



The Gospel According to Mark

Lesson 8

Lesson 8 Commentary Mark 16:1–16:20 and Recap

Introduction

We have reached the final session. When we left off, Jesus was laid in the tomb and the stone was rolled against the door. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, saw where he was laid. In this session we will examine the final chapter, which has a rather unusual history.

There are several endings to Mark 16. All manuscripts have verses 1 – 8. Many of the manuscripts simply end at that point with verse 8, “So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” Other manuscripts include a statement after verse 8. “In some Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic manuscripts Mark 16:8 is followed by this short ending:

All that had been commanded they proclaimed briefly to those about Peter. Afterward Jesus himself appeared to them, and from the East as far as the West he sent forth through them the sacred and incorruptible proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.”¹

Still other manuscripts include the “longer ending” with verses 9 – 20. Several of the earliest patristic writers did not seem aware of the verses 9 – 20. “There is no indication that Clement of Alexandria or Origen knew it, and Eusebius and Jerome claimed that it was absent from almost all the Greek manuscripts known to them.”² Many scholars believe that the longer ending is not original. “The majority of Marcan manuscripts, however, include this “longer ending” (16:9–20). According to the Council of Trent, the canon of Scripture corresponds to everything

¹ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 2, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 462.

² Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 2, Sacra Pagina Series, 462.

included in the Latin Vulgate edition (Sess.4, Dec.1). This official translation includes 16:9–20 as part of the inspired Gospel.”³

Chapter 16

Chapter 16, in the NRSVCE, has five sections.

- The Resurrection of Jesus
- Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene
- Jesus Appears to Two Disciples
- Jesus Commissions the Disciples
- The Ascension of Jesus

The chapter begins with a discussion of the same women who saw where he was laid. It is widely accepted that the Mary, the mother of Joseph, and Mary, the mother of James, are the same person. On the evening after the Sabbath (Saturday after sunset), the women purchased spices to anoint the body of Jesus. In John 19:39, we see that those burying Jesus had anointed him with myrrh and aloes. The two Marys must have thought that the burial was done quickly because Jesus died just before the beginning of the Sabbath (3 PM or so on Friday). The next morning (Sunday), the two Marys go to make sure the anointing was done properly to prevent the stench of the decaying body. They enter the tomb and encounter what Matthew calls an “angel,” who tells them to tell Peter and the Apostles to go to Galilee. The women fled in terror and “said nothing to anyone.” As stated above, in many manuscripts this is where the Gospel ends.

John (John 20:11 – 18) gives more detail to the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene. The difference between Mark’s and John’s renditions is that Mark says that the Apostles did not believe her. Note in verse 9, that the author describes Mary Magdalene as if we have not been introduced to her before. Why put this here instead of Chapter 15, where she is first introduced? The same description can be found in Luke 8.

Next, Jesus appears to two disciples. This appears to be a shortened version of the disciples on the road to Emmaus found in Luke 24:13 – 43 (one of my favorite stories in the Gospels). Again, “they” did not believe them, a fact not found in the Luke rendition.

He finally appears to the eleven and “he upbraided them for the lack of faith and stubbornness.” Throughout the Gospel of Mark, the Apostles are not shown to be the sharpest knives in the drawer, yet he commissions them to “proclaim the good news.” Jesus then names “signs that will accompany those who believe.” Mark 16:17 – 18 reads, “And these signs will accompany

³ Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The New Testament* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 97.

those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.” “In the early Church, the apostles drove out **demons** (Acts 16:16–18), spoke in **new tongues** (Acts 2:4–11), sustained the sting of **serpents** unharmed (Acts 28:1–6), and healed infirmities by placing their **hands on the sick** (Acts 3:6–8; 28:8; CCC 434, 670)”⁴

The Gospel of Mark ends with ascension of Jesus. Note that the author, again, echoes Daniel 7 related to sitting at the right hand of the Father.

Recap

The four Gospels paint different pictures of the same Jesus. Matthew, speaking to the Jews, tends to present Jesus as the King, and fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament. Luke, speaking to the Greeks, shows that Jesus is compassionate to the marginalized, the poor and women. John, speaking to an advanced group of Christians, shows that the Son was with the Father for all times and became flesh for our salvation. What picture does Mark paint?

Mark states his claim in Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Mark illustrates that Jesus is a healer, an exorcist, and is Messiah. Given the Messianic Secret, it does appear that Jesus believes that the Jews of His time are not prepared for the type of Messiah he will be -- the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah. Except for a couple of long sermons, Jesus is a man of action, moving from place to place quickly.

Some have argued that Mark does not have a Trinitarian theme. I disagree. It is probably not as obvious as other Gospels. However, when you put together Mark 4, 6 and 14, along with Exodus 3, Daniel 7 and Psalms 107 and 110, I think Mark shows that Jesus was as the second person of the Trinity. The Trinity doctrines, themselves, were not defined for several centuries, but the warrant for them exist in what may be the earliest Gospel written, Mark.

⁴ Hahn and Mitch, *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The New Testament*, 98.