

# Chapter Thirteen



## Mark 13

*“Is it possible to **be ready** for something that we think **unlikely** to happen in the near future? Certainly it is. Everyone who wears a seatbelt when driving, or purchases auto insurance, gets ready for an event he or she thinks to be unlikely. In a similar way it seems possible to take seriously the warnings that Jesus could come when we are not expecting him, and nonetheless to say that the signs preceding his coming will probably yet occur in the future.”*

*--Wayne Grudem*

Mark 13 may be one of the toughest chapters to understand in this gospel. The text directly deals with a difficult aspect of our faith called eschatology. Eschatology means “the study of last things.” Eschatology has led to many scholarly debates, a few best-selling fiction books, and even a movie or two. Despite all of the possible scenarios that the world imagined, Mark 13 affirms that Jesus is the Christ and is coming back!

As we study this somewhat confusing chapter, it is important for us to cling to a few simple truths: 1) Jesus is going to come back and 2) we do not know when this will happen. His return will be sudden and unexpected (Mark 13:32-33, Matthew 24:42-44, Matthew 24:50, Luke 12:40, 2 Peter 3:10). When reading about the signs that Jesus gives us in this text (and others like it) which will indicate that the end times are coming, we may be tempted to swing to one of two extremes: 1) to say that Christ cannot come back yet because the signs have not been fulfilled or 2) to read the signs and associate them with everything currently happening in the world. The danger in the first is that we may lose the urgency of Christ’s return. The danger in the second is that it could lead us towards never being involved in any long-term commitments, activities, ministries, or purposes. Both of these stances are directly opposed to Scriptures such as: “The Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect (Matthew 24:44) and “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour” (Matthew 25:13). Both of these Scriptures tell us to live our lives in such a way as to be ready whether He comes in 100 years or in 100 seconds. Therefore, we should constantly be on the alert and eagerly awaiting his return while continuing to live in the present moment (Titus 2:12-13, Mark 13:35-37).

Mark 13 opens with one of the disciples commenting how incredible the temple in Jerusalem was. This simple comment was something that was surely common at the time because the temple itself was an incredibly large, magnificent piece of architecture. The Jewish historian Josephus recorded that the stones it was made from were approximately 25 cubits in length, 8 cubits in height, and 12 cubits in depth (a cubit was the length of a forearm; therefore we can estimate

that the stones were approximately 40 feet long, 15 feet high, and 20 feet in depth). Not only was the temple a magnificent building, but it was also the religious center of Israel, the nations capital, and a place that the Jews were able to tangibly relate to the fact that they were God's chosen people. Jesus' remark that, "Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down" must have been shocking. His words indicate that the Jewish religion and election as God's people would change. As the disciples learned in His teaching on new wineskins and his actions towards the fig tree, the old way of walking with God (which required being Jewish and the sacrificing at the temple) was over. Jesus' prophetic words came to pass in A.D. 70 when Romans came through Jerusalem and destroyed the temple and killed roughly one million Jews.

Afterwards, the conversation changed locations from outside the temple to the Mount of Olives. Here the disciples ask two questions that lead into the longest section of continuous teaching in the book of Mark. It says that Peter, James, John, and Andrew were questioning him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled" (Mark 1:4). It is important to note that from where the disciples and Jesus are having this conversation, they are able to look directly at the temple and over the whole city because the Mount of Olives was only on the other side of a valley. Jesus then goes into describing a time of great suffering. Christ indicates that before His return there will be a time of great suffering for mankind. Imagine the old saying "the calm before the storm," and flip it. It is important to note in verses 5-8 that Jesus does not refer to any specific event. He does not refer to a specific false teacher, a specific war, or a specific natural disaster. He instead refers to all these various signs as the "beginning of birth pains" in verse 8. This would imply that, like birth pains, there are going to be times of great pain and suffering and times of peace. This is not a warrant to point out where we see those birth pains now and conclude that we are most definitely in the end times, but rather a constant reminder that Jesus has not yet come and that God is still in control.

Jesus then begins speaking directly to what the disciples are going to face after Jesus' departure in addition to the turmoil He previously described. In verses 9-13, He refers specifically to the persecution they are going to face for following Him. He tells them to "be on their guard..." because they will be persecuted by not only the religious people ("flogged in the synagogues" v. 9), but also by the government ("stand before governors and kings for My sake" v.9). (Look also to 1 Peter 4:12-18 for an expansion on suffering for God's glory.) Jesus reassures the disciples that during their coming persecution, "it is not you who speaks, but it is the Holy Spirit (v.11)," and "you will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved (v.13)."

