

Righto... Today we've come to the end of the Gospel of Mark.... And you may not know this, but there's actually a fair bit of confusion over "Where **does** the Gospel of Mark end?"

And you might be thinking, "Don't be daft, Michael: The Gospel of Mark ends where my Bible ends." ... But where **does** your bible end???

You see, some of the **older** English translations (like the King James Version) go through to 16:20. Some of the **newer** English translations end at V8, and then they have a footnote containing the remaining 12 verses, and some of them even give **3** possible endings.

That's all a bit confusing, but why do different translations vary? And I know that some people get 'all up-in-arms' about "*How dare they change what's written in the Bible*", and some people are very militant that, in their view, "*The only true bible that anyone should ever read, is the King James Version of 1611...*" I want to say (quite bluntly), "That's not only a nonsense – it's an arrogance..." Who are we English speakers, that we should believe, the only true bible is an English version, that was written in the **early** 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the New Testament documents, were **originally** written in Ancient Greek, all within a couple of hundred years of the resurrection.....

So, why **do** our bibles today vary?

Well, the reason most modern translations finish the Gospel of Mark at V8, and then put the remainder in brackets or as a

footnote, is because the **oldest** and most reliable of the original Greek transcripts, all end at v8.

It seems that, at some point in history, a separate record (a summary record) of what happened after the resurrection, may have been collated together with a copy of Mark's Gospel. And then when the next person copied Mark's Gospel, it got included and from that point on, it was assumed that it was part of Mark's Gospel, And then over time, it was just copied from one document to the next, and it was just assumed and accepted to be part of the Gospel of Mark....

So, where does that leave us, today? .... When we're study the Scriptures, where does the Gospel of Mark end? And if it **does** end at V8, what do we do with the remaining 12 verses? Are they even Scripture??? Should we read them? Should we believe them????

And I can't give you a directive on that – all I can do, is I can tell you how **I** see it, and I can explain how we're going to approach it for our study today...

Righto:

1. Firstly, I agree that the evidence is pretty overwhelming that it's not part of the original Gospel of Mark, and so as we study this Gospel, the **first** thing I want us to do, is to see how **Mark's** Gospel ends, and to see what **Mark** was trying to communicate to us, in the way that **he** ended his Gospel.

2. But having said that, I also want to impress, that even though v9-20 may not have been **originally** in Mark's Gospel, I **do** consider them to continue to be Scripture. Vs9-20 continue to be testimony about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- The early church recognised them as valid;
- There doesn't seem to be any terrible heresy;
- They're basically a summary of other parts of the New Testament; and so
- While they may not have been written by Mark, they **are** entirely consistent with what we know about the resurrected Jesus, and the early church's experience of His presence with them...
- And I believe the Holy Spirit continues to speak to us through these Scriptures today.

So, we're going to look at it from **both** angles:

- The impact of the resurrection for Mark; and
- The impact of the resurrection for the early church...

Alright, so first of all, let's look at it from the perspective of Mark:

Some people describe the Gospel of Mark, as "a passion narrative, with a bit of an introduction"... It spends a lot of time building up to the crucifixion of Jesus – that's what it seems to concentrate on... and after that, it pretty much just ends...

For me, the highlight of every other Gospel, is the resurrection – it's when Jesus comes back to life – the empty tomb – the meetings with Jesus – the excitement of the whole occasion...

But the ending of Mark – and the way he describes the resurrection – it's so very different – it just finishes...

Alright, so let's set the scene:

As soon as the Sabbath was past (Sunset Friday to Sunset Saturday), so as soon as the sun went down on Saturday night, that was the first opportunity the 3 women had to go and buy their spices (Mary Magdalene & Mary Jesus' mum [James] & Salome)... And they go and buy embalming spices, ready for the morning. And very early, on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week (Early Sunday Morning; just after the sun came up), they make their way to the tomb.

And on their way, it appears that something dawned on them: They had everything they needed, but they didn't think about who was going to roll the stone away so they could get to the body...

