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Mark 16: 1-8 “ The Resurrection of Jesus”

Introduction to Biblical Studies

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Introduction

This paper will examine the interpretation and application of the book of Mark 16: 1-8: The Resurrection of Jesus. The author of Mark 16: 1-8 intended to explain and store faith and belief in the rising of Christ. The resurrection of Jesus sent a message of hope and power in the holy lands.

The resurrection of Jesus as recorded in the book of Mark sets the humiliation, conquer and unfairness of the crucifixion and the death of Christ. It shows the glory, victory and the justice found in the kingdom of God. Readers are taken through a mental journey where they join the three women, Salome, Mary the mother of James and Mary Magdalene to the trip in the tomb where they had gone to anoint him with spices. The women find the stone rolled and inside they find a young man dressed in white. The young man tells them about the resurrection and they are amazed. He tells them to go tell the disciples and peter that Jesus would meet them at Galilee. Questions that arise are questions such as, why are the women amazed? Who is the young man in white? Why did the women not response? And was this the best way for Saint Mark to end the book?

The first verse tells as how the women followers of Christ named Mary mother of James, Salome and Mary Magdalene went to the tomb to anoint the body of Christ with spices. This was on the first day of the week after the

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Sabbath which marks three days after his death. This in itself is a fulfillment of a prophecy that Jesus was to stay in the tomb for three days. We see only female followers coming to see or to pay respect by anointing the body of their master. These women were also present when Jesus was crucified and in fact, Mary Magdalene helped Joseph of Arimathaea to bury the dead Christ. His closest friend, the male disciples were not present nor performed the easy things that they would have done. This shows that the female followers were consistently showing more faith and courage than the male followers. The women are mentioned in the chapter to remind the reader of the women's presence at Jesus' death and burial and their faithfulness to him both at Galilee and his moment of greatest need. The anointment to be done at the tomb meant that there was no time to prepare his body because the Sabbath was near at the time of his death.

The women were in total shock from the death of their master. Despite their presence in the closing of the tomb with a large stone, it had not occurred to them that the stone still blocked the entrance to the tomb. This shows the state of confusion due to the passing away of their master and this made them unable to think clearly. They could not think ahead on how they were to roll the stone at the tomb's entrance. Verse three of the same chapter tells us that upon their arrival, they asked themselves who would roll the stone for them? This shows that the women were led by the love for their master such that their thinking was hindered. The stone was the only thing that stood between Jesus and their ability to pay their last respect. The stone was an order from Pilate. When he was warned that Jesus had promised to resurrect after three days, he ordered that the tomb be made as secure as

the guards could make it. According to Matthew chapter 27 verse 65, a huge stone was rolled over the entrance of the tomb and sealed. This was to ensure that Jesus would not get away.

As the three women were wondering on how to roll the stone from the tomb's entrance, Mary Magdalene noticed that the stone was already rolled. The women further find a man who tells them that Christ has risen and he is not among the dead. This is no coincidence. Jesus had said that he will resurrect on the third day. The women had gone to the tomb on the third day. Counting from the time that Jesus was laid in the tomb, and the first day of the week, Sunday we find three days. Judging from Jesus' speaking of the three days and nights in relation to Jonah as documented in the book of Matthew chapter 12 verses 40, we count that Jesus was in the tomb for three days. Being crucified on Friday- before the Sabbath on Saturday, Sunday is the third day according to the Jews counting. As prophesied therefore, it is not amazing that Christ was risen and not among the dead. It was just a prophesy that was being fulfilled.

St. Mark clearly describes the movement of the women to the tomb, into the tomb and out of it. When the women reach the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side. The young man was dressed in white and they got alarmed. St. Mark does not reveal why the young man was sitting on the side of the tomb. The women expected to find Jesus but rather what they see is a young man. Being seated on the right-hand is vocally linked with the Son of man's position of power. The women feel astonished due to the sight of a man that had totally not been expected. St. Mark does not reveal who this young man is. This remains the hardest and most difficult part of the gospel

to understand. However, according to other gospels, the young man was an angel dressed in purely white clothes. However, in this context, the identity of the young man remains anonymous and St. Mark should have revealed the identity of the man to make the gospel more comprehensive and easy to apprehend. The use of the words, “ just as he told you” brings to the readers of the gospel every expectation that the promise has been fulfilled.

The young man ushers them in and consoles them by telling them, “ Do not be alarmed”. Additionally, he emphasizes that Jesus, whom the women were looking for, was no longer in the tomb “ he is not here. See the place where they laid him”. Indicating of the place where Jesus was laid refers back to the culmination of the burial episode where Mary Magdalene and the mother of Jesus had clearly witnessed the place where Jesus was buried. The use of the word ‘ amazed’ which is highly emotional captures the full range of their sentiments, astonishment, shock and wonder.

The young man serves the function of ushering the women in and assuring them that Jesus was no longer there. He serves the role of an informant who appears to have known the fact that Jesus had resurrected before anyone else knew of it. Verse 6 challenges expectations and elude our every attempt at control. These women, being the ones that were so close to Jesus when he was alive, should not be alarmed when they are told that Jesus is no longer there and had resurrected. In the contemporary context, the women might be perceived to be weak in faith. They had gone to the tomb early in the morning to bury Jesus properly. They were not in any way expecting his resurrection and no one should hold the idea that they had gone there to wait for his resurrection. It is utterly ironical since Jesus had prophesied and

told them that he will resurrect on the third day. Their love for their friend was greater than their expectations.

The young man at the tomb told the women to go out and spread to the world the good news that Jesus had resurrected. In the contemporary context, the young man might be perceived as a preacher who welcomes people to Jesus and feeds them on the good news of Jesus. However, cannot be ascertained as there is no any verse in the entire bible that hints on this. The young man emphasizes that Jesus' disciples and especially peter should be told the good news. " Tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee". This designates that Jesus had pardoned Peter, who denied him, and the other disciples and will maintain his special affiliation with them despite their failure in the hour of crisis. This further coagulates the message that Jesus came to forgive and help sinners and not to punish anyone. He was still going to wait for them at galilee the same place where Jesus performed his first miracle. The report that the women were supposed to deliver indicates that the apostolic faith in the resurrection will rest on witness, firsthand experience and not hearsay hence the disciples had to see Jesus themselves.

As St. Mark wraps up his gospel, he states that the women fled from the tomb astonished and trembling. " trembling and astonishment had seized them". However, they did not tell anyone the news. The women are bewildered over the good news that Jesus had resurrected. It appears that the idea that Jesus had risen was understandably- hard for them to gulp. The women say nothing to any one and yet they were told to spread the good news of resurrection. It is also ironical that the women leave the tomb

astonished. That is not how anyone would expect them to react after receiving the good news. St. Mark uses a double negative for emphasis and this is quite different to other accounts of resurrection. The women's response in 16: 8 is a tragic, as being fearful and unable to deliver the message, disastrous conclusion to Mark's Gospel. St. Mark's conclusion depicts the failure of the women and this might possibly be his intention behind writing the last line of his gospel. Mark's gospel becomes impassioned against the community's dogmatic adversaries and illustrates the final denunciation.

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