

What's Next?

(Mark 16:9-20)

(preached 2/28/16; Sunday AM)

Introduction

A pastor and his associate pastor were by the road in front of their church holding a sign that read...

“The end is near. Turn yourself around now before it is too late...”

Well, the first car that came down the road was shiny red corvette containing two young men...

Their radio was blasting and they were hanging out the window dancing...

They caught sight of the two pastors and turned their radio down, so that they could yell at the preachers as they passed by....

“We aint turning around for nobody. Leave us alone, you religious nuts...”

They went over the hill and all the pastors could hear were the screeching of tires and a big splash...

One pastor liked at the other and asked...

“Do you think we should have just written “Bridge Out” on the sign?”

Well, we have reached the end ourselves...

The end of the gospel of Mark that is...

On July 20th, 2014, we set out in Mark 1:1 and on February 28, 2016, we have come to the end...

One thing weighed on my heart as I entered ministry, where should I start my ministry?

There is so much to choose from..

Should I start with some random sermons from various books of the Bible and allow you to get used to my preaching?

Should I start with a small book of the Bible to get some momentum by completing it quickly and moving on to another?

Should I start with some sermons that I had already preached and kind of settle in to ministry by reducing my study time?

But one thing kept pressing on my heart...

If you want to people to love Jesus and obey Jesus, then they have to know Jesus...

And the only way to know Jesus is to be with him every Sunday...

And that is what we have done for the past 19 months, we have had our eyes, minds and hearts focused on Jesus Christ...

We followed Him from his first day on the job to his rising from the tomb and we will complete that journey today as we get final instructions from Him in verses 9-20...

And I would say it has been all that I thought it would be...

I am sure there were things that we already knew about Jesus but were simply reminded of in Mark, but I am also sure that we learned some new things as well...

And if anything, we have learned what Mark set out to teach us in Mark 1:1, which was to prove to his readers that Jesus was the Son of God.

He proved it through his teaching...

He proved it through his healing, his miracles, and his sinlessness...

He proved it through his authority over demons and his authority over the teaching of the Jewish religious leaders...

He proved it through his obedience of going to the cross and he proved it through his power over death in the resurrection...

Mark has proved his case of Jesus being the Son of God, and if that is the case, you better make sure that you are right with the Son...

If not, there is literally hell to pay for rejecting Jesus..

Next week ,we are going to build on the gospel of gospel of Jesus by going to the book of Colossians which is going to tell us how to live in light of the fact that Jesus is King over all..

That will be a great book for us to go through as well, but let's finish up the gospel of Mark today..

Now, we have to deal with a little controversy before we do...

If you look at your Bibles, most of you will have brackets or parentheses around verses 9-20 of Mark 16....

You may even have another verse in italics at the end of verse 20 as well...

Just depends on which translation you have..

King James and New King James may not have brackets at all...

It just depends upon your Bible...

Well, those brackets are there for this reason...

The ending of Mark has been debated for centuries...

Really ever since the NT was put together in the 2nd century AD, people have disagreed over how Mark ended...

So, let me talk about that before we dig into these verses this morning...

Because it is important to know how we got the Bible...

And it is important to know that we can trust our Bibles that we hold in our hands...

As long as it is a solid translation like the NASB, the ESV, the NKJV, the KJV, the Holman or even the NIV...

There are others, but as long as you have a trusted translation and if you are unsure about that, just ask me and others trust...

But if you have one of those trustworthy translations, I want to assure you that you are holding the very word of God as it was spoken to its original human authors...

Now, how do I know that?

Well, a couple reasons...

First, if I have faith that God wrote it, I have faith that he has preserved it as it has been translated..

And I do.

Second, people have studied the Bible from its original writing throughout the years of translation and they are confident that it has been translated correctly...

This is called the science of text criticism...

And here is what that means...

People came along trying to find errors in translations and transmissions of the Bible...

In other words, it was their job to criticize the Bible and how it has been passed down as a way to poke holes in it...

Yet, all that has done is increase the confidence that what we have even in today's Bibles is the actual word of God.

In fact, all their work has accomplished is to turn up some errors in spelling in places and a few minor word changes...