After Jesus addresses the disciples specifically, He again returns to giving signs of the end times. He starts in verse 14 with what at first read can appear to think He's talking about something out of a Tolkien novel, something called "the Abomination of Desolation." Though the exact meaning of this prophecy is unclear, it is most likely addressing a topic in Daniel 12. The prophecy states that the Jews are to flee to the mountains when the temple is defiled during a time of tribulation. Many Jews believed this time had come in 168 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes King of Syria set up a pagan altar. Jesus was saying that they are to immediately flee to the hills when an event similar to that of 168 B.C. occurs. History tells us that in 66-70 A.D. the Roman Empire went to war with Israel and burned the temple to the ground. Many Jews saved themselves by fleeing to a city in the hills called Pella. The Romans destroyed the temple, as was discussed earlier, and it led to the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world. The fulfillment of his prophecy assures his followers that he will fulfill another of his prophecies: He will return one day! Granted, we know that Judaism is still around today, but only as a mere shadow of what it was then. There is no more temple worship. There are no more sacrifices. All that still remains are the Law and a national-ethnic identity.

He goes on to warn them against false teachers coming during that time because during times of tribulation, people will be vulnerable to the appeal yet false teachings and false signs from these men. (v.21-v.23). As the religious structure and national identity crumble, people will rise and claim to be the Christ who will restore "God's Kingdom of Israel," but Christ assures His disciples that the Christ has already come and His Kingdom has already been established.

In verses 28-36, Jesus explains why He informed the disciples of these signs. He draws an metaphor between a fig tree's branch growing leaves as a sign that the seasons are changing and the tumultuous times as a sign that He is coming He makes a strong point in verse 32 that no one, not even the angels, can know the hour of the second coming. Only God the Father knows.

Jesus concludes with, "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come." This verse speaks directly towards how we ought to live our lives. We should live with an alertness that Christ may come at any time. Generation after generation has predicted the end to come during their time, and it seems that this anticipated period is always changing. Instead of wasting our time and brain power trying to figure out what we can't know, we would do better to focus on the last four words of the chapter: "BE ON THE ALERT."

Don't waste time trying to predict His return. Repent and believe the good news that Jesus has redeemed us from our sin (Mark 1:15) Live a life that loves God and loves others (Matthew 22:37-39). Tell the world what He's done and invite

them into it (Matthew 28:19-20). Worship God with your whole life (Romans 12:1-2). Don't be swayed. Jesus is the true Messiah. He's coming back and He's coming back soon. What we've seen in Mark 13 affirms it.

## **Lifegroup Study Questions**

### **Discussion:**

Why do you think Jesus decided to leave the world for a time and then return instead of staying here and doing the work of preaching the Gospel himself?

### **Understanding/ Application Questions:**

How would you characterize the way you live your life: Alert or Asleep? Why?

Do you eagerly wait for Christ's return? If not, what factors in your life do you think contribute to that?

At the risk of sounding cliché, are you ready if Christ would return today? If you knew He was coming back tomorrow, what situations or relationships would you want to straighten out today?

Do you think you should straighten those things out even if Christ's return today is unlikely?

### **Further Scripture:**

Matthew 24:42-50

2 Peter 3:10

Matthew 25:13

1 Peter 4:12-18

# Chapter Fourteen



## Mark 14:1-9

*“No one gets to lean against the cross in pride while others kneel. Instead, we all kneel before the cross and say to others, ‘come, there’s room for you here.’”*

*-Matt Chandler*

A woman walks in and begins to wash Jesus’ feet. One of the disciples (who we know from the other gospels to be Judas Iscariot)<sup>1</sup> speaks up, saying that the perfume should have instead been sold and the money given to the poor. Matthew’s account says that not only Judas, but *all* the disciples were bothered by this.<sup>2</sup> They weren’t just talking about general charity to the poor. We see a few verses later that the time of the Passover was near. During the Passover, it was a religious requirement for rabbis to give money to the poor. They called it almsgiving. So when Jesus says that the “poor will always be with you,” he is not encouraging apathy toward the poor. Rather, He is exposing the ill logic of helping the poor for a season when the poor are around every day of the year. At the same time, He is calling attention to the urgency of his remaining time on earth.

