

Sermon Title: The Perfect End of Mark
Scripture Text: Mark 16:9-20

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-19-20

We come today to the end of the Gospel According to Mark. We've spent a long time in Mark. We held off on Chapter 16 until last Lord's Day, for Easter. And now, we have some more words on the page. This section at the end of Mark gives us a good reason for a very unusual sermon. Chapter 16, Verses 9 through 20, if you look at your Bible, is probably in brackets—in most of the Bibles today, that's the case—or, maybe there's a marginal note or a footnote explaining something about these 12 verses not being in the best manuscripts. We're going to look at that today, and I trust, in the end, this is going to increase your confidence in the Bible that you hold in your hands.

I remember many years ago, I dealt with a question about this passage in response to a "Provoke the Pastor" series—that Question-and-Answer thing we do every summer. I explained why we don't regard this as part of Mark, as Mark and initially wrote it, and I also showed that nothing in the passage is specifically heretical. Well, I haven't changed my view about any of that, one bit. What I *have* changed is my attitude toward dealing with this. Providentially, my friend John MacArthur chose the Book of Mark to be the final one of his 43-year preaching series and writing series, writing a set of commentaries on the entire New Testament. I remember when he signed that contract, and I remember spraining something in my head, rolling my eyes and saying, "You're going to do *what?*" Well, he did it! And that meant that the final sermon in that long sequence was on this passage. I happened to hear John reprise that sermon at the next Shepherd's Conference after he had finished Mark, and I decided that very day that someday, I was going to do my own version of it. Well, welcome to that day! It has arrived.

Now, it's not that I can improve on what I heard John say. As a matter of fact, I edited a lot to fit the amount of time that we have available. But this is going to pull back the curtain and show you what lies behind that precious translation of the Bible that you read every day. All translations of Scripture—and unless you're reading Biblical Greek or Hebrew, you're reading a translation—they're all based on ancient sources, ancient sources that have been compared by very good, fastidious, careful scholars over the centuries, so that I can say to you unequivocally that the Bible that you hold in your hand—if you have a "formal equivalence" translation, one that seeks to be faithful to the original—what you have in your hand is an *accurate* Bible.

Now, yours is printed and bound. The printing press, though, is a fairly newcomer on the scene, looking at the broad span of history; the printing press didn't show up until around A.D. 1500, so everything up until that time was copied by hand. The scribes who did that understood the seriousness of what they did; they knew what they had before them. They copied it with a care and rigor that would be unknown to most of us today, because they understood they were dealing with Holy Scripture (see Deut. 4:2; cf. Matt. 5:18).

Now, there are a lot of documents from antiquity, but *nothing* in ancient literature even comes *close* to the mass of manuscripts that we have of the New Testament. The number may even continue to go up, but today, we have roughly 25,000 manuscripts, of various kinds, of all or part of the New Testament. They demonstrate a spectacular uniformity and consistency. Of those 25,000 manuscripts, there are about 5,600 Greek manuscripts, and they go way back—

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that's the original language that the New Testament was written in. We have Greek manuscripts from as far back as the Second Century and the Third Century—and bear in mind: Jesus died in 33 A.D.; John the Apostle didn't die until just toward the end of the First Century.

So we have all of these manuscripts. I'm not going to give you a huge lesson in archaeology and manuscript studies, because it's hard enough to keep you awake when you're *here*, let alone when I am by remote control. But manuscripts are labeled, of course; they tend to be numbered and/or named according to people who found them and the location where they were found. There is a manuscript called P52—that's not an airplane; it's not a rock group—P52 has parts of the Gospel of John, and it dates from somewhere between 100 and 150 A.D. That little manuscript is likely a first or second copy from the original that the Apostle John wrote. There's a famous papyrus called the Chester Beatty Papyrus—I'll give you one guess at who discovered it—it has all four Gospels and the Book of Acts, and it dates from around 200 A.D.

