

He Has Risen
Mark 16:1-8
ABC 4/17/22

There's a person in my home, who shall remain unnamed, who always jumps ahead to read the last chapter of a book to see if it ends the way she wants. On Netflix, she'll jump to the end of a movie or the last episode of a series to see if it ends in a way she likes. This unnamed person also reads magazines starting at the back. I don't know what you think about doing that. In my opinion, it's weird, but I love her anyway. We've spent the last 3 months in Mark's gospel & have made it to Mk 3:6. Today, in honor of the one who won't be named, I'm going to jump ahead to the end of the story. If you recall, Mark has already begun foreshadowing what the end will be. In 2:20 Jesus said, **the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them.** Then, as we saw last week, 3:6 tells us, **The Pharisees went out & immediately *began* conspiring with the Herodians against Him, *as to* how they might destroy Him.** This plotting comes to fruition at the end of Mark 14 with Jesus' arrest. Although you know the story, let's get a refresher. Mark tells us that **early in the morning (Friday) the chief priests with the elders & scribes & the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; & binding Jesus, they led Him away & delivered Him to Pilate (15:1).** Pilate interrogates Jesus, finds Him guilty of nothing, but **wishing to satisfy the crowd, has Jesus scourged, & handed Him over to be crucified (Mk 15:15).** The Roman soldiers mocked Him by dressing Him in purple with a crown of thorns. **They kept beating His head with a reed, & spitting on Him (15:19).** Eventually, **they led Him out to crucify Him (15:20).** Mark, with his usual brevity, simply says, **& they crucified Him (24).** **At the 9th hour, around 3 p.m. Jesus uttered a loud cry, & breathed His last (33, 37).** Jesus died. The Scribes, Pharisees, Herodians, & Sanhedrin pulled it off & had Him killed by the Romans. Mark tells us that when the Roman **centurion, who was standing right in front of Jesus, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, *Truly this man was the Son of God!* (15:39).** Joseph of Arimathea then goes to Pilate & asks for Jesus' body to bury it. Pilate questions the centurion to make sure Jesus is dead. The centurion, an expert in death, verifies it & Pilate gives Joseph permission. So **Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Jesus down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth & laid Jesus in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; & he rolled a stone against the entrance of**

the tomb (15:46). Everybody would think this was the end of the story. *Jesus had a good run. He tried His best but was outmaneuvered by the religious elite. He's dead.* If the gospels ended there, they'd be right. But, as you know, the gospels don't end with the death of Jesus. Turn to Mk 16 & we'll read the end of the story in vss 1-8. Yes, I know there are some vss in your Bible after that, & we'll talk about them later. But it appears Mark ended his gospel with vs 8. Trust me on that for now & let's read the end of the story. **1-8**

1. The Empty Tomb The Jews marked their days at sundown rather than midnight, so **the Sabbath** ended on Saturday evening around 6:00 p.m. I imagine that Saturday must have been the darkest day the disciples ever experienced. A day of shattered hopes & broken dreams. These disciples, crushed, their hopes dashed, & dreams demolished, tried to live through that Saturday with no hope for the future & no belief in the resurrection. But as we come to Mk 16, the Sabbath is over. & now **Mary Magdalene, & Mary the mother of James, & Salome** come to the tomb (Mk 16:1; Lk 23:56; Jn 19:39–40). They **bought spices, so that they might ... anoint** Jesus body. They didn't have time on Friday because the Sabbath was about to begin. The other gospel writers explain that other women were also there (Lk 24:10; 15:32), including Mary the mother of Jesus (Jn 19:26). These women had followed Jesus & some were present at the cross (Mk 15:40–41). At least 2 of them saw Joseph & Nicodemus wrap Jesus' body with spices & place Him in the tomb (Jn 19:39; Mk 15:46). Now they wanted to personally anoint their friend & Lord. They wanted one last opportunity to demonstrate their love for Him.¹

Notice that 3x within a span of a few vss, Mark records the names of some women who witnessed these events: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James & Joses, & Salome (15:40, 47; 16:1). By doing this, Mark is letting us know he's writing a historical account, not a fictional story. They saw Him die. They saw Him buried. They were witnesses to the empty tomb. By repeating the names of the women, he's naming eyewitnesses. By including their names, he's saying to anyone reading his account, *if you want to check the truth of my story, go talk to these women. They're still alive & they can confirm everything I've written.* What is it these women witness? They've brought

