

Sermon outline and notes:

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Mark 16:9-20 “How the Gospel Ends: Jesus Is Lord”

Intro. After over a year of study through the gospel of Mark, we come now to what is known as the conclusion of Mark’s gospel. Now if you have a newer translation, you may notice that this text of Scripture has a notation pointing out that a few of our oldest manuscripts do not contain these verses. If I was teaching in a classroom setting, I would spend some time dealing with the textual evidence as to whether Mark actually wrote this as the ending of his gospel account. Suffice it to say that v.8 does not seem at all to be an appropriate way to end this gospel, and these verses should be considered part of the Word of God, especially to the extent that they agree with other Scriptures. Only v.18 contains anything new that is not already found in other scriptures. So even though there are some valid textual concerns, I will proceed with confidence that what I am preaching today will be the truth of the Word of God.

So consider with me the main truths of my text, which really are a fitting conclusion of this Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Mark begins with Jesus and ends with Jesus. But in these verses Jesus is now addressed as “Lord” (vv.19-20). Here we see the conclusion of this gospel lifting up Jesus as Lord of all.

How do we know the Jesus is Lord of all? First of all:

I. BECAUSE JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD

In these verses we have abundant proof that Jesus Christ really rose again from the dead. Of all the facts of our Lord’s history, there is none more thoroughly established than the fact that He rose from the dead. Now based on Mark’s account, the primary reason we should believe in the resurrection of Christ is this:

A. Christ Appeared to Many Witnesses - Mark tells us that our Lord appeared to one witness, then to two witnesses, and lastly to eleven witnesses. Who were they?

1. He First Appeared to Mary Magdalene - V.9 says, “Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.” To her was granted the privilege of being first to behold a risen Savior. This was really contrary to expectation. If men were making up a resurrection story, she would not have been the first witness. Why was she the first witness?

a) To show us how much He values love and faithfulness. Last at the cross and first at the grave, this warm-hearted disciple was allowed to be the first to see Him when the victory was won. She loved Him much because Jesus had done much for her. V.9 indicates that she was a woman who at one time had been possessed by seven demons, and she probably had been a wicked lady, certainly during the time she was possessed. But Jesus forgave all her sin and set her free. Those who have been forgiven much love much. How much do you love Jesus?

b) To give hope to all who are great, but penitent sinners. However far we may have fallen, we are raised to complete peace with God if we repent and believe the Gospel. Though before far off, we are brought near. The blood of Christ makes us completely clean in God’s sight. Once brought to Christ, we need not doubt that all is forgiven.

2. He Appeared to the Two Disciples – In v.12 we read, “After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.” Luke gives us the full account of that walk on the road to Emmaus. There we read that they commented concerning Jesus, “We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel” (Lk. 24:21a). When Jesus died on the cross, their hopes died with Him. But with the resurrection of Jesus, their hope for the future was restored. After they broke bread with Jesus, they realized that the stranger was the risen Christ! The apostle Peter wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ... has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Peter 1:3). Only Jesus can give a certain hope of eternal life beyond the grave.

3. He Appeared to the Eleven Disciples – In v.14 we read, “Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table...” We may doubt the witness of one or two, but now we are up to 14 different witnesses who saw Jesus alive from the dead. In addition to these appearances, other writers in the New Testament describe 7 or 8 other appearances of our Lord, with a total of some 500 witnesses!

Another reason we should believe that Christ rose from the dead is because:

B. The Resurrection Was Contrary to Expectation - The emphasis in Mark 16:9-14 is on the unbelief of the disciples who were mourning and weeping instead of rejoicing at the good news. Three times in this very passage we find Mark describing the unbelief of the eleven apostles. Now their unbelief at the report of Mary might be explained in terms of a common prejudice against the witness of the women, for the testimony of a woman was not accepted in a Jewish court. But how can we explain their unbelief at the witness of the two Emmaus disciples? (v.13). In fact, when Jesus did appear to the eleven, He had to reproach them for their unbelief which was caused by their hardness of heart (see Mark 6:52: 8:17).

