

# Hopeless Ending—Endless Hope

## The Cross (Part 20)

Mark 16:1-8 (Mt.28:1-8; Lk.24:1-11) 4/8/2023

*Mark's account of the resurrection ends this way: "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid." No appearances by Jesus? He ends his whole gospel with a statement about the total failure of some female disciples? What kind of ending is that?*

*It's a profound ending with an important principle to teach us that is often missed.*

Introduction: Bad Endings .....	2
Part 1: The Quest for the "Historical" Jesus.....	3
Unbelief .....	3
Part 2: The Ominous Invitation.....	4
Who Will Roll the Stone?.....	4
Come on In .....	5
Part 3: The Angel.....	6
Young Man .....	6
White Robe .....	6
Right Side .....	6
Part 4: Sending Out the Women.....	7
The Angel's Knowledge.....	7
Misguided Looking.....	7
He's Been Raised.....	7
Jesus is the Christ .....	8
The Commission.....	9
Tell His Disciples .....	9
And Peter.....	10
Just as He Told You .....	11
And Me.....	11
Part 5: Fear and Disobedience.....	11
Fled.....	12
Afraid.....	12
Troubling Ending.....	13
The Structure .....	13
Meat in the Middle .....	13
The Three Complaints .....	13
Stories as Parables .....	14
The Messianic "Secret" .....	14
Fear Persists until Faith .....	15
No Appearances – Jesus' Word Is Proof.....	15
Finding Jesus Starts with Revelation .....	17
Conclusion .....	17
Summary.....	19

**Mark 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 been raised! 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.

## Introduction: Bad Endings

Have you ever watched a movie that had such a bad ending that it made you regret even watching the movie in the first place? Which movie has the worst ending you've ever seen? I think if you gathered all Bible commentators together in a giant room and asked, "Which book of the Bible has the worst ending?" it would be unanimous. Mark—winner by a mile. Almost nobody likes the ending of Mark.

If you ask for the best ending, Revelation might come out on top. That's a fantastic ending. So satisfying. But Mark—the Church has always struggled with his ending, even as early as the 100's, not that long after it was written.<sup>1</sup> The Church has been so unsatisfied with the ending of Mark, there have been multiple efforts to fix it. There's a longer one that's probably printed in your Bible, but scholars are almost unanimous that nothing we have after v.8 was written by Mark.<sup>2</sup>

But there is still debate over whether Mark intended more. Many scholars say either the real ending got lost<sup>3</sup> or Mark died before he could finish up. There's no manuscript evidence for that—they just argue that no one in his right mind would end a gospel with verse 8.

**Mark 16:8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.**

The end.

---

<sup>1</sup> Verses 9-20 were most likely added to Mark sometime between A.D. 100 and 140. Hooker: Although this section was obviously added to Mark in an attempt to 'complete' the gospel, it could hardly have been written for that purpose. It does not attempt to deal with the problems caused by Mark's abrupt ending—the women's silence and the unfulfilled promise to the disciples that they would see Jesus in Galilee—and it shows no reliance on vv. 1–8. It consists of three brief accounts of appearances of the risen Lord.

<sup>2</sup> The most well-known is probably printed in your Bible, labeled verses 9-20 in Mark 16. It has a totally different vocabulary (22 occurrences of words that never appear anywhere else in Mark), different style, and the transition from v.8 to v.9 doesn't make sense (verse 9 has a "he" referring to Jesus, even though Jesus hasn't been mentioned). Most scholars agree that not only did Mark not write those verses; but whoever did write them didn't intend them as an ending to Mark. They were written for some other purpose and someone cut and pasted them on to the end of Mark.

They read like a compendium of excerpts from the other three gospels about the post resurrection appearances of Jesus, plus a weird little section about handling snakes and drinking poison. (If you ever wondered how snake handling became a thing in some fringe churches, it's because of v.18.)

Whoever wrote it seems to have a bit of an axe to grind. Most of it is similar to what the other gospels say except it presents a much more negative picture of how resistant the disciples were to believe the reports about the resurrection and how harshly Jesus rebuked them for that. It sounds like someone in the early 100's was frustrated with people refusing to believe, and so he adjusted the post resurrection accounts a bit to make a big point about how important it is to believe the reports.

The sentiment is actually in line with Mark's emphasis. Mark does make a major point about the error of failing to believe the testimony. More than the other gospels, Mark emphasizes the testimony of Jesus and the angel as proof. Believing reliable testimony is more rational even than believing your own eyes. But even if the point he was making is correct, the writer was wrong to put words in Jesus' mouth that he didn't say.

<sup>3</sup> There is no evidence for this, and it seems very unlikely to me. If the final portion was lost or damaged, surely someone would have remembered the ending and written up another copy.

What kind of ending is that?

I'll tell you what kind of ending it is—it's the ending God gave us. It's what we have. And even if Mark did write more, the Holy Spirit didn't see fit to preserve it for us.

And if we just study what God gave us instead of second-guessing it... , I think we'll find that these eight verses are a powerful and brilliant way to end the book. And ending it this way provides a crucial insight that we don't get as clearly with the other gospels but that we desperately need.

## Part 1: The Quest for the “Historical” Jesus

Let me just show you how Mark organizes the material, and you can judge for yourself. Mark tells the story in 5 distinct sections. We'll go through each one and then step back and see how they're arranged. Section 1 is the first verse.

**Mark 16:1** When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James,<sup>4</sup> and Salome<sup>5</sup> bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

### Unbelief

It's the first day of the week and they're expecting to find his corpse. There is a famous book by Albert Schweitzer titled *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. When the liberals say, “the historical Jesus,” what they mean is the real man as opposed to the mythical Christ of faith. The Christ of faith who came from heaven and performed miracles and rose from the dead—that's all myth. But Schweitzer and other liberals are on a quest to discover the normal, natural man, who was just a regular human being with nothing supernatural about him and who is dead and gone.

I bring that up because the title of Schweitzer's book could be the title of verse 1. Why do the women buy spices? Because they are on a quest to find the same kind of Jesus as Albert Schweitzer—a man who died and stayed dead.