But none of those changes affects the meaning of anything in the Bible...

I can say with confidence that the Bible we study can be trusted in every way..

I have staked my life on it..

I have chosen a career to teach it and defend it, and I trust it with everything I am...

And that comes after taking a class in seminary that talked about some of these small problems...

Well, the ending of Mark is one of those minor problems...

And you have good Christian scholars who land on both sides of the issue...

Some say that verses 9-20 were written by Mark and belong there...

And some say that these same verses were added later to make the ending of Mark to better match the endings of Matthew, Luke and John..

Since there has been disagreement, Bible publishers print Mark 16:9-20 in their Bible but put them in brackets to note some disagreement over whether these verses belong...

Now, here is the 5 minute version that explains why there is debate over how Mark ends..

When Mark or for that matter any author of the Bible sat down to write his book or books...

The Bible says that God breathed out every word they should write and carried them along by the Holy Spirit to write every book....

Well, that is what happened...

Mark sat down with a writing instrument and and something to write on, and he wrote down the very words of God...

Same was true with Moses or David or the other writers in the OT, or Paul or John or Peter or the other writers of the NT...

And their writing was confined to that piece of paper we will call it though it would have been different than paper today...

Well, people would come along and copy down Mark's words or John's words or Paul's words...

There were no Xerox machines or copiers...

So people became the copiers of the original books of Scriptures...

Eventually when all the NT was completed with John writing Revelation in 90 AD...

All the book of the Old and New Testaments were put together and copies were then made of all of them..

Well, God watched over all of that, and the people copying the Bible took great care to copy it perfectly...

They knew they weren't dealing with any old book, they knew that they were handling the very word of God when they copied it...

So much attention was paid to how it was copied..

One story is told of a scribe who was copying the book of OT book of Isaiah who would copy a single letter of a verse then go and take a bath before he moved on to the next letter of the verse....

Just to remind himself of the seriousness of his task...

Well, what happened over time is that the original copies of all the books of the Bible were lost or misplaced and what the world was left with was simply copies of each of the books...

But not to worry, thousands of copies existed for each of the books of the Bible....

And when you have thousands of copies, it is easy to go through them and identify when a word was misspelled or copied wrong...

For instance, if you had 999 copies of the book of Mark that began with the word “the” and you had one copy that began with the word “now”....

It is easy to tell that “the” is the word that Mark originally used...

And so when we find a copy of a book in the Bible, we compare it and see what matches and what doesn't and most match up almost perfectly...

However, the ending of Mark is a problem....

Most of the copies of Mark have verses 9-20 in them, but the ones that are closest to the time that Mark was written do not...

The gospel simply ends with verse 8...

And so, there has been disagreement about how Mark ends for centuries...

And it won't be settled today either...

Most scholars today think that Mark should end in verse 8, but it is not a cut and dry case...

Therefore, we end up with Bible that have verses 9-20 in brackets...

Here is what you need to know about the ending of Mark....

#1 - The Bible is inerrant regardless of how you view the ending of Mark...

If you cut out verses 9-20, the things taught in those verses are taught other places in the Bible...

So you dont miss any great truth if you come to believe that the book should end with verse 8...

On the other hand, if you think they belong there, you are also fine because none of these verse contain error or anything false...

So first of all, how you view these verses doesn't alter the fact that the Bible is inerrant and can be trusted to be 100% true..

#2 - How you view the ending of Mark is not a test of your salvation or anyone else's.

Nothing in these verses changes the gospel whether you include them or leave them out...

I just say all of that to say this...

The Bible is perfect in every way, and even the minor problem of how Mark ends does not affect that...

Those who find fault with God because the ending of Mark is unclear want to find fault with God...

And if it wasn't the ending of it would be another small problem...

The bottom line is this...

We accept the Word of God as error free and authoritative on faith...

Because our minds have been renewed by the Spirit of God working in us to believe it...

The unsaved doesn't do that because he is filled with unbelief and not faith...

With that said, let's look at how Mark ends his gospel this morning in verses 9-20...

And whether these verse belong here or not is up to you after careful prayer and research...

However, since they are here and also taught in other gospels, let's spend a moment examine them to learn what happens next after the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

The first thing to see is this in verses 9-14...

