

Mark 16
July 14, 2024

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

I'm going to stretch you this morning. And it will require us to use our imagination. Jesus is resurrected and meeting up with His disciples. And what if we were one of the disciples, and Jesus appears to us as we're eating dinner He says, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Q: What would our plans look like?! We wouldn't have the internet to book a plane ticket out of AIBA through booking.com. They didn't have an email account to reach others around the world. At a practical level, how do you think we would go about that? [Let people engage]

Transition: When Jesus met with His disciples, he not only proved that He conquered death and is alive, but he gave a COMMAND. He commissioned them to take the Gospel to all creation! This command, known as the Great Commission, shows up in all four Gospel accounts + Acts:

- Matt 28:19-20 (Go and make disciples of ALL nations...)
- Mark 16:15 (Go into ALL the world and preach the good news to all creation.)
- Luke 24:46-48 (...repentance of sins will be preached in his name to ALL nations...)
- John 20:21 (...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.)
- Acts 1:8 (You will receive power when the HS comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in ALL Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.)

Hypothetical Q: What if the resurrection of Jesus happened last week in today's culture and we are one his disciples. What if he said to us, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." What would our plans look like? [Let people engage]

Transition: I struggle with this question. Sometimes I think we aren't being intentional enough to share the Good News with others. I think we have excuses as to why we shouldn't broach the subject with people in our lives. There are times that we resist instead of leaning into it with the belief that the Holy Spirit is always guiding us.

It's clear to me that we must not ignore the Great Commission, nor should we try to explain it away. It's clear that the mandate is to spread the Good News to all people on Earth. And whether we carry out the Great Commission will matter for all of eternity! There are many souls at stake! Let's read chapter 16 and see what we can glean.

BOOK:

The Resurrection

16 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.

⁹ 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.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

What an opportunity and obligation we have to carry the Gospel to the whole world! “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Are you serving, or are you expecting others to serve you?

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 166-168). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The Servant's Resurrection (Mark 16:1–18)

Jesus Christ was “delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). A dead Savior cannot save anybody. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is as much a part of the Gospel message as His sacrificial death on the cross (1 Cor. 15:1–8). In fact, in the Book of Acts, the church gave witness primarily to the Resurrection (Acts 1:22; 4:2, 33).

The Resurrection proves that Jesus Christ is what He claimed to be, the very Son of God (Rom. 1:4). He had told His disciples that He would be raised from the dead, but they had not grasped the meaning of this truth (Mark 9:9–10, 31; 10:34). Even the women who came early to the tomb did not expect to see Him alive. In fact, they had purchased spices to complete the anointing that Joseph and Nicodemus had so hastily begun.

When you combine the accounts in the Gospels, you arrive at the following probable order of Resurrection appearances on that first day of the week: (1) to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11–18 and Mark 16:9–11), (2) to the other women (Matt. 28:9–10), (3) to Peter (Luke 24:34 and 1 Cor. 15:5), (4) to the two men going to Emmaus (Mark 16:12 and Luke 24:13–32), and (5) to ten of the disciples in the Upper Room (Mark 16:14 and John 20:19–25).

It was still dark when Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and Joanna (Luke 24:10) started out for the tomb (John 20:1); and they arrived at early dawn (Luke 24:1). Their first surprise was finding the stone already rolled away from the door (Matt. 28:2–4) so that they were able to enter into the tomb. The second surprise was meeting two angels in the tomb (Luke 24:4; Mark focused on only one angel); and the third surprise was hearing the message they delivered. No wonder the women were amazed!

The message was that Jesus was not there: He had risen from the dead, and He was going before them into Galilee where He would meet them. The women were the first messengers of the glorious Resurrection message! Note that there was a special word of encouragement for Peter (Mark 16:7), and keep in mind that Mark wrote his Gospel with Peter's assistance.

Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter and John what she had discovered (John 20:2–10), and then she lingered at the tomb after they left. It was then that Jesus appeared to her (John 20:11–18). From her conversation with Jesus, it seems that Mary did not fully grasp what the angels had said, but she was the first believer to see the risen Christ. Mark 16:8 may give the idea that all the women fled, but Mark 16:9 states that Mary met Jesus personally.

