

## **MARK 16:1-20 – “HE HAS RISEN, HE IS NOT HERE”**

Today's lesson is the message of Easter – Jesus has risen from the dead! “He has risen. He is not here!” All four Gospels record that Jesus died and all four record that He was resurrected. Mark's account of the resurrection is the shortest. It is concise like of the rest of his book. So, to help provide some context, we are going to be looking at the other three Gospels, some things from them. How important is the resurrection? Well, to say that it is very important would be an understatement.

Listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians Chapter 15: “Now I would remind you, brothers [and sisters], of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). That last phrase, “unless you believed in vain” in the New Living Translation it says, “unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place.” That is the idea.

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received...” This is something that Paul has preached. “That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas [we know him as Peter], then to the twelve” (1 Corinthians 15:3-5).

Paul apparently knows the story of Jesus's death and resurrection, even though the only Gospel written at this point (when he writes First Corinthians) is Mark. And that was so new that it would not have been widely circulated yet. The Gospels of Luke and Matthew had not been written yet. They are still several years away from being written. And, of course, the Gospel of John, will not be written for another 30 years. But the stories about Jesus were widely known. And why is that? How did they get widely known? By word of mouth. The apostles, the disciples taught about it to the various people in the church and then that word got spread.

“Then [Jesus] appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive [at the time he wrote First Corinthians], though some have fallen asleep [died]. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, He [Jesus] appeared also to me” (1 Corinthians 15:6-8).

Q1, which of the following does Paul say about Jesus’s resurrection? I gave you six statements and asked you to check all that apply. That is usually an indication that there is more than one answer. So, what did you all put down? What did you check that he said? The resurrection had been predicted in the scriptures, in the Old Testament, right? It is something that Paul had preached. And Jesus appeared to many people after His resurrection. Those three and that is all. Paul did not witness the resurrection personally. He never stated that the resurrection was announced by angels, although when you read the gospels, you find out that it was. And, as stated previously, the gospels were not a source available to Paul when he wrote First Corinthians.

Paul goes on to emphasize the significance of Jesus’s resurrection. Why is the resurrection so important? Well, in v 14 Paul begins to lay out clearly his theology concerning the resurrection... “And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Q2, true or false? According to Paul, the resurrection is our whole basis of faith. Yes, that is true, right.

Now, the answer to Q3 you are going to get from the verses 15-19. Here is the question: According to Paul, IF (big if) Jesus Christ has NOT been raised from the dead, which of the following statements is true? So, let’s begin in v 15...

Paul says, “We are even found to be misrepresenting God [if all that is true, if He has not been raised] because we testified about God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised” (1 Corinthians 15:15). So, in other words, if Jesus was not

resurrected, then Paul and the rest of the apostles are false teachers because that is the message they had been preaching and teaching. You can check that one off.

Then he goes on to say in v 16: "For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins (1 Corinthians 15:16-17). So, if Christ has not been raised, then you are still lost in your sins! Check that one off.

"Then those also who have fallen asleep [died] in Christ have perished" (1 Corinthians 15:18). If Jesus was not resurrected then all your loved ones who died are not really with Jesus, but they are somewhere else, wherever that is.

"If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19). If Jesus has not been raised, then we as a people are to be pitied. So, in other words, we Christians are a pitiful lot. So then, ALL the statements I gave you are true. Check them all off.

"But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead..." Thank God! "...the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Q4, based on the evidence that he had received, what "fact" did Paul, conclude in v 20? Christ has risen, HE HAS risen, right? Paul thinks the resurrection is pretty important! Without the resurrection we have NO message. We have NO salvation. We have NO hope. We have no proof of eternal life. Our salvation definitely comes into question, doesn't it?

OK, with that as an introduction, let's read what Mark has to say about the resurrection. I am going to begin back in Chapter 15, where we left off last time to build on what happens. "And [Joseph of Arimathea] bought a linen shroud, and taking [Jesus] down, wrapped Him in the linen shroud and laid Him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses saw where He was laid" (Mark 15:46-47). So, all of this happens on Friday late afternoon. And the very next thing that Mark tells us is in Chapter 16 and v 1: "When the Sabbath was past [so, some time

has gone by], Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices..." [and so forth].