That's unbelief. Jesus said he'd rise, he said it would happen on the third day... , he said it plainly and clearly, and here these women expect to find his dead body in the tomb on the third<sup>6</sup> day. They loved him; they just didn't trust him. They didn't believe his words.

---

<sup>4</sup> Mary Magdalene and Salome are referred to in exactly the same way throughout the story of Jesus' burial. Their names remain unchanged each time they are mentioned. On the other hand, this Mary is identified in three different ways in these few verses. No other person in this Gospel is treated in this way. It is as though the Evangelist were inviting his readers to think more carefully about who she might be.

<sup>5</sup> If they were making all this up, writing in women as the eyewitnesses would not be the way to convince anyone in that culture. And the fact that it was the testimony of women didn't escape people's notice. Even 200 years later, one writer mocked Christians for believing in a resurrection based on “the gossip of women about the empty tomb” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.55, cited in the Pillar commentary on Mark). Not even the Apostles themselves, who knew these women personally, were all that impressed with their testimony.

**Luke 24:10** It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. **11** But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

The New Testament writers did not create the resurrection. The resurrection created the New Testament writers.

<sup>6</sup> Sometimes people worry about the fact that Jesus was only in the tomb one full day. They bury him on Friday evening and by Sunday morning he's gone—how does that fit with Jesus saying he'd be in the tomb three days? You have that tension even before he died when he was giving prophecies about his death, because sometimes he said he would rise after three days and other times he said he would rise on the third day. If you count days the way we count days, there's no way both of those could be true. For us, if it was after three days, then it would happen on the 4th day. But the gospel writers didn't see it as any kind of difficulty or something they needed to explain, because in their way of speaking, any part of a day counted as a day. So after three days and on the third day meant the same thing. Jesus was in the tomb part of Friday,

So when the Sabbath ended (sundown on Saturday night), the shops open and these ladies go buy the spices. But they don't want to go to the tomb in the dark, so they wait until morning.

**2 Very early on the first day of the week,<sup>7</sup> just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb.**

## Part 2: The Ominous Invitation

That's section 1—the women set out for the tomb in unbelief. Part 2 is all about the stone (vv.2-4).

**3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"**

### Who Will Roll the Stone?

Those stones were 5 or 6 feet in diameter, and Mark says in the next verse that this one was especially large. They were pushed down an incline against the entrance, so to remove it, you have to pull it uphill. Not something three women could do. If only they had a group of, say, eleven men there to help them. But the Apostles are all in the wind, so they're on their own.

And asking for help could be a problem. The Romans had the death penalty for anyone removing a body from a tomb... , so it might be a little awkward walking up to strangers and saying, "Hey, will you help us open up this grave?"<sup>8</sup>

---

Saturday, and part of Sunday. That's three.

<sup>7</sup> For the Jews, the first day of the week had no significance whatsoever. They didn't even have a name for it—they just called it the day after the Sabbath. But from this moment on it became hugely significant to Christians.

There are some Christians that have tried to make Sunday the new Sabbath. And there are other people who have reacted against that to say there is no significance to the first day of the week.

Neither of those extremes fit the teaching of Scripture. Nothing in the Bible points to Sunday as the new Sabbath.

It's not the Sabbath. But because of the resurrection, the first day of the week is important. The four gospel accounts of the resurrection are very different, yet they all go out of their way to mention that this happened on the first day of the week. And as you keep reading in the New Testament, you find the first day becomes the day of meeting for Christians (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). And most scholars agree that when John refers to the Lord's Day in Revelation 1:10, it's referring to the first day of the week. And the early church called Sunday the Lord's Day. Even later Jewish rabbis would sometimes refer to the first day of the week as "the day of the Nazarenes," or "the day of the Christians." (Str-B 1.1, 052–53, cited in the Pillar commentary on Mark.) But even if we didn't have any of that, you can tell just from Mark that it's important. In verse 1 he says it's the day right after the Sabbath, then in verse 2 he begins with a reminder that it's the first day of the week just in case you forgot at some point between verses 1 and 2.

Isn't it interesting that the Church has never met on Friday? Think about how important the cross is to Christianity. It's everything. Every church has a cross, the cross is the universal symbol of Christianity, more than any other symbol. Paul said all he did was preach Christ crucified. The cross is super important, and yet Friday has never been the day we get together. It's always been Sunday.

So what happened to the Sabbath? It was fulfilled. The Sabbath was a day of rest that was a shadow of the true spiritual rest God's people would one day find in the Messiah. So when Mark begins his account of the resurrection by saying, "When the Sabbath was over," he's just talking about what day it was but theologically, you could say that when Jesus rose from the dead, the Sabbath as they knew it really was over—for good. The Sabbath day as a weekly signpost pointing forward to the time of God's rest was over. The Sabbath day as a mandatory observation for God's people was over. That's why Paul said, "Don't let anyone judge you with regard to Sabbath days" (Colossians 2:16). That was a shadow law—pointing to something greater (Colossians 2:17). If you want to do something special on Saturday you can—one man considers one day holier than the others, another man considers all days equal—either one is fine (Romans 14:5). But the old Sabbath day is over. The new Sabbath is the day you hear Jesus say, "Come to me you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."

<sup>8</sup> An inscription from Nazareth of uncertain date, though probably pre-70, may have some bearing on our understanding of the sanctity of the grave in late antiquity. The Nazareth inscription reads (see Boffo, *Iscrizioni*, 319–33; Cumont, *Revue*

## Come on In

So what's the answer to their question? Who will roll the stone away for them? The answer ends up being really important. But instead of telling us, Mark wants to show us.

As they walk, the night shadows are starting to give way to the beginnings of dawn. It's just light enough that they can see a little bit. They're downcast, dejected, walking with their heads down, and when they get close they look up and—oh my.

**4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.**

Wow. Who did that? They're about to meet him.

We're 12 hours into the first day of the week, so Jesus is long gone. It wouldn't surprise me if he was up and out of there at 6:05 on Saturday night.

