

## The Resurrection of Jesus Mark 16

**\*\*READ VERSES 1-8. \*\***And then Mark does a mic-drop! And maybe you're thinking ... "Whoa ... what about verses 9-20. Why are you stopping with verse 8?" I'm so glad you asked! I've known this was coming ... and that I'd have some explaining to do ... because some of you are holding a King James or New King James version ... and it appears that I'm leaving you hanging by not preaching on verses 9-20. Others of you have an English Standard Version ... or a New American Standard Version ... or a Christian Standard Version—and verses 9-20 are in brackets ... with a heading that reads, "Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include verses 9-20." Now ... I don't have time to explain this exhaustively ... but I believe the gospel of Mark ends with verse 8.

Before I tell you why, let me make clear that this is not a debate over the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. The reason there's a debate over these verses is because conservative Christians revere the Bible as the

authoritative Word of God. And if the Bible doesn't just contain the Word of God ... but is the very Word of God, then we don't have the right to subtract anything from the Bible ... or add anything to the Bible. So although I grew up on the King James ... and have memorized out of the King James ...

There are two reasons I am convinced that verses 9-20 are likely not Mark's writing. First, the earliest manuscripts do not contain these verses ... and so it seems that over time, scribes who were copying Mark's gospel added these verses to reflect the endings of the other gospel accounts. Now ... we need to understand that we do not possess a single original manuscript of any biblical writing. All we have are copies—some of the whole New Testament, but most of those are copies of single books or fragments of a few verses. But in the 400 years since the King James Version was translated ... much more manuscript evidence has been discovered ... and that evidence supports the shorter ending of Mark.

And then secondly ... the shorter ending seems to fit better with Mark's writing style. Mark is

short and sweet and to the point. He's fast-paced and action-packed. I mean, right out of the gate in Mark 1:1, he says, "Here's the beginning of the good news of Jesus" ... and boom ... here comes John the Baptist crying out, "There's One coming after me whose sandal straps I am not worthy to stoop down and untie." And then Mark says, "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth." That's all Mark says in introducing us to Jesus. There's nothing about Jesus' birth ... nothing about his childhood ... just John saying "here is Jesus." And it seems that Mark ends his gospel just as abruptly as he begins it—telling us that Jesus finished what he came to do. He died and rose again ... the end!

Now, you may disagree with me on this. I have family members and friends who do ... and that's ok ... because this isn't something that should come between us. What we read in verses 9-20 doesn't contradict what is written elsewhere in Scripture ... or add anything that isn't written elsewhere in Scripture. Now ... there are some questions about the snake-handling and poison-drinking in verse 18 ... so please don't do either of those things ... but

acknowledging that this is a questionable text doesn't undermine the authority of Scripture; it shows that we take the authenticity of Scripture seriously ... \*\*because as Isaiah 40, verse 8 says ... every word of our God will stand the test of time. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand ... forever!

OK ... I'm glad that's done ... because the older I get, the more I dislike controversy! And the good news is that there's nothing controversial about \*\*the BIG Idea of verses 1-8 ... because the resurrection of Jesus changes everything! How many of you have heard the saying that everything rises and falls on leadership? For the Christian, everything rises and falls on the resurrection. Everything. Not some things ... or even most things. Everything! If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, God is a liar, Jesus was a lunatic, and Christianity is a sham. \*\*As 1 Corinthians 15:19 says, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, "we are of all people most to be pitied." But Mark tells us that Jesus did rise from the dead. The devil has been defeated ... sin has been disarmed ... and death has died ... because Jesus IS risen! And to get just how ...

## **A Transformational Event**

\*\*This is for Jesus' disciples ... we need to remember that when we arrive at verse 1 ... Jesus has been dead for nearly 40 hours. And they're beside themselves. "Is this how it all ends ... with the lifeless body of Jesus lying in a tomb?" They're doubting ... and fearing ... \*\*because on Friday, Jesus confounds their expectations. So ... how do we respond when God confounds our expectations? Maybe it's your career ... and God just blew it up. Maybe it's your marriage ... and it ended badly. Maybe it's that God took your spouse or your child too soon. He just hasn't lived up to your expectations. You are not alone. That's Jesus' own followers on Friday and Saturday. They expected crowns ... and thrones and kingdoms ... but now Jesus is dead. Hopes are dashed. Dreams shattered. Plans blown-up. \*\*But Friday is not the end of the story ... because on Sunday, Jesus exceeds their wildest expectations—even though he had told them three times that this would happen. Listen ... the empty tomb proves that God knows what He's doing! You can trust Him ... because the resurrection of Jesus is ...

