

## Mission Possible

In the mid 1960's to early 1970's CBS aired a television series called *Mission: Impossible*. The plot revolved around a team of secret agents that undertook complex and highly dangerous covert missions to thwart national security threats to the United States. One of the quotes that recurred in every episode was the presentation of a mission objective to the main character, Jim Phelps. It usually sounded something like this: "Your mission, Jim, should you choose to accept it, ... As always, should you or any of your IM Force be caught or killed, the Secretary will disavow any knowledge of your actions. This tape will self-destruct in five seconds. Good luck ..."

As Luke's account of Jesus' life concludes, the author gives a synopsis of the final events of the Master's time with His followers culminating in the delivery of a world-changing mission (Lk 24:13-53). After His resurrection, Jesus joined two disciples on their way to Emmaus, a small town located seven miles outside of Jerusalem. As the trio continued their journey, Jesus concealed His identity from them, but "interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Lk 24:27). The two received an Old Testament education from the One to whom the entire biblical story leads! When the trio finally reached Emmaus, the two disciples invited their mysterious fellow journeyman to join them for dinner. During their meal, Jesus opened their eyes to recognize Him and then immediately disappeared from their presence. The two disciples were so excited they hurried back to Jerusalem that very night and reported the news to the eleven. Without warning, Jesus appeared to them also. Their shock and surprise is understandable, so Jesus assured them of His never-ending presence and His inexhaustible grace (Lk 24:36-40). The following 40 days were filled with Jesus appearing to His disciples (1 Cor 15:3-8) and teaching and preparing them for the aforementioned mission (Lk 24:45; Acts 1:3) - a mission that was to proclaim His suffering, dying, and resurrecting to all nations (Lk 24:45-49).

All four gospel accounts, including Luke, record the Lord giving His disciples this mission before His ascension. In the most familiar commissioning account, Jesus tells His disciples the "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me**. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. **And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age**" (Matt 28:18-20). Unlike the clandestine operations of *Mission Impossible*, our responsibility is not to avoid capture, but to be "caught" in inviting people to follow

Jesus. The mission's success is not dependent on our abilities or eloquence, but on our King's authority. We are merely ambassadors "for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor 5:20). Furthermore, we will not be disavowed or abandoned. On the contrary! The Lord will always be with us, everywhere and without fail.

It is important to remember that our mission is a "commission". It is a directive or command to make disciples that is given to all believers. In his book *Gaining By Losing*, J.D. Greear :

The Great Commission is not a calling for some; it is a mandate for all... When it comes to a calling, we don't need a voice; we have a verse (Mt. 28:19). It is now our responsibility, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to evaluate how we are best suited to fulfill that call... We... see every member of our church as a potential missionary to be equipped and mobilized. Our goal is not to send some, or even our best, but to send all into the mission – to our city, across the country, or to the other side of the world.

The verses that conclude Luke's Gospel are not the end, but only the beginning: the beginning of the church's mission. As a matter of fact, Luke continues the incredible story of Jesus in his follow-up volume, the Acts of the Apostles. As the Holy Spirit is poured out on the believers gathered in Jerusalem, they launch forward together by teaching, fellowshiping, remembering, and praying (Acts 2:42). Furthermore, without exception, they herald the glorious message of a risen Savior. They are a city on a hill that is visible to all and that points their friends and family to Jesus. This was the mission of the local church then and remains the mission of the local church now. It is what we are and what we are called to do... It is the mission we must accept!

***Luke 24:45-48 (ESV) - "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that **repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.**"***