But the women don't know any of that yet. All they know is this looks really sketchy. The tomb is open? The stone is way over there? What's going on here?

Can you imagine how scary that would be? Obviously a bunch of strong guys were here—or maybe still inside. Or something supernatural? The spookiness of the whole scene combined with the morning chill and send shivers through these women.

So what do they do? I love verse 5.

**5 As they entered the tomb ...**

Hollywood has a trope in horror movies. The characters in horror movies always make decisions no sane person would make just because the writers want to ramp up the tension. There's a hilarious Geico commercial that makes fun of that. A group of young people are running from a chainsaw murderer, and one of them says, "Why don't we just get in that car and drive away!" And another one says, "Are you crazy? Let's hide behind the chainsaws in the shed!" So they all go and crouch behind the chainsaws. And the murderer is standing right behind them and takes off his mask and just shakes his head. Then the voiceover comes on and says, "When you're in a horror movie, you make bad decisions—it's what you do" and then goes on to talk about Geico. And then the commercial ends with the teens running away from the shed and one of them says, "Let's head for the cemetery!"

Every time I read verse 5, I think of that commercial. It's dark, the huge stone is tossed aside, the tomb is standing open, no one is around. There are no lights in the tomb, so they're looking at the opening to a cave that's pitch black inside... —scariest situation you can imagine, and what do they do? Run away?

---

historique 163 [1930] 241–66; Metzger, "Nazareth Inscription"; van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, 159–60):

Ordinance of Caesar: It is my pleasure that graves and tombs—whoever has made them as a pious service for ancestors or children or members of their house—that these remain unmolested in perpetuity. But if any person lay information that another either has destroyed them, or has in any other way cast out the bodies which have been buried there, or with malicious deception has transferred them to other places, to the dishonor of those buried there, or has removed the headstones or other stones, in such a case I command that a trial be instituted, just as if they were concerned with the gods for the pious services of mortals. For beyond all else it shall be obligatory to honor those who have been buried. Let no one remove them for any reason. If not, however [i.e., if anyone does so], capital punishment on the charge of tomb robbery I will to take.

Metzger ("Nazareth Inscription," 91) comments: "If in fact the ordinance was published in Palestine some time prior to the death of Jesus, then ... at the time of the resurrection there was in force a severe law against tampering with buried bodies, the consequences of infringing which the panic-stricken disciples are very unlikely to have braved" (cf. Boffo, *Iscrizioni*, 333; Brown, 1293–94).

## 5 As they entered the tomb ...

Mark just ratchets up the tension. Something tells me Mary Magdalene went first. She ducks down, steps inside, holds up her lantern expecting to see a body wrapped up in linen... , and instead she sees someone sitting up looking back at her. And v.5 says they were alarmed. I guess!

Mark is showing us the answer to their question. Who will remove the stone? And angel. He was opening the door and inviting them in—that’s part 2 of the story. Part 1, they travel toward the tomb in unbelief. Part 2, The angel invites them in by moving the stone. Now part 3, which is v.5.

## Part 3: The Angel

**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.**

That’s the first giveaway that this is an angel—they always say that. This scene has all the earmarks of an angelic encounter.<sup>9</sup>

### Young Man

Mark calls him a young man. Bible writers often describe angels from the observer’s point of view<sup>10</sup> and they often use this term translated “young man.”<sup>11</sup> A man in the prime of his strength. That term is frequently used in the Bible to refer to a champion or a mighty warrior. So don’t think of some gangly teenager. More like a Navy Seal.

### White Robe

The second description Mark gives is his white robe, also common in heavenly visitations.<sup>12</sup> And the only other time Mark uses the word “white” in the whole book is at the transfiguration to describe Jesus clothes shining like the sun. In Luke’s account at the tomb it says the angels’ clothes gleamed like lightning.<sup>13</sup>

### Right Side

Then he says he’s seated on the right side. The right side of what? Evidently, it doesn’t matter. It just matters that he’s seated on the right side, the place of honor.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> The white robe, the women are terrified at his presence, he tells them not to fear, he has knowledge of private conversations, he delivers revelation and then gives an authoritative command. And the other gospels state explicitly that he’s an angel.

<sup>10</sup> Luke does the same thing, and in Luke, he tells us a few verses later that he’s talking about angels.

**Luke 24:4 ... suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ... 23 They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive.**

And in Jewish writings, this same term is often used to refer to angels. In the Pillar Commentary on Mark, Edwards cites 2 Macc 3:26, 33; Gospel of Peter 36; Josephus, Ant. 5.277.

<sup>11</sup> In the Pillar Commentary on Mark, Edwards cites 2 Macc 3:26, 33; Gospel of Peter 36; Josephus, Ant. 5.277.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Mt. 28:3; Jn. 20:12; Acts 1:10; 10:30 and the frequent mention of white clothes for those promoted to join in the worship of heaven in Revelation. For the wider Jewish background see, for instance, Dn. 7:9; 1 Enoch 62:15–16; 87:2; 2 Macc. 3:26. Normal people didn’t wear white clothes except at formal occasions.

<sup>13</sup> Luke 24:4.

<sup>14</sup> Luke does the same thing in Luke 11:1 when the angel of the Lord (presumably this same angel) appears in the Temple

There are only two other places in Mark where someone is seated at the right side. Both times it's Jesus, seated at the right side of the Father.

This angel has the same clothes as Jesus had in his glory at the transfiguration... , and the same lingo of Jesus' exalted status is used of this angel. I believe the point here is that this angel is there representing Jesus. Matthew tells us was the angel of the Lord,<sup>15</sup> who appears many times in the Old Testament representing Yahweh.<sup>16</sup> So this angel is there representing Jesus, so that every word out of his mouth is the word of Christ himself. It's an angel representing Jesus—that's part 3. Now part 4, where the angel speaks.

## Part 4: Sending Out the Women

### The Angel's Knowledge

**6 ... You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified.**

If they haven't already figured out this is an angel, he removes all doubt by showing he has supernatural knowledge of everything that's going on. I know why you're here. I know what you want. And I know everything that's happened. He even quotes word-for-word what Jesus said to the disciples in private.