## **\*\*A True Event**

That's what Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome are about to discover. As the sun was coming up on Sunday morning, they're on their way to the tomb. And according to Luke 24 ... a woman named Joanna was there, too ... and because I'm married to a Joanna—I always include her in the resurrection account! So, the scene opens with these women coming to the tomb. And why are they coming? Because they've got high hopes. They want to see Jesus walk out of the tomb. All Friday night ... all day Saturday and Saturday night ... their anticipation has been building. It's like Christmas morning for these ladies ... and so they're sprinting to the tomb ... to catch a glimpse of the resurrection.

Is that what your Bible says? If it does ... get a different Bible! Because the women aren't coming to the tomb to catch a glimpse of the living Jesus ... they're coming to anoint the body of a dead Jesus. That's why they are carrying perfumes and ointment ... because, in that day, they didn't embalm a dead body, they anointed it with spices and ointments and

perfumes. That's what these women are coming to do ...

And that took some real guts ... some major courage ... because they are coming to the tomb of a man labeled public enemy #1. That's why, on Saturday, Pilate deploys a security detail to guard the tomb. He even sealed the stone that covered the entrance—so that no one could get in ... or out. \*\*And yet, these women set out for the tomb ... they will be **the initial eyewitnesses to the resurrection.**

And that's significant evidence that the resurrection is a reality ... because in that day, women weren't even allowed to testify in a Jewish court of law. So Mark isn't telling us that women are the first eyewitnesses to coax us to believe a hoax. He's telling us that it's women who arrived first at the tomb because that's what happened. And with God, that's the way it often happens ... because He specializes in using the marginalized. He delights in doing the unexpected ...

Because as the women approach the tomb ... the soldiers aren't there! Matthew tells us that sometime before sunrise the earth quaked and

an angel rolled the stone away. And the soldiers are so overcome with fear that they pass out. I love that ... because that's how the enemy responds when heaven shows up! So the soldiers are gone ... and the stone is rolled away ...

But these women don't know any of that ... that's why they're asking the same question we'd be asking—"Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" That's a valid concern ... because notice verse 4—it's a very large stone. The Greek word here is mega—it's a mega stone ... so the women can't move the stone on their own. But, no worries, heaven has moved it for them—not to let Jesus out ... but to let them in! And so when they arrive ... and see the stone rolled away ... they do what we would have done. They enter the tomb, expecting to see the body of Jesus ... because according to Mark 15:47, they had seen Jesus buried right here on Friday ...

And that's why when they walk into the tomb, they aren't just shocked by what they don't see—the body of Jesus is gone; they're terrified at what they do see—a young man



dressed in white. It's an angel. But it isn't just his presence that grips them—it's his words in verse 6. Notice the verb tenses. "Do not be alarmed, you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who **was** crucified. **He has** risen; **He is** not here. See the place where they laid him." And they do. They see where Jesus' body had been. But now it's gone ... Jesus is alive!

This is God's grace to these women—and to us. Without the angel to interpret what they're seeing, their minds would have raced in a hundred directions ... and sorted through a thousand options. Did someone steal the body? Are we at the wrong tomb? Was Jesus faking his death? But to spare these women from sorting through it all the questions, God dispatches an angel to give them the answer ... \*\*and that's another piece of evidence ... **heaven shows up to interpret the empty tomb.** That's what our God has done in this book. He doesn't leave us to sort through all life's questions on our own. He gives us the answers. He reveals all we need to know. \*\*Psalm 119:130, "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple." God doesn't leave these women—

or us—groping for answers ... He answers our questions ... he interprets life for us ... including the empty tomb ...

And as the women take it all in ...

**astonishment seizes them.** \*\*The third piece of evidence that the resurrection is true ... is that they're scared to death. Mark uses four different Greek words to tell us four different times that these women are scared to death. Verse 5 ... they're alarmed. Verse 8, they're trembling ... they're seized by astonishment ... because they are afraid. They're scared speechless. They're trembling. Shaking. It's real and raw emotion.

\*\*It reminds me of the day we were driving into the mountains in eastern Tennessee ... and because of the hairpin turns on I40, the speed limit drops from 70 to 45. And as we were making our way into that first hairpin turn, we were in the right lane ... and in the side mirror I see a woman in a Dodge Charger ... she's in the left lane ... and she's doing 70 ... and as she comes alongside us, she's still doing 70 ... and she can't hold it ... she's veering into our lane. So I slam on my breaks ... just in time ...

and she veers over into our lane ... and onto the shoulder ... where she regained control just in time. When we caught up with her, she had stopped on the shoulder ... and I could see her holding her head in her hands ... shaking ... trembling ...