Jesus is also pointing out the absurdity of helping the poor out of obligation rather than out of love, which we know is worthless.<sup>3</sup> By holding to the tradition of almsgiving, the disciples were apparently building up pride in their ability to do good things. In their minds, this is what made them better than the woman who came to pour perfume on Jesus’ feet. Jesus draws attention to the act of using your religion as a point of comparison between you and another person. Interestingly, Jesus’ tone and subject matter seems very similar to his response to the Pharisees in Mark 7. Jesus is rebuking his own disciples for the same religious self-righteousness that He rebuked the Pharisees for! To worsen Judas’ plight, according to John’s account of the same story<sup>4</sup>, he only spoke out because he, as the keeper of the moneybag and helped himself to whatever was in it.

Jesus continues to say that the story of this woman will be proclaimed “wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world.” Jesus isn’t specifically referring to her preparing his body for burial. Rather He is distinguishing the gospel from the religious requirements and traditions that were so popular in that day. He is showing that a true understanding of the gospel doesn’t simply come from a set of doctrines or beliefs about Him. Rather, a true understanding of the gospel

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<sup>1</sup> John 12:4-5

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 26:8

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:3

<sup>4</sup> John 12:6

comes from a right relationship with Him, a true understanding of who He is and why He came, and an understanding of who we are compared to him. What He means is that in this instance, the woman has painted the most accurate picture of what our approach to Jesus should look like. She walks in without saying a word, takes her place at his feet (which, in that culture would have confirmed a low regard of herself in relation to Him), and breaks her most expensive perfume to offer to Him. Altogether, we probably spend too much time reading off our prayer requests to God and not listening. We spend too much time holding our “alabaster jar” of possessions behind our back, away from Jesus, refusing to break them and leave them at his feet. We spend too much time asking *him* to wash *our* feet.

### **LifeGroup Study Questions:**

#### **Discussion:**

What is social justice? How should Christians view social justice? How is that different from charity?

#### **Understanding/Application:**

How easy do you find it to ‘look down’ on other people?

In what ways are you using Jesus to elevate yourself above other people?

Can we have an accurate understanding of who Jesus is and why he came while using his name to look down on others?

Read Exodus 20:7. Think of examples of ways we use God’s name in vain.

Remember Amos 5:21-24. What does this mean for us when we give money to the poor without doing it in the name of Jesus?

When you help others are you doing it out of love, or out of guilt and obligation? Use 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 to guide you in your understanding of what love is.

#### **Further Scripture:**

1 Corinthians 4:7

1 Corinthians 9:16

2 Corinthians 10:17-18

Galatians 2:16

Mark 7:1-13

James 4:6

## Mark 14:9-72

*“For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.”*

*-Hebrews 2:10-11*

Most sources indicate that Judas was never really interested in being spiritually involved with Jesus’ ministry. More than likely, he tagged along because he thought that Jesus would be a powerful political leader, and wanted some of the glory (or maybe just the cash) for himself.<sup>5</sup> Jesus allowed him to become one of the twelve, not because he was unaware of Judas’ motives, but to fulfill Scripture.<sup>6</sup>

All this being said, Jesus wasn’t big on ignoring things that needed to be brought to light. Which is probably why he chose to make known at the Lord’s Supper that there was a betrayer in their midst. Jesus didn’t enjoy fakeness (see Mark 7 and above for the first part of Mark 14), and He wasn’t about to make light of the fact that someone in the room had no intention of being loyal to Jesus.

Then we see Jesus explain the cup and the bread to His disciples. The symbolism in the Lord’s Supper taking place at the time of the Passover is amazing. During the Passover, it was the blood of the lamb that identified the Israelites. As a result of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice on the cross, we are identified by righteousness that can only be found in His blood. Jesus himself makes the connection between himself and the manna that was provided for the Israelites in John 6:32-34. Just as their had to be an atoning sacrifice for the firstborn of the Israelites to survive the Passover, there had to be an atoning sacrifice for us to receive the gift of life.<sup>7</sup>

Afterwards, Jesus explains that all the disciples will abandon Him as His time of death approaches. When Peter objects, Christ explains that not only is He telling the truth, but Peter will deny Him three times before the night is through. And Peter did. He blatantly denied to know Jesus, who He earlier proclaimed as Christ, three times.

Despite knowing they would flee, Jesus asks Peter, James, and John (three of His closest disciples) to accompany Him while He prays in the garden of Gethsemane. When Jesus left them He told them that He was overwhelmed with

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*. pp. 1249.

<sup>6</sup> Zechariah 11:12, 13, others.