**Mark 14:27 "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: "'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' 28 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."<sup>17</sup>**

### Misguided Looking

And it's a bit of a rebuke. When he says, "You are looking for Jesus," that word translated "looking" is used ten times in Mark, and every time it's a bad thing. They are looking for Jesus on the third day in the one place he told them again and again he wouldn't be.<sup>18</sup> Truth that is only half understood, however plainly spoken, is always forgotten when the time comes to apply it.

### He's Been Raised

But then the angel reveals the good news.

**6 ... He has been raised! He is not here.<sup>19</sup> See the place where they laid him.<sup>20</sup>**

---

on the right side of the altar.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 28:2.

<sup>16</sup> He represented God in such a direct way that when people meet that angel, they say they met God and they fully expect to die, because they saw God. When that angel says something, they say God said it. That angel represents God in such a direct way that many theologians believe he is the pre-incarnate Christ. One reason I don't agree with that is that here the angel of the Lord is talking about Jesus and says, "He's not here." If the angel of the Lord is there and Jesus isn't there, then the angel isn't Jesus.

<sup>17</sup> Except it's not an exact quotation because the angel puts it in the present tense—He is going ahead of you.

<sup>18</sup> It's interesting to me that the Church very quickly lost track of where Jesus' tomb was. There's no record the Apostles ever visited it or decorated it or enshrined it in any way. Once they encountered Jesus after the resurrection, the tomb lost all significance. All through Scripture God instructs people to set up memorials to help them remember important events. But not Jesus' tomb. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And so the location of Jesus' tomb is as irrelevant as it can be.

<sup>19</sup> Notice the order. "He has been raised. He is not here." None of the gospels argue that the empty tomb proves the resur-

Tomorrow, worship leaders all over the world will say, “He is risen!” and the people will respond with, “He is risen indeed!” But did you know the Bible never actually says that? Every time where you read “He has risen” in your Bible (here, twice in Matthew, and twice in Luke), it’s always in the passive voice. The literal translation would be “he *has been* raised.” The Father raised him. Yes, Jesus had the authority to lay down his life and take it up again (Jn.10:18), but more important than that is the fact that God raised him up. It’s important because it shows that God accepted Jesus’ sacrifice and honored him by raising him from the dead.

**Romans 1:4 Jesus Christ our Lord, who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.**

He was already God’s Son, but when the Father raised him, it was a powerful, earth-shattering declaration of his sonship.

So this angel tells the women, “Don’t be upset. The things you’re upset over things you should be rejoicing over! What you see as a disaster (the tomb empty on the third day) is the best news ever! Sometimes it’s so painful when God doesn’t give us what we so desperately want... , and we don’t realize it’s because what he has for us is so much better.

**Jesus is the Christ**

And this angel leaves no room whatsoever for this idea that the historical Jesus was one thing and the “Christ of faith” is something else. The angel points to where the corpse was and says, “See where he *was*?” He’s not there anymore. He uses the most earthy, human way of referring to Jesus—Jesus the Nazarene... —Jesus from backwater hickville, who was crucified, the one whose body was lying right there, the man—*he*’s the one who was raised. Same person. And when he says, “He’s not here,” what wasn’t there? The body. The thing that was buried was the same thing that was raised—no room or some spiritualized “resurrection” that wasn’t physical.

---

rection. When Paul gives evidence for the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, he doesn’t mention the empty tomb. He mentions all the appearances to people—that’s the proof. The empty tomb doesn’t prove anything, but it’s still important because a non-empty tomb would definitely disprove the resurrection. So the angel doesn’t say, “He is not here, therefore he has been raised.” He says, “He’s been raised; that’s why he’s not here.”

<sup>20</sup> The angel affirms all three crucial pieces—Jesus’ death, his burial, and his resurrection. We already knew those were the three key components because Mark repeated the women’s names as they witnessed each one. Now the angel affirms it—death (**Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified**), burial (**See the place where they laid him**), and resurrection (**He has been raised! He is not here**).

The angel’s words form the pattern Paul uses when he summarizes the gospel.

1 Corinthians 15	Mark 16
Christ died for our sins (v. 3)	You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified (v. 6).
He was buried (v. 4).	See the place where they laid him (v. 6)
He was raised on the third day (v. 4).	He has been raised! He is not here (16:6)
He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve (v. 5)	Tell his disciples and Peter, “He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you” (v. 7)

There's really no getting around the fact that the gospel writers wrote what they wrote as actual history.<sup>21</sup> The gospel accounts don't read like myths or legends, which have a very clear style. The gospel accounts are presented as historical fact.<sup>22</sup>

## The Commission

So the angel gives them the news, then he gives them a commission.

**7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter.**

### *Tell His Disciples*

You women are to go and be the apostles to the Apostles. Before the Apostles' could tell the world, the women had to tell the Apostles.

Tell them what? You might expect him to say, "Jesus said, 'Tell those backstabbing cowards, it's too late to apologize.'" No.

**7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee.'<sup>23</sup> There you will see him, just as he told you.**

Jesus is going to lead them as a shepherd again.

---

<sup>21</sup> Christianity is the only religion in the world that its own scriptures say, "If this particular event in history didn't actually happen, then this whole religion is bogus."

**1 Corinthians 15:17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.**

Sometimes people wonder, "How could I possibly sort through all the religions in the world to figure out which one is true?" You can start with this: there are only three religions in the world that are disprovable, because there are only three that are based on history. The vast majority of religions are just philosophies. You can't prove them wrong or right—you just like the philosophy or don't like the philosophy. Buddhism is a philosophy. If you could prove that Gautama Buddha never even lived, it would make no difference whatsoever in that religion. If you could show there never was a man named Confucius, it wouldn't have any impact at all on Confucianism. But there are three religions that claim to be based on certain historical realities, and if their version of history is incorrect, the religion is false. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. All three depend on history, and all three really depend on the same historical events—what happened to Jesus. Islam teaches that Jesus never died, and modern Judaism teaches he died but never rose. Christianity says he died and rose, and if he didn't the whole religion is false.

