

Confirming the Word

Mark 15:38 – 16:20

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~ I feel as if our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God literally sprinted through the Gospel of Mark at the fastest possible pace a study could proceed. I'm sure I should be ashamed of my handling of this literary jewel of a book in the Bible. We condensed all sixteen chapters into nineteen reports; and we completed our commentary on the entire account in less than fifty thousand words. I can only imagine all the things we missed. What we did not miss was the death on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ in our last report as we received our chronological account of the crucifixion as documented by John Mark. Our previous report concluded with Jesus crying out with a loud voice and giving up the Ghost....

XV

38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

~ This would have been at the time of the evening sacrifice, so most of the priests would have seen this; certainly, it had some affect upon them. We know from other Bible accounts that many of them came to a saving knowledge of Christ at this time. We read in Acts chapter six verse seven, for example, "... and the Word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." We have every reason to believe many priests were saved at the crucifixion as they were serving in the temple.

The veil being rent in twain is not a random accident and it's not recorded that way. When Jesus gave up the ghost, He didn't physically expire due to internal organ shutdown. Jesus very deliberately and very definitely dismisses His Spirit on command. Christ could not die until He gave that command. That means Jesus died completely differently than any of us will. The veil speaks of the humanity of Christ. In Leviticus we're going to

examine very carefully and in detail how the life of Christ shuts us OUT from God. We should make THAT part of the Christmas message, too. It is His death – NOT His life – that brings us to God. We're going to get a master's degree in the veil in the Levitical leg of this expedition....

39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

~ This is the confession of faith by a hopelessly lost man; and this is as far as this man could possibly go at this time - but nothing he could have said would have revealed a faith more clearly than this. This man has just acknowledged that Jesus was God's Son. This is an acknowledgement of Who Jesus was and what He was doing. There's no way this centurion had all the theological details and he had never read a single word from Scripture. This man only knew enough to take his place underneath the cross of Christ and correctly proclaim Who He is; and to come to Him in faith is the only thing God has ever asked anyone to do! Well, this man's doing it! Let's keep this in perspective: this centurion was a filthy pagan Roman on the crucifixion detail. This is the executioner himself. He had mental pictures that one can never erase. We see him made tender now - and I wonder what became of his career and family? ~

40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him); and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath,

43 Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and requested the body of Jesus.

44 And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.

45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

~ The women were the last ones to come to the cross - but they'll be the first ones at the tomb! Let's not read too much into that because the apostles are scattered. We have many other people here that are not named, also. Joseph was a little-known disciple of Jesus. We were very critical of him in Matthew, but I think he is, actually, overall, an honorable man. Notice that Nikki – Nicodemus – isn't even here in this Gospel? Well, quite frankly, Joseph has the courage to step out in the open. I think Nikki was still sneaking around with this faith and his oil at this time. Anyways, Joseph had a very expensive piece of real estate that he had dug out by hand, as Matthew tells us, that he gives to the Lord now and that's a whole lot of work, friends! So, Joseph has merit and he also has charge of the burial. Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin who had not consented to their illegal deeds they wrought upon Jesus. I don't think Nikki consented, either; but old Nikki has other problems - as we'll see later. Joseph of Arimathaea was certainly waiting for the Kingdom of God, and he steps out at a time when the apostles are scattered and there's no one else around to take care of this, quite frankly!

Now, Pilate is amazed that Jesus is already dead because crucifixion was a process that could take days. They would hang there and eventually expire of dehydration or shock or exposure or any number of things that only happen over several days. Crucifixion is cruel and inhuman and the very mention of it should make a man shudder with paralyzing fear; it is a mode of torture that is not to be looked upon; and that's the reason God gives us the accounts of it as He does. Well, Pilate can't believe this has happened so fast, so he wants to make sure; and in the last hours on the cross the legs were usually broken to tell if the prisoner was still alive. Of course, it was necessary not to break Jesus legs in fulfillment of prophecy, which says, 'no bone was broken.'

So, Joseph is given control over the body of Christ by Pilate. Joseph, we are told, was a rich man and we discussed that in Matthew, too. I'm not sure

we need to belabor the point. Interestingly, there are two words used in connection with "body." The first word speaks of the total personality and has a note of care and tenderness; and that's what Joseph received from Pilate. The other word for "body" just means dead corpse; and that's what Pilate gave Joseph! It's two different attitudes and two different viewpoints of death and the remains of the dead. What a difference! What value do you put on Jesus? Is your heart tender for the things of God? Or, does Christ's death on the cross just make Him another dead carcass to you? We have been redeemed in spirit today and our bodies are to also be redeemed. These bodies we live in now will die; but there is a day when we will receive glorified bodies that do not die. We have a glimpse of an insight here. Matthew also told us the soldiers sealed the tomb. The only ones left with Him were the women who were there until the very end....

