

Jason Upchurch - Mark 16:1-8 - The Good News of the Resurrection

It was almost exactly 2 years ago that we began our study on the gospel of Mark. I hope this has been an encouraging look at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know it has been for me.

This sermon is the last sermon in the gospel of Mark. We will turn to the next section again next week. But - buckle your seatbelts - next week I am going to make the case to you that the ending of Mark is in **Vs. 8** and that **Vss. 9-20** are not actually part of the Bible.

Now, before you guys string me up as some kind of Bible-denying liberal, most of you have notes or footnotes to that effect in your Bibles. The ESV basically has 2 bracketed sections that say "some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20." Now, that's a little vague. We might shrug our shoulders and say "okay, whatever; now what?" But what they're subtly telling you is that there is no evidence that this section should be in your Bible at all. Most Study Bibles - MacArthur and ESV have long notes to this effect.

Next week will be a fascinating dive into the history of how we got the Bible you have in your hands. And why you can actually trust the Bible in your hands.

Why even mention all that this week? Because I believe that Mark ends his gospel in **Vs. 8** with an absolute bang. He ends it with "for they were afraid." They were in awe.

That's the response they had to the resurrection. That was the response the first morning, and that should be the response we have as well. He's alive! He's not dead! They killed him and the grave couldn't contain him. He actually raised himself from the grave!

This is the best news of all. The Lord lives!

And just like they were afraid, we should have godly fear as well.

What does that mean: afraid? It means that the ladies who came to the tomb left in a state of absolute awe and wonder. They weren't afraid like a little child afraid of a thunderstorm. They were afraid like the first time you saw the Grand Canyon or the Rocky Mountains or a solar eclipse and you were in awe of something.

When they saw that empty tomb that morning, the stone rolled away, they knew something eternally amazing had happened. They knew.

I think Mark leaves us with something of a mic drop, an exclamation point on the power and effect of the life, death and here resurrection of Jesus.

So our plan this morning is approach our section in 3 parts. I want to talk briefly about the importance of the resurrection. Then I want to give you something of a harmonized look at the events of Sunday morning. Then I want to approach the passage the way I think Mark wants us to see it.

So let's work through this.

1) Importance of the resurrection.

I think you all know this but what we're talking about here is the historical record of the most important aspect of the Christian faith. There really is no more central doctrine than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Put it a different way, if we believe in the Trinity, but don't believe Jesus was raised from the dead we're not saved. We're not Christians.

If we believe in the virgin birth, but deny the literal resurrection of Jesus we're not saved.

If we believe that Jesus was a good teacher, that he walked on water, that God created the universe in 6 literal days, that one has to believe in Jesus but we deny that Jesus rose from the dead, we are not saved and we are bound for eternity in hell to face the wrath of God.

“Jason, how can you say that? That’s so judgmental!” Well, I didn’t say it. The Bible says it. **Turn to 1 Cor. 15** for a minute. Here Paul talks about how essential the resurrection of Jesus is. And the resurrection of Jesus is tied to our future resurrection.

I think you know this, but our hope is not to die and go to heaven where we float around like a ghost or something for all eternity.

The Christian hope is that when we die our bodies go into the grave and our spirit goes to be with Jesus for a while. But one day Jesus will return to this very earth, with our spirits and our spirits will be reunited with our bodies. Our dead, decaying bodies will be raised up out of the grave, they’ll be glorified, and reunited with our spirits forever as we live on a renewed earth for all eternity.

That’s the plan of God. But there were people in Corinth who were denying the future resurrection. They were saying “We know Jesus rose from the dead, but we’re not going to rise. That won’t happen.” Here’s Paul’s response. **Read 12-19**

This is an amazing claim Paul makes. He’s saying that if someone denies the future resurrection, they are functionally denying the resurrection of Jesus. Because the 2 are inseparable. If Jesus rose, then we will rise. So if someone says we won’t rise, then they’re denying that Jesus rose.

And if Jesus didn’t rise from the dead then why preach? **Read 14**

It’s vain to preach if Jesus isn’t alive because there is no hope to preach.

And we’re calling God a liar. **Read 15**

If Christ wasn’t raised then what we’re doing is lying. We’re saying that God raised Jesus, but if he didn’t actually raise Jesus then we’re misrepresenting God.

It’d be like saying Jesus drove a Ferrari through Galilee. And if you don’t believe Jesus drove a Ferrari through Galilee then you’re going to hell.

Did Jesus drive a Ferrari? No. But if we said that we’d be lying. We’d be misrepresenting God.

The same is true for the resurrection. If Jesus didn’t really rise, but we say he did, we’re liars and misrepresenting God. **Read 16-17**

If there is no future resurrection, then Jesus wasn’t raised either. And if Jesus wasn’t raised either our sins are still on our account.

