

MARK

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Mark chapter 15 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we will finish up the Gospel of Mark this evening. Keep in mind that Jesus has been arrested and has faced Annas and Caiaphas the High Priest and will conclude with His religious trial before the Sanhedrin. Let me share this summary of this chapter with you and as you will see, the one on trial before Pilate is not Jesus. We are told,

As Christ stood before Pilate, it was he, not Christ who was really on trial. Christ's blood was on Pilate's hands, and public hand washing could not remove his own guilt. Against his better judgment, Roman law, and his wife's pleas, he, for political expediency, delivered Jesus to be crucified. Turned away by Pilate, spurned by His own people, and forsaken by His disciples, the Servant was obedient unto death (Phil. 2:8) and went to the cross to die for our sins. "He saved others; himself he cannot save," cried a mocking multitude, uttering more truth than they could possibly imagine. After agonizing hours on the cross, the Savior fulfilled His grand design to be made sin for us who knew no sin, "that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

- James McGowan, The Gospel of Mark, p. 213

With that as our background, let's pick up in Mark chapter 15 beginning in verse 1 as Jesus is going to go before the Sanhedrin and then on to Pilate for trial.

MARK 15**VERSES 1-5**

Remember from our last study, the charge against Jesus was blasphemy, claiming that He is God, which was a capital crime, punishable by stoning. The problem was that Rome took away the Jews right to execute criminals in around 5 A. D. so their only option was to send Him to Pilate, and that is just what they did!

If they did not have the right to put Jesus to death, why did they stone Stephen? Because they did go around this law from time to time. But Jesus was such a hot potato you might say, the people loved Him so much, they wanted someone else to put Him to death. In other words, it was out of their hands, they just brought the charges and Pilate put Jesus to death!

Also note that this trial was “**Immediately, in the morning**” and the reason for that was they wanted to bring Jesus and these charges before Pilate as soon as the day started. Lane expounds on this by saying, “The detail that Jesus was delivered to Pilate’s forum early in the morning is a significant index of the historical accuracy of the tradition. It was necessary for the Sanhedrin to bring its business to Pilate as soon after dawn as possible because the working day of a Roman official began at the earliest hour of daylight. Legal trials in the Roman forum were customarily held shortly after sunrise.”

Now, why were the Jews, especially the Jewish religious leaders so upset with Jesus? Yes, one of the reasons was that they were jealous of Him and they did not want Rome to take away their position.

But I think another reason is that the righteousness of Christ exposed the shallowness of their lives, it showed their sin and they did not like it and tried to extinguish the light. One writer put it like this as he wrote,

Once an African chief happened to visit a mission station. Hanging outside the missionary's hut on a tree was a little mirror. The chief happened to look into the mirror and saw her reflection, complete with terrifying paint and threatening features. She gazed at her own frightening countenance and started back in horror, exclaiming, "Who is that horrible-looking person inside that tree?" "Oh," the missionary said, "it is not in the tree. The glass is reflecting your own face."

The African would not believe it until she held the mirror in her hand. She said, "I must have the glass. How much will you sell it for?" "Oh," said the missionary, "I don't want to sell it." But the woman begged until he capitulated, thinking it might be best to sell it to avoid trouble.

So he named a price and she took the mirror. Exclaiming, "I will never have it making faces at me again," she threw it down and broke it in pieces.

This is precisely what the religious establishment did to Jesus. They would dash this mirror of their souls! So they nailed him to a cross, only to find that this magnified the reflection.

This same syndrome was at the heart of the persecution that came to William Booth and the Salvation Army. English society, the exploiting slum landlords, the industrial buccaneers, the liquor magnates, and the uncaring Church were made to see themselves, and they hated it.

It is the same today. A Spirit-filled believer models Christ and shows life as it should be, and many recoil. Archbishop William Temple said, "The world . . . would not hate angels for being angelic; but it does hate men for being Christians. It grudges them their new character; it is tormented by their peace; it is infuriated by their joy." Of course, the upside of this is that open hearts, like that of Nicodemus of the Sanhedrin, are ineluctably [not to be avoided, changed] drawn to Christ.

There is nothing like the hatred of theologians. The mirror must not only be broken, but ground to powder.

- R. Kent Hughes, Mark Volume Two, p. 189

Now Pilate was the sixth Roman governor in this region and he was not doing well. He caused a riot with the Jews when He placed a picture of Caesar on the Temple Mount and of course, the Jews rioted, they only worshiped God! And many Jews were killed. And a letter to Rome was sent.

