

# Mission and Jesus' Great Command<sup>1</sup>



## SABBATH—MARCH 15

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Matthew 25:31–46; Mark 16:14–20; Luke 24:36–53; John 3:14–19; Romans 5:6–10; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 2:22–25.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “He [Jesus] told them, ‘This is what is written. The Christ will suffer. He will rise from the dead on the third day’ ” (Luke 24:46, NlrV).

**AS ADVENTISTS, WE UNDERSTAND THAT MUCH OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY (DUTY)** in the Great Command is connected with the three angels' messages<sup>2</sup> of Revelation 14. At the center of these messages is the everlasting gospel. We have nothing to give to the world if we do not teach them the great truth of justification<sup>3</sup> by faith alone.

Ellen G. White also believed that our important mission is the preaching of justification by faith alone (read *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890). This is the great news that salvation (God's plan for saving us from our sins) comes only through the grace (God's free gift of mercy) of God upon those who do not deserve it. Salvation does not come through any works on our part at all.

This week we will study the gospel (good news) as it relates to the Great Commission (the Great Command) from Jesus.

**THIS WEEK'S LESSON IN BRIEF (SHORT):** What part do works of charity have in the life of those who are disciples (followers)? What part did Jesus give to the Bible in explaining His life and death? How important is the gospel in the Great Command that Jesus gave to His church?

1. the Great Command—Jesus made a command to all Christians to be His witnesses and to preach the gospel everywhere in the world. Read Matthew 28:18, 19.

2. the three angels' messages—verses in Revelation 14:6–12 hold the reason for our belief and responsibility in spreading the gospel all over the world. The messages are to focus on Jesus as our Savior, Sabbath-keeping, and avoid becoming involved with false worship.

3. justification—the process in which a person's sins are forgiven and he or she is made righteous through the belief in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior.

**SUNDAY—MARCH 16****END-TIME EVENTS AND DISCIPLESHIP<sup>4</sup> (Matthew 25:31–46)**

The message of Matthew 25:31–46 is part of Jesus' Mount of Olives speech given during His last week of work in the Jerusalem area. It is part of the last words of His final (last) speech.

**How are we to understand these words in Matthew 25:31–46 about discipleship and witness?**

These verses hold a truth about the mission (work) of disciples. Jesus clearly shows that part of the work of disciples involves mission to the poor, the sick and suffering, the imprisoned, and the needy. The best example of discipleship is shown in how we treat those around us who are in need.

“On the Mount of Olives, Christ described to His disciples the scene of the great judgment day. And He showed its decision as turning upon one point. When all the people face Him, there will be but two classes [groups]. And their eternal end will depend on what they have done or have failed to do for the poor and the suffering. In that day Christ does not show before men the great work He has done for them in giving His life for their salvation. Instead, He shows the faithful work they have done for Him.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 637.



Jesus clearly shows that the work of disciples involves mission to the poor, sick, and suffering.

**The Bible does make it clear, in many places, that salvation is not earned by our works. Instead, salvation comes by God's grace alone. How, then, are we to understand what Jesus is saying? As you try to answer this question, keep in mind the idea of who a true disciple is. True disciples are those who have surrendered (given) themselves totally and completely to Jesus. They claim for themselves “the great work He [Jesus] has done for them in giving His life for their salvation.” How does keeping**

4. discipleship—the practice of accepting Jesus and following Him.

**this important truth before us help us better understand what Jesus is saying? After all, who of us could feed enough poor or clothe enough naked to earn salvation?**

### MONDAY—MARCH 17

#### MARK'S VERSION (SIDE) OF THE GREAT COMMAND (Mark 16:14–20)

In an earlier lesson, we looked at the Great Command as presented in Matthew 28:18–20. Read those texts again. Review the important points, commands, and the promises. Then ask yourself: “What am I doing to fulfill these words?”

**Compare Mark 16:14–20 with Matthew 28:18–20. What parts are found in one and not the other?**

After you have noted the differences, read both stories again. Both are very much alike. The basic message is the same.