¹ John MacArthur, *Mark 9–16*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, p 398

spices & are on their way to the tomb to add to what Joseph had already done. As they approach, they know Joseph had secured the gravesite with a large, heavy stone (Mk 15:46) & wondered how they'd be able to move it (3). Because Friday was the last time any of them had seen the tomb, they were unaware that the religious leaders had sealed it on Saturday & set a detachment of Roman soldiers to guard it (Mt 27:62–66). They were unaware of the earthquake that occurred earlier that morning & the arrival of the angel who rolled the stone away & incapacitated the soldiers, causing them to flee (Mt 28:2–4, 11). By the time the women arrive, the soldiers have disappeared & the tomb's entrance was open. To the women's surprise, as they looked **up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large** (4). It's important to know that the reason the angel removed the stone wasn't to let Jesus out. It was to let the women in, since they would've been unable to move the stone themselves (3). That they weren't expecting a resurrection is clear by the fact they'd come to the tomb with burial spices, absolutely unnecessary if they thought Jesus was alive. Soon they would learn the glorious truth.

2. The Angel In an instant, the women went from being perplexed to being terrified, when the morning gloom was replaced by the dazzling brilliance of **a young man**, an angel appearing in human form (Mt 28:5; Jn 20:12). **Sitting at the right** (a nice eyewitness detail), **wearing a white robe** (5), the young man's dazzling appearance clearly identified him as an angel from God. As you know, it was angels who brought tidings of great joy at the birth of Jesus (Lk 2:10-15); & angels who now announce the wonderful truth of His resurrection.

The angel's identification of Jesus left no doubt that the women had come to the right tomb. The angel was very clear he was speaking of Jesus, because he identified Him as **Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified** (6). He was equally clear the women were in the right place, where Jesus' body had been placed & encouraged them to look where His body had lain. **You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene**. That's exactly who they were looking for. They weren't looking for the Son of God, their Messiah. They weren't looking for a resurrected Lord. They were looking for the body of the man named Jesus. The One who died & was placed in this tomb on Friday. The angel went on to explain, **He has risen; He is not here** (6). The One they knew, whom they accompanied around Israel, the

Man they saw die on the cross, their loved One who was buried on Friday is no longer here. **He has risen** is more accurately translated, *He has been raised*. Just as God, through His angel, rolled away the stone, He raised Jesus from death. The resurrection is God's work completely.²

Can you imagine how these women felt, what they were thinking, as they heard these words? They'd come to the tomb in sorrow expecting to find a dead body. Instead they hear the words: **He has risen! He is not here**. But they shouldn't have been completely surprised. Repeatedly Jesus told His disciples, **I will rise on the 3rd day**. In Mark alone He said it in chpt 8, 9, & 10 & numerous times in the other gospels. Given that repetition, something curious is going on. On the 3rd day after Jesus' death, His disciples aren't around. These women appear, but they're bringing spices for a dead body. Nobody is expecting a resurrection. If you were Mark, trying to write a credible piece of fiction, & you've had Jesus saying repeatedly that He would rise on the 3rd day, wouldn't you at least have someone remembering that & saying, *Hey, it's the 3rd day. Maybe we ought to take a look at Jesus' tomb. What can it hurt?* But nobody does. In fact, they didn't expect a resurrection at all. It didn't occur to them as it wouldn't for us. If Mark had made up this story, he wouldn't have written it this way. Here's the point: The resurrection was as inconceivable for the disciples, as impossible for them to believe, as it is for many today. The people of Jesus' day weren't predisposed to believe in resurrection any more than we are. & if Mark & the others were making up these stories, they wouldn't have written women into the story as the 1st eyewitnesses to Jesus' empty tomb. Why? Because a woman's testimony wasn't given much credence then. The only possible reason for the presence of women in these accounts is that they really were present & reported what they saw. The stone has been rolled away, the tomb is empty.

As they recovered from their initial shock, the women were directed by the angel to examine **the place where they laid Him** (6). When Peter & John came to the tomb later that morning, they **saw the linen wrappings lying there, & the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself** (Jn 20:6-7). The women would've seen the same thing. As Jesus didn't need the stone removed to exit the tomb, He didn't need to be unwrapped to rise

² Sproul, p 414

from the grave. The angel's announcement that Jesus was alive represented the testimony of the Father Himself. This was God's explanation of the reason the tomb was empty. It was also the 1st post-resurrection declaration of the gospel. As one author writes: *The announcement of the angel is literally the gospel, good news, & the place which the gospel is 1st preached is the empty tomb that both received & gave up the Crucified One.*³