After He appeared to Mary, Jesus met the other women as they were on their way to report their conversation with Jesus to the disciples (Matt. 28:9–10). Initially, the women were both joyful and afraid, but after they met the risen Christ, they found the disciples and shared the good news (Matt. 28:8). It is one thing to hear the message and quite something else to meet the risen Lord personally. When you meet Him, you have something to share with others.

The emphasis in Mark 16:9–14 is on the unbelief of the disciples who were mourning and weeping instead of rejoicing at the good news. Was it because they were prejudiced against the witness of the women? Perhaps, for the testimony of a woman was not accepted in a Jewish court. But even when the two Emmaus disciples gave their witness, not everybody believed. Compare Mark 16:13 with Luke 24:33–35. Apparently, there was division in the Upper Room until Jesus Himself appeared.

But when He did appear, He reproached them for their unbelief which was caused by their hardness of heart (see Mark 6:52; 8:17). He was making it clear that the witnesses of His resurrection could and should be trusted. The phrase “the Eleven” in Mark 16:14 simply means “the Apostles,” because there were only ten of them together at that time, since Thomas was absent (John 20:19–25).

Before His ascension forty days later, the Lord gave several commissions to His followers (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:47–49; John 20:21; 21:15–17; Acts 1:4–8). The one Mark gives probably is a part of the Great Commission that Jesus gave on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16–20).

In this commission, Jesus pointed out our message and our ministry, and then backed it up with the miraculous credentials that only He could give. The message is the Gospel, the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The ministry is to share this message with the whole world.

A superficial reading of Mark 16:15–16 would suggest that sinners must be baptized to be saved, but this misinterpretation disappears when you note that the emphasis is on *believing*. If a person does not believe, he is condemned, even if he has been baptized (see John 3:16–18, 36). It was expected in the early church that believers would be baptized (Acts 2:41; 10:44–48).

When God sent Moses to challenge Pharaoh in Egypt, He gave him special miracles to perform as his divine credentials, proving that he was sent from God (Ex. 4:1–9). This was also true of some of the prophets (1 Kings 18; 2 Kings 2:14–25). The Apostles were also given special “signs” that enforced their message (Acts 19:11–12; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3–4). Of themselves, miracles do not prove that a person has been sent by God, for the message must also be true to God’s Word (see 2 Thes. 2; Rev. 13).

Most of the signs listed here did take place in the days of the Apostles and are recorded in the Book of Acts. The closest thing we have to taking up serpents is Paul’s experience on Malta (Acts 28:3–6), but we have no biblical record of anyone drinking poison and surviving. No doubt God has performed many wonders for His own that we know nothing about, but we shall learn about them in heaven.

It is tragic when well-meaning but untaught people claim these signs for themselves and then die because of snake bites or poison. Of course, the excuse is given that they did not have enough faith! But whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23); therefore, they should not have done it in the first place.

The person who takes up serpents just to prove his or her faith is yielding to the very temptation Satan presented to Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple (Matt. 4:5–7): “Cast Yourself down and see if God will take care of You,” Satan said in effect. He wants us to “show off” our faith and force God to perform unnecessary miracles. Jesus refused to tempt God, and we should follow His example. Yes, God cares for His children when, in His will, they are in dangerous places; but He is not obligated to care for us when we foolishly get out of His will. We are called to live by faith, not by chance, and to trust God, not tempt Him.

The Servant’s Ascension (Mark 16:19–20)

In a remarkable way, the Gospel of Mark parallels the great “Servant passage” in Philippians 2.

He came as a Servant (Phil. 2:1–7)—Mark 1–13

He died on a cross (Phil. 2:8)—Mark 14–15

He was exalted to glory (Phil. 2:9)—Mark 16

Both Paul and Mark emphasize the need for God’s people to get the message out to all nations (Mark 16:15–16; Phil. 2:10–11), and there is the added assurance that God is at work in and through them (Mark 16:19–20; Phil. 2:12–13).

Our Lord’s ascension marked the completion of His earthly ministry and the beginning of His new ministry in heaven as High Priest and Advocate for His people (Heb. 7–10; 1 John 2:1–3). The “right hand of God” is the place of honor and authority (Ps. 110:1; 1 Peter 3:22). Our Lord is like Melchizedek, King of Righteousness and King of Peace (Gen. 14:17–19; Heb. 7:2).