So it's not as hard as it sounds to sift through the religions and figure out which one is true. You just have to look into the evidence for the death and resurrection of Jesus.

<sup>22</sup> C.S. Lewis was a professor at Oxford with expertise in ancient literature, and he said this: "I have been reading poems, romances, vision literature, legends, and myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know none of them are like this. Of this [gospel] text there are only two possible views. Either this is reportage...or else, some unknown [ancient] writer...without known predecessors or successors, suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern novelistic realistic narrative (cited by Tim Keller, Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Reason, copyright 2008, page 106).

<sup>23</sup> Why Galilee?

After the resurrection Jesus appeared to hundreds of people in person to prove that he had risen. He was establishing rock-solid historical evidence for us that the resurrection really happened. And the best place to do that was Galilee, where he grew up and carried out most of his public ministry. Everyone knew him there. If he made his post-resurrection appearances anywhere else, someone might argue that the people in that area didn't know Jesus well enough, and some imposter could have fooled them. So Jesus goes right to where he grew up so there would be no doubt.

Another possible reason is the fact that Jerusalem had rejected him. Reject Jesus long enough and the time will come when he will grant your desire to be rid of him. So it could be a judgment on Jerusalem.

Thirdly, it could also be seen as a new beginning for the disciples. Galilee was where it all started. That's where Jesus called the 12 in the first place. He called them to take up their crosses and follow him to the death, and they utterly failed. Now, going back to Galilee, they're going to get another chance. It will be a new beginning for them—another shot at actually being followers of Jesus. And this time they won't fail.

## *And Peter*

And you can't miss the "and Peter" part. That's redundant, but necessary. If he hadn't said this, no doubt there would have been some big debate in the years to follow about whether Peter could be restored. In fact, there was a big debate in the Church not long after this about whether people who have denied Christ could ever be allowed back in the church.<sup>24</sup> Most churches finally decided that they could, but only after a long period of punishment and penance. The brothers and sisters in the pews can be merciless when you fall in ways they haven't fallen.<sup>25</sup>

That's one reason Jesus needs to say this. Another reason is for Peter himself. You can just hear the enemy whispering in his ear, "Jesus warned you, you wouldn't listen, you had your chance, you blew it. Don't you dare show up at the Galilee reunion. He's not going to want to see your face."

We know right after it happened, Peter went out and wept bitterly. If he was that crushed then, can you imagine his weeping now after what they did to Jesus on the cross?

So Peter is off by himself somewhere, in the pit of darkness, coming right up to the brink of going the way of Judas. Maybe he even brought a rope with him. Peter's an intense man with intense emotions. When he's up, he's way up. But you can imagine, when he's down, like this—that has to be about as dark as it gets.

His tears are dried up, maybe the only thing keeping him from putting that rope around his neck is that he's paralyzed with grief.

Suddenly there's a hand on his shoulder. It's the soft touch of a woman, but the hand is trembling. It's Mary Magdalene. She tells him the whole story. "He said if we go to Galilee, we'll see him."

Peter shakes his head. "You can go. Not me."

"Peter, *he said your name.*" He looks up at her. "Yes, the angel spoke your name."

One thing that stands out to me is how quickly Jesus restores Peter and the others. This is the very first thing God says through his angel. His highest priority is not to make sure they understand how bad they messed up. It's to make sure they know how welcome they are to come back.

I always think of that line in the song, "He's Alive" where Peter says, "Even if he was alive, it wouldn't be the same." Who knows what the exalted Christ will be like? He was patient with us during his humiliation, but now that he has been exalted into heaven, is he going to be more stern? Less accessible?

No. It doesn't matter if he's in the house at Bethany, or in the upper room... , or hanging on a cross, or lying in a tomb, or risen from the dead, or seated at the right hand of God.

---

<sup>24</sup> A couple hundred years after this, Rome started requiring everyone to offer sacrifices to pagan gods. If you refused, you might face torture or death. A lot of Christians caved and offered the sacrifices and denied Christ. Then when that emperor died and the persecution ended, those people who caved in wanted to be welcomed back into the church. The people who had remained faithful and refused to deny Christ and suffered all kinds of persecution while those other people had it easy because they caved in said, "I don't think so."

It's known in history books as the "lapsed" controversy. One side said those people who had lapsed lost their salvation and could never be restored. Others said, "No, we should let them back in." Eventually a middle view rose that most churches latched on to. They said it was possible for those people to be restored, but not easily. They had to go through a long period of punishment and penance. The more easily they caved in, the longer the punishment. In some cases they were required to wait until they were dying.

<sup>25</sup> David knew what he was doing when God gave him his choice of punishments and David said, "Let it be something directly from your hand. Don't let me fall into the hands of men."

He is the same everywhere and always and he said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

### ***Just as He Told You***

You know what I think might be the most encouraging words in this verse—even more than the “and Peter”? It’s the words, “Just as he told you.” Think about it—when did Jesus say those words about meeting up with them in Galilee? He said that immediately *after* he said they would all fall away. Jesus was talking about their restoration from their failure even before the failure happened.

When you have a really bad fall, it takes you by surprise, you thought you would never do something like that... , you’re defeated, you’re discouraged, you’re deflated, you feel like you’ve ruined everything... , and it’s natural to think God feels the same way. Like God is shocked, and he needs to work through it. And once he comes to terms with it, then you can start talking about how you could be restored. But that’s as wrong as it can be. Jesus told these men about their restoration *before they even fell*.

God chose you to be his child before the foundation of the world. He chose you to be his with full knowledge of every sin you would ever commit against him your whole life... —including all the ones you don’t even know about because they are still in your future.

We are so prone to project our weak, fragile, fickle love onto God and imagine he will give up on us as easily as we give up on ourselves.

God is a person, and he responds in personal ways. We can do things that grieve him, anger him, or delight him. All that is true—God is responsive to us in positive and negative ways. But we tend to imagine that our little fluctuations in loyalty have way more effect than they do. Like the earth thinking its changes in season have an impact on the sun. God’s love is more stable than we can even imagine.