The way we know that the death of Jesus covers our sins is because the resurrection. The resurrection was the proof that Jesus was who he said he was and did what he said he’d do which was atone for the wrath of God by his death.

The resurrection of Jesus is the central thing about the Christian faith. If you’re talking with someone about Christianity and you don’t know where to begin in the discussion you might as well begin at the resurrection. Because if they can’t get past believing in the resurrection it doesn’t really matter what else they believe because it can’t save them.

Either Jesus actually died and rose or he didn’t. If they believe that, then we can move on. If they don’t, it doesn’t matter what we move on to.

Rom. 10:9-10: If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Jesus is Lord, God raised him from the dead.

And I want to be absolutely clear: the belief in the resurrection of Jesus is an audacious claim. It's kind of crazy. Dead people don't rise. Dead people don't come back to life after lying in a tomb for 3 days. It's impossible. It cannot be done. How could it possibly happen?

God. God raised Jesus from the dead. It's a miracle.

He didn't fake death. There were no doctors there reviving Jesus with morphine or something. He was dead, dead for 3 days. And now he's alive, truly alive. By the power of God.

That is the cornerstone of our faith.

And, by the way, it becomes the whole way in which we live our lives. The NT authors talk about living a resurrection life. What does that mean? It means living a life like Jesus intended.

It means that when we have faith in the risen Lord, we become brand new people. It's as though our old sinful self has died with Christ. The old man is gone and dead and buried. And who we are now is defined by a brand new life lived in joyful obedience to the Lord who saved us.

It's as though we're walking around in resurrection bodies. We are to consider the sinful world dead to us. And we are now alive to Jesus and obeying him.

So it's not just that we believe in a future resurrection, we do. But we also fundamentally walk around this world here and now as though we are new creatures, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

The resurrection becomes the lens through which we look at the whole world and our lives as well.

So as we **turn** back to **Mark 16** and read this small passage about the resurrection of Jesus just know that this little chapter changes absolutely everything. These 8 verses change the entire course of human history and eternity. Forever and ever - 10 billion years from now the event we will look back to and sing about and praise God for is the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

So this is the importance of the resurrection.

2) Which leads us to the history of the resurrection. What happened that Sunday morning? Timeline.

Well, the last we left these ladies they were standing at a distance from Jesus as he died on Friday afternoon. Once Jesus died, Joseph got the body and with Nicodemus he prepared the body for burial. This happened very quickly because it was the afternoon and Sabbath began at Sundown. So from the time Jesus died to getting him off the cross and prepped for burial and in the tomb and stone in place was maybe 2 hours.

Mark says that the ladies saw where Jesus was laid **Read 15:47**

They knew where Jesus was laid. But here's the deal, they apparently didn't know that Joseph had prepped the body for burial with spices. It seems as though they thought he was just laid in the tomb quickly because of the lack of time.

So Saturday evening, after sundown, after the Sabbath was over, they went and bought their own spices. They didn't know Joseph and Nicodemus had done this so they were going to do it.

Now, think about that for a minute. We know that Nicodemus and Joseph are disciples now. All the gospels paint them in a very favorable light. Mark's readers would have known exactly who they were.

But at the time, Mary, Mary and Salome would have seen them and either 1) had no idea who they were or 2) they may have been afraid of them. Why would they be afraid? Because they were part of the Sanhedrin that just condemned Jesus to death!

They probably had no idea that these guys were secret disciples of Jesus. How would they? So they get spices Saturday evening after dark. And the plan is to go to the tomb super early Sunday to prepare Jesus's body.

Read 2-3

I think this is a little bit funny. They've got the spices and they've got good intentions but they have no idea how they're actually going to get into the tomb itself. In ancient times the tombs or caves would be covered by a very heavy stone. The typical circular stones you see in drawings are roughly accurate to what would have been there for rich people. Others just covered tombs with whatever rock they could find.

But they weigh hundreds of pounds if not more. The three ladies aren't going to be able to do it. But they head out anyway hoping something can happen to allow them to get in.

Now, just to repeat this, because I think it's important: no one was expecting the resurrection. No one. Not the apostles, not the ladies, not the religious leaders, not the secret followers. No one.

Joseph and Nicodemus put spices on Jesus because they fully anticipated his body to decompose. The ladies went and bought spices to anoint Jesus fully expecting his body to decompose in the grave over the course of the following year. He was dead - what more was there to do?

The only one expecting the resurrection was Jesus, the Father and the Spirit even though Jesus had fully made the plan known over and over.

But they get there that morning and the stone is already moved out of the way. **Read 4**

So they get there and the problem they were discussing along the way is solved. How did the stone move? **Look over at Matt. 28** for a moment.