Application: So the evidence of the resurrection is even more convincing. Since people, who were so unbelieving at first, were convinced at last, how strong is the proof supplied to us that Christ indeed arose. The very doubts of the eleven apostles are the confirmation of our faith today. These apostles did not dream up a resurrection story, for they were among the last to expect that Jesus would rise from the dead. They believed rather reluctantly, and were only convinced after several reports, and after seeing Jesus alive from the dead with their own eyes!

Do you believe the Jesus rose from the dead? To deny it shows far greater credulity than to believe it. To deny it you must put credit in monstrous and ridiculous improbabilities. To believe it you have only to appeal to simple, undeniable facts.

Now since the evidence that Jesus rose from the dead is so convincing, what does it mean for us? First, the resurrection was the crowning proof that the ransom He paid for sinners was accepted. This means He died for our sins, and our sins can be forgiven. If God can forgive Mary Magdalene, if God can forgive such failure in the disciples, He can forgive you. Make sure you have received such loving forgiveness! Secondly, the resurrection proves the main point of my message: Jesus is Lord.

Now another reason we know Jesus is Lord is:

II. BECAUSE JESUS ASCENDED ON HIGH

In v.19 we read, “So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven...” We know from other Gospel accounts that the ascension of Jesus took place from some mountain in Galilee, and was seen by many of His followers. I imagine that Jesus gradually &

miraculously ascended straight up until clouds received Him out of their sight. What an awesome experience that must have been for the disciples!

Now once He ascended into heaven, notice with me two truths we see in our text:

A. He Was Received by the Father - Here in Mark the ascension was described with the words, "He was received up" (*analambano*). The attention is focused on the fact that the power to ascend was not under Jesus, but from above. It was the Father who drew His Son to Himself, being eager, as it were; to reward Him for His accomplished work. Oh, what a wonderful welcome home celebration they must have had in heaven! I wish I could have been there when Jesus returned to heaven to face His Heavenly Father. How heaven must have resonated with the voice of God the Father saying, "Well done, My Son, well done."

Our Lord's ascension marked the completion of His earthly ministry and the beginning of His new ministry in heaven. Notice what Mark reports He is doing in heaven:

B. He Reigns at the Right Hand of God – In the last of v.19 we read that after Jesus ascended, He "sat down at the right hand of God." Mark knew this partly based on Old Testament prophecy. Ps. 110:1 says, "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Thus, He received the highest position of dignity, honor, authority, and power in heaven which our minds can conceive. 1 Peter 3:22 says that Christ has "gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him."

Thus, we see more evidence that Jesus is Lord, and we must obey Him. Are you living in obedience to Christ? Do you pray and worship as you should? Are you obeying Christ in your moral life?

Finally, we know that Jesus is Lord:

III. BECAUSE JESUS INITIATED A WORLD-WIDE MISSION

If Jesus is Lord, we would expect that He would save souls and be worshipped as Lord by the whole world. Well we are going to see that Jesus initiated a world-wide mission, and He is accomplishing that mission through His Church.

So what is the mission given by our risen & ascended Lord?

A. Reach the World with the Gospel Message – Jesus issued this mandate in v.15, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."¹ We are commanded to "preach" the gospel. We are to proclaim this message of salvation to a lost and dying world. And notice how extensively we are to share the gospel. We are to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." The Lord Jesus wants us to know that the entire world needs the Gospel. In every quarter of the globe people are the same: sinful, corrupt and alienated from God. Wherever we see a child of Adam, of whatever color, we see one whose heart is wicked, and who needs the blood of Christ, the renewing work of the Holy Spirit and reconciliation with God. We fall short if we shrink from telling anyone, "God is full of love to you, Christ is willing to save you." Let us see in these words of Christ the strongest argument in favor of missionary work both at home and abroad.