<sup>7</sup> Romans 5:10, Romans 6, others.

sorrow to the point of death. When He returns they were sleeping. Imagine telling your closest two friends that you felt such heavy a burden that you thought you were going to die, and they immediately fall asleep. Shortly after, our Lord, who spent His time on earth healing, restoring, and saving people, was captured with “swords and clubs” as if he was leading a rebellion.

When he was brought before the people, they brought testimonies against Him. He was spit on, and hated. The God of the universe suffered mocking and ridicule. Our God is familiar with suffering. He was used by Judas, rejected by Peter, fallen asleep on by James and John, and rejected by some of the very people who witnessed Him do miraculous things before their eyes. None of it was deserved. None of it was justified. Yet, He endured.

Christ actions in this text should serve as a great example to us. Those of us who have felt rejected, and those of us who have felt hurt can take comfort in knowing that our God experienced the same hurt we do. He experienced the same rejection we often feel. Jesus was “despised and rejected by men.” He was a “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Isaiah 53 says, “surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” Yet His suffering wasn’t finished yet, Mark records in Chapter 15 the worst that is still to come...

### **LifeGroup Study Questions:**

#### **Discussion:**

What is the hardest thing you’ve ever had to endure?

#### **Understanding/Application:**

Why is it significant that God endured suffering?

How does that affect the way we handle suffering and endure it ourselves?

What makes suffering so hard? In what situations are we told that we “don’t deserve suffering”? Do you think that true?

Peter sinned against Jesus simply by failing to acknowledge that he *knew* Jesus. What does this mean for us when we avoid telling others about the cross for fear that it may offend them? Or make them uncomfortable? Make *us* uncomfortable? Is that the same thing?

#### **Further Scripture:**

Hebrews 2:10-11

1 Peter 4:12-19

1 Peter 5:6-11

Hebrews 10:32-39

# Chapter Fifteen



## Mark 15

*As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. (Mark 15:1)*

The Sanhedrin had some ruling ability over the Jewish citizens (specifically pertaining to religious infractions), but when it came to execution they had to go through the Roman authorities. In chapter 14 the chief priest tore his clothes and asked, “what further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemes.” But in verse two of chapter 15, Pilate doesn’t ask Christ if he is the one they accuse of blasphemy; rather, “are you the King of the Jews?” Thus, Jesus’ adversaries accused him of challenging Caesar’s rule (which was indeed a capital offense worthy of execution).

In verse 3 the chief priest accuses Jesus of many things. Pilate then asks Jesus what he has to say to it. *But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.* (See also Isa. 53:7) Why was he amazed? In the Roman judicial system, if an accusation is brought against someone and it is not met by any refutation or rebuttal, then the charge automatically stands and the sentence for the crime must be given. If Jesus defended himself at all, Pilate would have at least had to make the decision to have Jesus killed or to let him go. But Jesus refused to deny the claims against him, Pilate had no choice but to give the sentence for Jesus’ death. Isn’t it interesting, then, that Jesus said that no one takes his life from him, but that he lays it down himself (Jn 10). Pilate didn’t really decide anything ... Jesus left him no choice!

But Pilate was not an ignorant man. He knew that the religious rulers had no concerns regarding threats to Roman rule. He perceived that their motivations to convict Jesus of such treason must be something other than patriotism (vs 10). Perhaps he also considered that the people did not share the same envious incentive of those accusing Christ for they were asking him to release a prisoner to them (vs 8). It is believed that the release of one prisoner to the people was a custom Pilate had introduced during the Passover week in order to help keep the peace. Before anyone asks for prisoners to be released, Mark records the name and reputation of a man, Barabbas.

The events involving Barabbas are incredibly interesting. The most obvious interpretation of Barabbas’ release is to understand him as we understand ourselves. That is: “I am guilty of sin and deserve just punishment, and yet I have been released and the innocent Messiah has taken my punishment instead!” This

is absolutely the truth and a great way to learn from this text. However, a closer look at the text reveals more going on here than we may initially recognize.

In chapter 14, Jesus cries out to God, saying, “Abba, Father.” In Hebrew the word “*abba*” actually means “father,” and the pre-fix “*bar*” means “son” So Barabbas’ name literally translates, “Son of the Father.” In fact, historical documents maintain that Barrabas’ full name was potentially “Jesus Barrabas,” in other words “Jesus, son of the father.”