3. The Command Speaking on God's behalf, the angel instructed the women to **go, tell His disciples & Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you'** (7). Peter was singled out not only because he was the leader of the disciples but to reassure him in light of his recent denials (Mk 14:66–72). Remember, Peter was Mark's mentor & source, & by mentioning him in this way, the angel declares Peter hadn't been rejected from future service for Jesus because of his denial of Him. The angel could have said: *You tell those faithless, backstabbing cowards that Jesus doesn't want to see them again because they deserted Him.* A message like that would've been perfectly deserved. They had all deserted Him. Peter had denied Him, not once, but 3x. But Jesus' message to the disciples, through the angel, was, *I'm alive. I'll see you. I'm going ahead of you & I'll be waiting for you.* The announcement that **He is going ahead of you** is as important as the word that **He is not here**. The verb used doesn't simply mean Jesus has gone on ahead of His disciples. It was used for leading troops forward or a commander making an advance.⁴ Earlier, Jesus connected the promise that He'd go before them to Galilee to the image of shepherd (14:27–28). Jesus has fed His flock (6:34) & has laid down His life for them, which caused them to be scattered. As the risen Lord, He'll regather them into the fold.⁵

With these words from the angel, the women's perplexity & panic was to be transformed into proclamation. The truth had been revealed to them, now they were to declare it to the disciples. How did they respond? **They went out & fled from the tomb, for trembling & astonishment had gripped them** (8). **Trembling** speaks of physical shaking caused by great fear, & **astonishment** is the Greek word from which we get the word *ecstasy*. That **they were afraid** came from a sense of

³ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, p 494

⁴ Thucydides, *Hist.* 7.6.2; Polybius, *Hist.* 3.60.13; 3.72.8; 4.80.3; 5.7.6; 5.13.9; 5.48.12; 5.57.6; 5.70.12; 9.18.7; 11.20.4; 12.17.3; 27.16.3; 31.17.5.

⁵ David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary, p 614

bewilderment & wonder. Matthew explains that their fear was mingled with **great joy** at the realization that Jesus was alive (Mt 28:8). Awestruck by the news they'd received, they immediately went to find the disciples, saying **nothing to anyone, for they were afraid** (8). & Mark ends His gospel with those words. Do you see the irony here? When Jesus' followers are told to speak about Him, they say nothing. It's absurd, however, to think that something this incredible can be kept quiet for long. That these women say nothing immediately doesn't mean they never speak anything for days or weeks. No, their silence is short-lived. Something this remarkable can't be kept hidden. They said nothing to anyone along the way to the disciples. After they got to them, they did a lot of talking (Mt 28:8; Lk 24:9). But what a way to end Mark's gospel. No appearance of Jesus. The women are trembling & afraid & Mark says they remained silent. Not the end of the story we might expect. There's a contrast here, because right at the beginning of Mark's gospel we have the story of a leper being healed & told not to tell anyone & he goes & tells everyone! Here the women are told to go & tell, & they're silent. They step out of the tomb & they bolt. Why? Because **trembling & astonishment had gripped them** (8). Instead of shouting this incredible news from the rooftops, they remain silent for a time. But how would you respond? At this point they hadn't seen Jesus. Neither have we. Like these women, we're called to go in faith. When the women came to the disciples & told what had happened, the disciples initially refused to believe them (Lk 24:10–11). Their lack of faith made them slow to respond to Jesus' command to go to Galilee. It wasn't until after the risen Jesus repeatedly appeared to them in Jerusalem (Lk 24:13–32; Jn 20:19–31) that they finally headed for Galilee (Mt 28:7, 16). When Jesus promised to meet His disciples in Galilee (Mt 28:10), He wasn't saying His 1st appearance after His resurrection would be there but that His supreme appearance (to hundreds of His followers at one time) would take place there. In Judea, He appeared to Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:11–18), the other women (Mt 28:8–10). Peter (Lk 24:34), the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:15), 10 of the apostles in the upper room (Jn 20:19), & all 11 including Thomas 8 days later (Jn 20:26). When the apostles finally arrived in Galilee, Jesus appeared to 7 of them on the shore of the lake (Jn 21:1–25). He later appeared to more than 500 disciples (1 Cor 15:6) on a mountain, where He commissioned the apostles to take

the gospel to the ends of the earth (Mt 28:16–17). At some point, Jesus also appeared to His half-brother James (1 Cor 15:7) & then a final time to the 11 apostles on the Mount of Olives, just before His ascension to heaven (Acts 1:4–11). Additional appearances are implied in Acts 1:2–3. God ensured that the resurrection would be verified by hundreds of eyewitnesses on many occasions who had personally seen the risen Christ. The reality of the resurrection, affirmed by the testimony of the empty tomb, the angels, & the eyewitnesses, proves Jesus is who He claimed to be. Mark began his gospel record by declaring Jesus to be the **Christ, the Son of God** (1:1). Everything throughout his gospel confirms that fact, but the resurrection proves it beyond any doubt. Jesus is the divine Messiah, the Savior of sinners, the Son of God, & Lord of all (Phil 2:10–11).

