

Commissioned with the Gospel

Mark 16: 9-20

Today we come to the concluding passage in Mark's gospel. We have discovered lasting truth in the time we spent moving through this precious account of the life and ministry of our Lord. While it covers a span of approximately three years, the impact is eternal. It is impossible to comprehend how the disciples felt at this moment, and years later as they reflected on the time spent walking with the Lord. They had experienced much with Him, and those memories and lessons would remain with them throughout their lives.

While we were not privileged to walk with Jesus physically as they did, I hope we have received guidance through our study that will remain as long as we live. We have spent months considering the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son, who came to earth in the form of a man to provide salvation for us, reconciling us to God, and guaranteeing eternal life.

The final passage begins with great uncertainty, but ends with unhindered devotion. Our lives are much like the disciples as well. We have moments of weakness and moments of triumph. Like these faithful men, we must not focus on the difficulties, but rest in the risen Savior. His triumphant resurrection promises eternal life and strength to endure whatever we face in life. As we close out this gospel, I want to consider the [experiences](#) revealed in the text as we think on: [Commissioned with the Gospel](#).

I. The Crisis among the Disciples (9-14) – This passage opens by revealing a crisis among those who had faithfully followed Jesus. They were dealing with doubt and despair, wondering what their future held. Notice:

A. The Revelation (9) – [Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.](#) We know by examining the other gospels that Mary Magdalene, along with other women were the first to witness the empty tomb. Upon discovering that Jesus was not there, she ran to tell Peter and John. They too came and witnessed the empty tomb, knowing Jesus had risen from the dead. Following the encounter at the tomb, Mary remained in the garden, near the tomb. While in the garden, Jesus revealed himself to Mary. Not only did she experience the empty tomb, she also talked with the risen Lord. Jesus had died upon the cross, was buried in a borrowed tomb, but the grave could not hold Him. He came forth triumphant and appeared unto Mary.

B. The Affirmation (10, 12-13a) – *And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.* ^[12] *After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.* ^[13a] *And they went and told it unto the residue.* In obedience to the Lord, following her encounter with Him in the garden, Mary went and told the disciples she had seen and talked with Jesus. The long night was over and hope had risen with the dawn. Jesus had died, but He was alive. There was no reason for grief and mourning. The Lord had risen just as He had promised!

- While Mark doesn't specifically say, we know he referred to the two that Jesus walked with on the Emmaus road, about seven miles outside of Jerusalem. Jesus appeared to these and talked with them as they traveled, expounding the Word unto them regarding himself as the Christ. Upon His departure, their hearts burned within them, knowing they had encountered the risen Lord. These too came and told the disciples of their encounter with the risen Christ. Word began to come in to the disciples that Jesus was alive and well. They now had heard two eyewitness accounts from three different people, affirming the resurrection of Jesus!

C. The Rejection (11, 13) – *And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.* ^[13] *And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.* After hearing the miraculous testimony of Mary Magdalene and the Emmaus road travelers, the disciples refused to believe. Apparently, their hearts remained full of grief and doubt. I am sure they wanted to believe, but had a hard time dealing with the events of the past few days.

- We may tend to be critical of them, but we are often filled with fear and doubt. It is good to hear of the encounters others had with the Lord, but often those testimonies do little to encourage our doubts. Closely abiding with the Lord is the best way to conquer fear and doubt.

D. The Confrontation (14) – *Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.* After coming into the midst of the eleven, Jesus chided them for their lack of faith and hardness of heart. These should have believed the report of the witnesses and rejoiced, rather than dwelling in doubt and unbelief.

- Thomas typically is spoken of harshly because of John's account of his reaction, but Mark records that Jesus chided all eleven of the disciples. It appears that even Peter and John had trouble believing, even after seeing the empty tomb. It is easy to be critical and make bold statements when all is well spiritually, but we need His strength and help in moments of doubt and uncertainty. I pray we will live our lives mindful of His glorious resurrection and the hope it affords!

II. The Commission for the Disciples (15-18) – This is Mark’s account of the Great Commission. While it is similar to the others, he offers insight not recorded by the others. Jesus spoke of:

A. The Message (15) – *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* The disciples received the Great Commission from Christ. He revealed the message they were expected to preach unto the world – the Gospel. While the Lord would use several of these men to provide New Testament epistles that reveal invaluable practical insight for Christian life and church order, their priority was the Gospel. They were to proclaim the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the means of salvation to all humanity!