One of His heavenly ministries is that of enabling His people to do His will (Heb. 13:20–21). It is fitting that the Gospel of the Servant should end with this reference to work, just as it is fitting for Matthew, the Gospel of the King, to end with a reference to His great authority. By His Holy Spirit, the Lord wants to work *in* us (Phil. 2:12–13), *with* us (Mark 16:20), and *for* us (Rom. 8:28).

The Apostles and Prophets laid the foundation for the church (Eph. 2:20), so their work is finished, and the apostolic signs have ceased. But the Lord’s working has not ceased, and He is still working in and through His people to save a lost world. His Servant-Son Jesus returned to heaven, but He still has His people on earth who can be His servants, if they will.

What a privilege to have the Lord working with us!

What an opportunity and obligation we have to carry the Gospel to the whole world!

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Are you serving—or are you expecting others to serve you?

Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *Mark*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 192-196) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

IX. Jesus’ Resurrection from the Dead near Jerusalem (16:1–8) (Matt. 28:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10)

The four Gospel accounts of the Resurrection contain various differences in recorded details (e.g., the number and names of the women who came to the tomb, the number of angelic messengers who appeared, and the women’s reactions to the Resurrection announcement). None of the writers reported all the data; they were free (within veritable limits) to summarize, particularize, and emphasize different aspects of the same event. The various recorded differences reflect the natural effect of this unique event on different eyewitnesses, thereby confirming the Resurrection as a historical event. (See the chart, “Forty Days—from Resurrection to Ascension,” at Matt. 28:1–4.)

A. *The women’s arrival at the tomb (16:1–5).*

16:1. **The Sabbath**, Saturday (Nisan 16), concluded at sunset and the new Jewish day, Sunday (Nisan 17), began. That evening after sunset the women who had witnessed Jesus’ death and burial (cf. 15:40, 47) **bought spices**, aromatic oils, **to anoint Jesus’ body** (lit., “Him”) the next morning. This indicates that they did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead (cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:34).

Spices were poured over a dead body to counteract the odor of decay and as a symbolic expression of loving devotion. Embalming was not a Jewish custom.

16:2–3. **Very early on the first day of the week** (Sunday, Nisan 17) **just after sunrise** the women went **to the tomb**. They left home while it was still dark (cf. John 20:1) and got to the tomb shortly after sunrise.

Two of them knew that a large **stone** had been rolled in front of the tomb's **entrance** (cf. Mark 15:47). Only Mark recorded their concern over the practical problem of getting it rolled back. Evidently they were not aware of the official sealing of the tomb or the posting of a guard (cf. Matt. 27:62–66).

16:4–5. **When** the women arrived on the scene, **they looked up** toward the tomb and immediately noticed **that the stone ... had been removed**, for (*gar*; cf. 1:16) it **was very large** and thus easily seen.

The women **entered the** tomb's outer room that led to the inner burial chamber. They were startled to see **a young man** (*neaniskon*; cf. 14:51) **sitting** to their **right** probably in front of the burial chamber. The unique circumstances, the accompanying description, and the revelatory message (16:6–7) indicate that Mark viewed him as an angelic messenger sent from God even though Mark called him a young man, as he appeared to the women. The **white robe** pictured his heavenly origin and splendor (cf. 9:3).

Luke (24:3–4) and John (20:12) mentioned the presence of two angels, the number necessary for a valid witness (cf. Deut. 17:6); but Matthew (28:5) and Mark referred to only one, presumably the spokesman.

The women **were alarmed** (*exethambēthēsan*; cf. Mark 9:15; 14:33) when they encountered the divine messenger. This compound verb of strong emotion (used only by Mark in the NT), expresses overwhelming distress at what is highly unusual (cf. 16:8).

B. The angel's announcement (16:6–7).

16:6. Sensing the women's distress, the angel commanded them, **Don't be alarmed** (cf. same verb, v. 5). They were **looking for** (*zēteite*, "seeking") the dead body of **Jesus, the Man** from Nazareth **who** had been **crucified**, expecting to anoint it (cf. v. 1). But the angel announced, **He has risen!** indicating that the Resurrection was God's act, a New Testament emphasis (cf. Acts 3:15; 4:10; Rom. 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Peter 1:21). His body was **not** there as they could easily see. The tomb was empty!