In Mark's account of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, Q5, what day is not included that Matthew's account mentions? Friday is talked about. We just saw that (at the end of Mark 15). And Sunday morning is talked about because it is right here (in Mark 16). It has to be Saturday, the Sabbath. Mark does not mention anything about it. Now it is Sunday morning. So, Mark skips right on past Saturday. He goes right from Friday to Sunday. But he is not the only one. So does Luke and so does John. The only one that talks about the Sabbath is Matthew. We know from Matthew's account that a lot takes place in the 30 hours or so that passes from Friday late afternoon to Sunday morning, the time between Mark Chapters 15 and 16.

Matthew tells us what happens on Saturday. He says that on the Sabbath (on Saturday) the religious leaders went to Pilate. They requested that a Roman guard be posted at the tomb in order to prevent Jesus's disciples from coming and stealing His body and then telling everybody that Jesus rose from the dead. "Let's prevent that from happening." Pilate agrees, the guards are posted, and the tomb is sealed.

Matthew goes on to say that in the early hours of Sunday morning, while it was still dark, there was a great earthquake; an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled away the stone, and then sat on it. The appearance of this angel was so terrifying that the guards shook with fear when they saw the angel. And they fell into a dead faint. I like what John MacArthur said, referring to what happened to the guards as a "divine anesthetic." So, whatever happened next, the guards never saw it because they were sleeping.

So, what DID happen next? Well, apparently Jesus came back to life and exited the tomb. There is no record of the actual resurrection of Jesus. None of the Gospel accounts describe what the resurrection actually looked like. Let's go ahead and skip ahead to Q7. We will come back to Q6. True

or false? None of the Gospel accounts describe how the resurrection looked. Well, that is true. We have to use our sanctified imagination. When you go to a passion plays, they will all show you what they think it looked like – a lot of dry ice (if you have been to the one in Eureka Springs). A lot of OOOOH mystery. But we do not know what it looked like. We can only imagine. Other than the angels who were there and Jesus Himself, there were no eye witnesses to His resurrection. Like I said, the guards were sleeping. Instead, what the Gospel writers do is they provide evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that Jesus was, in fact, resurrected. You know from courts of law, you don't necessarily need to have eyewitnesses. You can just piece together the evidence and figure out what happened, right? So, the three main sources of evidence presented about the resurrected Jesus are (1) the empty tomb, (2) the testimony of the angels (the different Gospel accounts have different numbers of angels, but they all record their testimony) and (3) the testimonies of people who saw Jesus alive with their own eyes.

Well, at some point, Matthew goes on to tell us that the guards wake up from their "nap." They look around and realize what has happened. You have the stone rolled away and you have an empty tomb – no body. They have some serious explaining to do! So, Matthew tells us that the guards go straight to the Jewish religious leaders and explain what happened. After hearing the report, the Jewish elders decide to bribe the guards to lie. Just say the disciples came in the middle of night and stole Jesus's body (that is the very thing they were trying to prevent from happening). The elders promise to smooth things over with Pilate so that the guards will not get punished for what occurred on their watch.

All this takes place by the time the three women that we just noticed in Mark Chapter 16 came to the tomb on Sunday morning. The women would have been completely unaware that any of that had taken place. This is where Mark picks up the narrative in Chapter 16. So, we will go back and read that.

READ Mark 16:1-2

The women arrive to finish the task they could not complete on Friday evening. Q6, what unfinished business brought the women to the tomb? They needed to anoint Jesus's body. They think Jesus is dead and why wouldn't they? They had been at His crucifixion. They saw Him die. They saw them take His body down from the cross and then place it in a tomb. They think He is dead. So, they are obviously not expecting what happens next.

READ Mark 16:3-4

Q8, when the women arrived at the tomb, what was the first thing they found? The stone had been rolled away. The large stone that had been placed at the entrance of the tomb on Friday has unexpectedly been moved away. Luke tells us that the women enter the tomb but they do not find the body of Jesus. They are puzzled. Where is Jesus?

READ Mark 16:5

Luke says that suddenly there appeared two men in dazzling robes and the women became terrified. Matthew describes one angel who says to the women, "Don't be afraid." The women anticipate finding the body of Jesus, but instead, they encounter an empty tomb and angelic messengers.

READ Mark 16:6

The "young man" sitting on the tomb is presumably an angel based on the other Gospel accounts. Q9, which of the following did the "young man dressed in a white robe" (this angel) NOT say to the women? "Who do you seek?" That's right. He did not say that. He knows exactly Who they are looking for – "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified." Now, Matthew records the angel saying, "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as He said would happen." Luke records a question put to the women: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" You can just imagine their surprise that Jesus is alive!

