

Message #63

Mark 16:9-20

Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead and all of those close to Him were a mess. They were a psychological and emotional wreck. No one believed He had risen from the dead so Jesus made a series of appearances. In fact, over the next several days following the resurrection, Christ made many appearances.

Even though Mark highlights just some of those appearances, as near as we may determine, in the next days He made at least eleven Personal appearances to nearly 600 people:

- 1) He appeared to Mary Magdalene first. **Mark 16:9**
- 2) He appeared to the rest of the women who went to the tomb. Matt. 28:8-10
- 3) He appeared to Peter. Luke 24:22, 34; I Cor. 15:5
- 4) He appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus. **Mark 16:12-13**; Luke 24:36-32; John 20:19-25
- 5) He appeared to ten disciples, minus Thomas, in the Upper Room. Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25
- 6) He appeared to 11 Apostles, including Thomas. **Mark 16:14**; John 20:26-28
- 7) He appeared to seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee. John 21:1-14
- 8) He appeared to over 500 brethren. I Cor. 15:6
- 9) He appeared again to the 11 at a mountain in Galilee. Matt. 28:16-20
- 10) He appeared to James, His half-brother. I Cor. 15:7
- 11) He appeared to His 11 in Jerusalem and ascended into heaven. **Mark 16:19**; Luke 24:50-55; Acts 1:4, 9

Now most English translations of the Bible put **Mark 16:9-20** in a bracket or they footnote it because two of the most respected Greek manuscripts did not contain these verses. However, what is not mentioned is the overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts do contain these verses. Furthermore, these verses are included in the old translations—Old Latin, Vulgate, Old Syriac, Peshito and Jerusalem Syriac. Furthermore, many early church leaders recognized these verses are belonging in Mark—Irenaeus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, Augustine, Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius and Jerome.

I find it intriguing that English Bibles do contain the verses. How did that happen? If everyone didn't think these verses were not supposed to be in Mark, how is it that even those that question it include it? My thinking is deep down inside they don't want to tamper with these verses because they know they are there. If God is sovereign over everything, who determined that many manuscripts would have these verses? God.

Now what these verses actually show us is this:

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST WAS DISBELIEVED BY ALL HIS DISCIPLES SO HE PROVED HE WAS ALIVE TO THEM AND THEN HE COMMISSIONED THEM TO GO TELL EVERYONE ABOUT IT.

Time and time again throughout the life of Jesus Christ, He had promised that He would rise from the dead. He told His disciples this many, many times (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34). The problem was no one close to Him believed Him.

As we look through these verses in Mark, we cannot help but see that unbelief was the big problem. Verse 11 says they “refused to believe” and when Jesus finally appeared to other witnesses, they did not believe them (**v. 12**) so He “reproached them for their unbelief” (**16:14**).

This is a fascinating text because it gives us Mark’s last capsule form glimpse of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. There are eight key facts we want to point out:

FACT #1 – Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. **16:9**

This is amazing. The first person He appears to after His resurrection is not a priest, or an elder, or a scribe or even one of His disciples; the first person to whom He appears was a woman who had been once demon-possessed. According to John, she was standing outside the tomb just sobbing over the fact that Jesus was dead. She had seen the empty tomb but didn’t believe it and it was then when Jesus said, “Woman, why are you weeping?” (John 20:15). Then Jesus said to her, “Mary” and she knew it was Him.

This woman at one time had been demon-possessed. The story of when Jesus touched her life is told by Dr. Luke in Luke 8:2. Mary Magdalene was a woman who had been involved in satanic and demonic things. She had come to faith in Jesus Christ and had been delivered from the demons. She became an ardent follower of Jesus Christ.

This would be about the last person in the world that you would think would be His first choice, but this was His first choice. He decided to appear first to this woman.

What grace. What amazing grace.

FACT #2 – When Mary Magdalene went to the disciples and told them she had seen Jesus, they refused to believe her. **16:10-11**

The close disciples were gathered together mourning and weeping and Mary went and told them that Jesus was alive and had appeared to her and they refused to believe her. They basically called her a liar and refused to believe her.

Look at this. These are the disciples of Jesus Christ and they refuse to believe Jesus has risen from the dead. They are mourning and weeping as if it is all over. Rather than believe the truth, they would rather wallow in their depression.

FACT #3 – Jesus appears to two disciples while they were walking to the country. **16:12**

Jesus appeared to two men walking on the road to Emmaus and He started talking with them. Emmaus was about seven miles from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13), which is a two to three hour walk. He did not initially tell them who He was (Luke 24:16) so they didn't recognize Him. But as He was talking, their hearts burned within them and eventually He did reveal Who He was and then vanished (**Mark 16:12-13**). These two immediately walked back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples.

FACT #4 – When the two disciples go and tell the other disciples, they don't believe them either. **16:13**

Christ had told them that in three days He would rise from the dead but they would not believe anyone who said He did. They did not believe Mary Magdalene and they did not believe these two disciples either. The reason they don't believe them is that they don't believe the Word of God. After all they had seen Jesus do they still did not believe what He told them.

FACT #5 – Jesus appears to the eleven Personally and rebuked them for their disbelief. **16:14**

Jesus appeared to them as they were reclining at the table, eating a meal. His first message to them is one of rebuke for their lack of faith. The words "hardness of heart" means their hearts were so stubborn and hard that they refused to believe the Word of God (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 409).