The angel's message clearly identified the Risen One as the Crucified One, both referring to the same historical Person, and it revealed the meaning of the empty tomb. The certainty of the Resurrection rests on the angel's message from God which people then and now are called on to believe. The historical fact of the empty tomb confirms it.

16:7. The women were given a task. They were to **go and tell** Jesus' **disciples** that they would be reunited with Him in **Galilee**. The words **and Peter**, unique to Mark, are significant since much of Mark's material likely came from Peter. He was singled out not because of his preeminence among the disciples but because he was forgiven and still included in the Eleven despite his triple denial (cf. 14:66–72).

The message that Jesus was **going ahead of** (from *proagō*) them **into** Galilee recalled the reunion He had promised (cf. the same verb in 14:28). His followers would **see Him** there which implies a Resurrection appearance (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5). This does not refer, as some say, to His second coming. Mark's journey motif (cf. introduction to Mark 8:31; also 10:32a) did not end with Jesus' death, for the risen Jesus continued to lead His followers.

These women were the first to hear the news of Jesus' resurrection, but their reports were disregarded initially as women were not considered eligible witnesses under Jewish law. The

disciples did not go to Galilee immediately. Jesus' additional appearances to them in the Jerusalem vicinity were necessary to convince them of the reality of His resurrection (cf. John 20:19–29).

C. The women's response to the news of Jesus' resurrection (16:8).

16:8. **The women ... fled from the tomb** because (*gar*; cf. 1:16) they were **trembling** (*tromos*, a noun) **and bewildered** (astonishment, *ekstasis*; cf. 5:42). For a time, **they said nothing to anyone** (Matt. 28:8) a double negative expression in Greek unique to Mark, **because** (*gar*) **they were afraid** (*ephobounto*; cf. Mark 4:41; 5:15, 33, 36; 6:50–52; 9:32; 10:32).

Their response was similar to Peter's at the transfiguration (cf. 9:6). The object of their fear was the awesome disclosure of God's presence and power in raising Jesus from the dead. They were overwhelmed with reverential fear and reduced to silence.

Several interpreters believe that Mark concluded his Gospel at this point. The abrupt ending is consistent with Mark's style and punctuates his development of the themes of fear and astonishment throughout his Gospel. The reader is left to ponder with awe the meaning of the empty tomb as interpreted by the angel's revelatory message (cf. the following comments on 16:9–20).

X. Disputed Epilogue (16:9–20)

The last 12 verses of Mark (16:9–20) known as “the longer ending of Mark” constitute one of the most difficult and most disputed textual problems in the New Testament. Were these verses included or omitted in Mark's original text? Most modern English translations call attention to the problem in some way such as adding an explanatory footnote at verse 9 (NASB), setting this section apart from verse 8 with an explanatory note (NIV), or printing the whole section in the margin (RSV).

The *external* evidence includes the following: (1) The two earliest (fourth century) uncial manuscripts (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) omit the verses though their respective scribes left some blank space after verse 8, suggesting that they knew of a longer ending but did not have it in the manuscript they were copying. (2) Most all other manuscripts (fifth century on) as well as early versions support the inclusion of verses 9–20. (3) Several later manuscripts (seventh century on) and versions supply a “shorter ending” after verse 8 which is clearly not genuine, but all these manuscripts (except one) continue on with verses 9–20. (4) Early patristic writers—such as Justin Martyr (*Apology* 1. 45, circa A.D. 148), Tatian (*Diatessaron*, circa A.D. 170), and Irenaeus who quoted verse 19 (*Against Heresies* 3. 10. 5)—support the inclusion of these verses. However, Eusebius (*Questions to Marinus I*, circa A.D. 325) and Jerome (*Epistle* 120. 3; *ad Hedibiam*, circa A.D. 407) said verses 9–20 were missing from Greek manuscripts known to them. (5) An Armenian manuscript of the 10th century attributed verses 9–20 to “the presbyter Ariston,” probably Aristion, a contemporary of Papias (A.D. 60–130) who was purportedly a disciple of the Apostle John. (6) If Mark ended abruptly at verse 8, then it is easy to see why some early copyist(s) wanted to provide a “suitable” ending for the Gospel from other authoritative sources. However, if verses 9–20 were part of the original, it is difficult to see why the early copyists would have omitted it.