Mark's gospel begins no less abruptly than it ends. Vs 8 seems a strange way for Mark to end it. But Mark's method throughout has been to leave his readers to make the crucial step of faith. Therefore, this abrupt ending was a stroke of genius. It forces us to conclude the story in our minds, to tell the story to ourselves, to consider its meaning, & to decide how we'll respond. When presented with this ending, we must ask, *What happened?* Mark wants to draw the reader into his account. He writes for Christians who are already acquainted with the account of Jesus' resurrection. They don't fret, *Oh, those foolish women, who never told the good news! Now no one will ever know what happened!* They know the news has been proclaimed because they had heard it. But Mark's gospel seems to end on a puzzling note: an empty tomb, a mysterious young man declaring Jesus has been raised but offering no proof, a promise of Jesus' going ahead of His disciples (or leading them) to Galilee, & women too scared to say anything. This strange, dissatisfying ending doesn't seem an appropriate one for a story supposed to be good news. Instead of triumph & joy, we encounter confusion & terror. We expect that something good is going to happen when the women find the large stone rolled away, but it doesn't. The angel doesn't announce, *Here He is!* But, **He is not here!** The women go from the tomb, but Mark says they don't go & tell as the angel instructed them. The angel doesn't track them down to reassure them again & spur them on to complete the task. In other words, Mark's ending seems to lead to a dead end. Since Mark doesn't record Jesus' meeting with His disciples in Galilee, the last words He speaks in

this Gospel are: **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?** (15:34). Mark opened his gospel with a voice from heaven authenticating Jesus' identity, mission, & authority. At the end, we have only the testimony of an angel & the witness of women whose testimony was considered to be suspect. Mark offers no evidence the angel's message is true, except that he repeats exactly what Jesus said would happen (14:28). We're left in suspense as to what happens next. The last scene in which Jesus speaks is from the cross. In Mark we see most vividly the power of God working in the crucifixion. The ending therefore means that one can't proclaim the glories of the resurrection to the neglect of the suffering of the cross. The confession, **Truly this man was the Son of God!** (15:39), comes when Jesus dies, not at the empty tomb. Mark wants us to focus not on the faith of the disciples, they had none. Nor on the faith of these women, they didn't have much. He wants us to focus on the power of God that's seen by the empty tomb. Jesus has risen, just as He said He would. After a criminal does his time in jail & fully satisfies the sentence, the law has no more claim on him & he walks out free. Jesus came to pay the penalty for our sins. That was an infinite sentence, but He satisfied it fully & on Easter Sunday He walked out free. The resurrection was God's way of stamping *PAID IN FULL* right across history so nobody could miss it. The resurrection is the *Amen* to Jesus' triumphant cry of, **It is finished!** (Jn 19:30). It's crucial we believe & trust these accounts of His resurrection because Scripture says Jesus **was delivered over because of our transgressions, & was raised because of our justification** (Rom 4:25). On the cross our Savior satisfied the demands of the righteousness of God. He settled a payment for us vicariously. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He declared to the whole world that our justification had been secured, because He'd accepted the atonement that Jesus had offered for His people. The Father who sent Jesus to the cross also brought Him out of the grave for our justification. By the power of God, Jesus is alive. By the grace of God in Christ, so are we.⁶ Jesus can't be held by death, let alone by a stone. He is free from death, transformed from this earthly existence, & unleashed on the world. One can't meet Him at the place where they laid Him. His grave isn't to become a shrine like David's tomb (Acts 2:29) or the tombs of modern-day leaders. The God who raises the dead

