

Sunday, September 23, 2012—Mark Dispensationally Considered—Mark 16:17-18: These Signs Shall Follow Them That Believe

Introduction

- The past two Sundays we have been looking at the so-called Great Commission in order to determine if it is our commission. We have seen that “the eleven” were sent into the all the world beginning at Jerusalem to preach a gospel message that included water baptism as a requirement for salvation. In addition, we studied that Jesus was baptized so that he could fulfill the righteous requirements of the law and function in the priest’s office. Furthermore, we saw that “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” which was included in the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom was instrumental in separating believing Israel (the Little Flock) from the untoward generation. Lastly, we contrasted this commissioning of “the eleven” to baptism with Paul’s statement that “he was not sent to baptize,” and learned there is one baptism for the church the body of Christ, the spiritual baptism that places us into the body of Christ.
- This morning we want to consider the rest of the verses in Mark 16 that deal with the commission “the eleven” were under in order to help us determine if this commission is our commission. At the outset it is important to realize that virtually all of professing Christendom believes that our marching orders for today are to be found in this passage but that is where there agreements ends.
- Before we dig into the verses 17 and 18, I want to challenge all of us regarding our perspective. I know that some of you have come out of Pentecostalism and have stories that you can share about your experiences and some of what we are going to say about these verses is going to challenge your thinking.
 - Mark 9:2-7—Peter was there on the mount of transfiguration. Peter saw Jesus with his own eyes standing there “shining exceeding white as snow” with Moses and Elijah.
 - II Peter 1:16-19—despite having seen Jesus transfigured with his own eyes, Peter says in verse 19 that he has more confidence and faith in God’s written word.
 - II Timothy 4:3-4—we need to have more trust, faith, and confidence in God’s written word than the stories and fables of men. The church at large is being led by their experiences today and God’s written word. The only way you know someone has had an encounter with God almighty is through an objective standard outside of yourself.

Mark 16:17-18

- **17) And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;**
18) They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

- What is the first word in verse 17? And. So verse 17 is a continuation of the thought being expressed in verses 15 and 16. In other words, Jesus is still in the process of explaining to “the eleven” how their commission is going to work.
- According to verse 17, signs are going to follow those who believe and are baptized in verse 16. Notice, the use of the phrase “shall follow them that believe.” In verse 17 there is no question about it; signs are going to follow those who believe. In other words, Jesus is proclaiming what will happen, anyone who believes will have these signs follow them.
 - “In the second and third persons, *shall* implies a promise, command or determination. "You *shall* receive your wages," "he *shall* receive his wages," imply that you or he *ought* to receive them; but usage gives these phrases the force of a *promise* in the person uttering them. When *shall* is uttered with emphasis in such phrases, it expresses determination in the speaker, and implies an authority to enforce the act. "Do you refuse to go? Does he refuse to go? But you or he *shall* go." (*Webster's 1828 Dictionary*)
- Please notice that there are not copouts, conditions, or excuses placed upon the functioning of these signs such as: 1) only if you have enough faith, or 2) you must have unconfused sin in your life.
- The English word “sign” comes from the Greek word *sēmeion* which means a sign, mark, or token according to *Strong's Concordance*. The word is used “of miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's.”
 - Luke 8:1—“preaching and shewing the glad tiding of the kingdom of God.”
 - John 4:48—unless the Jews saw signs and wonders they would not believe
 - Acts 2:22—how was Jesus approved of God within Israel? By miracles, wonders, and signs.
 - I Corinthians 1:22—the Jews require a sign.
 - Exodus 4:1-9—from the very beginning of God’s dealings with Israel as a nation God used signs to authenticate that his spokesman’s message was from God.
- Mark 16:17—the very fact the Jesus is guarantying that “these signs shall follow them that believe” is further proof of the Jewish nature and character of this commission. If they were begin their testimony in Jerusalem it must be accompanied by signs and wonders since the Jews require a sign.
- According to verses 17 and 18 there are five signs that would follow those who believed and were baptized.

- Cast out devils
 - Speak with new tongues
 - Take up serpents
 - Drink any deadly thing
 - Lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.
- Before we comment specifically on any of these signs I would like to ask a couple of questions.
 - Is there any textual justification in the passage to accept verses 15 and 16 as one's commission and then not accept the signs in verses 17 and 18 as part of that commission?
 - Is there any textual justification in the passage to accept some of the signs in verses 17 and 18 and not all of them?
 - The answer to both of these questions is no. One cannot arbitrarily claim verses 15 and 16 as applying to today and at the same time reject verses 17 and 18 and remain consistent. Likewise, one cannot pick and chose which of the five signs they like or don't like and remain consistent. Consequently, one must either accept or reject the entire passage as being applicable to today. If you were here the past two Sundays you can already figure out where I stand with respect to the passage. During the early Acts period, Peter and the rest of "the eleven" toiled under this commission as they called Israel to repent for their part in the death of Christ. When Israel refused to repent God set the nation of Israel aside temporarily aside along with this commission. God then saved Paul on the road to Damascus and began the process of revealing the mystery of the church the body of Christ which included an entirely different commission. One that did not require water baptism or law keeping for salvation. While it is true that for a time during the Acts period Paul did baptize, speak in tongues, and heal people when the revelation of the mystery was fully known all such these act ivies ceased.
 - Since all five of the signs mentioned in verse 17 and 18 stand or fall together we will spend the most time talking about the sign of tongues and use what we learn about that issue to address the other four signs.
 - Mark 16:17—speaking with new tongues does not mean that once you are truly saved you will not curse any more. In the Bible tongues were real discernible languages not an indiscernible private prayer language as the modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movement has tried to claim. In the Bible to speak with a new tongues means to speak in a language that one has not studied.
 - Acts 2:4-13—when the Holy Spirit fell upon the 12 Apostles in Acts 2 they were empowered to speak in real discernible languages that they had not studied. Please notice also that there was no need for interpreters.

- Acts 2:15-21—the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and along with its accompanying signs (tongues) was the fulfillment of a prophecy made to the nation of Israel in Joel 2:28-32.
- I Corinthians 14:22—what were tongues for? A sign. Who requires a sign? “The Jews require a sign.” (I Cor. 1:22)
- Romans 11:7, 11-12, 30-32—Israel fell from her favored standing in time past. The gentiles obtain mercy from God through the unbelief of Israel. Now that both Jew and Gentile are both officially in a state of unbelief God could for the body of Christ.
- Ephesians 2:11-18
- Galatians 3:27-28—if today in Jesus Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek what would be the point for the gift of tongues to continue functioning.
- I Corinthians 13:8—when Paul wrote I Corinthians he told the Corinthians that the day would arrive when the gift of tongues would cease. You will have to come back next week to hear the rest of the story.