You see, God providentially preserved these ancient texts—these copies—very close to the originals. A papyrus—when you think of a scroll rolled up, that's the format upon which we find those things. A bound volume, rather than a scroll, is called a "codex." There are two of them that are especially important: The first one is called "Sinaiticus"—it's from around 350 A.D., and it contains the whole New Testament. The second one is called "Vaticanus"—I'll give you a wild guess where the library is where *that one* was discovered; it's from around 325 A.D., and it contains the whole Bible. By the way—I'll just tip my hand here about the Gospel of Mark: Both Sinaiticus and Vaticanus end the Book of Mark at Chapter 16, Verse 8; we'll note more about that later. We also have 8,000 copies of the New Testament in Latin; it's called "The Vulgate"—"vulgate" from "vulgar," the common language of the everyday people; when you all spoke Latin, that's what that was. The Vulgate dates from 382 to 405 A.D. We also have more than 350 copies of the Bible in Syriac, the version of the Semitic languages that was spoken in Syria; it goes way back to the 200's A.D.

Now, you don't need to know all of those details; that is *not* going to be on the entrance test for Heaven. You do well, though, to understand why they are so important. We have all of these ancient manuscripts that, when they are carefully compared, they *all say the same thing!* It's very common for people who want to reject Scripture to say that we really don't know what the original said—and that's *patently* false!

Let me give you a comparison. We have about 25,000 manuscripts of various forms of the New Testament. The second most common ancient document in the manuscript world is Homer's *Iliad*. Maybe you had to read the *Iliad*—I'll bet you read a translation of it, if you did. Next to the New Testament, there are more copies of Homer's *Iliad* than any other ancient piece of literature. There are a whopping 643 copies of the *Iliad* in existence, compared to 25,000 of the New Testament. And by the way: the *oldest* copy we have of the *Iliad* is from the *Thirteenth Century* A.D., and Homer wrote it in the *Eighth Century* B.C.—so there's 2,100 years between when Homer wrote it and the oldest copy that we have, compared to the New Testament, where we have a span of 40 to 100 years from when it was written.

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Go onto a college campus these days and quote Homer, and you'll be considered scholarly. Go onto a college campus and quote Jesus, and you'll be considered silly and uneducated. You see, it has a lot to do with what the facts really are.

What is so amazing about this is that these are all *hand copies*! And you say, "You mean that, in all of that copying, there were *no errors*?" No, we *don't* say that. They *made* mistakes; they *did* introduce errors. That's why, when we speak of Inerrancy, we talk about the "original writings." Sometimes, they would put in a wrong word—you've done that. Sometimes, they would put in a wrong spelling. There was no scribe named Auto-correct, so they had to figure it out on their own. Sometimes, something might get left out—you could finish one line that ended with a certain word, and then have the next line end with the same word, and you could skip the line in between; somehow, that could happen, occasionally. Sometimes, they would even write something in the margins to clarify something for the next scribe that would come along.

But guess what? We have *so many manuscripts* from *so many places* over *such a span of time*, we can tell when the mistakes popped up. Plus, if something shows up in a *later* manuscript, and it's not in *any* of the earlier ones, we know that it was *added later*! And we know where the copying may have gone wrong. We are so accustomed to just clicking "Print"—and what a crisis for us, when the printer doesn't work! This was all done by hand, literally for *centuries*.

Studying all of this stuff is called the science of "Textual Criticism." Let me give you an illustration: You're rooting around in a library somewhere and you find this manuscript, and in the Greek it says: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." You would read that say, "Hmph! What's that about?" And let's say you found another fragment of a manuscript, and it says: "It is easier for a *cord* to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." Well, you know it's *impossible* to put a *camel* through the eye of a needle, but if you took the cord and you maybe broke it down into its elements, and worked very, very patiently and worked hard for a long time, maybe you could get the cord through the eye of a needle. So you have these two manuscripts; they're quoting the same thing that Jesus said, and they disagree between "cord" and "camel"—which would be the correct one? Well, not "cord," because *no one* would read "cord" and change it to "camel," but you can see how somebody *might* want to turn "camel" into "cord"—*very, very hard* for a rich man to get over his love of his riches, and turn to Christ in faith. Oh, and by the way: there is only a tiny difference between of the word for "cord" and the word for "camel" in the Greek language. So, by comparing manuscripts, we can see when somebody introduces a change. That's the *fruit* of the study of "Textual Criticism." "Camel" is right. We also know that because of the text, because the text says, "It is *impossible* with man," and that only fits "camel," as I said.

There are other principles of comparing manuscripts—"Textual Criticism." One is: choose earlier manuscript over later ones. If one comes from a family tree of copying that only goes back 200 years, and one comes from a family tree of copying that goes back 1,000 years, if they differ—and everything else is the same—you would take the older versus the newer.