The text says, "He reproached them." That Greek word means He basically said, "You are disgraceful and shameful" (*Ibid.*, p. 318). Their unbelief and their hard heart was a complete disgrace. Jesus was ashamed of these guys. They were disgraceful. These were supposedly His best guys and they don't believe what He told them.

FACT #6 – Jesus gives the eleven a commission to preach the Gospel. **16:15-16**

This is pure grace. Mark jumps from the fact that Jesus is rebuking these unbelieving deadbeats of the fact that He is commissioning them to go tell everyone else to believe.

What Jesus commissions them to do is "**go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.**" The word "preach" means to publicly proclaim the Gospel (*Ibid.*, p. 246). This is their job—not to debate, not to discuss, not to entertain—but preach. You go preach. Preach to "all creation."

Now the noun "creation" is a word that refers to all the people who have been created by God (*Ibid.*, p. 260). Those who support abortion would do well to take a serious look at this word. Humans have been created by God and what they need to hear is the Gospel. You preach to rich people, poor people, men, women, children. You preach to politicians and jailbirds. You preach to all people of all backgrounds and all sins. You preach the Gospel to them.

The word “gospel” refers to the good news about what Jesus Christ did on that cross. He paid the price for our sins and was raised on account of our justification. Now the Gospel message is this: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”

Don’t miss verse 16; all people need to be saved. They need to be saved from condemnation due to their sin. All people need to believe on Jesus Christ.

Now the specific stated criteria is “He who has believed and has been baptized” shall be saved. But then notice at the end of the verse, the issue is not believing and being condemned.

So what is the connection between believing and being baptized? Here, in my opinion, knowledge of the Greek language is critical. Let me say, this has nothing to do with water baptism.

The participle “believe” is aorist active, meaning there is a point in time when the person actively believes on Jesus Christ. The participle “baptized” is aorist passive, meaning there is a point of time when the one who believes is the recipient of the action of being baptized and has nothing to do with the action. The baptism being referred to here is Spirit baptism.

We may recall that when Mark began this gospel he brought out in the first chapter the fact that John baptized with water, but Jesus “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:8). Furthermore, Peter specifically said this is what is meant (Acts 11:16).

What Jesus is telling His disciples is that you go to the world and you tell all people that in order to be saved from their sins they need to believe in Jesus Christ, the resurrected God/man Savior. The one who believes this will be totally and completely united with Me by the power of the Holy Spirit and will be saved. The one who does not believe in Me will be condemned.

FACT #7 – Jesus informs His disciples that specific signs will follow those who believe Him and go carry out this commission. **16:17-18**

Now again I want to point out grammar. In **verse 16** the one who believes or doesn’t believe is singular. It is an individual invitation to believe or not believe in Jesus Christ.

In **verse 17**, the pronoun “those” is plural and articular. The purpose of a pronoun is to take the place of a noun and the only plural noun that shows up in this context are “the eleven” (**v. 14**) that He just commissioned (**v. 15**). English makes it look like any who believe, Greek does not.

Keep in mind that He has just rebuked them for their hard hearts and unbelief. Then He challenged these spiritual duds to go out and preach the Gospel. **Now what He tells His Apostles is if they will believe Him and do this, eight apostolic signs will follow the ones who decide to believe this and do this.** These were specific signs for them in their unbelief; these are not signs for us. Paul called these the “signs of Apostle” (II Cor. 12:12).

The writer of Hebrews said exactly the same thing (Heb. 2:3-4). Some of these things we are able to actually track through the book of Acts:

Sign #1 - The Apostles were able to cast out Demons.

We know that some of the Apostles did literally do this (Acts 16:18).

Sign #2 - The Apostles were able to speak in new foreign languages.

We know that these Apostles all spoke foreign languages on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Paul also was able to speak in more foreign languages than all the others. He traveled to many areas and God enabled him to speak languages that he had not previously learned (I Cor. 14:18).

Sign #3 - The Apostles were not to be harmed if bitten by a serpent.

The Apostle Paul was bitten by a deadly viper that actually hung on his hand and it didn't faze him (Acts 28:3-5).

Sign #4 - The Apostles were not to be harmed if they drink poison.

There is a story from history that says the Apostle John was given poison to drink that he did not know was poison and he drank it and it didn't faze him.

Sign #5 - The Apostles were able to heal the sick.

We know that Peter and John did do this (Acts 3:7-8). The Apostle Paul also did this multiple times (Acts 19:11-12). In fact, in Paul's case he raised a man from the dead (Acts 20:9-12).

These were all apostolic signs. These signs were not given to us so a bunch of crazy Kentucky or Georgia mountain people could handle rattlesnakes and drink strychnine. These were signs that followed the Apostles.

Put this in its context. Jesus is telling unbelieving Apostles that if they will believe Him and go out and preach, they would be given power to do the job.

They would have power over demonic influence; they would be able to communicate in any language and they would be protected. All they needed to do was to believe Him and get to work.

FACT #8 – Jesus ascends up to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. **16:19**

Mark says that when the Lord had spoken, He was received up into "the" heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

Now the specific heaven being referred to here is the throne of God heaven which is the third heaven. I want to point out that it is a real place. This is not some fairytale land of oz. This is a very real place that is “way beyond the blue.”

Jesus is there in heaven and He sat down; His work was done.

Verse 20 says that they, those disciples, went and preached everywhere and the signs followed them.

Now what we know from this book of Mark is we need to be saved from our sins so that we will not be condemned. There is only One who can save us and that is Jesus Christ. Believe on Him and you will be saved.