But when they got there, that was all sorted – the stone had been rolled away. And when they went into **the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe**

Now, going to the cemetery [pretty much] at sunrise... It's all a bit spooky in itself, isn't it... It isn't any wonder, when the stone was rolled away; Jesus was gone; and the young man

was there (all dressed in white) – it isn't any wonder that  
"they were alarmed."

But the young man said to them:

"Do **not** be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples **and Peter** that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

Let's assume this young man dressed in white is an angel. And given that an angel is a messenger from God, What are the key points, that God wants to communicate at this point?

1. Firstly, Don't be afraid – Jesus has indeed risen from the dead. (First and most important message) You're in the right place – look, that's where they laid him. He was crucified – now He has risen. **Jesus lives!!!**
2. Secondly, **be witnesses** to His resurrection. **Tell!!!**. Start by telling His disciples.
3. Thirdly, this is all part of God's plan. Before Jesus was crucified (back in Mark 14), Jesus had said to them: **Mark 14: 28** **But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."** And so the Angel is saying "Just stick to the plan. Jesus will meet you in Galilee like He said..."
4. Fourthly, I learn from this, that our God is a God who forgives and restores. The Angel especially singles out Peter.

go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee.

Now, I don't think he's singling out Peter because he's a great leader, or because he's the strongest – he's singling out Peter, because he's the weakest. As a loyal disciple of Jesus, Peter's been an abject failure ... He promised Jesus so much loyalty, but he completely denied Jesus – 3 times, he denied Jesus... Can you imagine how **low** Peter must've felt? He didn't deserve to be a disciple of Jesus anymore. He had no right, to front-up to Galilee... **But** the Angel made sure that Peter knew that he's invited to the party, too... Our God forgives us when we fail...

So that's what **I** get out of the Angel's message:

1. Jesus lives
2. Be witnesses – Tell
3. It was part of God's plan; and
4. God is giving those who failed Him, another chance...

That was the message, so, what did the women do with that message????

Well, the closing words of the oldest and most reliable manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark, end like this:

<sup>8</sup> And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

That's where Mark's Gospel ends... What an anti-climax....

- Throughout the whole Gospel, it's been about discovering who Jesus is...
- We've finally come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...
- But He gets executed
  
- **But, Jesus rises from the dead...**
- An angel tells the 3 women to be witnesses (Tell people what you've seen)
  
- And they're afraid, so they said nothing to anyone...

What a let-down – what an anti-climax....

You'd think they'd be bursting at the seams with joy – they wouldn't be able to contain it – they'd just have to tell everybody about it... But they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid...

God has done His amazing, life-giving work.... And the message is put into the hands of humans, and they say nothing...

And yet, in all of the other Gospels, the women **didn't** remain silent... From Mark's perspective they said nothing, but in Matthew's Gospel: **Matthew 28:8** .... they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

In Luke's Gospel: **Luke 24:8** .... they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

But when they told the disciples, they thought they were telling them fairy tales and they didn't believe them, but Peter went to the tomb to check it out, ...

In John's Gospel:

**John 20:18** Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

All of the other gospels agree with each other, that they **did** tell the disciples about the resurrection...

But in Mark's Gospel, they remained silent. It just doesn't fit, does it... It just doesn't seem right... Is it any wonder, that the early church, included that additional testimony of the resurrection to go along with it...

It just doesn't seem right, that those first witnesses remained silent... But aren't many of **us**, exactly the same???

**We** know that Jesus is risen. **We** know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. **We** know that Jesus lives.... Who have you told that to this week???

Who do we tell that Jesus is risen??? And how often do we share this exciting news??? It's just as wrong for **us** to be silent, as it was for those women to be silent...



And I reckon, the point that Mark was making, is that we **can't** remain silent. The Gospel **didn't** stop. The Early Church he was writing this Gospel to, **knew** the Gospel didn't stop, otherwise how did they hear and believe???...