Internal evidence includes this data: (1) The transition from verse 8 to verse 9 involves an abrupt change of subject from “women” to the presumed subject “Jesus” since His name is not stated in verse 9 of the Greek text. (2) Mary Magdalene is introduced with a descriptive clause in

verse 9 as though she had not been mentioned already in 15:40, 47 and 16:1. (3) About 1/3 of the significant Greek words in verses 9–20 are “non-Markan,” that is, they do not appear elsewhere in Mark or they are used differently from Mark’s usage prior to verse 9. (4) The Greek literary style lacks the vivid, lifelike detail so characteristic of Mark’s historical narrative. (5) Mark would have been expected to include a Resurrection appearance to the disciples in Galilee (14:28; 16:7), but the appearances in verses 9–20 are in or near Jerusalem. (6) Matthew and Luke parallel Mark until verse 8 and then diverge noticeably, suggesting that Mark began its literary existence without verses 9–20.

Equally astute and conscientious interpreters differ widely in their evaluations of this data and reach opposing conclusions. Those who include these verses in light of the preponderance of early and widespread external support must still account satisfactorily for the internal evidence which appears to distinguish these verses from the rest of the Gospel. And those who omit these verses must still account for their early and widespread attestation externally and give a suitable reason for Mark’s seemingly abrupt conclusion at verse 8. Four possible solutions for this have been suggested: (1) Mark finished his Gospel but the original ending was lost or destroyed in some way now unknown before it was copied. (2) Mark finished his Gospel but the original ending was deliberately suppressed or removed for some reason now unknown. (3) Mark was unable to finish his Gospel for some reason now unknown—possibly sudden death. (4) Mark purposely intended to end his Gospel at verse 8.

Of these options, numbers 1 and 2 are unlikely even though the view that the original ending was accidentally lost is widely accepted. If Mark’s Gospel was a scroll manuscript rather than a codex (leaf form of book) the ending would normally be on the inside of the scroll and less likely to be damaged or lost than the beginning of the scroll. If the incompleteness of Mark is assumed, number 3 is the most probable option but due to its very nature it cannot be confirmed. In light of Mark’s use of the theme “fear” in relation to Jesus’ followers (cf. v. 8), many modern interpreters incline toward option 4.

A final conclusion to the problem probably cannot be reached on the basis of presently known data. A view which seems to account for the relevant evidence and to raise the least number of objections is that (a) Mark purposely ended his Gospel with verse 8 and (b) verses 9–20, though written or compiled by an anonymous Christian writer, are historically authentic and are part of the New Testament canon (cf. similarly the last chapter of Deut.). In this view, very early in the transmission of Mark’s Gospel (perhaps shortly after A.D. 100) verses 9–20 were added to verse 8 without any attempt to match Mark’s vocabulary and style. Possibly these verses were brief extracts from the post-Resurrection accounts found in the other three Gospels and were known through oral tradition to have the approval of the Apostle John who lived till near the end of the first century. Thus the material was included early enough in the transmission process to gain recognition and acceptance by the church as part of canonical Scripture. These verses are consistent with the rest of Scripture. The development of the theme of belief and unbelief unifies the passage.

A. Three of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances (16:9–14)

This section contains three of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances before His Ascension. (See the chart, “Forty Days—from Resurrection to Ascension,” at Matt. 28:1–4.)

1. HIS APPEARANCE TO MARY MAGDALENE AND HIS FOLLOWERS’ UNBELIEF (16:9–11) (John 20:14–18).

16:9–11. These verses turn abruptly to **Mary** Magdalene’s return visit to the tomb while it was still **early** (cf. “very early,” v. 2) that same morning. Though mentioned three times previously in Mark (cf. 15:40, 47; 16:1), she was described here for the first time as the **Mary out of whom Jesus had expelled seven demons** (cf. Luke 8:2). Jesus **appeared**, made Himself visible, to her **first**. This suggests that people could not recognize **Jesus** in His resurrected state unless He deliberately revealed Himself to them (cf. Luke 24:16, 31).