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Another principle is: choose the shorter one over the longer one, because as I said, scribes would sometimes write a note between lines, or in the margin, to add something to clarify, and then that could be eventually inserted into the text—but out of their reverence for the Word of God, they would *never* remove anything from the text (see Jer. 26:2). So, if you have two manuscripts—everything else being equal—choose the shorter over the longer.

Another one is: choose the more difficult over the easier one, because you can explain someone intentionally, or unintentionally, making something sound *easier* to understand, than making something sound *harder* to understand—like "camel" and "cord."

Why talk about all this? Because we have here, at the end of Mark, this long "textual variant," as we call it, stuck onto the end of Mark, and we *know* it *did not appear* in the original written by Mark; that's why our modern translations put it in brackets. And by the way: if you look down at the bottom of whatever page in your Bible where the Gospel of Mark ends, you might find yet another little section—in the New American Standard Bible, it's actually printed in a different type—it's *another* ending that showed up in the parade of manuscripts, a short one. So you have Mark's ending, and then you have a *long* ending, and then you have a *short* ending.

Well, if it's not in the original, why is it there? Well, how about we turn back to what Mark wrote: Mark Chapter 16, Verse 8. This is where we ended last Lord's Day; Mark's closing statement: "They went out"—"they" refers to the women who were at the tomb—"They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted). That's *it!* That's where Mark quit! But you can understand that folks started to say: "That just doesn't seem like an ending! That seems like he came to a stop sign, not to a destination."

Well, notice: the language is *very dramatic*. The Resurrection was *shocking!* Like we said last time: they didn't come to look for the resurrected Jesus—they came to take care of His dead body; they didn't yet believe, until He rose from the dead. The women are convinced of the Resurrection by the empty tomb that they saw, and by the spectacular announcement from the angels that they had heard, and it has dawned on them in their terrified bewilderment. They are gripped by this *unthinkable* reality of the Resurrection, and a few steps later, as they're fleeing from the tomb, they're *totally overwhelmed* by joy! They're *speechless!* And so is Mark; he's done. Verse 8 says: "they said nothing to anyone." I've heard it said that, that's yet another miracle: it's a group of women, and they said nothing to anyone. Well that, apparently, was good enough for Mark. Mark didn't have anything left to say, either. How fitting that this end is so dramatic and so powerful that, neither the women nor Mark have anything else to say! Yeah, the women *did* go and tell who they were supposed to, but that's more of the story.

So, what needs to be added? You have an empty tomb—speaks for itself; you have an angelic announcement, directly from God via His messenger; and you have the eyewitnesses. So, what is Mark doing, just *stopping* like that? Well, he told you, at the very beginning, what he was working toward. Why did he write this book? Why did he pick Peter's brain so thoroughly to put this together? What did he want you to be convinced of?

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Well, the connection to Chapter 16, Verse 8, is Mark Chapter 1, Verse 1. He describes his own Gospel, and Verse 1 stands like a title over it: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." That's the point Mark wanted to make! Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Did he make his point? Are you convinced? Is it enough? Did these 16 chapters get it done for you? Is it *clear* that Jesus is the Son of God? Well, what else is there to say? The *proof* is the Resurrection! So, Mark is as speechless as the women, because his point is proven. But obviously, Mark stopping like that bothered some people early in church history.

And you wouldn't be surprised to find out, there's a whole bunch of speculation. Some speculate that Mark knew that Matthew and Luke already had it covered; Mark hadn't read John's Gospel because it hadn't been written yet; so *that's* why Mark didn't bother—because Matthew and Luke had it covered. But we have no record of Matthew and Mark and Luke getting together and deciding who would include what.

Others have said that maybe, since Mark was getting his information from Peter, that what happened was: Mark suddenly lost access to Peter because that's when Peter got arrested and executed. Well, *maybe*—but again, that's pure speculation. Trust me, if the Holy Spirit had wanted to keep talking through Mark, He could; He could have kept Mark writing.

Some justify Mark's ending by comparing it to Matthew and to John. John starts the story of Jesus 30 years into His life with the baptism of Jesus (cf. Lk. 3:23), so they say, if John has a late start, what's wrong with Mark having a brief ending? Or, compare him with Matthew—he didn't really need to add anything, because Matthew already said it.