You know, I'm reminded of when Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and people were shouting and welcoming Him, and the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Tell your Disciples to tone-it-down a bit." And Jesus replied **"I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."**

The Gospel message **did** get out – the Gospel message was **always** going to get out... But if you remember back to last week's message, it was really only when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the church, that fear was replaced with power...

Which brings us to the additional ending to Mark, which states the **appropriate** response to the resurrection.

So, let's now read v9-20

<sup>9</sup> [[Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. <sup>10</sup> She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. <sup>11</sup> But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

That's recorded in the Gospel of Luke.

<sup>12</sup> After these things he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. <sup>13</sup> And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

That's a summary of when Jesus met some disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24)

<sup>14</sup> Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.

That's probably talking about the doubts of Thomas (John 20)

<sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

<sup>16</sup> Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. <sup>17</sup> And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; <sup>18</sup> they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

That's reminiscent of the Great Commission of Matthew 28.

<sup>19</sup> So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

That's the ascension (Luke 24)

<sup>20</sup> And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.

That's what the whole of the book of Acts is about...

There's nothing new here; There's nothing inflammatory; or heretical... This additional ending to Mark, is simply a summary of what we learn elsewhere in the New Testament....

So, what does this summary, tell us about the resurrection?

1. Well firstly, there were **many** witnesses to the resurrection. No court could doubt this much eye-witness testimony.

2. Secondly, In the long-run, the witnesses didn't remain silent – how could they? That would be wrong... In fact,

Jesus commands His disciples to **"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.**

3. Thirdly, many doubted. Even Jesus' own disciples doubted, and they had to have their own experience of the risen Christ. And that's the way it is today. Many doubt. And until the Holy Spirit does **His** work in the heart of an unbeliever, they will continue to have a hard heart, and they will continue to disbelieve the resurrection of our Saviour.

4. Fourthly, Belief / Faith in Jesus is really important... - It's the only way to life... Jesus said: <sup>16</sup> **Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**

The whole of the Gospel of Mark has been forcing us to make a decision about who Jesus is. The conclusion: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God... And even today, we are being forced to make a decision – who is Jesus?

Is He just a nice man? Or is He our Lord and our God??? Only those who believe in Jesus and are baptised into His Name, will be saved. Those who do **not believe will be condemned** . (they will be judged)

5. Fifthly, this Jesus who was crucified and rose again, has been exalted. He sits at the right hand of our Heavenly Father in glory.

6. But the 6<sup>th</sup> thing we learn, is that even though Jesus has ascended to the glory of the heavens, He is **also** present with us, and the evidence of His presence with us, is the Gospel being preached in the world, and the miracles that the Holy Spirit continues to do among His witnesses.

And this is one of the greatest encouragements we can have – The message of the resurrection is, that as we go out and preach the Gospel, the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, is right there, working with us...

And that's why the Gospel continues to be powerful; and potent; and life-changing... Some 2000 years later, the Gospel is changing lives today, because the preaching of the Gospel is **not** merely a human endeavour – it's the work of Christ Himself...

And for everyone who's hearing this message today, the Gospel can be life-changing for you today. <sup>16</sup> **Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved**

This is the work of Jesus...

I'm going to be really frank: You **cannot** depend on me. If the message I am giving you today, is merely a human work,,, the best advice I can give you, is "Discard it immediately"; it has no value to you; It's pointless...

But the message I give you today, is that Christ Himself can work in your life, if you let him (If you invite Him to)...

<sup>16</sup> **Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved**

That's the proper response to the resurrection. If some other person hadn't of collated that in with the Gospel of Mark, I would've had to of preached it anyway, because that's the only appropriate response to the resurrection... – Believe & be baptised...

And for those who **are** saved, it's to take this message out into the world, being witnesses for Jesus, and as we do so, He goes with us.

And that's where we end our series on the Gospel of Mark... Sort of...

You'll understand next week.

---

<sup>i</sup> Luke 19:40