Something we've seen all along is that the gospels aren't really concerned about laying out every detail each time. Some gospels highlight aspects that the others aren't concerned about. There are no contradictions. It's just like when we go on vacation and different members of the family tell the stories. Each of us are going to highlight different aspects of the story. That's how it works with the gospels.

So here's why they didn't have to roll the stone away. **Read 27:62-28:6**

So who opened the tomb? An angel. The angel came down, there's this massive earthquake - a great earthquake, just like when Jesus died, and one angel just peels the stone back like it's nothing and sits on it. That's how it opened.

How'd he open it? Well being that his appearance is lightning and and he's clothed in gleaming white clothes I'm guessing it wasn't hard for him at all.

Now Mark didn't mention this, but remember that the religious leaders had asked for guards to watch over the tomb? The feared that the disciples would come and open the tomb, steal the body and claim Jesus was raised. So they were there that Sunday morning and they felt the earthquake and saw the angel and fell down like they were dead. Some courage.

The ladies are also in awe of this whole thing but the angel talks to them. He knew they would be coming. And he tells them not to be afraid. **Read 7**

So there are two angels. There's the guy on the outside in lightning who moved the stone away and made the soldiers fall down like they're dead. Matthew jumps ahead to when the ladies go back to the disciples. But look again at Mark.

Here, they actually go into the tomb and check it out. **Read Mark 16:5-7**

So Matthew and Mark don't mention that there are 2 angels. Matthew mentions the one outside, Mark the one inside. Luke and John spell it out that there are two.

Here, the ladies enter the tomb, see the second angel

So, here's where we are. The ladies get the spices Saturday evening. Sunday morning they go to the tomb. On the way they feel an earthquake and an angel opens the tomb and tells them Jesus isn't in there and they can go look inside to see for themselves.

So they go inside. This was a super small tomb. Imagine the space under a stairwell, you'd have to crouch down to get in. So they crouch down to go in and they see another angel who greets them and says the same thing: Jesus isn't here, take a look at where he was laying.

Then they tell them to go tell the disciples. **Read 7**

Turn to John 20. This, as Paul Harvey says, is the rest of the story. Mary runs to tell the disciples. **Read 1-10**

So Mary tells the disciples. They are astonished. How could this be? They run to the tomb and confirm that it's empty.

Now, here's the thing. Did the apostles see the angels? No. It was just the women. Were the apostles told to go to Galilee? Not by the angels. The women told them to go do that. It's the women who were witness to the stone rolling away and the angels and their glory and the command to go to Galilee.

So they get there, confirm the tomb is empty. Now what? Well, they head home. But Mary doesn't leave just yet. And here's where she is blessed to be the first to see Jesus alive. **Read 11-18**

So Peter and John and the disciples leave - they head home. But Mary goes back into the tomb and the angels are back. Both of them are on the inside this time. And she's crying. Why is she crying? We don't know. It seems like she still doesn't totally comprehend that Jesus is raised.

There's awe and fear, but where is he!? If he's not dead, where is he? So she's weeping. And Jesus asks the same question to her that the angels asked: Why are you crying? Who you looking for?

And whether it's the tears she's crying or whether the Lord kept her from seeing him clearly, she still doesn't recognize him. Until he says "Mary." And she finally sees the Lord in clarity. Here he is. He's risen, just as he said. **Read 16-18**

What does that all mean? I think it just means "You don't have to grab on to me for dear life. I haven't ascended yet, so you're going to see me again before I ascend."

And she eventually goes back to the disciples to tell them she saw Jesus. They didn't see Jesus. They saw an empty tomb. She's the one who saw the angels and she's the one who saw Jesus. It's only later that day the disciples see Jesus. **Read 19-20**

That resurrection Sunday was wild. It goes from sorrow, to hope, to bewilderment, to hope again, to wonder, to amazement.

Jesus is alive.

3) Now, I want to end Mark the way we began Mark. I want to show you what I think Mark is doing with ending his gospel with the theme of fear. I think only of Mark's biggest goals is that we stand in awe of Jesus. Because he uses these words over and over.

Turn 1:26-28, 35-37, 45; 2:1-2, 12; 3:20-21; 4:35-41; 5:19-20; 39-43

Amazement - ecstasie. It's a profound emotional experience to the point of being outside oneself (BDAG). Where we get our word "ecstasy." It was megas ekstasie - great amazement.

6:45-52; 7:31-37; 11:12-19; 12:15-17; 15:1-5; 15:33-39; 16:7-8

What's Mark doing? He wants us to have the same reaction as all the people who saw Jesus. He wants us to be amazed at Jesus. Astonished at who he is and what he's done for us and the hope he gives through his life, death and resurrection.

Pray