I. After the Resurrection, Jesus Gave Confidence (9-14)

Let's read verses 9-14....

9 [[c]Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. 10 She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. 11 When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. 12 After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. 13 They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either. 14 Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Like we saw last week, Jesus appeared to his believers after his resurrection to strengthen their faith...

I can't imagine having to consider the resurrection of someone...

Even though Jesus had told them of his resurrection after death, it was not the easiest thing to understand or even believe..

We tend to look at these disciples and women with frustration for not believing the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead, but we would have probably been filled with the same unbelief at first..

And you see that in these disciples as well...

When Mary Magdalene saw Jesus, she went to tell the disciples and then didn't believe her in verse 11...

The same thing occurred after he appeared to two people on the road in verse 12...

They came and reported it to Jesus's disciples in verse 13 and they didn't believe them either...

Now eventually they come to believe in the resurrection after Jesus appears to them and rebukes them for not believing in verse 14..

But what I want us to see here is not the hardness of unbelief but the kindness of Jesus after the resurrection...

We touched on this last week, but look at the patience of Jesus here...

Even in the face of such unbelief, Jesus continues to appear to prove his resurrection and give his disciples confidence to believe in it...

As a child, I was scared to death of water...

My dad would tell me to jump to him in the pool, and I would tell him I didn't trust him to catch me....

Well that didn't affect him because I eventually got up enough courage to jump and he caught me...

The second time I was a little fearful, and I even told him...

You just caught me the first time so you could drop me this time...

But he caught me again...

My dad knew I needed to grow in my trust, and he didn't teach me to trust by dropping me...

He taught me to trust by catching me...

Jesus knew the disciples were filled with unbelief, but that didn't stop him from continuing to show himself to them...

That's the kindness of Christ...

Even in our unbelief, he continues to reveal himself to us...

How many times did you refuse to believe in Christ before you eventually repented and believed in Him?

Aren't you the Lord doesn't see our unbelief the first time and then refuse to come to us again?

Are you filled with unbelief this morning?

Have you rejected Christ so many times before?

Well, today He has come to you again to give you confidence in the fact that He is real and HE desires your repentance and faith in Him...

Turn from your unbelief and see the Lord and repent and trust in Him....

Jesus' multiple appearances after his resurrection were meant to end the disciples unbelief and fill them with confidence that He was the son of God...

What's Next after the resurrection?

Well, first Jesus gives confidence of the resurrection to his followers...

Then in verses 15-18....

II. After the Resurrection, Jesus Issued a Command (15-18)

Verse 15...

15 And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

17 These [d]signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Once the disciples see proof of the resurrection and believe that Jesus has indeed risen...

Jesus gives them a command to follow...

A mission to do...

An order to keep...

And this mission flows to us indirectly today as His followers...

And it is quite simple to understand....

Go into the world and preach the gospel to everyone...

The gospel is simply the good news that God has made a way for sins to be forgiven in the substitutionary death of His Son...

The good news or the gospel is that the sins we commit that separate us from God can be forgiven because Jesus took the punishment for our sins on the cross...

We were guilty criminals before God....

Liars, cheaters, thieves, adulterers, coveters...

In God's courtroom, our sins can with a death sentence...

We were guilty of our sins...

God is a just God and we deserved to die for our sins...

Yet, Jesus walked into the courtroom offered to take the death sentence for us by dying on a cross and pouring out his blood to satisfy the penalty for sin...

And when we repent and trust in Jesus to save us,
his blood is offered in our place to satisfy the death
sentence that we deserved...

We get to walk out of God's courtroom free and
clear and we are given the privilege of spending
eternity with God in heaven...

The good news or the gospel is that there is a way to
avoid the death sentence of sin...

And that way is by repenting and trusting in Jesus
Christ...

And we are called to take that good news to the
world...

And it goes without saying that taking the gospel to
the world requires us to talk to people in the
world...

To bring good news means that we speak to people
and call them to faith and repentance in Jesus...

This is a command that calls us to open our mouths
and share the good news...

And Jesus even tells us that lives depend upon his
disciples sharing this message in verse 16....

