

Gospel of Mark Chapter 16 – John Karmelich

1. As I was thinking about what to write for this lesson, I was reminded of a story told by a famous pastor in my area (Rick Warren). Every Easter Sunday, a particular man shows up to hear Rick speak. That man never comes to church other than on Easter Sunday. One time the man spoke to Rick and said, "Every time I come here, you always talk about the same thing, Jesus rising from the dead." Rick Warren then responded with, "You ought to try coming some other Sunday".
 - a) I was thinking about that story, as here we are in the final chapter of Mark, and yes, we are dealing with the story of "Easter Sunday".
 - b) Since I know someone will ask me this question, I am aware that the word "Easter" has pagan roots, but it has come to be associated with the resurrection, so I use it that way.
 - c) While I do believe I can show you some interesting things about the resurrection story you may not have thought about before, we should never forget the big picture: We believe that God the Father did raise Jesus from the dead, He did die for our sins and He is now at the right hand of God the Father. He is our "bridge" between God the Father and us. I may not be as poetic as others; ☺ but I do get the Gospel message.
2. It's time to ask one of my favorite questions: What we are doing with the knowledge that Jesus is God? That, believe it or not, relates to my lesson title. It is "How do we apply our Christian faith, when things are going wrong." Let me explain why that is the title.
 - a) What I noticed in this lesson are all the people who didn't get it about Jesus' resurrection and how they actually suffered do to that lack of knowledge.
 - b) Let me put it this another way: All of us as Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead. The important aspect of this lesson is "What do I do with that information?"; especially when things around us are falling apart.
 - c) My point is that if you truly believe that Jesus died for all of your sins (past, present and future) and that your salvation is secured, then we should realize that we will live forever. Consider how long is "forever" in comparison to whatever we are dealing with at this time? How bad are our problems in comparison to forever? One reason the Gospel message is called the "good news" is that no matter what we are going through, we can have peace knowing that the worse that can happen is we have to suffer in this lifetime.
 - i) That does not mean God wants us to ignore our problems. If anything, God wants to help us deal with whatever we are going through at the moment. God wants us to trust Him through those issues to eventually use them for His glory.
3. This leads me back to the Gospel of Mark. More than any other Gospel, Mark's emphasis is on "servitude". What I mean by that is throughout this book we learn how Jesus came to be a servant of mankind. Jesus took on the most "lowly of roles" (i.e., He didn't come to earth as a king or someone of prominence) to teach us as His followers how also to be servants.
 - a) That doesn't mean we each quit our jobs and go be somebody's slave. ☺ It means we have a servant's attitude in whatever capacity God has called us, even that of leadership, where we learn to put the needs of others as priority over own.
 - b) Then there is the resurrection. Jesus didn't just come to be a servant; He came to die on our behalf. A soldier who falls on a hand grenade for the benefit of his fellow soldiers does do a wonderful gesture. Jesus takes that idea one "big step" further, by paying the price for all the sins we have committed, past, present and future.
 - c) In other words, the only way God the Father can prove that He loves us and at the same time give each of us the punishment (justice) we deserve is for He-Himself to pay the price for our sins. To put it another way: Who killed Jesus? The answer is no one. He freely gave up His life for our sins. Do you want to blame someone for the death of Jesus? Blame yourself, as He died for your sins and my sins.

4. Gee John, that is very nice to read about, but let's say I know and believe all of this. How about you tell me some more how the resurrection affects my daily life here and now?
 - a) Part of it is to look at our problems in comparison to the eternal perspective. The other is to know that a resurrected God wants to be with us and help us through whatever we are dealing with at the present moment.
 - b) The key to understanding the resurrection is a lot more than realizing that God died "in our place" for the punishment we deserve. Yes, that is important and that is the beginning of understanding our role as believers. The next step is to realize how much God loves us and cares for our lives "here and now". God wants us to seek Him as to how to live our lives and learn what he wants and expects from our lives.
 - c) If you don't know what God has planned for you, don't worry, none of us do. Simply go forward with what you believe is God's plan for your life for that moment and He will lead you down the path He wants for us.
 - i) If that sounds either confusing or "cliché", my hope is simply that you take the time to regularly seek God and ask Him, "What do you want from me at this moment in time?" It may not be some great task. It may be simply to trust Him to get you through whatever we are going through at this moment.
 - d) I have learned that God never gives me more than I can handle. We will see examples of that in this lesson. God does not always give you or I some great vision of some great project. He may just want us to keep on doing what we have been doing and keep on trusting that He is working in our lives His way and at His pace.
 - e) OK, enough of the "big picture" introduction. Let's start Verse 1.
5. Verse 1: When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.
 - a) The first point of this verse is that when the Sabbath was over, some women went to Jesus' grave to anoint His dead body with spices. Notice the women did not violate the Jewish Sabbath to perform this act. In other words, they still obeyed God's rules for their lives despite their sorrow over Jesus at this moment.
 - b) For those of you who are fascinated by the "Was Jesus crucified on Thursday or Friday" debate, know that there are great bible scholars on both sides of this debate. There are hints in Matthew's Gospel that there may have been two "Sabbath's" in a row (two days straight) as one day may have been a Jewish holiday and one may have been a normal "Sabbath". That is why people vary on exactly when Jesus was crucified.
 - i) To me, it is a trivial point and if my view is wrong when I get to heaven, I will shrug my shoulders in effect and say, "Well, my view was wrong on that point."
 - c) OK, back to the verse. What were these women doing and why should I care?
 - i) These women were performing a specific Jewish burial custom. Let me explain: Jewish people didn't embalm their dead. To cover the smell of a dead body, they would anoint that body with ointments.
 - ii) For those who thought, "The women around Jesus understood how He was going to rise on the third day", this verse proves otherwise. If they did think Jesus was going to rise, these women would not have this desire to anoint the body.
 - iii) Most commentators suspect these women "left the scene" before the orders were given by the Jewish officials to seal the tomb and have soldiers guard it. (See Matthew 27:65-66).
 - a) In other words, if these women knew there were Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, they may have passed on this idea of anointing the body.
 - iv) They did know that Jesus was buried in a tomb and they knew a big stone was placed in front of that tomb. Maybe they were simply thinking, "Let's go buy the anointing oil and then we'll figure out how to move the stone when we get there."