I think about myself sometimes, let's say, going to a funeral and the surprise I would get if I walked up to the church or the grave site or wherever the funeral was to be held and someone said, "You'll never believe it. So and so (the deceased person) is not dead!" Has that ever happened to you? Would that be a shock? "What do you mean he or she's not dead? Come on!" So, this is a huge surprise. Jesus is alive, apparently. That is what they have been saying!

But he continues his message to the women...

READ Mark 16:7

Q10, what message was given to the women to tell to Jesus's disciples? WHERE they could find Jesus. It is interesting he did not say, "Go tell them Jesus is alive." He said, "Go tell them where they can find Jesus," which is where? Galilee, right? "Go to Galilee. Jesus will meet you there, just as He told you He would." When had He told them that? Pretty recently – Mark 14:28 to be exact, which is not that long ago. Just a couple of chapters.

READ Mark 16:8

Q11, what was the women's response when they left the tomb? They were astonished by what they have just seen and heard. They take off running and that is where Mark leaves it. These are the last words Mark pens in his Gospel. And you say, "Well, timeout, Chris, because there is verse 9 through 20. What are you talking about?" I am glad you asked.

You will notice v 9 starts in brackets. You go to v 20 and it ends in brackets. So, in the ESV (English Standard Version) these are included in brackets. Why is this? That is the subject of Q12 which I am going to answer for you. What would be some possible reasons for this? I gave you several possibilities. All the reasons listed are valid except for one. And which one is that? It is NOT that these verses contain any theological errors. I am going to explain all that. I am going to back that statement up, talk more about it. But before I do any of that, let's go ahead and read these verses. V 9...

## READ Mark 16:9-20

The earliest Greek manuscripts end Mark's Gospel at verse 8. The fourth-century church fathers Eusebius and Jerome noted in their writings that almost every Greek manuscript available to them did not include verses 9-20. (The key early manuscripts like Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus did not contain these verses). For this reason, most Bible scholars believe these verses were added by someone other than Mark at a later date, likely in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century. We do not know who did it.

It is doubtful that these verses were written by Mark. The vocabulary and style of writing are inconsistent with Mark. There are 18 Greek words that appear in these verses (v 9-20) that are not in the rest of Mark. The title, "Lord Jesus," v 19, is used only there and nowhere else in Mark.

There are a whole bunch of reasons I could give, but I am just going to give you three for the sake of time – reasons why Bible scholars believe these verses were added later:

- (1) The transition from v 8 to 9 is awkward. V 9 begins, "Now," but there is no continuation of the story of the women. As v 8 left off they were talking about the women that were at the tomb. The next thing you know in v 9 they are talking about Mary Magdalene standing there by herself outside and the Lord appearing to her outside the tomb. So, that is a little strange. What happened here? Where are the other women?
- (2) Mary Magdalene is introduced as one from whom Jesus cast out seven demons. This introduction is out of place since Mark has already talked about Mary Magdalene several times in the narrative. Why all of a sudden would you introduce her? You have already been talking about her.
- (3) The angel spoke about this promise that Jesus was going to appear to His followers in Galilee. And yet the appearances that are mentioned in those verses (v 9-20) are all in the Jerusalem area – no mention of Galilee.



OK, given all of this, the obvious question then is why would someone add these verses later? Inquiring minds want to know. We don't know for sure because we do not know who added them. However, that being said, there are many plausible theories floating around out there. The one that makes the most sense to me is this: Early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, the church did not like the rather abrupt ending of Mark (you have to admit it does end abruptly). You have these other Gospels out there and they had a lot more to them (their endings) than did Mark. So, they got together (we do not know who, probably some scholarly types) and came up with what they thought would be a better ending to Mark. They picked out things from the various other Gospel accounts and from the book of Acts and pieced them all together. Again, this is only a theory, a best guess. We don't really know the origin for sure. We are just fairly certain that Mark did not write it for the reasons I gave you earlier.

Q13, true or false? The information in these verses (v 9-20) is mentioned only here in Mark. False. Other verses in the Bible and some reliable extra-biblical sources provide us with the same or very similar information. So then, theologically, these verses are accurate. They just were not written by Mark.

So, let's go back to v 9 that is in brackets. Mark 16:9 which is talking about Jesus appearing first to Mary Magdalene is similar to Luke 8:2.

Mark 16:10, Mary Magdalene then goes and tells His followers, the disciples. That is based really on John 20:18.

Mark 16:11, the disciples did not believe Mary, comes from Luke 24:10-11. They did not believe her.

Mark 16:12, talking about these two walking out in the country is the whole Emmaus Road account that is in Luke Chapter 24. These two guys are going to the village of Emmaus and they are walking and talking with Jesus.