Then he took money from the Temple treasury to finance an aqueduct and again, more rioting. And once again, many Jews were killed. And another letter to Rome!

Thus, Pilate was warned by Rome that if he gets one more strike against him, he is out. Keep that in mind as you see how he is working with the Jews, trying to appease them with their case against Jesus!

Now in John we are told that Pilate was going back and forth from Jesus to the crowds, finding no fault in Jesus and yet being persuaded by the crowds to do something with this King of the Jews! Now the crowds were foaming at the mouth wanting Jesus dead, and yet, Jesus answered them not a word. Why? Because He did nothing wrong! And Pilate marveled at this, the contrast between the crowds and Jesus.

And Pilate, wanting to do what was right so he would not get in trouble with Rome, and yet, not offend the Jews so he would not get in trouble with Rome, thinks he has a solution to this problem, he thinks he has an answer to make everyone happy regarding Jesus. Listen to what his plan was.

VERSES 6-15

This was a perfect plan, or so Pilate thought. You see, on the Feast Day he would release a prisoner, kind of a good-will gesture to the Jewish people to stay on their good side. Thus, Pilate, recognizing that Jesus was innocent, gives the people a choice, to release innocent Jesus or Barabbas who was a robber and murderer.

It seemed obvious who should be set free and who should be put to death. Pilate was supposed to be in control, he sat as judge, as ruler, and yet, he was going to let the people dictate his actions. Be careful, don't let the crowds sway you into doing something that you know is wrong!

And make no mistake about it, Pilate knew the religious leaders wanted Jesus dead because they were jealous of Him. Envy, jealousy is an ugly monster, don't feed it for it will control you and consume you and bring about much destruction in your life!

And the religious leaders infected the crowds with their poison of envy and jealousy that lead to hatred and the calling for the death of Jesus! And it truly got ugly as they cried out louder and louder **“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”**

And notice what verse 15 says, Pilate wanted to please the people instead of doing what was right, so he released Barabbas and sent Jesus to be scourged before His crucifixion!

That is a good lesson for us. First of all, you will never please everyone. Secondly, please the Lord, honor Him by doing what is right! And it really doesn't matter what people say of you, if you are doing what is right, with a right heart, God will take care of you, don't let the crowds sway you!

So Pilate releases Barabbas and before Jesus is crucified, Pilate has Him Scourged! Scourging or flogging was a brutal torture. It was kind of the third degree to elicit a confession from a prisoner.

The Roman scourge had a wooden handle with a series of leather thongs threaded with pieces of metal, bone, brass that were sharpened to a razor's edge. The prisoner was tied by the wrists and tied to a post with his body taught.

Two men, one on each side would whip the prisoner starting out light and coming down stronger each time until he confessed his crime to them. It was so vicious that many died before they could be crucified, their back ripped open, bleeding, and going into shock. It was a torture beyond description and for Jesus, He had nothing to confess, so at the end of 39 blows, they were coming down as hard as they could! Can you image what His back looked like when they were done? It is amazing He even survived this torture!

Of this, Dr. William Edwards tells us, “As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim’s back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive the cross.”

“The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a pre-shock state. Moreover, hematidrosis had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus’ physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical.”

(Dr. William Edwards [with others] in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, March 21, 1986)

Listen to what Jesus endured after this brutal punishment

VERSES 16-20

Here stood God, the King over all creation, beaten, bloodied, in a state of shock from the torture He took, and now He is mocked, made fun of, and He took it all. Why? Because of His love for us. Think about that the next time someone mocks you or makes fun of you before you respond to them, it may change the way you respond to that person!

For Pilate, we don't hear anything more of him. He avoided the issue of *“Who is Jesus and what should be done with Him?”* and He paid the penalty for his actions, and so too will all those who reject Jesus. Pilate sought after position, popularity, and in the end his life was nothing! Don't do the same, put Jesus first in your life!

And can you imagine the pain as that purple robe was pulled off that bloody, raw flesh of Jesus! After all of this, they lead Him away to Golgotha to be crucified. And understand that they would not take the shortest route through the streets but would parade these criminals through the city streets for all to see, as they carried this 100-pound cross beam.