6. Verse 2: Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb³ and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"
- a) It would be helpful here to know that a Jewish day, (including the Sabbath which is just one day of the week) begins and ends at sundown. Therefore a Jewish "Sabbath" is from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown. If that is true, why didn't the women go to the tomb after sundown on Saturday? Maybe they needed to buy the anointing oil after the Sabbath was over and then they figured, "Let's just go to the grave first thing in the morning after we get a good night's sleep".
 - b) Maybe it was simply the Holy Spirit that inspired them to go on the "third day" to see Jesus as opposed to trying to do it the night before. However it happened, these women will be famous in history as the first people to be aware that Jesus rose from the dead.
 - c) Meanwhile, these women still had the problem of "how do we move the big stone?" I'm sure that was the main topic of conversation as they walked from their home to the gravesite. All they cared about was that they wanted to anoint the dead body of Jesus and they just saw the stone as an obstacle that they had to overcome. Experts estimated the stone was probably over a ton in weight.
7. Verse 4: But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.
- a) Again, other gospels tell us that the Jewish religious leaders ordered some guards be kept at the tomb. Jesus disciples did not believe that He would rise on the third day, however, the Jewish religious leaders understood what Jesus had said, and they had guards placed at the tomb so the disciples would not steal the body away.
 - b) The point as it relates to this verse is at this moment, there are no guards. Matthew's gospel records the sight of the angel(s) moving the stone, and that scared away the guards (See Matthew 28:4.) This is when the guards reported that story to the religious leaders.
 - c) Meanwhile, these women showed up and the one thing they were worried about the most, was not an issue. The stone had already been rolled away.
 - i) I don't know about you, but I have found that in life, most of the things that I have worried about never happen in the first place. Even if those bad things happen, it is usually not as bad as we feared. Here were these women probably worried all night about how they were going to deal with this large stone, and the problem has already been dealt with before they got there.
 - ii) It is just another small proof about giving our fears over to God to let Him deal with them, as opposed to worrying about some big issue in our lives.
 - d) By the way, the stone was probably round like a wheel and the size of a door. It was heavy enough that these women couldn't move it by themselves. Such stones were used for the graves of rich people, as to prevent grave-looters. Remember that this gravesite belonged to a local rich person named Joseph of Arimathea.
 - i) One of the things that you learn as a veteran Christian is that there are a lot of possible reasons that people come up with that Jesus didn't really die. One reason given is that Jesus just fainted and then He let himself out of the grave later.
 - ii) I defy any person to suffer like Jesus did and live through it. Further, the centurion who watched Jesus die verified that fact for us in the last chapter.
 - iii) I mention the "excuses" as another common story is that these women showed up at the wrong grave. To respond to that, the short answer is they knew where Jesus was buried and the angel reported to them that Jesus was not there.
 - e) Remember that at this point, these women still did not know that Jesus had risen from the dead. They just knew that the stone covering Jesus grave had been moved.
 - i) Naturally, as any curious person would do, they took the next logical step, which was to look in the grave for Jesus' body, as their purpose of coming was to anoint His dead body with oils as part of a Jewish burial ritual.