⁶ Sproul, p 415

has no use for this kind of memorial. God isn't the God of the dead, entombed in shrines, but of the living.⁷ Without the resurrection, we have no basis for saying we can come into the presence of a holy, loving, & righteous God. No basis for justification. No basis for peace with God. No basis for entry into heaven. No basis for a future bodily resurrection. All of it rests on Jesus' resurrection. If Jesus really has done it, if He truly is risen, if He's conquered death, it means He really is the Son of God, the true & perfect King. He came to earth to die on the cross for us. By trusting in what He's done for us, we're spared from eternal judgment & ushered into the presence of God for all eternity. In the gospel of John, Jesus puts it this way. **I am the resurrection & the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, & everyone who lives & believes in Me will never die** (Jn 11:25-26). His death means no death for us. His resurrection means our resurrection. But if Jesus isn't risen, then the story Mark's telling is pure fiction (1 Cor 15:13-19). The truth of the resurrection is of supreme & eternal importance. It's the hinge upon which the story of the world pivots. It's the swivel point for each & every one of us. If you believe the resurrection is true & you know that Jesus has died to save you & to redeem you from sin, you now have a relationship with God Himself. If you believe God has accepted you, for Jesus' sake, through an act of supreme grace, you're now part of God's family. You belong to Him & want to serve, worship, & glorify Him. If that describes you, it'll change everything about how you live in the present. May this be your experience today. How do you respond to the end of Mark's gospel? Maybe some of you have never really known what the Easter message means. It's our prayer you'll find the forgiveness, peace, joy, & hope that a living Lord Jesus can bring to your life. Jesus, as the Holy Lamb of God, was the perfect sacrifice for sin. His death was an atoning necessity if we're to survive the death that sin brings us. No other sacrifice would do. There was also the need of a holy & blameless High Priest to offer the blood of the Lamb of God on the altar before God. If Jesus didn't break the power of death by rising to life, He couldn't enter the Most Holy Place, offer His blood on our behalf, & cancel our death sentence (Heb 9:11-12). Jesus' resurrection was a historical & spiritual necessity. As the writer of Hebrews puts it: **Therefore, since the children share in flesh & blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same,**

⁷ Garland, p 623

that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (2:14). Jesus had to rise physically from the dead so that he could be our merciful & faithful High Priest before God. He then could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people (Heb 2:17). That's why Paul was so emphatic about the bodily resurrection of Jesus being the foundation of our faith. He said, **if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain** (1 Cor 15:14). Jesus' promise to forgive us of our sins & be the atoning sacrifice that would allow us to have a relationship with God was based, not only upon His death, but also upon His resurrection (1 Cor 15:17-20). It's a historical reality that Jesus' body was raised to new life. & because of that, we who believe also have new life. **God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (Eph 2:4-5). By the resurrection of Jesus, God took an apparently disastrous Friday & turned it into Good Friday. The resurrection shows us clearly that death has no power over the righteous Son of the Almighty God. Jesus broke the power of death by rising from the grave. What seemed to be the destruction of Jesus, throwing the human race into a hopeless situation, proved to be the very means of eternal life. Everything depends on the resurrection. Unless Jesus did rise from the dead, His promise of forgiven sins & an eternal relationship with God is nothing but a fantasy, a false hope. Jesus' death was an atoning necessity & His resurrection a historic necessity if we're to be saved from our sins.

Mark's ending of his gospel fits the beginning of it: **The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God** (1:1). The burial of Jesus & the news of His resurrection bring the narrative to a close, but the resurrection isn't the end of the story, only the beginning. How does one end such a story? *Just as the tomb will not contain Jesus, neither can Mark's story.*⁸ The resurrection sets in motion a new story that isn't finished or resolved yet. It won't be completed until Christians are gathered from the ends of the earth (13:27). What happens next, then, is up to us as believers. We can't allow the resurrection account to become a faded memory that's placed in a photo album & taken out once a year & admired. Mark's ending forces us to enter the story. We are the next chapter.

⁸ Juel, *Mark* p 235

What would we have done if we were those women given this tremendous news? The question then becomes not what will the women do but what will we do now that we've been let in on the news? Will we flee in fear & be silent? Will the story die with us? Will we obediently follow Jesus or hunker down in fear? Mark leaves us with the unfinished business of bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth. His ending (which isn't an ending) becomes a never-ending story as the baton passes on to us to join in the race & spread the news. Mark's ending raises the question, *Who will tell the story?* His Gospel is the account of the beginning of the gospel. Will we join in its continuation?⁹

I can think of no better way to end than with Paul's prayer that speaks of the work of the Spirit, of the hope Jesus' resurrection has given us, of the power of His resurrection, & of the coming kingdom in which He rules. May God answer this prayer in our lives & so help us to truly believe in His resurrection & live in light of the implications of that wonderful & amazing event.

I pray... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom & of revelation in the knowledge of Him. *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, & what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead & seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule & authority & power & dominion, & every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come (Eph 1:17-21).

⁹ Garland, pp 628–629