¹ Before His ascension, the Lord gave several commissions to His followers (John 20:21; 21:15-17; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:4-8). The one Mark gives probably is a part of the Great Commission that Jesus gave on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20).

The missionary statesman Oswald Smith said, "Why should anyone hear the gospel twice until everyone has heard it once?" Yes, "every creature" is to hear the gospel. No one is to be excluded.

Now no one individual can preach or share the gospel with every person on this earth, but we must work together to do so. If we cannot go as a missionary, then let us support those who do go financially and with prayer. And if we cannot go to the heathen in China or India, let us seek to enlighten the darkness which we shall easily find within reach of our own door. There are plenty of people out there who are just waiting for someone to come and explain the gospel to them. Let us say "Yes" to this assignment of our Lord Jesus, for He is Lord! What an opportunity and obligation we have to carry the Gospel to the whole world!

What are you doing today to get out the Word of God to people? One thing we are asking you to do is bring a friend to Sunday School & church on Oct. 3, especially someone who is unchurched. That could be the start to that friend being saved.

Now before you can share the Gospel, you must also:

B. Know the Gospel Message – In v.16 we have a statement of the Gospel, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." This is the Gospel, the Good News of salvation from through faith in Jesus Christ. A superficial reading of Mark 16:15-16 would suggest that sinners must be baptized to be saved, but this misinterpretation disappears when you note that the emphasis is on believing. If a person does not believe, he is condemned, even if he has been baptized (see John 3:16-18, 36). And notice that the last of v.16 does not say you will be condemned if you are not baptized. Baptism is the fruit of true faith. What is really important is that you place your faith in Christ as Savior.

So we are taught here the absolute necessity of faith in Christ to salvation. This is the one thing needed. They may have been baptized and made members of the visible church. They may be regular communicants at the Lord's Table. They may even believe intellectually. But all this will be useless if they lack saving faith in Christ.

Do you have such faith? This is the great question that concerns us all. Unless we feel our sins, and feeling them flee to Christ by faith and lay hold on Him, we shall find at length we had better never have been born. After all, the Scripture says, "Whoever does not believe will be condemned." How awful the words sound! That is a judicial term. Apart from faith in Jesus a person is condemned, for they are guilty both of sin & unbelief. There is an eternal hell for all who will persist in their wickedness, and leave this world without faith in Christ. He who died on the cross has given us plain warning that unbelievers will be condemned. Let us take care that His warning is not given to us in vain!

However, we *are* taught here the importance of baptism. It is an ordinance appointed by Christ Himself. It was expected in the early church that *all* believers would be baptized. In the book of Acts we see that baptism followed true faith (Acts 2:41; 10:44-48; 16:31-34, and everywhere). He is not saying that baptism is necessary to salvation, but that the person who is truly saved will be baptized.

C. Be Confident of God's Confirmation of the Gospel – We need to share the Gospel with confidence that it is true, for God has confirmed it. In vv.17-18 we read, "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Likewise, v.20 says that when the disciples went out and preached, the Lord was "confirming the word through the accompanying

signs.” Jesus knew well the enormous difficulties of the work which He had just commissioned them to do. He knew the mighty battle they would have to fight with heathenism, the world, and the devil. He therefore cheers them by telling them that miracles will help their work forward.

Here God was following a pattern He had previously established. When God sent Moses to challenge Pharaoh in Egypt, He gave him special miracles to perform as his divine credentials, proving that he was sent from God (Ex. 4:1-9). This was also true of some of the early prophets (1 Kings 18; 2 Kings 2:14-25). And so the apostles were also given special “signs” that authenticated and validated their message. They had a new message and great opposition, and God knew that they would need to give the people some proof that what they were preaching was truly the Word of God. And what Jesus predicted here certainly came to pass. Most of the signs listed here are recorded in the Book of Acts.