The point is: we really *don't know* any of that, and it's wrong to interpret based on what you don't know. What we *do know* is what Mark wrote, so let's go and look again at the text; this is the umpteenth time we've read it in two Lord's Days: Mark 16:8—"They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." The Greek word *tromos* is "trembling"; it's the ecstasy, the transcendent bewilderment where you're just shaking. The word translated "astonishment" is *ekstasis*, from which we get our "ecstasy." "They were just blown away" would be our vernacular way of saying it. *Phobeō* is the word for "afraid"—not scared to death, but just immobilized by the fear of God, this terrifying bewilderment that gripped their minds as they were comprehending the fact that *Jesus is alive!* So, yes—that ending is abrupt.

Maybe it *is* a *shocking* ending—but is it *incomplete*? That was the complaint: "Well, this is just an *inadequate ending* to a history!" So, in the very early years—going back, probably, to the Second Century—people started wanting to add something to Mark. Now, if you root around in enough commentaries, you will find the theory that, well, Mark didn't *really* end at Verse 8; there *is* an ending somewhere, but it's lost. I've seen people spend *pages* on the "Lost Ending Theory" of the Book of Mark. Well, there are some problems with that. How in the world can you say something was lost, if you don't know that it ever existed? How can you dogmatically say that this thing we don't have is what we really have here? It's like the soldiers who went back and explained in detail what happened while they were supposedly asleep—it's self-contradictory. If you *did* know it existed, then it wouldn't be lost.

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Others apparently said: "We need to put an ending on this; we just can't leave this!" So, that's how the endings began to appear—short ones, like the one at the end, the one that is beyond Verse 20. It says: "And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed. And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation."

Now, we have *all kinds* of manuscript evidence—*mountains* of it—to let us know: all of that was added later. Like I told you: those two most important, oldest manuscripts—Sinaiticus and Vaticanus—both end at Verse 8; and *all the other* most ancient manuscripts end at Verse 8. They don't have the added short ending, and they certainly don't have the longer ending that, in English Bibles, is typically labeled Verses 9 through 20. Early church fathers, who commented extensively on the Bible—they *knew* about these proposed endings, but *they rejected them* because they were not in the best manuscripts; they knew that they were later human inventions.

Now, I should also comment that, because we are in an English-speaking world—and the most influential book *ever* in the English-speaking world is the King James Version of the Bible—if you look at a King James Bible, or a New King James Version, you will find Verses 9 through 20 in the regular flow of text, and there are no brackets. Why is that? Well, it's because the *very* skillful translators of the King James Version—and it's only upgraded in the New King James—their translation is based, *not* on something like Sinaiticus or Vaticanus or the Chester Beatty Papyrus or anything like that; it's based on a *medieval* Greek text that was completed by a man named Erasmus in the early 1500's. The King James Version was done in 1611—they used a very good Greek manuscript that they had: the one that was done by Erasmus; it's typically referred to as the "Textus Receptus," or, the "Received Text"; they used it, and they used it faithfully, and they translated it well into the common, everyday British English of 1611. But *since* that time, we have discovered all these *earlier* texts, so the *later* translations—like the NASB: New American Standard Bible; ESV: English Standard Version; NIV: New International Version—they are based on the more ancient texts.

Now, you will encounter some folks who have a very *radical* commitment to the King James Version, and the typical thing they say is: "These *modern* translations *omit* things from the Bible!"—because the King James is longer; the most radical example of that is Mark Chapter 16. But the point is: from that *later* manuscript, it's not that other translations *omit* things, it's that the manuscripts from which the King James came—they *add* a whole bunch of confections that worked their way into the text between the 100's and 200's and 300's A.D., up to the 1500's, when Erasmus compiled that text.

So—why do we have Verses 9 through 20? Well, the only reason for including it, even in brackets, is the *powerful tradition* surrounding that text assembled by Erasmus, *and* the powerful influence of the King James Version in the English language—and, face it: it's been mostly English-speakers that have done most of the translation work around the world.

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All that is what we call "external evidence"—that is, from outside the Bible. And it's very strong evidence. But there is also what we call "internal evidence," and you're going to enjoy this. Let's look at this long ending. By the way: what is said here is true. The argument is not whether Mark 16:9 through 20 is *false*, it's whether it ought to be included or not. Well, let's read through it: Mark 16, starting at what is called Verse 9—"Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either. Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed. And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation."