Mary **went and told those who had been with Him** that she had seen Jesus. This designation for Jesus’ followers was not used earlier in Mark or in the other Gospels (but cf. Mark 3:14; 5:18). The clause probably refers to Jesus’ disciples in general (cf. 16:12), not just the Eleven (cf. Acts 1:21). They all **were mourning and weeping** over Jesus’ death, a description unique to this account.

On hearing **that Jesus was alive and ... had been seen** (*etheathē*, not used elsewhere in Mark) by Mary, the disciples refused to **believe** (*ēpistēsan*, a verb not used elsewhere in Mark) her report (cf. Luke 24:11). Apparently a short time later Jesus appeared to the other two women, confirming the angel’s announcement and urging them to tell His disciples (cf. Matt. 28:1, 9–10).

2. HIS APPEARANCE TO TWO FOLLOWERS AND THE UNBELIEF OF THE REST (16:12–13).

16:12–13. These verses summarize the story about the two Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:13–35). The words **two of them** indicate that they were part of the group who disbelieved Mary’s report (cf. Mark 16:10–11). **While they were out walking**, going from Jerusalem into **the country**, Jesus **appeared** (cf. v. 9) to them **in a different form** (*hetera morphē*, “a form of a different kind”). This could mean that He took on a form different from that in which He appeared to Mary Magdalene or, more likely, that He appeared to them in a form different from that in which they had previously recognized Him as **Jesus**. When they **returned** to Jerusalem **and reported** the event **to the rest** of the disciples, **they did not believe** their report **either** (cf. v. 11). Apparently, despite affirmative statements (cf. Luke 24:34), the disciples initially seemed to regard Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances as apparitions (cf. Luke 24:37).

3. HIS APPEARANCE TO THE ELEVEN AND HIS REBUKE OF THEIR UNBELIEF (16:14) (Luke 24:36–49; John 20:19–25).

16:14. **Later** (*hysteron*, a comparative adverb not used elsewhere in Mark) on the evening of the same day (cf. v. 9) **Jesus appeared to the Eleven** themselves while **they sat eating** (their evening meal is implied in Luke 24:41–43). **He rebuked** (*ōneidisen*, a strong verb not used of Jesus elsewhere) their unbelief and hardness of heart (*sklērokardian*; cf. Mark 10:5) because they refused **to believe** the testimony of eyewitnesses to His resurrection earlier that day. By hearing about Jesus’ resurrection (before seeing **Him**) they learned what it was like to believe the testimony of eyewitnesses. This would be necessary for all those to whom they would preach in their coming missionary outreach.

B. Jesus’ commission to His followers (16:15–18) (Matt. 28:16–20).

16:15. Later Jesus gave His disciples His great missionary commission: **Go into all** (*hapanta*, “the whole,” emphatic form) **the world and preach** (*kēryxate*, “proclaim”; cf. 1:4, 14) **the good news** (*euangelion*, “gospel”; cf. 1:1) **to all creation**, that is, to all people.

16:16. In response to the preaching of the gospel, **whoever believes and is baptized**, a baptized believer (lit., “the one who believed and was baptized”), **will be saved** (*sōthēsetai*; cf. comments on 13:13) by God (implied) from spiritual death, the penalty of sin. A single Greek article governs both substantival participles, linking them together in describing the inward, efficacious reception of the gospel by faith (believing) and the outward, public expression of that faith in water baptism.

Though the New Testament writers generally assume that under normal circumstances each believer will be baptized, 16:16 does not mean that baptism is a necessary requirement for personal salvation. The second half of the verse indicates by contrast that one who **does not believe** the gospel **will be condemned** by God (implied) in the day of final judgment (cf. 9:43–48). The basis for condemnation is unbelief, not the lack of any ritual observance. Baptism is not mentioned because unbelief precludes one’s giving a confession of faith while being baptized by water. Thus the only requirement for personally appropriating God’s salvation is faith in Him (cf. Rom. 3:21–28; Eph. 2:8–10).