And in front of them would be a soldier carrying a sign of the charges against that person. The reason they did this was to discourage others from committing crimes against the state. This was not a retribution for the crime, they could have just thrust the person through with a sword. It was a vivid object lesson for those who might be walking down the same path and to stop before it was too late and they ended up like these poor souls. You see, crucifixion was a very painful way to die, you could hang on a cross for two or three days before you would suffocate to death!

VERSES 21-23

It is hard for me to imagine Jesus making it out of the city gate in the condition He was in before He could no longer carry the cross any farther. When He could go no further, the Roman soldier compelled Simon, who was from North Africa, a Cyrenian, some 800 miles away, to carry His cross the rest of the way!

Simon came to celebrate the Passover and ended up meeting the Passover Lamb, Jesus, as he carried the cross for Jesus the rest of the way to Calvary! And it affected his life for in Romans 16:13 we are told, **“Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.”**

It would seem that Rufus was the son of Simon and thus, Simon got saved and went home and shared Jesus with his family and they got saved! Isn't it amazing how God orchestrates things in our lives and He tells us to walk by faith. Then, as we get to the other side of a situation, we see the reason the things happened the way they did.

Now Golgotha is the Arabic word; we call it Calvary which comes from the Latin word meaning skull. And that is exactly what this place looks like, you can see the face of a skull cut into the rocks!

Now the Catholic church believes Golgotha is inside the city gates at a place where they built a church called the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The only problem with that is Hebrews 13:12 tells us, **“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”** Thus, Golgotha is located next to the Garden Tomb, outside the city in a place called Gordon's Valley and not inside the city!

Now verse 23 tells us, **“Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it.”** Prior to the soldiers hammering His hands and feet to the cross the women tried to give Him a sedative to drink to dull the pain, but He refused. He was in control at all times!

“According to an old tradition, respected women of Jerusalem provided a narcotic drink to those condemned to death in order to decrease their sensitivity to the excruciating pain . . . This human practice was begun in response to the biblical injunction of Proverbs 31:6-7: ‘Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more.’” (Lane)

VERSES 24-26

The condemned person was stripped of all his clothes, except possibly for a loincloth, but many times they hung there naked for all to see their shame. It is hard for me to imagine my Lord hanging there like that, but He more the likely was! Now, over 1,000 years before these events took place, David tells us in Psalm 22 that they would divide His garments, and here we see that prophecy come to pass.

Of this stripping the condemned of his clothes, one writer makes these comments, “Men were ordinarily crucified naked (Artemidorus II. 61). Jewish sensitivities, however, dictated that men ought not to be publicly executed completely naked, and men condemned to stoning were permitted a loincloth (M. *Sanhedrin* VI. 3). Whether the Romans were considerate of Jewish feelings in this matter is unknown.” (Lane)

Now in verse 25 we are told that Jesus was crucified at the third hour and in John 19:14 we are told it was the sixth hour, which is right or is this a mistake?

In both cases it was nine o'clock in the morning and the difference is that Mark uses the Hebrew computation of time and John uses the Roman! Thus, the third hour was 9 am, the time that Jesus was placed on the cross of Calvary for our sins, and He hung there until 3 pm when He gave up His spirit!

Now placed above him was a sign that read, “**The King of the Jews.**” And the Jews wanted this sign taken down but Pilate refused and it was left as a testimony for all to see, He truly is the King of kings and Lord of lords. You can accept it or reject it but it doesn't change the facts, the reality of who He is!

VERSES 27-32

Again, here is another prophecy fulfilled with these two criminals being crucified alongside of Jesus. And this prophecy is from Isaiah 53:12.

Now Luke tells us that they both mocked Jesus, these two criminals crucified with Jesus, one on each side of Jesus. But then, at one point one of them cried out for Jesus to help him and Jesus gave this man with no hope, hope as He said “**. . . ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’**” Luke 23:43. Jesus sees a man crying out for help and He responds with words of comfort. I like that! Never forget that!

Let me ask you a question. Did you ever have a bad day and then someone says something and it just makes it worse? I don’t think it could have gotten any worse for Jesus. He was scourged. He was beaten. They pulled His beard out. His face was so disfigured that He did not look like a man anymore. And now, they are mocking Him, putting Him down, making fun of Him and He still loved them!

One of the things that they said was that Jesus saved others, which He did do, but then they said He can’t save Himself. Could Jesus have saved Himself and come down off the cross? You bet He could have but He didn’t, why? Because of His love for us!

It is as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “**. . . ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.’**” Mark 14:36.

