

# Jesus' Final Words and Ascension to Heaven

## Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-20

by David Servant

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*Jesus' final words to His disciples emphasize the importance of making disciples of all nations and the supernatural signs that follow believers.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16-17, Acts 1:8, Galatians 2:20

**Topics:** "Great Commission", "Discipleship"

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### Description

David Servant emphasizes the importance of making disciples of all nations, crossing cultural boundaries to show love to those who are different. He highlights the need to reach out to unreached people groups with the good news of Jesus Christ, encouraging prayers and support for these groups. Jesus desires obedient followers who make disciples, not just converts, and promises supernatural signs to believers, including casting out demons, speaking in tongues, protection from harm, and the healing of others. He reassures that He is always with believers spiritually and through His omnipresence, urging them to actively work for Jesus to expand His kingdom.

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### Transcript

On one of the occasions when Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples in Galilee, He told them what He wanted them to do for the remainder of their lives. It would be their job to make disciples of all the nations. The Greek word translated "nations" could be better translated, "ethnic groups," which is a group of people who are distinct from other groups by virtue of their culture, circumstances, language or the location where they live. For example, many Americans think that all Chinese people are part of the same ethnic group, but there are many different minorities living in China. America itself is made up of many ethnic groups, and God wants us to make disciples among them all. In order for that to happen, someone from one culture has to purposely cross over a cultural line, showing love for people who are different. At present, there are thousands of ethnic groups in the world without a single Christian among them. No one is trying to reach them with the good news of Jesus Christ. If a person within one of those un-reached groups wanted to find out about Jesus, he would have to cross a culture to find out. Our prayers and money should be directed toward those un-reached groups of people. And if God sends us to one of them, we should go.

Notice also that Jesus doesn't want just converts made; He wants disciples. Disciples are true believers in Christ; thus they are obedient followers. Jesus said they should be baptized, which would be the first indication of their true faith, and that they should be taught to obey His commandments. Of course, one of those commandments which they should teach their disciples was the commandment Jesus gave for disciples to make disciples. Every true believer in Christ should be doing what he can to make disciples. That is not a job that God has given only to pastors.

From Mark's Gospel we learn that there should be certain supernatural signs that follow those who believe. Jesus listed five. The first one is that they will cast out demons in His name. Every believer has the authority to cast out demons if the need arises.

Second, Jesus said that believers would speak in new tongues. According to the pattern found in the book of Acts, speaking in tongues is something every believer should expect to experience when he is baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The next sign Jesus mentioned was the safe handling of poisonous snakes. He certainly did not mean that Christians should pass around poisonous snakes during church services, because that would be the same as testing God, and there is no record of such a thing being done by the early church in the book of Acts. However, Luke did record that Paul was once accidentally bitten by a deadly snake and suffered no harm. That is more likely the kind of thing Jesus had in mind. He knew that snakes might bite those who would be carrying the gospel to remote places.

The fourth sign Jesus mentioned is probably in the same category. Jesus promised no harm to believers who drank poisonous liquids. As they take the gospel to other places, believers might accidentally drink something poisonous, or unbelievers might intentionally poison their water. In those cases, believers could claim Jesus' promise.

The fifth sign that should follow believers is the healing of others as they lay their hands upon them. This does not mean that every single sick person upon whom a believer lays his hands will be healed. But it does indicate that God wants to use all believers in healing others. In the context of Jesus' command to preach the gospel to everyone, this fifth sign should also be considered an aid to effective evangelism. Divine healing can get people's attention to listen to the gospel. We read in the very last verse of Mark's Gospel that God worked with the first disciples by confirming their words with miraculous signs. No doubt many of those signs were the five that Jesus listed, and the record of the book of Acts proves this to be so.

Q. Jesus promised His disciples that He would be with them always, even to the end of the age. Soon after He made that promise, He left them to sit at the right hand of God the Father. Did He break His promise?

A. No, Jesus didn't break His promise. He only departed physically. However, spiritually He now lives within every believer. That is why Paul wrote, "I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). Besides that, God is omnipresent, which means His presence is everywhere. In that sense, Jesus is always with us as well.

Q. In Mark's Gospel, we read that everyone who believes the good news about Jesus and is baptized will be saved. Does this mean that a person who believes in Jesus but who dies before being baptized goes to hell?

A. No, it does not. However, it does indicate to us that true believers in Jesus will want to obey Him, and since He commanded all who believe in Him to be baptized, people who profess to believe in Him but who refuse to be baptized prove their faith is not genuine.

Application: As believers, our job is not just to wait for the time we'll go to heaven but, our job is to work for Jesus, helping to expand His kingdom. Are you doing something to help?

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