- f) Before I move on, a quick point about why the stone was moved: It was not so Jesus could get out, it was so that people could come in and see the evidence of the resurrection.
- i) As I mention in past lessons, Jesus in His resurrected body, could walk into a locked room, (see John 20:26) and I believe He now exists in more than three dimensions. Therefore, Jesus did not need the stone moved in order to get out, but it was moved so others could see the evidence of the empty tomb.
8. Verse 5: As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.
- a) This verse says the women were expecting a dead body and instead they see an angel. Others gospels verify this angelic vision. (See Matthew 28:2-3 and John 20:12.)
- b) So why was an angel there? Why could it not be just an empty tomb?
- i) One reason was so that the women coming to the tomb would know for sure that they were at the right place. (This is also stated in Verse 6, coming up.)
- c) Let me also comment on the angel itself:
- i) We tend to visualize angels as ghost-like creatures with wings that hover over the ground. Yet here was this angel who appeared to be a man with no wings.
- ii) I take the view that angels can change appearances. Most of the appearances of angels in the bible are in the form of a human (no wings) dressed in a robe.
- iii) The purpose of the angel looking that way is so not to frighten these women.
- iv) If you read this story in John's Gospel, (John 20:12) it says there were two angels and here in Mark's Gospel, there is only one angel. Is that a contradiction?
- a) It is, but it is not a big deal. If you ever interview more than one witness to an event, you will rarely get exactly the same details. If every witness tells the exact same story, one's first thought is that the witnesses got together to collaborate their stories. The fact that different accounts of this story vary give support to that there was more than one witness recalling the story.
- b) The most likely situation is that there were two angels, but only one spoke and Mark's Gospel is focusing on the one that actually spoke.
9. Verse 6: "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.
- a) Again Verse 6 gives support to the idea that the women did not get the wrong grave.
- b) This verse also supports that the "entity" speaking is an angel. If this "entity" was only a human being, how would it (he) know that Jesus had actually risen from the dead?
- c) This verse also supports the idea that these women did not get the idea that Jesus was to be resurrected. They came to anoint the body and now they are told by the body is gone.
- d) OK John, I get all of this and I believe Jesus is alive. Why should I care about this? First of all, it is the fundamental issue of all Christianity. What we believe as Christians is based on the fact we accept the idea that Jesus was fully human and fully God and that He was raised from the dead at this moment in time.
- e) Now I want you to think about this event another way: Were these women now going over biblical theology in their heads and understanding how Jesus was the fulfillment of bible prophecy? ☺ No, they were just happy that Jesus was alive.
- i) That should be our attitude. Chapter 16 of the Gospel of Mark is all about the good news: That good news is that Jesus is alive.
- ii) Now think about that good news this way. How bad are our problems in comparison to the fact that Jesus is alive?
- iii) We as believing Christians will live forever. That does not mean that whatever we are dealing with now is not "real". It just means that in comparison to eternity, our problems are insignificant. We can get through whatever we are dealing with because we too know that we will be resurrected as Jesus was resurrected.
- iv) That is the good news of the Gospel of Jesus.

- f) Let me put it another way: If you or I are not happy about Jesus being alive, then we have the wrong perspective about life. Yes there is real suffering right now and we all have issues to deal with. If we remember that Jesus is alive, the worst that can happen to us, is whatever happens in this lifetime. Yes our problems are difficult at times, yet what is "that" in comparison to eternity? The good news of the Gospel is about keeping our focus on the length of eternity as compared to whatever we are dealing with in this lifetime.
- i) This is why Christians should always be joyful no matter what we are going through at any moment. It is not that "pain" is not real. It is just that the good news of Jesus being alive should give us the perspective to help us through whatever we are dealing with at the moment.
- g) OK, with that happy news stated, ☺ it is time to go back to the women at the tomb.
10. Verse 7: But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' "
- a) The angel at the tomb was not just there to tell these women that Jesus has risen from the dead. The other message for the women was to go tell the disciples and Peter (I'll talk in a moment why he was singled out) to go the Galilee area and Jesus will meet them there.
- b) A quick reminder about the local geography. The tomb where Jesus was at is just outside the walls of the City of Jerusalem. The Galilee area is around the Sea of Galilee in the northern area of Israel, while Jerusalem is in the southern area of that country.
- i) Since the angel was not more specific about where in Galilee they should go, I would assume the logical place would be their original headquarters where Jesus first stayed when He started his ministry. In other words, these women were to gather the disciples and they should all travel north back to the Galilee area.
- c) OK, so why should I care about this information?
- i) The key point is not that everyone has to go to Galilee. ☺ The key point is that Jesus is alive and that He is "not done with everyone". He has plans to meet all of the disciples away from where those who arrested Jesus were living.
- ii) In other words, if we just learned that Jesus has risen and He is God, that should be enough good news. The real good news is that He is not done working with you and me and He wants to see us to have a closer relationship with Him.
- iii) OK John, you have been addressing this lesson to those who already have a relationship with Jesus. What if I've never done that? That answer is simple:
- a) Stop and pray for Jesus to come into your life and be a part of your life.
- b) That is one prayer request God never refuses. Be willing to say in effect that you want God's will done for your life. That too is a start and that too is guaranteed to be an answered prayer as God will come into our lives.
- d) The point of this verse for believers is that God still wants to work in our lives. Just as Jesus came to Galilee to talk to the disciples some more, God is still working in the background of our lives and He wants a continuous relationship with us.
- i) If you recall from the last lesson, a big deal was made about the fact the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom. The symbolic aspect of that torn up curtain was that now there is no barrier between God and man as the price for all sin has been paid for. Therefore, no matter where we are (spiritually speaking) in our lives, no matter how bad we have messed up, no matter how good or how bad things are going in our lives at that moment, Jesus is waiting for us to talk to Him.
- ii) I also want to remind you that when we approach God, we need to have balance in that we should remember that God is "God" (He is "holy" and has no tolerance for sin). We balance that with the fact that we can call God "Abba" (i.e., father or daddy) in that He is a loving father that cares about our lives and wants to guide us through whatever we are going through at the present time.
- e) OK, before I started all of this happy talk, ☺ I believe we left off on Verse 7.

