statement in Heb. 2:4.
2. Again and again the Gospels remind us of the sinfulness and weaknesses of the disciples of Jesus. At the same time they remind us of the firm gentleness and kindness of our Lord. Vs. 14.
3. Throughout the ages missionaries have fulfilled the command of vs. 15. Missionaries were always the first to go into foreign lands. The most important message was always what Jesus Christ has done for all men. Most language and translation work has been done by missionaries.
4. Vs. 16 is one of the most often quoted vss. in the Bible. Baptism is a work of the Triune God in man for Jesus' sake. But it is not magic. It must be attended by the faith which is also a gift of God. The way of salvation is here very simply described. The vs. does not say that the lack of baptism damns. It is the rejection, not the lack, of baptism that damns. Sin does not damn. Unbelief damns. Unbelief is the mother of all sins.
5. Vss. 17-18 are devoted to signs, the word used for miracles in the Gospel of Jn. A "sign" is a phenomenon which must not be disregarded. For a good example read Mt. 12:38-40. The scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign. But they asked in unbelief. He warned them with the prediction of the sign of the resurrection which dare not be disregarded. Mk. here in vs. 17 says that signs would attend believers. Signs were not permanent possessions of believers. God gives these signs to believers as the Spirit wills, I Cor. 12:11. The apostles did not have permanent powers to cast out demons, speak in strange languages, heal the sick, raise the dead or hold snakes in their hands. But when it was necessary to affirm the validity of the Gospel, God temporarily gave them this power. Read Hebr. 2:4. Peter and John did not have a permanent gift to heal the lame, Acts 3:1-7, but on this occasion this sign was given to their faith. Paul did not permanently take hold of poisonous snakes, Acts 28:3-6, but on this occasion this sign was given to his faith. God proved that He was protecting His apostle. It was always entirely in the interest of faith and the Gospel, giving all glory to God and all benefit to man. It was not sensational. The apostles never said: "Come to my meeting and witness miracles." Believers don't speak thus. Only unbelievers speak thus.
6. During the days of His humiliation (from conception to burial) He was truly God but did not constantly use the powers of His divinity. He did use them in a limited way (like miracles) to prove His divinity. But beginning with His revivification in the grave the Father exalted Him. From then on He used His divine power constantly. His human nature now uses all the powers of the divine nature. When He ascended His human nature sat at God's right hand but His human nature is still with us on earth. The right hand of God is everywhere. He said: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." He gives us His very body in the Lord's Supper. His session at God's right hand proves that His saving work for mankind is complete.
7. While Jesus was on earth He performed miracles to prove that He was the Messiah, Jn. 2:11. Mk. 16:20 says that the Lord worked with them and confirmed His Word through the signs that attended them. Read also Hebr. 2:4. The N.T. was not recorded immediately. God gave His Word through the apostles. During the apostolic age the Lord proved and affirmed the Word through the signs. Now we have the written Word of God. There is no need for these signs though, of course, if God wills them to occur through faith they surely happen.

Sermon Outline on Mk. 16:14-20, Ascension

Theme: THE WONDERS ATTENDING JESUS' ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN

Introduction: The occasion of Jesus' Ascension is fully described at Acts 1:9-11 and Lk. 24:50-53. Mk. compresses it into one vs. in our text. But in our text for today Mk. summarizes everything from Easter Sunday to Ascension, forty days. Jesus prepared the disciples before His Ascension and attended them after His Ascension.

I- THE PREPARATION OF THE DISCIPLES BEFORE THE ASCENSION

- A- He showed them their sins. Vs. 14 tells us about the attitude of the disciples on Easter Sunday. They were guilty of unbelief and hardness of heart. They did not believe the women who saw the risen Lord. Unbelief is the Christian's greatest danger. But Jesus did not abandon them. He never leaves Christians who are in trouble. From Jn. 20:19-23 we know that He forgave their sins and restored them. So it is with us.
- B- He gave them the great commission. Vs. 15 is very similar to Mt. 28:18-20, also the great commission. All people should hear about the completed redemption of Jesus Christ. All is done. All are now invited to the banquet.
- C- He told them what to preach. Vs. 16 is a summary of Law and Gospel preaching. It reminds us of Mt. 3:2 and 4:17. Also Lk. 24:47. A true preacher first shows people their sins and then forgives them.
- D- He assured them that signs would affirm the Word, vs. 17. Read Acts 3:1-10, the first example of these signs. Healing the lame man gave Peter and John the opportunity to preach Christ. There are many, many others in the book of Acts. I Cor. 12:1-11 tells us about these gifts of the Spirit which come only as the Spirit wills. They confirm the message of Christ crucified.

II- HE WAS TAKEN INTO HEAVEN

- A- This is described more fully elsewhere. Read Acts 1:9-11 and Lk. 24:50-53 for a full description. Eph. 4:10-16 tells us that He ascended beyond all the heavens to fill all things. Both His divine and human natures are everywhere, especially in the Word in the church. He ascended to send preachers and teachers to the Church.
- B- He sat down at the right hand of God, vs. 19. This is a fulfillment of Ps. 110:1. See Mt. 27:44; Acts 2:34; Rom. 8:34; I Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1 and especially Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12. Ps. 110:1 pervades the book of Hebr. His sitting at God's right hand (which is everywhere) means that Jesus' saving work is complete and now the God-man, according to both natures rules all things. He is truly King of kings and Lord of lords and He will rule forever.

III- THE DISCIPLES DID AS JESUS SAID. Vs. 20

- A- They preached the Gospel everywhere. The word "they" refers especially to the disciples but it includes all the missionaries, evangelists, preachers and teachers during the 2000 years since Christ lived. They went to Asia, Africa, North America, South America and Australia.
- B- The Lord worked with them. In Mt. He said: "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world." The Triune God is present in His Word. A true Christian teacher is never alone when He teaches the Word of God. The Lord works with him. Think of the many examples in Acts, especially the Apostle Paul. Even in prison he sang songs of praise.
- C- The Lord affirmed the Word through the signs. Whenever the Lord willed, He sent signs to affirm the Word. Read the book of Acts. We are not told to preach signs. We are told to preach the Word. God will take care of the signs, if they are necessary. Wonderful things still attend the preaching of the Word, especially conversions.

Conclusion: After the ascension the disciples returned to Jerusalem with joy. They held church services in which they preached the Word and celebrated the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. So it is with us today.