This Barabbas was a rebel who committed murder while leading an insurrection against Roman rule. This is what makes Pilate standing Jesus and Barabbas before this Jewish crowd so interesting. On one side you have Barabbas, whose name means son of the father who actually committed treason against Rome. On the other side you have Jesus who actually is the Son of the Father who brings about God’s Kingdom that peacefully supercede the empire of Rome. One Jesus claims that the kingdom of Heaven is at hand and seems to care little about overthrowing Rome. The other in prison for actually fighting against Rome!

How ironic it is that the chief priests and Jewish people select Barabbas instead of Jesus. How hard do you think it was for the chief priest and those of the Sanhedrin to convince the people that Barabbas was really the one they wanted? How hard is it for *us* to convince *ourselves* that we should choose other “saviors” than Christ? We are just as guilty as they were. God has looked at us and said, ‘hey, you deserve judgment. You’ve been serving all of these other things, and as a result, you deserve death. But I am offering you a true savior! You can choose him; choose Christ, and he will bring you liberation... he will give you freedom.’ Time and again, we respond back, “No, give me what I want instead. Give me what I think is right. Give me Barabbas.”

Yet, now that Jesus has willingly given Himself to the punishment deserved, and the Jewish people (reflecting the rest of mankind) have made their choice, everything comes down to what happens to Jesus next: His crucifixion. This is what the entirety of history has been pointing towards. The scapegoats in Leviticus, Moses’ bronze snake, the plumb line in Amos have all been attesting to this moment in history when Jesus Christ bears the full and undiluted wrath of God Almighty for the atonement of all sin and the redemption and restoration of EVERYTHING. Verse 37 says that Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. It is finished! The penalty for sin was paid.

But before Jesus dies, Mark records him crying out, “My God my God, why have you forsaken me?” These words are significant. Jesus was not only enduring the weight of all sin and brokenness, but also the complete wrath of God. We cannot deny the pain and grief that Jesus felt as He identified with these words. However, we can read these words not as a cry of defeat but as a shout for victory to come.

In His last moments, Jesus is actually quoting Psalm 22, which begins with the exact same phrase, "My God my god, why have you forsaken me?" At first glance, Psalm 22 is despairing. The psalmist speaks of persecution and suffering in spite of his innocence. But then, the passage takes an up turn and becomes a message of hope. Though the writer writes of pierced hands, shame in nakedness, and being surrounded by enemies, he still admits the impending hope of God's faithfulness. He writes,

"All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belong to the Lord, and he rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it." (Psalm 22: 27-31)

While the writer may be suffering he knows that victory is coming. How beautiful that these are some of Jesus' last words Although He is suffering, He knows that victory is coming.

### **LifeGroup Study Questions**

#### **Discussion:**

What was the point of the crucifixion? What did it accomplish?

#### **Understanding/Application:**

Who is your Barabbas? What is it in your life that you have asked for in place of Jesus?

What does the crucifixion mean for you personally? What is different about you because Christ died?

If all of history pointed to this moment, and all of eternity resounds with its implications, how is it affecting you and the way you live day to day?

#### **Further Scripture:**

Psalm 22

Romans 5:6-10

1 Corinthians 15:3

Romans 6:10

# Chapter Sixteen



## Mark 16

*"The resurrection is not merely important to the historic Christian faith; without it, there would be no Christianity. It is the singular doctrine that elevates Christianity above all other world religions."*

*– Adrian Rogers*

As was customary for the culture, the women were bring spices to anoint Christ' dead body following the Sabbath day. The women were certainly not expecting Jesus to be alive. They are aware of the heavy stone placed in front of Jesus' tomb, and have concern over how to remove it in order to anoint the Lord's body. The stone would have been too heavy for the women to move on their own, so their concern is genuine. The stone was put in place to prevent grave robbers and others like them to come and disrupt Christ' tomb. The stone was meant to stay put, not to be moved.

Miraculously, by the work of God, the stone had been rolled away. Whereas the stone stood in the way of the women from Jesus, our unrighteousness stands in our way of God. Their question was "who will help us," and similarly so is ours. Who will help us from our unrighteousness? Who will help us from our suffering? Who will help us from our sin? The answer: the risen Lord Jesus, which is precisely why the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark is so incredibly important!