You see, without the cross we would still be dead in our trespasses and sins for the penalty for our sins would not have been paid! Jesus did not save Himself because He came to save us and He did by giving His life as a sacrifice for us, for our sins!

And please understand that Jesus did not just pay the penalty for our sins, He took our sins upon Himself, they have been removed from our lives, never to be remembered again! And it was not the nails that held Jesus on the cross, but His love for us.

Unbelievable the love He has for us! The thing is this, are you moved by the crowds or the cross? Are you headed for judgment or a pardon? Are you standing firm on your own rights or are you saying He is right? You see, it all revolves around Jesus, the cross and His resurrection from the dead - that is the Gospel message, the Good News! Are you willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him?

VERSES 33-37

We are told that from noon till 3 pm darkness covered the land. And understand that it could not be an eclipse for it was the Passover, a full moon, and opposite in the sky of where it needed to be for an eclipse to occur. Can you imagine what the people were thinking, that darkness that was in their hearts now filled the land! But they closed their eyes to these things.

Phlegon, a Roman historian wrote regarding this darkness, "In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was an extraordinary eclipse of the sun: at the sixth hour, the day turned into dark night, so that the stars in heaven were seen; and there was an earthquake." (cited in Clarke)

And verse 34, the cry of Jesus is one of the saddest cries in the Bible. He cried out, "**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**"

And this is what David said in Psalm 22 and now we see that it is fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Why would God the Father do this? What was this separation all about? What does He mean by this?

As Jesus bore all our filthy sins the Father could not look upon Him as He did before. He cannot look upon evil or sin with acceptance. Habakkuk 1:13 says, **“You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. . .”**

And the same is true in our lives outside of Christ. But, in Christ the Father can look upon us for Paul tells us **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** II Corinthians 5:21. Thus, this darkness not only shows us the darkness of man’s heart, but it represents the judgment of God upon sin!

And that separation Jesus never experienced before and will never experience again. But that is how much He loved us that He went to the cross of Calvary and endured that separation from the Father for those three hours so that our sin could be paid in full!

And then, in verses 35 and 36 we see that some of the Jews thought Jesus was calling for Elijah to come and rescue Him. Why? Because there was a popular Jewish belief that if a righteous man was suffering Elijah would come to deliver him. But they weren’t believing that Jesus was righteous and thus, they were not looking for Elijah to come.

In fact, they even refused to moisten His lips that must have been parched at this point. They just continued to harden their hearts towards God. And the thing is this, they should have known that darkness was symbolic of God’s divine judgment, the Scriptures testify of this, but they were not interested in the truth!

Now, prior to Jesus giving up His Spirit, we are told in John 19:30 that He cried out, **“It is finished!”** In other words, the payment for sin was **“Paid in full”** as Jesus cried out ***TETELESTAI!***

It is as Paul said in I Timothy 2:5-6, **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”**

Also, please understand that Jesus was in control, for the seventh and final saying of Jesus from the cross of Calvary was, **“And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last.**” Luke 23:46.

It is as Jesus said in John 10:18, **“No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”**

Also, it was getting late in the day and because of the Feast Day, the soldiers, trying to hasten the death of these men, broke their legs, but when they came to Jesus, He was already dead. Fulfilling another prophecy that none of His bones would be broken!

VERSES 38-41

As Jesus gave up His spirit the veil in the Temple, some 18 inches thick, was torn from top to bottom. Understand that this veil separated the holy place from the most holy place, where God dwelt. And only the High Priest could enter the most holy place and only once a year, on the day of Atonement. You see, this veil separated man from God but now it is torn, why? Because God has opened the way up for man to come to God, something man could not do by his own efforts, but was done by Christ for us.

But now the way to God is opened up and it is opened up to us through Jesus Christ. I am sure the priests who were there offering the evening sacrifice were horrified by what they saw and maybe some in the end came to believe! We do not know but we do get a hint as we are told in Acts 6:7, **“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”**

And what I want you to understand is that man did not tear this veil, God did for it was torn from top to bottom. Not only that but it was so thick that no man could tear it. Why is this important to us? Because it is showing us that God provided the way, Jesus provided the way into the Holy of Holies or the presence of God and that way is through Him! Jesus said in John 14:6, **“... ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”** And here is the example of that truth!