Mark 16:13 is borrowed from Luke 24. These two guys apparently go back and tell the disciples [that they had seen Jesus]. That part, "they did

not believe them," it says in Matthew 28:17 that "some doubted" even after seeing the resurrected Jesus. So, there is this whole theme around the fact that the disciples did not believe Jesus was resurrected.

Mark 16:14, talking about the disciples not believing is based on the account from Luke 24:10-11. These people are coming and telling them and "they did not believe them."

Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel" is from the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19.

Mark 16:16, "Whoever believes" parallels John 3:18, "Whoever believes," very similar to what Jesus had taught.

Mark 16:17, the "signs will accompany those who believe" refers to the signs given to the apostles in Matthew 10:1 and then again Paul talks about it in 2 Corinthians 12:12.

Now we get to a very interesting verse, Mark 16:18, "they will pick up serpents with their hands." That is a reference to what happened with Paul on the island of Malta after the shipwreck. Remember, he picked up the viper and he was spared and they were amazed by that (Acts 28:3-6).

What about this drinking of "deadly poison"? Well, that one does not have any biblical reference. Where does that come from? Actually, this has an origin that would have been well known by the 4<sup>th</sup> Century because of Eusebius. He was a 4<sup>th</sup> Century historian and he wrote this: "He [St. John, the Apostle] drank the cup of hemlock which was intended to cause his death, and suffered no harm from it." So, whoever is writing this last part of Mark would have been aware of this tradition about St. John.

Mark 16:19, talking about Jesus being taken up into heaven, the whole ascension story is covered in Acts 1:9. Being "at the right hand of God" is a reference to Acts 2:33, being "exalted at the right hand of God."

Finally, Mark 16:20, talking about "accompanying signs." That is based on Acts 2:22.

So then, what I want you to see is that the verses at the end of Mark's Gospel in brackets are a patchwork collage of scripture and other sources attempting to provide Mark with a so-called "better ending." I have just shown you verse by verse why the answer to Q13 is false. All of this information can be found elsewhere.

Now, let me make the case for why I think the rather abrupt ending to Mark is intentional and fits Mark's purpose in writing. A quick review of Mark and then we are going to finish with our study.

Mark begins his Gospel abruptly in Mark 1:1 stating his purpose – to show that Jesus Christ is "the Son of God." He then sets out to prove his point following Jesus throughout His ministry, from His baptism to His death and resurrection.

In Mark 1:22 it says, "And they were astonished at His teaching..."

After Jesus cast out the demon in Mark 1:27 it says, "And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves..."

And then Jesus heals the paralytic and Mark 2:12 says, "so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'"

Mark 4:41 says, "And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'"

Mark 5:15, "And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid."

Jesus healed the woman with the hemorrhage and then Mark 5:33 says, "But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth."

Jesus raised that little girl from the dead and then Mark 5:42 it says, "and they were immediately overcome with amazement."

In Mark 6:51, "And He got into the boat with them [the disciples], and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded."

Mark 9:6, Peter, James, and John at the transfiguration, "[Peter] did not know what to say, for they were terrified."

Mark 9:15, "And immediately all the crowd, when they saw Him [Jesus], were greatly amazed and ran up to Him and greeted Him."

Then Jesus was speaking about His death and resurrection to His disciples. Mark 9:32 says, "But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask Him."

Mark 10:24, "And the disciples were amazed at His words."

Mark 10:32, "And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid."

Mark 11:18, Jesus goes in and clears out the temple. Do you remember that? "And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy Him, for they feared Him, because all the crowd was astonished at His teaching."

Mark 12:17, When Jesus had escaped the confrontation with the Jewish leaders, He said to them, "'Render to Caesar the things that are 'Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they marveled at Him."

Mark 15:5, "But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed."

Mark 16:5, "And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, [in an empty tomb] and they were alarmed."

So, it should be no surprise, then, that Mark would end his Gospel – "For trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." The women are experiencing bewilderment,

amazement, astonishment, and wonder. There is no human explanation for what they have just witnessed. You see this all the way through the Gospel of Mark – the amazement and the emotion that is stirred around Jesus, time and time again. And so, I believe that the book of Mark ends like it should in v 8, with the glory and wonder of the resurrection – the final proof, Mark's whole point of his book, that Jesus really IS the "Son of God."

The amazing Jesus. His amazing grace and His amazing love. So, I close this study with a question: Are YOU amazed at Jesus?