- The Gospel remains the theme of the church today. While Jesus first gave the Great Commission to the disciples, it has been handed down to the church. We are expected to proclaim the Gospel unto the world, [Acts 1:8](#).

B. The Measure (16) – *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* Jesus revealed the standard by which men will be judged. Those who believe the Gospel will receive salvation, and those who refuse to believe will be damned in judgment. There is no middle ground or alternative means. Salvation is inclusive in that it is available to all who believe, and yet it is exclusive, only those who believe will be accepted of God. Men are either saved by grace and accepted of God or yet accountable for sin and in danger of sovereign judgment in wrath.

C. The Miracles (17-18) – *And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ^[18] They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* Jesus declared that the disciples would be followed by miraculous signs and enabled with great spiritual gifts. They would have the ability to cast out devils, speak in many languages, and heal the sick. These men would miraculously be protected from deadly serpents and poisons. We see these miracles in the lives of the apostles throughout the book of Acts. Even Paul was blessed with these abilities. Following his shipwreck, Paul was bitten by a serpent from the fire. The native people watched, waiting for Paul to die from the venomous bite, and yet he lived without becoming sick. God used these signs and miracles to affirm His power and promote the Gospel.

- These verses, and others dealing with spiritual gifts have been debated for centuries. The gift of tongues was always the supernatural ability to speak a known language previously unknown to the bearer of the gift. It was never about some made up, supposed “spiritual” language that no one had ever heard before. I am convinced the gifts of healing and tongues in

particular ceased with Paul. We read of one account where Paul left Trophimus at Miletus sick in body. It appears that Paul would have healed him and brought him with him in the journey, if he still had the ability to do so. There is power in prayer, and God is able to do as He pleases, but I am convinced these gifts and abilities no longer exist. Some churches still practice these verses, handling snakes and drinking poison. I have no desire to be involved with such nonsense.

III. The Commitment of the Disciples (19-20) – Mark closed his gospel with a record of the devoted commitment of the eleven. Consider:

A. The Majesty (19) – *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.* Mark doesn't reveal the lapse in time following the resurrection and the ascension, but he does reveal that Jesus ascended back to the right hand of the Father after He gave the disciples the Great Commission. He ascended through the clouds, taken up out of their sight, with the promise of returning just as they had seen Him taken up. This same Jesus will come again for the church!

B. The Ministry (20a) – *And they went forth, and preached everywhere.* Following the command of Jesus, the disciples were obedient, preaching the Gospel throughout the world. In the coming years, the church would experience radical growth through the efforts of these men, the apostle Paul, and countless others committed to the Gospel. They received and remained committed to the Great Commission.

- We remain responsible to continue in obedience to the Great Commission. This command was not optional, and it wasn't generational. It was given for the church to continue until the Lord returns for His church. We are responsible to do our part in engaging the world today!

C. The Authority (20b) – *And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.* The Lord worked through the lives of these men and others who followed, using signs and wonders to confirm the preaching of the Word. The Gospel was a radical new message, and the Lord used supernatural means to convey the Gospel and convince men of its truth, turning to Christ in salvation. The Lord ensured the Gospel was proclaimed and prosperous following the resurrection.

- There is comfort and hope in this verse. We do not stand alone in our efforts to reach the world. The Lord works mightily among His people to proclaim the Gospel and reach the lost. We do not minister in our own ability, but through the power and authority of the risen Lord!

Conclusion: That concludes months of study in Mark's gospel. I hope you have enjoyed this study and have been encouraged and enlightened. This gospel presented Jesus Christ, the Servant of Men. We have walked through the life and ministry of Jesus, eternally preserved in the Word. He came to earth with purpose – to provide atonement for sin through His sacrificial death on the cross. I am thankful for the Savior who loved us enough to bear our sin and save us by His grace. I pray you know Jesus as your personal Savior. If not, come to Him in repentance and faith. If you are saved, I pray you have been challenged and encouraged to faithfully serve the one who provided so much for us!