46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph beheld where he was laid.

XVI

~ This chapter holds one of the cardinal truths of the Christian faith: the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ! This is the very heart of the primitive and basic Gospel. Every single sermon preached in the Book of Acts is a message on the resurrection. It amazes me that we only have one Easter service each year! Every preacher in the early church gave this sermon! Christ is risen! That is the electrifying news that affected the lethargy and charged a sinful generation in the Roman Empire. This turned them upside down and inside out and right side up; so, they went out to tell the world about it! The church could have hope in our present day, too - if it would preach this message.

This last chapter of Mark has come under suspicion by higher critics; and rightly so. The only reason I am even going to mention that is because, if I don't, someone will call out some of the contextual problems we have

here. We don't pass over anything in this safari, friends – we're going to touch every single base on the way around this field. This chapter at verses nine through twenty has been called into question by both fundamental conservative scholarship and liberal theological groups alike. Westcott omits it altogether from the Greek text. Nestle does the same by separating it from the regular text and puts it in itty bitty type hidden in there. The liberal wings seem to jump on it wholeheartedly when they find it. The better manuscripts omit it entirely and take the chapter to verse eight only. Beyond that, we don't bother ourselves with New Testament Introduction matters in the Spiritual Safari because that's just not our purpose for studying the Bible like we do. I just want to let you know that I know the debate - and we will treat all of chapter sixteen as the inspired and inerrant Word of God! ~

1 And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

~ Mary didn't waste the ointment at Simon the Lepers house, but these women sure did waste theirs! Jesus was gone when they got there! Now, the Sabbath had ended at sundown on Saturday, so they had secured the spices at some point after that in order to be ready to go so early Sunday morning. The same women that were at the cross have now come to the tomb. As we have said, the women were the last ones at the cross but first to the tomb. The apostle's attitude was that Jesus was dead and they were afraid for their own lives now. They intended to stay under cover until things cooled down. There is not one shred of evidence that any of the apostles were planning to visit that tomb. Well, the sun is coming up now

as these women bring the oils that they had intended to anoint Jesus with. Of course, the stone would have been a difficulty for them, but the stone had been rolled away. The body of Jesus was gone, and a Heavenly announcement of the resurrection was given. It is well attested to and sufficiently established that the tomb was empty. The evidence is conclusive in a manner that it would be accepted in a contemporary court of law....

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

~ The serious student of Scripture considers all four Gospel accounts together at all times when engaging in a discussion concerning them. Here is a quote from Lord Lyndhurst, high chancellor of Great Britain in 1846 - and was also the high steward of Cambridge, which is the highest honor that was given: "... I know full well what evidence is and the evidence for that of the resurrection has never broken down, yet!" Here the women are instructed to go tell the disciples because the angels aren't waiting around for some apostle who isn't coming! No, the angel knows he has to send a message to the apostles about meeting in Galilee because they have probably forgotten about that, too. John chapter twenty-one would be a remarkable read to accompany this study. These women are amazed and speechless. Honestly, this just feels inappropriate as an end to this Gospel....

8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

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.

10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.

13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.

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.

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

17 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.

19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

~ At verse nine we begin a summation account by Mark of the order of events after the resurrection. The apostles had no faith and did not believe Mary at all when she said He had risen. Luke gives us the account of the walk on the Emmaus road and their encounter with Him there. Baptism is not essential for salvation, so we won't get into details on that at verse sixteen - but that means the baptism of the Holy Spirit. All we are instructed to do is believe. What are you doing to support getting the Word of God out? If we really believe - then we ought to be doing something to take the entire Word of God to the entire world, I can tell you that.

However, you people that want that something to be the sign gifts, you had better be prepared to take them all, brothers and sisters! I will personally prepare a formaldehyde cocktail if you really think you can do it. If you can't raise the dead, you cannot speak in a tongue. These were sign gifts at the beginning that were important to the apostles for credibility; and they are sign gifts that YOU do NOT have and that are not needed today anyways. Why speak in tongues? We have the New Testament that speaks of Christ - so we can all be on the same spiritual page all the time. The Word of God is our credibility – NOT something we think we do. If you're honest with yourself, you'll admit that speaking in tongues is utter foolishness.

The evidence today is: he who has not this doctrine of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as the basis for salvation is not of salvation; that is the only test. The Word of God is our great sign in this hour – not your incoherent babbling baby talk that makes everyone question your sanity – except YOU, of course. No, the sign gifts were for the apostles – not you. I do wish we could spend some more time dealing with all of this but maybe we have already said too much? Either way, that concludes our commentary on Mark; and this Gospel sure has been a Gospel of action in our Spiritual Safari. Our next course of action will be to return to the Old Testament where we go to the Book of Leviticus. I think we learned a lot here in Simon Peter's Gospel. Jesus is telling YOU – and me - to get into action ~