16:17–18. These verses list five kinds of **signs** (*sēmeia*; cf. comments on 8:11) which would attend **those who believe**. “Signs” are supernatural events attesting the divine origin of the apostolic message (cf. 16:20). The signs authenticated the faith the early believers proclaimed, not the personal faith that any one of them exercised. In light of this and historical evidence it is reasonable to conclude that these authenticating signs were normative only for the apostolic era (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3–4).

In fulfilling their commission (cf. Mark 16:15) believers would be given the ability to do miraculous things **in Jesus’ name** (cf. comments on 6:7, 13; 9:38–40). **They would drive out demons**, thereby demonstrating Jesus’ victory over Satan’s realm. The Twelve (cf. 6:13) and the Seventy had already expelled demons, and this ability continued in the apostolic church (cf. Acts 8:7; 16:18; 19:15–16). **They would speak in new tongues**, presumably a reference to intelligible foreign languages not previously known to the speakers. This was demonstrated at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:4–11) and later in the life of the early church (cf. Acts 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:1–24).

In the Greek the first two clauses in Mark 16:18 may be understood as conditional clauses with the third clause as the conclusion. An interpretive rendering would be, “And if **they** be compelled to **pick up snakes with their hands** and if **they** should be compelled to **drink deadly poison**, it shall by no means (*ou mē*, emphatic negative; cf. 13:2) harm **them**.” This promise of immunity by divine protection in either situation refers to occasions when persecutors would force believers to do these things. This does not warrant voluntary snake-handling or drinking of poison, practices not attested in the early church. Since Paul’s encounter with a snake at Malta was unintentional (cf. Acts 28:3–5), the New Testament records no actual instance of either of the experiences described here.

As a final kind of authenticating sign **they** would put **their hands on sick people** and **they** would **get well**. Healing by this means is mentioned in Acts 28:8 and the gift of healing was exercised in the early church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:30).

C. Jesus’ Ascension and the disciples’ ongoing mission (16:19–20) (Luke 24:50–51; Acts 1:9–11).

16:19–20. These verses consist of two closely related parts. On the one hand (Gr., *men*) **the Lord Jesus**—a compound title not found in the Gospels except in Luke 24:3—**after** His post-resurrection ministry (a 40-day period; cf. Acts 1:3) **was taken up into heaven** (by God the

Father, implied). There **He sat down at the right hand of God**, His place of honor and authority (cf. comments on Mark 12:36–37a). The reality of this was confirmed to the early believers by Stephen’s vision (cf. Acts 7:56). In one sense Jesus’ work on earth was finished.

On the other hand (Gr., *de*) His work on earth in another sense continued through **the disciples who went out from Jerusalem and preached** (*ekēryxan*, “proclaimed”; cf. Mark 1:4, 14; 16:15) the gospel **everywhere**. At the same time **the risen Lord** was working **with them** by empowering them, **and confirming His Word**, the gospel message, **by the signs** (cf. 16:17–18) **that accompanied it**. The signs authenticated their message (cf. Heb. 2:3–4). This task of proclaiming the gospel still goes on through disciples empowered by the risen Lord.

Leavell, L.P. (1972). Mark. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher’s Bible Commentary (p. 633). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

The Risen Christ (Mark 16:1–20)

The passage—The glorious finale to redemption’s story is recorded in 16:1–8. The women waited until the sabbath was over, at sunset on Saturday evening, then began to assemble spices to anoint the body. Early Sunday morning they began to walk from Bethany to Jerusalem.

It is little wonder they were astounded upon reaching the tomb. Not only was the body gone, but an angel of God was sitting there. In fear they did not follow instructions. They were told to tell the disciples and Peter, but they said nothing. These women were the first to know the most earthshaking fact ever revealed to man. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, ever lives to make intercession for us!

From 16:9–20, we have a passage not found in the most reliable ancient Greek manuscripts. Some of these verses are found in other gospels that are not disputed. The truth of these verses is not in question. The textual question concerns the original ending of the Gospel of Mark.

Aside from the textual question, the emphasis in these final verses seems to be on the authority of Christ. In this sense, it gives a parallel to Matthew’s concluding verses. Whatever one’s approach to the authenticity of these verses, the point is clear that the power and authority of Jesus Christ is supreme.

The command of the angel to “go—tell ...” is reiterated throughout the New Testament. This is still our task.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Mark 16. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.