

THE RISEN JESUS

Mark 16:9-20

Intro: I believe that it is well known that the verses in my text for this morning, are not found in at least two of the most ancient MSS of the NT. And so some of you may have translations of the NT which omit verses 9 through 16, or have them printed in smaller print to show that they do not really belong there. But there is more than one side to the discussion about this and other verses or passages in the NT. There are scholars on both sides of the question as to whether or not the last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel were actually written by him under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The branch of study which deals with such questions as we have in Mark's Gospel, is called Textual Criticism. Most Christians never read a word telling of the controversy surrounding certain verses or passage of Scripture. It is certainly not a subject that is suitable for a Sunday morning worship service. Probably most of the questions surrounding certain verses about which there has been a difference of opinion, will not be solved before the Lord returns. But perhaps in a situation like the one we face this morning, there are certain observations that might be of help to us. I don't want to spend a lot of time on this, but perhaps I can make some suggestions that should be helpful to all of us.

First, I would remind you that the Bible is the Word of God. I am speaking now of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament. We can be sure that God has a vital interest in His Word. If He had not preserved it for us, it would have been destroyed long before our generation came along. But it has been preserved, and although there may have been some problems as it passed through the hands of men, yet we must recognize that one of the marvels of our generation is that we have the Word of God intact as God determined that we should have it. If God is sovereign over all things, and we know that He is, then He must be sovereign over His Word as well. To say that His sovereignty does not extend to His Word, is about as reasonable as saying that His sovereignty extends to all parts of salvation except for the question as to who will be saved. I believe that this is an important point to remember.

Second, if we did not have verses 9 through 16, or something very much like these verses, then clearly the Gospel according to Mark would be incomplete. We can say that because of the way the other three Gospels are

concluded – with the resurrection of Christ, His appearances to His own people, His ascension into heaven which was preceded with specific statements of what He wanted His disciples to do after He returned to heaven.

Third, there is not anything in these verses that contrary to what is revealed the other Gospels. We don't know all that the apostles and the believers in the early church experienced by way of opposition following the ascension of our Lord. We do not have any record in the Bible that the apostles played with snakes or deliberately drank poison to prove that they were invincible. But the Lord did not say here in this passage that that is what they would do. We know that the Apostle Paul was bitten by a viper after their ship was wrecked, and that the people of the island waited for him to die. But he didn't die. God miraculously preserved him. And then the people thought he was a god. We don't know that any of the apostles purposely drank poison to prove their invincibility. We don't even know that anyone tried to poison them. But neither do we know that such a thing never happened. We do know that God protected His servants in many ways. We do know that the apostles were able to perform miracles, that they spoke in foreign languages that they had never studied. And so it is not unreasonable to think that some of the other things mentioned in our text happened to them. There is nothing in these verses that is in conflict with what we have in Matthew, Luke, and John. Just because the other Gospel writers did not happen to mention snakes or poison, does not mean that such things never happened.

Fourth, it is characteristic of Mark's writing that he was inclined to be brief in what he wrote. This is the shortest of the four Gospels. So we might expect that his conclusion would be more of a summary of what took place than what we find in the other three Gospels.

Therefore, I don't hesitate to speak to you this morning from Mark 16, verses 9 through 20. So come with me for the rest of the time that we have for our service this morning, and let us look for blessing. I am confident that there is blessing in these verses for us.

As we look over these verses,

- 1) Verses 9, 10, and 11 go together.
- 2) Verses 12 and 13 go together.
- 3) Verse 14 stands by itself.
- 4) Verses 15 and 16 go together.
- 5) Verses 17 and 18 go together.

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6) Verses 19 and 20 go together.

So we really have six points in these twelve verses. Let us look at each of them in the time that we have.

I. MARY MAGDALENE (Mark 16:9-11).

We have already met Mary Magdalene. But this is the first time we have been told that she had been demon-possessed before she knew the Lord, and that He had cast six demons out of her. Somewhere in the past the idea began to circulate about Mary Magdalene that she was a prostitute. But such a charge against her appears nowhere in Scripture. And it is not what Mark was telling us about her here in verse 9. She had been demon-possessed! How that happened, we do not know. She probably got involved in something that was Satanic. Maybe it was some form of idolatry. We don't know. What we do know is that she, like other demon-possessed people was in a special way under demon control, and she was unable to do anything about it. Her life was absolutely miserable when through the providence of God she came into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, and He cast seven demons out of her. As a result she became very devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, not in any sinful way as some people have suggested. But in the same way that you and I should be devoted to Him—because of what He has done for us in setting us free from sin and Satan, and declaring that our sins have been forgiven. She was the first human being to whom the Lord revealed Himself after His resurrection. When she met Him near the tomb, she thought He was the gardener, and it was not until He called her by name, “Mary,” that she knew it was the Lord. And you probably remember that the Apostle John tells us in John 20:16 that she responded by calling Him, “Rabboni.”

She never doubted for a moment but that it was the Lord. Can't you almost feel in your own heart the joy that was in Mary's heart when she had found the Lord? She ran to tell the apostles that she had seen the Lord, and that He was alive. They were mourning and weeping. But they quickly tried to rob her of her joy because we are told that they “believed not.” Mark doesn't tell us what they said to Mary, but just that they “believed not.”

At this point Mary was spiritually miles ahead of all of the apostles. Mary was one who had been forgiven much, and so she loved much. She had eyes to see, and ears to hear, and a heart to understand. The disciples

could have had their sorrow turned to joy, but they “believed not.”

Next Mark tells us about:

II. TWO DISCIPLES WHO WERE NOT APOSTLES (Mark 16:12-13).

You know that Mark was referring to two disciples of our Lord, one whose name was Cleopas. You will find their story in Luke 24:13-35. I wish I had the time to read those verses to you. It is one of the greatest stories in all of the Gospels, or even the rest of the NT.