Now, when I teach preaching, when I teach "hermeneutics"—how to interpret the Bible—when I teach people how to go from the text to understanding what the text says to deciding how to proclaim it, I always tell would-be preachers: "You must examine the text so that you know what the structure of it is, and you want to derive an outline *from the text* that shows the people who listen to you what God inspired in that text. So, here is my outline of the inspired text from Mark 16, Verses 9 through 20...Yeah, that's it! It's on the screen [indicating a blank screen]. This isn't inspired! This was not what Mark wrote down by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Now, let me take you to this internal evidence; there some really interesting things. The internal evidence—just studying these alleged verses—also argues for excluding them, and I'll give you six lines of reasoning. The transition from Verse 8 to Verse 9 is awkward. Verse 9 begins with the word "now"; that would require continuity from Verse 8 to Verse 9—however, what follows in Verse 9 does not continue the story of the women who are the subject of the sentence in Verse 8; it's a bizarre change, and it totally *lacks* continuity. If you're going to use the word "now," you would be continuing the story of the women, not jumping to a different appearance to Mary Magdalene.

There's another problem in Verse 9: In Verse 9, there is a masculine pronoun; a masculine pronoun—he, him, etc.—requires a masculine antecedent, and that can't be referring back to the women, so there's a grammatical kind of thing that would not be done...and there were no problems with gender identity in those days.

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Here's another piece of internal evidence: Why would Mark suddenly identify Mary Magdalene, in this section, as the one "from whom [Jesus] had cast out seven demons" when he has already mentioned her three times in the eight verses coming up to it? Now he introduces it as if you need to know who Mary Magdalene is. That just makes no sense.

Number 4: The angel spoke of Jesus's promise to appear to His followers in Galilee. Mark 16, allegedly Verses 9 through 20, describes several appearances that all happened in Jerusalem—again, a total *disconnect* between what is before it, not a connection.

Number 5: The vocabulary is not consistent with Mark; it doesn't read like Mark. If you ever have the privilege to study Biblical languages and then do some translation, you'll catch on to the normal vocabulary, the normal sentence structure—kind of like the written accent that somebody has. When you read something from Dr. Seuss, you don't mistake it for the Encyclopedia Britannica. So, this section doesn't read like Mark. There are 18 words in these alleged verses that are *never used anywhere* by Mark. Now, sure, a guy can add some new vocabulary and build on it as he goes, but—18 words in this half of a chapter, compared to what he had done before?

The sentence structure is different from the structure of Mark's writing. In Verse 19, he uses a title: "Lord Jesus"—nothing *wrong* with that title, but that title is *never used anywhere* else by Mark. And there's no reference to Peter here, although Peter was mentioned back in Verse 7.

And then you have the strange themes that are interjected into the supposed narrative of the Resurrection here. You don't have anything like this in Matthew or Luke or John. You have the theme of not believing—Verse 11, Verse 14, Verse 16; you have the theme of gospel proclamation in Verses 11 through 20. They don't exist anywhere in Mark; they just don't fit—it's like they're *added in...* which is what they are. They're out of range for the subjects that Mark deals with regularly.

And then you have the "signs" thrown in here. That doesn't appear in any of the other Gospels; in no post-Resurrection account of Jesus is there *any* discussion of signs like picking up serpents or speaking with tongues or casting out demons. Those things all *happened*; but then you have the drinking "poison"—that came out of *nowhere*. Then there's the laying of hands on the sick. So, both internally and externally, this doesn't fit Mark.

You say, "Well, then, where did this thing come from?" The definitive answer is: We don't know who made it up. We don't know *who* it came from, but we *do* know *where* it came from. Whoever put this together—an individual or several individuals, or maybe one person doing it and somebody else tweaking it; we don't know—people picked things out of the other Gospels and some of the other New Testament books, and put them together. This isn't unique to Mark; all this stuff comes from somewhere else. Verse 9 comes from Luke 8; Verse 10 from John 20; Verse 12 from Luke 24—same with Verse 13, same with Verse 14; Verse 15 is Matthew 28:19; Verse 16 comes from John 20:23; Verses 17 and 18 has elements from Matthew 10, Mark 6, Luke 10, and Acts 28.

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So what we have here is a patchwork that someone—or someones—pulled together. Maybe a committee all went out for Chinese food and they all sound verses in their fortune cookies, and they put them together! That makes as much sense as *any* explanation that we have.