When Jesus required us to forgive 70 times 7 (the number of completeness squared and multiplied times ten)... —if that’s how many times God requires you to forgive others, how many times do you think God is ready to forgive you?

Not only is Peter included, but he’s actually given preference.

**1 Corinthians 15:4 He was buried, he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.**

He appears to Peter first, ahead of the others. Peter receives special grace because he committed special sin. And if that sounds backwards, it’s because we’re influenced by a world that values fairness above grace. Sometimes the Lord draws nearest to those who need him most, even if they deserve it the least.

### ***And Me***

One really cool thing about this is that if Peter’s name could be singled out, yours could too. Peter represents the worst of the disciples’ failures. And so if the angel would say, “Tell his disciples and Peter,” he would also say, “Tell his disciples and [fill in your name].” When you think you’ve gone too far, failed too much, fallen too severely, you can hear your name in the angel’s words. You’re invited back too.

## **Part 5: Fear and Disobedience**

Okay, so let's take a look at part 5. This is the ending no one likes—verse 8. Right after the angel commands them to go and tell ...

**8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone,<sup>26</sup> because they were afraid.**

The end.

## Fled

The word translated “fled” is the same word used to describe the abandonment of the disciples when they fled in fear at Jesus’ arrest (14:50). All these terms are negative. Mark piles up the negative terms in describing their response. They were cowards at the cross and they are cowards at the resurrection.<sup>27</sup>

And all that money they spend on those those spices was wasted. They went there to honor Jesus, but they dishonor him by disobeying. The only way to honor Jesus is through faith—by trusting him enough to obey him.

## Afraid

But they don't obey—why?

**8 ... They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.**

Afraid of whom? Some say their still freaked out about the angel, but that doesn't make sense. If they're afraid of the angel, they would say, “We don't want to cross him. We better do what he says.”

What kind of fear would make them disobey and not tell anyone? Fear of people. They were afraid people would think they were crazy. “People will write us off as a bunch of gullible, hysterical women.” And they were right. Here's what happened when they did finally get up the courage to go tell the Apostles.

**Luke 24:10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.**

And as the Apostles laughed, Mary said to Salome, “See. This is exactly what I was afraid of.” Two hundred years later, Celsus mocked Christianity as being based on “the gossip of women about the empty tomb.”

---

<sup>26</sup> It's possible Mark means they said nothing to anyone besides the disciples while they were on the way to tell the disciples, as in Luke 10:4; 2 Kings 4:29. There are other times when the Bible says someone didn't tell anyone, but it was only temporary. Samuel was afraid to tell the of his vision to Eli (1 Sam. 3:15) but eventually did. As Daniel kept silent about the visions in his head but eventually made them known (Dan. 7:28).

But I think it's more likely Mark means she didn't even tell the disciples because:

- 1) Mark is so emphatic with his double negative “nothing to anyone.”
- 2) it seems to be a purposeful statement to show the did the opposite of what the angel commanded, which was to tell the disciples.
- 3) In the context, the women staying at a distance at the crucifixion is seen in a negative light.

<sup>27</sup> At his death they are off at a distance and at his resurrection they disobey because of fear. And sandwiched in between is Joseph, who takes up his cross and follows Jesus. Mark can't resist one last sandwich to draw a contrast between fearful cowardice and believing boldness.

They were afraid of exactly the same things we're afraid of when we don't tell people about Jesus. Isn't it true that we have read the Great Commission and immediately gone right out and bit our tongue when we had a chance to speak up for Christ because we were nervous about how it would come across?

## **Troubling Ending**

So that's the ending nobody likes. The whole story just ... ends with fear and disobedience? And worse than that, a resurrection account with no appearances of Jesus? Jesus is the main character in every scene in the entire gospel, front and center every time... , but the most important scene of the entire book, the resurrection, and Jesus is nowhere to be seen? Mark couldn't have meant to end his gospel this way, could he? Wouldn't he put the most important part, the big climax at the very end?

## **The Structure**

### **Meat in the Middle**

Would he? What have we seen all through the book? Where does Mark like to put the climax? At the end? No—the middle.

The whole book is set up that way. The first half is about who Jesus is, the second half is why he came, and the climax—Christ in all his spectacular glory—that's the centerpiece. So Mark puts it in the mid point in the book - the transfiguration.

What about this section? I counted the Greek words in Mark's resurrection account, and guess what's right in the center... , with exactly 61 Greek words before it and 61 words after it. Verse 5.

Mark 16 is a chiasmus—where parts 1 and 5 go together, parts 2 and 4 go together, and the centerpiece is part 3.

**A – The women go to the tomb in unbelief.**

B – The angel invites the women in to tell them the news.

**C – The appearance of the angel.**

B<sup>1</sup> – The angel sends the women out to tell the news.

**A<sup>1</sup> – The women flee from the tomb in unbelief.<sup>28</sup>**

And the centerpiece? The glorious angel who represents Christ.

### **The Three Complaints**

And how does that structure solve the problem of Mark's terrible ending? Well, let's think about it. What are the complaints with Mark's ending? It's too abrupt, it's too much of a downer, and no appearances of the risen Christ.

---

<sup>28</sup> Everything before the centerpiece is movement toward the tomb; everything after is movement away from the tomb.

## Stories as Parables

Too abrupt. Would Mark end a story abruptly? Mark is the king of abrupt endings.<sup>29</sup> Chapter 1, Jesus is tested with an epic battle with Satan in the wilderness for 40 days. How did that turn out Mark? No comment—just moves on to the next story.<sup>30</sup>

He stills the storm and the disciples say, “Who is this?” There’s your opportunity Mark—answer their question! Nope—right on to the next event.

Jesus asks, “How is it that the Messiah is the son of David, and yet David calls him Lord?” And we all scoot to the edge of our seats for the answer. And it’s like Mark just says, “Weird, huh?” and moves on to the next thing.

Mark’s strategy is to narrate what happened, but then end it in a way that turns the story into a kind of parable or riddle that forces you to think. He gets you leaning forward in your chair, then suddenly ends the story, leaving you with two options... : either think really hard about the meaning or walk away without a clue.