They went to the disciples also, and got the same response from them that Mary Magdalene had gotten. ““Neither believed they them” (Mark 16: 13). Isn’t it amazing that of all people who should have been expecting to hear that the Lord was alive, His disciples were the ones who refused to believe what the Lord had told them many, many times! Sometimes the people who have had the closest relationship with the Lord in the past, are the ones who are the biggest disappoint to us in the present

Verse 14 stands by itself, and it has to do with:

III. THE ELEVEN DISCIPLES AND THE LORD (Mark 16:14).

They were eating, but it was not a happy time for them. They were wallowing in their unbelief because of the hardness of their hearts. We speak of Christians as believers. They believe in God. They believe in Christ. They believe in the Holy Spirit. They believe the Bible. But did you realize that believers can be guilty of unbelief. For a time at least they are unbelieving believers. What a contradiction of words that is. It is expected the a believer will believe God, will believe Christ, will believe the Bible. No true believer should ever question anything that God says. The Lord had told these men that He was going to Jerusalem, that He would be betrayed into the hands of sinners, that they would kill Him, *but that on the third day He would rise again*. The fact that the Lord said that should have erased all unbelief from their minds. They should have reasoned that, if the Lord said it, it has to be true, and that they would be dishonoring Him by not believing what He said.

What is “hardness of heart”? It is what unbelief does to us. It makes us incapable of believing. It is with the heart that we believe. When we

refuse to believe the Lord, a callousness sets upon our hearts rendering us incapable of believing. How did the Lord deal with the eleven apostles? He “upbraided” them. What does that mean? It means that He chided them. He rebuked them. He pointed out that they were wrong in not believing those who said that they had seen Him. Why would Mary lie to them? The two other disciples were evidently well known to the twelve. Why would they not believe them? The Lord often uses other believers to help us in our unbelief. If we reject their word, we are rejecting the Lord Himself.

Mark left that incident with just these few words because he evidently wanted his readers to get the full impact of the way the twelve had dishonored Him. Mark evidently wanted the wrongdoing of the apostles to sink in on the hearts of all readers of his Gospel.

IV. THE LORD’S COMMISSION (Mark 16:15-16).

We ought to be amazed at what the Lord did. He commissioned the apostles to preach the Gospel, going into all the world, preaching to every creature. Obviously the Lord did not mean that the twelve would be able to do this by themselves. They wouldn’t live long enough to see such a task completed. No, they were to begin this work, and it would fall upon all future believers to make sure that they continued with this same objective in every generation until the Lord returns.

If you have a red letter edition of the Bible, you probably have verses 15 through 18 in red letters, indicating that it was the Lord Who said all of this. This seems to be indicated by what Mark wrote in verse 19: “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them . . .”

But what about what the Lord said about baptism? Didn’t Peter tell the Jews the same thing in Acts 2:38 when they asked him what they should do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

Was the Lord teaching baptismal regeneration? Absolutely not! There is no such thing. We are not saved by our works; we are saved by the work of Christ. Well, then, what did the Lord mean? He spoke of baptism in this way because baptism was meant to follow the profession of a person’s faith *to show that their faith was genuine!* Faith in Christ is

meant to mean something, and baptism was meant to express a sincere faith in Christ. I understand that among orthodox Jewish people today. A family will disown a son or daughter who goes so far as to be baptized.

What else did the Lord tell His disciples? Next we look at verses 17 and 18.

V. SIGNS (Mark 16:17-18).

The word that the Lord used here for “signs” is the same word that the Apostle John used for the miracles of the Lord. They were “signs,” but in what sense does this word describe a miracle as it was used here by our Lord to describe the miracles that they would be able to do? A sign authenticates that a person has truly been sent of God. Now the ability of the eleven to perform miracles was a confirmation that they had truly been sent by God to do what they were doing. The signs were their credentials. Obviously the Lord did not intend that these should be signs throughout the present age, but they were very important in getting the work of the Lord established following the ascension of the Lord. If the apostles could do the same kind of miracles that the Lord had done, this would cause the people to realize that the apostles must be carrying on the work of the Lord. But even before the NT was finished, there was evidence that the signs were not going to be permanent. Paul left Trophimus at Miletus sick. Paul had a thorn in the flesh which the Lord did not take away. And Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach trouble. But in the beginning of this Church age, there was a carryover of the work that the Lord had done with the work that the apostles were doing so that the people would relate the ministries of the disciples with the work of the Lord.

And now we come to:

VI. THE POST RESURRECTION MINISTRY OF THE LORD IN HEAVEN, AND OF THE APOSTLES ON THE EARTH (Mark 16:19-20).

We know that the Lord was with His disciples for forty days after His resurrection. See Acts 1:3. Much was said, and much was done. But at the end of that time the Lord went to heaven, and the apostles “went forth” preaching, the Lord working with them. And that is the way it is to this very day while we wait for the Lord to return. The Lord is in heaven,

seated at the Father's right hand; we the people of God are to be going forth continually preaching the Word, spreading the Gospel, trusting the Lord to work with us. And without His work with us, our work is worth nothing. And among His most important ministries is His prayer for us. See Heb. 7:25.

Concl: What a wonderful summary this is of the post resurrection ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The essential points are all here, aren't they? The will of the Father is very clear both with regard to our Lord's ministry on our behalf, and our ministry on His behalf.

What do we need to be concerned about?

- 1) The daily strengthening of our faith.
- 2) Our fellowship with the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3) Our obedience to the Lord, not only in the way we live, but in the way in which we spread the Gospel.
- 4) The assurance that the Lord will make us fruitful.
- 5) The confirmation that the Lord will give that evidence that He is working with us.