You see, through Christ we can boldly come before the Father, the way to God has been opened up to us through Jesus as I have said, and thus, as Hebrews 4:16 says, **“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”**

We also see this Centurion who was in charge of this execution squad make an amazing statement - he was moved by what he saw. On the other hand, we are told in Luke 23:48, **“And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned.”** They left Him fearful, confused, disturbed by what they saw and yet unchanged, and many do the same when they come to church, they leave as they have come in, unchanged!

It is hard for us to image what these women were feeling as they saw their Lord put to death and the ugliness of the crowds. The only apostle that was there was John, the others were hiding, fearful instead of faithful like these women!

VERSES 42-47

It took the death of Jesus for Joseph to stand up and take a stand for Jesus! You see, when a person was crucified they would leave their bodies on the cross so the vultures, the birds and other wild animals could feed on them, and then what was left they would throw into a common grave. But now Joseph steps forward and asks Pilate if he could care for the body of Jesus. What will it take for you to get serious about your relationship with Jesus?

So we see Joseph ask Pilate for the body of Jesus so that he could bury Him. And Joseph was from Arimathea, about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem and the place where the prophet Samuel lived, and was called Ramah. (I Samuel 7:17).

He was a wealthy man, a member of the Sanhedrin and a follower of Jesus. Luke 23:51 tells us **“He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God.”**

And, like I have said, we see Joseph is now stepping out in faith, realizing he is cutting all ties with his religious faith to serve Jesus. Also, we are told that Nicodemus was with Joseph, another member of the council and a follower of Jesus who now has to step out in faith. It took Joseph and Nicodemus the death of Jesus, the death of their Savior to risk it all and take those steps of faith.

As they come to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus we see that Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. You see, it could take two or three days for a person to die of suffocation on a cross. So Pilate asks the Centurion to be sure Jesus is dead before he releases the body to Joseph. And the Centurion is sure, it was his job!

Thus, we see Joseph and Nicodemus taking care of the body of Jesus and they place Him in the grave or tomb, not in the ground. They wrapped the body of Jesus with fine linen and spices, about 100 pounds. And they would take these linen stripes and tightly wrap the body and in between they would place aromatic spices.

The tomb itself was the tomb for Joseph and his family but he freely gave this to Jesus, this new tomb, this garden tomb next to Calvary, the sight of the crucifixion. It is as Isaiah says, **“And they made His grave with the wicked - but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.”** Isaiah 53:9. He died between two criminals and yet in His burial He was placed in the tomb of a rich man!

And you have to love this. The men, the apostles are all hiding and here are the women watching and worshiping their Lord. Some say the women went to the wrong tomb on that Sunday morning, I doubt that for a few are here and they are watching where Joseph and Nicodemus placed the body of Jesus. The men let fear drive them away while the women let devotion draw them to Him! Which has your life, fear or devotion?

Can you imagine the emotion that was going through the minds of the followers of Jesus? And now, as we will see, as three days pass by, their lives are going to be changed forever!

MARK 16**VERSES 1-8**

The Sabbath was past and now, early Sunday morning these women go to the tomb of Jesus to anoint His body with spices. Make no mistake about it, they loved the Lord and this love was manifested in what they were going to do.

Now in John chapter 20 we are told that Mary Magdalene arrived ahead of the other women at the tomb, before the sun was up and she finds the tomb empty and runs and tells Peter and John what she saw. They in turn ran and also found the tomb empty. Then Mary, at the tomb, sees the risen Lord! Now as these other women arrive they are wondering who will roll the stone from the door of the tomb so they could get in?

But as they arrive the stone is rolled away, the soldiers are gone and I wonder what was going through their minds at this point?

And as they look into the tomb to see the body of Jesus they instead see this angel, Luke tells us there were two angels there. And as fear began to rise in these women the angel tells them not to be afraid, Jesus is not dead, He is risen!

Now these women are sent back as witnesses, to tell the others that Jesus is not dead, He is risen. And go and tell Peter because He needs to hear this. You see, Peter was discouraged by his own actions, his own failure, his denying the Lord and God wants to encourage him before He restores him.

And please understand this, ***FIRST YOU MUST COME AND SEE, AND THEN YOU CAN GO AND TELL!*** That is the order, see and then tell!

Now in verse 8 when it says that “**they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid**” does not mean they did not tell the apostles what they saw, what the angel told them. We know from Mark 16:11 and Luke 24:9 that they did!

What we see here is that they did not discuss this among themselves as they were traveling. They did not try to figure things out. They believed and told the apostles what they saw and heard!