**What is Jesus' message to us, as found in both these stories?**

In both stories we are told that there was some doubt (Matthew 28:17) and that the disciples' hearts were hard. In Mark's story, Jesus upbraided (scolded) them for this doubt. But the Greek verb in Mark can be translated into stronger language, such as “reproached (showed displeasure),” “denounced (accused),” or even “insulted.” The point was that some disciples

were still struggling with faith. Jesus had to deal firmly with them.

It is interesting to note that only after Jesus dealt with their hardness of heart, He gave them their command. Jesus knew that for them to succeed, they needed to be strong in faith. This is because Jesus would soon be gone from them. And He would be “received up into heaven” (Mark 16:19, NKJV). Anything they were to do for Him from then on would have to be done by faith alone.

**Faith is a gift. But it is a gift that needs to be cared for. What things can you do to make your faith grow and become stronger?**



**After Jesus was received up into heaven, anything the disciples did for Him would have to be done by faith alone.**

**TUESDAY—MARCH 18****DISCIPLESHIP AND THE GOSPEL  
(GOOD NEWS) (John 3:14–19)**

Let us look at something else in Mark's story of the Great Command. In Mark 16:15, 16 (NIRV), Jesus says, "Go into all the world. Preach the good news to everyone. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who does not believe will be punished." So, we learn that the key to the command is the call to preach the gospel.

**How does Revelation 14:6 help us understand what our work is as Seventh-day Adventist disciples?**

The work of preaching the gospel is a very important part of discipleship. When we make disciples, it is also very important that we understand what the gospel message really is. In Mark, Jesus gives us the gospel. If you believe it, you shall be saved. If you refuse to accept it, you shall be lost.



As Seventh-day Adventist disciples, we are to preach the gospel and give the three angels' messages to the world.

How does John 3:14–19 help us to understand what Jesus is saying in Mark 16:15, 16?

It is very important that as disciples we have strong roots in the gospel that we are called to preach. Because of sin, the world was judged as guilty. But Jesus accepted that punishment, fully and completely, in Himself. Through this wonderful gift, anyone who believes in Him no longer has to face the punishment that came through sin. Instead, thanks to God's unlimited grace, that person is pardoned, forgiven, and clothed with Christ's righteousness (holiness). It does not matter how sinful he or she has been. This message must be the center of all our preaching and teaching to the world.

**WEDNESDAY—MARCH 19****LUKE'S VERSION (SIDE) OF THE  
COMMAND (Luke 24:36–53)**

Luke 24:36–53 is another story about Jesus with His disciples. He gave them the call to preach to the world.

In this story, the disciples gathered together. The two disciples who met the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus joined them and shared their experience of meeting Jesus. During their discussion, Jesus joined them.

What were the first two things that Jesus did to help increase the faith of the disciples in Luke 24:36–53?

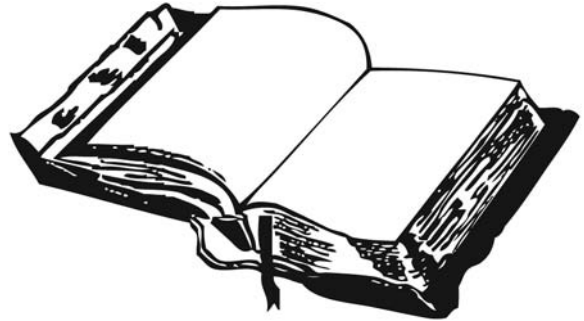
Notice that Jesus did not stop with just giving them proof of His real body. It was the proof they could see and feel. But no, that was only part of it. Jesus then took them into the verses of the Bible. Jesus showed them the Word of God that what had happened to Him had been in Bible prophecy.<sup>5</sup>

### What lesson should Christ's use of the Bible teach us?

We find an important principle (rule) here: Sure, experiences, physical appearances, and miracles have an important part in giving people what they need in order to have strong faith in Jesus. But the Holy Bible must be the foundation (basis) of all of our faith. Jesus did the miracles. But He supported the faith of His disciples by using the Bible. He used the Bible to support all that had happened to Him. *If Jesus Himself used the Bible to support all that He did, how much more so should we?*

Christ's words and actions here are a powerful rebuke (attack) against anyone who tries to weaken the influence (power) of the Bible in the life of the church and in our work as disciples.