- f) The other point to get out of this verse is the word "Peter". The instructions this angel gave to these women were to go tell the disciples "and Peter" to meet Jesus in Galilee.
- i) So does this mean that Peter was not a disciple at this moment in time? Some commentators do argue that view. Whether he was or not, is strictly a "moot point" (in other words, it does not matter) as we read in John's Gospel Chapter 21, that Jesus restored His relationship with Peter at that point. In fact Jesus singled out Peter as the leader of the 11 remaining disciples in John, Chapter 21.
 - ii) I hold the view that once one believes Jesus died for their sins and keeps that belief, one cannot lose their salvation. However, it is possible for a time that one cannot be a disciple if one is focusing on one's own life and not what God wants.
 - iii) I'm sure Peter was thinking, "That's it, I'm no longer worthy to be called a disciple of Jesus" and I believe that is why this angel singled out Peter.
 - a) Let me personalize that verse: The next time we mess up and sin, God is saying to us in effect, "Hey, it's ok, I still want to have a relationship with you. Yes, I want you to confess what you did wrong, but it is not the end of our relationship just because of what we did at that moment."
 - b) In other words, God is calling Peter to once again, have a deep personal and intimate relationship with Him. That is always what God is calling us to do. It is the call to confess what we have done wrong and seek Him as to once again form that intimate bond that He wants.
- g) Let me describe this situation from God's perspective. Does God get some sort of "thrill" out of having people be intimate with Him? The short answer is that if God is a loving God, then He desires someone or something to express that love upon.
- i) Let me give an illustration: If someone loves to paint (as in art), they would just do it even if they don't get paid for it. That desire to paint is just "in them". God's great desire is love, and He chooses to show that love upon humans. All He asks of believers is to confess our sins and trust in Him. A loving God at the same time cannot tolerate sin, so in order to have that intimate relationship we have to be willing to say we are sorry for our sins and have a desire to live God's way.
 - ii) That is why God Himself "had to die" so He can show how much He loves us.
11. Verse 8: Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.
- a) What is to be learned by this verse is that God works on our level at any moment in our lives. In other words, if all we can handle for the moment is, "Jesus is alive and you are mistaken by seeking His dead body" that is all that God gives us at this moment.
 - i) To put it another way, Jesus could Himself have appeared to these women at this time. Instead they were scared by what the angel said and they needed time to digest that information and contemplate what they were supposed to do.
 - ii) That is how God works in our lives. God does not tell us everything that will happen to us the rest of our lives. Truthfully, we could not handle all of that future information. I find that God only gives us what we can handle at any moment in time and then it is our job to move forward with what God communicated to us.
 - iii) I also find with God, it is usually "our move". Often the reason God does not give us more instructions, is that He is still waiting for us to carry out His last set of instructions before He gives us the next set of instructions.
 - iv) There are times when God is silent in our lives where we need to contemplate, "Is there something God has already desired me to do, but I haven't done it yet?" That could be the reason (but not always) why God has not communicated more as He is still waiting for us to complete the last thing He asked us to do.

- b) I need to talk about this verse from another angle. In Jewish society at that time, the testimony of women was not considered valid evidence. That is one reason why when these women reported this event to the disciples, Peter and John ran to the tomb to see it for themselves. (See John 20:3-8.) In order for something to be legally accepted as true (at that time and place) it required two men to be in agreement and therefore, Peter and John also reported seeing the empty tomb.
- c) Finally, think about this whole event from the women's perspective. They went to this tomb to anoint Jesus' dead body. Now an angel just told them Jesus is alive and has risen from the dead and that same angel said Jesus would meet them in Galilee.
 - i) Forget for a moment they were women. Such news would shake anybody up. Personally, if an angel told me major news, I would be too scared to tell just anyone I just spoke to an angel as many would be convinced I am a nut.
 - ii) Therefore, the only logical thing for these women to do was to go tell the disciples exactly what happened.
- d) Before I move on to the next section, I want to talk a little about this event in terms of "court admissible evidence".
 - i) If you talk to Jewish (non-Christian) biblical scholars, most will argue that Jesus was a real person and that the disciples stole away His body. Therefore they argue that the "key made up" part of the Gospels is the concept that Jesus rose from the dead and that these women saw an angel at this point.
 - ii) We do know that the Jewish religious leaders at that time put guards over this tomb. After all, they were afraid that Jesus' disciples might try to steal His body, so it is logical that they put guards at this tomb and sealed it as good as possible.
 - iii) The truth is the guards were scared by the angels who moved the stone. Think of the guards this way: Would they be scared of people trying to move a stone? If they were trained soldiers, they would probably fight. If they were outnumbered, they would at the least report back that they were outnumbered. Instead they were scared as they saw an angel move the stone.
 - iv) Matthew's gospel (28:4) reports that the guards saw the angel move the stone. When they reported what they saw to the Jewish religious leaders, those leaders then spread the rumor the body was stolen. (See Matthew 28:13).
- e) My point of all of this is to show the evidence that the body was not stolen and the guards were simply scared by the sight of an angelic being moving the big stone. That is the only logical explanation to the guards not being there when the women showed up.
 - i) The timing of all of this is interesting in another aspect. I'm sure the guards went back to the chief priests to report what was happening. I suspect the chief priests would want to see for themselves what happened. I believe the women came to the tomb in the time frame between the guards leaving and the guards returning with the chief priests to examine the tomb.
 - ii) What about when Peter and John came to the tomb? (Again, see John 20:3 on that point.) That was probably a little later in the day. I suspect (but don't know for sure) that the chief priests personally saw the tomb empty and then said in effect, "Tell everyone the disciples stole the body" and therefore, they too left the tomb with the guards. (See Matthew 28:13.)
 - iii) Again the key point of this whole section is that there is a tremendous amount of court admissible evidence to the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 - a) Why is that important? Because the next time we go through our own doubts about Christianity, we should study the events of the resurrection and decide for ourselves whether or not this was "real or made up". The evidence speaks for itself how real this event it.

