

Mark 16:9-20 – The resurrection and ascension of Jesus

We have reached the end of Mark's good news. Remember 1:1 – the good news about Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus is the good news. Mark has shown us that Jesus really is God's Son, and shown us what kind of Saviour he is; he had to die and rise again, and to follow him we must also die to ourselves and humble ourselves to serve. Are you ready to pay the price? Have you believed, and are you following him?

1. Unbelief, our tragedy

Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. Not to a king; not even to the apostles; but to a believing woman whom he had saved and who loved him. She went and told the apostles, but they were too sad and did not believe. Sometimes strong emotions, if not made to submit to God's word, can lead us away from God (e.g. grief, worry, pain). God's word needs to reign! The apostles still did not believe after another two witnesses (v12-13). This shows that the resurrection was true; they were not easily persuaded! But they were rebuked for unbelief because Jesus had told them he would rise. V16 tells us that we must believe. Baptism is not a ritual with power to save, but it is the step of obedience and testimony for those who believe. If we do not believe, we shall be lost. Do you believe?

2. Christ's ascension, our glory

In v19 and 20, Mark calls Jesus “the Lord”. Having been perfectly obedient to his Father, and having now defeated sin, death and hell, Jesus now received the very highest position of all. He now has authority of all creation (v15). All are commanded to obey him. After giving this command, he was raised up (exalted) to the right hand of God – the place of power and favour (v19). He did not change into a spirit, or disappear; but as the man Christ Jesus, God and man in one person, he is there. We have a friend in the highest place! So we can never despair or lose hope. From there he sent his power in the preaching of the gospel (v17-18, 20). These signs were done by the apostles in the apostolic age when the gospel was new; but the power of the gospel itself remains with us today.

3. Christ's commission, our task

Jesus gave his disciples his instructions. They were to go. The gospel must be taken out. We cannot sit waiting! It is to be declared to all people, in all places. The good news is for everyone; whoever believes and trusts will be saved. The apostles went out, and Christ's power followed them. If we obey him, Jesus will make the gospel successful too today.