Also, this word “**afraid**” is not speaking of terror. Morgan tells us, “These women left the tomb, and fled. Seized with trembling, and astonishment; – the actual Greek word there is ‘ecstasy,’ – seized with trembling and ecstasy, filled with fear; so they fled.”

And yes, fear can stop us dead in our tracks, it can prevent us from doing things we need to do. But love, faith, can overcome that. In fact, Matthew tells us that Jesus appeared to them to comfort them, to encourage them, which worked, for they did go and tell the others that He is risen! Folks, the Lord will do no less for us!

Before we read on let me say this because there are those who will try to tell you that Mark 16:9-20 is not part of the text but was added much later and thus, we should not include it in our Bibles. My Bible has this as a footnote, “Vv. 9-20 are bracketed in NU [These variations from the traditional text generally represent the Alexandrian or Egyptian type of text [the oldest, but sometimes questioned text]. They are found in the Critical Text published in the Twenty-sixth edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (N) and in the United Bible Society’s third edition (U), hence the acronym “NU-text.”] as not original. They are lacking in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, although nearly all other mss. of Mark contain them.”

First of all, the reason why so many reject this portion of Mark is because the two oldest existing Greek manuscripts (dated from 325 and 340 A. D.) do not contain this section and neither do about 100 other ancient manuscripts translated into other languages.

If that is all we had we might also agree with these verses not being part of the Bible, but we have other writings that make it very clear, these verses belong here. Let me show you what I mean.

Papias refers to Mark 16:18. He wrote around 100 A. D.

Justin Martyr's first *Apology* quoted Mark 16:20 (151 A. D.).

Irenaus in *Against Heresies* quoted Mark 16:13 and remarked on it (180 A. D.).

Hippolytus in *Peri Charismaton* quoted Mark 16:18 and 19. In his homily on the heresy of Noetus, he refers to Mark 16:19. And He wrote this while he was Bishop of Portus (190-227 A. D.).

Vicentius, Bishop of Thibari, quoted from 2 of the verses in the 7th Council of Carthage held under Cyprian (256 A. D.). Augustine, a century and a half later, in his reply, recited the words again.

Now here's the thing. If this was not part of the Bible, why were they quoting and teaching on this portion of Mark, that would make no sense. And think about it. Would Mark end his Gospel with these words, "**And they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid**"? I don't think so, it would make no sense.

I truly believe this is part of the text and thus, we will be covering these verses this evening, no matter what the so-called higher critics say. Interestingly enough, one of the commentaries I use doesn't even have anything on these verses, it does not say a word about why they are left out, they are just ignored like they were not even written! But, again, as you look what was quoted by the early church fathers, some of the other manuscripts that we have, these verses were included and thus, I will teach on them!

VERSES 9-11

Mary's dramatic meeting with Jesus (whom she first supposed to be the gardener) is described more fully in John 20:11-18. But the Good News falls on deaf ears. When Mary told the apostles what she saw they refused to believe only seeing a hysterical woman who thought she saw the Lord.

The thing is she did see the risen Lord! Unbelief is a dangerous thing. Keep in mind that Jesus told His men that He was going to die but on the third day He would rise from the dead. It was the third day! They just didn't believe, not yet anyway!

VERSES 12-13

These two men are traveling back to Emmaus, about 7 miles northwest of Jerusalem, and they were discouraged, all hope was gone as their Lord has been put to death. And as they are traveling the Lord appears to them, but at this point they do not recognize Him.

And the Lord gives them a Bible study from Genesis through Malachi on how the Scriptures testify of the Messiah, of Jesus. As they reached their village they invite this man to stay with them and He does.

Now as He broke the bread their eyes were opened and they knew it was the Lord. How did they know it was the Lord?

Possibly they saw the nail prints in His hands! And they took that news to the others, that the Lord is risen! Unbelief had left them sad, hopeless, but now, belief has given them joy and a heart to share the Good News with others. Now, once again the disciples had a hard time believing this. They rejected what Mary said about the risen Lord and now they reject what these men were saying. (Luke 24 gives us more details of this encounter with these men).

VERSES 14-18

Now that first Sunday evening we see Jesus appear to 10 of the apostles, Thomas wasn't there. Then, 8 days later Jesus appeared to 11 of them including Thomas, and that is what we see here in Mark. But this was a tough group to convince, Thomas had to see and touch the nail prints before he would believe and then he said to Jesus, "... 'My Lord and my God!'" John 20:28.