12. NIV comment at this point: [*The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20.*]
- a) If you read most English bibles other than a King James or New King James Version, they will have some sort of footnote or comma at this point to say in effect that some of the original manuscripts have Mark's Gospel ending at this point.
 - b) In one of my lessons in the middle of the Gospel of Mark, I promised that there was one place where I do support the King James Version and this is that place.
 - c) To explain, first let me give a little history on how the New Testament was put together:
 - i) First, one has to remember that for the most part, Christianity was an illegal religion for the first few centuries after Jesus. Therefore, it was difficult for church leaders to get together and decide what books belong in the bible.
 - ii) All of the original manuscripts of the New Testament are long gone.
 - iii) Let me put this problem of lost manuscripts another way: If one was trying to figure out what an original manuscript said, and the original writing was gone, how does one figure out what the original manuscript said?
 - a) The answer is, if you asked one hundred people to hand copy what you wrote, odds are everyone would make mistakes, but that no two people would make exactly the same mistakes. By comparing all of the copies, one can tell what the original manuscript said. That is how it was done.
 - b) We have hundreds (or thousands) of hand written copies of parts of the New Testament that were found in three different continents in the centuries following the resurrection of Jesus. By comparing all of those copies is how we put together the original writings of the New Testament.
 - d) Given all of that, there is some evidence that the last twelve verses do belong and other good evidence they don't belong. The King James Version relies upon manuscripts that include these last twelve verses. Almost all versions give this footnote about these verses.
 - i) Some of the oldest complete copies we have of the Gospel of Mark do not contain these verses, which is why scholars argue these verses don't belong here.
 - ii) Some of the early church fathers (from the 2nd and 3rd century) have their own writings where they quote from this section of the Gospel of Mark.
 - iii) Here is another way to look at this: If the Gospel ends at Verse 8, that gospel does not make a lot of sense. Why would Mark end the gospel with the women seeing an empty grave? Remember that Peter is Mark's source for this gospel, and therefore, Mark would want to record Jesus appearing to the disciples.
 - iv) Therefore, it seems logical that Mark would have the longer ending.
 - e) My point is that (I believe) all English versions of the bible contain these last 12 verses, but some have them as a "footnote" and some have them as part of the original text.
 - f) The real question then, is did Mark write these last 12 verses, or were they added by a well-intentioned person soon after it was written? My short answer is, it does not matter. I am convinced that these verses were intended to be part of the bible. In that sense, I support the King James Version and I believe these verses are authentic.
 - g) I included a special appendix to this lesson that discusses these last twelve verses using mathematical properties to show that whoever wrote these verses was inspired by God. These mathematical properties don't prove who is the author, only that the odds of someone randomly writing these verses is highly unlikely, once one understands the odds associated with these mathematical properties.
 - i) Therefore, my concluding thought on this is simply that it does not matter whether or not Mark actually wrote these last twelve verses. What does matter is that they do belong as part of this gospel and it is beneficial for us to study them.
 - h) OK, after spending a page explaining why the last 12 verses belong in the Gospel of Mark, it is time to break down and actually talk about them. ☺