So, except for that bizarre reference to drinking poison, this is just an attempt to make Mark look like it has a better-sounding ending. But, you know what? This ending is not better in *any way*. Mark wrote the *perfect* ending to his Gospel, *just* the way he wanted it; and he wrote it *just* the way the Holy Spirit inspired it.

So, let's think about Mark's ending...and then we're done. Why does he end the way he does? Well, it's the way he wrote! He was abrupt. He wrote with urgency. He *started* abruptly—he skipped everything up to the baptism of Jesus. What about Elizabeth and Zacharias, and the promise of the birth of John the Baptist? What about John the Baptist's early life? What about all the stuff that he did? What about the Annunciation? What about the angels? What about the Virgin Birth? What about Bethlehem? What about that trip to the temple when Jesus was 12 years old?

Where's *that*? It's not in Mark. In fact, he starts with the ministry of John the Baptist in the second verse of his whole book. Then Jesus shows up to be baptized by Verse 9. Well, that's *over six months* in those few verses. He has nothing *before* the ministry of Jesus; he has nothing *after* the Resurrection of Jesus. He set out to prove a point: Jesus is the Son of God. He proved it by following Him through His ministry, through His death, through His burial, through His Resurrection—and then, he *stopped*.

But there's something else here that is striking. The last word in Mark is the word "afraid." "They were afraid"—not afraid for their lives; not afraid of being harmed, or that they were in danger. They were totally humbled—terrified, if you will—by the presence of God. It's that word *phobeō*, from which we get "phobia"—it means an irrational experience; they were experiencing bewilderment, amazement, astonishment, wonder. There *are no* human explanations for what they saw. This book ends in wonder and awe and the fear of God.

Now, as we come to a close, think back over our time in Mark. Just think back carefully through the 81 previous sermons—this is Number 82, and it's the end. It's only been 29 months; it's only been 81 sermons. But when I show you some things, I think you'll see Mark's way of doing things. What does he say? Chapter 1, Verse 22—"They were amazed"; 1:27—"They were all amazed"; 2:12—"they were all amazed"; 4:41—"They became very much afraid"; 5:15—"they became frightened"; 5:33—"the woman fearing and trembling...fell down before Him"; 5:42—"they were completely astounded"; 6:51—"they were utterly astonished"; 9:6—Peter, James, and John "became terrified" at the Transfiguration; 9:15—a huge "crowd" was "amazed"; 9:32—"they were afraid"; 10:24—"The disciples were amazed"; 10:32—"they were amazed, and...fearful"; 11:18—"The chief priests...were afraid of Him"; 12:17—"they were amazed at Him"; 15:5—"Pilate was amazed"; 16:5—"Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed."

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How would you expect a guy who emphasizes all of those things to finish his book, other than to say: The women "fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid"? That's *perfectly consistent* with Mark! That's his pattern. And, the Resurrection? *That's the most amazing, bewildering, awe-inspiring, fear-invoking thing of all!*

The Gospel of Mark is a non-stop ride from one point of amazement to the next, so it ends *exactly* where it ought to end. It ends exactly where Mark *intended* to end it. It's not complete—it ends with amazement and wonder at the Resurrection. When you finish Mark, I've got to ask: *Are you amazed?* Maybe I should say: *Aren't you amazed?* The story of Jesus is *amazing*. Isn't *every word* of this Gospel amazing? Isn't *every miracle* amazing? Isn't *every confrontation* that Jesus had—and He *always* won every one of them—aren't they amazing? Isn't every *insight* amazing? Isn't *everything* about Him *stunning* and *overwhelming*?

So, why not end it with a group of people in glory and wonder, as they've seen: Jesus is alive! It proves He is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). Why not just walk away from this book in amazement?

With that, we walk away. We know we can visit again, anytime we want to, and I commend it to you.

Let's pray:

Thank You, Lord for Mark. We remember his development. We remember how he fled from ministry, and yet, how he was restored, how he became so precious to the Apostle Paul. Obviously, he was precious to the Apostle Peter, as well. Thank You for using them to bring us this book. Thank You for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Thank You that He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures—just as we read; and He was buried, and He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures—just as we read. Thank You for our risen Savior. We rejoice with our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world, who are celebrating the Resurrection on this Lord's Day instead of last Lord's Day. The day of the week, the number on the month—that doesn't matter. Thank You for the risen Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.