Those who believe their message will be saved and those who refuse to believe the gospel will be condemned...

And then in verses 17-18, Jesus tells the disciples that some signs will accompany their preaching to validate the truthfulness of it...

You have to understand how the spread of the gospel started...

You literally had very unskilled men charged with the task of going into the world with the greatest news the world has ever known...

But no one would even give them the time of day...

The world was sophisticated and knowledgable, and here you had a bunch of Jewish fishermen and a tax collector and other blue collar workers telling people how to be right with God...

Needless to say, nobody listened...

So in those early stages of the gospel being spread before the New Testament was completed, God sent signs to accompany the disciples to prove that their message was true...

Some of the signs and wonders performed by the disciples are listed in verses 17-18...

They were able for a while to cast out demons,...

Speak in tongues with simply means they were able to speak known languages of other nations....

Handle serpents and drink deadly poison without dying...

And heal sick people...

And all of these signs were for a time so that their message of the how to be right with God through His Son would be more receivable and believable...

We have no need of these signs today...

The Bible verifies the message of the gospel...

We don't handle snakes or drink poison to prove our message is from God...

We point to the truth of the God's written Word that has been passed down through the centuries...

Our message is know to be true because God has verified it in His Word...

And our lives also verify the truthfulness of it by how we live...

That is why the a great defense of the truth of the gospel is not seen by handle you handle a snake today...

But by how different your life is after you claimed to have gotten saved...

So, we have seen that after the resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples to give them confidence but also a command...

There is one more thing to see here after the resurrection and it is found in verses 19-20...

III. After the Resurrection, Jesus' Was Exalted (19-20)

Let's read verses 19-20...

19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the [e]signs that followed.]

In verse 19, Jesus was exalted in heaven...

His mission was completed with perfect obedience, and because of that..

He was received back into heaven after the resurrection...

According to verse 19, he now sits in a place of honor at the right hand of God until he is sent back to earth to rule it as it was meant to be ruled before sin...

So first of all after the resurrection, Jesus was exalted to a place of honor in heaven..

However, Jesus was also exalted on earth after the resurrection as well...

Because we read in verse 20 that Jesus' name was reached everywhere by His disciples....

In fact, the spreading of the good news that started with just a few men eventually grew so much that the preaching of the gospel eventually turned the world upside down, and

The preaching of the gospel is still turning lives upside down today...

We gather each Sunday as a church to hear the Bible taught and the gospel preach...

And then we scatter to take that gospel to the world during the week...

That was the pattern of the early church and it remains the pattern today because Jesus commanded it...

And we simply obey our King....

Even today, Christ is exalted in heaven while His name is still preached and exalted on earth...

Conclusion

And that is how the gospel of Mark ends with an exalted Christ...

Mark set out to prove that Jesus was the Son of God, and the gospel ends with Jesus sitting at the right hand of God....

That is a great way to end our time in the gospel of Mark...

With an exalted Christ sitting in heaven but also being exalted on earth...

Because that is the only way to view Jesus....

As the the King exalted in both heaven and earth...

And if the gospel of Mark has taught us anything in these 16 chapters, it is this....

There is but one place that Jesus deserves in your life...

And that is the place of exaltation...

Jesus needs to be exalted over every part of your life...

If you are unsaved in here this morning, you need to bow your knee and your whole life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ...

You need to stop exalting yourself and start exalting Jesus beginning with your repentance and trust in Him to save you...

If you do claim to be saved in here today, I would ask you if Christ is exalted in your life...

Does he hold the place of prominence in all your decisions and daily living?

Or does just get exalted when others are looking on Sunday mornings?

If that is the case, you better make sure your claim of faith is real...

Because no true believer would give Jesus a back seat in their life...

If Jesus isn't exalted in your life, you may not know him and worse yet, He may not know you...

Finally, if you are a believer in here today but have simply forgotten to give Jesus the place of prominence in all you do, today is the day to exalt Christ in every part of your life...

Today is the day to repent and of giving Jesus a back seat and put him in the driver's seat of all you do...

Mark has written this gospel to show us that Jesus is the son of God....

My prayer for you is that your life reflects the glory of that truth...

Let us pray.