**There are so many things, even within the church, that work to weaken our trust in the Bible. What are some of these things? How can we protect ourselves from anything that questions the authority (truth) of the Holy Bible?**



The Holy Bible must be the foundation (basis) of all our faith.

## THURSDAY—MARCH 20

### “WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS” (Luke 24:45–48)

Yesterday, we studied the Great Command in Luke. We read how Jesus supported the Bible. Jesus used the Bible to support all that had happened. He also used the Bible to give the disciples their command to preach to the world.

**According to Jesus, what was the Bible message that the disciples were to take to the world in Luke 24:45–48? How does this fit in with what we read in Tuesday's study? How does this fit in with our understanding of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14?**

The most important part of the whole call to make disciples is the death and resurrection (return to life)

5. prophecy—a message given about what will happen in the future.

of Jesus. He did all of this for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus Himself points to the events that happened around His life and death. But He also gives reasons for those events. This is what Jesus told the disciples to preach to the world. What would make their testimony (witness) so powerful was what they had witnessed. As Jesus said to them, “ ‘You have seen these things with your own eyes’ ” (Luke 24:48, NIV). Jesus meant, of course, the things about His death and resurrection.

**How do Romans 5:6–10; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 2:22–25 help us to understand the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection?**

The disciples were powerful witnesses too. What began in Jerusalem as a Jewish event became a worldwide movement within 50 years. Acts 1–7 shows the growth in Jerusalem and Judea. Chapters 8–12 shows how attacks against Christians and other influences<sup>6</sup> spread the movement beyond to Samaria, Ethiopia, Syria, and other Gentile (non-Jewish) lands. Acts 13–28 shows how Saul of Tarsus became a Christian and took the gospel (good news about Jesus) to far-off countries until it reached Rome.

### FRIDAY—MARCH 21

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, pages 553–560, 658–660, 881–887, 1110; Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 779–828; *The Acts of the Apostles*,<sup>7</sup> pages 9–56; Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 21; Acts 1; Acts 2.

“Let the subject be made very clear that we cannot change anything in our standing before God or in the gift of God to us through good works. If faith and works should buy the gift of salvation for anyone, then the Creator is under debt to humans. Here is an opportunity [a chance] for falsehood [lies] to be accepted as truth. If any man can earn salvation by anything he may do, then he is the same as the Catholic who must do penance<sup>8</sup> for his sins. In that way salvation may be earned as wages. Man cannot, by any of his good works, earn salvation. Then it must be wholly of grace, received by man as a sinner. This is because he receives and believes in Jesus. It is wholly a free gift. Justification by faith is put out of Satan's control.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, pages 19, 20.

6. influences—people or things that have the power to change or affect others.

7. apostles—God's disciples (followers) who preached and taught the gospel after Jesus returned to heaven.

8. penance—the practice in which a Catholic confesses to a priest and then receives forgiveness from him through “good works” such as making payments to the church treasury for good deeds.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

❶ How do we understand Mark 16:16? Is Jesus saying that you have to be baptized to be saved? In what ways does the verse itself give the answer? How do we understand the meaning and importance of baptism?

❷ Think about your local church and how it fits in with the worldwide mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The verses for this week will help. What part does your church have? What part is it playing? How can you help get your church more involved in the work of spreading the

gospel to all nations?

❸ Why is it so important for us, as disciples, to understand the gospel before we can be good witnesses for Jesus? What is your understanding of the gospel? Write it out in one paragraph. Bring it to class and be prepared to share it with others there. What wisdom can you gain from the Ellen G. White quote in today's study?

❹ What more can your local church do to help the poor and the needy in your area? How does your church help with this important part of being a disciple?