

Gospel of Mark

May 30, 2010

Resurrection

Mark 16

I. Passion Background

At the end of last week's lesson, we saw Jesus dead and being buried. Fortunately, the story does not end there. Unfortunately, even Jesus' closest followers appeared to believe that Jesus' life was already over.

The counterparts for this lesson are Matthew 27:32-56, Luke 22:32-49, and John 19:17-37.

II. Faithful Women at the Empty Tomb: Mark 16:1-8

Mark 16:1-8

16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" 8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

NIV

Almost all scholars, whether conservative or otherwise, agree that Mark appears to end at 16:8. (NOTE: Below is commentary on the "long ending" as is typically included in the NIV and other major English translations.) If we accept that the gospel ends at Mark 16:8, we do not see any actual resurrection appearances by Jesus in this gospel. Of course, the Christians of Rome and other believers would have known that Jesus had been seen. The empty tomb is an interesting way for Mark to potentially have ended his gospel; the actual appearances of the risen Christ are really only additional explanations and evidence concerning the fact that Jesus was resurrected.

- Verse 1 Spices were used to nullify the effects of decay from the rotting body. Despite Jesus' various pronouncements that He would be resurrected, we do not see any evidence that any of His followers, including these devoted women, believed that Jesus would rise again.
- Verse 3 Given that there were a lot of people in the vicinity of Jerusalem, the women might have thought that they would find some strong men to help them. By sunrise, most Judean residents would be out.
- Verse 5 The "young man" is apparently an angel. "Alarmed" is a strong word, also indicating dread. The women were surprised and afraid.

Verse 6 The tomb is empty!

Verse 8 In addition to being afraid, the women's testimony would not have much weight, i.e. others might doubt them. Later, as the news of Jesus' resurrection became wider known, they would have undoubtedly have spoken then. Mark is simply recording the first observation of Jesus' resurrection without trying to include all the rest of them.

III. Evidence that Jesus Arose!

Evidence that Jesus died and rose from the tomb (edited from Life Application Bible):

| Concern with the Empty Tomb | Evidence | References |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Jesus was only unconscious | Roman soldier told Pilate that He was dead Romans did not break His legs; Jesus' side pierced with a spear. Jesus' body wrapped in linen and placed in tomb | Mark 15:44-45 John 19:32-34 Mark 15:46 |
| Women went to wrong tomb | Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph and wife of Cleophas saw where He was entombed. | Mark 15:47 |
| Unknown thieves stole the body | Tomb sealed and guarded | Matt. 27:65-66 |
| Disciples stole the body | Disciples willing to die for the resurrected Jesus; people do not die willingly for a known lie. | Acts 12:2, many other places |
| Religious leaders stole the body | If they had taken the body, they would have produced it to quell rumors of the resurrection. | --- |
| Jesus was not resurrected | Many later sightings, including Thomas touching Jesus | John 20:27 |

IV. The "Long Ending": Mark 16:9-20

Mark 16:9-20

When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. 10 She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. 11 When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it. 12 Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. 13 These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either. 14 Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. 15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." 19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

NIV

Per the NIV, the rest of the book of Mark is not in the better manuscripts. The original readers knew what happened next and did not need more. Chances are good that a later scribe seeing the abrupt ending decided to “complete” the book. Everything written in this section can be substantiated (except maybe for the poison) by the other gospels. So, it will not make a significant difference if we accept this section or if we do not. My advice would be to use other references in making points rather than Mark 16:9ff so that you can be sure that your reference is both solidly Biblical based and harder for those doubting your point to assail.

Others suggest that there was another ending to the gospel which has been lost to us, but given the disbelief, astonishment, and fear that Mark has used to characterize Jesus’ ministry throughout this book, this is not a bad ending. Indeed, at the time that Mark wrote this book, Jesus was still bringing fear and astonishment to new believers, including many who would be called to give their lives for the gospel.

Examples of overlapping Biblical references with Mark 16:9ff in the so-called “longer ending” are:

| Event | Mark Reference | Other Reference |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Sighting by Mary Magdalene | 16:9-11 | John 20:11-18 |
| Appearance to two waking from Jerusalem | 16:12-13 | Luke 24:13-35 |
| Appearance to disciples including Thomas | 16:14 | John 20:24-31 |
| Great Commission | 16:15-16 | Matthew 28:16-20 |
| Cast out demons; speak new languages | 16:17 | Various examples in Acts, 1 Cor 13 |
| Handling poisonous snakes without harm | 16:18 | Acts 28:5, Luke 10:19 |
| Healing | 16:18 | Various examples in Acts |
| Ascension/preaching and praising God | 16:19-20 | Luke 24:50-52 |

Mark 16:9-20 appears to be a summary from the other gospels. (If you want to argue that it is original, we could also claim that the other gospels fill out the summary left by Mark.)

Two other endings are often cited as well, sometimes these endings are meshed together somehow:

SHORTER ENDING

Mark 16

[[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]]

NRSV

Mark 16:9

Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8. One authority concludes the book with the shorter ending; others include the shorter ending and then continue with verses 9-20. Most of the time, verses 9-20, when used, follow immediately after verse 8, though according to some of these ancient authorities the passage is marked as being doubtful.

ADDITION TO LONGER VERSION FOLLOWING VERSE 14

And they excused themselves, saying, "This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits. Therefore reveal your righteousness now" — thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, "The term of years of Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was handed over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, that they may inherit the spiritual and imperishable glory of righteousness that is in heaven."
NRSV

Verse 11 If the disciples would not believe Mary's testimony that Jesus was alive, why would anyone else? No wonder she was afraid to speak openly.

Verse 13 Notice the desire to speak of the resurrection by these two travelers. Like Mary, their testimony led to disbelief. A Christian's testimony today of the risen Christ might have the same result!

Verse 15 Despite the likely disbelief that they will encounter as did Mary Magdalene and the two travelers, the disciples are to evangelize the entire world. This is Mark's version of the Great Commission, as indicated in Matthew:

Matt 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

NRSV

Verse 16 Baptism with water should occur to recognize that one is a Christian and that baptism with the Spirit has occurred.

Verse 18 Despite situations that can lead to fear, God will protect us according to His will when we are doing His work. The early church demonstrated this point as evidence by its spread throughout the world. This does not mean that no one will die as a result of giving the gospel.

Verse 18 Does this verse mean that we should test God so that we can know that we are saved since He has promised to protect us? (The answer is "no." Why?)

Verse 18 Some compare Paul being bitten by a poisonous snake to taking poison. If this comparison is disallowed, there is no example of poison being used anywhere else in the Scriptures.

Verse 19 Jesus place in the center of the throne room at the right hand of God:

Heb 1:3

3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

NIV

Verse 20 We know the results of their work as we see them everyday of our lives two thousand years later.

V. Question

What does the empty tomb mean to you? Is there some part of you that disbelieves it as did the original apostles?