Mark doesn’t want you to get to the end of his gospel and slam the book closed. He wants you to read the last verse and say, “Wait, what?” and start paging backward looking for insight.

It’s interesting—everyone who thinks Mark should have a longer ending has exactly the same idea of what it should say. The women eventually get up the courage to tell the Apostles, and later Jesus appears to them. We want Mark to say that because we all know that’s what happened, obviously, otherwise how would we all know?<sup>31</sup>

But Mark’s not real big on stating the obvious.<sup>32</sup> So many times the other gospel writers will state something explicitly, but in Mark’s account, he just implies it and leaves it to the reader to figure it out. He likes to make things into riddles because it exposes who has spiritual eyesight and who’s blind.

### *The Messianic “Secret”*

Probably the most famous riddle in Mark is what commentators call, “the messianic secret,...” where Jesus keeps saying, “Don’t tell anyone about me.” It’s such a head-scratcher because it’s not a secret. Jesus’ revealed who he was in public and he did his miracles in public. It wasn’t secret.

---

<sup>29</sup> Some insist verse 8 could not be the intended ending because the final word in the verse is “for” (Greek *gar*). But ending a section with that word is also part of Mark’s style. See 1:16, 5:42, 9:6, 11:18, 16:4.

<sup>30</sup> Very often, there’s a verse at the end of a pericope that half the commentaries place as a conclusion statement, and the other half place as the introduction to the next section. So when he gets to the last story of the book, there’s nothing next to link it into so it just feels like an abrupt ending.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 28:8 says that they left the tomb with fear and great joy as they ran to tell Jesus’ disciples. And if that sounds strange to you, you may not have paid much attention to your own emotions. If our emotions are anything, they are up and down, right?

I like the way Alexander McLaren put it: “If we remember the excitement and confusion of mind in which they were, we shall not wonder if belief and unbelief followed each other, like the flow and recoil of the waves. One moment they were on the crest ..., and saw land ahead; the next they were down in the trough, and saw only the ... surge.”

So it’s not as paradoxical as it sounds when Matthew says they were full of both fear and joy. But for his purposes, Mark only mentions the fear part.

That’s no different from Luke 24:11, which says the Apostles didn’t believe the women because their words sounded like nonsense.

<sup>32</sup> It was not uncommon for writers to refer to very well-known events without narrating them, and by doing that—by leaving them out of the narration—it has a way of drawing even more attention to them.

But Mark won't tell us why. He forces us to put the puzzle pieces together and figure it out. And by chapter 8, it all comes together. He didn't want them telling others about him because without understanding the cross and resurrection, they would get it wrong.<sup>33</sup>

The riddle of the last verse of the book is similar. It also involves not telling. But this time it's different, because this time they are *supposed* to tell. But it's still a riddle. Why won't the women tell? If we understand the answer to the other riddle, that's a clue to getting this one. Before they weren't allowed to tell because they didn't understand about Jesus' death and resurrection. Now the women fail to tell also because of confusion about Jesus' death and resurrection—they still don't believe.

## Fear Persists until Faith

And that brings us to the 2<sup>nd</sup> complaint people have—why does Mark end with such a downer—disobedience and unbelief? Didn't he know that would make us uncomfortable? Of course he did. We can't close the book there, we need some resolution, so where does Mark point us with his structure? Back to the centerpiece in v.5. What's the solution to fear and disobedience? Listen to the word of Christ through the angel.

What v.8 forces us to see is that even though the cross has happened and the resurrection has happened... , we're still not where we need to be until faith happens. He's showing us that the cross doesn't automatically transform anyone. Neither does the resurrection. No one changes—not even the best disciples—until believe. Where does the resurrection of Jesus get you prior to faith? Nowhere. And that forces us to look at ourselves and our own fear, doesn't it? If those women never would have told anyone, the whole work of Christ really would have ended in disaster. And our silence and fear and cowardice will also be disastrous. And what is the solution? The centerpiece—believe the revealed Word of God.

## No Appearances - Jesus' Word Is Proof

The third complaint people have about Mark's ending is the fact that there are no appearances of the risen Christ. In the other gospels, those are the proof of the resurrection—the Apostles see Jesus with their own eyes.

So why doesn't Mark give us that? He does. Again, go back to that centerpiece—the word of God through the angel.

**6 He has been raised! ... 7 He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.**

That's divine revelation. He said those post-resurrection appearances would happen, so they happened. And if that's not enough, he reminds us that Jesus himself said it. You want proof of the resurrection? It was proved beyond a shadow of a doubt the moment Jesus first prophesied it.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> In 8:30-32, Jesus commands them not to tell anyone about him, then he reveals for the first time that he is going to die. And Peter rebukes him. This shows that if the disciples went out to spread the gospel, they would get it wrong. No one who rejects the idea of Jesus' death and resurrection is fit to preach the gospel.

<sup>34</sup> If you want to know what happened after the resurrection, just listen to Jesus. He already said he would appear to his disciples in Galilee, and after that they would preach the gospel to the nations until the kingdom of God expanded from a mustard seed to an expansive tree.

Even that isn't the end. Mark described his book as "The *beginning* of the gospel about Jesus Christ." So we've known right from v.1 that Mark never intended to finish the story. He told us in the very first verse of the book that this is only the

Mark has shown Jesus' prophecies fulfilled to the letter again and again and again leading up to the cross. If Jesus said he would rise and appear to the Apostles, that settles it. And when God sends an angel from heaven to repeat it, that *really* settles it. And we know the angel said that because of the testimony of the women.<sup>35</sup>

The accounts of Jesus appearing to the Apostles in a way that completely transformed them is compelling proof, but it's not the best kind of proof. One thing we've learned in Mark is that the question of whether or not you will believe something depends not on how much proof or evidence you are given... , but rather it's based on whether your eyes are open or blind. When you're spiritually blind, Jesus can literally perform miracles right in front of your face and it won't budge your heart.