13. Verse 9: When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.¹⁰ She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping.¹¹ When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.
- a) OK, first question: Why single out Mary Magdalene? If you go back to Verse 1, there were three women who went to the tomb, and apparently all three saw the empty tomb.
 - i) This is important because? Mary is the one who first reported the news to the disciples that Jesus is still alive. The angel could have spoken to all of these women, but Mary is the one who reported the news about Jesus to the disciples.
 - b) Verse 10 says she told those people who had been "with him (Jesus)". As that text implies, those who followed Jesus were more than just the 11 disciples.
 - c) What this text is getting at is starting with Verse 9 we will be given a list of people who actually saw Jesus after He had risen from the dead.
 - d) Now let me talk about the key point of Verse 11. When Mary Magdalene told the disciples that Jesus was alive, they did not believe her.
 - i) Let's stop for a quick second and let that sink in. Jesus made it very clear in His ministry that He was going to die and rise again. Yet, when that news was reported to the disciples, they did not believe it. Why is that?
 - ii) I suspect it is because the disciples believed they would not see Jesus again until they all died or unless they saw Him come back as a great king.
 - e) OK John, so people didn't believe this news at first. What is the point for us?
 - i) Yes, it is more evidence that the story of Jesus is true, but what does that have to do with my life? Does that mean I have to believe the testimony of all women? ☺
 - a) (I'll dodge that question before I get into real trouble.)
 - ii) The issue has to do with trust. It is easy to believe in Jesus when there are no serious problems in our lives at the moment. The trick is having faith that God will work all things out for His glory when nothing is going right.
 - iii) Which leads us back to this story: As far as the disciples were concerned, nothing was going right. The disciples thought Jesus would lead Israel to rule the world, and now He is dead. Some woman then reported that the body was stolen.
 - iv) That is the "type of time" where God says in effect, "Trust Me, I'm working out a plan." Yes, trusting God means letting go of our desires and accepting His desires for our lives, but I am amazed at how often when we let go of what we want, that God blesses us in ways that are far greater than what we originally desired.
14. Verse 12: Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country.¹³ These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.
- a) From Mary Magdalene's testimony in the last few verses, the text now moves to some other followers of Jesus (who apparently were not part of the eleven disciples) to whom Jesus appears. This story is told in more detail in Luke Chapter 24 (Verses 13-35.)
 - i) The significant point here in Mark's Gospel is that when news of Jesus talking to these two disciples reached the ears of the "eleven", they still didn't believe it.
 - ii) Let me add the next verse and then I'll tie the whole thing together.
15. Verse 14: Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.
- a) To sum up Verses 9-14, we have a bunch of people who actually saw Jesus after He was dead. First Mary Magdalene saw Him, then some other disciples as they were walking on the road, and finally here in Verse 14, the "Eleven" saw them.
 - b) Verse 14 says that Jesus rebuked the disciples. I can just picture Jesus saying, "I've told you over and over again I'm coming back, and yet, you refused to believe it". So did Jesus say this to let off some "steam" or was there a purpose behind it?

- c) Jesus rebuked them not to show off any anger, but to demonstrate the danger of a "lack of faith". (In case you haven't noticed, that ties to my lesson theme very well. ☺)
 - i) The disciples should have believed what Jesus said about His return or they should have believed the testimony of those that actually saw Jesus.
 - ii) OK, so the disciples blew it. How is that relevant to me? Let me put it this way: When we put our trust that God is working in our lives, it changes our perspective so that we don't have to worry about the outcome of a situation, knowing that whatever happens is part of God's plan for our lives. The point is to have faith that God is working in our lives no matter what is happening.
 - a) That doesn't mean we don't do the "footwork" of whatever situation is at hand. It means that we trust that God is working out the outcome for His glory of whatever happens through that situation.
16. Verse 15: He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.
- a) This is Mark's version of the "Great Commission" statement. That statement is similar to the more famous one, which is "Matthew 28:19". Both statements essentially make the same point. Jesus is saying here in effect, "OK, you have seen me alive after rising from the dead. Don't keep this news to yourself, but spend the rest of your life sharing that news with others."
 - i) What news is that? The news that anyone can live forever in heaven if they trust that Jesus is God, He did die for your sins and He is in charge of one's life.
 - b) So, does that mean that all of us have to quit our jobs and go be professional evangelists? No, God does not give every Christian the "gift" of evangelism. At the same time, that is not an excuse to not be a witness for Him. I am also not saying for example, one has to "cheat at work" by evangelizing when should be working. I am saying that when the opportunity arises, we should be willing to share one's faith with others.
 - c) Let me try this another way: Let's assume you or I are too scared to talk about Jesus with someone at the moment. That just means we are normal. I find God makes it obvious when there is something that He wants us to say at any given moment in time. If you are not sure what to say, simply pray about it and trust in God to lead you or not lead you in such a situation.
 - i) Here's another example of fulfilling this verse. If and when people ask us why we don't want to participate in some potentially sinful activity, that is the time to share one's faith. It can be as simple as saying, "That may be an acceptable thing for you to do, but for me at this moment, it is not something I want to do."
 - ii) If necessary pray for the strength to resist that temptation of the moment.
 - iii) I have found the more time we spend with God in prayer and studying His word, the less it bothers us what others think of our behavior.
 - iv) The way we grow as a witness for God is not by "trying harder", but by letting Him work through us to grow in our trust in Him and grow in our ability to share our faith with others. The secret to being a good witness for Jesus is by letting God the Father work through us.
17. Verse 16: Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.
- a) Verse 16 is a controversial: There are Christian denominations that teach that unless one is baptized a certain way, or through a particular denomination, one is not saved. This verse says to "believe and be baptized". Nothing said about the method or place.
 - b) I take the view that baptism is something a Christian should do, but is not required to do. For example, the thief on the cross who was crucified next to Jesus (See Luke 23:43) did believe that Jesus was God and I believe he was saved, although he was not baptized.
 - c) So if some are saved right before they die, why does this verse emphasize baptism? That is because baptism is a public sign (i.e., a sign to those around us) that we are saved.