Three times already Jesus has told the disciples plainly that this would happen because it is what He came to do. Christ' death and resurrection are the pinnacle of His work here on earth. When it comes to our hope and salvation, they are two sides of the same coin; we needed them both. Without His resurrection, the purpose of Christ' death would be incomplete. What is happening in this text is the most glorious thing to happen in the Gospel of Mark. In Christ' resurrection, we find the great hope and promises of our faith. Paul says, "and if Christ has not been raised, the our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain... and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins." By His resurrection, Christ has defeated sin, He has defeated death, and He has brought redemption through new life to those who believe in His name! There is no event more important than when Mary, Mary, and Salome find the empty tomb!

Christ' resurrection ensures our new birth. Because He rose from the dead to new life (not just restored life from which He would die again, but completely new and eternal life) we also have the promise that through faith in Him we have been granted the same. According to Ephesians 2:5-6, "even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Our old sinful lives have been re-born anew in Christ' new life. The penalty for it was paid in His death, and our new life granted in His life. The Kingdom Christ talked so

much about bringing was one of God's redemption and He brings it through the victory of His life.

In addition, the resurrection promises that our sins have indeed been forgiven and we now stand justified before God. As Paul says of Christ in Romans 4:25, "He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification." Death was the consequence for sin (Rom. 3:23). The condemnation that we were due because of our sin was placed on Christ in His death. The proof that this is true and we now stand redeemed and justified is the fact that He is not dead anymore! Sin's sting, the victory of death, is over for good for those who believe (1 Cor. 15:55).

Christ is risen. Through God's grace mankind's sins have been forgiven and they will be given new life because of His new life through faith in Christ. That is the greatest news the world will ever hear... and God wants them to hear it! Mark 16:15 is a direct command from Jesus himself and exists in one variation or another in each of the four gospels (Matt. 28:19-20, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:21). Those who know Jesus are now told to take this great news of Christ to the rest of creation in order that they may also be baptized as believers. Paul asks in Romans 10:14, "How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" This responsibility now lies on those of us who profess faith in the risen Christ. We must go. When we truly understand how great of news the Gospel is, we have no excuse not to!

### **LifeGroup Study Questions:**

#### **Discussion:**

What assurances (or hope) do you find in the resurrection?

#### **Understanding/Application:**

If you now have new life in Christ, how does that encourage you in your Christian walk and ministering to others?

How does knowing you have been raised and seated with Christ (Eph. 2:5-6) affect your prayer life and the way you handle life's struggles and spiritual warfare?

How does the resurrection encourage you to be eternally-focused?

What evidences have you seen of "new life" in your life? How about in the lives of others in your group?

How can you be actively engaged in telling the world about Jesus? What are doing currently to help others come to know that salvation that comes through faith in Christ?

What excuses are you using to not be a missionary to our city and the world? Why are these unacceptable?

**Further Scripture:**

1 Corinthians 15

Romans 4:25

Romans 8

Ephesians 2:1-10

Colossians 1:13-14

Colossians 3:1-4

**Note on Mark 16:9-20<sup>8</sup>**

*“Longer Ending of Mark.”* Some ancient manuscripts of Mark's Gospel contain these verses and others do not, which presents a puzzle for scholars who specialize in the history of such manuscripts. This longer ending is missing from various old and reliable Greek manuscripts (esp. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), as well as numerous early Latin, Syriac, Armenian, and Georgian manuscripts. Early church fathers (e.g., Origen and Clement of Alexandria) did not appear to know of these verses. Eusebius and Jerome state that this section is missing in most manuscripts available at their time. And some manuscripts that contain vv. 9–20 indicate that older manuscripts lack the section. On the other hand, some early and many later manuscripts (such as the manuscripts known as A, C, and D) contain vv. 9–20, and many church fathers (such as Irenaeus) evidently knew of these verses. As for the verses themselves, they contain various Greek words and expressions uncommon to Mark, and there are stylistic differences as well. Many think this shows vv. 9–20 to be a later addition. In summary, vv. 9–20 should be read with caution. As in many translations, the editors of the esv have placed the section within brackets, showing their doubts as to whether it was originally part of what Mark wrote, but also recognizing its long history of acceptance by many in the church. The content of vv. 9–20 is best explained by reference to other passages in the Gospels and the rest of the NT. (Most of its content is found elsewhere, and no point of doctrine is affected by the absence or presence of vv. 9–20.) With particular reference to v. 18, there is no command to pick up serpents or to drink deadly poison; there is merely a promise of protection as found in other parts of the NT (see Acts 28:3–4; James 5:13–16). (See *The Reliability of the New Testament Manuscripts*.)

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<sup>8</sup> Excerpt from *The ESV Study Bible*. Crossway, 2008.