Notice Thomas did not say "My Lord and a god" or "My Lord and a lesser God." No, Thomas recognized that Jesus is Almighty God even though many today like to deny that fact!

As you look at verses 15 and 16 I believe that this is not the same day but it is close to the end when Jesus would be taken up to the right hand of the Father, close to the 40 days after His resurrection.

And keep in mind that this event took place in Galilee, not Jerusalem. We are told in Matthew 28:16-20, **“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”**

You see, on a specific mountain in Galilee is where they waited for the Lord. His ascension took place on the Mount of Olives by Bethany (Luke 24:50-51). Thus, the Great Commission occurred on this mountain in Galilee.

Also, I want you to see that there is no such thing as a limited atonement but it is for all who believe and receive it. Also, some say that you must be baptized to be saved. I don't believe that is what the Bible teaches.

This verse can literally be translated **“The one who believed and was baptized.”** You see, once they were saved they were baptized. Salvation is an inward commitment to the Lord while baptism is an outward expression to tell others what has taken place in your life. Baptism is not necessary for salvation but the Lord does want us to be baptized once we are saved! Also, notice that judgment comes to those who don't believe, nothing is said of judgment coming upon those who are not baptized!

And if baptism was needed for salvation, then Paul missed the boat on it for he said very clearly in I Corinthians 1:14-17, **“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”**

You see, baptism does not save, the Gospel of Jesus Christ does because it brings us to Jesus, the Savior of the world.

In regards to baptism, Warren Wiersbe makes these comments, “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.” (Wiersbe)

Another writer put it like this, “The omission of *baptized* with ‘disbelieveth’ would seem to show that Jesus does not make baptism essential to salvation. Condemnation rests on disbelief, not on baptism. So salvation rests on belief. Baptism is merely the picture of the new life not the means of securing it.” (Robertson)

I hope that clears things up for you. I do think baptism is important, not for salvation but in obedience to what the Lord has told us!

Now there are more troubling verses, and they are verses 17 and 18 of Mark chapter 16. Some say that this was for the first century church, that this power is no longer around today. But that is not what the text is saying.

You see, this power was not just for the first century church for in Luke 24:49 we are told, **“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”**

And then Peter, on the day of Pentecost said in regards to this empowering, **“For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”** Acts 2:39. Thus, it is for all of us, for we are **“afar off”** from when Peter spoke those words!

And what is this power for? To move the Gospel message forward. Now the problem today is we have people following after signs and wonders and that is not what Jesus said. He tells us **“And these signs will follow those who believe.”** In other words, as we abide in Him, live our faith out, these signs will follow after us, wherever we go, even to the most remote places in the world!

And then verse 18, we have those who love to handle poisonous snakes in church, drink poison and they use this verse to justify their actions. That is foolishness and that is not what the Scriptures are saying.

The whole point is that as you are going out witnessing, sometimes in remote areas, dangerous areas, God will protect you. Not if you are acting foolish!

We see this played out in Acts 28:1-6 where we are told, **“Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, ‘No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live.’ But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.”**

And Paul was able to witness to the people and many came to know the Lord! But Jesus never intended us to act foolishly and drink poison or handle poisonous snakes, not at all, that is just tempting the Lord!

VERSES 19-20

The event here does not take place in Galilee, but some 70 miles away or so, in the area of Bethany by the Mount of Olives, some 40 days after His resurrection. The Lord is now seated at the right hand of the Father, the place of authority and honor. Also, the priest would never sit down, there were no chairs in the Temple for the work was not completed. But now Christ, our Great High Priest has sat down. Why? Because the work is finished! He paid in full the penalty for our sins by His shed blood!

Now as Mark concludes he tells us that they went out preaching the Gospel message by the power of the Holy Spirit and in just some 30 years from this time, through a few empowered people, Paul was able to say in Colossians 1:5-6, **“because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.”**

That is only done through the power of God’s Spirit in and upon a believer’s life! God wants to do no less in our lives. If you don’t have the power, just ask God and He will give it to you. It is as Jesus said in Luke 11:11-13, **“If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”**

So, just ask Him! You see, Jesus is commanding us to go and follow His example, spread forth the Gospel message wherever you go. May we take what God has shown us and use it for His glory!

The Gospel of Mark has presented to us Jesus as the Suffering Servant as we are told in Mark 10:45, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”** May we follow His example and be servants of the King of kings and Lord of lords, shining the light of Christ in this dark and dying world!