Scared to death. It isn't like we see in videos where kids are jumping out from behind doors and furniture ... supposedly scaring their parents ... but it's obvious that it's all a set-up ... it's all a put-on ... because you can't fake being scared to death. \*\*That's why Mark tells us four different times that the fear these women are feeling is real. And that's why the angel answers their fear with words of assurance ... when he gives them an assignment: "Go, tell Jesus' disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee ... there you will see him, just as he said." But they can't say anything. Terror has seized them—a take-your-breath away kind of terror! I mean, how do you process this? How do you explain it? You can't. That's why they're speechless. On the way to the tomb, they're talking as they're walking. But on their way from the tomb, they are running ... in silence. It isn't

just what they have seen that's left them speechless ... it's what they haven't seen. **\*\*The body of Jesus isn't there ... it's the fourth piece of evidence that the resurrection is true ... because \*\*the once-occupied tomb is occupied no longer. It's empty. They've seen. They've heard. And now they know: Jesus is no longer dead, He's alive!**

So what? What makes the resurrection ... not just A transformational event ... but THE transformational event in the lives of His people? It's what we see in the lives of Jesus' disciples ... because after Jesus ascends to the Father ... and the Holy Spirit comes, these disciples are new men. Their doubts give way to faith. Their fear turns to courage. When we read the book of Acts, we discover that this group of rehabilitated scaredy cats turns the world upside down with the message that Jesus is alive. In fact, all but one of them will die for that message ... because the resurrection changes everything—not just for them ... but for us. So let's conclude our study of Mark's gospel with ...

## **Three Takeaways**

\*\*1) The resurrection gives real reason to entrust your life to Jesus. To believe in Jesus ... and follow Jesus. The resurrection doesn't allow you the option of labeling Jesus "a nice guy" or "a good teacher who said some really cool stuff." You can't say that Jesus was a philosopher like Socrates or Confucius ... or a religious leader like Muhammad or the Buddha ... or a political revolutionary like Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. ... because all of those men died and stayed dead. Jesus died ... and rose again. You have to deal with that. And if it's true, then Jesus deserves our worship and allegiance ... our all-out, all-in commitment to Him.

And that's true for you young people. Many of you are growing up with parents who love and follow Jesus. And yet some of you are more a fan of Taylor Swift than you are a follower of Jesus. Some of you know your favorite influencer better than you know Jesus. Some of you think that the Bible's morality is outdated and its claims of exclusivity are narrow-minded and bigoted ... because you're believing your college prof rather than Jesus. But there's an empty tomb that a group of

women ran from in fear and trembling. What are you going to do with that? ... \*\*because 1 Peter 1:21 says that “[God] raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” A resurrected Jesus leaves no room for half-hearted believing in Jesus ... or going-through-the motions following Jesus. The God of this universe breathed life into the dead body of His Son so that YOUR faith and hope would be in Him. Is it? Gospel! Because when your faith and hope are in God ...

\*\*2) The resurrection gives eternal meaning to everything you do. Maybe you’ve never considered that what happened in a tomb on this Sunday gives eternal meaning to your everyday ... \*\*because as Paul concludes his teaching on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, he says, “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” Ever. So when you’re chasing toddlers around the church nursery ... or when you’re teaching little ones in Sunday School or

listening to Bible verses in AWANA ... it matters. When you crawl out of bed in the morning ... and go to work, it's not in vain because you are serving the Risen King. Students ... your math matters. Husbands and wives, your marriage matters. And parents, when that pile of dirty laundry just keeps growing ... and you're cleaning up puke for the fourth time that night ... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in your parenting work ... because it's the Lord's work ... it's not in vain. So work full-throttle ... petal-to-the-metal for our Risen King ... because ...

\*\*3) The resurrection gives enduring hope in life's darkest moments. Life is full of dark moments—friends betray us ... a husband or wife or child walks away from us. As we grow older, our health fails us ... and eventually death itself will come for us. But there's real hope for you in those dark moments.

\*\*Because Jesus lives, there is coming a day when Revelation 21:4 will be our eternal experience: "He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things—all those

things ... will have passed away ... the pain, the hurt, the evil, the death—all the dark moments will be forever forgotten in the light of Jesus' resurrection! In a sin-cursed world, it's impossible to wrap our minds around the fact that there is coming a day with no hospitals ... and no funerals—because there's coming a day with no diabetes ... or heart disease ... or cancer. There is coming a day with no police officers patrolling ... no lawyers practicing ... no judges adjudicating ... no politicians politicking! There is coming a day without the pain of a broken marriage ... or losing a child ... or a spouse. All of that will be forever done—because the risen Jesus will be visibly ruling and reigning as the unrivaled King. There is coming a day!

So in life's darkest moments ... read your story through the lens of the empty tomb. \*\*It isn't just an appropriate ending to Mark's gospel ... it's the exclamation point to the first words he wrote in chapter 1: "This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The gospel is good news because Jesus lives! And because He lives, we will live with him. That changes everything—forever! AMEN!