- d) Think of this verse this way: The previous verse says that Christians are to go out into the world telling others about Jesus. Now in the next verse (this one), Jesus says that we are to be baptized as a public witness of our trust in Him.
 - e) Let me tie together the key point of these last two verses: Do these verses say we must accept Jesus to be saved? Yes it does. What about people who have never heard of Jesus? A fair God will judge all people fairly. If we live in a culture where the message of Jesus is prevalent, there is no excuse. If one has lived all of their life somewhere that is isolated from that message, God will judge such people fairly.
 - i) The point here is not that people will be judged based on what they know about Jesus. (That is true, but not the point here.) The point being made is that God calls on Christians to go out and spread the message of Jesus and then after people hear and accept that message, such people should be baptized.
 - f) This verse is not written to scare the nonbeliever as much as it is written to scare (for the lack of a better word) the believer. It is to say to the Christian, there is no neutrality with God. If we do believe the Gospel message, then what are we doing about it? Are we being baptized and living a life pleasing to God? That is the emphasis of that verse.
18. Verse 17: And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."
- a) All the "signs" mentioned in these verses (other than deadly poison) are mentioned in the New Testament and were experienced by Paul as an example to us.
 - b) These verses do not mean we should test God by playing with deadly snakes or drinking poison on purpose. I am convinced that if we do that, we could die from such an act.
 - i) Let me explain further: These verses do not say we are to test God by say, "picking up poisonous snakes" knowing that they cannot hurt believers.
 - ii) To do such an act is "testing God". If you recall from when Satan tempted Jesus, Satan told Jesus in effect, "Go do this, as the bible says you will be safe if you do that act?" Jesus responds with "You shall not tempt the Lord, Your God". (See Matthew 4:1-11 for this discussion between Jesus and Satan.)
 - iii) Jesus point was that He came to do God the Father's will, not Satan's desire, even if the will is "Scriptural". Which leads us back to these verses: God does not call on us to tempt Him by say, drinking deadly poison in order to test these verses.
 - c) Now that I've given the bad news, let me give the good news of these verses. ☺ It does mean that if one is truly following Jesus, God does give believers special power and if it is God's will, that power can overcome the forces of this world.
 - i) I have seen Christians who have received miraculous cures just because others have prayed for them. I don't know why God chooses to miraculously heal some but not others, but I know this to be true.
 - ii) I do believe God does give Christians the powers to do all of the things written in these verses, but that power comes from God and they happen on His timing.
 - a) It is nothing we can turn on or turn off. Such miracles are up to God and not up to us. We can ask God to help us do any one of these things, but it again, up to God whether or not these things will be done.
 - d) In summary if one is in a room with a deadly snake, make a run for it if you can. If one knows a drink has poison, don't drink it. If there is a sick person in the room, pray for them. If one has the gift of praising God in a foreign tongue, use that gift in private, as others don't know what it is you are saying. The point is it is up to God when and if anyone of us have such gifts and talents and if God gives us any one of these gifts, it is His "prerogative" to turn on and off that gift.

19. Verse 19: After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. ²⁰ Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.
- a) Verse 19 says in effect, "There is nothing more that I God, have to communicate to people at this point so go out and do what I have called you to do". Yes there are more things God wanted to communicate, and that is the rest of the New Testament. The point here is there is nothing else in effect that God wanted to say through the Gospels, so now it is time for Jesus to go up and be at the right hand of God.
 - b) Verse 20 is the "did it" and "do it" verse. In other words, verse 20 is saying the disciples did go out and do what God commanded them to do and the signs as listed in Verses 17 and 18 did happen as the disciples when they were out being a witness for God.
 - i) There are some Christian denominations that argue the "visual signs" (of Verses 17-18) are not for today, but only for the early disciples. They believe that once the bible was completed, such signs were not necessary. Others argue those signs are for the entire church age, including today.
 - ii) I'm not here to solve that debate. The point is we are to go out and tell others about Jesus and "if" one receives such signs while being a witness for Jesus, well them we should use them for God's glory and not to show off what we can do.
20. OK, we have just finished Mark's Gospel. What should I remember the most from this book?
- a) I would state the importance of understanding how Jesus came to be a servant of mankind, not so we can know how much Jesus suffered, as much as we should go and do likewise. I don't mean we should look for ways to suffer, but that we should have the attitude of the lowest servant while we live our lives to make a difference for God.
 - b) Let me end this book another way: If we truly believe that Jesus is God and truly believe the bible is the word of God, what would be the greatest purpose for living? It would be to make a difference for God with our lives in this lifetime. I'm not that impressed with people who say they believe in Jesus. I'm impressed with people who do something about that faith. That is what living for God is all about.
21. Let me end this lesson with something I said when I started it. I mentioned in the opening of this letter that Rick Warren made a statement on a particular Easter Sunday when someone asked him in effect, "Why are you always talking about Jesus rising from the dead?"
- a) My answer to that question would have been, "Because that is the central message of everything I believe". That belief in Jesus is what gets me through difficult times. That resurrected Jesus is one who I talk to and He guides me through whatever I am going through at any time. When I am talking to God the Father, I am also talking to Jesus whether I realize that or not. The reason I am obsessed about Jesus' resurrection is that it becomes the central point of my life. The facts proving that Jesus is risen from the dead (just as it is written) is the central point of our eternal existence as humans.
 - b) On that happy note, ☺ it is time to close in prayer and end this study.
22. Let's pray: Father, may we never grow weary of remembering that Jesus is Your Son, He has been resurrected and our trust in that fact is the central theme to all that we believe. As we go through our lives making a difference for You, help us to have a servant's attitude in whatever role we have called to, in life. Lord, I don't know what You have planned for us today or tomorrow, but I ask for your guidance and your strength to get through whatever those plans are. At the same time, help us be a good witness for You as we go through these things. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.
23. There are the two appendixes to this lesson. The first is some facts about the last 12 verses of this chapter in terms of the "structural significance" of those verses. The second appendix my list of sources that I use in preparing these lessons. Thanks for reading and I hope it helps you grow in your relationship with Jesus our Lord. - John