However, the age of miracles were never meant to continue beyond the establishment of the apostolic church. Heb. 2:4 and 2 Cor. 12:12 make it quite clear to me that there were signs and miracles that were unique to the apostolic age (cf. Acts 19:11-12). Some of the early church fathers, such as Chrysostom and Augustine, testified that these gifts ceased with the passing away of the apostolic age. It is only when plants are first planted that they need daily watering and support. Now that we have the Bible, which contains the written account of all these miracles, God no longer needs to confirm His message in such ways.

In our day, God is certainly continuing to work miracles, especially spiritual ones. A changed life is a wonderful miracle of God, and you have to be spiritually blind not to recognize it. And God occasionally does physical miracles like healing, but not for the purpose stated here. God is not going to force you to believe when He has already given you everything you need to believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He expects us to come to Christ by faith, not by sight.

But of course, there are plenty of preachers today who claim that these signs are still with us today. But may I point out that if these signs are still valid, then one must accept all five of them! There are many who cast out demons, speak in tongues, and practice faith healing, which do not handle snakes or drink poison. Now why is that? Now there are some who are at least consistent. Back in Georgia & a few other states, there are a few snake handling churches. I must confess that I never attended one! But it is tragic when well-meaning people claim these signs for themselves and then die because of snake bites or poison. But since no one in my audience is likely to do either one, I will not spend any more time on this.

Yet the main point for us is that we can believe the message of the apostles with confidence, because God gave overwhelming confirmation of their message.

Finally, if we are going to continue to make progress in fulfilling the mission of our risen Lord, then we must:

D. Be Confident of the Lord’s Presence & Power – In v.20 we read that when the disciples went out and preached, the Lord was “working with them ...” The word translated “working with” (*sunergeo*) literally means to share energy with someone. The disciples did not labor alone. By His Spirit Jesus was right there with them, working on their behalf. In Matthew’s account, He said, “and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Oh, how they needed this power & assistance from the Lord. Now keep in mind, these were the men who were described as scared and unbelieving. And yet, Jesus is telling them to preach the gospel to the *whole world*. That would have never happened with any success unless Jesus had risen from the dead, ascended to heaven, and then filled these men with the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. So they had to lean on the thought that their Savior was with them, always ready to

help. They had to remember that when they slept, Jesus was awake—though they fainted, Jesus was never weary—though they became weak, Jesus is almighty—and though they die, Jesus lives forevermore! Their preaching would have been ineffective had it not been for the enabling power of the Lord, who was “constantly working with them.”

We know well from the Acts of the Apostles, and from the pages of church history, the manner in which these words have been proven true. We know that, in spite of every effort of Satan, the word of truth was not preached in vain. Believers from time to time were gathered out of the world. Churches of saints were founded in city after city and country after country. The little seed of Christianity gradually grew into a great tree.

There is strong comfort here for all true Christians. We live in an evil world. We are often worried and upset about many things. Yet we do not work alone. The Lord will be with us. He will empower us. He will bless our labor with success.

It is fitting that the Gospel of the Servant should end with this reference to work. The apostles and prophets laid the foundation for the church (Eph. 2:20), so their work is finished and the apostolic signs have ceased. But the Lord is still working in and through His people to save a lost world. We ought to be serving the Lord and others like our Lord (Mark 10:45). Are you serving, or are you expecting others to serve you?

Conclusion: So we have seen that Jesus is Lord of all because He rose from the dead. Jesus is Lord because He ascended to the right hand of God. And Jesus is Lord because He is saving souls from all over the world.

The question for each of you is this: Is Jesus *your* Savior & Lord? Can you say that He is if you have not repented of sin? Can you say that He is Lord if you have not followed Him in baptism? Can you say that He is Lord if you are not working with Him to spread the Gospel? Today is the day to either commit yourself to the Lordship of Christ, or to renew your commitment to the Lordship of Christ.

Sources: William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Jerry Vines (notes from sermon tape of 6/17/84); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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