And what tool does God use to open blind eyes? Usually not proof. The tool that has power to open blind eyes is the gospel—God's Word. So Mark ends in a way that makes us lean forward and go back and search the book until we find he's already given us the end of the story and the best proof of all... —the word of God through the angel and the word of Christ.<sup>36</sup> Divine revelation is more reliable than what you see with your own eyes.<sup>37</sup>

Remember what God said when he spoke from heaven at the Transfiguration? "This is my Son ... *listen to him.*" The Moses and Elijah disappeared. Beyond even the law and the prophets, listen to my Son.

The book started with God's message delivered through his messenger, John the Baptist. And it ends with God's message delivered through this angel. And what Mark wants the reader to do with this ending is the very thing all the characters in the story refused to do—take Jesus' prophecies seriously.

---

beginning, and he reminds us again in the last verse of the book.

The fact is, none of the four gospels finishes the story. All four of them give us only the beginning of the gospel. The full gospel is the entire New Testament. If you get to Mark 16:8 and you're wondering where the ending is, go to Revelation 22. Mark is the beginning of the gospel, Revelation is the end of the gospel, the epistles are the heart of the gospel—all of it, including all the commands that show us how to walk with Christ, it's all part of the good news.

Just as the tomb couldn't contain Jesus, neither can the book of Mark or any single book of the Bible.

<sup>35</sup> This is not a hallucination, as all three women see and hear the same thing. There's no such thing as a group hallucination. They didn't expect it. What the angel told them was the opposite of what they believed. It's not a story where the women come out looking like heroes. There is no reason to assume this is anything other than a truthful account of what happened.

<sup>36</sup> Some people teach that it's impossible to prove a resurrection, so we just have to accept it on blind faith. That's wrong. It's easy to prove a resurrection. All you have to do is verify the person was dead at some point, and then alive at some later point. And the way to determine if that happened in history is through eyewitness accounts. Reliable testimony.

And lest you degrade that down to some lesser form of knowledge than scientific knowledge, let me remind you that 90+ percent of everything we believe, even about science, is based on reliable testimony, not scientific experimentation. I believe the speed of light is 186,000 mi/s, not because I've ever measured it with a scientific test, but just because reliable authorities tell me that's how fast it is. I believe my body is made up of millions of cells not because I've ever seen any of them, but because I'm told by trustworthy sources that's the case. If a sign tells me the street I'm on is a dead end, or the news reports a big wildfire in the mountains, or the label on my bread says one slice as 28 grams of carbs, or a Google search tells me the Nuggets won last night, or my wife tells me she saw a friend at the store, or I don't require scientific proof of any of that. I don't tell my wife, "I'll believe you saw a friend at the store when I see surveillance footage with my own eyes."

Even the scientists who do measure the speed of light or look at cells in a microscope—even those people believe most of what they believe about science based on the testimony of other reliable scientists in other fields. The primary way human beings gain knowledge is through reliable testimony.

<sup>37</sup> There is no account in any of the gospels of the resurrection of Jesus. The narrative always leaves off at his burial and picks up again long after he is raised. Why did no human being witness the resurrection? Perhaps because it's so supremely important that God wanted it to be announced by angels. Human beings can be fooled, our eyes play tricks on us, we sometimes misinterpret things.

Some things are so important God wanted to bypass all that and have an angel from heaven announce it directly.

## Finding Jesus Starts with Revelation

One last observation.

### 7 ... There you will see him.<sup>38</sup>

With all we've seen in this gospel on the theme of blindness and spiritual sight... , we can't miss the implication of those words, "you will see him." Not only will they see him physically; their eyes will be opened like the Centurion and they will see the Son of God. Even though they've walked with him for years, in Galilee they're going to see him—really see him—for the first time. And it's only after seeing Jesus that way that fear finally gives way to courage.

## Conclusion

Do you see the beauty of Mark's crazy ending? Every time you get to that hopeless ending in v.8, and it forces you back to the Word of Christ in v.5... , so what looks at first like a hopeless ending becomes an endless hope—perpetually cycling you back to his great and precious promises. Such a profound and powerful way to end the book. Especially when you remember who Mark is writing to—the persecuted believers in Rome. Do you think maybe some of them were at a place where they were trembling and bewildered and silenced by fear? How about us here in this room? What's the solution to our times of bewilderment and confusion and fear? Ask yourself, "Am I trusting him? Am I believing his words?"

He understands your weaknesses. He wasn't thrown off by your most recent failure. He already has a plan in place to restore you from your next failure. And the plan is to draw you close to him.

The solution to our fear and confusion and anxiety is to see him. To have our spiritual eyes opened wider. And that will happen when we stop operating based on how things seem and go back to his words, think deeply about them, and believe.

---

<sup>38</sup> Seeing Jesus will only happen when they go meet him in Galilee where he said to meet him. The angel doesn't say, "Jesus has been raised. Now go out there and be good little seekers and find him! Organize a search party and set up a search grid and go door to door." If they search anywhere but Galilee, they won't find him. They could have Sherlock Homes on the case and hire expert trackers, but until they go to Galilee, they'll find nothing. If you want to encounter Jesus, it will happen when and only when you seek him the way he said to seek him. No one finds Jesus without starting with divine guidance. People who decide to go on a quest for the truth, but they don't start with divine guidance, they're like a kid playing pin the tail on the donkey where they get blindfolded, spun around until they're dizzy, but then no one points them toward the wall. They say, "Just start walking." You don't have any chance at all.

## Harmony

Matthew 27:62 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. 63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." 65 "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Matthew 28:1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has been raised, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has been raised from the dead' and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." 8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

Mark 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 been raised! 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.

Luke 24:1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has been raised! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" 8 Then they remembered his words. 9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

John 20:1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" 3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes, 11 but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

## **Summary**

Mark's resurrection account is a chiasm where the angel who represents Jesus is the centerpiece. The unsatisfying ending points back to the centerpiece of divine revelation. Their fear and disobedience is due to failure to believe Christ's Words. The solution to fear is faith. Especially trust in Jesus' invitation to meet him and promise of restoration.