Supplement:

An Argument Supporting Last 12 Verses of Mark Chapter 16, (that they belong in the Gospel of Mark).

This was taken from Chuck Missler's presentation on this topic, and with comments added by myself.

<http://www.khouse.org/articles/2000/201/>

Here are some facts about the structure of the last twelve verses as written here in Mark:

There are 175 (7×25) words in the original Greek text of the twelve verses that make up Mark 16:9-20. These words use a total vocabulary of 98 different words (7×14), also an exact multiple of seven.

Try constructing a passage in which *both* the number of words *and* the number of letters are precisely divisible by seven (with no remainder)! The random chance of a number being precisely divisible by 7 is one chance in seven. In seven tries, there will be an average of six failures.

In fact, the number of vowels in these verses are 294 (7×42); and the number of consonants is 259 (7×37), both of which are also multiples of seven.

With 10 such "features" that are multiples of seven found, it would take 7^{10} attempts, or 282,475,249 attempts for these to occur by chance alone.

But there's more: The total word forms in the passage are 133 (7×19). 112 of those words (7×16) occur only once, leaving 21 (7×3) words that occur more than once; in fact, these occur 63 (7×9) times.

It gets worse: Greek, like Hebrew, has assigned numerical values to each letter of its alphabet. For example, the first letter of the Greek alphabet also represents the number "one" and the second letter represents the number "two". Thus, each letter has a numerical ("gematrical") value and each word in the original Greek has a numerical value by adding up the value of all the letters in that word. With that said, note the following:

The total numerical value of the passage is 103,656 ($7 \times 14,808$). The value of v.9 is 11,795 ($7 \times 1,685$); v.10 is 5,418 (7×774); v.11 is 11,795 ($7 \times 1,685$); vv.12-20, 86,450 ($7 \times 12,350$). In verse 10, the first word is 98 (7×14), the middle word is 4,529 (7×647), and the last word is 791 (7×113). The value of the total word forms is 89,663 ($7 \times 12,809$). And so on.

This information was taken from the results of the work by Dr. Ivan Panin. In fact, he identified 75 features like this of the last 12 verses of Mark. We have highlighted only some of those features.

Chuck Missler's source: Ivan Panin, The Last Twelve Verses of Mark, B-761, Bible Numerics, Suite 206, 121 Willowdale Ave., Willowdale, Ontario, M2N 6A3, (406) 221-7424.

Final comment from me (John): This does not prove Mark is the author of the last 12 verses of the book, but it does give excellent evidence that these verses were intended to be part of the bible.

Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. "The Message" copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. I also have been reading the English Standard Version. (ESV) The copyright information for the ESV is in point #6 below. All the bible text (except the ESV) is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on the Gospel of Mark are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to "audio" commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on Gospel of Mark by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://www.joncourson.com/>
2. Commentary on Gospel of Mark by Bob Davies. They are available in MP3® format at http://northcountrychapel.com/audio_studies/
3. Commentary on Gospel of Mark by David Guzik. It is available for free in text and audio format. The web address is <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/47.htm>.
4. Commentary on Gospel of Mark by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>. Also available at firefighters.org/html/library.cfm
5. The Defender's Study Bible by Dr. Henry Morris World Publishing (1995) ISBN: 052910444X
6. The English Standard Version Study Bible Copyright (2005-2009) The Standard Bible Society. The version itself is copyrighted 2008 by Crossway Bibles, a publication of "Good News Publishers"
7. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every verse of the Bible. (It is available at Christian bookstores.) Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this source.
8. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm
9. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229
10. When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties -- Norman L. Geisler, Thomas Howe; Baker Book House 1999
11. I also refer to Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry, which is Stand to Reason at www.str.org.